



THE ROYAL OPERA

Music Director
SIR ANTONIO PAPPANO
Director of Opera
OLIVER MEARS

555: VERLAINE EN PRISON

Writer and Director **ELEANOR BURKE**
Writer and Countertenor **LOGAN LOPEZ GONZALEZ**
Actor **ANNA SIDERIS**
Pianist **STELLA MARIE LORENZ**

The Jette Parker Artists Programme is generously supported by
OAK FOUNDATION

APPROXIMATE TIMINGS

The performance will last about 1 hour, without an interval.

GUIDANCE

Content suitable for all. We cannot admit children under the age of 5

JETTE PARKER ARTISTS PROGRAMME

Head of Programme **ELAINE KIDD**
Artistic Director **DAVID GOWLAND**
Administrative, Company and Events Manager **THOMAS MARSHALL**
Producer **CATHERINE CHIBNALL**
Senior Project Co-Ordinator and Access Lead **ELLIOTT HENRY**
Administrative Assistant and Project Co-ordinator **ISOBEL LAWSON**

4 MARCH 2024 AT 1PM

PROGRAMME

Acte de Renonciation (1873) – **ARTHUR RIMBAUD (1854-1891)**

Prison – **GABRIEL FAURÉ (1854-1924)**

Romance sans paroles – **FELIX MENDELSSOHN (1809-1847)**

Soleils couchants (1866) – **PAUL VERLAINE (1844-1896)**

Mandoline – **GABRIEL FAURÉ**

Art Poétique (1874) – **PAUL VERLAINE**

Clair de Lune – **GABRIEL FAURÉ**

En Sourdine – **REYNALDO HAHN (1874-1947)**

C'est que moi seule ai connu un Verlaine tout différent de ce qu'il était avec les autres – *Mémoires de ma vie* – **MATHILDE MAUTÉ (1843-1914)**

À la fin des vacances 1871 – *Nouvelles Notes sur Rimbaud* – **PAUL VERLAINE**

La mer est plus belle que les cathédrales – **CLAUDE DEBUSSY (1862-1918)**

Billet à Mathilde, juillet 1872 – *Mémoires de ma vie* – **MATHILDE MAUTÉ**

Green – **GABRIEL FAURÉ**

L'échelonnement des haies moutonne à l'infini – **CLAUDE DEBUSSY**

La déchirure: Soir du 8 juillet 1873 - Rimbaud débarque à Bruxelles – *Verlaine emprisonné* – **J.P. GUÉO (1955-), G. LHÉRITIER (1948-)**

Spleen – **GABRIEL FAURÉ**

Romance sans paroles – **FELIX MENDELSSOHN**

Lettre de Paul Verlaine à Rimbaud: 3 juillet 1873 – **PAUL VERLAINE**

Deux coups de feu' – *Verlaine emprisonné* – **J.P. GUÉO, G. LHÉRITIER**

Un grand sommeil noir – **EDGARD VARÈSE (1883-1965)**

Un matin, le bon Directeur lui-même entra dans sa cellule – *Mes prisons* – **PAUL VERLAINE**

Ô triste, triste était mon âme – **LÉO FERRÉ (1916-1993)**

Chanson d'automne – **REYNALDO HAHN**

Une poignée de main – *Mes prisons* – **PAUL VERLAINE**

Soleils couchants – *Paysages tristes* – **DÉODAT DE SÉVERAC (1872-1921)**

Il faut, voyez vous, nous pardonner les choses – **PAUL VERLAINE**

L'heure exquise – **REYNALDO HAHN**

Colloque sentimental – **PAUL VERLAINE**

Colloque sentimental – **LÉO FERRÉ**

TRANSLATIONS

Acte de Renonciation' (1873) – **ARTHUR RIMBAUD**

I, Arthur Rimbaud, 19 years old, writer, usually residing at Charleville, (Ardennes-France), declare, to pay homage to the truth that: on Thursday 10th around 2 a.m., when Mr Paul Verlaine, in his mother's room, shot me with a revolver, which wounded me slightly in the left wrist, Mr Verlaine was in such a state of drunkenness that he was unaware of his action. I am entirely convinced that when he bought this weapon, Mr Verlaine had no hostile intent against me, and that there was no criminal premeditation when he locked the door on us.

The cause of Mr Verlaine's drunkenness was actually his frustration with Mrs. Verlaine, his wife. I further declare that I gladly pardon Mr Verlaine from any charges- criminal, correctional or civil and understand that I renounce today withdraws the benefits of any lawsuit that is or may be brought by the public prosecutor against Mr Verlaine for the crime in question.

Prison – **GABRIEL FAURÉ**

The sky is, above the roof,
So blue, so calm!
A tree, above the roof,
Rocks its palm.
The bell, in the visible sky,
Gently chimes.
A bird on the visible tree
Sings its complaint.
My God, my God, life is there,
Simple and tranquil.
This peaceful murmur
Comes from the city.
- What have you done, oh you there
Crying endlessly,
Tell me, what have you done, you there,
With your youth?

Soleils couchants (1866) – **PAUL VERLAINE**

A weakened dawn
Pours through the fields
The melancholy
Of setting suns.
Melancholy
Lulls with sweet songs
My heart that forgets
In the setting suns.
And strange dreams,

Like suns
Setting on the shores,
Vermilion ghosts,
Unfurl endlessly,
Unfurl, alike
To grand suns
Setting on the shores.

Mandoline – **GABRIEL FAURÉ**

The brave serenaders
And the lovely listeners
Share sweet words
Under singing branches.
Tirsis is present, so is Aminte,
And Clitandre, quite tedious,
And Damis, who for many a cruel maiden
Writes many a tender song.
Their short silky jackets,
Their long trailing dresses,
Their grace, their happiness,
And their gentle blue shadows
Spin wildly in the delight
Of a gray and rosy moon,
And the mandolin continues to play
In the trembling breeze.

Art Poétique (1874) – **PAUL VERLAINE**

Music before anything else,
For which irregular verse is better suited
More vague and more soluble in air,
Without anything cumbersome or affected.

You must never
Choose words without some
misunderstanding:
Nothing is dearest than the grey song
Where the indecisive joins the precise.

It's beautiful eyes behind veils,
It's the bright day shivering at noon,
It's the blue jumble of clear stars,
Through the cooling autumn sky

Because we want Nuance still,
Not Color, only nuance!
Oh! only nuance binds
Dream to dream and flute to horn!"

[...]Take eloquence and break its neck!
[...]Let your verse be the good adventure
Scattered in the crisp morning wind
That smells like mint and thyme...
And everything else is just "literature"

Clair de Lune – **GABRIEL FAURÉ**

Your soul is a cherished landscape,
Enchanted by masks and revelers,
Playing the lute and dancing, nearly
Melancholy beneath their whimsical disguises.

All while singing in a minor key,
Of triumphant love and opportune life,
They don't seem to believe in their happiness,
And their song blends with the moonlight,

With the calm, sad, and beautiful moonlight,
That makes birds dream in the trees
And brings tears of ecstasy to the fountains,
The tall fountains slender among the marbles.

Mémoires de ma vie – **MATHILDE MAUTÉ**

Only I knew a Verlaine quite different from the one he was with others: Verlaine in love, transformed both morally and physically. Before my eyes, his appearance changed, and he stopped being unattractive. Morally, the transformation was almost complete. During our fourteen months of engagement and the first year of our marriage, Verlaine was gentle, tender, affectionate, and happy; yes, happy, with a positive, healthy, and contagious demeanour [...]

En Sourdine – **REYNALDO HAHN**

Calm in the half-light
That the tall branches create,
Let's immerse our love
In this profound silence.

Let's blend our souls, our hearts,
And our ecstatic senses,

Among the gentle longings
Of pines and strawberry trees.

Close your eyes halfway,
Cross your arms on your chest,
And from your asleep heart,
Banish any plan forever.

Let's be convinced
By the soothing and gentle breath
That comes, at your feet, to ripple
The waves of the russet lawns.

And when, solemn, the evening
Of the black oaks descends,
Voice of our despair,
The nightingale will sing.

Mémoires de ma vie – **MATHILDE MAUTÉ**

[...] Verlaine quit drinking, so much so that those who knew him before our marriage thought he had never had a drinking problem. Neither my parents nor I suspected that he used to be a heavy drinker. Unfortunately, we learned this too late because, after these two good years, Verlaine turned bad, cowardly, hypocritical, with a dark and calculated malice. He used his intelligence to cause harm, and I can say that nobody knew a Verlaine like him. This lasted from October 1871 to July 1872, the time of his departure. A year of paradise, a year of hell and constant suffering, that was my two years of marriage. What happened? What were the causes of my misfortune, of my shattered life, and later, of Verlaine's sad and unstable existence? Rimbaud! Absinthe!

Nouvelles Notes sur Rimbaud – **PAUL VERLAINE**

At the end of the holidays in 1871, after spending time in the countryside in Pas-de-Calais with relatives, I received a letter from Arthur Rimbaud upon returning to Paris. In the letter were 'Les Effarés', 'les Premières Communions', and other poems that struck me with their extreme originality—how can I put it without sounding clichéd? The poems were remarkably beautiful. I had imagined the poet to look quite different for some reason. Instead, he had a child's head, chubby and fresh, on a tall, bony body that seemed awkward, like an adolescent still growing. His voice had an Ardennes accent, almost like a local dialect, with the jerky intonation of the Mue region.

La mer est plus belle que les cathédrales – **CLAUDE DEBUSSY**

The sea is more beautiful
Than the cathedrals,
Faithful nurse,
Lullaby of moans,
The sea on which
The Virgin Mary prays!
It has all the gifts,
Terrible and sweet.

I hear its pardons
Roaring its anger.
This vastness
Is not stubborn.

Oh! So patient,
Even when mean!
A friendly breath haunts
The wave, and sings to us:
"You, without hope,
Die without suffering!"
And then, under the skies
That laugh clearer,
It has blue, pink, gray, and green airs...
More beautiful than all,
Better than us!

Billet à Mathilde', juillet 1872 – *Mémoires de ma vie* – **MATHILDE MAUTÉ**

My poor Mathilde, don't be sad, don't weep, I'm having a bad dream I'll come back one day.

Green – **GABRIEL FAURÉ**

Here are fruits, flowers, leaves, and branches,
And here is my heart that beats only for you.
Please don't hurt it with your two white hands,
Let this little gift be sweet to your beautiful eyes.

I come covered in dew,
Chilled by the morning wind on my forehead.
Let my tiredness rest at your feet,
Dreaming of moments that will make it feel better.

Let my head rest on your young chest,
Still echoing with your last kisses;
Let it calm down from the good storm,
And let me sleep a little while you rest.

Verlaine emprisonné – **J.P. GUÉO, G. LHÉRITIER**

Your life with Mathilde was a constant alcoholic psychodrama. On May 9, 1872, things almost took a deadly turn when you tried to set fire to her hair and then attempted to stab her. Although she survived with a bump on her forehead and a split lip, your relationship reached a breaking point. Faced with a deadlock, you chose flight as a way out, perhaps hoping to avoid the worst. Leaving your suffering wife behind, you made your way to the station on July 7, 1872. This marked the beginning of your first escape with Rimbaud, first to Belgium and then to London. However, it turned out to be a futile escape, a reckless rush. Travel, "voilage", constant movement, dizziness, the speed of the railway, "waggonage", "paquebottage" [...]

L'échelonnement des haies moutonneà l'infini – **CLAUDE DEBUSSY**

The tiered hedges
Roll endlessly, a sea
Clear in the clear mist
That smells of young berries.
Trees and mills
Are light on the tender green
Where agile foals
Play and stretch.
In this haziness of a Sunday,
Ewes also play,
As gentle as their white wool.
A moment ago, the waves surged,
Rolled in spirals,
Bells echoed like flutes
In the sky like milk.

Verlaine emprisonné – **J.P. GUÉO, G. LHÉRITIER**

[...] the storms with Arthur were as intense as those with Mathilde. Eventually, your wife joined you in Brussels, and you shared the same bed. Rimbaud was temporarily expelled. Later, Mathilde stopped receiving desperate letters from you; instead, she received insults and discovered the letters Rimbaud had sent.

In London with Arthur, your days shifted from infamous drunken bouts to knife fights. You burned through Aunt Louise's inheritance, and money started to run out. Sooner or later, you would become a universal widower, losing both Mathilde and Arthur. When Arthur didn't run away from you, it was you who abandoned him, leading to the last stage in Brussels in July 1873.

Spleen – **GABRIEL FAURÉ**

It cries in my heart
Like it's raining on the town.
What is this languor
That penetrates my heart?
Oh, sweet sound of the rain,
On the ground and on the roofs!
For a bored heart,

Oh, the song of the rain!
It cries without reason
In my nauseated heart.
What! No betrayal?
My grief is without reason.
It's truly the worst pain,
To not know why,
Without love and without hate,
My heart is so troubled.

It has blue, pink, gray, and green airs...
More beautiful than all,
Better than us!

Lettre de Paul Verlaine à Rimbaud: 3 juillet 1873 – **PAUL VERLAINE**

My friend,

I don't know if you will be still in London when this letter arrives to you. Yet I want you to know that you must, basically, understand, finally, that I absolutely had to go, that this violent life with all these scenes without any reason than your whim couldn't the hell suit me anymore!
But, as I loved you immensely (Evil be to him who evil thinks) I want to confirm to you too that, if in three days, I'm not with my wife, in perfect conditions, I will blow my brains out. Three days in hotel, a revolver, that adds up... the reason for my "stinginess" of this afternoon. You should forgive me. - As it is all too likely that I must do that last stupid thing, I at least will do it as a good fool. - My last thought, my friend, will be for you, you who called me all the worst things possible this afternoon, and who I didn't want to join because I had to "pop off", - FINALLY!

Do you want me to kiss you as I die?

Your poor

P. Verlaine.

P.S We will not see each other anymore. If my wife comes, you will receive my address, and I hope you will write to me.

Verlaine emprisonné – **J.P. GUÉO, G. LHÉRITIER**

Evening of July 8, 1873: Rimbaud arrives in Brussels. He shares a room rented in your name at Courtrai Hotel, while your mother occupies an adjoining room. July 9, 1873: Arthur and you spend the day drinking, hanging out and bickering. He wants to go back to Paris, where Mathilde is staying, even though you still hope to save your marriage. July 10, 1873: a sunny and humid day. At dawn, the air seemed to vibrate in the heat. You bought a six-shot, seven-millimeter revolver at the Montigny armory located in the passage Saint-Hubert. It cost you 23 francs. Then, after having copiously washed down your purchase, mixing drinks, you went back to the hotel. It was the hottest time of the day: "This is for you, for me, for everyone", you shouted, showing your weapon. You go out for an aperitif even though you were already staggering. The meal was no less watered. The absinthe was flowing freely. Back in your room, you shot your friend, shouting: "Here, I will teach you to want to leave". Before asking your mother, who had meanwhile come running, to unload the weapon that was on your temple.

Un grand sommeil noir – **EDGARD VARÈSE**

A great black sleep
Falls upon my life:
Sleep, all hope,
Sleep, all desire!
I see nothing anymore,
I lose the memory
Of good and evil...
Oh, the sad story!
I am a cradle
Swung by a hand
In the hollow of a vault:
Silence, silence!

Mes prisons – **PAUL VERLAINE**

One morning the good Director [of the prison] himself entered my cell. "My poor friend," he said to me, "I bring bad news. Have courage. Read!" It was a sheet of stamped paper, the copy of the divorce judgement, served by the Civil Court of the Seine. Although it was deserved in principle, it was no less hard in reality! I fell in tears on my miserable back on my pitiful bed.

Ô triste, triste était mon âme – **LÉO FERRÉ**

Oh, my soul was so sad,
Because, because of a woman.
I couldn't find comfort,
Even though my heart had gone.
Though my heart, though my soul,
Had distanced from that woman.
I couldn't console myself,
Even though my heart had gone.
My too-sensitive heart asked,
Could this proud, sad exile be?
Is it possible, even if it were,
This proud, sad exile?
My soul replied to my heart,
Do I know what this trap wants?
To be present, yet exiled,
Even though far away.

Chanson d'automne – **REYNALDO HAHN**

The long sobs
Of autumn violins
Wound my heart
With a lingering
Sadness.

Feeling suffocated
And pale, when
The hour strikes,
I recall
Old days
And I cry;
And I drift away
With the harsh wind
That takes me
Here and there,
Like a
Dead leaf.

Mes prisons – **PAUL VERLAINE**

A handshake and a pat on the shoulder from the Director [of the prison] gave me a little courage—and, an hour or two after this scene, did I not find myself saying to the prison guard to ask the Chaplain to come and talk to me? He came and I asked him for a catechism. He immediately gave me Gaume's 'Catechism of Perseverance'

Soleils couchants – *Paysages tristes* – **DÉODAT DE SÉVERAC**

A weakened dawn
Pours through the fields
The melancholy
Of setting suns.
Melancholy
Lulls with sweet songs
My heart that forgets
In the setting suns.
And strange dreams,
Like suns
Setting on the shores,
Vermilion ghosts,
Unfurl endlessly,
Unfurl, alike
To grand suns
Setting on the shores.

Il faut, voyez vous, nous pardonner les choses – **PAUL VERLAINE**

We need forgiveness for things, you see,
that's how we will be very happy,
and if our lives have moments of gloom,
at least we'll be sobbing women together, will we not?
Sister souls that we are, I hope we can mix into our muddled
vows
The puerile sweetness of walking far away from women and men,
Having newly forgotten what exiles us.

Let's be children, let's be two girls
enamoured of nothing, astonished by everything,
Who grow pale under chaste arbours
Without even knowing they are forgiven.

L'heure exquise – **REYNALDO HAHN**

The white moon Gleams in the woods;
From every branch
There comes a voice
Beneath the boughs...
O my beloved.
The pool reflects,
Deep mirror,
The silhouette
Of the black willow
Where the wind is weeping...

Let us dream, it is the hour.
A vast and tender Consolation
Seems to fall
From the sky
The moon illumines...

Exquisite hour.

Verlaine emprisonné – **J.P. GUÉO, G. LHÉRITIER**

'Colloque sentimental', 'Fêtes gallantes'. 1869.

Arthur had not entered your life. We read your verses Paul
Verlaine. Did they predict your meeting?

In the ancient park, deserted and frozen,
Two shapes have just passed by
Their eyes are dead and their lips are lifeless,
And their words can hardly be heard.

Colloque sentimental – **LÉO FERRÉ**

In the ancient park, deserted and frozen,
Two shapes have just passed by.
Their eyes are dead and their lips are lifeless,
And their words can hardly be heard.
In the ancient park, deserted and frozen,
Two spectres were recalling the past.
—Do you remember our past rapture?
—What do you want me to remember?
—Does your heart still surge at my very name?
Do you still see my soul when you dream?—No.
—Ah, the beautiful days of inexpressible bliss
When our lips met!—It may have been so.
—How blue the sky, how hopes ran high!
—Hope has fled, vanquished, to the black sky.
So they walked on through the wild grasses,
And only the night heard their words.

THE ROYAL OPERA

Patron **THE FORMER PRINCE OF WALES**

Music Director **SIR ANTONIO PAPPANO** cvo

Director of Opera **OLIVER MEARS**

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