

“Connais-tu le pays?” (Do you know that fine land?) duet, Wilhelm and Mignon.
Ambroise Thomas, libretto by Jules Barbier and Michel Carré, Act I, 1866.

SYNOPSIS: Wilhelm, a student traveling through Europe to “find himself,” meets Mignon, who had been kidnapped as a child by gypsies in Italy. She helps the wandering band survive by dancing for the public. When she refuses to perform, Wilhelm comes to her rescue and plans to purchase her from her captors. He tries to find out more about her and she tells him of her dim childhood memories.

WILHELM

Dis-moi de quelles plages lointaines, ton âme a gardé le souvenir, et si ma main brisait tes chaînes vers quel pays aimé tu voudrais revenir?	Tell me of what faraway shores a mem'ry remains in your heart; and if my hand could set you free, to what beloved land would you wish to return?
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MIGNON

Connais-tu le pays où fleurit l'oranger? Le pays des fruits d'or, et des roses vermeilles? Où la brise est plus douce, et l'oiseau plus léger; où dans toute saison butinent les abeilles où rayonne et sourit comme un bienfait de Dieu un eternal printemps sous un ciel toujours bleu? Hélas! Que je ne puis-je te suivre vers ce rivage heureux d'où le sort m'exila! C'est là; c'est là que je voudrais vivre, again, aimer, aimer et mourir. C'est là que je voudrais vivre, c'est là, oui, c'est là..	Do you know that fine land where the orange tree blooms? The land of golden fruit, and of scarlet-hued roses; where the breeze is more calm, and the bird soars more lightly; where all through the whole year the bees are making honey; where the sun shines and smiles like a gift sent from God in an eternal spring 'neath an ever-blue sky? Alas! If we could both go there, back to that happy place where they stole me away! It's there; it's there that I want to live to love, to love and to end my days. It's there that I want to live again It's there, yes, it's there.
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Connais-tu la maison
où l'on m'attend là-bas?
La salle aux lambris d'or
où des hommes de marbre

Do you know that big house
where they're waiting for me?
The room with golden walls
where those men made of marble

m'appellent dans la nuit
en me tendant les bras.
Et la cour où l'on danse
à l'ombre d'un grand arbre;
et le lac transparent
où glissent sur les eaux,
mille bateaux légers,
pareils à des oiseaux?
Hélas! Que je ne puis-je te suivre
vers ce rivage heureux
d'où le sort m'exila!
C'est là; c'est là que je voudrais vivre,
again,
aimer, aimer et mourir.
C'est là que je voudrais vivre,
c'est là, oui, c'est là..

call to me in the night
with their arms open wide.
And the yard where you dance
with shady trees around you;
and the crystal clear lake
where, on the water, glide
one thousand graceful boats,
as if they all were birds?
Alas! If we could both go there,
back to that happy place
where they stole me away!
It's there; it's there that I want to live
to love, to love and to end my days.
It's there that I want to live again
It's there, yes, it's there.

---From a course for Lifelong Learners at UC Santa Cruz, "Bel canto, the French Connection,"
2011