



MASSENET

Visions

(Symphonic Poem)

Brumaire • Phèdre
(Overtures)

Espada (Suite)

Les Érinnyes
(Incidental Music)

Royal Scottish
National Orchestra

Jean-Luc

TINGAUD



Jules Massenet (1842–1912)

Visions

Jules Massenet, a principal composer of the Belle Époque, is famous for his 27 operas of mellifluous lyricism, especially *Manon* (1884), *Werther* (1892) and *Thaïs* (1894). But he also wrote ballets, orchestral suites, incidental music, and some 200 songs. Some of his non-operatic music presented in this collection represents an important aspect of his work with his trusted publishers Georges Hartmann (1843–1900) and Henri Heugel (1844–1916). Both encouraged these commissions that were performed in the famous Parisian orchestral concerts directed by Jules-Étienne Pasdeloup (1819–1887) and Édouard Colonne (1838–1910), and later at the Monte Carlo Opera where, from 1902, the composer often worked.

Brumaire – Overture (1900)

Ouverture pour le drame de Éd. Noël, (1848–1926)

Édouard Noël, poet and critic, wrote the play *Brumaire* to commemorate the centenary of the *coup d'état* of 18 Brumaire (9 November 1799) in which the Directory was replaced by the Consulate under Napoleon. Massenet provided an *Overture* for the piece, performed at the Concerts Colonne on 10 March 1901. Bright, brilliant chords lead into a fanfare. A serious minor-key melody launches itself, upwards and yearning, moving into a powerful development, a stormy outburst ending in sudden silence. A procession with side drum and trumpets announces *La Marseillaise*, followed by solemn brass and chiming bell with the addition of beneficent harp arpeggios. A march-like theme in the major key rings triumphal, building into a swift coda with fanfares and hints of *La Marseillaise*.

Visions (1891)

Poème-symphonique

Visions was written for Massenet's new publisher Henri Heugel in November 1891. It is a tone poem modelled on the famous *Les Préludes* (1848) by Liszt. Besides the

standard orchestra (with woodwinds in threes), the work calls for an offstage group comprising soprano, solo violin, harp, harmonium and the unusual 'electrophone'. The great dramas of life are soothed and consoled by mystical visions of a better world.

Soft chords create a meditative mood, until a serene plateau is reached. A troubled development launches, with strong brass passages and high strings. All is quietened, and a dialogue between the upper strings and the powerful bass ensues. All falls away into silence. A harp initiates a violin solo, a remote and ethereal dialogue between the two, the mood sustained by the harmonium and the electrophone (playing middle C, B natural and B flat). The cor anglais launches a more troubled sequence, with fleeting woodwind, a minor-keyed development of the opening subject, adding a sense of drama. This sustained symphonic movement resolves into chords punctuated by the tam-tam. Reflection follows, with echoes of the ethereal second subject, before the harp and violin return, this time with a distant soprano vocalise, soothing and mysterious, the rising and falling harp leading to an abrupt cadence.

Espada – Suite (1908)

Ballet in one act

Gabriel Astruc, a concert organiser, pressed Massenet to write a work for Monaco. The 1908 Monte Carlo season opened with Ponchielli's *La Gioconda* and Massenet's third ballet *Espada* on 13 February.

The ballet is another instance of Massenet's perennial interest in the Iberian peninsula. The scene is a *posada* near the bullring. The pretty dancer Anitra is applauded by a delirious public. She loves the toreador Alvéar and offers to dance for him alone, but he is not interested. He prefers just to drift, kissing the girls and teasing the women. Anitra reads the cards and predicts grave danger for Alvéar if he does not consent to be loved. So Alvéar kisses her. Trumpets announce the bullfight. Alvéar gives Anitra a rendezvous for that

evening. She tries to hold him back, afflicted with terrible presentiments, but Alvéar goes into the ring. Anitra is dejected, but the crowd insist that she dance. Toreadors arrive with the news that Alvéar has been killed. Nobody seems to care: they insist Anitra goes on dancing, which she does until she drops dead.

Minkus's *Don Quixote* (1869) and Bizet's *Carmen* (1875) developed the sustained use of Iberian colour and style in music. Massenet made his own contribution in the famous ballet sequence in *Le Cid* (1885) with seven different regional Spanish dances. *Espada* is also drenched in Iberian sunshine, presenting a bolero, a fandango and the slow waltz miming the bullfight.

I. Panaderos: The rhythmic harp is taken over by the orchestra, an impetuous passionate melody over harp chords. A second idea on the woodwinds emerges, before the launch of a third string melody, with the woodwind leading into a decisive coda.

II. Boléro: A full brilliant orchestral introduction transmutes into a descending motif over reiterated full strumming chords. A second subject presents a rising passionate melody. The opening theme is resumed before a new idea on the brass and woodwind leads into an accelerated coda.

III. Toréador et andalouse: A string figure builds tension before the extended melody is floated over a rhythmic bass. There is a sudden change of tempo and mood, and in the middle section a reflective Andalusian episode before the resumption of the Toreador music. A fervent yearning intensification of the opening theme suggests a tragic note before being swept aside by the relentless rhythm of the *Andalouse*.

IV. La Danse de la Mercédès: Gentle Iberian rhythms initiate the airy string melody of the dance, before the entry of the fuller orchestra. The darkening of the rhythmic figure by the bassoons and timpani leads back into the augmented first subject, now extremely passionate and dramatic, moving precipitately into the decisive coda.

Les Érinnyes – Incidental Music (1873/76)

Les Érinnyes. Tragédie antique in two parts

Félix Duquesnel requested the incidental music for the play *Les Érinnyes* ('The Furies') by Charles-Marie-René Leconte de Lisle (1818–1894). It opened at the Odéon on 6 January 1873, based on Aeschylus's *Oresteia*. Act I presents the Furies before the palace of Pelops, Agamemnon's return to Argos after the Trojan War, and his murder by his queen and her paramour. In Act II, Elektra mourns her father's death, and is surprised and overjoyed at the return of her brother Orestes, who avenges his father's death by slaying Aegisthus and Clytemnestra. Elektra flees in horror, and the Furies close in on Orestes.

The 1873 version (conducted by Colonne) was for 36 string players, with kettle drums and three trombones for the Furies. The melodrama accompanying Elektra's pouring of the libations over her father's grave attracted special attention with its poignant dolorous muted cello solo. Louis Gallet soon set words to this bittersweet melody which became famous as the *Invocation* (*Ô doux printemps d'autrefois*). The incidental music was expanded for the full orchestra, with melodramas and some ballet numbers, for the Théâtre-Lyrique de la Gaité on 15 May 1876.

I. Prélude: Deep solemn strings unfold a processional theme, hymnic in mood and style (a portrait of Elektra). There is a sudden shattering *fortissimo*, with crashing cymbals, tam-tam and trombones (for the Furies) leading into a dramatic exchange, punctuated increasingly by the brassy percussion. The solemn opening theme is resumed.

II. Scène religieuse, Invocation: An arpeggiated harp chord immediately launches into a serene, yearning melody for the strings and winds. Another harp chord leads into the famous cello theme that accompanies Elektra's obsequies for her murdered father. The first section now resumes its peaceful flow to the cadence.

III. Entr'acte: This begins with a hesitant figure in the strings, an ostinato over which a placid theme is slowly

unfolded. The melody has a brief middle section, before a gently decorated reprise of the opening idea.

IV. Divertissement: Allegro: A sequence of brilliant chords heralds a bright woodwind melody affecting an Antique style. String figures present another variant on the melody, before the extended and accelerated coda.

IV. Divertissement: Andante: A sustained oboe figure sees a long thoughtful woodwind melody unfold, immediately repeated on the cello. Harp chords initiate a reprise. The woodwinds muse in variation, this leading peacefully to the coda.

IV. Divertissement: Allegro très décidé: (Originally the *Air de danse des Saturnales*). The piece launches into a sharp, bright frenetic melody (representing the Bacchic festivities). A lyrical middle section with prominent harp and strings becomes more impassioned, and the mood quickens in excitement and tempo to a breathless coda.

Phèdre – Overture (1873)

Massenet completed his *Overture* in late December 1873, and Colonne performed it on 22 February 1874. Jean Racine (1639–1699), the great Neo-Classical dramatist, explored a profound sense of destiny, presenting love as a motivating, destructive power, dissolving the personality. In the absence of her royal husband Thésée, Phèdre declares her love for Hippolyte, Thésée's son from a previous marriage.

The *Overture* begins with a melancholy introduction, an *andante* in G minor that recalls the Classical style and mood of Mendelssohn's *Antigone Overture*. Then follows an impulsive *allegro*, suggesting the furious amorousness of Phèdre in the passion for her stepson. This is impetuously launched in the major, a full bright melody, suddenly pulled up in a passage of fragmentary commentary. A second broad theme, on the lower strings, begins a questioning idea that is expanded into full symphonic sound. The various themes are explored in interaction in the development, passing through a *fugato* section into wistful flute and clarinet solos. The recapitulation presents the first subject highlighted in passionate writing for the strings, culminating in brassy figures and a sudden return to the quiet introductory motif for the lower strings.

Robert Ignatius Letellier

Royal Scottish National Orchestra



The Royal Scottish National Orchestra (RSNO) is one of Europe's leading symphony orchestras. Formed in 1891 as the Scottish Orchestra, the company was awarded Royal Patronage in 1977. Many renowned conductors have contributed to its success, including Sir John Barbirolli, Walter Susskind, Sir Alexander Gibson, Neeme Järvi, Walter Weller, Alexander Lazarev and Stéphane Denève. The Orchestra's artistic team is led by Danish conductor Thomas Søndergård, who was appointed RSNO music director in 2018. The Orchestra performs across Scotland and appears regularly at the Edinburgh International Festival, the BBC Proms at London's Royal Albert Hall and the St Magnus Festival, Orkney, in addition to international tours. The RSNO has a worldwide reputation for the quality of its recordings, receiving two Diapason d'Or de l'année awards for symphonic music (Denève/Roussel 2007; Denève/Debussy 2012) and eight GRAMMY Awards nominations. Over 200 releases are available, including Thomas Søndergård conducting Strauss, the complete symphonies of Sibelius (Gibson) and Prokofiev (Järvi) and the major orchestral works of Debussy (Denève). The RSNO is a National Performing Arts Company, supported by the Scottish Government.

www.rsno.org.uk

Jean-Luc Tingaud



Photo: Jean-Baptiste Millot

Jean-Luc Tingaud was born in 1969 and studied with the French composer and conductor Manuel Rosenthal. Notable opera engagements have included *Pénélope* and *Le Roi malgré lui* (Wexford Festival Opera), *Roméo et Juliette* (Arena di Verona), *La Damnation de Faust* (Reims), *Pelléas et Mélisande* and *Carmen* (Toulon), *Faust* (Macerata), *The Turn of the Screw* (Lille), *Dialogues des Carmélites*, *La Bohème* and *Madama Butterfly* (Pittsburgh), *La Fille du régiment* (Madrid), *Pelléas et Mélisande* (Prague National Theatre), *The Pearl Fishers* (English National Opera), Spontini's *Fernand Cortez* (Florence) and Donizetti's *L'Ange de Nisida* (Donizetti Opera Festival, Bergamo). Orchestras he has conducted include the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, the English Chamber Orchestra, the Ulster Orchestra, the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, the Filarmonica Arturo Toscanini, the orchestras of the Teatro Carlo Felice, Genoa and the Teatro Massimo, Palermo, the Warsaw and Kraków Philharmonics, the Orchestre National des Pays de la Loire, the Orchestre National de Lyon, the Orchestre National de Lorraine and the Tokyo Philharmonic Orchestra. His recordings include *Sapho* (Wexford), *Werther* (Martina Franca), *La Voix humaine* (Compiègne) and *Le Siège de Corinthe* (Bad Wildbad) and, most recently for Naxos, works by Dukas (8.573296), Bizet (8.573344), d'Indy (8.573522), Poulenc (8.573739) and Franck (8.573955).

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Jules Massenet is famous for his series of 27 operas that include *Manon* and *Werther*, but he also wrote a significant portfolio of orchestral music which include ballets, orchestral suites and incidental music. The works presented here show his versatility and lyricism and include the one-act ballet *Espada*, saturated in Iberian colour and beguiling rhythms, as well as *Les Érinnyes* ('The Furies') with a vivid sequence of contrasting themes. Modelled after Liszt, *Visions* is a *poème-symphonique* of both ethereal and dramatic power.



Jules MASSENET (1842–1912)

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|----|----------------------------------------------------|-------|
| 1 | Brumaire – Overture (1900) | 10:05 |
| 2 | Visions – Symphonic Poem (1891) | 14:05 |
| | Poppy Shotts, Soprano • Maya Iwabuchi, Violin solo | |
| | Espada – Suite (1908) | 10:13 |
| 3 | I. Panaderos | 1:53 |
| 4 | II. Boléro | 2:01 |
| 5 | III. Toréador et andalouse | 3:43 |
| 6 | IV. La Danse de la Mercédès | 2:36 |
| | Les Érinnyes – Incidental Music (1876 version) | 30:58 |
| 7 | I. Prélude | 5:05 |
| 8 | II. Scène religieuse, Invocation* | 7:35 |
| 9 | III. Entr'acte | 4:45 |
| 10 | IV. Divertissement: Allegro | 5:09 |
| 11 | IV. Divertissement: Andante | 3:33 |
| 12 | IV. Divertissement: Allegro très décidé | 4:48 |
| | *Aleksei Kiseliov, Cello solo | |
| 13 | Phèdre – Overture (1873) | 9:20 |

Royal Scottish National Orchestra Jean-Luc Tingaud

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Cover: *Mlle. Victorine in the Costume of an Espada* (1862) by Édouard Manet (1832–1883)

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