



## STREAMING THE FIRST CENTURY

**SESSION 2: Parlez-vous français?**

**FEATURED CAST AND LIBRETTO EXCERPTS: *Thaïs*, 1976**

San Francisco Opera premiere

### **THAÏS**

Music by Jules Massenet

Libretto by Louis Gallet, based on the novel by Anatole France

War Memorial Opera House

September 10, 1976 (Broadcast)

#### CAST

Athanaël Sherrill Milnes

Thaïs Beverly Sills

Conductor John Pritchard

Production Tito Capobianco

**Clip 1:** The monk Athanaël arrives the city of his birth, Alexandria. He criticizes its impurity and sin.

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| ATHANAËL                                      | ATHANAËL                                       |
| Voilà donc la terrible cite                   | Behold the fearsome city:                      |
| Alexandrie, où je suis né dans le péche;      | Alexandria, where I was born of sin;           |
| L'air brillant où j'ai respire                | The shimmering air, where I once breathed      |
| L'affreux parfum de la luxure!                | The wretched perfume of lust.                  |
| Voilà la mer voluptueuse                      | There is the swollen sea                       |
| Où j'écoutais chanter la sirène aux yeux d'or | Where the golden-eyed siren sang her song,     |
| Où, voilà mon berceau selon la chair,         | Where I was schooled in the ways of the flesh, |
| Alexandrie! Mon berceau, ma patrie!           | Alexandria! My cradle, my homeland!            |

**Clip 2:** In Thaïs' bedroom, Athanaël and the courtesan discuss differing views on love; his spiritual and hers sensual.

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| ATHANAËL<br>Ah! Je t'aime, Thaïs à te le dire<br>Mais je t'aime, non comme tu l'entends!<br>Moi, je t'aime en spirit, je taime en verité,<br>Je te promets mieux qu'ivresse fleurie<br>Et songes d'une brève nuit;<br>Cette félicité qu'aujourd'hui je t'apporte<br>Ne finira jamais! | ATHANAËL<br>How I love you Thaïs, and I love to proclaim it<br>But mine is not the love that you have known!<br>I love you in spirit and in truth,<br>I vow to you far more than the intoxication<br>And the rapture of one fleeting night;<br>This bliss I promise you today<br>Is eternal! |
| THAÏS<br>Montre-moi donc ce merveilleux amour!<br>Un amour vrai n'a qu'un language: les baisers   | THAÏS<br>Let me see this magnificent love!<br>True love speaks only the language of the flesh.   |
| ATHANAËL<br>Thaïs, ne raille pas! L'amour que je te prêche<br>C'est l'amour inconnu!  | ATHANAËL<br>Thaïs, do not mock me! The love I pledge<br>Is yet unknown to you!   |
| THAÏS<br>Ami, tu viens bien tard;<br>Je connais les ivresses  | THAÏS<br>You've come too late, friend.<br>I have known every kind of rapture.  |
| ATHANAËL<br>L'amour que tu connais n'enfante que la honte<br>Celui que je t'apporte est le seul Glorieux!   | ATHANAËL<br>The love that you have known breeds only shame;<br>That which I have offered you yields Glory!   |
| THAÏS<br>Je te trouve hardi d'offenser ton hôtesse  | THAÏS<br>You dare to thus offend your hostess...   |

**Clip 3:** Thaïs prays to the goddess of love, while Athanaël wrestles with his passion for her.

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| THAÏS<br>Vénus, invisible et présente<br>Vénus, enchantement de l'ombre                   | THAÏS<br>Venus, invisible yet present,<br>Venus, ghostly enchantress...                |
| ATHANAËL<br>Fais que la force de ses charmes<br>Ne triomphe pas de ma volonté             | ATHANAËL<br>Do not let her powerful charms<br>Conquer my resolve.                      |
| THAÏS<br>Vénus, éclat du ciel<br>et blancheur de la neige<br>Splendeur, Volupté, Douceur! | THAÏS<br>Venus, Heavenly brilliance<br>White as snow<br>Resplendent, sensuous, gentle! |

**Clip 4:** Thaïs is dying in the desert monastery. Athanaël confesses his passion and calls upon her in despairing tones, but Thaïs sees Heaven and her spirit passes gently away.

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| ATHANAËL<br>... J'ai parlé, t'ai menti   | ATHANAËL<br>... When I spoke earlier, I lied to you   |
| THAÏS<br>Et la voilà l'aurore!<br>Et les voilà les roses de l'éternel matin!   | THAÏS<br>Here is the dawn!<br>Behold the everlasting morning roses!   |
| ATHANAËL<br>Non! Le ciel .... Rien n'existe<br>Rien n'est vrai que la vie et que l'amour des êtres<br>Je t'aime!   | ATHANAËL<br>No! Not the Heavens... they are no more.<br>Love here below is the real truth.<br>I love you!   |
| THAÏS<br>Le ciel s'ouvre!<br>Voici les anges, les prophètes, Et les saints!<br>Les mains toutes pleines de fleurs!   | THAÏS<br>Heaven extends before me,<br>Here now are the angels, the prophets, and the saints!<br>Their arms laden with flowers   |
| ATHANAËL<br>Entends-moi donc, ma toute aimée!  | ATHANAËL<br>Hear me, my most beloved!   |
| THAÏS<br>Deux séraphins aux blanches ailes<br>Planent dans l'azur!<br>Et comme tu l'as dit, le doux consolateur<br>Posant sur mes yeux ses doigts de lumière<br>En essuie à jamais les pleurs! | THAÏS<br>Two white-winged seraphim<br>Soar in the azure vastness...<br>And as you foretold it, He has come to comfort me,<br>Filling my eyes with His light,<br>Forever wiping away my tears. |
| ATHANAËL<br>Viens! Dis-moi: je vivrai! Je vivrai!  | ATHANAËL<br>Come, tell me: "I shall live, I shall live!"  |
| THAÏS<br>Le son des harpes d'or m'enchante!<br>De suaves parfums me pénètrent! ... Je sens<br>Une exquise beatitude<br>Endormir tous mes maux!<br>Ah! Le ciel! Je vois Dieu!                   | THAÏS<br>The sound of golden harps enchants me!<br>Sweet perfumes surround me! I feel<br>Exquisite bliss<br>Wipe away all my pain!<br>Ah! Here is Heaven! I see the Lord!                     |
| ATHANAËL<br>Morte! Pitié!  | ATHANAËL<br>Dead! Mercy!  |