

Annick Massis

soprano

After earning two university degrees, Annick Massis made her debut at the Capitole of Toulouse in 1991.

In the same season, her performance of the title role of **La Finta Giardinera** by Mozart (Nantes Opera House) attracted the public's attention.

Spotted by Gabriel Dussurget, she met Bernard Thomas, with whom she gave numerous concerts of sacred music by Vivaldi, Pergolesi and Bach.

Mozart would be very present during her formative year: **Le Nozze di Figaro** (Opéra Bastille, Paris, 1994), and numerous concerts with the **Mass in C minor**, the **Requiem**, **Exultate Jubilate**, etc.

Alongside Jean Claude Malgoire, William Christie and Marc Minkowski, she explored the French Baroque back in the great sacred works of Handel. The public and the specialised press noted and hailed her as one of the leading figures of the generation that placed the French baroque on the repertoire to stay. She scored major personal successes with these works, both on the stage and on disc, which included **Hippolyte & Aricie** (Opéra de Versailles, Festival de Beaune, Arsenal de Metz 1994, Opéra Garnier, Paris 1996, Opéra de Caen 1997), a triumph in **La Folie dans Platée** (Paris, 1999), **Les Indes Galantes** (Opéra de Versailles (1994), Opéra de Paris (2000), **The Messiah** (1994)), and as many references on disc with Minkowsky, **Les Motets Romains** and **La Ressurezione** by Handel, **Te Deum** and **Messe de Minuit** by Charpentier, **Anacréon**, **Hippolyte and Aricie** by Rameau.

In 1992, she was offered her first French coloratura role by Pierre Jourdan at the Théâtre Impérial de Compiègne, where she immediately made a name for herself as Philine in **Mignon** by Ambroise Thomas. A gallery of portraits of French heroines would follow: Ophélie (**Hamlet** 1994, Théâtre de Rouen, staged by John Cox), Micaela (**Carmen** 1996, Salle Favart in Paris), **La Dame Blanche** by Boieldieu (recorded for EMI alongside Rockwell Blake, 1995), Philine again (Compiègne, 1996), Marie (**La Fille du Régiment** 1997, Grand Théâtre de Genève, 2000, Théâtre de Bordeaux), Eurydice (**Orphée aux enfers** by Offenbach, 1997, Geneva), Leila (**Les Pêcheurs de Perles**, 1998).

Exhibiting remarkable musical curiosity, she added romantic roles to her impressive and varied repertoire: Musetta (**La Bohème** 1993, Théâtre de Rouen, 1996, Salle Favart, Paris), Anna (**Die lustigen Weiber von Windsor** 1995, Salle Favart, Paris), Carolina (**Il Matrimonio Segreto**, 1996, Opéra de Nantes), Rezia (**Les Pèlerins à la Mecque**, 1998, Opéra de Caen, Opéra de Montpellier).

She played Rosina in Rossini's **Il Barbiere di Siviglia**, in a project that alternated the higher-pitched French version with the Italian version for mezzo soprano (Salle Favart, Paris 1995). She added Isabella to her repertoire (**L'Inganno Felice**, Deauville, 1996), and recorded for Erato.

She triumphed in Cunégonde in the French creation of Leonard Bernstein's **Candide** (L'Esplanade de Saint Etienne, Opéra de Nancy, Opéra Royal de Wallonie in Belgium, Opéra de Tours, Opéra comique, etc. 1995).

In 1997, Annick Massis took on two roles that would dominate Annick Massis's repertoire for some time to come, and define an impressive series of international debuts in major opera houses, the Comtesse Adèle in Rossini's **Comte Ory** (alongside Rockwell Blake, staged by John Cox for Paris), and Donizetti's **Lucia di Lammermoor** (Théâtre des Arts Rouen).

These two roles will remain the ones Annick Massis has performed the most often to this day.

In 1997, she made her international debut at the Glyndebourne Festival in Rossini's **Compte Ory**, staged by Jerome Savary. She was involved the following year for the same opera (now available on DVD).

Since then, her international career would register an ever-increasing geographic and artistic expansion.

She brought her Ophélie to the Washington Concert Opera (Lissner Auditorium); performed **Lucia di Lammermoor** (staged by Nicolas Joël), and while in Washington was offered the role of Leila (Bizet's **Les Pêcheurs de Perles**).

Annick Massis has become widely associated with the role of Leila, and her interpretation of this role is unanimously acclaimed as the benchmark vocally and stylistically. She remains much in demand for this role

Through her musical commitments she has also met Emmanuel Rosenthal and Michel Plasson (Toulouse, 1997), Trevor Pinnock (**The Messiah**, Paris, 1998), George Prêtre (Théâtre des Champs Elysées, Paris, 1992, **Gloria** Poulenc).

The Opéra d'Avignon offered her debut in the role of Elvira in Bellini's **I Puritani** (1999).

Back in the United States, she performed in Bellini's **Capuleti ed I Montecchi** (1991) for the first time. Alongside Vesselina Kasarova and Gregory Kunde, she offered a graceful Giuletta under the baton of Eve Queler for her debut at the Avery Fischer Hall in New York.

Then it was again the Comte Ory for the Corum de Montpellier, where she met Alberto Zedda for the first time. This meeting would blossom into a deep artistic friendship and several major projects.

Annick Massis has sung at the Royal Albert Hall during the Nights of the Proms, where she triumphed in a programme of French arias, including a legendary mad-scene of Ophélie.

She made her debut at the Gran Teatre del Liceu in Barcelona (2000) in Donizetti's **Lucia di Lammermoor**, staged by Graham Vick and conducted by Bertrand de Billy, and at the Teatro Real of Madrid in Bellini's **La Sonnambula**, under the baton of Richard Bonyngé.

She broached Verdi with her first Gilda in **Rigoletto** (Saint Etienne, 2000).

She sang Ophélie in Ambroise Thomas's **Hamlet** alongside Ludovic Tézier at the Teatro Regio de Torino – the first performances in the original French given in Italy since the work was premiered in that theater in 1881.

New triumphs followed in Toulouse with a new Comtesse Adèle for the **Comte Ory** (Rockwell Blake) and a new Philine for Ambroise Thomas's **Mignon**, staged by Nicolas Joël, where she scored an immense personal triumph.

She gave concerts at the time in Paris (Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, 2000), Covent Garden (London 2001), and the Opéra de Lausanne, the Grand Teatre del Liceu in Barcelona, Staatsoper in Hamburg, Lugano, Grenoble, etc.

Against the background of the tragic attacks of September 2001 in New York, Annick Massis met Christoph Eschenbach. He expressed the desire to dedicate Debussy's **Le Martyre de Saint Sébastien** to the memory of the victims of those attacks. The Canadian singer initially scheduled was grounded in the United States, and he convinced Annick Massis to sing the double part of the Voix céleste and the Ame de Sébastien, at a moment's notice. With a cast that included Ludmilla Mikaël, this season opening concert at Pleyel, marked the beginning of a series of collaborations between the conductor and the singer.

Again for Eschenbach, she accepted the **Freischutz** (2002), again in Paris, for the rare Weber / Berlioz French version.

Annick Massis sang Mademoiselle Silberklang (Mozart's **Der Schauspieldirektor**, 2002) for her debut at the La Cornua Festival in Spain, at the invitation of Alberto Zedda. Finally, on disc, **Persée et Andromède** by Jacques Ibert (2002), under the baton of Jan Latham Koenig, for Avie.

November 2001 saw one of the most ambitious projects in her Bel canto repertoire. She did her first performance of the rarely heard **Maria di Rohan** by Donizetti at the Grand Théâtre de Genève with Evelino Pido.

On the Bel canto front, it is also worth noting Bellini's **La Sonnambula** for Alberto Zedda in Belgium and in France, Donizetti's **Lucia di Lammermoor** for her debut at the Pittsburgh Opera and the Festival d'Antibes alongside Rolando Villazon.

The 2002-2003 season saw her first recording collaboration with Opera Rara of the title role in Giacomo Meyerbeer's **Margherita d'Anjou**. While at it, she performed this absolute rarity in concert at the Royal Festival Hall with the London Symphony Orchestra conducted by David Parry.

She then gave several concerts at the Festival de Lacoste, the Théâtre du Jorat in Switzerland, at Aix les Bains, Madrid, etc. She again broached Mozart with the Great **Mass in C minor** for Ivor Bolton and the Maggio Musicale di Firenze, as well as the **Requiem** for Pinchas Steinberg at the Victoria Hall in Geneva.

In December 2002, she made her debut at the Metropolitan Opera of New York alongside Marcello Alvarez. She was the first French singer since Lily Pons to sing **Lucia di Lammermoor** on this stage.

A triumphal return followed at the Opera Comique de Paris with a new series of the **Comte Ory** staged by Savary (2003).

She sang her Her first Teresa in Hector Berlioz's **Benvenuto Cellini** for Christoph Eschenbach at the Théâtre Mogador.

After concerts of Pergolesi, Handel (Lacoste, Antibes, Châteaudun, Thirion Gardais), and Haydn and Mozart (Paris, Cascavelle CD recording), she returned to **Lucia di Lammermoor** for the Opéra de Nice.

She triumphed in a Bel canto programme in the Salle Gaveau with Marco Zambelli, with excerpts from **Semiramide, Lucia di Lammermoor, Vêpres Siciliennes, Maria di Rohan, Attila...**

Annick Massis then offered a brand new programme of French *mélodies* and Lieder by Viardot, Ravel, Debussy and Strauss for her debut at the Opéra de la Monnaie in Brussels, accompanied by Jean Philippe Collard.

In February 2004, she triumphed in Handel's **Semele** for the Théâtre des Champs Elysées in Paris, a new production by David MacVicar conducted by Marc Minkowski. This performance was considered one of the high points of the Parisian season.

Annick Massis made her debut also at the Fenice in Venice (Teatro Malibran 2004), in a new production of Bizet's **Les Pêcheurs de Perles** (CD & DVD with Dynamic), under the double invitation of Pier Luigi Pizzi and Maestro Marcello Viotti.

In connection with these performances, and at Viotti's request, she gave a concert performance of **Les Pêcheurs de Perles** in Munich .

She then made her debut at the Opernhaus of Zurich in Rameau's **Les Boréades**, a high point of baroque music, headed by the Minkowski – Pelly duo. She took the occasion to say her goodbye's to Rameau and head for new Bel canto and lyrical challenges of her repertoire.

In August 2004, Annick Massis made her debut at the prestigious Rossini Opera Festival in Pesaro, at the invitation of Maestro Alberto Zedda. Long dominated by Italian and American Belcanto personalities, the festival was to offer her one of the greatest artistic and media apotheoses of her career. She appeared alongside Juan Diego Florez, in the title role of the very rare **Matilde di Shabran**, in a new production by Mario Martone.

The performance was recorded by Decca for a CD release, thereby filling an important gap in Rossinian discography. Annick Massis's performance bestowed on **Matilde di Shabran** the place this work deserved to in in Rossini's catalogue.

Invited again by the Opernhaus of Zurich in November 2004, she performed **Lucia di Lammermoor** in a production by Robert Carsen under the baton of Ralph Weikert.

Important recording highlights occurred in January 2005, with the re-release of Ambroise Thomas's **Mignon**, the appearance of Bizet's **Les Pêcheurs de Perles** on CD and DVD, and two complete works of Donizetti with Opera Rara, in the titles roles of **Francesca di Foix** and **Elvira**.

She sang Beethoven's **9th Symphony** in Paris for Yutaka Sado and while at it, recorded a new opus for his firm Opera Rara in pieces by Pacini (**Contestabile di Chester**) and Mercadante (**Virginia**).

In April 2005 she made her debut at the Scala of Milan in the role of Almirena in Handel's **Rinaldo**, in a production by Pizzi.

She then embarked on a second tour of Japan in May with a reprise of Bizet's **Les Pêcheurs de Perles** and the forces of the Fenice of Venice.

In 2005, another groundbreaking role with her first **Marguerite de Valois** in the Huguenots by Giacomo Meyerbeer.

After singing Cherubini's **Messe de Chimay** at the Festival d'Antibes, the season was brought to a close in Italy with the critics' "La Siola d'Oro" award, bestowed on her, as it was to Mariella Devia and June Anderson, for her contribution to the Italian Bel canto and French Romantic repertoire.

In September 2005, she started the season by participating in the homage paid by the Fenice to Pier Luigi Pizzi alongside, in particular, Daniella Dessi, Raina Kabaivanska and Mariella Devia.

In November 2005, still in Venice (Teatro de la Fenice), she sang her first Princesse Eudoxie in Halévy's **La Juive**.

She also made her debut at the Vienna Staatsoper in December 2005 in Donizetti's **Lucia di Lammermoor**.

In the last quarter of the season she took up the role of Giunia in Mozart's **Lucio Silla**. A project for the Fenice of Venice again, in June, and a new production by Jurg Flimm, which also saw her make her debut at the Salzburg Festival in July 2006. The performance was recorded on DVD by Deutsche Grammophon.

In September 2006, she made her acclaimed debut at the Deutsche Oper of Berlin, where she opened the season alongside Juan Diego Florez in Bellini's **La Sonnambula**. The press praised "the best contemporary Bel canto couple" to the skies, while comparing the poetry and musicality of her Amina to the remembrance of Maria Callas.

Invited again in Vienna in November, she gave her first European performances of **La Traviata Traviata** (she did her debut in this role in Pittsburgh with John Mauceri) under the baton of Friedrich Haider, and in December, again at the Staatsoper, a new emotional role for Gounod's **Roméo et Juliette** staged by Jurgen Flimm.

In February and March 2007, she triumphed in the role of Princess Eudoxie in the return of Halévy's **La Juive** at the Opéra Bastille in Paris. This work had not been staged in Paris in well over 70 years. Conducted by Daniel Oren, this new production was the highlight of the Parisian opera season. After the triumphal reception accorded to her by the Parisian public, the press defined her performance as a new reference for this role. Whereas some would underscore the singer's international stature, others stressed the obvious affinity with the repertoire and fame of Laure Cinti Damoreau or Julie Dorus Gras. For her performance in this opera, she received the insignia of Chevalier dans l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres.

In April 2007, she assumed a new major role, Donna Anna, in Mozart's **Don Giovanni** for her debut at the Teatro Verdi in Trieste.

In 2007, she made her debut at the festival of Verona - a new milestone for the most Italian of French opera singers. Then back to Rossini with **Il Barbiere di Siviglia** in a new production by Hugo de Anna.

Annick Massis performed her first Rosina in Italy by imposing her French signature, the alternative aria that Rossini offered to Fodor-Mainvielle in Paris.

Annick Massis started her 2007-2008 season by returning to New York.

Invited again to the Metropolitan for the opening performance of the season, she will sing in the new production of Donizetti's **Lucia di Lammermoor** under the baton of James Levine.

A gala of opera arias in Japan, new performances of **La Sonnambula** (Belgium), Donna Anna (Debut in Monte Carlo), **Lucie de Lammermoor** (role in the French edition for the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam), and a new production of **Les Pêcheurs de Perles** for Italy are to follow.

For more information , please visit : www.annickmassis.com

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Note:

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