

DIAMONDS IN THE ROKAHR:
A COLLECTION OF GEMS FROM FRENCH OPERETTA, 1872 – 1923

by

Hannah Jo Smith

A DISSERTATION

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Major: Music

Under the Supervision of Professor Donna Harler-Smith

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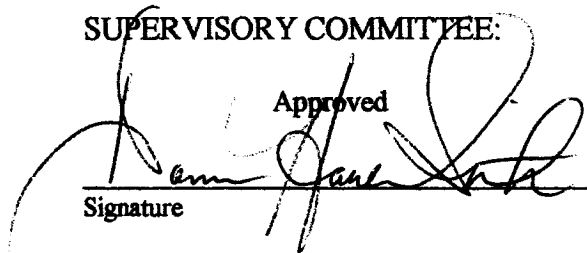
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Hannah Jo Smith

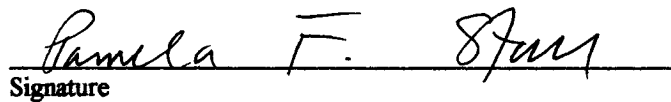
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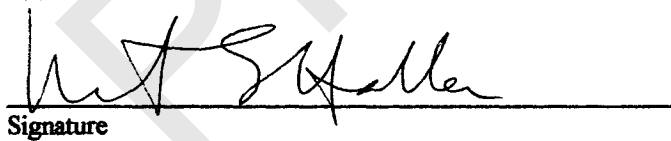
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DIAMONDS IN THE ROKAHR:
A COLLECTION OF GEMS FROM FRENCH OPERETTA, 1872 – 1923

Hannah Jo Smith, D.M.A
University of Nebraska, 2005

Adviser: Donna Harler-Smith

French operetta is a rich source of comic-dramatic music for younger or less-experienced singers. Five popular composers from the post-Offenbach era – Charles Lecocq, Robert Planquette, Louis Varney, Edmond Audran and André Messager – are well-represented in the Rokahr Family Archive (RFA) in the School of Music Library at the University of Nebraska Lincoln. This document presents new editions of arias excerpted from the scores available in the RFA, two contrasting arias for each voice type from each of the five composers. The anthology is a collection of 40 arias, twenty for men's voices and twenty more for women.

Chosen specifically for the emerging singer, these memorable tunes foster healthy vocal development and improve musicianship skills without undue demands on the voice. Arias included in this anthology were chosen for their limited range, appropriate tessitura, comprehensible poetry, appealing plotlines and phrase lengths complimentary to the breath energy of younger singers. Arias were excerpted from the larger score and edited for solo performance. Tempo, dynamic and expression markings have been retained; choral interjections and lengthy dance interludes have been removed. Each chapter presents the work of one composer, and includes biographical information, notes on collaboration with librettists, and highlights of compositional style. The musical excerpts are annotated with plot synopsis, simple character analysis, new English translations for study, artwork and photos from productions of these works and IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) transcriptions to aid young singers in French pronunciation.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This anthology was made possible by Jack Rokahr's generous gift through the University of Nebraska Foundation to the UNL School of Music. Collecting opera scores, recordings, artwork and supporting materials has been his life's passion. It is now my privilege to make some portion of this remarkable collection more accessible to singers and teachers alike. I thank Dr. Anita Breckbill and the library staff at the School of Music for their cheerful assistance as I explored the Rokahr Family Archive and examined its contents. Additionally, I'm grateful to Debbie Krahmer and Paul Royster, associates with the UNL Libraries, who patiently guided me through the process of editing the digital images for this anthology.

I offer thanks to the members of my committee not only for their guidance and assistance through my coursework and examinations, but also for their continued support and encouragement throughout the completion of this document. I am particularly grateful to Professor Donna Harler-Smith, my committee chair and doctoral adviser. Her enthusiasm made planning this project a pleasure and her willingness to share her expertise made completing the project possible. I thank Dr. William Shomos for pointing me in the right direction and expressing his continued interest every step of the way. I'm grateful to Dr. Pamela Starr and Dr. Quentin Faulkner not only for their scholarly insight and suggestions, but also for their high expectations of my writing. A significant debt of gratitude is owed to Dr. Robert S. Haller, who generously offered his expert advice with the process of translating lyrics from French to English. I thank Dr. Marshall Olds for his attention to detail, Dr. Glenn Niernan for his experienced counsel and Colleen McDonald for her patience in addressing my questions and concerns.

My colleagues at Doane College provided immeasurable support. Dr. Jay Gilbert helped keep my spirits high with his infectious good humor, Dr. Kurt Runestad patiently tutored me in

the workings of Finale and my dear friend Dr. David Breckbill graciously listened to my recitation of each triumph or setback along the way, always responding with encouragement, logical suggestions and good cheer.

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PREVIEW

Introduction

Young American singers need accessible mid-grade dramatic music in French. Auditions, competitions and contests require singers to perform arias from dramatic works. It is, however, difficult for teachers to find appropriate French material for young voices. Current popular operatic anthologies, edited by Kurt Adler¹ or by Robert Larsen², include French arias from the pens of Bizet, Lalo, Meyerbeer, Gounod, Saint-Saëns, Massenet, Thomas and Berlioz. These works can be intimidating to the developing singer. The dramatic conflicts are perplexingly sophisticated and the demanding vocal lines are extremely taxing to the less-experienced singer. Singing arias from French Grand Opera before a young singer's vocal technique is secure may encourage detrimental habits that inhibit healthy singing. In short, attempting these larger works before a singer is ready may do more harm than good.

To be sure, anthologies may also include an aria from the *opéra-bouffe* works of Offenbach; these charming romantic comedies are an excellent choice for introducing younger singers to the wide world of French opera. Offenbach stood at the forefront of a popular musical movement – a movement that grew away from the *opéra-comique* tradition, developing a lighter-hearted and less pretentious form of entertainment. Advancing improbable, humorous plotlines and general gaiety through the infectious use of dance rhythms and tuneful singing, Offenbach became known as the father of operetta. (Saint-Saëns commented that operetta is “a daughter of the *opéra-comique* who has gone to the bad...although, girls who go to the bad are not always bereft of charm.”³) Through his entrepreneurial and dramatic leadership during the second half of the 19th century, Offenbach was influential throughout Europe, as evidenced by the popularity of

¹ Kurt Adler, ed., *Operatic Anthology: celebrated arias selected from operas by old and modern composers, in five volumes* (New York: G. Schirmer, 1953).

² Robert L. Larsen, ed. *Arias for Soprano/Mezzo Soprano/ Tenor/ Bass/ Baritone*. (New York: G. Schirmer, 1991; 1992).

³ James Harding, *Folies de Paris* (London: Chappell and Company, 1979), 17.

works by Strauss, Lehár, and Gilbert and Sullivan. In his adopted hometown of Paris, he composed, produced and promoted his own works; he also laid the groundwork for the continued popularity of operetta in Paris for nearly 50 years after his death.

The active operetta composers of the post-Offenbach era are less well known. Charles Lecocq (1832 – 1918) was the most accomplished of Offenbach's immediate successors, and André Messager (1853 – 1929) was the most prominent figure of the succeeding generation.⁴ Strung between these two pillars were the lesser lights of Robert Planquette, Edmond Audran, and Louis Varney.⁵ Synopses of all five musicians' works are presented Lubbock's *Complete Book of Light Opera*,⁶ and Gänzl's *Book of the Musical Theatre*.⁷ Additionally, their works and influences are described in Mackinlay's *Origin and Development of Light Opera*⁸ and Traubner's *Operetta: a Theatrical History*.⁹ These composers were extremely popular in their day. Many of their works were translated into English and transported not only to London, but also to New York, where their popularity influenced the growth and development of American operetta¹⁰. From 1875 until about 1929, excerpted songs and arias from the popular works of Audran, Lecocq, Messager, Planquette, and Varney were published as sheet music and included in operatic anthologies. These older publications – long out of date and out of print – are accessible only through library holdings. WorldCat lists some 50 citations for excerpts from works by these composers; fewer than one-quarter of these citations are scores available in French, and the vast majority are single songs or duets catalogued by only one library.

In the latter half of the twentieth century, however, arias from the "French Five" appeared from time to time on sound recordings, performed by Joan Sutherland, Régine Crespin,

⁴ Gervase Hughes, *Composers of Operetta* (London: Macmillan, 1962), 74 – 79, 91 – 99.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 82– 90.

⁶ Mark Lubbock, *The Complete Book of Light Opera* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1962).

⁷ Kurt Gänzl and Andrew Lamb, *Gänzl's Book of the Musical Theatre* (London: The Bodley Head, 1988).

⁸ Sterling Mackinlay, *Origin and Development of Light Opera* (London: Hutchinson, 1926).

⁹ Richard Traubner, *Operetta: a Theatrical History* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1983).

¹⁰ John Dizikes, *Opera in America: a Cultural History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 263-64.

and re-releases of Maggie Teyte. More recently, French operetta arias have been recorded by Susan Graham, Felicity Lott, Jerry Hadley and Thomas Hampson. Excerpted French operetta arias in print are less easily found. One American anthology, Adler's *Songs from Light Operas for Soprano*,¹¹ contains arias from works by Audran, Lecocq, Messager and Planquette – the last, sadly, appears only in an English translation. More recently, anthologies published in Europe have included some arias from these composers.¹² A single aria by Lecocq can be found in Joan Sutherland's *Nineteenth Century French Arias* published as the eighth volume of *The Art of Joan Sutherland*, a retrospective collection of materials performed by one of the greatest singers of the last century. The works of Audran, Lecocq and Planquette are represented in Michel Verschaeve's collections for baritone and soprano: *Airs d'opérettes*. They are not readily available on this continent. WorldCat lists a total of three libraries owning the Verschaeve collections. Designed for native French speakers, Verschaeve's collections include neither English translations nor a pronunciation guide.

The School of Music at the University of Nebraska Lincoln is in a unique position to bring French operetta back into the North American light of day. A "mother lode" of musical gems awaits discovery in the materials amassed by Jack Rokahr and given through the University of Nebraska Foundation to the UNL School of Music. The Rokahr Family Archive (RFA) is a collection of scores, recordings, visual art and reference materials associated with the field of opera. Librarians are in the process of cataloguing and classifying the items in this remarkable collection. French operetta is well represented: for example, the RFA includes the complete works of Offenbach. Moreover, complete works are available for important French composers of the following generations: Audran, Varney and Messager. Works by other composers thriving in post-1870 Paris, especially Planquette and Lecocq, are also readily available in the RFA.

¹¹ Kurt Adler, ed., *Songs from Light Operas for Soprano* (New York: G. Schirmer, 1960).

¹² Joan Sutherland and Richard Bonyng, *Nineteenth Century French Arias* (London: Josef Weinberger, 1991); and Michel Verschaeve, *Airs d'opérettes* (Paris: Lemoine, 2002).

Professional singers have been recording these gems, championing their musical and dramatic appeal. And now, the Rokahr Family Archive has yielded a jewel-like assortment of French dramatic works in print appropriate for singers at various stages in their vocal development. Herein are virtually unknown French operetta sparklers (unavailable in the aforementioned anthologies by Adler and Verschaeve) appropriate for the emerging singer: music of good quality which is challenging and yet accessible. These little treasures were chosen for their limited range, appropriate tessitura, comprehensible poetry, appealing plotlines, and phrase-lengths complimentary to the breath energy of younger singers. Arias were excerpted from the complete piano-vocal scores and re-transcribed through Finale[®] (computer software). Typographical errors, both textual and musical, were corrected. Dynamic, tempo and expression markings were retained from the original scores. In order to be sung by an individual performer with piano accompaniment, each aria was edited as necessary, removing recitative dialogue, choral interjections and dance interludes.

Through consulting analysis and commentary by Gänzl,¹³ Lubbock,¹⁴ and Traubner,¹⁵ each musical excerpt is annotated with plot synopsis and simple character analysis. New English translations, intended for study, not for singing, are also included. Reproductions of photos, sheet music covers and promotional posters of the shows and characters not only give a strong visual element to the collection, but also encourage more thorough understanding of the world of operetta. Finally, IPA transcriptions are provided to aid young singers in French pronunciation. The resulting compilation – an anthology of French operetta – provides a "user-friendly" glimpse into a long-lost era.

Anthologies are generally compiled for a single vocal range. Voice teachers, however, work with students of every voice type. Herein are representative arias for a variety of

¹³ Gänzl and Lamb, *Gänzl's Book of Musical Theatre*.

¹⁴ Lubbock, *Complete Book of Light Opera*.

¹⁵ Traubner, *Operetta*.

younger voices; two contrasting arias for each voice type from each of the five composers yielded a total of 40 arias.¹⁶ The chapters are presented in chronological order, based not on the year of the composer's birth, but on the year each produced his first major successful operetta. Each chapter begins with biographical information, notes on collaboration with librettists, and highlights of compositional style, for each of the five composers.

Singers of international stature are exploring these gems. Now students and teachers alike can re-discover these charming works for themselves.

¹⁶ These lighter works are accepted as "arias" for the purpose of NATS and MENC auditions. Opera and operetta are so closely related that the Library of Congress has no separate classification for "operetta." Stage works in this style fall under the subject heading of OPERA.

Chapter One – Charles Lecocq

Charles Lecocq (1832-1918), born and raised in Paris, began his studies at the Conservatoire at the age of 17, studying harmony with Bazin and composition with Halévy. His classmates included Bizet and Saint-Saëns.¹⁷ The young Lecocq showed great promise in his practice of counterpoint and his performance at the organ; unfortunately, family financial difficulties forced him to leave the Conservatoire prior to the completion of his studies.

Despite this setback, he was able to rise to momentary prominence in the Parisian musical scene of 1857 through a composition contest promoted by the reigning king of *opérette*, Jacques Offenbach. Composers were invited to submit their settings of a chosen libretto: *Le docteur Miracle*. Unable to decide between two finalists, the grand prize, a production of the show as submitted by the composer, was awarded to two rising-stars: Lecocq (now 25) and the 18-year-old Georges Bizet.¹⁸ By drawing lots, Lecocq won the right to have his composition staged first; Bizet's setting premiered the following evening. Neither production was particularly successful. Lecocq continued his struggle toward recognition in the shadow of the great entrepreneur, but as long as Offenbach held the limelight, success eluded Charles Lecocq.

Composing, teaching, coaching and accompanying, Lecocq waited patiently for his day in the sun. After the governmental regime change of 1871, Offenbach's style of political satire fell out-of-favor; fortune began to smile on the 40-year-old Charles Lecocq.¹⁹ *La Fille de Madame Angot*, produced to great acclaim in Brussels in 1872, achieved great success in Paris the following year. *Giroflé-Girofla* (1874) also opened in Brussels, but was soon seen in Paris and in New York as well.

¹⁷ Andrew Lamb, "Lecocq, (Alexandre) Charles," in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd ed.

¹⁸ Harding, *Folies de Paris*, 80.

¹⁹ Traubner, *Operetta*, 75.



Lecocq's fame continued to grow through *La Petite Mariée* (1875), *Le Petit Duc* (1878) and many others. His compositions demonstrate his gift for dramatically effective rhythms and pleasant melodies, giving his singers every opportunity to display the varied nuances of their art.

PREVIEW

Pomponnet: "Aujourd'hui prenons bien garde"
from *La Fille de Madame Angot* -- The Daughter of Madame Angot (1872)

The late Madame Angot, fishmonger of the marketplace of Les Halles, was famous for her great beauty and her sharp wit. Her orphaned daughter, Clairette, whose father is not known, was adopted at the age of three by the other shopkeepers and market-folk of Les Halles. Schooled at the finest academies and encouraged in virtuous living, Clairette was set up in a florist's shop. Her "committee of parents" has decided the time has come for her to be married. The wigmaker, Pomponnet, whose shop is directly across the square from Clairette's, recognizes his great fortune at having been chosen as the happy bridegroom. He sings this aria as he enters the marketplace on his wedding day.²⁰



Aujourd'hui prenons bien garde
 A ce bouquet plein d'appas;
 Je permets qu'on le regarde
 Mais que l'on n'y touche pas!
 Seul je prétends en cachette
 Le tenir en mon pouvoir.
 Et je me fais une fête
 De le détacher ce soir.
 Ah! d'avance, Quand j'y pense
 Quel effet cela me fait!
 Je l'entends, elle soupire
 Sans même savoir pourquoi;
 Son bouquet semble me dire:
 Grâce pour elle et pour moi!
 Mais une double conquête
 Me livrant femme et bouquet

De l'innocente Clairette
 Fait madame Pomponnet!

Today let's take good care of
 this bouquet full of charms.
 I permit people to look at it
 but no one is to touch it!
 I alone am claiming it in secret,
 holding it in my power.
 And I am celebrating
 by untying it tonight!
 Ah! Already when I think of it,
 what an effect it has on me!
 I understand that she sighs
 without exactly knowing why;
 her bouquet seems to say to me:
 "Be gentle with her and with me!"
 But a double conquest
 handing over to me both
 woman and bouquet
 makes of the innocent Clairette
 my wife – Madame Pomponnet!

²⁰ Kurt Gänzl, *Book of the Musical Theatre*, 337.

Pomponnet's entrance from *La Fille de Madame Angot*

Charles Lecocq

Moderato (♩ = c. 92)

p *sf*

5 Pomponnet

1. Au - jour - d'hui pre - nons bien gar - de _____
2. Je l'en - tends, el - le sou - pi - re _____

p

8

— A ce bou-quet plein d'ap-pas; Je per-mets qu'on le re - gar - de _____
 — Sans mê-me sa - voir pour-quoi; Son bou-quet sem - ble me di - re: _____

8

12

8

— Mais que l'on n'y tou-che pas! Seul je pré-tends en ca - chet - te Le te-
 — Grâ - ce pour elle et pour moi! Mais u - ne dou - ble con - quê - te Me liv-

12

p

16 *rall.*

nir en mon pou-voir. Et je me fais u-ne fê-te De le dé-ta-cher ce
rant femme et bou-quet De l'in-no-cen-te Clai-ret-te Fait ma-da-me Pom-pon-

16 *suivez.*

19 *Allegretto*

soir. Ah! Ah! Ah! d'a-van-ce, Quand j'y pen-se Quel ef-
net!—

19 *p léger*

p

23

8

fet ce - la me fait! Ah! d'a - van - ce, Quand j'y pen - se Quel ef - fet ce - la me

23

p

leggiro.

28

8

fait! Ah! d'a - van - ce, Quand j'y pen - se Quel ef - fet ce - la me fait! Ah! d'a -

28

mf

f

33 *p*

van - ce, Quand j'y pen-se Quel ef - fet ce-la me fait! Ah! Quel ef - fet ce-la me

33 *f* *p*

38 *mf*

fait! Ah! Quel ef - fet ce-la me fait! Ah! Quel ef - fet ce - la me rall.

38 *f* *p* *f* rall.

44 *f* fait!

44 (to second verse) (FINE) tempo primo *p*

Aujourd'hui prenons bien garde
[o ʒur dʒi prənɔ̃ bjɛ̃ gardə]

A ce bouquet plein d'appas;
[a sə buke plɛ̃ dapa]

Je permets qu'on le regarde
[ʒə pɛrmɛ kɔ̃ lə rəgardə]

Mais que l'on n'y touche pas!
[mɛ kə lɔ̃ ni tuʃə pa]

Seul je prétends en cachette
[sœl ʒə pretɑ̃ zɑ̃ kaʃɛtə]

Le tenir en mon pouvoir.
[lə tɛni ʁɑ̃ mɔ̃ puvwɑ]

Et je me fais une fête
[e ʒə mɛ fɛ zynə fɛtə]

De le détacher ce soir.
[də lə detaʃɛ sɔ̃ swɑ]

Ah! d'avance, Quand j'y pense,
[a davɑ̃sə kɑ̃ ʒi pɑ̃sə]

Quel effet cela me fait!
[kɛ lefɛ sɛla mɛ fɛ]

Je l'entends, elle soupire
[ʒə lɑ̃tɑ̃ ɛlə supirə]

Sans même savoir pourquoi;
[sɑ̃ mɛmɛ savvɑr purkwa]

Son bouquet semble me dire:
[sɔ̃ buke sɑ̃blə mɛ dirə]

"Grâce pour elle et pour moi!"
[grasə pu ʁɛ le pur mwa]

Mais une double conquête
[mɛ zynə dublə kɔ̃kɛtə]

Me livrant femme et bouquet
[mə livrɑ̃ fa mɛ buke]

De l'innocente Clairette
[də lɛnɔ̃sɑ̃tə klɛrɛtə]

Fait madame Pomponnet!
[fɛ madamə pɔ̃pɔnɛ]

**Mademoiselle Lange: "Les soldats d'Augereau sont des hommes"
from *La Fille de Madame Angot* -- The Daughter of Madame Angot (1872)**

Early in the 18th century, some dozen or so years after the French revolution, Paris (indeed, all of France) was ruled by the Directory, an inefficient and corrupt group of aristocrats with little skill for governing and even less regard for the people. Mademoiselle Lange, an actress of exceptional talent, is known to be the mistress of the Vicomte de Barras, a member of the Directory; according to the city gossips, she is also having an affair with an influential financier, M. Larivaudière. All three are secretly involved in a growing underground resistance plotting the downfall of the Directory. Under the premise of a grand ball, Mlle Lange (a role originally played by Marie Desclauzas) hosts a midnight meeting for the schemers. Highly suspicious of her friends and her motives, Marshal Augereau has arrived with his company, ready to arrest the conspirators. She takes charge of dealing with the soldiers (after all, they're only men!) by mocking their military "might."²¹

<p>Les soldats d'Augereau sont des hommes Et toute faibles que nous sommes Je prétends que nous les valons, Car nous faisons des hommes Tout ce que nous voulons, Oui, nous faisons des hommes Tout ce que nous voulons. Comme un coursier qui devant tout se cabre, Augereau marche contre tout Armé de son grand sabre Qu'il fait traîner partout. Nous dont le pouvoir est plus traître Nous ne laissons traîner que nos robes de bal, Mais en traînant peut être font elles plus de mal En traînant oui peut être elles font plus de mal.</p>	<p>The soldiers of Augereau are some men! And however weak we women are, I claim that we are their equals, because we make of men all that we want-- yes, we make these men into whatever we want! Like a warhorse who rears before everything Augereau advances against everyone, armed with his great saber, which he drags all over everywhere. We for whom power is more subtle, we allow only our ball gowns to drag. But in dragging, maybe they do more damage; in dragging, indeed, they may be more dangerous (than the saber)!</p>
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²¹ Ibid., 339.

<p>Notre ennemi, l'histoire en a pris note, De gloire vient de se couvrir, Il a pris Montenotte, Il a pris Aboukir. Nous, sans danger au sein des fêtes, Nous avons obtenu de plus brillants succes, Et fait plus de conquêtes Qu'ils n'en feront jamais.</p>	<p>Our enemy, as everyone knows, has just covered himself in glory. He has taken Montenotte, and taken Aboukir*. We, safe in the midst of the festivities, we have obtained wonderful success, and make more conquests than they will ever make!</p>
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*Montenotte and Aboukir were sites of Napoleon's early military defeats.

PREVIEW