

“Je crois entendre encore” (I think once more I hear) LES PÊCHEURS DE PERLES
(The Pearl Fishermen) Act I, Georges Bizet; libretto by Eugène Cormon and Michel
Carré, 1863.

SYNOPSIS

The story is set in Ceylon. After a long absence, Nadir returns to his native fishing village where Zurga, his lifelong friend, is now the chief. In the past, both men loved Léila, a priestess who had taken a vow of chastity. Having once quarreled over her, they are now reconciled as friends. A heavily veiled priestess (Léila) arrives at the village to offer prayers for the fishermen’s safety. Nadir ‘s passion is revived when he hears the unknown woman’s voice.

NADIR

Je crois entendre encore,
caché sous les palmiers,
sa voix tendre et sonore
comme un chant de ramiers
Ô, nuit enchanteresse,
divin ravissement,
Ô, souvenir charmant,
folle ivresse,, doux rêve !

I think once more I hear
far off, beneath the palms,
her tender voice ring out,
like the song of forest birds.
Oh, night, filled with enchantment,
divine, beguiling time,
oh, charming memory sublime,
wanton ecstasy, sweet dream of love!

Aux clartés des étoiles,
je crois encor la voir
entr’ouvrir ses longs voiles
aux vents tièdes du soir.
Ô, nuit enchanteresse,
divin ravissement.
Ô, souvenir charmant,
folle ivresse, doux rêve !

Under shining starlit beams,
I think I see her again,
as she opens her long veil,
to the balmy evening breeze.
Oh, night, filled with enchantment,
divine, beguiling time,
oh, charming memory sublime,
wanton ecstasy, sweet dream of love!

Charmant souvenir !
Ô souvenir charmant!

Oh, charming memory!
Oh, charming memory!

--From “Bel canto Masters, “ a course for Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at UC
Santa Cruz., ©2012, Miriam Ellis