

230th season
Tuesday 16 October 2012

Claude Debussy
PELLÉAS ET MÉLISANDE

Lyric drama in five acts

Performed in French

With synchronised supertitles in Russian

The libretto is based on the eponymous play
by Maurice Maeterlinck (with cuts)

Musical Director and Conductor – **Valery GERGIEV**

Conductor – **Christian KNAPP**

Credits:

Stage Director – **Daniel Kramer**

Set Designer – **Giles Cadle**

Costume Designer – **Michael Krass**

Assistant Stage Director and Choreographer – **Elaine Tyler-Hall**

Lighting Designer – **Peter Mumford**

Musical Preparation – **Natalia Mordashova**

French Language Coach – **Xenia Klimenko**

Principal Chorus Master – **Andrei Petrenko**

Assistant Director – **Irina Kosheleva**

Concert Masters – **Oxana Klevtsova, Zhanna Trutko, Dmitry Yefimov**

Chorus Masters – **Pavel Petrenko, Leonid Teplyakov**

The performance features the edition G. RICORDI & CO.,
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Partner of the Mariinsky Theatre



Stage Manager: **Anna Shishkina**

*Performance running time: 3 hours
There will be one interval*

CAST:

<i>Arkel, King of Allemonde</i>	Oleg Sychov
<i>Geneviève, mother of Golaud and Pelléas</i>	Elena Vitman
<i>Pelléas, grandson of Arkel</i>	Vladimir Moroz
<i>Golaud, grandson of Arkel</i>	Yevgeny Ulanov
<i>Mélisande</i>	Irina Mataeva
<i>Yniold, the young son of Golaud</i>	Platon Cherkasov
<i>Doctor</i>	Timur Abdikeyev

Servants – extras

SYNOPSIS

ACT I

A dark forest in a distant land. A young woman flees her past. Prince Golaud, hunting a trail of blood, discovers the runaway princess, Mélisande, and is taken by her beauty and her royal blood. Golaud takes Mélisande out of the forest.

Back home, on the depleted island of Allemonde, Geneviève pleads with King Arkel to allow her son, Prince Golaud, to return home with his new wife, Mélisande. Arkel laments Golaud's failure to wed another whose union would have ended the war that cripples his nation. But in his old age and encroaching blindness, Arkel leaves the decision to destiny and grants permission for Golaud to return home. Pelléas, the bastard child of Geneviève, enters and begs King Arkel to let him leave the island to visit a dying friend. Arkel refuses, reminding Pelléas that his presence is needed at home to prepare his brother's return and to care for his own dying father upstairs. The lamps are lit for Golaud's return.

On a cliff atop the island, Geneviève shows Mélisande the unending darkened forests of Allemonde which she has endured for forty years and

the glistening sea far beyond. Pelléas joins them. Pelléas and Mélisande stare out in excitement as the boat which brought Mélisande ushers away some lucky few. Geneviève asks Pelléas to escort Mélisande home. Pelléas informs Mélisande that he is leaving tomorrow.

ACT II

Deep in the forest, Pelléas leads Mélisande to an old well which hitherto cured the blind – until King Arkel himself began to go blind. Mélisande basks in the too little seen sunlight. Mélisande plays a dangerous game of catch with her wedding ring over the bottomless well and drops the ring into the well at the ominous stroke of noon. Pelléas urges Mélisande to tell Golaud the truth.

Golaud storms about his bedroom. While hunting, precisely at the stroke of noon, he was tossed from his horse. Mélisande asks Golaud to take her away from the island; she senses something awful that she cannot explain. Golaud, taking her hands to comfort her, notices the wedding ring is missing. Mélisande lies and says that she lost it in a cave by the sea. Golaud explodes and forces Mélisande to go hunting for it immediately – with Pelléas.

At the mouth of the cave, Pelléas and Mélisande stand in terror. Pelléas forces Mélisande to enter so she can lie truthfully to Golaud about the place she “lost” the ring. The moon emerges and reveals three beggars sleeping in the cave. Mélisande is terrified and runs home.

ACT III

Mélisande, now locked in her tower, contemplates her own escape. Pelléas interrupts and again tells Mélisande that he is leaving tomorrow. Mélisande opens herself to Pelléas as best she can; Pelléas binds himself in Mélisande’s metaphoric love. Golaud discovers the two and chides them both for playing like children.

Golaud takes Pelléas on a journey to smell the stench of death up-close.

Released from Golaud’s threatening grip, Pelléas basks in the sunlight. Golaud tells Pelléas that Mélisande is now pregnant and that he must therefore keep a subtle distance – so as not to upset her. Pelléas defies his half-brother’s wishes and goes to Mélisande in her tower.

Beneath her window, Golaud questions his son, Yniold, about Pelléas and Mélisande’s behaviour. But Yniold does not tell his father what he wants to hear. A light in the tower turns on and Golaud lifts Yniold high in the air to spy on Pelléas and Mélisande. Yniold sees Pelléas and Mélisande sitting, staring into the light.

ACT IV

King Arkel throws a party to celebrate the recovery of Pelléas' sick father and the coming birth of Golaud and Mélisande's baby. Hope is returning to Allemonde. During the party, Pelléas finds Mélisande in another room and plans a last secret meeting at the well before his hopeful departure tomorrow.

Arkel enters and showers Mélisande with gifts of love for the arrival of her baby. Golaud enters, blood on his forehead, and confirms Pelléas' departure the next day. Mélisande tries to care for Golaud but he explodes and accuses Mélisande of infidelity, throwing her to the ground and dragging her about. Arkel rises to control Golaud and to protect Mélisande. Arkel tries to comfort Mélisande. Yniold tries to free his toy which is wedged between two rocks. He tries to enlist Mélisande's help; but she is distracted by her own grief and guilt. She plays a game with Yniold who sees a flock of sheep being led to the slaughter. Yniold runs off in terror.

Pelléas prepares his last meeting at the well with Mélisande. Mélisande arrives, scared to enter the darkness with Pelléas. But once she does, they declare their love for one another. The gates of the palace close early. Golaud appears. The lovers kiss. Golaud murders his half-brother, Pelléas. Mélisande flees for her life.

ACT V

The family gather in Mélisande's room as she fights for her life. She awakes with no recollection of the murder, nor of her premature baby's birth. Golaud asks to be alone with Mélisande and instantly obsesses over the true nature of her love for Pelléas. Arkel re-enters to protect Mélisande.

Mélisande is introduced to her baby girl, says "I pity her" and quietly dies. Arkel leads the family out of the room. Now it is her daughter's turn.

Daniel Kramer