

To honor the Jewish High Holidays, which begin this week, the WCPE Opera House is proud to present Camille Saint-Saëns's *Samson et Dalila* (Samson and Delilah). Loosely based on an episode in the Book of Judges in the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament), it's notable for its superb choruses, lavish spectacle, and the sensuous beauty of Dalila's music. Interestingly, the opera--a staple of the French repertoire--had its premiere in Weimar, Germany—in German—on December 2, 1877, thanks to Franz Liszt, who directed the Court Opera there. Paris did not see *Samson* until 1890, at the Théâtre Eden, and the Paris Opéra--which long objected to portraying biblical subjects onstage--did not capitulate until 1892.

The story takes place in Gaza. Samson (tenor **Plácido Domingo**) leads a successful Hebrew revolt against their Philistine overlords, in which the ruler Abimélech (bass **Jean-Philippe Courtis**) is killed. Prompted by the High Priest of Dagon (baritone **Alain Fondary**), the Philistine seductress Dalila (mezzo-soprano **Waltraud Meier**) renders Samson powerless by cutting off his hair, from which his strength is derived. Finally, Samson's strength is restored to him through prayer, and he pulls down the Temple of Dagon, killing his enemies and himself.

Myung-Whun Chung conducts the chorus and orchestra of the Bastille Opera in this 1992 EMI Classics recording, CD number 54470.

Rita Gorr is joined by **Jon Vickers** in "Mon coeur s'ouvre a ta voix":
https://youtu.be/R_QmJXpK5Fw.

As a bonus we'll celebrate the career of Bulgarian bass **Nicolai Ghiaurov**, who was born on September 13, 1929. We'll hear him in arias and duets from Gounod's *Faust*, Verdi's *Don Carlo*, and Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov*.

Be sure to join us next Thursday, September 20th, for an encore broadcast of George Frideric Handel's *Amadigi di Gaula*, hosted by the late **Al Ruocchio** (1937-2007). **Nathalie Stutzmann** sings the title role. She's joined by **Bernarda Fink** (Prince of Trace), **Jennifer Smith** (Oriana), **Eiddwen HARRY** (Melissa), and **Pascal Bertin** (Orgando). **Mark Minkowski** conducts Les Musiciens du Louvre in this 1991 Warner Classics recording, CD number 4677016.

The Opera House is heard every Thursday evening at 7 o'clock in the Eastern time zone on 89.7 FM in central North Carolina. We're streamed "live" online at <http://www.theclassicalstation.org>, or you can listen on WCPE's Android or iPhone apps.