## Nabucco

**Giuseppe Verdi**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONDUCTOR</th>
<th>Paolo Carignani</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PRODUCTION</td>
<td>Elijah Moshinsky</td>
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<tr>
<td>SET DESIGNER</td>
<td>John Napier</td>
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<tr>
<td>COSTUME DESIGNER</td>
<td>Andreane Neofitou</td>
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<td>LIGHTING DESIGNER</td>
<td>Howard Harrison</td>
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<tr>
<td>STAGE DIRECTOR</td>
<td>J. Knighten Smit</td>
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<tr>
<td>GENERAL MANAGER</td>
<td>Peter Gelb</td>
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<tr>
<td>MUSIC DIRECTOR</td>
<td>James Levine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRINCIPAL CONDUCTOR</td>
<td>Fabio Luisi</td>
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### Dramma lirico in four parts

Libretto by Temistocle Solera, based on the play *Nabuchodonosor* by Auguste Anicet-Bourgeois and Francis Cornu

Wednesday, October 5, 2011, 7:30–10:15 pm

The production of *Nabucco* was made possible by a generous gift from Bill Rollnick and Nancy Ellison Rollnick.

Major funding was provided by Mr. and Mrs. Ezra K. Zilkha, Mercedes and Sid Bass, and Mr. and Mrs. Paul M. Montrone.

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The revival of this production is made possible by a gift from The Dr. M. Lee Pearce Foundation.
The Metropolitan Opera
2011–12 Season

The 48th Metropolitan Opera performance of

Giuseppe Verdi’s

Nabucco

CONDUCTOR
Paolo Carignani

IN ORDER OF VOCAL APPEARANCE

Zaccaria, High Priest of the Hebrews
Carlo Colombara

Ismaele, nephew of Sedecia, King of Jerusalem
Yonghoon Lee

Fenena, Nabucco’s daughter
Renée Tatum *

Abigail, slave, believed to be Nabucco’s
everest daughter
Maria Guleghina

Anna, Zaccaria’s sister
Amber Wagner

Nabucco
Željko Lučić

High Priest of Baal
David Crawford

Abdallo, officer of the King of Babylon
Hugo Vera

Wednesday, October 5, 2011, 7:30–10:15 pm
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A scene from Act III of Verdi’s Nabucco

Yamaha is the official piano of the Metropolitan Opera.

Latecomers will not be admitted during the performance.

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Synopsis

Jerusalem and Babylon, 6th century B.C.E.

Part I
The Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem

Part II
SCENE 1  Nabuco’s palace in Babylon
SCENE 2  Elsewhere in the palace

Intermission  (AT APPROXIMATELY 8:45 PM)

Part III
SCENE 1  The hanging gardens of Babylon
SCENE 2  The banks of the Euphrates

Part IV
SCENE 1  Nabuco’s royal apartments
SCENE 2  The hanging gardens

Part I
The Israelites are praying for help against Nabuco (Nebuchadnezzar), king of Babylon, who has attacked them and is vandalizing the city. Zaccaria, their high priest, enters with Nabuco’s daughter, Fenena, whom the Hebrews hold hostage. He reassures his people that the Lord will not forsake them. As the Israelites leave, Ismaele, nephew of the king of Jerusalem, is left alone with Fenena. The two fell in love during Ismaele’s imprisonment in Babylon. Fenena helped him escape and followed him to Jerusalem. Their conversation is interrupted by the sudden appearance of Fenena’s half-sister, Abigaille, and a band of disguised Babylonian soldiers. Abigaille, who is also in love with Ismaele, tells him that she can save his people if he will return her love, but he refuses. The Israelites rush back into the temple in a panic. When Nabuco enters with his warriors, Zaccaria confronts him, threatening to kill Fenena. Ismaele disarms the priest and delivers Fenena to her father. Nabuco orders the destruction of the temple.

Part II
Nabuco has appointed Fenena regent while he is away at the wars. Abigaille, back in the royal palace in Babylon, has found a document saying that she is not the king’s daughter but the child of slaves. Foreseeing a future in which Fenena and Ismaele will rule together over Babylon, she swears vengeance on Nabuco and Fenena. The High Priest of Baal arrives with news that Fenena has freed the
Israelite prisoners. As a result of her treason, he offers the throne to Abigaille and proposes to spread the rumor that Nabucco has fallen in battle.

Elsewhere in the palace, Zaccaria prays for inspiration to persuade the Babylonians to give up their false idols. Ismaele enters and the assembled Levites accuse him of treachery, but Zaccaria announces that he has been pardoned for saving a fellow Israelite—the newly converted Fenena. An officer rushes in to warn Fenena that the king is dead and her life is in danger. Before she can escape, the High Priest of Baal arrives with Abigaille and the Babylonians, who proclaim Abigaille ruler. She is about to crown herself when, to the astonishment of all, Nabucco appears. He snatches the crown from her, faces the crowd and declares himself not only their king but their god. For this blasphemy, a thunderbolt strikes him down. Abigaille, triumphant, retrieves the crown for herself.

Part III

The Babylonians hail Abigaille as their ruler. The High Priest urges her to have the Israelites killed, but before she can give the order, the disheveled Nabucco wanders in. Abigaille dismisses the crowd and, alone with Nabucco, tricks him into signing the death warrant for the captive Israelites. He asks what will happen to Fenena, and Abigaille replies that she too must die. When Nabucco tries to find in his garments the document proving Abigaille’s ancestry, she produces it and tears it to pieces. He pleads in vain for Fenena’s life.

Along the banks of the Euphrates, the Israelites rest from forced labor, their thoughts turning to their homeland. Zaccaria predicts they will overcome captivity and obliterate Babylon with the help of God.

Part IV

From a window in his apartment, where he has been locked up by Abigaille, Nabucco watches Fenena and the Israelites being led to execution. Desperate, he prays to the god of Israel for forgiveness, pledging to convert himself and his people. His sanity restored, he forces open the door and summons his soldiers to regain the throne and save his daughter.

The Israelites are about to be executed. Fenena prays to be received into heaven when Nabucco rushes in and stops the sacrifice. Abigaille, full of remorse, takes poison and dies, confessing her crimes and praying to the god of Israel to pardon her. Nabucco announces his conversion and frees the Israelites, telling them to return to their native land and rebuild their temple. Israelites and Babylonians are united in praising God.
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In Focus

**Giuseppe Verdi**

**Nabucco**

*Premiere: Milan, Teatro alla Scala, 1842*

Verdi’s third opera, a stirring drama about the fall of ancient Jerusalem at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar (Nabucco) and the Hebrews’ subsequent exile in Babylon, was a spectacular hit at its premiere and catapulted the 28-year-old composer to international fame. The story of the premiere is famous: Following the death of his first wife and the disastrous reception of his previous work, the comedy *Un Giorno di Regno*, a disillusioned Verdi had decided to quit composing. He is said to have changed his mind when he saw the lyrics written by Temistocle Solera for a choral prayer in Part III of *Nabucco*. Inspired, he set to work and created an opera that would become a sensation and launch his career. The music and the composer himself were subsumed into a surge of patriotic fervor culminating in the foundation of the modern nation of Italy. Specifically, the Chorus of the Hebrew Slaves in Part II (“Va, pensiero”), in which the Israelites express their longing for their homeland, was singled out as the nexus of Verdi’s art and the country’s aspirations for unity. It has come to stand for that exciting era in Italian history, the Risorgimento, or “Resurgence,” and was long considered a sort of unofficial national anthem. Some of the history surrounding these events and Verdi’s role in them has been called into question by recent scholarship, but there is little doubt that “Va, pensiero” gripped audiences from the very first performance. Six decades later, Arturo Toscanini conducted the piece at Verdi’s state funeral in Milan, leading the vast forces of orchestras and choruses from all over Italy. The stories surrounding the creation of *Nabucco* have sometimes obscured the musical qualities of the opera itself. It faded from the repertory after its initial success and was little known for decades. But what struck audiences more than 150 years ago has again impressed contemporary listeners as dynamic and exhilarating.

*The Creators*

Giuseppe Verdi (1813–1901) composed 28 operas during his 60 active years in the theater, at least half of which are at the core of today’s opera repertory. His role in Italy’s cultural and political development has made him an icon in his native country, and he is cherished the world over for the universality of his art. Temistocle Solera (1815–1878) was a professional librettist and, early in his career, a composer of moderate success. He also provided Verdi with the librettos for his first opera, *Oberto*, and the subsequent *I Lombardi*, *Giovanna d’Arco*, and *Attila*. 
The Setting
Solera’s libretto takes some liberties with biblical history, and the characters other than the title role are dramatic inventions. But the story as a whole stays close to events as they are related in Jewish scriptures: primarily Jeremiah, as well as 2 Kings, 2 Chronicles, Daniel, and the Psalms (the words to “Va, pensiero” are a paraphrase of Psalm 137, “By the waters of Babylon”). The first part takes place around the destruction of the first temple in Jerusalem in 586 B.C., with the remainder of the opera set in various locations in the city of Babylon.

The Music
The score, with its contrasts of the dynamic and the serene, provides an ideal frame for the personal and communal aspects of the drama. The chorus is assigned a major role, giving voice to a wide spectrum of feelings, from terror at the beginning to despair, faith, and finally bright hope. It also interacts superbly with the soloists: the Part II, Scene 2 ensemble, “S’appressan gl’ istanti,” is a masterful depiction of the counterpoint of private and public emotion. Abigaille’s wild character is sharply drawn from her first entrance: a recitative covering a range of two octaves, with a pair of high C’s in the subsequent trio. Rather than depicting a character that goes mad, as in so many other operas, Abigaille’s music reflects a personality that embodies madness through sheer malice. The opera contains a brief mad scene for the title character, but Verdi gives more emphasis to Nabucco’s return to sanity in his poignant Part IV aria, “Dio di Giuda.” The aria is a prayer, one of a number in the opera: The secondary soprano sings a serene one in Part IV, while the Hebrew priest Zaccaria has several prayers of varying moods—including a rousing opening-scene solo and a stately one full of faith and grandeur in Part II, Scene 2. The supreme example of operatic prayer, of course, is found in “Va, pensiero.” The simplicity of the choral melody and the unity of the vocal line (there is no harmonization until about halfway through) perfectly encapsulate the communal sentiment.

Nabucco at the Met
The opera did not appear at the Met until a production by Günther Rennert opened the 1960–61 season. Thomas Schippers conducted Cornell MacNeil, Leonie Rysanek, and Cesare Siepi in the leading roles. Despite a popularity surge at the time in what were then the lesser-known works of Verdi (with Macbeth receiving its Met premiere in 1959 and Ernani and Simon Boccanegra returning to the repertory in new productions around the same time), Nabucco again fell from the repertory for several more decades. The current production by Elijah Moshinsky is only the second in Met history. It was unveiled in 2001, with James Levine conducting a cast led by Juan Pons, Maria Guleghina, and Samuel Ramey.
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Milka Ternina as Brünnhilde in Die Walküre, 1899

Deborah Voigt as Brünnhilde in Die Walküre, 2011
Fate sometimes moves in strange and unpredictable ways, and Giuseppe Verdi’s early career provides a prime example. Following the failure of his second opera, Un Giorno di Regno, in Milan in 1840, the composer was offered the opportunity to set the libretto for what was to become his first unqualified success, Nabucco. The offer to Verdi was made only after the rising young German composer Otto Nicolai refused the text because he thought the subject was too violent. In its place he composed Il Proscritto—on a libretto Verdi had previously returned to Bartolomeo Merelli, the impresario of Milan’s La Scala. That opera was received so poorly that Nicolai left Italy, never to return. (Despite such divergent beginnings, the endings of the compositional careers of Nicolai and Verdi were curiously similar. Each set for his final opera Shakespeare’s play The Merry Wives of Windsor, and each was successful. Operatic history tells us that Verdi’s opera, reitled Falstaff, was just a bit more successful.)

The author of the Nabucco libretto, Temistocle Solera, seems to have been a remarkably adventurous if somewhat unpredictable fellow. His exciting life included a stint, as a boy, with a traveling circus. Later, among other things, he served as an intimate advisor to Queen Isabella of Spain and as personal courier for Napoleon III to the Khedive of Egypt. His multifaceted personality and many interests extended to the lyric theater as well: he composed the music for two operas, helped Verdi with the libretto for his first dramatic effort, Oberto, and provided the complete texts for I Lombardi and Giovanna d’Arco. He suddenly left Italy for Spain before completing the libretto for Verdi’s Attila.

The principal events of Nabucco—the Assyrian conquest of Judah and the Babylonian captivity of the Hebrews—can be found in several books of the Old Testament (Kings, Chronicles, Psalms, Jeremiah, and especially Daniel, in which there is a prophecy of Nabucco’s madness and subsequent return to sanity as a result of his prayers to the Hebrew god). But Solera’s primary source appears to have been a French play first performed in Paris in 1836. Translated for the Italian stage as Nabuchodonosor, it formed the basis for a successful pantomime ballet given at La Scala in 1838. The action of Solera’s libretto follows the ballet more closely than the play. (In fact, to save money the impresario Merelli reused many of the costumes and much of the scenery of the ballet for the initial production of Verdi’s opera.) If Solera chose a source for his libretto that was originally French, Verdi’s model for the music was decidedly Italian: Rossini’s oratorio-like Mosè in Egitto, first heard in Naples in 1818 (a work the composer later adapted and translated for the Paris stage as Moïse et Pharaon). The revised Moses was retranslated into Italian and performed successfully in Milan during the 1830s; it had another, particularly well-received run there in 1840, not long before Verdi set to work on Nabucco. The parallels between the two biblical operas, relating to the structure of the first act and the choice of voice parts for the principal characters, have been convincingly described elsewhere. But there are also
similarities between Nabucco and another of Verdi’s operas whose setting is the Middle East: Aida.

In each work a conquered people is threatened with death (by the High Priest of Baal in Part II of Nabucco and by Ramfis and his priests in the finale to Act II of Aida). In each, however, the king of the conquering nation intervenes on behalf of the enslaved people. And a love triangle provides a significant aspect of both plots. A young hero (Ismaele, Radamès) loves an enslaved enemy princess (Fenena, Aida) and betrays his country on her behalf (unwittingly on the part of Radamès), with decidedly unpleasant consequences for himself. The spurned princesses are politically powerful and have strong personalities (Abigaille, Amneris). At this point, however, the plots diverge. In Aida the love triangle is the paramount aspect of the story and the opera culminates with the tragic deaths of Aida and Radamès, leaving behind a bereft Amneris. In Nabucco, Fenena has converted to Judaism and at the end she and Ismaele are free to marry and live happily ever after. To be sure, Abigaille commits suicide, but she is allowed to beg forgiveness for her sins to the Hebrew god—and her death leaves us relatively untouched since she is, after all, the villainess of the piece. True to its biblical origins, on three occasions in Nabucco divine intervention is of crucial significance to the plot. Because he had proclaimed himself god, lightning strikes the blaspheming Nabucco; his prayers to the Israelite god restore his sanity; and finally, he witnesses the miracle of the spontaneous destruction of the Great Idol of Baal. At this point Nabucco frees the Hebrew people to return to Judah. This brings us to the crucial dramatic difference between the two works: in Nabucco we care less about the individuals (kings, princes, and princesses) than about the suffering and ultimate fate of the Hebrew people.

The choruses in Aida, especially in Acts I and II, are wonderful; but they are less numerous and far less important for the drama than those in Nabucco. And it is in the choruses that we hear the people speak. They do so often in Nabucco: the chorus is heard in all but two of the 13 individual numbers. To be sure, the Hebrews are led—admonished, comforted, cajoled—by their religious leader, Zaccaria, whose in some ways is the most consistently impressive solo role. But when Verdi wrote the overture for the opera (after the remainder of the work had been composed, as was common), he chose for the principal themes the music of the choruses. It is surely not coincidental that the most beautiful and memorable music in Nabucco is the lament of the Hebrews in their Babylonian captivity, “Va, pensiero.” The astute Rossini called it “a grand aria for sopranos, altos, tenors, and basses,” and Verdi chose the melody to occupy the central position in his overture. The importance of this particular piece of music was demonstrated at a memorial funeral service held in Milan shortly after Verdi’s death. Arturo Toscanini conducted a crowd of thousands of mourners in singing “Va, pensiero.”
Reflecting the success and importance of this chorus, Verdi used it as a model for several others in his following operas. Examples include “O Signore, del tetto natio” from I Lombardi, “Si ridesti il leon di Castiglia” from Ernani, and “Patria oppressa” from Macbeth. In fact, during the early years of Verdi’s career, his choruses were so well received that he was called “Papà di cori” (father of the choruses). Despite the contemporary enthusiasm aroused by these and others of Verdi’s early choral numbers—most of them representing oppressed peoples, as does “Va, pensiero”—recent musicological scholarship has been questioning Verdi’s role as the principal musical spokesman for the Risorgimento, the movement in Italy during the 19th century that resulted in national unity and freedom from foreign domination.

It is germane, therefore, to point out that during the revolutions that swept Italy (and other European countries) in 1848 and 1849, Verdi wrote the overtly political La Battaglia di Legnano for the Teatro Argentina in Rome. The story dates from the late Middle Ages, when a league of northern Italian knights defeated the armies of Frederick Barbarossa, which were invading Italy from Germany. The premiere of La Battaglia di Legnano took place just days before the proclamation of the Roman Republic. The leading soprano role was sung by Teresa De Giuli Borsi, who had replaced Giuseppina Strepponi, Verdi’s future second wife and the original Abigaille, in the extraordinarily successful second season of Nabucco. Between August and December of 1842, Nabucco was performed an unprecedented 67 times at La Scala, a record unmatched by any other opera either before or since. The following year, when Verdi conducted Nabucco in Vienna—again with De Giuli Borsi—the music director of the Kärntnertortheater was the young composer’s good friend, Gaetano Donizetti. By this time Donizetti had written Lucia di Lammermoor, L’Elisir d’Amore, La Fille du Régiment, and many other operas. Not long after the success of Nabucco, Verdi would step into his shoes as the leading musician of Italy. —Martin Chusid
The Cast

Paolo Carignani
CONDUCTOR (MILAN, ITALY)

THIS SEASON  Nabucco at the Met, Simon Boccanegra with the Vienna State Opera, Die Fledermaus and Luisa Miller with Munich’s Bavarian State Opera, Tosca with Toronto’s Canadian Opera Company, and Donizetti’s Il Duca d’Alba in Antwerp.

MET APPEARANCES  Aida and La Traviata (debut, 2008).

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS  He was general music director of the Frankfurt Opera from 1999 to 2008 and has led opera productions at the Vienna State Opera, Covent Garden, Paris Opera, Berlin’s Deutsche Oper and State Opera, San Francisco Opera, Barcelona’s Liceu, Netherlands Opera, Spoleto Festival, and Pesaro’s Rossini Festival, among many others. Symphonic engagements include appearances with the Munich Philharmonic, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, Yomiuri Nippon Symphony, and Netherlands Radio Symphony Orchestra.

Maria Guleghina
SOPRANO (ODESSA, UKRAINE)

THIS SEASON  Abigaille in Nabucco at the Met and Vienna State Opera, the title role of Turandot at the Deutsche Oper Berlin, Lady Macbeth in Macbeth in Monte Carlo, and Leonora in a concert version of Verdi’s Oberto at Paris’s Théâtre des Champs-Élysées.

MET APPEARANCES  More than 150 performances, including Turandot, Lady Macbeth, Norma, Lisa in The Queen of Spades, Adriana in Adriana Lecouvreur, Maddalena in Andrea Chénier (debut, 1991), Tosca, Aida, Santuzza in Cavalleria Rusticana, Abigaille, Dolly in Sly, and Giorgetta in Il Tabarro.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS  Odabella in Attila, Tosca, Lady Macbeth, and Abigaille at the Paris Opera; Violetta in La Traviata in Japan; Norma at the Santander and La Coruña festivals; Abigaille, Tosca, and Maddalena with the Vienna State Opera; Elena in a concert version of I Vespri Siciliani with the Washington National Opera; Abigaille at St. Petersburg’s Mariinsky Theatre; and 15 new productions at La Scala.
Renée Tatum  
MEZZO-SOPRANO (ORANGE, CALIFORNIA)

THIS SEASON  Fenena in Nabucco at the Met.
MET APPEARANCES  Inez in Il Trovatore (debut, 2010).
CAREER HIGHLIGHTS  Háta in The Juilliard School and Met Opera’s joint production of The Bartered Bride; and the Third Lady in Die Zauberflöte and Flosshilde and Grimgerde in performances of Wagner’s Ring cycle with the San Francisco Opera. She is currently in her second year as a member of the Met’s Lindemann Young Artist Development Program, was formerly an apprentice with the Santa Fe Opera, and is an alumna of the San Francisco Opera’s Merola Opera Program. She recently appeared as Amando in Ligeti’s Le Grand Macabre and Klytämnestra’s Train Bearer in Elektra with the New York Philharmonic, the Secretary in Menotti’s The Consul with Chautauqua Opera, and Bersi in Andrea Chénier with Mobile Opera.

Carlo Colombara  
BASS (BOLOGNA, ITALY)

THIS SEASON  Zaccaria in Nabucco in Bilbao and at the Met, Oroveso in Norma in Oviedo, Colline in La Bohème in Barcelona and Salzburg, Walter in Luisa Miller in Stuttgart, Jacopo Fiesco in Simon Boccanegra in Zurich, and Padre Guardiano in La Forza del Destino in Barcelona.
MET APPEARANCES  Ramfis in Aida (debut, 1995).
CAREER HIGHLIGHTS  Escamillo in Carmen in Rome at Caracalla, the title role of Mefistofele at Finland’s Savonlinna Festival, Balthazar in La Favorita and Zaccaria in Zurich, and Philip II in Don Carlo in Zurich, Seville, and Bologna. He has also sung Jacopo Fiesco in Paris, Zurich, and Munich; Timur in Turandot in Beijing’s Forbidden City; Oroveso with the Lyric Opera of Chicago; Count Rodolfo in La Sonnambula in Lyon; Ramfis in Florence; Walter with Munich’s Bavarian State Opera; and more than 100 performances of the Verdi Requiem in cities including Florence, Rome, London, Naples, Paris, and Modena.
Yonghoon Lee
TENOR (SEOUL, SOUTH KOREA)

This season Ismaele in Nabucco at the Met, Riccardo in Un Ballo in Maschera and the title role of Don Carlo with the Deutsche Oper Berlin, the title role of the original French version of Don Carlos with the Vienna State Opera, and Don José in Carmen for his debut with the Lyon Opera.

Met Appearances Don Carlo (debut, 2010).
Career Highlights He made debuts last season at La Scala as Turridu in Cavalleria Rusticana, the Vienna State Opera and Dresden State Opera as Cavaradossi in Tosca, and the Lyric Opera of Chicago as Don José. He has also recently sung Don Carlo in Munich, Frankfurt, and Valencia, and with the Met on tour in Japan; Arrigo in La Battaglia di Legnano in Rome; Cavaradossi in Rome, Berlin, Hamburg, and Athens; Don José at the Netherlands Opera, Berlin State Opera, Deutsche Oper Berlin, and in a concert at the Hollywood Bowl; Rodolfo in La Bohème in Genoa and Frankfurt; and Macduff in Macbeth at the Glyndebourne Festival.

Željko Lučić
BARITONE (ZRENJANIN, SERBIA & MONTENEGRO)

This season The title role of Nabucco at the Met and the title role of Rigoletto with the San Francisco Opera.

Met Appearances Count di Luna in Il Trovatore, Rigoletto, Michele in Il Tabarro, Germont in La Traviata, Barnaba in La Gioconda (debut, 2006), and the title role of Macbeth.

Career Highlights Germont at Covent Garden and with the Vienna State Opera, Rigoletto in Dresden, Don Carlo in Ernani with the San Francisco Opera and Munich’s Bavarian State Opera, Nabucco with the Dallas Opera and Vienna State Opera, Iago in Otello with the Deutsche Oper Berlin, Count di Luna with the Paris Opera, Zurga in Les Pêcheurs de Perles and Rigoletto in Madrid, Macbeth with the Bavarian State Opera, and Renato in Un Ballo in Maschera, Yeletsky in The Queen of Spades, Simon Boccanegra, Gianni Schicchi, and Michele in Frankfurt.
A Conversation with Fabio Luisi

On the eve of the 2011–12 season, the maestro spoke with Met radio announcer Margaret Juntwait about becoming Principal Conductor—and stepping in on short notice to conduct two of opera’s greatest masterpieces, back to back.

Just before the start of the season, you were elevated from Principal Guest Conductor to Principal Conductor. Congratulations! Thank you. It was very sudden and quite surprising for me, because the news that James Levine had to withdraw from his performances [because of a fall] was somewhat of a shock. I’m very sorry for Jimmy, and my thoughts are with him. But working in this house is a joy. The musical and theatrical level is so high—higher than I’ve experienced in other houses. And in my new position, the musicians and I will work together even more closely and be even more connected than before.

You are conducting the new production of Don Giovanni on short notice. Does it help that this is such a well-known piece? Absolutely. I have known Don Giovanni since my childhood—but I am always trying to explore new aspects of it. To keep it fresh, you have to convince the singers and the orchestra to think that we are performing it for the first time. Forget about everything you have learned before, and try to have a fresh look—like a child who is hearing it for the first time.

Don Giovanni is such a rich piece musically. Is there any part of it that is especially challenging for you as the conductor? Well, Don Giovanni is one of the most perfect operas ever composed, which doesn’t make it any less challenging, because in Mozart every note has meaning. It’s like Wagner or Strauss in that way. So it’s important to make sure that all of the performers are very, very closely connected to the score.

Shortly after Don Giovanni opens, you will step into Maestro Levine’s shoes to conduct the new production of Siegfried. Do these operas complement each other at all, or will it be a complete switch? Well, music is always complementary. If you play Monteverdi, you find connections with Puccini, for example. And if you play Mozart, you find connections with Wagner. Wagner was educated with the Classical music of Beethoven, Mozart, and Haydn. So there are very, very strong links, and we shouldn’t ignore them. Nevertheless, Siegfried comes from another era. It is in another language and it is quite different.

Of course, you’re very familiar with the Ring operas. When you’re leading Siegfried, do you have the other three in mind? Of course. Mainly I have the proportions of the other operas in mind, which is very important for the Ring. These are not four different individual operas—it’s one big opera stretched over four nights. And, actually, you can understand the dimension of Siegfried or Göttterdammerung only if you understand the dimension of Rheingold, only if you understand the construction of Walküre. So jumping in, as I am, right in the middle with Siegfried—it’s quite challenging and exciting!