

ANNICK MASSIS

Soprano

Following her completion of two university degrees, French soprano Annick Massis made her operatic début at the Capitole de Toulouse in 1991. During the same season, her performance of the title role in Mozart's **La Finta Giardiniera** at the Opéra de Nantes brought her to the wider attention of the public.

Attracting the notice of celebrated film and opera director Gabriel Dussurget, Miss Massis teamed with Bernard Thomas, with whom she gave numerous concerts featuring sacred music by Vivaldi, Pergolesi, Bach, and their contemporaries.

In addition to the Baroque liturgical repertory, Mozart roles were prominent in the formative years of Miss Massis' early career. In addition to singing in **Le Nozze di Figaro** at the Opéra Bastille (Paris) in 1994, Miss Massis also took part in numerous concerts featuring Mozart's **Great Mass in C-minor (K. 427)**, his **Requiem (K. 626)**, the motet '**Exultate, jubilate**' (**K. 165**), and other notable works.

Under the batons of noted Baroque-repertory specialists Jean-Claude Malgoire, William Christie, and Marc Minkowski, Miss Massis began her exploration of the monumental sacred works of Georg Friedrich Händel and the masterpieces of the French Baroque. The public and the press alike quickly recognized Miss Massis as one of the most important singers of her generation and praised her contributions to resurrecting the superb music of the French Baroque. Miss Massis experienced in the works of Händel and the French Baroque a series of personal successes, both in theatres and on recordings. Particularly rewarding were her performances in Rameau's **Hippolyte et Aricie** (Opéra de Versailles, Festival de Beaune, and the Arsenal de Metz in 1994; Opéra Garnier de Paris in 1996; and Opéra de Caen in 1997); a triumphant performance as la Folie in Rameau's **Platée** (Paris, 1999); and acclaimed performances in Rameau's **Les Indes Galantes** (Opéra de Versailles in 1994; Opéra de Paris in 2000) and Händel's **Messiah** (1994). During this period, Miss Massis also participated in widely-praised and prize-winning recordings with Marc Minkowski of Händel's **Roman Motets** and Italian oratorio **La Ressurezione**, Marc-Antoine Charpentier's **Te Deum** and **Messe de Minuit**, and Rameau's **Anacréon** and **Hippolyte et Aricie**.

Miss Massis was offered her first role in the French coloratura repertory in 1992 by Pierre Jourdan: Philine in Ambroise Thomas' **Mignon** at the Théâtre Impérial de Compiègne, in which role she secured her reputation as a coloratura singer of the highest order. This proved the first in a gallery of portraits of French heroines which grew to include Ophélie in Thomas' **Hamlet** (Théâtre de Rouen in 1994, in a production by John Cox), **Micaëla** in Bizet's **Carmen** (Salle Favart, Paris, 1996), Boïeldieu's **La Dame blanche** (recorded for EMI, alongside American tenore di grazia Rockwell Black, in 1996), a return to Thomas' Philine for Compiègne in 1996, Donizetti's Marie in **La Fille du Régiment** (Grand Théâtre de Genève, 1997), Eurydice in Offenbach's **Orphée aux enfers** (Genève, 1997), and Leïla in Bizet's **Les Pêcheurs de Perles** (1998).

Displaying a remarkable musical curiosity, Miss Massis expanded her impressive and wide-ranging repertory by adding Romantic roles such as Musetta in Puccini's **La Bohème** (Théâtre de Rouen in 1993, and Salle Favart, Paris, in 1996), Anna Reich in Otto Nicolai's ebullient **Die lustigen Weiber von Windsor** (Salle Favart, Paris, 1995), Carolina in Domenico Cimarosa's **Il Matrimonio segreto** (Opéra de Nantes, 1996), and Rezia in Gluck's **Les Pèlerins de la Mecque** (Opéra de Caen and Opéra de Montpellier, 1998).

In 1995, Miss Massis took part in an exciting project at the Salle Favart, Paris, in which the original Italian version of Rossini's **Il Barbiere di Siviglia**, composed for mezzo-soprano, was alternated with the much higher French version, conceived for coloratura soprano. Continuing in the Rossini cannon, Miss Massis added the role of Isabella in **L'Inganno felice** to her repertory with

performances in Deauville in 1996, commemorated in a recording by ERATO.

Miss Massis enjoyed a new triumph in creating the role of Cunégonde in the French premiere of Leonard Bernstein's **Candide** in a series of performances throughout France and Belgium in 1995 (L'Esplanade de Saint-Etienne, Opéra de Nancy, Opéra Royal de Wallonie, Opéra de Tours, and the legendary Opéra Comique).

1997 brought Miss Massis' first performances of two roles that would prove definitive to her career: the Comtesse Adèle in Rossini's **Le Comte Ory** and the title role in Donizetti's **Lucia di Lammermoor**. Miss Massis first sang the Comtesse Adèle alongside the **Comte Ory** of Rockwell Blake in Paris in a John Cox production, followed by her brilliant international début in the same work at Britain's Glyndebourne Festival in a production by Jérôme Savary. Miss Massis was invited to return to Glyndebourne for a revival of Savary's **Comte Ory** in the following season, in performances preserved on DVD. Miss Massis's first Lucia thrilled audiences at the Théâtre des Arts in Rouen. Both Adèle and Lucia remain cornerstones of Miss Massis' repertory.

Following on these successes in Europe, Miss Massis' career has developed internationally while continuing to display the same hallmarks of intelligence and artistic curiosity displayed by her early career in France.

Miss Massis soon established numerous contacts with the American public. After presenting her portrayal of Thomas' Ophélie with Washington Concert Opera (Lissner Auditorium at George Washington University), Miss Massis sang Lucia at Staten Island and in New Jersey in her first collaboration with the orchestra of the Metropolitan Opera.

Following these American successes, Miss Massis triumphed anew at the Capitole de Toulouse in a new production of **Lucia di Lammermoor** by Nicolas Joël. She also impressed the public with a deepened interpretation of Leïla in **Les Pêcheurs de Perles**, a role for which she has been in great demand due to her unique gifts and ideal vocal range and style.

Miss Massis' musical explorations have brought her into contact with Emmanuel Rosenthal and Michel Plasson (at Toulouse in 1997), Trevor Pinnock, OBE (for Händel's **Messiah** in Paris in 1998), and Georges Prêtre (for Poulenc's **Gloria** at Paris' prestigious Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in 1999).

The Opéra d'Avignon offered Miss Massis the opportunity to make her début as Elvira in Bellini's **I Puritani** in 1999. Also in 1999, she returned to the United States to perform the role of Giulietta in Bellini's **I Capuleti ed i Montecchi** alongside Vesselina Kasarova and Gregory Kunde, under the baton of Opera Orchestra of New York director Eve Queler. This performance marked Miss Massis' début at New York's Avery Fisher Hall at Lincoln Center.

In a new production of **Le Comte Ory** for the Corum de Montpellier, Miss Massis worked for the first time with Maestro Alberto Zedda. This experience facilitated a deep artistic friendship that has developed through numerous important projects.

In the UK, Miss Massis has sung at Royal Albert Hall during the BBC Proms, in which she enjoyed a great success with a program of French arias culminating in the legendary 'mad' scene of Thomas' Ophélie.

During 2000, Miss Massis débuted at the Gran Teatre del Liceu in Barcelona in a new production of **Lucia di Lammermoor** by Graham Vick, conducted by Bertrand de Billy. Later in the same year, she débuted at the Teatro Real in Madrid as Amina in Bellini's **La Sonnambula** under the baton of bel canto specialist Richard Bonyngé, CBE.

2000 also saw Miss Massis give her first performances as Gilda in Verdi's **Rigoletto** at Saint-Etienne, her first performances of a Verdi opera.

Miss Massis sang Thomas' Ophélie from **Hamlet** at the Teatro Regio in Torino in the first performances of the opera to be sung in French in Italy since the opera's first performances in Italy at the Teatro Regio in 1881.

Fresh triumphs in Toulouse greeted Miss Massis in a production of **Le Comte Ory** alongside Rockwell Blake and performances of Philine in **Mignon** in a production by Nicolas Joël, in which she enjoyed a great personal success.

During the same time, Miss Massis gave critically-acclaimed concerts throughout Europe: at Paris' Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in 2000, at London's Royal Opera House (Covent Garden) in 2001, at the Opéra de Lausanne, at the Gran Teatre del Liceu in Barcelona, at the Hamburgische Staatsoper, in Lugano and Grenoble, and elsewhere.

Also in 2001, Miss Massis took on another Rossini role for the Opéra de Marseille: Amenaïde in **Tancredi**.

In the difficult days following the tragic terrorist attacks in New York in September 2001, Miss Massis met famed conductor Christoph Eschenbach. Maestro Eschenbach wished to dedicate a performance of Claude Debussy's **Le Martyre de Saint Sébastien** to the memory of the victims of those attacks. When the Canadian singer engaged for the performance was grounded in the United States, Maestro Eschenbach prevailed upon Miss Massis to sing both the role of the Vox cœlestis (Heavenly Voice) and that of the Anima Sebastiani (the Soul of Sebastian) at a moment's notice. With a cast including the remarkable actress Ludmilla Mikaël, the moving performance opened the season at the Salle Pleyel and began a series of enriching collaborations between Maestro Eschenbach and Miss Massis.

Maestro Eschenbach also persuaded Miss Massis to accept a 2002 engagement for Weber's **Der Freischütz** in the rarely-heard French version adapted by Hector Berlioz.

At the invitation of Alberto Zedda, Miss Massis made her début at the Festival Mozart de La Coruña in Spain in 2002, singing Mademoiselle Silberklang in Mozart's **Der Schauspieldirektor**, a role first sung by the legendary soprano Catarina Cavalieri. Also in 2002, Miss Massis made a widely-lauded recording of Jacques Ibert's **Persée et Andromède** under the baton of Jan Latham-Koening for the Avie label.

In November 2001, Miss Massis embarked on one of the most challenging and ambitious projects within her bel canto repertory: performances of the nearly-forgotten **Maria di Rohan** by Donizetti at the Grand Théâtre de Genève, conducted by Evelino Pidò. Also noteworthy within Miss Massis' bel canto repertory were performances in Belgium and France of Bellini's **Sonnambula** with Alberto Zedda and her débuts at the Pittsburgh Opera and Festival d'Antibes as Donizetti's Lucia, partnered by the Edgardo of Mexican tenor Rolando Villazón.

During the 2002-03 season, Miss Massis celebrated her first collaboration with Opera Rara, both recording and participating in a concert performance at Royal Albert Hall of Giacomo Meyerbeer's **Margherita d'Anjou**, in which Miss Massis sang the title role under the baton of David Parry.

The remarkable success of **Margherita d'Anjou** was followed by concerts at the Festival de Lacoste, at the Théâtre du Jorat in Switzerland, at Aix les Bains, in Madrid, and elsewhere. Miss Massis again embraced the music of Mozart in performing in the **Great Mass in C-minor** with Ivor Bolton at the Maggio Musicale Fiorentino and the Requiem with Pinchas Steinberg at Victoria Hall in Genève.

In December 2002, Miss Massis made her début at New York's Metropolitan Opera, singing **Lucia** to the Edgardo of Argentine tenor Marcelo Álvarez. Miss Massis became the first French soprano to sing Lucia at the MET since the retirement of Lily Pons, who last sang the role at the MET in 1958.

Miss Massis' successful MET début was followed by a triumphant return to the Opéra Comique in 2003 in a new series of performances of **Le Comte Ory**, staged by Jérôme Savary. She then sang her first performances of Teresa in Berlioz' **Benvenuto Cellini** with Christoph Eschenbach at the Théâtre Mogador. This role opened new horizons for Miss Massis' repertory. Cellini was followed by Miss Massis' first performances in Japan, in Tokyo and Osaka, as Amenaide in Rossini's **Tancredi**.

After presenting concerts of music by Pergolesi and Händel in Lacoste, Antibes, Châteaudun, and Thirion Gardais and recording a disc with sacred music of Haydn and Mozart for the Cascavelle label, Miss Massis returned to Lucia for the Opéra de Nice.

Miss Massis experienced another personal triumph with an ambitious program of bel canto selections from **Semiramide**, **Lucia di Lammermoor**, **Les Vêpres Siciliennes**, Maria di Rohan, and Attila, among other works, with Marco Zambelli at the Salle Gaveau.

Thereafter, Miss Massis presented a new program of **French mélodies** and Lieder by Pauline Viardot, Ravel, Debussy, and Richard Strauss for her début at the Opéra de la Monnaie in Brussels. She was accompanied in this performance by Jean-Philippe Collard.

Paris' Théâtre des Champs-Élysées was the site of another great triumph for Miss Massis in February 2004, as Händel's **Semele** in a David McVicar production conducted by Marc Minkowski. This production was considered one of the great highlights of the Paris season.

Invited both by Pier Luigi Pizzi and Marcello Viotti, Miss Massis also débuted during 2004 at the Teatro La Fenice in Venice in a new production of **Les Pêcheurs de Perles**, a production recorded by Dynamic and released on both CD and DVD. In conjunction with the La Fenice production, Miss Massis also sang at Maestro Viotti's invitation a concert performance of **Pêcheurs de Perles** in Munich.

Success as Leïla was followed by a début at the Opernhaus Zürich in Rameau's **Les Boréades**, overseen by the groundbreaking partnership of Marc Minkowski and Laurent Pelly. With this production, Miss Massis said an affectionate adieu to Rameau as she intensified her focus upon her bel canto and lyric repertory.

In August 2004, Miss Massis made her début at the prestigious Rossini Festival at Pesaro at the invitation of Alberto Zedda. Bringing a refreshing French perspective to the Festival long dominated by Italian and American bel canto artists, Miss Massis teamed with exciting Peruvian tenor Juan Diego Flórez in a new production by Mario Martone of Rossini's **Matilde di Shabran**. Miss Massis' superb performances of the title role were recorded by DECCA and released on CD, finally giving to this rare gem the exalted place in the Rossini discography it deserves.

Invited to return to the Opernhaus Zürich in November 2004, Miss Massis sang **Lucia** in a Robert Carsen production conducted by Ralph Weikert.

January 2005 proved very important in Miss Massis' career as a recording artist, with the reissue of her recording of Philine in Thomas' **Mignon** and the releases of the CD and DVD productions of **Les Pêcheurs de Perles** followed by two integral Donizetti recordings for Opera Rara, the title roles in **Elvida** and **Francesca di Foix**.

Miss Massis then sang Beethoven's towering **Ninth Symphony** ('Choral'), followed by a new recording for Opera Rara of selections from Pacini's **Contestabile di Chester** and Mercadante's **I Normanni** and **Virginia**.

Miss Massis made her début at the famed Teatro alla Scala, Milano, in April 2005 as Almirena in a production of Händel's **Rinaldo** by Pier Luigi Pizzi. This milestone in her career was followed in May by a second tour of Japan in **Pêcheurs de Perles** with the forces of La Fenice.

June 2005 brought another significant role début, as Marguerite de Valois in Meyerbeer's **Les Huguenots**. After singing in Cherubini's **Messe de Chimay** at the Festival d'Antibes, the Italian season ended with Italian critics bestowing on Miss Massis the '**La Siola d'Oro**' award for her sterling contributions to Italian bel canto and French Romantic repertoire. Previous recipients of this great honor include June Anderson, Mariella Devia, Sumi Jo, and Dame Joan Sutherland.

In September 2005, Miss Massis inaugurated the La Fenice season in a special performance given in homage to Pier Luigi Pizzi, singing alongside such notable artists as Daniela Dessì, Raina Kabaivanska, and Mariella Devia. Still in Venice, Miss Massis sang in November 2005 her first performances of Princess Eudoxie in Halévy's **La Juive**.

December 2005 brought Miss Massis' anticipated début at the Wiener Staatsoper as **Lucia**.

The final quarter of the 2005-06 season was devoted to the role of Giunia in Mozart's **Lucio Silla**. Taking part in a new production by Jürgen Flimm at La Fenice in June 2006, Miss Massis repeated the role when the production was given at the Salzburger Festspiele in July. The Salzburg performances were recorded and released on DVD by Deutsche Grammophon.

September 2006 brought Miss Massis to the Deutsche Oper in Berlin, where she opened the season with her house début in **La Sonnambula**, alongside Juan Diego Flórez. Lavishing praise upon 'the finest bel canto couple of the moment,' the press compared the poetic beauty and musicality of Miss Massis' Amina to the achievements of Maria Callas in the same role.

Returning to the Wiener Staatsoper in November 2006, Miss Massis gave her first European performances as Violetta in Verdi's **La Traviata**, a role first performed with Opera Pittsburgh and John Mauceri in 2004, under the baton of Friedrich Haider. This was followed in December, again at the Wiener Staatsoper, by her first performances of another hallmark role, Juliette in Gounod's **Roméo et Juliette**, in a production by Jürgen Flimm.

February and March 2007 brought renewed triumphs for Miss Massis as Princess Eudoxie in **La Juive** at the Opéra Bastille in Paris, marking the first performances of the opera in Paris for more than seventy years. The new production conducted by Daniel Oren seized the collective imagination of the Parisian public and proved the 'hit' of the season. Building upon the tumultuous reception of her performances of Princess Eudoxie by the public, the Parisian press named Miss Massis' performance a new ideal for the role. Some observers have focused on Miss Massis' spectacularly successful international career as a singer while others have noted the remarkable affinity with her chosen repertoire and compared her with the great nineteenth-century French sopranos Laure Cinti-Damoreau and Julie Dorus Gras. In the wake of her superb success as Princesse Eudoxie, Miss Massis was awarded, on 7 March 2007, the medal of the **Chevalier dans l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres**, France's highest civilian honor bestowed on artists.

In April 2007, Miss Massis renewed her interest in Mozart repertoire by giving her first performances of Donna Anna in **Don Giovanni**, a major new role, at the Teatro Verdi in Trieste. Following this new addition to her repertoire, this most Italianate of French singers experienced another milestone in her career when she débuted at the festival at the Arena di Verona. She then returned to the familiar territory of Rossini with **Il Barbiere di Siviglia** in a production by Hugo de Ana. Singing her first Rosina in Italy, Miss Massis brought French ambiance to the role by singing the alternate aria for Rosina composed by Rossini for soprano Joséphine Fodor-Mainvielle, who sang Rosina in the Paris premiere of *Barbiere di Siviglia*.

Miss Massis began the 2007-08 season by returning to New York for the season-opening new production of **Lucia di Lammermoor** by Mary Zimmerman, conducted by James Levine.

Following in the 2007-08 season were a gala of operatic arias in Japan, performances of *La Sonnambula* in Belgium; a début with the Opéra de Monte Carlo as Donna Anna; performances of **Lucie de Lammermoor** (Donizetti's 1839 French version of *Lucia* for Paris' Théâtre de la Renaissance) at Amsterdam's Concertgebouw; a recital of operatic arias with which she made her

début in Moscow; and a new production of **Les Pêcheurs de Perles** in Italy. Miss Massis ended the 2007-08 season with a new production of Lucia at Rome's Baths of Caracalla.

A deluge of new roles awaits Miss Massis in the 2008-09 season. The season begins in September 2008 with Ravel's shimmering **L'Enfant et les Sortilèges** with Sir Simon Rattle. This is followed by Miss Massis' first collaboration with Concerto Köln, in an October concert of **Baroque arias** for Amsterdam's Concertgebouw. She then sings Violetta in **La Traviata** for the first time in Italy in December, followed in January 2009 by the four heroines in Offenbach's **Les Contes d'Hoffmann**, sung at the particular invitation of the Opéra de Nice. She returns to La Scala in the spring for the Contessa di Folleville (a role created in the opera's 1825 premiere by Laure Cinti Damoreau, incidentally) in Rossini's **Il Viaggio a Reims**, followed by her first Gilda from **Rigoletto** in Italy, conducted by Daniel Oren.

For more information, please visit Miss Massis' official website at <http://www.annickmassis.com>. Check often, as new features and videos are added regularly. Merci beaucoup!

Note:

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