

NAXOS

OPERA CLASSICS

DDD

DEBUSSY

Pelléas et Mélisande

Delunsch • Théruef

Arapian • Bacquier • Jossoud • Golfier • Doumène

Orchestre National de Lille-Région Nord/Pas-de-Calais

Jean-Claude Casadesus



Claude Debussy (1862 - 1918)

Pelléas et Mélisande

Opera in 5 Acts

Libretto: Maurice Maeterlinck

Mélisande	Mireille Delunsch, Soprano
Pelléas, Arkel's grandson	Gérard Thérue, Baritone
Golaud, Arkel's grandson	Armand Arapian, Baritone
Arkel, King of Allemonde	Gabriel Bacquier, Bass
Geneviève, mother of Pelleas and Golaud	Hélène Jossoud, Mezzo-soprano
Yniold, Golaud's son	Françoise Golfier, Soprano
Le médecin, le berger	Jean-Jacques Doumène, Bass
(A Physician, A Shepherd)	

Chœur Régional Nord/Pas-de-Calais

Eric Deltour, Chorus-master

Orchestre National de Lille-Région Nord/Pas-de-Calais

Jean-Claude Casadesus, Conductor

Assistant to Jean-Claude Casadesus : Pierre-Michel Durand

Musical studies : Irène Aïtoff

Vocal coach : Neil Beardmore

Stage production by Pier'Alli for the Opéra de Lille

Production Opéra de Lille, Artistic Director: Ricardo Szwarcer

CD 1

Act I

- | | | |
|---|---|---------|
| 1 | Scene i | (12:55) |
| | A forest / Une forêt | |
| 2 | Scene ii | (10:15) |
| | A room in the castle / Un appartement dans le château | |

③	Scene iii	(6:50)
	In front of the castle / Devant le château	

Act II

④	Scene i	(10:04)
	A fountain in the park / Une fontaine dans le parc	
⑤	Scene ii	(14:33)
	A room in the castle / Un appartement dans le château	
⑥	Scene iii	(4:35)
	Outside a cave / Devant une grotte	

CD 2

Act III

①	Scene i	(14:22)
	One of the towers of the castle / Une des tours du château	
②	Scene ii	(3:52)
	The castle vaults / Les souterrains du château	
③	Scene iii	(18:15)
	A terrace at the entrance to the vaults / Une terrasse au sortir des souterrains	
④	Scene iv	(10:28)
	In front of the castle / Devant le château	

CD 3

Act IV

①	Scene i	(3:02)
	A room in the castle / Un appartement dans le château	
②	Scene ii	(17:21)
③	Scenes iii and iv	(18:41)
	A fountain in the park / Une fontaine dans le parc	

Act V

④	A chamber in the castle / Une chambre dans le château	(24:54)
---	---	---------

Claude Debussy was born in 1862, the son of a shop-keeper who was later to turn his hand to other activities, with varying success. He started piano lessons at the age of seven and continued two years later, improbably enough, with Verlaine's mother-in-law, who claimed to have been a pupil of Chopin. In 1872 he entered the Conservatoire, where he abandoned the plan of becoming a virtuoso pianist, turning his principal attention to composition. In 1880, at the age of eighteen, he was employed by Tchaikovsky's patroness Nadezhda von Meck as tutor to her children and house-musician. On his return to the Conservatoire he entered the class of Bizet's friend Ernest Guiraid and in 1884 won the Prix de Rome, the following year reluctantly taking up obligatory residence, according to the terms of the prize, at the Villa Medici in Rome, where he met Liszt. By 1887 he was back in Paris, winning his first significant success in 1900 with *Nocturnes* and going on, two years later, to a succès de scandale with his opera *Pelléas et Mélisande*, based on the play by Maurice Maeterlinck, a work that established his position as a composer of importance.

Debussy's personal life brought some unhappiness in his first marriage in 1899 to a mannequin, Lily Texier, after a liaison of some seven years with Gabrielle Dupont and a brief engagement in 1894 to the singer Thérèse Roger. His association from 1903 with Emma Bardac, the wife of a banker and an amateur singer, led eventually in 1908 to their marriage. In the summer of 1904 he had abandoned his wife, moving into an apartment with Emma Bardac, and the subsequent attempt at suicide by the former, who had shared with him the difficulties of his early career, alienated a number of his friends. His final years were darkened by the war and by cancer, the cause of his death in March 1918, when he left unfinished a planned series of chamber music works, only three of which had been completed.

As a composer Debussy must be regarded as one of the most important and influential figures of the earlier twentieth century. His musical language suggested new paths to be further explored, while his poetic and sensitive use of the orchestra and of keyboard textures opened still more possibilities. His opera *Pelléas et Mélisande* and his songs demonstrated a deep understanding of poetic

language, revealed by his music, expressed in terms that never overstated or exaggerated.

The Belgian playwright Maurice Maeterlinck was a close contemporary of Debussy, born in Ghent in 1862. He occupies an important position in the development of the Belgian and French Symbolist movements and, after starting his career as a poet, established himself in the theatre with a series of plays, set in a mysterious dream-world of mystic implication, haunted by the inexorability of fate. Debussy had sought permission to set Maeterlinck's play *La Princesse Maleine*, staged in Paris in 1890 and considered by Satie as a possible opera. Maeterlinck refused Debussy his permission but three months after the latter had seen the single Paris performance of *Pelléas et Mélisande* at the Théâtre des Bouffes-Parisiens on 17th May 1893, he allowed the composer to set the work to music, later demanding a principal rôle for his then mistress Georgette Leblanc. Debussy's refusal to engage her as the first Mélisande, a rôle taken by Mary Garden at the first staging of the work by the Paris Opéra-Comique on 30th April 1902, led to a quarrel and to Maeterlinck's expressed disapproval of the opera.

Debussy's opera *Pelléas et Mélisande* was written over a period of years, starting at once, in 1893, with the fourth act love scene between Pelléas and Mélisande. Work continued in the following years, but not in order, with the final composition of the second act in the summer of 1895. The opera was accepted in 1898 by the Opéra-Comique, leading Debussy to work on a vocal score and a full orchestral score, but after this, during rehearsals for the first staging in 1902 and again for subsequent productions in Brussels and in London, Debussy made a number of changes, not fully represented in the second published edition. These included the lengthening of orchestral interludes between acts and scenes, at the request of the first conductor, André Messager, for very practical purposes of scene-changes. The present recording takes account of some of the further changes noted by Debussy in his own copy of the score.

In writing his opera, Debussy made various necessary changes in the original play, with the approval of Maeterlinck. Principally these changes involved the opening scene, where maidservants were seen attempting vainly to wash away

y avoir quelque chose entre vous. Vous êtes plus âgé qu'elle ; il suffira de vous l'avoir dit... Évitez-la autant que possible ; mais sans affectation, d'ailleurs, sans affectation...

(Ils sortent)

SCÈNE 4 (Devant le château)

Entrent Golaud et le petit Yniold.

GOLAUD

- 4 Viens, nous allons nous asseoir ici, Yniold ; viens sur mes genoux ; nous verrons d'ici ce qui se passe dans la forêt. Je ne te vois plus du tout depuis quelque temps. Tu m'abandonnes aussi ; tu es toujours chez petite mère... Tiens, nous sommes tout juste assis sous les fenêtres de petite mère. Elle fait peut-être sa prière du soir en ce moment... Mais dis-moi, Yniold, elle est souvent avec ton oncle Pelléas, n'est-ce pas ?

YNIOLD

Oui, oui ; toujours, petit père ; quand vous n'êtes pas là.

GOLAUD

Ah!... Tiens, quelqu'un passe avec une lanterne dans le jardin! Mais on m'a dit qu'ils ne s'aimaient pas... Il paraît qu'ils se querellent souvent... Non ? Est-ce vrai ?

YNIOLD

Oui, oui, c'est vrai.

GOLAUD

Oui ? Ah! Ah! Mais à propos de quoi se querellent-ils ?

YNIOLD

A propos de la porte.

GOLAUD

Comment! A propos de la porte! Qu'est-ce que tu racontes là ?

YNIOLD

Parce qu'elle ne peut pas être ouverte.

GOLAUD

Qui ne veut pas qu'elle soit ouverte ? Voyons, pourquoi se querellent-ils ?

YNIOLD

Je ne sais pas, petit père ; à propos de la lumière.

GOLAUD

Je ne te parle pas de la lumière ; je te parle de la porte... Ne mets pas ainsi la main dans la bouche... Voyons...

YNIOLD

Petit père! Petit père!... Je ne le ferai plus.
(Il pleure)

GOLAUD

Voyons ; pourquoi pleures-tu maintenant ? Qu'est-il arrivé ?

YNIOLD

Oh! Oh! Petit père! Vous m'avez fait mal...

