

## Massenet (1)

Written by bluesever

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## Massenet

### 1. Le Cid (Flv)

520 MB



Roberto Alagna (Rodrigue), Béatrice Uria-Monzon (Chimène), Kimy Mc Laren (L'Infante), Francesco Ellero D'Artegna (Don Diègue). l'Opéra de Marseille, cond. J. Lacombe 2011

Jules Massenet's *Le Cid* represented a turning point for the composer as he realized that grand opera was not his most effective medium. The sixth opera of his to have been performed, it is based on a drama by the seventeenth century French playwright Pierre Corneille. It relates the story of the eleventh century Spanish military hero El Cid, Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar. With a libretto representing the combined efforts of three writers (Edouard Blau, Adolphe d'Ennery, and Louis Gallet), the work was premiered at the Paris Opéra on November 30, 1885. The theatre provided a cast of preeminent Meyerbeer specialists, among them the period's most accomplished lyric/dramatic tenor singing the French repertory, Jean de Reszke (Polish) and the two finest basses of the time, his brother Edouard and the elegant Pol Plançon. The de Reszke brothers had enjoyed success in Massenet's previous grand opera, *Hérodiade*. They, together with Plançon sang at the Metropolitan Opera premiere of *Le Cid* in 1897, but the opera was performed there only seven times. Massenet wrote only one more grand opera (*Le Roi de Lehare*), choosing instead to devote himself to more intimate subjects.

The opera boasts an imposing overture whose emphatic effect is unlike the lush, somewhat feverish quality of Massenet's customary orchestral writing. Some dramatic scenes work well, for example Rodrigue's knighthood investiture where he addresses his sword in the broad and

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assertive aria, "O noble lame étincelante." The agitated music accompanying the duel between Rodrigue and Gormas yields effectively to a solemn requiem intoned by the mourners who gather. The protracted springtime ballet episode amply meets the requirement that grand opera include both dance and spectacle. Based upon the dances of Spain's provinces, Massenet's introduction of the "Castillane," "Andalouse," "Aragonaise," "Aubade," "Catalane," "Madrilène," and "Navarraise" reveal his exceptional gifts as an orchestrator in music lush, brilliant, and exotic. Both Chimène's lament, "Pleurez, pleurez, mes yeux," a lyric aria close to Massenet's best standards and the Rodrigue/Chimène duet that follows are finely crafted. Before battle, Rodrigue sings the most celebrated piece from the score, the moving invocation "O souverain, o juge, o père," an aria encountered not infrequently in concerts and recorded recitals.

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