

The Vocality of Sibyl Sanderson in Massenet's Manon and Esclarmonde: Musical Training and Critical Response

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Abstract : This presentation will address the vocality of American soprano Sibyl Sanderson (1865-1903) in Massenet's Manon and Esclarmonde as discernible from documentary sources such as vocal treatises, annotated scores, and correspondence. These sources will then be compared and contrasted with Sanderson's reception in French press. Sanderson sang Manon in 1888, which Massenet revised for her. She then created the role of Esclarmonde for the 1889 l'Exposition Universelle in Paris. The soprano appeared as the Byzantine Empress more than 100 times in the nine months following the premiere, which secured her fame and an international operatic career fraught with controversy and criticism as well as adulation. Before her débuts as Manon and Esclarmonde, Sanderson received musical training in California and Paris from multiple teachers with varied and opposing methods. There will be an exploration of the ways in which the disparate pedagogic influences such as those taught by Giovanni Sbriglia and Jean de Reszké may have guided Sanderson's vocal strategies, and possibly caused or promoted the severe vocal pathologies she battled in subsequent years. In addition, there is interrogation of the vocal writing and revisions made to the titular roles for Sanderson in order to assess how these factors may have affected her technique and vocal health.

Keywords : French, nineteenth-century, opera, pedagogy, vocality

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