

“Mes longs cheveux” (My long hair) PELLÉAS ET MÉLISANDE, Act III, 1902; music by Claude Debussy, libretto by Maurice Maeterlinck, based on his play by the same name.

SYNOPSIS

Debussy’s impressionistic opera is set in a legendary land in a faraway time. An unknown princess, Mélisande, is found in the forest by Golaud, who eventually marries her. His brother, Pelléas, falls in love with Mélisande; she is also attracted to him. In this scene, Mélisande is at the tower window, brushing her long hair. Pelléas appears beneath her window and as she reaches out her hand to him, her hair falls and covers his face.

MÉLISANDE

Mes longs cheveux descendent
jusqu’au seuil de la tour.
Mes cheveux vous attendent
tout le long de la tour,
Et tout le long du jour.
Et tout le long du jour.
Saint Daniel et Saint Michel,
Saint Michel et Saint Raphaël,
Je suis née un dimanche,
un dimanche à midi.

My long hair reaches down
to the base of the tower.
My hair waits for you
all the length of the tower,
and all the length of the day,
and all the length of the day.
Saint Daniel and Saint Michael,
Saint Michael and Saint Raphael,
I was born on a Sunday,
on a Sunday at noon.

From “Bel canto: The French Connection,” a course for Lifelong Learners at UC Santa Cruz,
©2010, Miriam Ellis



