

Guide to "Aida" opera costume paintings C0473

"Aida" opera costume paintings
circa early 1870s



Title Statement

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Subtitle: "Aida" opera costume paintings

Author: Amanda Brent

Publication Statement

Publisher: George Mason University. Libraries. Special Collections Research Center

Fenwick Library, MS2FL
4400 University Dr.
Fairfax, Virginia 22030
Business Number: 703-993-2220
Fax Number: 703-993-8911
speccoll@gmu.edu
URL: <https://scrc.gmu.edu>



March 2016, 2021

Profile Description

Creation: This finding aid was produced using ArchivesSpace on 2026-06-17 07:01:35 -0400.

Language Usage: Description is written in: English, Latin script.

Descriptive Rules: Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Descriptive Summary

Unit ID

C0473

Unit ID

/repositories/2/resources/542

Unit Date

circa early 1870s

folder

1

Language

French

Abstract

Seven pen and watercolor paintings on paper of character and chorus member costume designs for the opera "Aida," circa early 1870s.

Creator

George Mason University. Libraries. Special Collections Research Center

Extent

.01 Linear Feet 7 paintings

Physical Location

R 72, C 3, S 5

Repository

George Mason University. Libraries. Special Collections Research Center

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

There are no access restrictions.

Use Restrictions

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Acquisition Information

Purchased by Steve Gerber from J & J Lubrano Music Antiquarians in September 2016.

Processing Information

Processing completed by Amanda Brent in March 2021. EAD markup completed by Amanda Brent in March 2021. This item was formerly part of the Performing Arts Manuscript Materials collection, C0215.

Preferred Citation

"Aida" opera costume paintings, C0473, Special Collections Research Center, George Mason University Libraries.

Historical Information

"Aida" is a four-act opera by Giuseppe Verdi that premiered in 1871. Set in the Old Kingdom of Egypt and sung in Italian, it tells the story of an enslaved Ethiopian princess, the titular Aida, who is brought to the Egyptian court. Unbeknownst to the court, the Egyptian military commander Radames is in love with Aida, who also returns his love. Throughout the opera the couple struggles to assert their love, while also honoring their respective countries and dealing with the war that ensues between Egypt and Ethiopia. "Aida" was immensely popular when it premiered and is still considered one of the most beloved operas today.

"Aida" has a performance history of brown and blackface, with white singers often performing characters of another race. This occurred as recently as early 2020, though there has been more effort in the opera world to cast racially appropriate singers in these roles, particularly that of Aida.

Scope and Content

Seven pen and watercolor paintings on paper of character and chorus member costume designs for the opera "Aida," made circa early 1870s. Featured are Radames in Act I, Scene 1 and Act II, Scene 4; Ax-bearers from Act II, Scene 4; Officers of the chorus, Act I, Scene 1 and Act II, Scene 4; Amneris in Act II, Scene 4; and The King, Act II, Scene 4 and Act I, Scene 1. Notably absent are the roles of Aida, Amonasro, and Ramfis. Each painting has the name of the role written in pen on the lower left corner and the act and scene numbers on the bottom right corner. The main roles have the voice range written next to the role name. All text is written in French.

Related Materials

The Special Collections Research Center also holds the [Single 'Aida' opera costume painting \(C0474\)](#) and the

['Cavalleria rusticana' opera costume paintings](#), as well as other materials related to opera, costume design, and the performing arts.

Keywords

Art

Costume design

Opera

Verdi, Giuseppe, 1813-1901. (Title of work: Aïda.)

Bibliography

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"Synopsis: Aida." The Metropolitan Opera. Accessed March 15, 2021. <https://www.metopera.org/user-information/synopses-archive/aida>.

Arrangement

This is a single folder collection.