



Haim Permont (b.1950)

Nabucco Blues

Words by Ronny Someck, Premiere

"Nabucco Blues" was commissioned by the Israel Symphony Orchestra Rishon LeZion for Giuseppe Verdi's bicentenary. Following Permont's request of his friend, poet Ronny Someck, the latter composed a song that relates to the connection between Verdi's oeuvre and the Jews – especially in his opera Nabucco. This is not the first time that such a cooperation has taken place. Ronny Someck assisted greatly in choosing the songs for the work Song of Israel for soprano, choir and orchestra (performed by the Israel Symphony Orchestra Rishon-LeZion under Dan Ettinger in 2008), as well as contributing a song of his own – A Reply to a Question: When will your peace begin?, that was a movement in the piece.

Someck's song, "Nabucco Blues", which combines drama and humour and the is holding a dialogue among others with the Bible and Israeli life (if only through the poet's typical use of the Hebrew language), inspired the composer to write a hybrid work that has references of Blues, Big Band music, quotes from Nabucco, and an attempt to combine humour and drama – all inspired by Ronny Someck's writing.

The composer apologizes to the audience for his less than serious and reverent approach to Verdi as manifested in this work, and hopes that the music will be able to portray the spirit of the text, and together they will create a "whole that is more than the sum of its parts".

Nabucco Blues

Mini Libretto by Ronny Someck

Literal translation

1. Nebuchadnezzar

I Nebuchadnezzar made a vow / to forget that I am a stem / of Queen of Sheba and Solomon. / With my own hands I shall destroy the Temple / that my great grandfather had built in Jerusalem, and I shall lay a stone in / every Jewish slave's hand, / and together we shall build the tower that God demolished in Babylonia.

2. The Slaves

We are the slave who despise the uncalled for muscles / on our arms, hold in our hands stones from the Jerusalem ruins.

Our hearts heaps of burning coals. / Our eyes are burning. And the fire in our hands beating like a whip.

"Where are you haeding?" you ask. / "When we return," we answer, "we shall know where we set, / and where we wept".

3. Verdi

I Giuseppe Verdi saw as a child / saw my mother spinning threads with which, after years I sewed the royal attire / and the robes to cover Avigail's and to Nebuchadnezzar, Pnina's / corporal passion.

With the leftover threads I have woven sacks to cover scars on my body and the slaves' body.