

NABUCCO

Dramma lirico in four parts

Libretto

Temistocle Solera,
after the play *Nabucodonosor* by Anicet-Bourgeois and Francis Corneu
and the scenario of the ballet *Nabucodonosor* by Antonio Cortesi

Premiere

9 March 1842, Milan (Teatro alla Scala)

Cast

NABUCCO [NEBUCHADNEZZAR], King of Babylon (Baritone)
ISMAELE (Tenor)
ZACCARIA (Bass)
ABIGAILLE (Soprano)
FENENA (Soprano)
HIGH PRIEST OF BAAL (Bass)
ABDALLO (Tenor)
ANNA (Soprano)

CHORUS

Babylonian and Hebrew soldiers, Levites, Hebrew virgins, Babylonian women, magi,
grandees of the Kingdom of Babylon, populace, etc.

Place

Jerusalem (Part I) and Babylon (Parts II to IV)

Time

587 BC.

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Overture**PART ONE - Jerusalem**

Thus saith the Lord. Behold, I shall deliver this city into the hand of the King of Babylon, and he will burn it with fire. (Jeremiah)

The interior of the Temple of Solomon

HEBREWS, LEVITES, VIRGINS

Throw down and destroy all festive decorations,
let the people of Judah clothe themselves in mourning!
Minister of an angry God's wrath,
the King of Assyria has fallen on us now!
The horrible howlings of barbarian legions
have thundered in the Holy Temple of God!

LEVITES

Maidens, rend your white veils,
raise your arms in supplication;
the fervent prayer of innocent lips
is a pleasing perfume in the nostrils of the Lord!
Pray, maidens! Through you may the fury
of the savage enemy legions be as naught!

All prostrate themselves.

VIRGINS

Almighty God, Who fliest on the wings of the wind,
Who freest the lightning flash from the quivering cloud,
disperse, destroy the legions of Assyria,
let the daughter of David rejoice once more!
We have sinned! But in heaven may our prayers
obtain mercy and forgiveness for our frailty!

ALL

Oh, let not the wicked cry with blasphemous presumption:
"Does the God of Israel hide Himself for fear?"
Do not let Thy children fall prey
to a madman who scorns Thy everlasting might!
Do not permit the Assyrian foe to sit
among his false idols upon the throne of David!

Zaccaria enters, leading Fenena by the hand.

ZACCARIA

Be of good cheer, my children! Almighty God
in His might has vouchsafed a sign;
He has delivered a precious hostage
into my power:
indicating Fenena
the offspring of the enemy king
can bring us peace.

CHORUS

The sun of a more propitious day
has perhaps arisen for us!

ZACCARIA

Curb your fears! Place your trust
in God's eternal help.

There upon the shores of Egypt
He procured Moses his life;
once He rendered invincible
the hundred men of Gideon...
Who, trusting in Him, has ever
perished in the hour of extremity?

CHORUS
The sun of a more propitious day...

ZACCARIA
Curb your fears!

CHORUS
... the sun of a more propitious day...

ZACCARIA
Curb your fears!

CHORUS
... the sun of a more propitious day
has perhaps risen for us!

ZACCARIA
Place your trust in God's eternal help.
Who, trusting in Him, has ever
Perished in the hour of extremity?

CHORUS
Has risen for us!

ZACCARIA
Who, trusting in him, *etc.*

CHORUS
Has risen for us! *etc.*

ZACCARIA
Curb your fears! *etc.*

LEVITES
What noise is that?

Ismaele enters, followed by Hebrew soldiers.

ISMAELE
Furiously
the Assyrian king advances;
it seems he defies the whole world
in his haughty arrogance!

ALL
Let us die rather ...

ZACCARIA
Heaven will perhaps
put an end to his wicked endeavours –
the foe shall not rest
upon the ruins of Zion.
to Ismaele, as he hands Fenena into his charge
I commit this first among Assyrian damsels
to your care!

ALL
Have mercy, o Lord!

ZACCARIA
As night before the shining sun,
as dust before the wind,
thou shalt vanish in the hour of trial,
of false god of Baal!
Thou mighty God of Abraham,
descend and fight alongside us.

CHORUS
In Thy servants kindle a breath of fire
that shall deal death...

ZACCARIA
... to the enemy.
In Thy servants kindle a breath of fire
thou shalt deal death to the enemy.

CHORUS
As night before the shining sun,
as dust before the wind,
thou shalt vanish in the hour of trial,
oh false god of Baal!

ZACCARIA
As night before the shining sun, *etc.*

CHORUS
In Thy servants kindle a breath of fire
that shall deal death...

ZACCARIA
... to the enemy.
In Thy servants kind le the breath of fire
that shall deal death to the enemy.

CHORUS
That shall deal death to the enemy, *etc.*

ZACCARIA
That shall deal death to the enemy, *etc.*

All then depart, save Fenena and Ismaele.

ISMAELE
Fenena! Oh my beloved!

FENENA
On the day of vengeance
who ever heard talk of love?

ISMAELE
Unhappy girl! Oh, how much more
beautiful you appear to my eyes now than when,
as Ambassador to Babylon from Judah,
I came! You took me
out of prison at grave risk to yourself,
neither were you disturbed by the cruel
and envious vigilance of your sister,
who pursued me with
a raging passion!

FENENA
Oh, why remind me! I am
a slave here now!

ISMAELE
But I would unlock the way
to freedom for you!

FENENA
Unhappy man! Now you are
betraying a sacred duty!

ISMAELE
Come! You also broke it
for me! Come! My heart
will open to you the way through thousands.

*While he tries to open a secret door, Abigail enters, sword in hand, followed by a band of
Babylonian soldiers disguised in Hebrew attire.*

ABIGAIL
Soldiers, the Temple is taken!

FENENA, ISMAELE
Abigail!

ABIGAIL
contemptuously, to Ismaele
Valiant soldier! Do you know no other arms
save those of love?
to Fenena
In the heart of an Assyrian maid
such a flame seems wicked to me now!
What god will save you? Your tomb
will be your bridal couch ...
The thunderbolt of my revenge
already hangs suspended over your heads!
to Ismaele
I loved you! I would have given
my kingdom and my heart for your heart!
This love is a raging fury,
it can give you life or death.
Oh, if you love me, I might
save your people yet!

ISMAELE
Ah no! I will render you up my life,
but my heart I cannot give;
I am content with my fate,
but cannot, no, cannot fear for myself.

ABIGAIL
I loved you!
This love is a raging fury ...

FENENA
Ah! I call upon Thee now, I recognize Thee now,
true God of Israel:
not for my sake in the hour of trial
be moved by my prayer..

ISMAELE
But let my tears
speak for my people.

ABIGAIL
Oh, if you love me, I might yet
save your people.

FENENA
... only protect my brother
and condemn me to weeping!

ISMAELE
For them alone may my tears,
ah yes, my tears speak,
speak for my people!

Hebrew men and women - with Anna - and Levites enter in a panic.

ANNA, WOMEN
You saw him? Like thunder
he bursts into the thick of the fray!

OLD MEN
Brandishing his bloody sword
he is heading this way!

LEVITES
In vain the soldiers offer their breasts

as shield to the Holy Temple!

WOMEN

Our prayers and our tears
are accursed in the sight of the Everlasting!

WOMEN, LEVITES, OLD MEN
Happy the man who has not lived
to see this day!

Disarmed Hebrew soldiers enter.

SOLDIERS

Behold the King! Upon his steed,
he makes his way to the Temple,
like a whirlwind that brings everywhere
black ruin in its train.

ZACCARIA

entering precipitately
What presumption! He does not
even dismount from his furious charger!

ALL

Calamity, alas! Who now will defend
the Temple of the Lord?

ABIGAIL

advancing with her soldiers
Long live Nebuchadnezzar!

VOICES

without
Hail!

ZACCARIA

Who opened the way to the scoundrels?

ISMAELE

pointing to the disguised Babylonians
False attire!

ABIGAIL

Pride
will not help. The King comes this way.

Babylonian soldiers invade the Temple. Nebuchadnezzar (Nabucco) appears at the threshold on horseback, but is stopped by Zaccaria.

ZACCARIA

What are you about? ... Tremble, madman!
This is the house of God!

NABUCCO

What is that about God?

ZACCARIA

seizing hold of Fenena and raising his dagger to strike
Before
you shall profane the Temple,
this dagger shall slay
your daughter!

NABUCCO

dismounting
I must dissemble, and my wrath
will burst forth all the stronger.
Let the madmen tremble at my anger.
Victims all they now shall fall!
Amid tears and groans wicked Zion
must welter in a sea of blood!

FENENA

Father, have mercy!
I am near unto death for you here!

ISMAELE, ANNA, ZACCARIA, HEBREWS, LEVITES

Thou who at Thy pleasure the hearts of kings
dost turn, o Almighty God, send us Thy aid!

ABIGAIL

You can calm the vehemence of my anger,
new hope that shines before my eyes!

NABUCCO

(Wicked Zion must welter in blood!)

ABIGAIL

That girl who disputes my one and only love with me
will perhaps fall victim to revenge!

ISMAELE, ANNA, ZACCARIA, HEBREWS, LEVITES

Send us Thy aid, Almighty God!
Look down upon Thy children,
who must now prepare themselves for cruel chains!

NABUCCO

(... it must!
Amid tears and groans wicked Zion
must welter in a sea of blood!)

FENENA

Father, have pity - pity!
Father, let pity speak in your heart!
I am at the point of death now because of you

Oh, pardon the victims of misfortune,
and your daughter will be saved!

NABUCCO

Down on your knees, defeated slaves!
I am the conqueror.
I challenged him in battle,
but did your God come?
He is afraid of me; who in the whole wide world,
you fools, will be able to withstand me?

ZACCARIA

again threatening Fenena with his knife
Wicked monster, see! The first victim
I slay will be this girl!
Do you thirst for blood? Let it
spill from your daughter's breast!

NABUCCO

Stop!

ZACCARIA

about to strike
No, she shall die!

Ismaele suddenly wrests the dagger from Zaccaria and frees Fenena, who throws herself into her father's arms.

ISMAELE

Unhappy girl,
love will save you!

NABUCCO

My fury, no longer constrained,
shall make horrible massacre of the conquered.
to the Babylonians
Plunder and burn the Temple;
mercy will be a crime!

ABIGAIL

This accursed people
shall be wiped off the face of the earth.
But will not love that wages war upon me
then perhaps be extinguished?
Though my heart's affection may not,
my hate, at least, shall be satisfied.

ANNA, FENENA, ISMAELE

Unhappy man, fond affection,
ah, has drawn a veil before his/my eyes!
Oh, the love that has set him/me so afire
will cover him/me with shame!
Oh, let not this unhappy man
be accursed, for pity's sake!

NABUCCO

Sack and burn down the Temple;
mercy shall be a crime!
Mothers shall offer their breasts
in vain to shield their children!

ZACCARIA

to Ismaele
Be rejected of men,
traitor to your brethren!
Your accursed name
shall be the shame of every age!

FENENA, ISMAELE

Oh, let not this unhappy man
be accursed, for pity's sake!

NABUCCO

Sack the Temple!

ABIGAIL

But will not love that wages war upon me
then perhaps be extinguished?

ANNA, FENENA, ISMAELE

Oh, let not this unhappy man
be accursed, for pity's sake!

ZACCARIA, HEBREWS

Oh, fly from the accursed one
heaven and earth will cry.

ABIGAIL

Though my heart's affection may not, *etc.*

ANNA, FENENA, ISMAELE

Oh, let not this unhappy man *etc.*

NABUCCO

Sack and burn down the Temple, *etc.*

ZACCARIA, HEBREWS

Oh, fly from the accursed one, *etc.*

ZACCARIA, HEBREWS

Oh, fly from the accursed one heaven and earth will cry.

ABIGAIL

This accursed people, *etc.*

ANNA, FENENA, ISMAELE
Unhappy man, fond affection, etc.

NABUCCO
My fury, no longer constrained, etc.

PART TWO - The Wicked Man or The Unbeliever

*Behold, the whirlwind of the Lord goeth forth: it shall fall upon the head of the wicked.
(Jeremiah)*

SCENE I
An apartment in the royal palace of Babylon

ABIGAIL
entering hastily, with a parchment in her hand
Happy chance I found you, oh fatal document! In his bosom
the King tried to hide you, in order to prove
my shame!... Abigail, issue of slaves!
Very well, let it be so! ... Daughter of Nabucco
such as the Assyrians take me to be,
what am I here? Worse than a slave! The throne
the King confides to the younger Fenena,
whilst he, among his soldiers, bends his mind
to exterminate Judaea! Me he sends from the battlefield here
to observe the loves of others! Oh, wretches all,
and even more deluded! Little do you know
the heart of Abigail!
Upon everyone you will see
my fury fall! Ah yes! Let Fenena fall ...
my pretended father ... the whole realm!
Upon me hurl thyself, oh fatal anger!

I, too, once opened
my heart to happiness!
Everything around me
I heard speak of holy love;
I wept at others' tears,
suffered at others' pain;
ah! to that lost enchantment
who will return me one day?
I wept at others' tears, etc.
The High Priest of Baal, accompanied by soothsayers, now enters.
Who comes here?

HIGH PRIEST
My eyes have witnessed
a terrible sight!

ABIGAIL
Oh! Of what do you speak?

HIGH PRIEST
Fenena is a wicked woman,
she is setting the Hebrews free!

ABIGAIL
Oh!

HIGH PRIEST
Who now can check
this accursed rabble?
Power awaits you ...

ABIGAIL
How's that?

HIGH PRIEST
All is prepared.

HIGH PRIEST, SOOTHSAYERS
We have already spread the rumour abroad
that the King has fallen in battle ...
The people call for you as queen
to save the Assyrian land.
Only a step... fortune is yours.
Be stout of heart!

ABIGAIL
I am with you! Go!...
Oh, faithful subject, this woman
shall not yield to you in stalwart courage!

I now ascend the bloodstained seat
of the golden throne.
From that seat I shall be able
to take my revenge.
That the sceptre is mine by right
all peoples shall see! Ah!
Royal princesses will come hither
to beg favours of the humble slave.

HIGH PRIEST, SOOTHSAYERS
And the vengeance of Baal
will thunder alongside yours!
Yes, alongside yours!

ABIGAIL
I now ascend the bloodstained seat, etc.

HIGH PRIEST, SOOTHSAYERS
And the vengeance of Baal
will thunder alongside yours!

ABIGAIL
... they will beg grace of the humble slave.

SCENE II

A hall in the palace

A door on the right leads to a gallery, one on the left to the regent's apartments. It is night: the hall is faintly lit by a solitary lamp.

ZACCARIA
entering, accompanied by a Levite carrying the Tables of the Law
Come, oh Levite! Give me
the Tables of the Law. The Lord wishes me
to be agent of a new miracle. He sends me as His servant
for the glory of Israel
to tear apart the darkness of an unbeliever.

On the lips of the prophets
Thou hast fulminated, o almighty God!
To Assyria in mighty accents
now speak Thou with my lips!
And with psalms sacred to Thee
every temple shall resound;
over the shattered idols
Thy law shall arise.

Together with the Levite, he enters Fenena's apartments.

LEVITES
What can be wanted? Who can have summoned us
to this dubious place now so late at night?

ISMAELE
entering
The pontiff summons you ...

LEVITES
Ismaele!

ISMAELE
Brethren!

LEVITES
Oh, horror!
Away! Begone!

ISMAELE
I implore your mercy!

LEVITES
Accursed of the Lord!

He who is accursed has no brethren ...
no man on earth vouchsafes him a word!
Harsh lamentation everywhere arises,
the wind carries it to the impious wretch's ears!
On his brow, brilliant as the lightning flash,
shines God's fatal brand!
Poison is prepared for his lips in vain,
vainly the dagger would pierce his heart!

ISMAELE
For love of the living God,
have done with your curses!
Fear is driving me mad!
Oh, death, for pity's sake!

LEVITES
You are accursed of the Lord!
He who is accursed has no brethren, etc.
Accursed of the Lord!

ISMAELE
Ah, cease!
Oh, death, for pity's sake!

Zaccaria enters, accompanied by Fenena, Anna and the Levite.

ANNA
Oh, brethren, forgive!
He saved a Hebrew maid!

LEVITES
Oh, what are you saying!

ZACCARIA
Raise psalms of thanksgiving
to God everlasting! ... It is true!

FENENA
But what a tumult is mounting!

ISMAELE, ZACCARIA, LEVITES
Oh heaven, what can it be?

Abdallo enters, out of breath.

ABDALLO
Royal lady, fly! That cry of ill omen
announces the death of my King!

FENENA
Oh, father!

ABDALLO
Fly! The people now call for Abigail,

and condemn these men here.

FENENA
Why do I tarry longer?
I must not stay here! To the midst of the impious rebels
I will hasten!

ISMAELE, ABDALLO, ZACCARIA, LEVITES
Stay! Oh, what a misfortune!

The High Priest of Baal and Abigail enter, accompanied by soothsayers and a retinue.

HIGH PRIEST
Glory be to Abigail!
Death to the Hebrews!

ABIGAIL
to Fenena
Now render up that crown!

FENENA
I shall die first!

Nabucco, carving himself a way through the confusion with his soldiers, throws himself between Abigail and Fenena, and, seizing the crown, sets it upon his own head.

NABUCCO
to Abigail
Take it from my head!

NABUCCO
followed in order by ABIGAIL, ISMAELE, FENENA and then ZACCARIA, ANNA, ABDALLO, HIGH
PRIEST, LEVITES
(The moment of direst wrath
is fast approaching;
upon their silent faces
terror already falls!
All about the thunderbolts
are poised ready to fall!
A day of mourning and vexation
is preparing!)

NABUCCO
Hear me now! Babylonians,
I throw your god to the ground!
He has rendered you traitors,
he wished to take you from my power.
Yours has fallen, oh foolish Hebrews,
fighting against me.
Hark to my words ...
There is only one god ... your King!

FENENA
Heavens!

HIGH PRIEST
What have I heard!

ZACCARIA, LEVITES
Alas, foolish man!

SOLDIERS
Long live Nabucco!

NABUCCO
Now bow down
your faces to the ground!
Worship me - me, God!

ZACCARIA
Madman! May your insane pride
be brought low ...
God will seize you by the hair of your head,
already he is robbing you of your throne!

NABUCCO
Do you dare so much? Oh, loyal followers,
let this old man be conducted
to the foot of the idol.
He shall perish with his people!

FENENA
A Hebrew - I will die with them!

NABUCCO
furious
You lie! Oh, wretched girl, prostrate yourself
before my image!

FENENA
I have embraced the Hebrew faith!

NABUCCO
seizing her by the arm
Down! Prostrate yourself!
I am king no more, I am God!

There is a crash of thunder and a thunderbolt bursts above Nabucco. Terrified, he feels the crown being lifted from his head by supernatural forces. Dawning madness manifests itself in his every feature.

ALL
See how avenging heaven
has struck the presumptuous man!

NABUCCO
Who is it that takes my royal sceptre from me?
What horrid spectre is pursuing me?
Who seizes me, alack, by the hair?
Who is crushing me? ... Who lays me low?
Oh my daughter! Do you even
not help to support me in my weakness?
Alas, I am surrounded by phantoms...
they having flaming swords of fire!
And the blood-red sky has fallen
upon my head!
Ah, upon my head!
Why, oh why did a tear
start from my eye?
Who will support me? ... I am fainting ...

ZACCARIA
Heaven has
punished the boaster!

ABIGAIL
picking up the crown fallen from Nabucco's head
But the greatness of the people
of Baal shall not be eclipsed!

PART III - The Prophecy

The wild beasts of the desert shall dwell in Babylon, and the owls shall dwell therein. (Jeremiah)

SCENE I
The Hanging Gardens of Babylon

Abigail is seated upon the throne with soothsayers and nobles at her feet. Near a huge golden statue of Baal stands the High Priest surrounded by his followers. Babylonian men, women and soldiers.

NOBLES, SOOTHSAYERS, PEOPLE, SOLDIERS
Assyria is a queen
as powerful as Baal upon earth;
she deals destruction everywhere,
if the stranger challenge her to war.
Now among the joys of peace,
worthy reward of valour,
she will pass her smiling days
in happiness and love.
Now among the joys of peace,
just reward of valour,
she will pass her smiling days
in happiness and love,

HIGH PRIEST
Peerless lady, ruler of
Assyria's fate, hear the prayers
of your faithful subjects. The wicked children of Judah
must all be destroyed, and, first and foremost, that woman,
whom I dare not call your sister ...
She has betrayed Baal.

He presents a decree to Abigail for her signature.

ABIGAIL
in feigned surprise
What are you asking of me! ...
But who comes here?
Nabucco, poorly clothed and with dishevelled beard, now makes his appearance. The guards, with Abdallo at their head, make way respectfully before him.
What presumptuous fellow is it
that breaks my royal interdiction? Conduct the old man
back to his apartments!

NABUCCO
his mind wandering
Who dares raise his voice
in the presence of Nabucco?

ABDALLO
respectfully
Deign to follow me, my lord!

NABUCCO
Whither would you lead me? Let me be!
This is the council chamber... Stay! Do you not see?
They are awaiting me. Why do you
support me? I am weak, it is true,
but woe if anyone should know it! I wish everyone
to think me still strong. Let go of me ... I will
find my seat myself ...
He advances towards the throne and prepares to mount it.
Who is this woman?
Oh, what effrontery!

ABIGAIL
descending from the throne
Withdraw, loyal subjects!

All withdraw.

NABUCCO
Woman, who are you?

ABIGAIL
Custodian
of your throne I came hither!

NABUCCO
You? Of my throne? Ch, imposture!
Were you commanded to do so by me?
Oh, imposture!

ABIGAIL
You lay sick ...The people
cried out against the rebellious Hebrew;
you must set your royal seal
to their decree!
showing him the decree
Death is writ here for the wicked rebels.

NABUCCO
What are you saying?

ABIGAIL
Sign.

NABUCCO
(A thought troubles me!)

ABIGAIL
You refuse?
Arise then, happy Hebrews!
Lift up hymns of glory
to your God!

NABUCCO
What is that I hear!

ABIGAIL
Seized with cowardly dismay,
Nabucco is no longer himself!

NABUCCO
You lie! Let death, death
be dealt to the whole of Israel!
Give me the parchment!

He sets the royal seal upon the parchment and returns it to Abigail.

ABIGAIL
Oh, what good fortune is mine!
The last obstacle is surmounted!

NABUCCO
Oh! ... But what of Fenena?

ABIGAIL
Traitor!
She has given herself to the false God!
Oh, she shall die!

She hands the parchment to two guards, who bear it away at once.

NABUCCO
trying to prevent her
She is my flesh and blood!

ABIGAIL
No one can save her!

NABUCCO
Oh, horror!

ABIGAIL
Another daughter ...

NABUCCO
Bow low,
slave, before your lord!

ABIGAIL
Fool! Here I wished to await you!
Me, a slave?

NABUCCO
searching in his robe for the document, proof of Abigail's low birth
Learn the truth!

ABIGAIL
Drawing forth the document from her own bosom and tearing it in little pieces
Thus do I return, miserable creature,
the lying document to you!

NABUCCO
(Oh, what deep shame afflicts
my grey hairs!
In vain my failing hand
flies to my once-feared sword!
Oh, wretched old man!
You are but the shadow of the King!)

ABIGAIL
(Oh, day of long-coveted glory,
thou art come!)

NABUCCO
(Woe is me!)

ABIGAIL
(The throne is worth far more
than a lost father!)

NABUCCO
(Ah!)

ABIGAIL
(At last the people will fall
at the base slave's feet.)

NABUCCO
(Oh, wretched old man!
I am but the pale shadow of the King!
Oh, wretched old man, etc.)

ABIGAIL
(They will fall at my feet.
Yes, they will fall at my feet,
At last the people will fall, etc.)

There is a sound of trumpets.

NABUCCO
What sound is that?

ABIGAIL
It is the death knell
of the Hebrews you have condemned!

NABUCCO
Ho there, guards! I am betrayed!
Guards, I say!

Several guards present themselves.

ABIGAIL
Oh fool! Do you still oppose me?
These guards I have kept in reserve
solely for you, prisoner!

NABUCCO
Prisoner?

ABIGAIL
Yes - of a slave
who scorns your might!

NABUCCO
Prisoner?

ABIGAIL
Yes!

NABUCCO
Oh, pardon, oh, forgive
a father who is mad!
Oh, give me back my daughter;
do not bereave a father!
Then let the people of Assyria
call you lady and queen!
This old man asks nothing of you
but the life of his heart's delight!

ABIGAIL
Be off! You beg grace of me in vain,
I am unmoved by your belated tears.

NABUCCO
Ah, forgive!

ABIGAIL
Such you were not, presumptuous old man,
when you reserved dishonour for me.
Such were you not, etc,

NABUCCO
Oh, pardon, oh, forgive
a father who is mad!

ABIGAIL
It is useless!

NABUCCO
Oh, give me back my daughter,
do not bereave a father!

ABIGAIL
I am unmoved by your belated tears.
Begone! ... Madman!

NABUCCO
Their queen, their lady
let the people of Assyria acclaim you!
This old man only begs you
for the life of his heart's delight!

ABIGAIL
It will be seen now, if the royal mantle
ill becomes this slave!
It will be seen now, if I besmirch
the grandeur of Assyria!
You beg grace of me in vain.
Ah, no.

NABUCCO
Oh, pardon, oh, forgive
a father who is mad!
Oh, give me back my daughter,
do not bereave a father!

Oh, pardon, I ask nothing of you
but the life of my heart's delight!
Oh, forgive me!

SCENE II

The banks of the Euphrates

HEBREWS

in chains, at forced labour
Fly, thought, on wings of gold;
go settle upon the slopes and the hills,
where, soft and mild, the sweet airs
of our native land smell fragrant!
Greet the banks of the Jordan
and Zion's toppled towers.
Oh, my country so lovely and lost!
Oh, remembrance so dear and so fraught with despair!
Golden harp of the prophetic seers,
why dost thou hang mute upon the willow?
Rekindle our bosom's memories,
and speak of times gone by!
Mindful of the fate of Jerusalem,
either give forth an air of sad lamentation,
or else let the Lord imbue us
with fortitude to bear our sufferings!

ZACCARIA

coming upon the scene
Oh, who is it that weeps? Who is it raises lamentations,
as of timorous women, to the Everlasting?
Oh, rise up, brothers in anguish,
the Lord speaks from my lips.

In the obscurity of the future I see...
Behold, the shameful chains are broken!
The wrath of the Lion of Judah
already falls upon the treacherous sand!

HEBREWS

Oh, happy future!

ZACCARIA

To settle upon the skulls, upon the bones,
hither come the hyenas and the snakes;
midst the dust raised by the wind
a doomed silence shall reign!
The owl alone will spread abroad
its sad lament when evening falls ...
Not a stone will be left to tell the stranger
where once proud Babylon stood!

HEBREWS

Oh, what a fire burns in the old man!
The Lord speaks through his lips!
Yes, the shameful fetters shall be broken,
the courage of Judah is rousing already!

PART IV - The Broken Idol

Baal is confounded, his idols are broken in pieces. (Jeremiah)

SCENE I

*An apartment in the palace
Nabucco is fast asleep in a chair.*

NABUCCO

awakens, panting
These are my limbs! Through the woods
was I not fleeing, panting
like a hunted beast?
Oh, it was a dream ... a terrible dream!
Now, behold the cry of war! My sword, ho!
My charger, that thirsts for battle
as a young girl longs for dancing!
Oh, my valiant troops, Zion,
that proud city, see, towering here ...
She must be ours, let her fall in ashes!

VOICES

off
Fenena!

NABUCCO

From the lips of my faithful subjects
my daughter's name falls!
looking from the balcony
See, she comes running
between ranks of soldiers! Alas! Am I dreaming?
Why are her hands bound in chains? ...
She is weeping!

VOICES

off
To death with Fenena!

Thunder and lightning. Nabucco's face takes on a new expression.

NABUCCO

rushing to the doors one after the other and finding them locked
Oh! I am a prisoner!
Returning to the balcony, he stares fixedly down into the street
God of the Hebrews, forgive me!
falling to his knees

Judah's God - the altar, the Temple
sacred to Thee shall rise again.
Oh, rescue me from this terrible anguish
and I will destroy my rites.
Thou hearest me! ... The wicked wretch's
sick and sinful mind is clearing already! Ah!
True and omnipotent God,
I will worship Thee from henceforth always.
He rises and tries to force open a door.
Open now, fatal door!

ABDALLO
entering, accompanied by soldiers
My lord,
where are you hastening?

NABUCCO
Let me be!

ABDALLO
You wish to go forth,
so that your sick mind may be affronted?

SOLDIERS
We have come here to defend you!

NABUCCO
to Abdallo
What are you saying? My mind
is no longer deranged! Abdallo, my sword,
my sword ...

ABDALLO
joyfully surprised
To regain the throne
here it is, oh King!

NABUCCO
I would save Fenena!

ABDALLO, SOLDIERS
The traitors shall fall, fall
like locusts to the ground!
Through you we shall see the sun
shine upon Assyria once again!

NABUCCO
Follow me, my valiant men!
Day opens to my mind,
I burn with unaccustomed ardour,
I am King of Assyria once more!
At the flashing of this blade
the wicked shall fall, fall to the ground!
We shall see everything again resplendent
in the sunlight of my crown.
Let us go! We shall see everything shine bright
in the gleaming sun of my crown.
Come on, let's go.

ABDALLO, SOLDIERS
Through you we shall see it shine bright,
come, we shall see it shine bright,
the sun above Assyria.
Come on, let's go.

SCENE II
The Hanging Gardens

The High Priest of Baal is standing by a sacrificial altar. Fenena and other Hebrews condemned to die are brought in to the lugubrious strains of a funeral march.

Funeral march

Fenena kneels before Zaccaria.

ZACCARIA
Go, win the palm of martyrdom,
go and win it, oh pure young maid!
You have been too long in exile.
Your country is in heaven! Hasten!

FENENA
Oh, the firmament is opened up!
My soul longs for the Lord ...
He smiles upon me and reveals to me
hundred upon hundred of joys everlasting!
Oh, splendour of the stars, farewell!
God floods me with His holy light!
From this mortal body that, heavy as lead, detains us here,
my soul escapes already and wings its way to heaven!

VOICES
off
Long live Nabucco!

ANNA, FENENA, ISMAELE, ZACCARIA, HEBREWS
What cry is that?

VOICES
off
Long live Nabucco!

HIGH PRIEST
Let the rite be consummated!

NABUCCO

comes running, blood-stained sword in hand, followed by Abdallo and soldiers
Stop, wicked wretches! Soldiers, shatter
the baneful idol, like dust to the ground!

The idol falls of itself and shatters to pieces.

ANNA, FENENA, ISMAELE, ABDALLO, ZACCARIA, HEBREWS
Divine miracle!

NABUCCO

Oh, return once more, Israel,
return to the delights of thy native land!
Let a new Temple be raised to thy God...
He alone is great, mighty is He alone!

ALL

falling to their knees
Great Jehovah ...

FENENA, ISMAELE, NABUCCO, ZACCARIA
... who has not felt Thy might?

ALL

Who is not as dust ...

FENENA, ISMAELE, NABUCCO, ZACCARIA
... in Thy sight?

ZACCARIA

Almighty Jehovah,
who has not felt Thy might?

ALL THE REST

Jehovah!

ZACCARIA

Who is not as dust
in Thy sight?

THE REST

Ah! Great and almighty Jehovah!

FENENA, ISMAELE, NABUCCO, ZACCARIA
Doest Thy rainbow span the firmament?
All things are radiant.

ALL

Dost Thou unleash the thunderbolt?
Man is as naught.

ZACCARIA

Great Jehovah,
who has not felt Thy might?
Who is not as dust
in Thy sight,
in Thy sight?

THE REST

Jehovah, ah, great and almighty Jehovah!

Abigail enters, supported by two soldiers.

NABUCCO

Oh, whom do I see?

ALL

Why does the wretched girl
now drag herself hither?

ABIGAIL

to Fenena

To me ... faint ... dying ...
let your pardon be vouchsafed!
Fenena, I was to blame ...
I am punished for it now!

to Ismaele

Come! These two loved one another ...

to Nabucco

May they place their hopes in you!
Who will now relieve me of the iron
burden of my crime?

to the Hebrews

Ah! You have said, oh people:
"God lifts up the afflicted."

HEBREWS

"God lifts up the afflicted."

ABIGAIL

I implore Thee, oh God, Thee I do revere...
Let me not be damned!

HEBREWS

"God will lift up!"

ABIGAIL

Let me not be damned!
She collapses and dies.

HEBREWS

She is dead!

ZACCARIA

to Nabucco

Servant of Jehovah,
you shall be king of kings.

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