## Elton John, Tim Rice update Aida with pop music

The name's the same. The story line is the same.
And that's where the similari-

ties end. The Fisher Theatre is playing

The Fisher Theatre is playing host to Aida for four weeks.

This isn't the same Aida as the opera written by Giuseppe Verdi in 1871.

It's the Broadway hit Aida written by the successful The Lion King duo — composer Elton John and lyricist Tim Rice.

Rice.
Giuseppe Verdi wrote the
famous opern at the age of 68.
It became only one of several
operns — Nabucco, I Lombardi,
Rigoletto, II Trovatore, La
Traviata, Otello and Falstaff,

Rigoletto, Il Trovatore, La Traviata, Otello and Falstaff, that made Verdis name immortadi in the world of music, He's known today as the greatest of the operatic composers. Verdi based Aida, on an existing story. John and Rice did the same, only with a more modern wist to the age-oid love story. This very interesting to see how a contemporary composer looks at an story from opera in eve terms; said David DiChiera, director of Michigan Opera Theatre. Nothing will replace the masterplece, Aida, just like the musical, Rent, won't replace Puchinnis La

Verdi based Aida, on an existing story. John and Rice did the same, only with a more modern twist to the age-old love story.

Boheme. I hope people will enjoy the new Aida and then when MOT redoes Verdi's opera in a few years from now, they will come and see what a great opera composer did with it. They might just find they enjoyed the traditional opera just as much as they did the newer version."

If Verdi were in the audience of our Aida, I hink he would like this rendition, 'said Jeremy Kushiter, who portrays the male lead, Radames, in the national tour produced by

male lead, Radames, in the national tour produced by Disney Theatrical Productions. "This is a really good show. Even if people aren't fans of Elton John music, they are going to fall in love with it."

The musical Aida opened March 23, 2000 on Broadway. It earned four 2000 Tony

awards — Best Score, Best Lead Actress in a Musical (Heather Headley), Best Scenic Design (by Bob Crowley) and Best Lighting Design (by Natusha Katz). Aida also carned the 2001 Grammy Award for the Best Musical Show Album.

## LOVE STORY

Aida is a story about the Nublan princess, Aida, who is stolen from her country, Nubia, at a time of war between Egypt and her country, Radames, an Egyptian army captain, is aboard the boat that takes Aida and other Nubian captives back to Egypt.

to Egypt.
Once they arrive, he sends
her to his betrothed, Egyptian
princess, Amneris.
Radames has promised to

Radames has promised to marry Amneris.

But like all love stories, things get complicated after Radames and Aida fall in love. The story ends when the lovers Radames and Aida are both buried alive in a tomb beneath the sands of the Egyptian desert, where they can spend an eternity together. an eternity together.
If you're familiar with The

Lion King, you know the burial scene will be handled with kid

gloves.
The John/Rice Aida produc-tion brings a modern bent to

the story. It begins in a 21st century museum, where a man and a woman touring an and a gyptian exhibit find themselves attracted to each other. There are touches of humor added to the dramatic story, such as in the show-stopping number, My Strongest Suil, with its strong Motown songs. Ameneris, played on the tour by Kelli Fournier, sings the comedic song complete with a fashion show unlike any other. Aida mark Fournier's Broadway debut. She's also a veteran of other stage roles and television credits. Paulette Ivory portrays Aida. She hails from Londons West End where she's had a musical career. She's also been in television, in films and is a recording artist.

Kushnier is from Winnepeg, Mantoba, Canada. He originated the role of Ren in Footloose for his Broadway debut and played Roger in the national teuring company of Rent. He also performed in the original Canadan companies of The Who's Tommy and Rent.

Kushnier joined Aida in February 2002. He takes time off from work in musicals to promote his band, whose debut compact disc, In Time, came out in the spring.

What: The John Ellon/Tim Rice musical, performed by the national touring company

When: 8 p.m. Tuesdays through Saturdays; 2 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays, 7:30 p.m. Sundays through Oct. 5. Additional performances at 1 p.m. on Thursday, Sept. 12 and on Wednesday, Oct. 2

Where: Fisher Theatre, 3011 West Grand Boulevard, Detroit Tickets: A through Ticketmaster at (248) 645-6666, by going to the Web site www.ticketmaster.com, at all Ticketmaster outlets and at the Fisher Theater box office. Groups of 20 or more can get special group rates by calling (313) 872-1132

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There is something for everyone in this story, he said.

There is something for everyone in this story, he said. It is definitely a different musical than The Lion King.

Whether one comes to see the costumes or the staging or to hear the music, they will walk out loving the story.

Elton John described Aida in this way: "It's truly a pop musical with spoken dialogue. It has all kinds of recognizable song types with very urban-base rhythm and blues and gospelinspired songs. It's my version

of what Aida should be in a

of what Aida should be in a modern way.

"What makes Aida so interesting to me is that the story is so great, so pertinent," he added.

"It's a beautiful, complex love story, where bigotry and hatred are swept out the window and love, compassion, forgiveness and understanding triumph. In this day and age, I'm a great believer in the human spirit trimphing over evil in any way.

umphing over evil in any way. stauber@oe.homecomm.net (248) 901-2571

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