

NAXOS

**Joseph**  
**CANTELOUBE**  
**Chants d'Auvergne • 2**  
**Chants de France • Triptyque**

**Véronique Gens, Soprano**  
**Orchestre National de Lille • Serge Baudo**



## Joseph Canteloube (1879-1957): Chants d'Auvergne • Chants de France • Triptyque

Most people today know the name of Joseph Canteloube only for his *Chants d'Auvergne*, the traditional folk-songs he gathered over many years on his travels around his native region, and which he went on to harmonize and orchestrate. In fact he composed many other works, in a range of genres, from symphonic and chamber pieces to full-scale operas, of which the most significant are *Le Mas* and *Vercingétorix*, with their premières at the Paris Opéra in 1929 and 1933 respectively. Nevertheless his reputation among music-lovers remains that of a regionalist composer, given his various well-known anthologies of songs from around France, notably *Le Chansonnier alsacien* (1952), *Chansons champenoises*, *Chansons du veillais* (1929), *Chants du Languedoc* (1948), *Chants du Pays Basque* (1949), *Noëls d'Europe* (1954), *Anthologie des chants populaires franco-canadiens* (1953), *Les Chants des terroirs français*, and so on. He also wrote books and articles about the folk-music that inspired him, for example *Les Chants des provinces françaises*, published in 1947. The *Chants d'Auvergne*, a series of five collections published between 1923 and 1954, form the heart of this original creative process.

Canteloube was born in Malaret, in the south of the Auvergne region. "I lived in the depths of the countryside, in a place where the peasants still loved to sing. I began to travel around the farms and villages to listen to their songs, asking old men and women, the herdsmen and shepherds in the pastures, the labourers and harvesters in the fields to sing to me." This then was the start of the composer's painstaking research into the rich seam of Auvergnat folk-music. Like Bartók in Central Europe, he gathered, albeit perhaps less systematically and scientifically than his Hungarian contemporary, songs and melodies, beginning to add harmonies to them and often using them as the basis for short works for voice with piano or orchestra.

In 1906 he left the Auvergne for Paris, where he studied piano with a former pupil of Chopin, before

enrolling at the renowned Schola Cantorum, by then headed by Vincent d'Indy. While at the Schola Canteloube confirmed his taste for "the power and purity of those musical and poetic sources that are the earth and its non-intellectualised emanations, folk-songs and dances, rustic legends and epic tales". D'Indy was a great proponent of this view, known for his attachment to the traditional roots of music and the medieval sources of the repertoire. "I have never sought to undertake some sort of simplistic musicology", wrote Canteloube, "I just want my work to be meaningful, to be that of a musician who wants to celebrate and share with others the music he loves." One of Canteloube's fellow students in Paris was the composer Déodat de Séverac, about whom he wrote a monograph in 1951 and whose aesthetics he also shared: "He advocates a return to one's own land and people, to the light, air, sun and colours of home, not out of any kind of vain pretension, but out of a sense of absolute necessity."

Naturally enough, perhaps, Canteloube's love of his regional musical inheritance developed into nationalism, which in turn led him to an association with the Vichy regime during World War II. A key figure in Pétain's cultural policies, he wrote in the right-wing periodical *L'Action française*, "The songs of the earth need their backdrop, their setting, their accompaniment of nature and fresh air. Only the immaterial art of music, with its moving, impalpable harmonies, timbres and rhythms, can evoke this atmosphere. I would go so far as to say that it has the right to do so, for many peasant songs can be qualified as the purest form of art, in terms of their sentiments and expression, if not their form."

Canteloube's artistic beliefs might clearly be labelled reactionary in comparison with those of some of his contemporaries. He also wrote, "At a time of over-developed intellectualism, we are witnessing a proliferation of the strangest, most outlandish and contradictory doctrines; the spread of the most

preposterous and ridiculous trends... Today audiences are presented with “things” that are called music but that have none of the characteristics which music dictionaries would agree are required in order for music to be defined as such. These “things” are preceded by explanatory circulars, written in quasi-scientific jargon, which most of the time is incomprehensible and unbelievably pretentious.”

Canteloube’s harmonizations and orchestrations of folk-songs are of a quite remarkably high quality. He justified his treatment of the originals as follows, “Though the peasants sing without accompaniment, this is not reason enough to imitate their practice. When they sing, working in the fields, bringing in the harvest, their song is accompanied by something beyond the ken of those who wish to remain “scientific”. It can only be heard by artists and poets, and, alas, not even by all of them. It comes from nature herself, from the earth, and peasant song cannot be separated from it...”

It is from this imaginary accompaniment, therefore, that Canteloube draws his inspiration, conjuring up a range of different harmonic and instrumental atmospheres to complement these songs, which in themselves are in many cases relatively rudimentary as far as structure and melodic line are concerned. Through the nine *Chants d’Auvergne* and six *Chants de France* included here there emerge worlds rich in poetry. In *Lo Fiolairé* (The Spinner), for example, the mystery and drama of the orchestration magically intensify the mystery and melancholy of the original melody. In *Obal, din lo coumbèlo* (Far off, in the valley), an impressionistic orchestra is entrusted with expanding the landscape... Very different in feel are *Tè,*

*l’co, tè* (Run, dog, run!) which uses onomatopoeia and animal imitations, as does the delightful *Hé! Beyla-z-y dau fé!* (Hey! Give him some hay!), a clever variation on the braying of a donkey.

This elaborate orchestral aesthetic, which one might call *paysagiste* (landscapist) – midway between the impressionism of a Debussy and the sweeping lyrical and rustic frescoes of a d’Indy – has much in common with that of the film score (think for instance of the soundtracks composed by Milhaud during the same period). While the voice provides the tone and melodic contours, the orchestra is responsible for adding all the expressive substance, accompanying and harmonizing the voice, of course, but above all giving a dreamlike response to the words and providing a lyrical commentary on these folk-songs.

The *Triptyque*, three songs for voice and orchestra setting poems by Roger Frêne, written in 1914, meanwhile, is a long way from folk-music. The poet’s words, reminiscent in a way of the work of symbolist poet Henri de Régnier (lyrical and sentimental alexandrines, a mix of neo-classical nobility and slight mawkishness...), inspired Canteloube to write three beautiful settings, their harmonies similar to those of Chausson (French modality combined with Wagnerian chromaticism). The skill with which he sets the poetry and his talent for creating intricate rhythms and eerie orchestral atmospheres are clear evidence of his stature as a great musician.

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Orchestre National de Lille  
Translation: Susannah Howe



## Véronique Gens

Having dominated the international baroque scene over the last years, the French soprano Véronique Gens today is also regarded as one of the world's finest Mozart singers. Recent appearances include Donna Elvira in *Don Giovanni* at the Teatro del Liceu in Barcelona, and Vitellia in *La clemenza di Tito* at the Semper Oper in Dresden. She has also appeared in *Così fan tutte* and as Donna Elvira at the Madrid Teatro Real, in *Pelléas et Mélisande* at the Berlin Deutsche Oper, in *La finta giardiniera* in Salzburg, and in Lully's *Alceste* at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées. In concert she has appeared in concerts and recitals in Amsterdam, Dresden, Copenhagen, Luxembourg, Salzburg, Lisbon, at the Wigmore Hall in London, at the Lincoln Centre in New York and at the Tanglewood Festival. Chosen Singer of the Year 1999 by the French Victoires de la Musique, she has over sixty recordings to her credit, with a repertoire ranging from Purcell, Handel and Scarlatti to Berlioz and Ravel.

## Orchestre National de Lille

Région Nord / Pas de Calais

Founded in 1976 on the initiative of the regional council for the Nord / Pas-de-Calais and with government support, the Orchestre National de Lille assumes an ambitious artistic programme aiming at the widest possible audience, performing symphonic repertoire, giving prominence to contemporary work and promoting young talent, cultural activities and educational projects. Following the leadership of its Director, Jean-Claude Casadesus, international conductors and soloists join the orchestra in taking music to wherever it may be received, in France and abroad, performing for the more than two hundred urban communities of the Région Nord / Pas-de-Calais. An outstanding ambassador for its region and for French culture throughout four continents and thirty countries, the orchestra has established itself as one of the leading orchestras in France, and is regularly featured in broadcasts on radio and television. Its recordings for Naxos include discs of music by Berlioz, Chausson, Dukas, Milhaud and Canteloube

## Serge Baudo

Joining the Paris Opéra Orchestra at the age of 22 as percussionist and pianist, Serge Baudo has worked as a composer with Joseph Kosma, Maurice Jarre and Louis Malle. In 1959 he turned to a career as a conductor, heading the Orchestra de la Radio de Nice. In 1962 he was invited by Herbert von Karajan to conduct *Pelléas et Mélisande* at La Scala, Milan, as well as several concerts in Berlin. In 1962 he was appointed permanent conductor of the Paris Opéra, then of the Orchestre de Paris, from its foundation in 1967, together with Charles Munch. He was musical director of the Orchestre National de Lyon until 1989. As a guest conductor Serge Baudo has appeared with the Berlin Philharmonic, the London Philharmonia, the Vienna Symphony Orchestra, the NHK Orchestra in Tokyo, the Metropolitan Opera, the Vienna State Opera, the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, the Paris Opéra Bastille, and the Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires, among others. Serge Baudo is now musical director of the Prague Symphony Orchestra, and is the founder of the Festival Berlioz in Lyons.



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Since his death in 1957, Canteloube has become widely known for his many folk-song arrangements, particularly the enchanting *Chants d'Auvergne*. This second Canteloube disc featuring Véronique Gens, herself native to the Auvergne region, completes the Naxos cycle of the complete *Chants d'Auvergne* accompanied by full orchestra. It also includes two rarely performed works: excerpts from *Chants de France*, another anthology of folk-songs subsequently harmonised and orchestrated, and the *Triptyque*, three exquisite settings worthy of being ranked alongside the greatest songs by Chausson and Ravel. Volume 1 of the *Chants d'Auvergne* is available on Naxos 8.557491.



## Joseph CANTELOUBE

(1879-1957)

### Chants d'Auvergne • 2

#### Chants d'Auvergne (Selection)

	<b>23:19</b>	
1 La Pastrouletta è lou chibalie	1:44	
2 Lo Fiolairé	2:44	
3 Pour l'enfant	2:56	
4 Chut, chut	2:09	
5 Pastorale	4:29	
6 Obal, din lo coumbèlo	5:18	
7 Postouro, sé tu m'aymo	1:30	
8 Tè, l'co tè	0:43	
9 Hé! Beyla-z-y dau fé!	1:45	

#### Triptyque

10	Offrande à l'été	5:10
11	Lunaire	4:00
12	Hymne dans l'aurore	6:54

#### Chants de France (Selection)

	<b>17:35</b>	
13	Auprès de ma blonde	3:20
14	Où irai-je me plaindre?	3:18
15	Au près de la rose	1:23
16	Délicieuses cimes	3:29
17	Réveillez-vous!	3:38
18	D'où venez-vous fillette?	2:27

### Véronique Gens, Soprano

### Orchestre National de Lille-Région Nord/Pas-de Calais • Serge Baudo

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