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Verdi Reimagined with Radiance and Power

La Scala, 22.05.2026 [ENA]

At the world famous Teatro alla Scala in Milan, the Verdi's Nabucco or Nabucodonosor returned not merely as a revival but as a jubilant reaffirmation of opera's power to move, unite, and exalt. Under Riccardo Chailly's commanding leadership, this production unfolded as a celebration of Verdi's youthful genius and of La Scala's unique ability to turn repertory into living theatre.

The evening had the rare quality of feeling both historically resonant and vividly immediate, as if the opera were being rediscovered in real time. Chailly's reading was one of the chief pleasures of the performance. He shaped the score with breadth, flexibility, and a remarkable sense of dramatic architecture, allowing the music to breathe while keeping the tension alive. What emerged was not simply a stylish account of early Verdi, but a performance of conviction and sweep, full of nobility in the choral moments and thrilling momentum in the scenes of conflict. The orchestral response from the Teatro alla Scala musicians was incandescent, with playing that combined refinement and visceral force.

One of the evening's greatest achievements was the chorus, which rose to the occasion with overwhelming eloquence. The La Scala Chorus delivered what could only be described as a magnificent performance: supple in dynamics, alert in phrasing, and astonishing in musicality. Their contribution gave the work its emotional and spiritual core, especially in moments such as "Va', pensiero," which became not just the opera's most famous number but its beating heart. The chorus sang with such poise and beauty that the audience was drawn into a collective moment of reflection and uplift.

Anna Netrebko's Abigaille brought glamour, power, and theatrical intelligence to one of Verdi's most formidable roles. She dominated the stage with a magnetic presence, yet what made her performance especially rewarding was the sense of control beneath the drama. Her projection was fearless, her top notes gleaming, and her coloring of the character made Abigaille more than a mere force of nature: she became a tragically human figure, driven by pride, vulnerability, and appetite for recognition. In a role that can easily become a vocal battlefield, Netrebko turned it into a compelling portrait of ambition under pressure.

Luca Salsi's Nabucco was equally distinguished, and perhaps even more moving for its blend of authority and inwardness. He gave the title role real baritonal grandeur, yet he never reduced the character to bluster. Instead, Salsi sang with a warmth and flexibility that made Nabucco's transformation emotionally persuasive. His stage presence was firm, his phrasing eloquent, and his understanding of Verdi's line deeply

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musical. This was a performance that trusted the power of the voice and the intelligence of the text, and it paid rich dividends.

The supporting cast added exceptional value. Francesco Meli brought lyrical polish to Ismaele, while Michele Pertusi offered Zaccaria with gravity and a welcome sense of noble command. Veronica Simeoni made Fenena touching and dignified, giving the role an affecting softness that contrasted beautifully with the surrounding storm. Together, they helped create an ensemble of unusual balance and finish. Alessandro Talevi's staging, in his La Scala debut, deserves praise for serving the opera rather than distracting from it. The production focused attention on the drama's essential conflicts: power, faith, exile, and redemption.

It provided a clear theatrical frame for the singers while leaving space for Verdi's music and the chorus to do the most important work. In an age that often mistakes conceptual clutter for insight, such clarity felt refreshing and artistically generous. What made the evening truly special was its cumulative effect. Every element seemed to reinforce the same message: that Nabucco remains a cornerstone of the repertoire because it speaks directly to the human condition. At La Scala, with Chailly at the helm and a cast of striking vocal distinction, the work shimmered with freshness. The performance was not only successful; it was uplifting in the deepest sense, reminding the audience why opera endures.

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