

MASSENET'S *THAÏS*: A COMPARISON BETWEEN THE STAGINGS
IN THE *LIVRET DE MISE EN SCÈNE* F-Pbh T 8 (1) AND THE
METROPOLITAN OPERA'S 2008 PRODUCTION

by

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THESIS ABSTRACT

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Title: Massenet's *Thaïs*: A Comparison Between the Stagings in the *Livret de Mise en Scène* F-Pbh T 8 (1) and the Metropolitan Opera's 2008 Production

The evidence found through comparing and contrasting staging manuals strongly suggests that Massenet might have been involved in the staging of his operas. Several important differences, which include the implications of the use of a chair versus a bed in the final scene, are presented through a comparison of the final duet of Massenet's Opera *Thaïs* in a restaging from the *livret de mise en scène* F-Pbh T 8 (1) with the Metropolitan Opera's 2008 production. In addition, a probable date between the premiere in 1894 and the revision in 1898 for the *livret de mise en scène* F-Pbh T 8 (1) is deliberated. Three staging manuals for *Thaïs* are examined, which were found to contain the same information, and these findings are contrasted with four staging materials for Massenet's opera *Manon* and several other staging materials for works by various composers.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Livrets de mise en scène are staging manuals that were often printed for 19th century French operas, for the purpose of reproducing subsequent productions of the respective opera. Gossett states, “Intended to assist in provincial restagings of works originally performed in Paris, these staging manuals quickly gained importance as well for revivals in the capital itself.”¹ These manuals are important for the wealth of information they contain about the production of French opera in the 19th century. Each manual varies from the next, but many contain detailed descriptions of the set design, costumes, accessories, and, most importantly, gesture, movements, and the overall staging of the opera. As H. Robert Cohen states, “staging manuals contain very detailed indications of the stage action—including a complete list of the entries, exits, gestures, movements and positions of the principal characters and supernumeraries, localized by means of word cues or by reference to specific passages in the musical score.”² In addition to these staging manuals, there are annotated librettos and scores with similar information.

These materials provide us with further insight into the staging of French opera in the 19th century. They are primarily located in several libraries in Paris, with the largest

¹ Philip Gossett, Preface to *Cent ans de mise en scène lyrique en France (env. 1830–1930) = One hundred years of operatic staging in France: catalogue descriptif des livrets de mise en scène, des libretti annotés et des partitions annotées dans la Bibliothèque de l'Association de la régie théâtrale (Paris)*, (New York: Pendragon Press, 1986), x.

² H. Robert H. Cohen, and Marie-Odile Gigou, *Cent ans de mise en scène lyrique en France (env. 1830–1930) = One hundred years of operatic staging in France: catalogue descriptif des livrets de mise en scène, des libretti annotés et des partitions annotées dans la Bibliothèque de l'Association de la régie théâtrale (Paris)*, (New York: Pendragon Press, 1986), xl.

and most important collection in France housed at the Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris. H. Robert Cohen's book *Cent ans de mise en scène lyrique en France (env. 1830–1930)* is an invaluable annotated catalog of this collection.³

Livret de mise en scène can be roughly translated into English as staging manual, and the Italian equivalent is *disposizione scenica*. Certain sources also refer to these staging manuals as production books. Most of the work done with these staging manuals is in regard to the Italian *disposizioni sceniche*. Though a few staging manuals have been translated or republished for circulation today, none of these are for Massenet's operas. All of the *livrets de mise en scène* for Massenet's works were still sitting in the archives of libraries in Paris, and H. Robert Cohen's catalog listed numerous staging manuals for Massenet's operas. In particular, the book noted three staging manuals for Massenet's *Thaïs*.

I studied and photographed the three staging manuals for *Thaïs* in the Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris. F-Pbh T 8 (1) is a published manuscript, and F-Pbh Mes 75 (2) and F-Pbh Mes 20 (2) are unpublished manuscripts that appear to have been copied from F-Pbh T 8 (1). Through a close examination of these three staging manuals, I discovered notable similarities among them. These similarities suggest that *Thaïs* had one particular staging, and that this staging was intended to be replicated with each production, whether at the same house or at a new venue. The primary focus of this

³ H. Robert H. Cohen, and Marie-Odile Gigou, *Cent ans de mise en scène lyrique en France (env. 1830–1930) = One hundred years of operatic staging in France: catalogue descriptif des livrets de mise en scène, des libretti annotés et des partitions annotées dans la Bibliothèque de l'Association de la régie théâtrale* (Paris), xl.

project is on F-Pbh T 8(1) and how it can deepen the meaning of the music through the staging.

The final duet between Thaïs and Athanaël is discussed in Chapter II. As part of this project I restaged the final duet based upon the information found in F-Pbh T 8 (1) and recorded it. This restaging demonstrated the clarity that these staging manuals can bring to the music through the use of movement. The staging from F-Pbh T 8 (1) is then compared to the staging in the Metropolitan Opera's 2008 production of *Thaïs* with Renée Fleming and Thomas Hampson to show the differences between the two stagings and the implications that these changes can have for the music.

The date for F-Pbh T 8 (1) is unknown. In Chapter III a possible date for the staging manual F-Pbh T 8 (1) is discussed through a comparison of the staging manuals for *Thaïs* and a close examination of F-Pbh T 8 (1). In order to demonstrate that the basis of the information contained in F-Pbh T 8 (1) is possibly from the premiere in 1894 or the four years following it before the revision in 1898, an analysis of the material contained within the manual is necessary. This analysis is then compared with the other two manuals that are clearly from after the revision in 1898. It is important to know that F-Pbh T 8 (1) is from sometime between 1894 and 1898, as it means it contains information about the opera before its revision. The information found in the staging manuals for *Thaïs* is then contrasted with those for *Manon* to see if the findings are limited to *Thaïs*.

All of the materials examined in this project are located in the Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris. The materials for *Thaïs* include three staging manuals F-Pbh T 8 (1), F-Pbh Mes 75 (2), and F-Pbh Mes 20 (2); and for *Manon* there is a staging

manual F-Pbh M 33 (I), an annotated score F-Pbh M 33 (II), an annotated libretto F-Pbh M 33 (VI), and a second annotated libretto F-Pbh Mes 22 (3).

Literature Review

There are several staging manuals that have already been translated and published for other operas, and some work has already been done with a few of these staging manuals. The majority of this work is on Verdi's operas, but others include Meyerbeer, Donizetti, and Gounod. H. Robert Cohen has made a significant contribution to this work with his books on these staging manuals. *Cent ans de mise en scène lyrique en France (env. 1830–1930) = One hundred years of operatic staging in France: catalogue descriptif des livrets de mise en scène, des libretti annotés et des partitions annotées dans la Bibliothèque de l'Association de la régie théâtrale (Paris)* is a catalog by Cohen of the *livrets de mise en scène* that are located in the Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris.⁴

In Rebecca Wilberg's dissertation, "The *Mise en scène* at the Paris Opéra-Salle Le Peletier (1821–1873) and the Staging of the First French *Grand opéra*: Meyerbeer's *Robert Le Diable*,"⁵ she examines the staging practices of French opera in the 19th

⁴ H. Robert H. Cohen, and Marie-Odile Gigou, *Cent ans de mise en scène lyrique en France (env. 1830–1930) = One hundred years of operatic staging in France: catalogue descriptif des livrets de mise en scène, des libretti annotés et des partitions annotées dans la Bibliothèque de l'Association de la régie théâtrale* (Paris).

⁵ Rebecca S. Wilberg, "The *Mise en scène* at the Paris Opéra-Salle Le Peletier (1821–1873) and the Staging of the First French *Grand opéra*: Meyerbeer's *Robert Le Diable*" Thesis (Ph. D.), (Brigham Young University, 1990).

century in light of the social, cultural, and political circumstances that created it.⁶ Her work is an excellent resource, as she looks into the reasons that stagings have changed along with the views on the motives behind the grandiose stagings of French *grand opéra*. In regard to the changes of stage design in modern productions of French *grand opéra* she states, “Most modern stages are not equipped with the space or technical prowess to deal with these works as they were originally envisioned.”⁷ Wilberg studies the *livret de mise en scène* for Meyerbeer’s *Robert Le Diable*. She also considers the *mise en scène* and its role in grand opera. In addition, she helps to clarify some of the terminology that is present in the staging manuals, such as *rampe* for footlights and *portants* for wing-lights.⁸

“Analyzing Mise-en-Scène: Halévy’s *La juive* at the Salle Le Peletier”⁹ by Arnold Jacobshagen shows that staging manuals are a not necessarily a record of the staging from the opera’s premiere. He demonstrates this with two staging manuals for the opera *La juive* by Halévy. Jacobshagen investigates the possible date of Palianti’s production book for *La juive* and the differences between Palianti and Duverger’s staging manuals for this opera. Jacobshagen explains how these production books were not used for all subsequent reproductions of the opera, because the evidence from the changes between

⁶ Rebecca S. Wilberg, “The *Mise en scène* at the Paris Opéra-Salle Le Peletier (1821–1873) and the Staging of the First French *Grand opéra*: Meyerbeer’s Robert Le Diable,” xi.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 361.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 119- 120.

⁹ Arnold Jacobshagen, “Analyzing Mise-en-Scène: Halévy’s *La juive* at the Salle Le Peletier,” in Annegret Fauser and Mark Everist, eds., *Music, Theater, and Cultural Transfer: Paris, 1830–1914*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 176–194.

Palianti and Duverger's production books suggests that the staging for *La juive* changed over several decades. This means that Palianti's production book is not from the premiere and that staging manuals are not necessarily from their respective operas' premiere as had previously been thought. In addition, Jacobshagen notes that the purpose of each staging manual should be discussed on an individual basis relative to the circumstances that created that specific staging manual.¹⁰

Douglas Coe's article "The Original Production Book for *Otello*: An Introduction"¹¹ goes through the *disposizione scenica* for *Otello* and explains some of the blocking and other movements. He focuses on the quartet in Act 2 and the scene between Desdemona and Otello in Act 3. He points out that the quartet is staged so that there are basically two scenes occurring simultaneously on stage. To stage right are Emilia and Iago arguing over the handkerchief and to stage left is Desdemona pleading with Otello, who is absorbed in his thoughts concerning Desdemona. This scene is fairly static, but the music is complex and reduces the need for considerable blocking.¹²

The staging in the scene from Act 3 between Desdemona and Otello, as Coe argues, gives contrast to the quartet in Act 2. Here the blocking is carefully thought out and helps to depict the emotional changes in the characters. The idea of a power side comes into play, as Desdemona steps to stage left of Otello for the first time when she is trying to assert her power. Otello then physically moves her back to his right through a

¹⁰ Arnold Jacobshagen, "Analyzing Mise-en-Scène: Halévy's *La juive* at the Salle Le Peletier," 194.

¹¹ Douglas Coe, "The Original Production Book for *Otello*: An Introduction," in *19th-Century Music* vol. 1, (1978–1979), 148–158.

¹² *Ibid.*, 154–155.

series of movements in the following phrases of music.¹³ Coe asserts that these examples show how the staging manuals can help deepen the knowledge about the characters.¹⁴

Andrew Porter helped restage two productions of Verdi's *La forza del destino* using production books. The first was in 1980 at Irvine, California, and the second was at the Seattle opera in 1984. He briefly discusses these in his response to James Hepokoski's "Staging Verdi's Operas: The Single, 'Correct' Performance" in *Verdi in Performance*.¹⁵ Porter notes that "drawing on them (production books) in certain structural aspects may well help to provide a clearer and more effective musical execution of the scores."¹⁶

David Rosen's "The Staging of Verdi's Operas: An Introduction to the Ricordi *Disposizioni sceniche*"¹⁷ covers several areas that "reveal the fascination of these documents."¹⁸ One is the scene changes within acts and how these changes occurred without stopping the opera, as is typical of scene changes between acts. One of the ways scene changes occurred within acts is through the use of lighting as noted in the staging manuals, and how the lighting usually changes only for natural occurrences in Verdi's

¹³ Douglas Coe, "The Original Production Book for *Otello*: An Introduction," 155–156.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 158.

¹⁵ Roger Parker and Alison Latham, eds., *Verdi in Performance*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

¹⁶ Andrew Porter, "In Praise of the Pragmatic," in Roger Parker and Alison Latham, eds., *Verdi in Performance*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 23.

¹⁷ David Rosen, "The Staging of Verdi's Operas: An Introduction to the Ricordi *Disposizioni sceniche*," in Daniel Hertz and Bonnie C. Wade, eds., *Interdisciplinary Horizons in the Study of Music Traditions, East and West: The Twelfth Congress of the International Musicological Society, August 21–7, 1977, University of California, Berkeley California; Final Report*, (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1981), 444–453.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 447.

operas.¹⁹ Another topic is how blocking can help define the characters because the emotions of the characters are explained through the blocking in the staging manual, and this can guide singers toward a desired interpretation.²⁰ Overall, Rosen is trying to demonstrate that the staging manuals are not just for stage directors and specifics about set designs, but they contain insights about the characters and can be used by anyone researching these operas.

In “Stanislavsky’s *La Bohème*”²¹ Rosen discusses Stanislavsky’s work with opera productions and focuses primarily on his work in the 1927 production of *La Bohème* in Moscow. The idea behind Stanislavsky working with the opera singers was to bring the level of acting in opera up to that of the Bolshoi, one of the major theaters in Moscow at the time.²² Rosen points out that Stanislavsky would deviate at times from the direction in the score, but for purposes that he felt furthered the plot. Stanislavsky was also a proponent of realistic and conservative sets in contrast to the modern ones of his contemporaries.²³ In addition, Rosen is the editor of the recent republication of some of the Ricordi staging manuals for Verdi’s operas.

¹⁹ David Rosen, “The Staging of Verdi’s Operas: An Introduction to the Ricordi *Disposizioni sceniche*,” 449.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 451.

²¹ David Rosen, “Stanislavsky’s *La Bohème* (1927),” in Roberta Montemorra Marvin and Hilary Poriss, eds., *Fashions and Legacies of Nineteenth-Century Italian Opera*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

²² *Ibid.*, 221.

²³ *Ibid.*, 225.

The anthology *Opera on Stage*²⁴ edited by Lorenzo Bianconi and Giorgio Pestelli and translated by Kate Singleton contains several articles that give general background information about staging in opera. Some of these include “Stage and Set”²⁵ by Mercedes Viale Ferrero and “Directing Opera”²⁶ by Gerardo Guccini. These deal primarily with Italian opera, but the information allows for a comparison between stagings in Italian and French opera. In “Stage and Set” Ferrero examines several qualities of Verdi’s operas. She does briefly mention the early production books for *Giovanna de Guzman* in 1856, which were based upon the French staging of *Les vêpres siciliennes* in Paris in 1855. She notes that the first wholly Italian staging manual was for *Un ballo in maschera* in 1859, and that the staging manuals grew in length with time. The production book for *Un ballo in maschera* in 1859 was thirty-eight pages, and by the time Verdi got to *Aida* in 1872, the production book contained sixty-eight pages.²⁷

Allan Mallach’s *The Autumn of Italian Opera: from Verismo to Modernism 1890–1915*²⁸ has a section dealing with Ricordi and the publishing of staging manuals, as well as chapters on Verdi and other characteristics of verismo operas. In “Staging and the

²⁴ Lorenzo Bianconi and Giorgio Pestelli, *Opera on Stage*, trans. Kate Singleton, orig. published as *Storia dell’opera Italiani*, vol. 5: *La Spettacolarità*, 1988, *E.D.T. Edizioni di Torino*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

²⁵ Mercedes Viale Ferrero, “Stage and Set,” in Lorenzo Bianconi and Giorgio Pestelli, eds., *Opera on Stage*, trans. Kate Singleton, orig. published as *Storia dell’opera Italiani*, vol. 5: *La Spettacolarità*, 1988, *E.D.T. Edizioni di Torino*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 80–115.

²⁶ Gerardo Guccini, “Directing Opera,” in Lorenzo Bianconi and Giorgio Pestelli, eds., *Opera on Stage*, trans. Kate Singleton, orig. published as *Storia dell’opera Italiani*, vol. 5: *La Spettacolarità*, 1988, *E.D.T. Edizioni di Torino*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 157–170.

²⁷ Mercedes Viale Ferrero, “Stage and Set,” 97–98.

²⁸ Allan Mallach, *The Autumn of Italian Opera: from Verismo to Modernism, 1880–1915*, (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2007).

disposizione scenica” Mallach explains that the responsibility of staging an opera in Italy transitioned from the theater poet to the conductor in the 19th century. The exception to this was the premiere of an opera, at which point the composer would step in to help with the staging. As stagings became more complex, it became too much for any one individual, and Verdi suggested that the Italians take on the tradition of the French *livrets de mise en scène* to facilitate.²⁹

There were two main publishers in Italy, and the individuals managing these companies were Giulio Ricordi and Edoardo Sonzogno. The publishers held the rights to the operas, because the composers had to sell the opera to the publisher in order to get the opera performed. At the height of their power in the second half of the 19th century, the publishers had control over nearly all components of the operatic repertoire in Italy, including which companies could perform the opera, who would sing the roles, and even who would conduct the opera.³⁰

There are other examples of research on the stagings of Verdi’s operas and the *disposizione scenica*, one of which is Emanuele Senici’s “Words and Music.”³¹ Senici discusses how Verdi created an interdependence between words and music, where neither can be fully understood without the other, and that together they create drama.³² Another

²⁹ Allan Mallach, *The Autumn of Italian Opera: from Verismo to Modernism, 1880–1915*, 200–202.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 208–213.

³¹ Emanuele Senici, “Words and Music,” in Scott Leslie Balthazar, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Verdi*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004), 88–110.

³² *Ibid.*

is Gilles De Van's *Verdi's Theater: Creating Drama Through Music*.³³ De Van covers the theatrical side of Verdi's operas, including his use of melodrama and musical drama. Others include James Hepokoski's *Giuseppe Verdi, Otello*;³⁴ "Otello" in Thomas Forest Kelly's *First Nights*,³⁵ which is about the premieres of five famous operas; Andrea Giger's "Staging and form in Giuseppe Verdi's *Otello*";³⁶ and Harold Powers' "La dama velata."³⁷

In 2011 Dawn Urista restaged and compared the Mad Scene from the ballet *Giselle*. She based one staging on Henri Justamant's notebook from the 19th century, and the other on a workshop Urista took from Sorella Englund in 2010.³⁸ From the comparison, Urista found that the changes in this scene have affected the way *Giselle*'s character is perceived, as well as a decline in the amount of pantomime in modern productions.

In regard to research on Jules Massenet, Steven Huebner is one of the main scholars. His work deals greatly in part with Richard Wagner's influence on Massenet's compositions. Huebner's book *French Opera at the Fin de Siècle: Wagnerism*,

³³ Gilles De Van, *Verdi's Theater: creating drama through music*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

³⁴ James Hepokoski, *Giuseppe Verdi, Otello*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

³⁵ Thomas Forest Kelly, *First Nights at the Opera*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004).

³⁶ Andrea Giger, "Staging and form in Giuseppe Verdi's *Otello*," in Roberta Montemorra Marvin and Hilary Poriss, eds., *Fashions and Legacies of Nineteenth-Century Italian Opera*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 196–218.

³⁷ Harold Powers, "La dama velata," in Martin Chusid, ed., *Verdi's Middle Period 1849–1859—Source Studies, Analysis, and Performance Practice*, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1997), 273–339.

³⁸ Dawn Urista, "Giselle's Mad Scene: A Demonstration and Comparison of 21st Century and 19th Century Paris Opéra Stagings" Master's Thesis, (University of Oregon, 2011). <<http://hdl.handle.net/1794/11502>>.

*Nationalism, and Style*³⁹ goes into great depth on the history of thirteen operas of the late 19th century, one of which is *Thaïs*. The book contains four parts, the first of which is on Massenet and his operas *Manon*, *Esclarmonde*, *Werther*, and *Thaïs*. Huebner's article "Massenet and Wagner: Bridling the Influence"⁴⁰ specifically addresses Wagner's influence on Massenet's operas. Huebner discusses the similarities in composition, including the use of leitmotifs, between Massenet's operas *Werther* and *Esclarmonde* to that of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*.

Other resources on Massenet include Henry Fink's *Massenet and His Operas*,⁴¹ Otto T. Salzer's *The Massenet Compendium*,⁴² and James Harding's *Massenet*.⁴³ These works are primarily biographical. One fascinating but somewhat controversial resource is Massenet's *My Recollections*,⁴⁴ which is a set of stories by Massenet about various phases of his life.

This thesis helps to fill in the void of work done on the staging manuals for Massenet's operas. To my knowledge there is no research that covers these staging manuals, aside from Cohen's catalog. What has been written about Massenet covers his life and personality, Wagner's influence on him, and basic biographical information

³⁹ Steven Huebner, *French Opera at the Fin de Siècle: Wagnerism, Nationalism, and Style*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

⁴⁰ Steven Huebner, "Massenet and Wagner: Bridling the Influence," *Cambridge Opera Journal*. Vol. 5. No. 3 (Nov. 1993): 223–238.

⁴¹ Henry Theophilus Finck, *Massenet and His Operas*, (New York: John Lane, 1910).

⁴² Otto T. Salzer, *The Massenet Compendium*, (Fort Lee, N.J.: Massenet Society, American Branch, 1984).

⁴³ James Harding, *Massenet*, (London: Dent, 1970).

⁴⁴ Jules Massenet, *My Recollections*, (Boston: Small, Maynard & Co., 1919).

concerning his operas. In addition, my thesis adds to the work done on the French *livrets de mise en scène*.

CHAPTER II

STAGINGS

Restaging of the Final Duet Between Thaïs & Athanaël

Several things became apparent through restaging the final duet between Thaïs and Athanaël. First, there are two kinds of directions that are given. One is specific blocking: “stand at measure *x*.” The other is emotions: “sing *phrase x* with a feeling of urgency.” Having these two types of directions leads to more choices, as the second type is much more open to interpretation by the singer. However, the first style of direction is easier to follow and often lends a deeper understanding of the music. Other observations that surfaced include that some of the staging was added not only for dramatic effect, but to aid the singers. In addition, the set design and layout correlate perfectly with the blocking to prevent any possible injuries from extreme actions, for example falling dead from a standing position. This restaging is only a fraction of what is contained in the staging manual, but it offers insight into the workings of the staging manual and the benefits that it can provide as a reference point, if not more, to begin a production.

Certain insights became obvious almost immediately when I started to restage the final duet between Thaïs and Athanaël. The first was how difficult directing can be; there were many choices to be made in directing even as few as five to six minutes of music. The staging manual F-Pbh T 8 (1) is extremely detailed and gives considerable information to help make these decisions. However, every director’s interpretation of it will be different. This difference in interpretation is due to the level of detail found in F-Pbh T 8 (1). The detail is not in-depth to the point that there is no room for creativity. In

fact, quite the opposite is true. In restaging the final duet, the author gives just enough for the director to understand the staging of the scene but left some things up for interpretation. For instance, Athanaël does not receive a great deal of information regarding the blocking for this duet. Instead, he is given emotions to portray. Several examples are “Athanaël listens tenderly,” “Athanaël speaks with ardor,” “Anxiously he says,” and “Athanaël is feverous and speaks as though to convince.”⁴⁵ This is in stark contrast to the specific motions given to Thaïs: “On the *rall*, page 214, she rises to standing position and falls forward towards the green carpet at F.”⁴⁶

Indeed, one could say that in the final duet Thaïs is primarily given actions, and Athanaël is given emotions. Both characters receive the two kinds of directions, but each receives primarily one type or the other. The implications are that the person singing Athanaël has more choice in how to portray his character than the person singing Thaïs. Athanaël is given very little blocking. His directions are emotions, and emotions are quite subjective to each individual’s perception. This is in contrast to the specific blocking that is given to Thaïs, such as the moment she is to stand. There are artistic decisions in how she can stand, but the knowledge of her condition—being on her deathbed—helps tremendously with this choice. For example, “On the *andante religioso*, Thaïs sits up and speaks in a dream, not hearing the words of Athanaël, ‘Do you remember the water in the fountain?’ On this *andante religioso* there are three measures of orchestral music. If Thaïs sits up too quickly, there seems to be extra music. Yet, if she struggles as though it is difficult, because she is about to die, it takes up these three measures of music. The

⁴⁵ F-Pbh T 8 (1), 45, translation by Dolores Julien.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

music then allows for the character's state of being to be shown to the audience at a deeper level without words. Thaïs is given the space to struggle physically, and it brings the audience on a journey with her.

Rebecca Stuhlbarg, who portrayed Thaïs in the restaging carried out for this thesis, powerfully demonstrated the use of the space in the music. Thaïs's struggle is clear, and it gives the music meaning. The creativity with the blocking comes about as the director and singer work together to come up with the way Thaïs will struggle. This use of the music became evident only as the restaging began. The first few times we went through the staging, Rebecca found herself waiting for the music to progress to the beginning of her sung phrase. However, when she began to take the time to struggle to sit up, things flowed smoothly from the movement into the singing.

As the staging progressed, the use of the stage and the importance of the placement of items on it grew clearer. In the stage diagram the green carpet with a green cushion at F appears to be slightly stage right of the bed that Thaïs is on at the beginning of the duet. There does not appear to be a reason for this until the staging begins. Two of the first questions that were asked were: "Which way should Thaïs be lying on the bed?" and "Which way should she fall?" At first there was not a clear answer to either of these, but stage right was chosen for both, and as things progressed it became obvious that this was the correct way. When Thaïs sits up, she is then more in the middle of the bed, but still to stage left of it. The staging manual says she rises and then moves forward toward the mat. If she is to fall on the mat, she must fall to stage right, for it would be odd to have her fall to stage left, as this would put the majority of the scene out of center stage.

However, if she is standing to stage left of the mat and falls to stage right, then the scene is blocked primarily in center stage, which is most appropriate for the final duet.

Furthermore, it became clear that the mat is slightly stage right of the bed to allow for Thaïs to fall and be completely on the mat. If it were directly in front of the bed, she would need to move to the stage left edge of the mat in order to fall and not land off of the mat. This can be clearly seen in the video, as Rebecca has to shift slightly stage left to be on the edge of the mat to avoid falling and landing partly on the floor. This understanding came about by a slight mishap where Rebecca and Nevada Jones, who portrayed Athanaël in the restaging for this thesis, did not execute the fall as well as had been hoped. Rebecca nearly hit her elbow on the floor. By shifting the mat over to stage right a bit more, which would appear to follow the stage diagram more closely, this would be easily remedied. Thaïs could then stand and move straight forward without worrying about where the edge of the mat was located. In the video the mat is slightly stage right of the bed, but not enough. It was left this way to show how Rebecca moved to accommodate the mat. However, the set in the staging manual appears to have been drawn so that the staging could be executed without difficulties.

The direction from which Athanaël comes in is another detail that supports which way Thaïs should be facing. Athanaël enters from stage left. If Thaïs has her head on the stage right side of the bed, she is situated perfectly to open her eyes and see Athanaël.

The way the blocking allowed for the singer to be in the most efficient position possible to sing the most difficult part of the duet is one of the more striking facets of this staging. Thaïs begins lying down, but only says one phrase before she sits up. She then

sings nothing higher than A6, and this is only once for a quarter note. She stands at the *rallantando*, as she sings “two seraphim.” This allows for the singer to be standing while singing the two high D6s. It works extremely well with the music, as Thaïs is seeing the heavens open up. Later she raises her arms as she says, “Oh...The Heavens.” And finally she sways as she sings, “I see God” and falls to the ground dead. It is highly dramatic with the standing and falling, while giving the singers the most efficient position for the most difficult part of the duet. This means that the staging incorporates not only the musical and dramatic effects that are present in the story, but it considers the performers and the challenges the music places on them, and how they can best execute this piece.

Effects on Music from Changes in the Staging

The Final Duet

The staging in the Metropolitan Opera’s production of the final duet is quite different from what is found in the staging manual F-Pbh T 8 (1), and these changes greatly impact the scene and alter the audience’s perception of what is occurring. In the Met’s production Thaïs is seated on a chair that is raised up on a platform in a shrine-like manner. The surroundings are fairly extravagant with vases of flowers around the platform and what appears to be a tapestry behind Thaïs’s chair. Aside from the libretto, there is no way to know that she is sick and about to die.

As Athanaël enters in the Met’s production, he stays at a distance staring up at Thaïs. It is as though she is unapproachable. Later on Athanaël crosses the stage in front of where Thaïs is seated on the platform. She then stands several phrases later. He

eventually goes up to where she is seated and kneels next to her, but she is oblivious to his intentions of trying to persuade her to listen to him. She stands, and shortly thereafter he stands and moves behind her, still trying to get her attention. She is too caught up with the heavens opening up that she does not hear him. She dies and falls back into the chair. He utters a cry of pity and collapses into her lap overcome with grief.

This is in stark contrast to the staging manual. According to the staging manual, as Athanaël enters Thaïs is lying in a bed, and from the description given there is nothing elaborate about her surroundings. He comes and kneels next to her. As she stands, he stands. Then when she falls dead, he catches her and lays her down on the ground, as he falls to his knees. He looks towards the heavens as he cries, “Pity!”, then he drops his head into his hands.

These differences in staging impact this scene dramatically. By Athanaël approaching Thaïs in her bed, it could symbolize that he is coming back for what he could have had earlier, her love. However, he is too late. In contrast, by having Thaïs in a chair, it is not clear that she is about to die, nor does the undertones of the worldly love that Athanaël is coming back for come through. The chair gives more of an idea that Athanaël is worshipping Thaïs, and not so much that he is coming back to tell her he loves her and wants to be with her.

The staging manual clearly gives this strong undertone of Athanaël’s desire for Thaïs, as he approaches her in her bedroom. The only other time he was in her bedroom was at the beginning of the opera when he went to convert her. However, he was not comfortable being in her room at that time. He had come to tell her about a love that she

did know, and he wanted nothing to do with her worldly ways. Now he wants to be with her, but he has lost his chance. There was all the time that they were together that he could have made the decision, but now it is too late. She is dying and does not hear his requests for her attention. It is over, and he is left to suffer in agony over what he wanted and could have had.

In addition, the dramatic effect of Athanaël catching Thaïs, as she falls dead, is absent in the Met's production. He just watches as she falls back into the chair, and he collapses into her lap holding her knees. The blocking in the staging manual takes some rehearsing to make sure it is accomplished easily and without any injuries to the performers, but the implications that this has on the dramatic outcome is immense. Falling dead from a standing position is extreme; he has to catch her. The audience may have a moment of holding their breathe as it sinks in that Thaïs has just fallen dead, while Athanaël is left in agony and grief on his knees next to her dead body. As the curtain falls in the Met's production, Thaïs is left dead in the chair with Athanaël kneeling on the ground next to her; whereas in the staging manual she lies lifeless on the ground, as he collapses over her with his head in his hands. The staging manual creates a deeper level of understanding of Athanaël's intense desire for Thaïs's love than the Met's production, and offers more extremes in the blocking for a stronger closing scene.

Act 1, Scene 1

Further study into the differences between the Met's production and the staging manual can be found in the first scene of the opera, as there is quite a contrast between these two stagings. One of the first differences is the set design. In the Met's production

the background is a solid, deep blue, and the stage is a desert with a few large rocks and nothing more. There are no trees, tables, chairs, plates, or cups. In the staging manual, on the other hand, there is a table on stage center left with chairs for all of the Cenobites. Bread, salt, hyssop, water, and honey are all sitting on the table. There is an area of trees to the far stage right and another one behind the table. Then to stage left there is a bed.

The beginning of the scene varies between the two productions. In the Met's production when the curtain rises, the Cenobites are scattered around on the stage praying. They slowly gather bread, salt, hyssop, honey, and water; but these items are not visible onstage before the Cenobites pick them up. The Cenobites greet each other, and then they take everything to Palémon in the order of the text. After each Cenobite says his line, he goes to a rock where the others are seated. This is slightly stage right. In the staging manual, by contrast, the Cenobites are all seated around the table at the beginning of the scene. Palémon is seated in the center of the group, and his chair is raised higher than those of the others. There is no movement until they pass food around the table. The food is passed after each sung line in the respective order of the text. For instance, "Voici le pain" ("Here is the bread"), then the bread is passed.

In the score there is space in between the phrases "Voici le pain" ("Here is the bread"), "et le sel" ("and the salt"), "et l'hyssop" ("and the hyssop"), "Voici le miel" ("Here is the honey"), and "et voici l'eau" ("and here is the water"). This would allow for the Cenobites to begin to pass these items before the next phrase, as is stated in the staging manual. If the notes in the staging manual are followed, each item is taken from a different spot on the table than the previous item.

In the next part of the scene in the Met's production, the Cenobites all watch as Palémon, who is still standing, begins to speak. At this point everyone is either seated or standing at a rock that is used as a table on stage right, aside from one Cenobite who is next to Palémon. Palémon stays standing as he speaks his line, "Chaque matin ..." ("Each morning..."). In the staging manual, Palémon stands up to sing his line "Chaque matin ..." ("Each morning..."). This would be the first major movement onstage. Until this point, no one has moved, aside from passing food around the table.

The staging manual's directions clearly demonstrate Palémon's power or heightened status over the others. First, he is seated higher than everyone else, followed by his standing while everyone is seated. From the moment the curtain rises, it would be evident that Palémon is the highest-ranking person on the stage at that time. Palémon's authority is not as clear in the Met's rendition, however. The only thing that distinguishes Palémon from the other Cenobites is his hair, which is gray, while the others hair is brown. But it does not become evident that Palémon has more power or a higher ranking than the others until he is blessing the food that the Cenobites bring to him.

Up to the point of Palémon's line, the only similarity in the blocking between the staging manual and the Met's production is when the Cenobites are seated while Palémon is standing during his phrase "Chaque matin ..." ("Each morning..."). The next similarity occurs in the following phrases after Palémon's line. In the staging manual the Cenobites are to speak their line, "Que le noirs demons de l'abîme..." ("May the black demons of the abyss..."), with their heads lowered and hands joined. In the Met's production this blocking is similar. Almost all of the Cenobites have their hands together praying and

their heads are either lowered or looking slightly up in a reverent manner. It is not identical, but the same feeling of reverence is present.

Moving further on in the scene, the blocking between the staging manual and the Met's production contains more similarities. In the staging manual some of the Cenobites say with respect, "Athanaël! Athanaël! Bien long est son absence!" ("Athanaël! Athanaël! He has been absent so long!"). Then the following phrase is spoken with interest, "Quand donc reviendra-t-il? Quand donc?" ("When therefore will he return? When?"). Following the Cenobites' questions, Palémon answers mysteriously with, "L'heure de son retour est proche..." ("The hour of his return is near..."). The Cenobites listen with marked attention and respond with, "Athanaël est un élu de Dieu!" ("Athanaël is appointed of God"). The Met's production is quite similar, as there is not much to change in this section. That these directions about emotions or attitudes are given in the score is noteworthy because it shows how the staging manual lines up with and furthers the direction in the score. Thus, the staging manual and score state primarily the same things, so it is not surprising that the two stagings have similarities at this point.

The Cenobite tenor rises at the *andante lento* in the staging manual. He looks toward stage right, and then states, "Le voici!" ("Behold!"). At the third bar that follows this phrase, Athanaël enters behind the *ferme* (framework) of trees at F. "He holds a large staff and advances slowly, as though exhausted with fatigue and sorrow."⁴⁷ Palémon, who has risen, approaches and says, "Frère, salut! La fatigue t'accable..." ("Brother, welcome! You are overwhelmed with fatigue..."). At this point we have Athanaël and Palémon standing next to each other. Athanaël is on Palémon's right.

⁴⁷ F-Pbh T 8 (1), 5, translation by Dolores Julien.

In the Met's production, the Cenobite tenor rises before the *andante lento* and looks to stage left. Athanaël enters as the tenor sings, "Le voici!" ("Behold"). This is what is noted in both the vocal score from 1922⁴⁸ and a revised score from 1898.⁴⁹ The staging manual differs from the score. The staging manual has Athanaël entering three bars after the tenor's phrase, and the score has him appearing at the beginning of the phrase. Perhaps, Athanaël is to appear at the beginning of the phrase, but not enter into the group until the third bar following the phrase. Another possible explanation for this difference can be found in the date of the staging manual. The date is unknown, but if the staging manual is from the premiere, or at least before the revision in 1898, then this difference could be accounted for if there was a change in the score when the opera was revised. It is not completely clear why this difference exists, but it is noteworthy.

Further differences between the staging manual and the Met's production exist with Athanaël's entrance. In the Met's production Athanaël does not have a staff when he enters. But he does have a staff in the staging manual, and the staff would make sense for a monk who has been traveling. Another variance is that Athanaël enters from stage left in the Met's production and not stage right, as is noted in the staging manual. However, the Met's production does have Athanaël entering diagonally in relationship to where the Cenobites are located. This diagonal entrance is the same movement as in the staging manual, but the sides are reversed. This reversal is due to the difference in set design.

⁴⁸ Jules Massenet, Louis Gallet, and Anatole France, *Thaïs: comédie lyrique en trois actes et sept tableaux*, (Paris: Heugel, 1922), 12.

⁴⁹ Jules Massenet and Anatole France, *Thaïs: Comédie lyrique en trois actes et sept tableaux*, (Paris: Heugel & Cie, 1894, Plate H. & Cie. 9434, Reprinted: Paris: Heugel, n.d.(ca.1898 with revisions)), . [http://imslp.org/wiki/Thaïs_\(Massenet,_Jules\)](http://imslp.org/wiki/Thaïs_(Massenet,_Jules)) (accessed March 31, 2012), 21.

As the scene progresses in the staging manual, the Cenobite tenors rise emphatically saying, “Repose-toi.” (“Come rest.”), and they show Athanaël his empty seat at the table. Palémon comes to take the staff, which he places next to the bed. Athanaël then takes his place at the table, at which point the Cenobites return to their places and listen attentively to Athanaël. Athanaël gently pushes back the food that is brought to him, and he speaks in a somber tone, as though haunted. He is talking to himself: “La ville est livrée au péché!” (“The city is possessed by sin.”)

The Met’s production is quite different from the staging manual as Athanaël enters. The Cenobites stand as they see Athanaël arrive, and they seem fairly emphatic as they ask him to come and rest. However, Palémon does not move when Athanaël enters. This is counterintuitive, as one would most likely rise to help a friend who is fatigued. Instead, Palémon waits for Athanaël to come to him. Even once Athanaël reaches Palémon, Palémon does not stand up. The only distinction that sets Palémon apart is that Athanaël specifically greets Palémon in a manner that he does not use for the other Cenobites. But, Palémon never comes to help Athanaël.

As the Met’s production continues, Athanaël stays standing when he begins his recitative, and the Cenobites remain standing in their current places. Athanaël moves around as he speaks. The Cenobites ask him to eat and drink, but food is not brought to him. Athanaël refuses with a hand motion and a head-shaking to their words, but there is no object to refuse, as there is in the staging manual’s version. It could be difficult to understand this scene if there were not a libretto or supertitles available. Having a physical object to reject helps further the understanding.

The staging manual does not give much information for blocking at the beginning of Athanaël's recitative, but the actions that it gives prior to Athanaël's phrase, "La ville est livrée au péché!" ("The city is possessed by sin!"), would take up most of this time. In addition, there is quite a bit of direction in the libretto and score that would fill in any missing gaps. As Athanaël reaches his phrase "La ville est livrée au péché!" ("The city is possessed by sin!") in the Met's production, he is center stage and still standing. It is odd that someone so distraught and exhausted would still be standing. In the staging manual Athanaël is seated the entire time, and the movement revolves around his place at the table. The staging in the Met's production has Athanaël moving around the stage, while the other Cenobites stay primarily where they were after they greeted Athanaël.

In the staging manual the Cenobites ask with a calm and simple curiosity, "Quelle est cette Thaïs?" ("And what of this Thaïs?"). Athanaël comes out of his torpor and says, "Une prêtresse infâme," ("An infamous priestess,"), then dropping down immediately he states, "du culte de Vénus!" ("of the cult of Venus!"). The Met's production follows this till the point of Athanaël's phrase "du culte de Vénus!" ("of the cult of Venus!"). Athanaël seems more agitated and does not hold back with this phrase. Rather, he falls to his knees and harshly sings the words. Even in the score, the first part of the text is *forte* and the second part is *piano*.

According to the staging manual, Athanaël is to slowly rise before he speaks on the *crescendo poco ritardando*. He is to speak humbly but with charm, as though remembering something from the past. He states, "Helas! Enfant encore." ("Alas! As a child."). Little by little he becomes more somber and agitated; he says, "Je l'ai connue."

(“I knew her.”). The next direction is for Athanaël to speak with strong emotion as he moves toward stage right, saying, “Et je voudrais gagner cette âme à Dieu!” (“And I would like to win this soul over to God!”). During the Met’s production Athanaël does not move; he stays on his knees at center stage. He seems to follow the emotions given, which are noted in the score.

In the staging manual Palémon is to move down to Athanaël’s left on the *ritornello* following Athanaël’s last phrase. Athanaël and Palémon are center stage, with Athanaël on stage right. This is depicted in the staging manual by the diagram found in Figure 1. It clearly shows Palémon leaving the table and going over to Athanaël. It is very clear that Athanaël is stage right of Palémon. Palémon says, “Ne nous mêlon jamais, mon fils, aux gens du siècle.” (“We never get involved, my son, with the people of the present time.”). In the Met’s production Palémon begins to approach Athanaël from stage right, while Athanaël is singing “Et je voudrais gagner cette âme à Dieu!” (“And I would like to win this soul over to God!”). Palémon reaches Athanaël after Athanaël has finished the third “A Dieu!” (“To God!”). Athanaël stays kneeling and reaches his hands up to Palémon. Palémon takes Athanaël’s hands. Palémon is to the right of Athanaël, as he begins to sing the phrase, “Ne nous mêlon jamais, mon fils, aux gens du siècle.” (“We never get involved, my son, with the people of the present time.”)

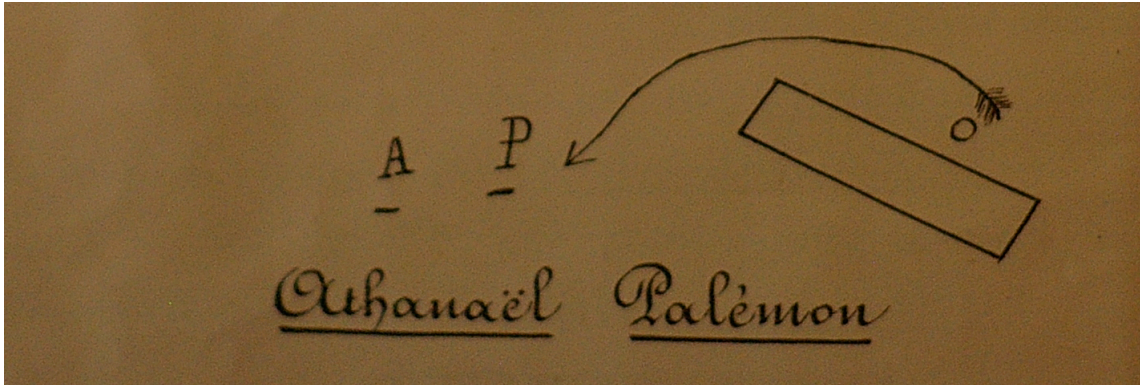


Figure 1: Page 6 from F-Pbh T 8 (1) for *Thaïs*,
Diagram Showing the Movement of Palémon from the Table

Aside from two differences, the staging manual and the Met’s production are quite similar at this point. The two differences are that Palémon is to the right of Athanaël and Athanaël is kneeling in the Met’s production, whereas Palémon is to the left of Athanaël and Athanaël is standing in the staging manual. The overall effect would be quite similar in both of these stagings, because these differences are minor and would not drastically change how the audience perceived the emotions of the characters during this segment.

The score clearly notes that on the third “A Dieu!” (“To God!”) of Athanaël’s phrase about saving Thaïs, night is to begin falling upon the scene and in the hall. In the staging manual this is written directly before the diagram showing Palémon moving to Athanaël, but it is after the directions telling Palémon to move. It is slightly out of place, but it appears that the author wanted to continue the stage direction before dealing with the lighting. However, it is important enough that the author wrote it in the staging manual. This change of lighting occurs in the Met’s production, though it is difficult to detect the exact time that the lighting begins to darken, due to the angle of the camera during this part of the scene.

The findings that were previously discussed from the filming of the restaging along with the comparison of the first scene of Act 1 clearly depict how the blocking and the music flow together in a way that makes sense in the staging manual, whereas the Met's production appears to ignore the meaning of the text for blocking. This could be in part due to a different goal that the director had in mind. He might not have been trying to achieve realism. But it is clear in the staging manual that the music, actions, emotions, and singing all come together in masterfully staged manner.

In many ways the Met's 2008 production of *Thaïs* depicts the story well: the set design is the desert, and the staging does go with what is occurring in the plot. However, the staging manual portrays the story in a clearer manner that might be easier for audiences to follow. For instance, at the beginning of the scene, where the Cenobites sing about the bread and the water, the space that is left between the phrases allows for the movement that is given in the staging manual. Without this movement, these sections of music seem out of place; they feel like additional material. These spaces of music make sense in light of the blocking in the staging manual, and in this comparison the staging manual is more effective in communicating the meaning of the orchestral music between the singers' phrases.

Dawn Urista noticed a similar effect concerning the audience's understanding of the music in the ballet *Giselle*. Urista compared two stagings of the Mad Scene from the ballet *Giselle*, and her viewers noted that in the restaging from Justament's notebook from 1868–1869 that, "it was the dancers' commitment to the mimed gestures and

dialogues that propelled the scene.”⁵⁰ This is just as true with opera. The directions given in the staging manual can give the music meaning, but it is the performers who make it come alive. This is where the creative energy should be put. In Urista’s restaging, the mimed gestures gave the audience a deeper understanding of the music because the dancers understood the music. This is akin to how the restaging of the final duet of *Thaïs*, according to the staging manual, furthered my understanding of the score. The staging manual can deepen the meaning of the music through the blocking.

⁵⁰ Dawn Urista, “Giselle's Mad Scene: A Demonstration and Comparison of 21st Century and 19th Century Paris Opéra Stagings,” 31.

CHAPTER III

STAGING MANUALS

The Livret de Mise en Scène F-Pbh T 8 (1)

Date of F-Pbh T 8 (1)

The staging manual F-Pbh T 8 (1) consists of fifty-four pages of material regarding the staging, costumes, set design, and lighting for Massenet's opera *Thaïs*. It is broken down into sections for the separate acts and scenes, with diagrams for each new set design. The author and date of this staging manual are not known. However, certain parts of the manual suggest it was written either at the premiere in 1894, or between the premiere and the revision in 1898. Three notices about the differences in the division of acts and scenes, the addition of the new scene, "The Oasis," as a four-page appendix, the differences in handwriting between the new scene and the rest of the staging manual, and the information about the ballet all imply a date after the premiere before the revision. If F-Pbh T 8 (1) was indeed written before the revision and even possibly for the premiere, it contains what may have been the original staging for *Thaïs* and also offers a deeper understanding of how the opera evolved with the revision.

There are three notices that discuss the division of acts and scenes. The first is found on the initial page of the staging manual. It states, "If the ballet is produced, the work will have seven scenes, excluding the ballet: six scenes. Place the number of scenes on the bill according to the arrangement adopted."⁵¹ The next one is found on the second page and mentions that the production can be adapted to the presentation at the Opéra, which is not the same as the first edition of the score. The presentation at the Opéra

⁵¹ F-Pbh T 8 (1), 1, translation by Dolores Julien.

would have two scenes in the first act, two in the second, and two in the third if the ballet is removed. The first edition of the score has one scene in the first act, three in the second, and two in the third without the ballet. Thus, there would be six scenes total without the ballet in either the first or second edition of the score.⁵² This same material is presented again on page 10. It is translated below in Figure 2 and the original is found in Figure 3.

None of these notices mention the new scene, “The Oasis,” that was added at the beginning of the third act during the revision in 1898. All of these examples list six scenes without the ballet and seven scenes with it. In the revised version from 1898 there would be two scenes in the first act, two in the second, and three in the third for a total of seven scenes without the ballet. In the revised version the ballet was edited and moved to the end of the second act. If it were performed there would be eight scenes. Not one of these notices and examples includes the new scene, nor have the total number of acts of the revised version, nor list the optional ballet in the second act but in the third. Thus, these notices all appear to be referencing a production of the first version sometime between the premiere in 1894 and the revised version in 1898.

It is not until page 35 that anything is mentioned concerning the new scene, “The Oasis,” which was added in the 1898 revision. At the bottom of page 35 there is a note written in a different style that appears to have been added at a later time. It is more of a handwritten note than a carefully penned note for a publication. It states, “For the new scene ‘The Oasis’ = Go to the end.”⁵³ This note is found at the end of the second scene

⁵² F-Pbh T 8 (1), 2, translation by Dolores Julien.

from Act 2, where the new scene would have been described if the staging manual were written after the revision in 1898. This is shown in Figure 4.

<u>Attention:</u>	<u>Note on the subject of the division of the scenes and the acts.</u>	
<u>At the Opéra:</u>	1 st Act – 2 scenes	{ The Thébaïde The Terrace
	2 nd Act – 2 scenes	{ The Bedroom The Square
	3 rd Act – 2 scenes	{ (Without the Ballet) The Thébaïde The Monastery
<u>In the score 1st Edition:</u> 1 st Act – 2 scenes – The Thébaïde		
	2 nd Act – 2 scenes	{ The Terrace The Bedroom The Square
	3 rd Act – 2 scenes	{ (Without the Ballet) The Thébaïde The Monastery

Figure 2: Translation of Page 10 from F-Pbh T 8 (1) for *Thaïs*, A Notice About the Different Divisions of the Scenes and Acts

⁵³ F-Pbh T 8 (1), 35, translation by Dolores Julien.

At the end of the staging manual is a four-page description for the new scene, “The Oasis,” that was clearly added after the original fifty pages of the staging manual were written. There are no page numbers for this addition, whereas all of the other pages are numbered. It comes after all of the descriptions for the instruments outside of the orchestra, the dance crew, the choir, and the accessories for each scene, all of which are found after the staging is described in its entirety. Another crucial piece of evidence supporting that this was added at a later time is found in the handwriting and organization of the stage diagram. The way the stage design is marked is different from the rest of the diagrams found in the first fifty pages. For example, the letters are described in a paragraph rather than in a list, as can be seen in Figures 5 and 6. And, a different scribe penned these four pages. If the “L” from the top of the first page of this added material is compared to the “L’s” that are written in the first fifty pages, they do not match. This is shown in Figures 7 and 8. Even comparing just paragraphs or sections from these last four pages to any of the previous fifty would show another writer. The handwriting is clearly different. This is found in Figures 5 and 6.

The added note shown in Figure 4, combined with the differences in handwriting, demonstrate that these four pages were an afterthought, which would make sense if they were added when the opera was revised in 1898. Thus, it is highly probable that the first fifty pages were written before 1898, with the new scene added in 1898 or shortly thereafter when the opera was revised.

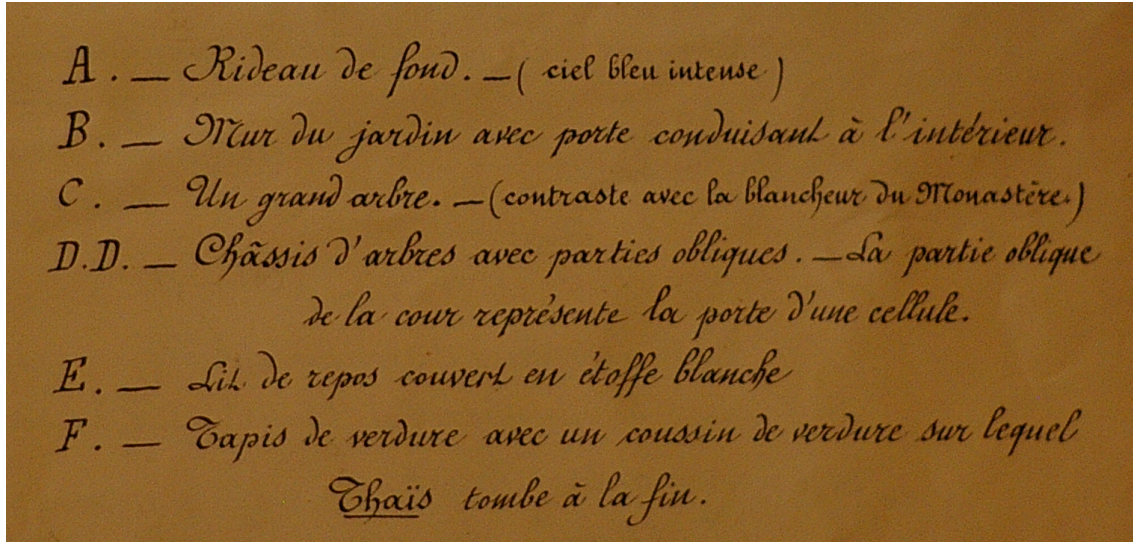


Figure 5: Page 43 from F-Pbh T 8 (1) for *Thais*,
 Standard List Description of the Stage Diagram for Act 3, Scene 7

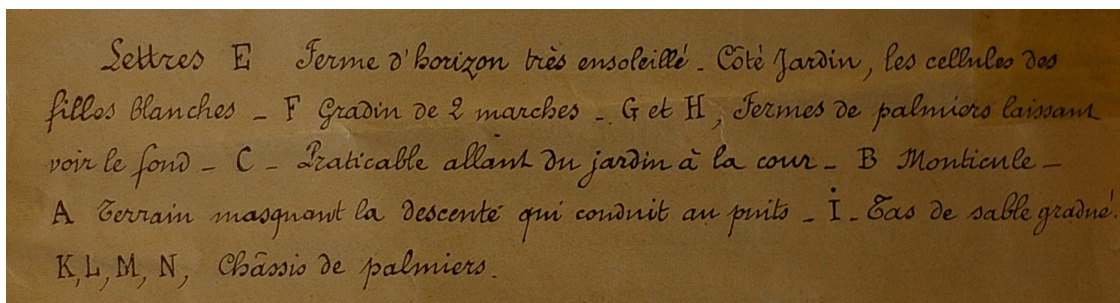


Figure 6: Appendix Page 1 from F-Pbh T 8 (1) for *Thais*,
 Paragraph Description of the Stage Diagram for the New Scene “The Oasis”

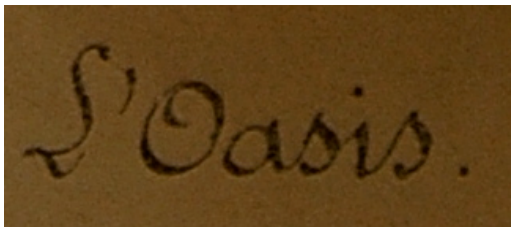


Figure 7: Appendix Page 1 from F-Pbh T 8
 (1) for *Thais*, Showing the Difference in the
 Handwriting of the New Scene “The Oasis”

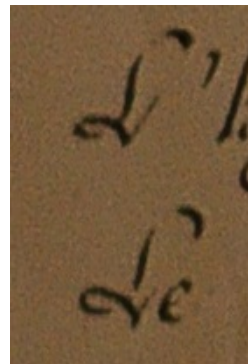


Figure 8: Page 4
 from F-Pbh T 8 (1)
 for *Thais*,
 Representation of
 the Handwriting of
 the First Fifty Pages
 of the Staging
 Manual

Another clue to the time when this staging manual was written can be found on page 37, where the staging for the ballet is given. Before the directions for the ballet, there is a section that reads, “Notice: Everything that is framed is from the ballet that was

removed from the Paris Opéra.” Based upon where this ballet is placed in the staging manual, it would have been the original ballet from the 1894 premiere. It is in the middle of the first scene of Act 3, whereas the ballet in the revised score from 1898 is at the end of the second scene of Act 2. However, this does not explain why the ballet was ignored in both of the notes on pages 1 and 2. Though this oversight might be clarified through the subject of the first edition of the score versus the second, which might have to do with the production at the Opéra and the shifting of the premiere from the Opéra-Comique to the Opéra. When Massenet learned that the premiere would be at the Opéra, he then wrote the mandatory ballet. The ballet was not in the original plans, but was added to meet the standards at the Opéra. If the ballet had not been in the original plans, the initial score might have been divided up into different scenes, and this manual may have been written during this transition from the Opéra-Comique to the Opéra. Or perhaps this second version was how a later production at the Opéra was staged without the ballet, but before the 1898 revision. Though it is not likely that a production would have been produced at the Opéra without a ballet, since the ballet was mandatory.

The presence of the ballet makes pinpointing the date a little more difficult, but all of the signs point to a date before 1898. The change from the Opéra-Comique to the Opéra for the premiere could explain everything, including the ballet. This staging manual may have been written for the premiere in 1894, though it is clear that it was almost certainly written before the revision in 1898.

Analysis of Act 1, Scene 1

To understand further how the staging manual works, a description and analysis of a scene is necessary. The first scene from the first act of *Thaïs* is a great place to start. The diagram of the stage design is excellent, with everything clearly labeled. Figure 9 is the stage diagram for this scene. The corresponding letters are defined and translated below the figure, and they are set up similarly to show how the letters are explained directly beneath the diagram in the staging manual.

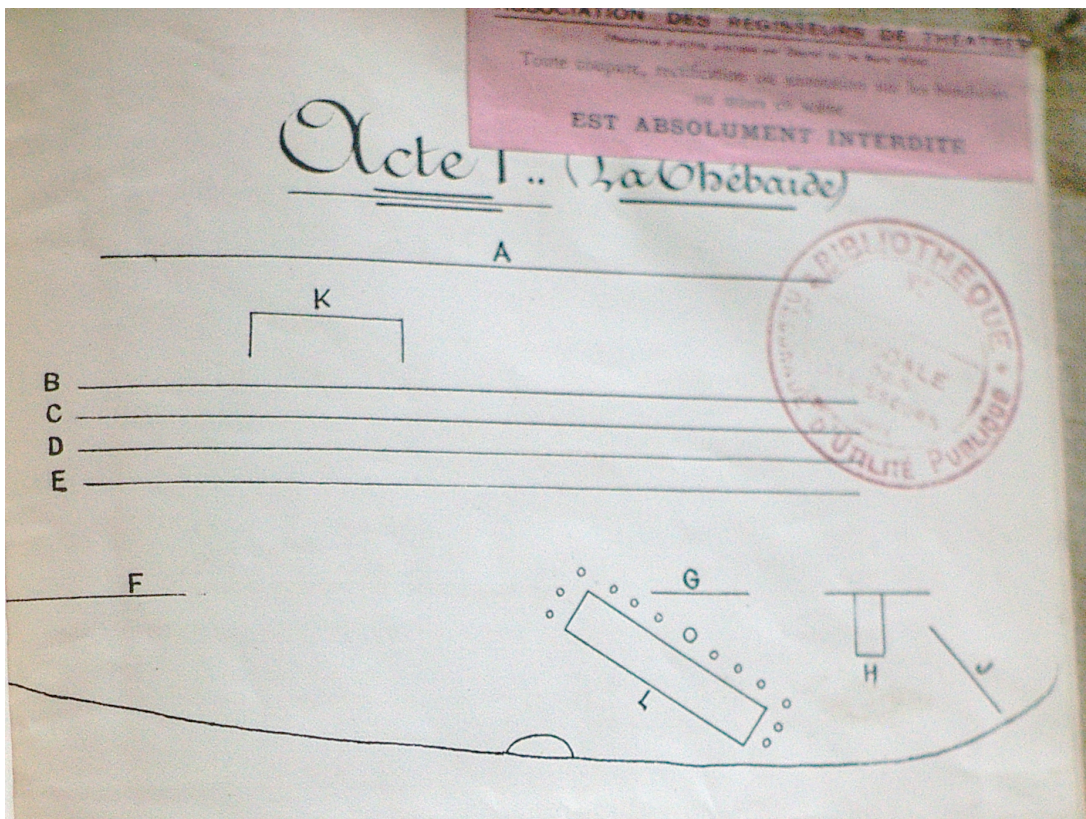


Figure 9: Page 3 from F-Pbh T 8 (1) for *Thaïs*,
Diagram for the Set of Act 1, Scene 1

- A. *Pantolon* curtain representing a section of the theatre of Alexandria.
- B. Air curtain falling behind the backdrop to hide the *Vision*.
- C. Backdrop of the desert.

D. E. Two *fermes* (frameworks) going downstage.

F. G. Two *châssis* (flats) of trees; in the center of *châssis* (framework) G is a canvas door of a hut with a metal *practicable* (platform) used only during Act 3.

H. Athanaël's bed, which fits into the *châssis* (framework) in Act 3.

J. Door of a hut, hidden by a curtain.

K. *Practicable* (platform) where Thaïs will appear.

L. A large table with thirteen chairs: on the table are placed two water jars, a salt cellar, a plate of honey, a basket filled with hyssop, a basket of bread, thirteen plates, and thirteen cups.

The first scene begins with the Cenobites seated at the table, which is stage center left. Palémon's chair is higher than all of the others and is located in the center of the table. The breadbasket and hyssop are at the stage left end of the table, the salt and two water jars are in the center, and the honey is at the stage right end of the table. There is one chair facing stage right that is left open for Athanaël.

As the first Cenobite says, "Voici le pain" ("Here is the bread") the basket is passed for each Cenobite to take a piece. Once each person has taken his piece, the basket is put back in its original location. This is followed by the same movements for the salt, the hyssop, the honey, and the water, respectively. After this is completed, Palémon rises to speak with unction, "Chaque matin ..." ("Each morning..."). Once he finishes his sentence, he is to sit down slowly.

The staging manual correlates with the score. If there is a direction written in the score, for instance "Se levant, avec onction" ("Rising, with unction") which is written

above “Chaque matin...” (“Each morning”), the staging manual has the same direction but with further guidance. In this instance the staging manual has “Se leve pour dire avec onction” (“Rises to say with unction”). This is nearly identical to what is found in the score, except the idea is given that he is supposed to stand before he speaks, rather than the possibility of rising as he begins to speak. The score does not specify exactly when Palémon rises, but the staging manual does. At times the staging manual even has a measure or two of music written into the directions. Figure 10 represents this level of detail and communication with the score. This is the kind of direction that is found throughout F-Pbh T 8 (1) in its entirety.



Figure 10: Page 17 from F-Pbh T 8 (1) for *Thaïs*,
Example of a Measure of Music Drawn into the Staging Manual

Set Designs, Movement Diagrams, and Lighting

As the opera progresses, each new scene has a new diagram illustrating the set design in a fashion identical to the one previously discussed. After the diagram there is always a list with the corresponding letters explained, and then it dives into the stage direction. Occasionally there is a note about something of importance, such as the division of scenes, but this is clearly labeled as a notice.

Another key area is the illustrations for the characters onstage and their movement. Throughout each scene there are little drawings of the characters and where they are in relation to each other. Sometimes these are just their names in their respective places. Then at other times there is a second drawing, which shows the changes from the first drawing, after more directions are given. This is seen in Figure 11. The first part of the movement is illustrated with the respective places of everyone listed on the entire stage. There is a movement given, and then the change for the two people that were affected is shown.

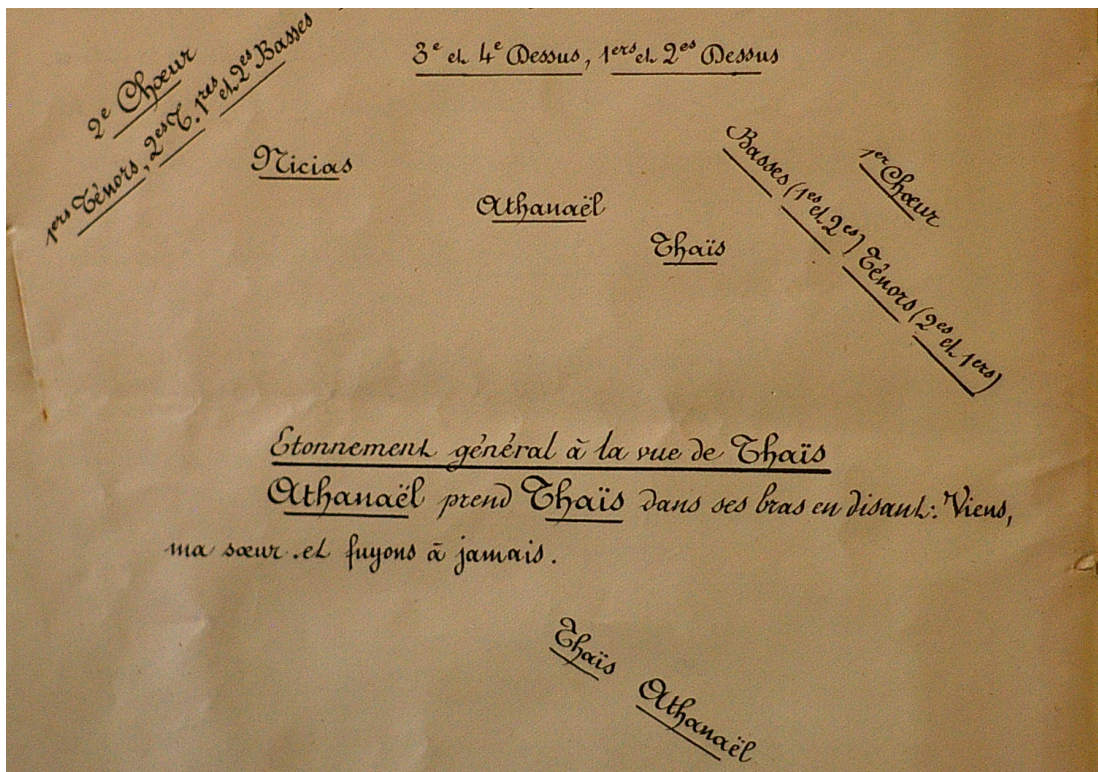


Figure 11: Page 34 from F-Pbh T 8 (1) for *Thaïs*, Example of the Movement of Characters Between Two Consecutive Diagrams

The last area of interest is found in the descriptions for the lighting, and the references to theaters that do and do not have electric lights. The author writes several

notices about lighting options for theaters that have electric lights. An example of this is found on page 7. It states that theaters with electric lights should dim the *horses* (overhead-lights) and the *rampe* (footlights) for the end of the scene, as it is now dark night in the hall.⁵⁴

The staging manual goes on to describe how the apparition for the *Vision* is illuminated, even to the degree of the color of the lights being a blue-green. The lighting is so detailed for the *Vision*, that it gives the exact measures for when the lights turn on and off on the apparition where Thaïs is standing during the *Vision*. It begins with the lights on at the Allegro, then at the 11th bar: lights out, at the 12th bar: lights on, at the 17th bar: lights out, at the 21st bar: lights on, and at the 37th bar: Thaïs lets her coat drop, and lights go out on the *portants* (wing-lights) and the *rampe* (footlights). Curtain B falls quickly.⁵⁵ There are several more examples of this kind of lighting information. And, as is noted at the end of the lighting description for the *Vision*, even the information regarding when curtains rise and fall and specifically which curtain should be used is given.

Another feature of this staging manual, illustrated in the *Vision* scene, is how it correlates with the score. The way the lights turn on and off with regard to particular measures is in direct relation to slight changes in the music. In addition, this on and off with the lighting adds another dimension to the scene. There is not much movement occurring onstage, as Athanaël is dreaming and Thaïs is appearing in the *Vision*. The only

⁵⁴ F-Pbh T 8 (1), 7, translation by Dolores Julien.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 8.

movement is Thaïs performing the *Amours d'Aphrodite*.⁵⁶ Since so little is changing on the stage, the lights going on and off would have a tremendous impact on the audience. It would definitely get their attention, and it could be more dream-like, because dreams can come and go.

All of this detail is continued throughout the fifty-four pages of the staging manual. The accessories for each scene, the instruments that are onstage for certain effects during certain scenes, and the dancers needed for each scene are all listed in several pages at the end of the staging manual but before the pages for the new scene that appears to have been added at a later date. The attention to detail in the stage design, movements, lighting, and costumes, with directions for variations in different theaters, points to the importance that was placed upon this staging manual by the author at the time it was written.

Comparison of Three *Livrets de Mise en Scène* for *Thaïs*

A comparison of the three staging manuals found in the Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris suggests that the information contained in the staging manual F-Pbh T 8 (1) was intended to be used to reproduce future productions of *Thaïs*. These three staging manuals are F-Pbh T 8 (1), F-Pbh Mes 75 (2), and F-Pbh Mes 20 (2).⁵⁷ Each of these three staging manuals has a different author and is in a different volume. The main

⁵⁶ F-Pbh T 8 (1), 8, translation by Dolores Julien.

⁵⁷ The staging manual F-Pbh T 8 (1) is a volume that contains a single staging manual for *Thaïs*. The staging manuals F-Pbh Mes 75 (2) and F-Pbh Mes 20 (2) are located in two different bound volumes that hold several staging manuals for different operas. *Thaïs* is the second opera in both of these bound volumes.

difference between F-Pbh T 8 (1) and F-Pbh Mes 75 (2) and F-Pbh Mes 20 (2) is that F-Pbh T 8 (1) is a manuscript that was published and meant to be copied and circulated, whereas F-Pbh Mes 75 (2) and F-Pbh Mes 20 (2) are from a personal, bound volume of a stage director or singer, perhaps for his or her own records, or another individual involved with the opera production.

Both F-Pbh Mes 75 (2) and F-Pbh Mes 20 (2) are written in a personal notebook without much thought as to the layout in regard to the staging and scenes. In F-Pbh T 8 (1) each scene in every act starts on a new page with an elaborate title at the top. In F-Pbh Mes 75 (2) and F-Pbh Mes 20 (2) the scenes just come as they fall on the page. The scribe seemed to be more concerned about paper conservation than with the layout. For instance, in F-Pbh Mes 75 (2) the very beginning of the staging manual starts at the bottom of a page, after the end of the previous staging manual for the first opera in that volume. This is seen in Figure 12.

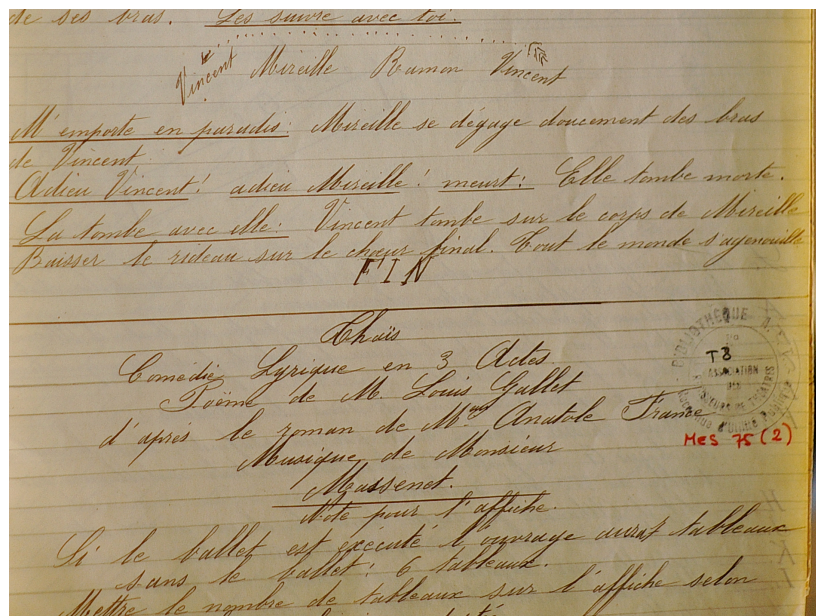


Figure 12: Page 1 from F-Pbh Mes 75 (2) for *Thaïs*, Example of Paper Conservation in a Volume with Multiple Staging Manuals

Additional proof of the importance of the material in F-Pbh T 8 (1) for the staging of *Thaïs* is found in the information that is in F-Pbh Mes 75 (2) and F-Pbh Mes 20 (2). It appears that F-Pbh Mes 75 (2) and F-Pbh Mes 20 (2) were copied from F-Pbh T 8 (1). For, F-Pbh Mes 75 (2) and F-Pbh Mes 20 (2) duplicate the material in F-Pbh T 8 (1), except that the new scene is located where it would fall in the order of the scenes rather than added as an after thought. In Figures 13 and 14, the stage design for Act 2, Scene 2 is shown from F-Pbh T 8 (1) along with the written list of descriptions for each letter that corresponds to the letter on the diagram. If you compare this to F-Pbh Mes 75 (2) in Figures 15 and 16 and F-Pbh Mes 20 (2) in Figure 17, they are identical. Perhaps F-Pbh Mes 75 (2) and F-Pbh Mes 20 (2) are even slightly more detailed, as the scribe drew in trees and a few other specifics in the stage diagram than is found in F-Pbh T 8 (1). However, the added detail lines up with the descriptions given in the list for the corresponding letters. This is the same throughout the entirety of these three staging manuals. The words and directions are the same.

The only difference that was found between these three staging manuals is in direct correlation to the revision in 1898. The new scene, “The Oasis,” in Act 3 is not added in an appendix-like fashion in F-Pbh Mes 75 (2) and F-Pbh Mes 20 (2), rather it is found directly where it would take place in the opera after Act 2, Scene 2. This means that these manuals were definitely written after 1898, and further support that F-Pbh T 8 (1) was written before the revision in 1898 and had the new scene added at or slightly after the time of the revision.

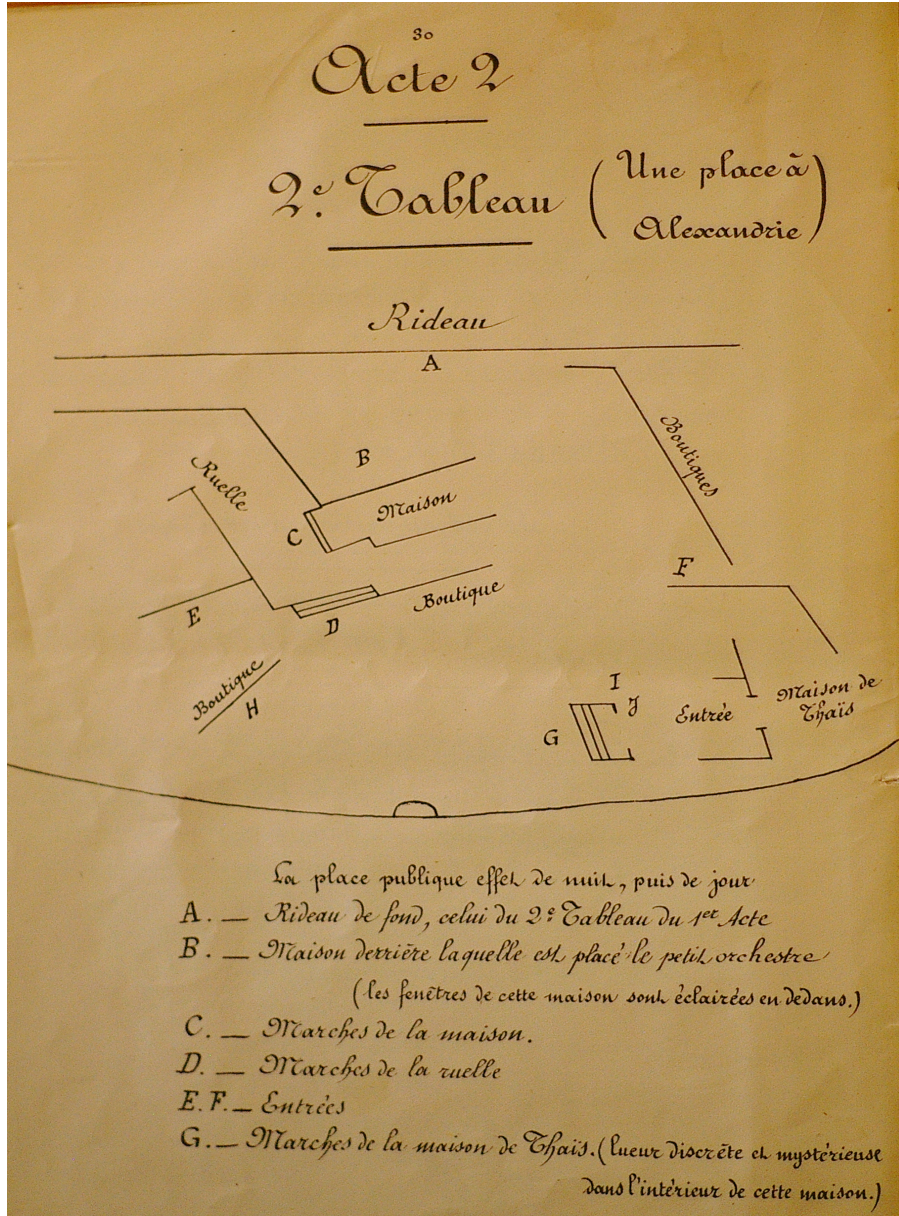


Figure 13: Page 30 from F-Pbh T 8 (1) for *Thaïs*, Showing Nearly Identical Set Diagrams for Act 2, Scene 2 Between Staging Manuals

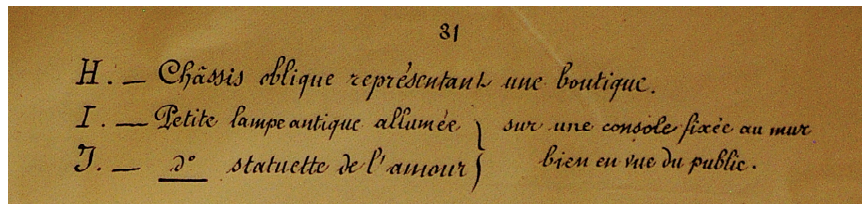


Figure 14: Page 31 from F-Pbh T 8 (1) for *Thaïs*, Continuation of the List Description of the Set Diagram

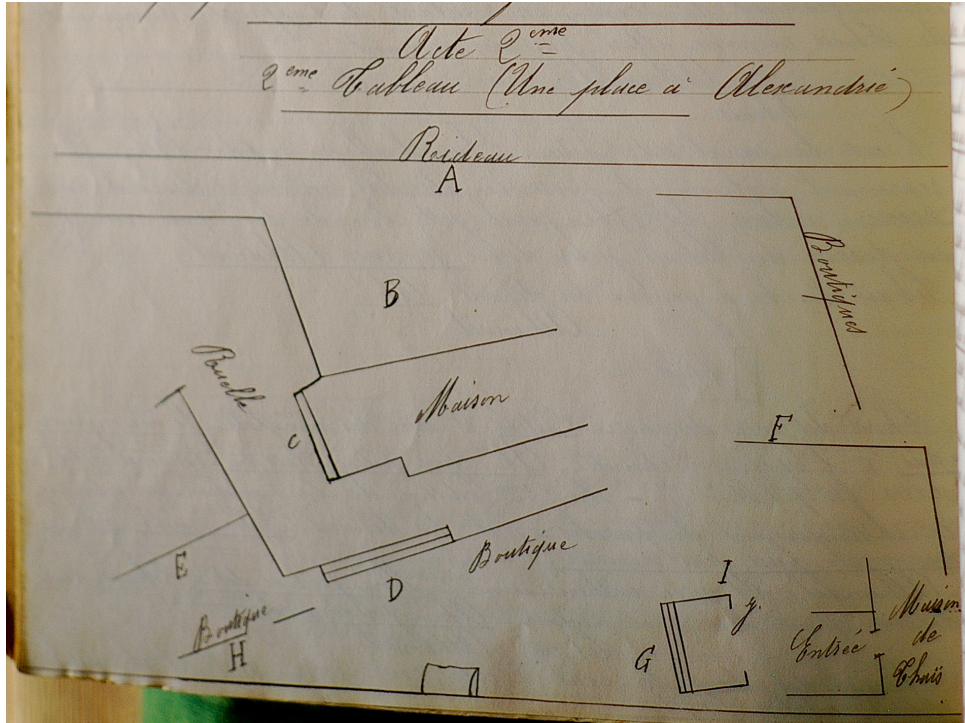


Figure 15: Page 31 from F-Pbh Mes 75 (2) for *Thaïs*,
Showing Nearly Identical Set Diagrams for Act 2, Scene 2 Between Staging Manuals

- La place publique ³² effet de nuit, puis de jour.
- A. — Rideau de fond, celui du 2^{ème} Tableau du 1^{er} Acte.
 - B. — Maison derrière laquelle est placé le petit orchestre
(Les fenêtres de cette maison sont éclairées en dedans.)
 - C. — Appareils de la maison.
 - D. — Appareils de la ruelle.
 - E, F. — Trottoirs.
 - G. — Appareils de la maison de Châis. (Lueur discrète et mystérieuse dans l'intérieur de cette maison.)
 - H. — Cassis oblique représentant une boutique.
 - I. — Petite lampe antique allumée } sur une console fixée au mur
 - J. — 1^{re} statuette de l'amour } bien en vue du public

Figure 16: Page 32 from F-Pbh Mes 75 (2) for *Thaïs*,
The List Description of the Set Diagram



Figure 17: Page 26 from F-Pbh Mes 20 (2) for *Thaïs*, Showing Nearly Identical Set Diagrams for Act 2, Scene 2 Between Staging Manuals

Other Staging Manuals and 19th Century Ideas

A brief look at Massenet's opera *Manon* helps to give a better understanding of whether the findings in the staging manuals for *Thaïs* are typical, or found only in *Thaïs*. *Manon* was premiered in 1884, ten years prior to *Thaïs*. It was and still is one of Massenet's most successful operas.

In the Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris I photographed four staging materials for the opera *Manon*. These materials include the staging manual F-Pbh M 33 (1), which is quite similar to F-Pbh T 8 (1) for *Thaïs*; the annotated score F-Pbh M 33 (II) with diagrams and corresponding letters in the music; and two annotated librettos, F-Pbh M 33 (VI) and F-Pbh Mes 22 (3), with set diagrams. A comparison revealed that all four of these staging materials contain the same stage diagrams and depictions of set designs for *Manon*. To demonstrate these findings, the set design from the Act 3, Scene 1 is depicted in Figures 18, 19, 20, and 21.

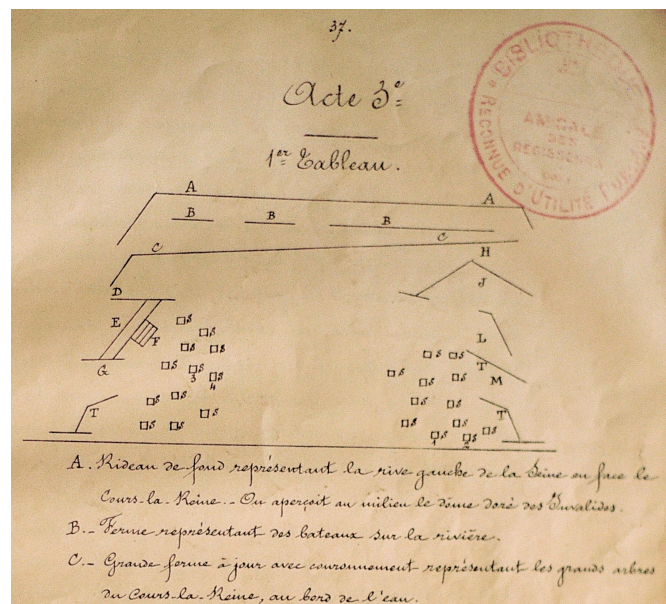


Figure 18: Page 37 from F-Pbh M 33 (I) for *Manon*,
Depicting the Matching Set Diagrams for Act 3, Scene 1 Between Staging Materials

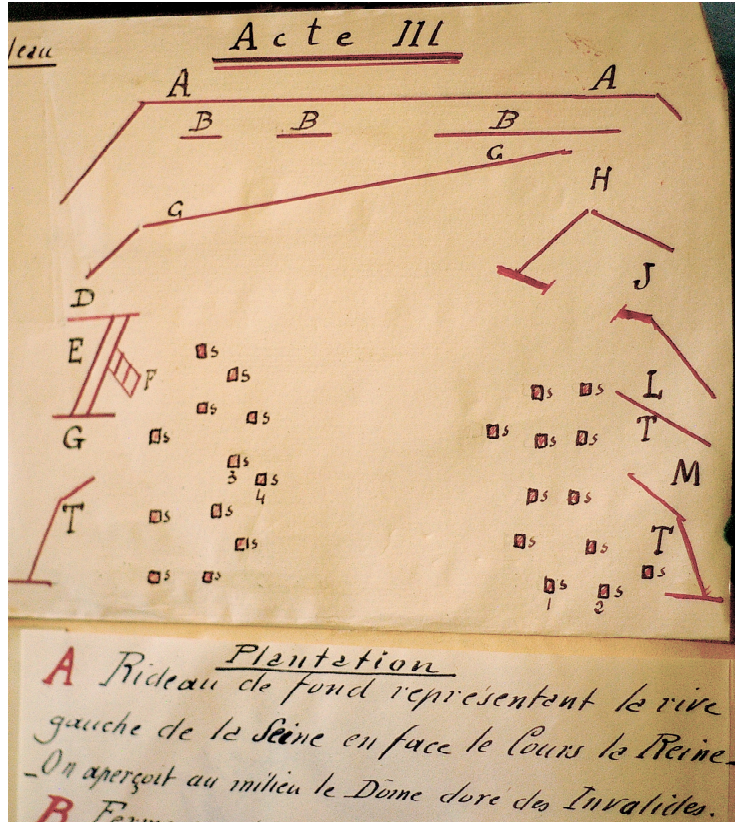


Figure 19: Addition to Score from F-Pbh M 33 (II) for *Manon*, Depicting the Matching Set Diagrams for Act 3, Scene 1 Between Staging Materials

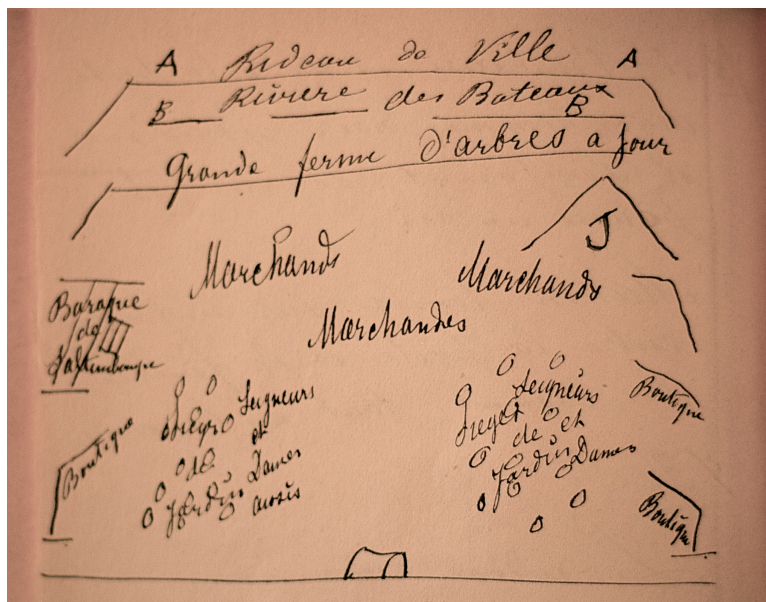


Figure 20: Addition to Libretto from F-Pbh M 33 (VI) for *Manon*, Depicting the Matching Set Diagrams for Act 3, Scene 1 Between Staging Materials

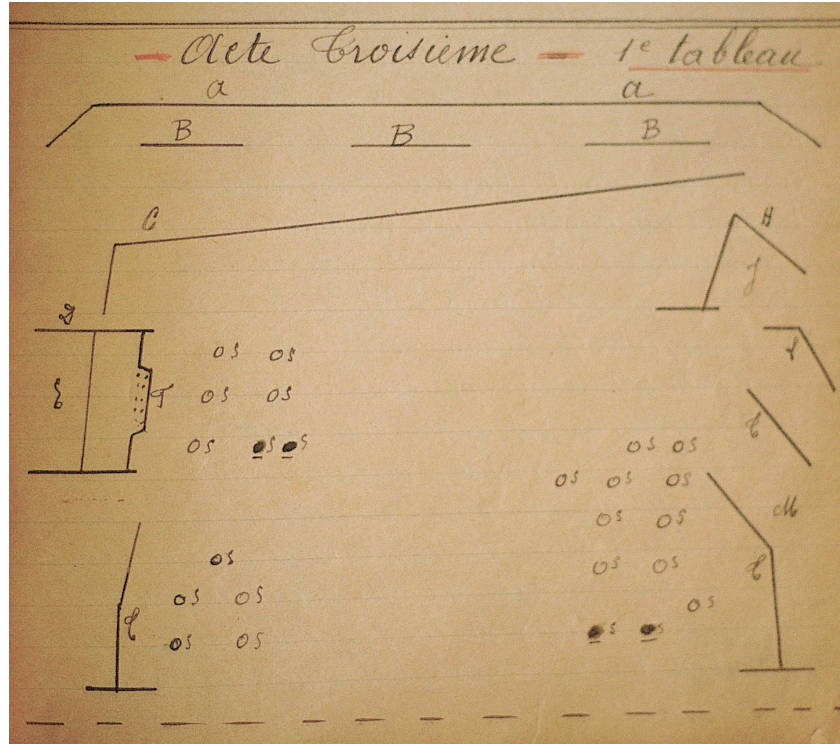


Figure 21: Addition to Libretto from F-Pbh Mes 22 (3) for *Manon*,
 Depicting the Matching Set Diagrams for Act 3, Scene 1 Between Staging Materials

In comparing the type of information found in the materials for *Manon* with those for *Thaïs*, one can see that the staging manuals for *Manon* appear to be even more elaborate and in-depth than those for *Thaïs*. For instance, there are many more cases of diagrams showing people and their movements. Figure 22 is an example of one of the detailed diagrams on movement. Some of this may be due to the fact that there are more people involved in the scenes in *Manon*, but nonetheless, the diagram is still more detailed.

A few items were bound with the staging manual F-Pbh M 33 (I). These included a printed program from a production on April 18, 1909 with biographies for the performers and beautiful pictures of scenes from the opera, as well as a magnificent color print of Lise Landouzy, who portrayed Manon at the Opéra-Comique in 1901. Other

items were a newspaper clipping and a synopsis of *Manon* with diagrams and background information. The staging manual itself contains ninety pages. On the cover it says it represents the premiere on January 19, 1884; it was written by M. Ch. Ponchard, who was the régisseur général at the Opéra-Comique.

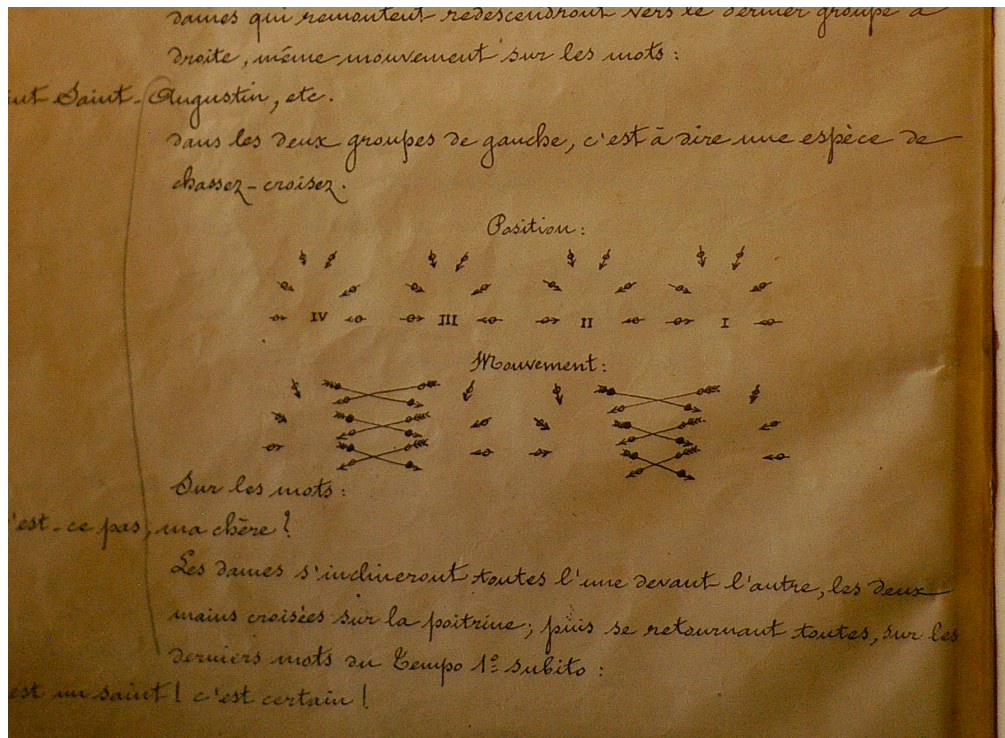


Figure 22: Page 56 from F-Pbh M 33 (I) for *Manon*, An Example of a Highly Detailed Movement Diagram for Everyone Onstage

The other materials that were present for *Manon* were an annotated score and two annotated librettos. It is difficult to compare these to the staging manuals for *Thaïs* in regard to general trends of specific types of sources, as there were no annotated librettos or scores for *Thaïs* at the Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris. However, these other materials for *Manon* appear to hold all of the same information that the staging manual does. For both operas the staging diagrams are the same among the staging materials for each respective opera.

The same sort of specificity that is found in *Thaïs* and *Manon* is present to an even greater extent in Verdi's *Aida*. Ricordi published the staging manual for *Aida* after he had assisted Verdi at the premiere at La Scala in 1872. This staging manual has diagrams for the set design that are very similar in style to the ones found in F-Pbh M 33 (I) for *Manon* and F-Pbh T 8 (1) for *Thaïs*. The diagrams for movement and character positions are detailed to such a degree, that some of them make Figure 22 from *Manon* appear simple. Figure 22 is also one of the most detailed drawings in F-Pbh M 33 (I), whereas *Aida* is filled with drawings that are just as descriptive if not more.

It is known that Verdi was highly involved in the staging of his operas and that he had a hand in creating the *disposizioni sceniche* of his later operas. Verdi was obsessed with his work, and he wrote the music with specific movements and gestures in mind. For example, during the first scene of the second act the following is given for the actions between Amneris and Aida: "After *Un Dio Possent...* Amneris takes a small step toward Aida and tells her with obvious intent and great sweetness *amore*. Aida, shocked by that word, takes two steps downstage and, deeply moved, advances three steps, exclaiming *Amore! Amore!* Amneris also takes three or four steps to the left and downstage, and says with suppressed anger, her eyes fixed from time to time on Aida, *Ah! Quell pallore.*"⁵⁸ This kind of descriptive movement is throughout the entire staging manual. Other types of direction include numerous sections with a measure or two of music written in denoting the exact time the action is to occur. Some diagrams are detailed to the extent that there is a specific symbol for each person and an arrow for the direction they are to

⁵⁸ *Aida* staging manual, published by Ricordi, reprinted in Hans Busch, *Verdi's Aida: The History of an Opera in Letters and Documents, Collected and Translated by Hans Busch*, (Minneapolis: 1978), 559.

be facing. These descriptions and diagrams in the staging manual for *Aida* are more elaborate than those found in the staging manuals for *Thaïs* and *Manon*, but the research done on the staging manuals for Verdi's operas can help further the understanding of the staging manuals for Massenet's operas.

Correlations

As Cohen has written, “By recording in staging manuals the visual, dramatic, and decorative elements of an operatic production, often at the time of its first performance, *régisseurs généraux* (stage managers) established a permanent record of the *mise en scène*, with a view to facilitating its duplication in subsequent productions.”⁵⁹ In both of the instances for *Thaïs* and *Manon* there emerges what is a published manuscript for the opera with other staging materials that appear to have been copied from the published staging manual for each respective opera. This demonstrates that the staging did not change in the immediate years following the publication of the staging manual, and it furthers the history of the staging for the respective opera.

These staging manuals show what has been lost or changed over the years in opera, and another example of this same sort of evolution is found in ballet-pantomime. Smith states, “These ballet-pantomimes told stories—elaborate ones—and music was considered an indispensable tool in getting them across to the audience.”⁶⁰ The music in

⁵⁹ H. Robert H. Cohen, and Marie-Odile Gigou, *Cent ans de mise en scène lyrique en France (env. 1830–1930) = One hundred years of operatic staging in France : catalogue descriptif des livrets de mise en scène, des libretti annotés et des partitions annotées dans la Bibliothèque de l'Association de la régie théâtrale* (Paris), xl.

⁶⁰ Marian Smith, *Ballet and Opera in the Age of Giselle*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 3.

the ballet was there for a reason: it allowed space for the characters to speak through their actions. The same is true in opera. Yes, there are words, but sung words are not always clear. In addition, there is not singing one hundred percent of the time in an opera. There exists space in between sung phrases, and this music allows for movement and thus expression. Dialogue and choreographic notation are needed for ballet-pantomimes, just as the stage direction and movements are needed for opera. Without this information, the music does not make sense. However, in opera a few measures of music here and there not making sense is not like an entire section of a ballet. But nonetheless, if a measure of music is not understood, that measure cannot be communicated to the audience; and a moment has been lost.

Considering that staging manuals give the directions for nearly all blocking and set design, directors may think that they would have little space for anything new and creative. And if the performers are not careful, this detail could make things robotic. This problem came about with Wagner's operas after his death. His wife Cosima took control over the staging of his works. In her desire to stay true to the acting that she observed in the first few performances, she lost sight of the creativity. Millington describes it this way:

Cosima had a natural dramatic talent and continued the progressive tendency of naturalistic acting she had observed at the first festivals, but her determination to reproduce every gesture, every moment as she remembered it, led to uninspired, over-prescriptive stage movements.⁶¹

But in fact, detail is what allows for extreme creativity. No two performers will ever present the same gesture or an emotion in the exact same way. If directors and performers

⁶¹ Millington, Barry Millington, *The New Grove Guide to Wagner and His Operas*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 162.

follow the directions in a staging manual, they will need to figure out how to follow these directions, while bringing them across to the audience as natural and true to the character. It is a difficult task, but it could aid in giving performances that awe-inspiring effect. For on the other hand, if this information is lost or unknown, then the depth and temperament of the character can be misunderstood. This was seen with the ballet *Giselle*, where the character changed and sections of music were cut.⁶² Music should never be removed from a work purely on the basis that it seems excessive or useless. The reasons need to be justifiable for these decisions.

⁶² Dawn Urista, "Giselle's Mad Scene: A Demonstration and Comparison of 21st Century and 19th Century Paris Opéra Stagings," 29–30.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

Findings

Several unexpected findings arose over the course of this project. These include: the significance of the bed in the final duet, the consistency in the way of depicting set designs and stage diagrams among the manuals, the use of certain measures of orchestral music between sung lines to allow time for movement, and the adaptation of F-Pbh T 8 (1) to include the new scene “The Oasis.” These discoveries suggest that further research should be done with Massenet’s operas and the remaining staging manuals located in the Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris. If these findings remain consistent among the staging manuals for Massenet’s other operas, then it is possible that Massenet may have composed his operas with the staging in mind, in a method similar to Verdi’s.

The fact that the set designs and stage diagrams were the same among the staging manuals for each respective opera was at first a surprise. After some consideration, this makes sense because the staging manuals were designed to replicate the production for which they were written. If an opera had one staging that was intended for subsequent productions, then the authors of these manuals may have been copying other manuals to reproduce the staging for that opera at other theaters. Just as each company would need a score, they would need a staging manual. Thus, these different staging manuals would all come from the same initial staging manual and have the same blocking and set designs.

It is also important that the blocking utilized the space between sung phrases, and thus made parts of the orchestral music come alive with meaning. Certain measures of

music did not make sense until the directions given for them were read. All of a sudden it was as if a light bulb had been turned on, of course the orchestral music between the sung lines is there; it is to allow time for certain movements to take place. The music is for blocking, or it changes because of an emotional change in a character. The blocking and the music work in conjunction with each other in order to give time for the singer to complete movements and further the understanding of the character and the music. This was seen with the music provided for Thaïs to struggle as she sits up, or the space for the Cenobites to pass the food.

The adaptation of F-Pbh T 8 (1) for the revision of the opera and the implications this had on a possible time frame for when the staging manual was written is important. It appears that the scribe for the new scene did not want to change anything from the first production, other than what Massenet revised in the score. He left the original staging manual in tact and did not alter it to add the new scene; he did not want to change anything else in the staging manual. This could explain why he kept the staging manual from the first production, but added the new material at the end and made a note in the body of the staging manual where the new scene would go. The other two staging manuals for *Thaïs* include the new scene where it transpires in the order of the acts and scenes, and not as an appendix. Thus, the addition of the new scene as an appendix is one of the strongest arguments for F-Pbh T 8 (1) having been penned before the revision in 1898, and its importance in understanding the changes between the original version and the revision.

Finally, quite possibly the most intriguing and important discovery to come about was the implication of the bed versus the chair on the perception of the final scene. The bed instantly changes the dynamics of the relationship between Thaïs and Athanaël; it depicts Athanaël's longing for Thaïs's love in a way that is not present with the chair. And, the bed furthers the audiences understanding of the fragile state that Thaïs is in from the moment the final scene begins, as lying in a bed demonstrates more clearly than sitting in a chair how close Thaïs is to death.

Final Remarks

These staging manuals are of immense importance, and only recently has the research they deserve really begun. Around seventy-five years ago, in 1938, Marie-Antoinette Allévy wrote in her doctoral dissertation that “These transcriptions of staging have much of interest to offer the history of theatre—which until now has hardly taken notice of them—for they are faithful accounts, by men of the profession, of a good number of contemporary theatrical works.”⁶³ Then Cohen notes in 1986 that “Since Allévy underscored the importance of this material approximately fifty years ago, only three theatre historians have studied a portion of this documentary resource,”⁶⁴ and musicologists have limited their interest to primarily those written by Palianti and the

⁶³ Marie-Antoinette Allévy, *La mise en scène en France dans la première moitié du dix-neuvième siècle*, (Paris: E. Droz, 1938), 129, quoted in H. Robert Cohen and Marie-Odile Gigou, *Cent ans de mise en scène lyrique en France (env. 1830–1930) = One hundred years of operatic staging in France: catalogue descriptif des livrets de mise en scène, des libretti annotés et des partitions annotées dans la Bibliothèque de l'Association de la régie théâtrale (Paris)*, (New York: Pendragon Press, 1986), xl.

⁶⁴ H. Robert Cohen and Marie-Odile Gigou, *Cent ans de mise en scène lyrique en France (env. 1830–1930) = One hundred years of operatic staging in France: catalogue descriptif des livrets de mise en scène, des libretti annotés et des partitions annotées dans la Bibliothèque de l'Association de la régie théâtrale (Paris)*, xli.

eight *disposizioni sceniche* for Verdi's later operas, that came about from the composer's contact with the French practice.⁶⁵ The gap of nearly fifty years between Allévy's work and Cohen's might be explained by Cohen in the introduction to his catalog of the *livrets de mise en scène* at the Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris. He states:

While the fundamental importance of the visual elements of operatic production in 19th- and early 20th-century France has long been recognized, studies dealing with this aspect of the lyric art are extremely rare. At first glance it may appear somewhat difficult to understand why this subject has not attracted considerable attention and certainly numerous factors could be invoked in an effort to explain this phenomenon, but perhaps it can best be explained in a simple manner: we are only now becoming aware of the truly monumental documentary legacy bequeathed us by the many long forgotten régisseurs, scenery designers and costume designers.⁶⁶

Before Cohen, Allévy was one of only a few people to research the *livrets de mise en scène*, and while little occurred between the time of Allévy's and Cohen's work, there has transpired excellent research on these staging manuals after Cohen's writings.

After carefully studying the staging manual F-Pbh T 8 (1), the notion became extremely clear that someone took the time and energy to ensure that every aspect of the production for Massenet's opera *Thaïs* was preserved. According to H. Robert Cohen,

Frequently these manuals also indicate the type of voice required for each role, and describe for each act the costumes, the required props and furnishings, the sets and their placement on stage and, at times, the lighting. On rare occasions sketches of set designs may also be found.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ H. Robert Cohen and Marie-Odile Gigou, *Cent ans de mise en scène lyrique en France (env. 1830–1930) = One hundred years of operatic staging in France: catalogue descriptif des livrets de mise en scène, des libretti annotés et des partitions annotées dans la Bibliothèque de l'Association de la régie théâtrale (Paris)*, xli

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, xxxix.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, xl.

If the diagrams of set designs are rare as Cohen states, then it must have been that much more important that the staging and blocking for *Thaïs* be preserved, as there are ornate set diagrams for every scene.

Furthermore, the four staging materials analyzed for *Manon* all contain the same set diagrams, in the same manner that three staging manuals for *Thaïs* have the same set diagrams. This presents the possibility that Massenet may have participated in the creation of the staging manuals for his operas in the same manner as Verdi, because the staging manuals are so detailed and do not change. But, additional study and research would be needed to prove this. Much of Steve Huebner's work shows that Wagner influenced Massenet; perhaps another possibility is that Massenet was pulling inspiration from Wagner's idea of *Gesamtkunstwerk*. In any case, the diagrams found in the staging manuals for *Thaïs* are akin to those of Verdi, whom we know to have been involved in the writing of the staging manuals and the production of his operas.

In many ways staging manuals may help the staging director become more creative, as they have to take what they are given and form something unique from it. As Gossett notes,

Directors may well find that nineteenth-century staging manuals are more liberating than constraining.... No two productions will ever be the same, even if they are both heavily influenced by an early staging manual, any more than two actors would pronounce the words of 'To be or not to be' with precisely the same inflections.⁶⁸

Dawn Urista described a similar occurrence with the tradition of oral transmission between ballet dancers:

⁶⁸ Philip Gossett, Preface to *Cent ans de mise en scène lyrique en France (env. 1830–1930) = One hundred years of operatic staging in France: catalogue descriptif des livrets de mise en scène, des libretti annotés et des partitions annotées dans la Bibliothèque de l'Association de la régie théâtrale (Paris)*, x–xi.

Oral transmission of a dance role will usually include both steps and cues via imagery and what the older dancer remembers, but it also opens up new possibilities for both learner and teacher to discover new ways of disseminating the information. New imagery may arrive, a step may be altered to favor a dancer's stronger leg, and much like the temporal nature of dance itself, the role will alter to fit the new model.⁶⁹

It is just as true that the same staging in an opera will change with each performance and each singer.

For various reasons, it appears that the stagings for 19th century operas were buried with the composer. New modern trends took over, and the operas evolved to survive. Yet, musicologists are beginning to further the research that has been done on the *livrets de mise en scène*. Hopefully Porter's restagings are just the beginning of many more full productions of operas based upon these staging manuals, as there are numerous staging manuals stored in library archives waiting to be utilized in informed restagings of their respective operas.

⁶⁹ Dawn Urista, "Giselle's Mad Scene: A Demonstration and Comparison of 21st Century and 19th Century Paris Opéra Stagings," 29.

APPENDIX A

THAÏS

Legend, Novel, & Synopsis

The opera *Thaïs* is based on the novel written by Anatole France in 1890. Anatole France took his inspiration from a French translation of the legend of the courtesan Thaïs, who later became a saint. The German nun Hrostwitha recorded this legend in the 10th century. France first wrote a poem in 1867, followed by a serial in 1889 titled *Paphnuce*, after the name of the monk who converts Thaïs to the Christian faith. The final novel was published in 1890 as *Thaïs*; and according to Milnes, the church savagely attacked it for “its anti-clerical satire of Voltairean irony.”⁷⁰ Massenet and his librettist, Gallet, had to be granted permission, in 1892, before they could turn it into an opera.⁷¹

The story is about Thaïs, a beautiful, wealthy courtesan in Alexandria, who is converted to the Christian faith and becomes a saint. In the beginning of the opera, the monk Athanaël has a vision about Thaïs. Despite the warning from Palémon, his superior, about mixing with people of the world, Athanaël decides he is going to try to save Thaïs from her sins.

While hiding his identity as a monk, Athanaël heads to Alexandria, where he finds Thaïs at Nicias’ house. Later, when Thaïs is alone in her room, she discovers how empty her life is. After a discussion with her mirror that reveals she is aging, Athanaël

⁷⁰ Rodney Milnes, “Thaïs,” In *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, edited by Stanley Sadie, *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/O006414> (accessed March 23, 2012).

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

enters. Upon her warning not to love her, he reveals that he is a monk and has come to offer her eternal life and a different love. He leaves and says he will wait for her. Thaïs is left in hysterics.

Later that evening, Thaïs returns to Athanaël and says that she will go with him. He tells her she must burn everything, but she wants to save a small statue of Eros. Before she can return to her house, Nicias and his companions enter. A ballet ensues. After the ballet is over, Athanaël announces Thaïs's conversion. Upon hearing this news the crowd is angered and threatens to stone both Athanaël and Thaïs. Nicias saves them by throwing gold to the crowd, allowing Thaïs and Athanaël to escape.

As Athanaël and Thaïs are in the desert heading toward Mère Albine's settlement, Thaïs begs to stop and rest for a moment. She is too weary to continue. Athanaël drives her on, saying that she must ignore her fleshly desires. However, he sees the blood on her feet and pities her. Athanaël then goes to fetch her some water. She thanks him for saving her from her sins. Mère Albine and the sisters then welcome Thaïs. As he leaves, Athanaël realizes with horror that he will never see Thaïs again.

Twenty days have passed since Athanaël returned to his place with the other Cenobites. In this time he has not eaten or drunk anything. No amount of self-flagellation can bring him peace. He cannot get over Thaïs, and Palémon can only repeat his initial warning about mingling with people of the world. As a storm threatens, Athanaël begins to hear distant voices that are saying Thaïs is going to die. This is intermixed with visions of her before her conversion. He cannot take it any longer. With the thought of her dying and never seeing her again, he rushes into the storm.

Athanaël arrives at Mère Albine's settlement to find Albine and the sisters praying alongside Thaïs, who is on her deathbed. The final duet is sung as Athanaël proclaims his love to Thaïs, but she is caught up in seeing the heavens open up and angels waiting for her. She dies, and he utters an agonizing cry of pity as the curtain falls.⁷²

Opera: Premiere, Revision, & Success

The opera was originally planned to premiere at the Opéra-Comique. However, in the spring of 1893, as Massenet was finishing the opera, things changed. The young soprano from California, Sybil Sanderson, for whom Massenet had composed *Thaïs*, had a dispute over performance fees with Léon Carvalho at the Opéra-Comique. Sanderson then signed a contract with the Opéra. *Thaïs* was now headed to the Opéra, where it was adapted with the obligatory ballet that Massenet composed over the summer.⁷³

Thaïs opened on March 16, 1894, but unfortunately it was not a big success. Despite the controversial nature and the "accidental" exposure of Sanderson's bust, it received only fourteen performances before Sanderson retired for married life in 1897. At this point Massenet revised the opera. He added a new scene, "The Oasis," as the first scene during Act 3. He then removed the original ballet and second act interlude and added a new ballet at the end of Act 2. This version was first performed on April 13, 1898. And again, it did not go over well. In 1903 the opera finally became a success when it was premiered at the Teatro Lirico in Milan with Lina Cavalieri depicting Thaïs.

⁷² Rodney Milnes, "Thaïs," In *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, edited by Stanley Sadie, *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online*.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

Cavalieri's success was repeated in Paris in 1907 for the 69th performance at the Opéra, at which point the work's popularity was now assured. The opera also found popularity in the United States with its premiere in 1907, with the assistance of Mary Garden in the title role. *Thaïs* remained in the repertory of the Opéra until 1956, where it fell just short of 700 performances.⁷⁴ *Thaïs* is truly a remarkable composition that has never fully received its due. As Rodney Milnes states, "*Thaïs* has never entirely lapsed from the repertory but—undeservedly—has never achieved the popularity of *Werther* or *Manon*."⁷⁵

⁷⁴ Rodney Milnes, "Thaïs," In *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, edited by Stanley Sadie, *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online*.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

APPENDIX B

TRANSLATION OF F-Pbh T 8 (1)

The following translation of F-Pbh T 8 (1) was prepared by Dolores Julien and edited by Alicia Antoinette with help from Marian Smith. The page numbers have been added to allow for a spatial understanding of how the staging manual is laid out. The set diagrams are added for clarity, but the movement diagrams have been deleted, with a note inserted where each diagram exists in the staging manual. These notes, in accordance with the page numbers, allow for easy correlation with the photographed version of the document to locate the specific diagram. Some formatting changes have been made in relation to spoken dialogue for the ease of the reader, but no content was altered. In addition, the page numbers noted in the text of the manual for locations of music in the score are referencing the score that was in correlation to this manual, but the edition and publisher of the score is unknown. Please note that *côté jardin* is used to refer to stage right and *côté cour* stage left.

Cover Page

Thaïs

A Comédie Lyrique in 3 Acts & 7 Scenes

By

Louis Gallet

Adapted from the Novel by Anatole France

Music by

J. Massenet

Production

(Covered Over)

Page 1

Thaïs

A *Comédie Lyrique* in 3 Acts

Poem by M. Louis Gallet

Adapted from the Novel by Mr. Anatole France

Music by
Mr. Massenet

If the ballet is produced, the work will have seven scenes.
Excluding the ballet: six scenes.
Place the number of scenes on the bill according to the arrangement adopted in the Opéra.

Page 2

Notice

—*The production can be adapted to the Opéra presentation.*—

The first edition of the score is not divided in the same manner—which means that the first act (at the Opéra) has two scenes.

The Thébaïde – The Terrace

The second act has two scenes: Thaïs' Bedroom
and the Square

The third act
has two scenes—if the ballet is removed (as at the Opéra):

The Thébaïde – The Monastery of the *Filles Blanches*

—The second edition would be the same as the presentation at the Opéra.

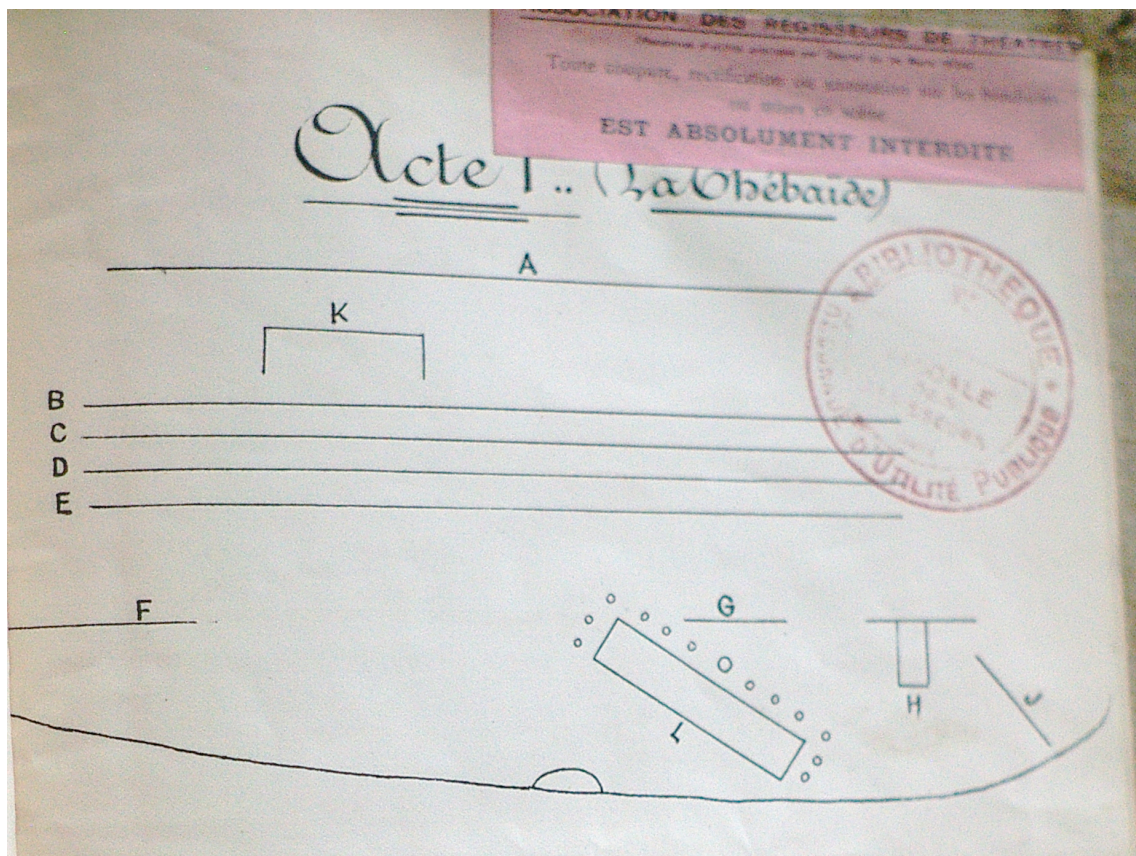
Act 1, Scene 1
The Thébaidé

Figure 23: Act 1, Scene 1 Set Diagram

The setting is the huts of the Cenobites along the edge of the Nile.
The decor has 3 levels plus the *Vision*

- A. *Pantalon* curtain representing a section of the theatre of Alexandria.
- B. Air curtain falling behind the backdrop to hide the *Vision*.
- C. Backdrop of the desert.
- D.E. Two *fermes* (frameworks) going downstage.
- F.G. Two *châssis* (flats) of trees; in the center of *châssis* (framework) G is a canvas door of a hut with a metal *practicable* (platform) used only during Act 3.
- H. Athanaël's bed, which fits into the *châssis* (framework) in Act 3.
- I. Door of a hut hidden by a curtain.

Page 4

- K. *Practicable* (platform) where Thaïs will appear.
- L. A large table with thirteen chairs: placed on the table are two water jars, a salt cellar, a plate of honey, a basket filled with hyssop, a basket of bread, thirteen plates, and thirteen cups.

The *Vision* is situated on the *côté jardin* (stage right) near the curtain.

(At the Opéra, the Cenobites, sung by 7 coryphées artistes, tenors, and basses and 4 choir coryphées, 2 second tenors [one a 1st bass and one a 2nd bass])

.....

The seat of Palémon is higher than the others.

The breadbasket must be placed at the far end of the *côté cour* (stage left) table.

The hyssop is next to it.

The salt and the two water jars are in the center.

The plate of honey is at the far end of the table toward the *côté jardin* (stage right).

There is one seat free facing the *côté cour* (stage left) for Athanaël.

The Cenobite speaks, “Behold the bread.” The Cenobites pass the basket for each to take a piece. This action completed, the basket is put back in its place. The Cenobites charged to speak the words, “And the salt, and the hyssop, behold the honey, behold the water.” They do the same movements as the first.

Palémon rises to speak with fervor: “Each morning...” At the end of his sentence he slowly sits down.

Page 5

The Cenobites speak with their heads lowered and hands joined. They are practically murmuring, “May the black demons of the abyss...” The following words are spoken with respect, “Athanaël! Athanaël! He has been absent so long!” “When therefore will he return? When?” is spoken with interest.

Palémon says mysteriously, “The hour of his return is near.” The Cenobites, after hearing with marked attention the recitative of Palémon, say earnestly, “Athanaël is appointed of God.”

On the *andante lento* the Cenobite tenor rises, looks toward *côté jardin* (stage right) and says, “Behold.” At the third bar, which follows this phrase, Athanaël enters behind the tree frame F. He holds a large staff and advances slowly, as though exhausted with fatigue and sorrow.

Palémon, who has risen, approaches to say, “Welcome Brother, you are overwhelmed with fatigue.”

(Diagram)

The Cenobite tenors rise saying emphatically, “Come rest.” They show him his empty seat at the table.

Palémon returns to take the staff and places it next to the bed.

Athanaël comes to take his place at the table.

The Cenobites return to their places and listen attentively to the recitative of Athanaël, who gently pushes back the food that is brought to him.

Athanaël speaks in a somber tone, as though haunted. He is talking to himself, “The city is possessed by sin.”

Page 6

The Cenobites speak with a calm and simple curiosity: “And what of this Thaïs?” Athanaël comes out of his torpor to say, “An infamous priestess,” calming down immediately, “of the cult of Venus.”

On the *crescendo poco rit*, Athanaël slowly rises before the first words to speak humbly with charm and as though remembering a far past, “Alas! As a child...” Little by little, more somber and more agitated, he speaks, “I knew her.” He speaks with strong emotion while he moves toward *côté jardin* (stage right), “And I would like to win her soul over to God.”

On the *ritornello* that follows, Palémon moves down left of Athanaël to say, “We never get involved with the people of the present time.” On the third, “To the Lord!” Night begins upon the scene and in the hall.

(Diagram)

The Cenobites rise one after the other in the night. After his phrase, Palémon turns and

Page 7

says to the Cenobites, “Night comes. Let us pray and sleep.”

The Cenobites respond with devotion, “Let us pray.” All the Cenobites exit into wing G saying fearfully and mysteriously with their heads bent and hands joined, “May the black demons of the abyss...”

Order of exit: Basses, Tenors, Palémon

At the Opéra, the choirmaster is in the wings. He beats the measure.

Athanaël crosses the stage, kneels at the foot of his bed, then lies down on the bed to the *un eu plus lent* on page 14.

Theaters with electric lights should dim the *herse* (overhead-lights) and the *rampe* (footlights)—scene. Dark night is in the hall.

The apparition is illuminated by a *herse* (overhead-light) and two blue-green *portants* (wing-lights) placed behind the *châssis* (frameworks) F and G.

As soon as the Cenobites have left, Curtain B rises gently.

At the beginning of the *allegro* on page 15 from the *Vision*, the lights from the *portants* (wing-lights) and the *herse* (overhead-light), which are placed behind the backdrop, illuminate the apparition.

Page 8

At the 11th bar: Lights out

At the 12th bar: Lights on

At the 17th bar: Lights out

At the 21st bar: Lights on

At the 37th bar: Thaïs lets her coat drop.—Lights out on the *portants* (wing-lights) and the *rampe* (footlights). Curtain B falls quickly.

During the *Vision*, Thaïs' double, wearing the same costume as Thaïs in the second scene of the first act, is placed with her back toward the audience on *practicable* (platform) K. She mimes the *Amours d'Aphrodite*.

The orchestra, which accompanies this scene, is placed on the *côté jardin* (stage right). It is composed of: Flute, Clarinet, English Horn, 4 Harps, and a Mustel Organ. Cheering is heard from afar *côté jardin* (stage right) with the help of cornets and the choir.

At the disappearance of the *Vision* Athanaël, who has awoken, stands up and shouts out in anger, "Shame! Horror!"

Rampe (footlights) and *herse* (overhead-lights) back on.

"Lord! Lord!" He moves downstage to finish his phrase, then falls on his knees and falls face forward towards the audience. In this position he begins the next phrase, "You who have pity in your souls."

He stands back up and says with enthusiasm, “I arise and leave.”

Page 9

Athanaël, in an even more rapturous state, speaks: “In the blue sky I see leaning toward her.” At the two bars that follow, “Eternal life,” he returns and calls into wing G, “Brothers, brothers, get up, all of you. Come! Come!” He goes to pick up his staff and returns to the middle of the stage.

Palémon and the bass Cenobites enter from wing G and come to the *côté jardin* (stage right) of the stage. The tenors exit the hut and fill the *côté cour* (stage left) of the stage.

(Diagram)

Athanaël warmly addresses everyone: “My mission has been revealed to me.” There is a rustle among the Cenobites. At the end of his phrase Athanaël bends toward Palémon, who turns his head away and says to him with a soft expression as if in a tender reproach, “My son....” During this phrase Athanaël has his eyes raised to heaven and says with a gesture toward all those who move to hold him back, “As God wishes!” Then he exits by wing F.

The bass Cenobites kneel and look in the direction of wing F. Palémon returns and stands. The tenors move to the *côté jardin* (stage right) and kneel.

Page 10

(Diagram)

A lead singer beats the measure for Athanaël and the Cenobites. Athanaël returns toward the wings further and further away. “Be strong like the Archangel!” Athanaël returns again. On the last notes that are sung the curtain lowers slowly.

The Curtain *de manoeuvre* is lowered.

.....

Attention: Note on the subject of the division of the scenes and the acts.

<u>At the Opéra:</u>	1 st Act – 2 scenes	{	The Thébaïde The Terrace
	2 nd Act – 2 scenes	{	The Bedroom The Square
	3 rd Act – 2 scenes	{	(Without the Ballet) The Thébaïde The Monastery

In the score 1st Edition: 1st Act – 2 scenes – The Thébaïde

	2 nd Act – 2 scenes	{	The Terrace The Bedroom The Square
	3 rd Act – 2 scenes	{	(Without the Ballet) The Thébaïde The Monastery

Act 1, Scene 2
 The Terrace of Nicias' House in Alexandria

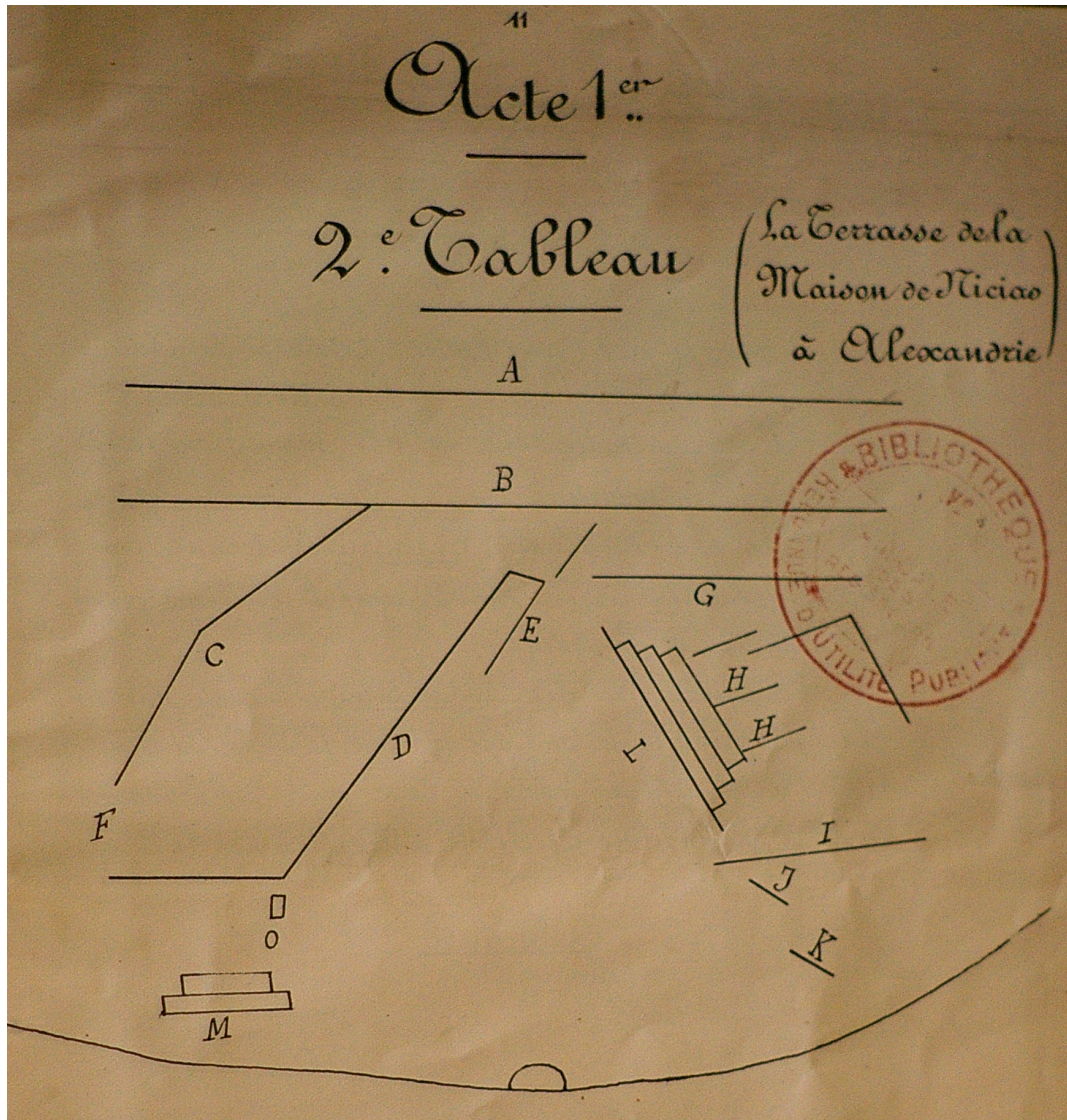


Figure 24: Act 1, Scene 2 Set Diagram

- A. Curtain representing the sea and bands of the sea (a very blue sea). The sky is an intense light blue.
- B. D. *Fermes* (frameworks) representing a railing.
- F. Entrance.
- C. *Châssis* (flat) panoramic representing the city of Alexandria (the city is very white and sunlit).
- E. Slope.
- G. *Châssis* (flat) of trees.

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H. H. Nicias' Palace, *Ferme* (framework) with two curtains.

L. Four steps,

I. *Châssis* (flat) of trees.

J. K. Grounds, flowers are planted.

O. Stool.

M. Stone bench with a back (full lighting on stage and hall).

The curtain rises on the 6th bar, which precedes the end of the introduction.

When the curtain rises Athanaël, holding his staff in hand, arrives through entrance F and comes to the middle of the stage.

Hearing steps the Servant, who is stretched out on bench M, takes the staff leaning against the back of the bench, rises, and standing over it, says brusquely, "Go, beggar, look for your livelihood elsewhere."

(Diagram)

Athanaël answers gently, "My son, do as you please."

The servant raises the staff and walks toward Athanaël. He says, "Get out, beggar."

Athanaël says firmly and calmly, "Strike if you wish but go warn your master, go."

At the look and calm attitude of Athanaël, the servant stops and passes in front of him.

When he comes to the bottom of the steps L, he stops, looks again toward Athanaël, then enters the house.

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(Diagram)

After these words, "Oh my country! My cradle, my home!" Athanaël leans his staff against the terrace D, then moves center stage, "From your love, I have turned my heart." He speaks towards upstage, "Come! Come! Heaven's angels!"

After his song, Athanaël goes toward the palace. He stops when he hears laughter coming from the palace.

The first burst of song occurs while the curtains are closed. The curtains open soon after and Nicias appears on top of the stairs with his arms leaning on the shoulders of Crobyle and Myrtale.

(Diagram)

The last burst of laughter should be sung at the bottom of the steps L. Nicias notices Athanaël, leaves Crobyle and Myrtale, and runs toward him saying, “Athanaël, you’re here.”

Page 14
(Diagram)

Nicias sings his recitative very slowly and with good humor. Crobyle and Myrtale look on in surprise as Nicias embraces this stranger.

Athanaël and Nicias go to the middle of the stage. Crobyle and Myrtale return and stay in the background.

(Diagram)

Athanaël says calmly, “Nicias, you know....”

Nicias answers laughing, “Of course! I know her!”

Athanaël says with conviction, “I want to bring her back to God.”

Nicias laughs aloud.

Athanaël with assurance, “I want to bring her back to God.”

Nicias whispers in Athanaël’s ear and laughing, says, “Have fear of offending Venus.”

Athanaël ever convinced, “God will protect me.” And calmly, “Where can I find this woman?”

Nicias smiling, “Right here.”

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Toward the end of this conversation they go toward bench M. After the words, “That you are going to give her,” Athanaël sits on bench M.

Nicias goes toward Crobyle and Myrtale, who come near. He says, “Crobyle and Myrtale.”

(Diagram)

After these words, “To adorn my good Athanaël,” Crobyle and Myrtale go toward the steps L, clapping. The servant appears, descends the stairs, and after exchanging a few words he goes into the palace.

Nicias has gone to take his place on the bench next to Athanaël. Crobyle and Myrtale are laughing. They go toward the bench.

The servant returns immediately carrying a chest, which he places on stool O. He exits.

Myrtale and Crobyle, laughing, prepare to dress Athanaël.

(Diagram)

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Crobyle speaks in an aside to Myrtale, “He is young.”

Myrtale responds to Crobyle, “He is handsome.”

Myrtale touches Athanaël’s beard then says to Crobyle, “His beard is a bit rough.” She responds, “His eyes are full of fire.” After these words Crobyle takes from the chest a golden band and places it on Athanaël’s head. He takes it off and places it on the bench.

Nicias stands up and moves to the center of the stage. Myrtale and Crobyle, each holding a bracelet, come to kneel before Athanaël; and each places a bracelet on his arm.

(Diagram)

Myrtale says, “The robe now.” She takes the robe.

Speaking coquettishly, “Take off this black shirt.” Crobyle goes to take it off him. Athanaël quickly stands and exclaims, “Oh! Women, for that, never!” Myrtale and Crobyle, at first scared away by Athanaël’s brusque refusal, return gently near him and pass an embroidered robe over his tunic. After this Athanaël sits down again.

(Diagram)

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Nicias says with familiarity and a smile, “Don’t be offended by their teasing.” After the garment Myrtale goes to get costly sandals and offers them to Athanaël, who refuses them. Crobyle takes a perfume bottle and pours the contents over the head and cheeks of Athanaël.

With these words, “On the cheeks,” Athanaël stands and goes toward Nicias.

Myrtale and Crobyle come back together and the reprise of the quartet is sung in the following position.

(Diagram)

Loud exclamations by the choir come from outside on the *côté jardin* (stage right).

(Diagram)

At the sound of these exclamations, Nicias returns toward the terrace. After looking toward the city, he returns toward Athanaël, who goes to the *côté cour* (stage left). He smiles and says, "Take care of yourself!"

(Diagram)

1. 2 Flute Players, who go center stage.

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2. 8 Actresses, two by two they come in front of the scene on the *côté jardin* (stage right).
3. 8 (Sopranos) on the *côté cour* (stage left).
4. 8 Actors, 4 First Tenors upstage *côté cour* (upstage left), 4 Second Tenors same.
5. 8 Philosophers, 4 First Basses in back, 4 Second Basses, same.
The male and female singers gather in front of the *côté cour* (stage left) scene.
The philosophers are in two lines in back.
6. Thaïs greets the players on *côté cour* (stage left) then goes to the *côté jardin* (stage right). Thaïs walks to the rhythm of the music with the same casualness that the dancers expressed when they came on stage. The ballerinas make a move toward them.
7. 6 Male Dancers, behind the philosophers.

The actors, male and female singers, and philosophers bow to her and all speak with admiration and veneration, "Thaïs, sister of the Karites."

After Thaïs enters, Crobyle and Myrtale place themselves on either side on top of the stairs L.

Page 19
(Diagram)

Nicias moves toward Thaïs then returns to speak to all, “Hermodore, Aristobule, etc.”
On the *ritornello* that follows, “So be it with you,” the exit begins.
All enter the palace H. Myrtale and Crobyle hold the curtains open.

Exit Order:

1. 2 Flute Players.
2. Female Dancers.
3. Choir.
4. Singing Itinerants.
5. Philosophers and Athanaël—the latter takes a quick look toward Thaïs before entering the palace.
6. Male Dancers.
7. Myrtale and Crobyle.

Thaïs prepares to follow. She passes in front of Nicias, who stops her by taking her right hand and leads her toward the bench M where he takes his place.
Thaïs stays near the bench. There she says, “Thaïs is here.”

(Diagram)

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Nicias stands and takes Thaïs by the hand, saying, “We have been lovers for a week long,” and after these words, “Free...Far from your arms...”

(Diagram)

Thaïs speaks bitterly: “Oh! Tomorrow! I will be nothing... but a name.”

They return in the direction of the palace and stop. The philosophers exit the palace and group themselves in the back.

Athanaël stops on the stairs and looks at Thaïs with severity.

Upon seeing him, Thaïs points to him and says to Nicias, “Who is this stranger?”

(Diagram)

Nicias speaks off-handedly in a low voice, “A philosopher with a coarse soul,” and with irony, “Watch out, he is here for you!”

Thaïs says mischievously, “What is he bringing? Love?”

At these words, “He wants to convert you to the Holy Doctrine,” Thaïs responds with a similar tone as before, “What does he teach?”

Athanaël descends the stairs and gently comes forward. He says, “Scorn of the flesh, love of pain.”

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The female dancers leave the palace and move to *côté cour* (stage left).

(Diagram)

Thaïs gazes at Athanaël for a long moment with a smile of incredulity and says, “Go... follow your path.” At the end of this phrase, she arrives at the *côté cour* (stage left). During this time the philosophers come upstage. The singers (choir), jesters, actors, Myrtale, and Crobyle leave the palace and take the following positions:

The female singers go to upstage *côté jardin* (upstage right) from the philosophers. The itinerants go behind the female singers. The male dancers are in back. Myrtale and Crobyle move to the right and left of Nicias.

(Diagram)

Everyone must actively follow what transpires with a feeling of surprise.

Athanaël, who has listened to Thaïs with a dark

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anger, breaks in, “Oh! Stop this blaspheming....” On the *allegretto* bar, Thaïs moves toward Athanaël and goes to touch him. He recoils. She responds with a coquettish irony, “Who makes you so stern?” Etc....

(Diagram)

She speaks with the charm of seduction. “Sit next to us and be crowned with roses.” All move toward Athanaël and speak in the same tone as Thaïs. “Sit next to us.” The female singers and male dancers make the gestures that express the words of the song.

Athanaël says with ardor, “No! I hate your false drunkenness.” He moves *côté cour* (stage left). At this moment the female dancers move up.

(Diagram)

Thaïs moves toward Athanaël and tries to touch him. Athanaël pushes her back and goes center stage.

On the *andante sans lenteur* the female ballet dancers come and lie in groups on either side of the stairs.

Thaïs comes to take the hand of Athanaël, who quickly moves in front of her.

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Thaïs says, “Dare to come, you who defy Venus.” She then moves toward the palace. Once she has come to the top of the stairs, she prepares to reproduce the love scene of Aphrodite.

Everyone’s eyes are fixed on Athanaël, who seeing Thaïs, who has removed her coat, recoils appalled by such daring. He exits quickly by slope E with a gesture of horror. All make gestures of mirth.

The curtain falls.

A beam of electric light shines upon Thaïs’ group.

End of the first act.

Act 2, Scene 3
The Bedroom of Thaïs in Her House

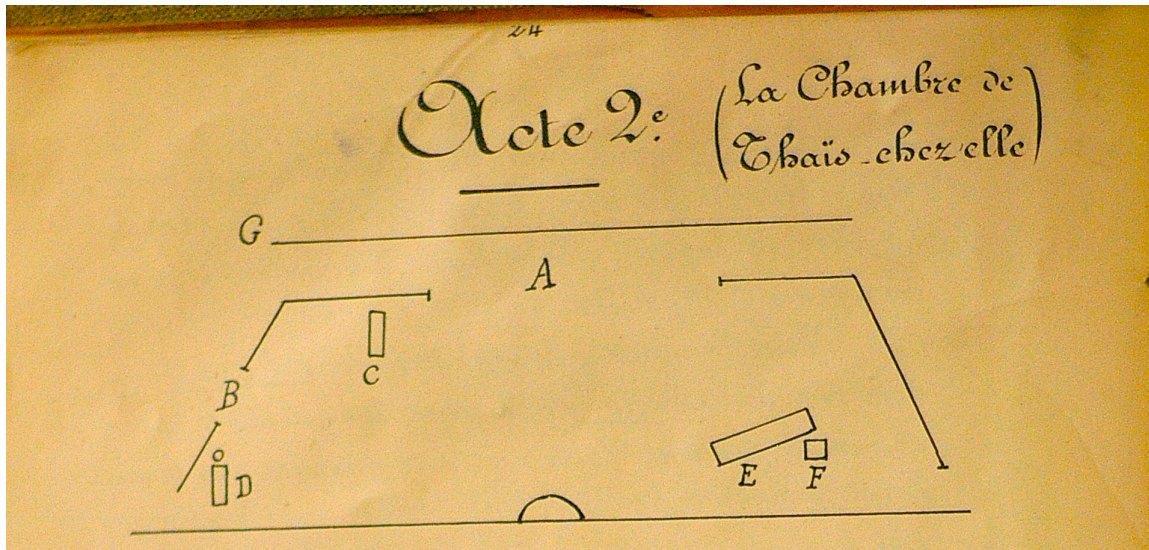


Figure 25: Act 2, Scene 3 Set Diagram

- A. Door closed by curtains.
- B. Door with curtains raised allowing a view of Thaïs' bedroom (hidden red lighting).
- C. Column on top of which is an alcohol lamp. It is lit.
- D. A statue of Venus on a pedestal decorated with flowers.
- E. Couch.
- F. Stool on top of which a hand mirror has been placed.
- G. Curtain representing the interior of a grotto.

(At the Opéra, there is a second soft curtain with drapery on either side—this curtain will be lowered at the end of Thaïs' dream scene.)

When the usual curtain rises, Thaïs, on cue with the *allegro moderato*, enters through the door followed by 4 female dancers. They move downstage toward *côté jardin* (stage right).

Thaïs removes her coat, which she hands over to the actresses, and after thanking them, invites them in and leads them to door A where they exit. Then she goes to the couch E where she sits and says:

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with weariness and bitterness, "Oh, here I am alone, alone at last!"

At the Opéra singing begins, “I am alone, alone at last” (see production second edition—conforms to the presentation).

Instead, “Oh! How tired I am!” (The words are found in the production of the 1st edition).

(Diagram)

On the *ritornello* that follows these words, “Happiness,” Thaïs dreamily takes the mirror from the stool F and gazes into it in a becoming way. She lies down on her left arm, the mirror in her right.

The first part of the piece is sung while she is on the couch with mirror in hand. At the penultimate bar, “Eternally,” she stands up to sing with full force, “Eternally.” *Sur le tempo* she looks again into the mirror, her expression closes; she places the mirror back on the stool and sings as she straightens, turning her ear toward a voice that seems to speak from the shadows: “Oh! Be quiet, voice without pity.” She sings dully, “Thaïs, you are aging!” and with fear, “You will never again be Thaïs.” Calming down little by little, “No! No!” At the words “Magic spells,” she goes to the statue of Venus to sing to her, “You, Venus....”

(Diagram)

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Thaïs murmurs with devotion, “Invisible and present Venus.” At the last bar of the *poco più mosso*, Athanaël silently enters and stops upstage *côté cour* (upstage left).

(Diagram)

On seeing him, Thaïs addresses him with charm, “Stranger, you are here as you said.” Athanaël, quivering with emotion, seems to murmur a heartfelt prayer, “Lord, Lord!” Thaïs responds with a winning smile, “Come, speak now.” She crosses to *côté cour* (stage left) and sits on the couch E. Athanaël goes downstage.

(Diagram)

Thaïs smiles and says, “This homage,” up to the words, “Beware of loving me!”

Athanaël heatedly rejoins, “How I love you, Thaïs!”

Thaïs smiles with irony, stands, and approaches Athanaël, who has gradually moved toward *côté jardin* (stage right). “Then show me this marvelous love!”

(Diagram)

To the words, “There is only one language for true love,” Thaïs moves downstage a little.

(Diagram)

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Athanaël reproaches her, “Thaïs, don’t complain. The love that I am preaching to you is an unknown love!”

Thaïs moves to *côté jardin* (stage right) and says lightly, “Friend, you come too late.”

(Diagram)

Athanaël, fiery and stern, says, “A love that you know.”

Thaïs haughtily answers, “You are so bold....”

Athanaël sings with fullness and growing enthusiasm at the *allegro maestoso*.

Thaïs is troubled. She furtively watches him and timorously sings, “To eternal life.”

(Diagram)

At the following part, “To eternal life!” trembling, Thaïs resolves to go over to Athanaël to speak to him, “Well, teach me...” and with a soft, mysterious fear, “I obey... I am yours....”

Athanaël fearfully speaks with a suffocated voice...tumultuous thunder.

At Athanaël’s words, Thaïs approaches the statue of Venus.

(Diagram)

Thaïs, seeming exalted, calmly says, “Venus, present and invisible.” During this part Athanaël, who is under Thaïs’ charm, gently backs up unaware to Thaïs, as though he is attracted to a diamond.

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(Diagram)

Once there, he says, “Have pity!” On the *allegro agitato* Athanaël violently retakes possession of himself and moves downstage. He throws off his robe and goes to stand upstage of Thaïs. He says, “I am Athanaël.” Thaïs falls to her knees says, “Oh!”

(Diagram)

Thaïs says in despair, “Have pity!” and with sobs, “Don’t scorn me!” At the Opéra she sings, “Oh, for pity sake, shut up!” (same notes in the score)—second edition of the score mentions this change of words, and the last words, “Have pity, pity! No, do not kill me!” Athanaël speaks with enthusiasm, “No, I have spoken.” Thaïs stands and ardently speaks, “Oh, I feel....”

(Diagram)

Nicias, from the wing on *côté cour* (stage left), speaks with gaiety and charm, “Thaïs, fragile idol.” Hearing these words Thaïs moves downstage speaking with a feeling of repulsion, “No, never!”; as though to herself, “My soul is no longer mine”; now with disdain and anger, “He has never loved”; brusquely, “He is in love with love.” Thaïs passes in front of Athanaël and moves toward the couch E, “Go ahead, tell him.”

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(Diagram)

Athanaël says with authority, “At your doorstep, at your doorstep, until the day.” When he has said these last words, “Oh, oh!” she falls on the couch her head in her hands.... This end of the scene and must give the illusion of a nervous attack, which begins with a strident burst of laughter and finishing with violent sobs.

Athanaël speaks with a gesture, “We will meet again.” He exits.

The curtain falls softly.

The orchestra continues and stops only for the recall.

Notice: During the time that the orchestra plays the Meditation, the choir is on stage behind the curtain—the director leads—a harmonium backs up the voices. Everyone leaves the stage during the last bars of the orchestral piece.

Act 2, Scene 4
A Square in Alexandria

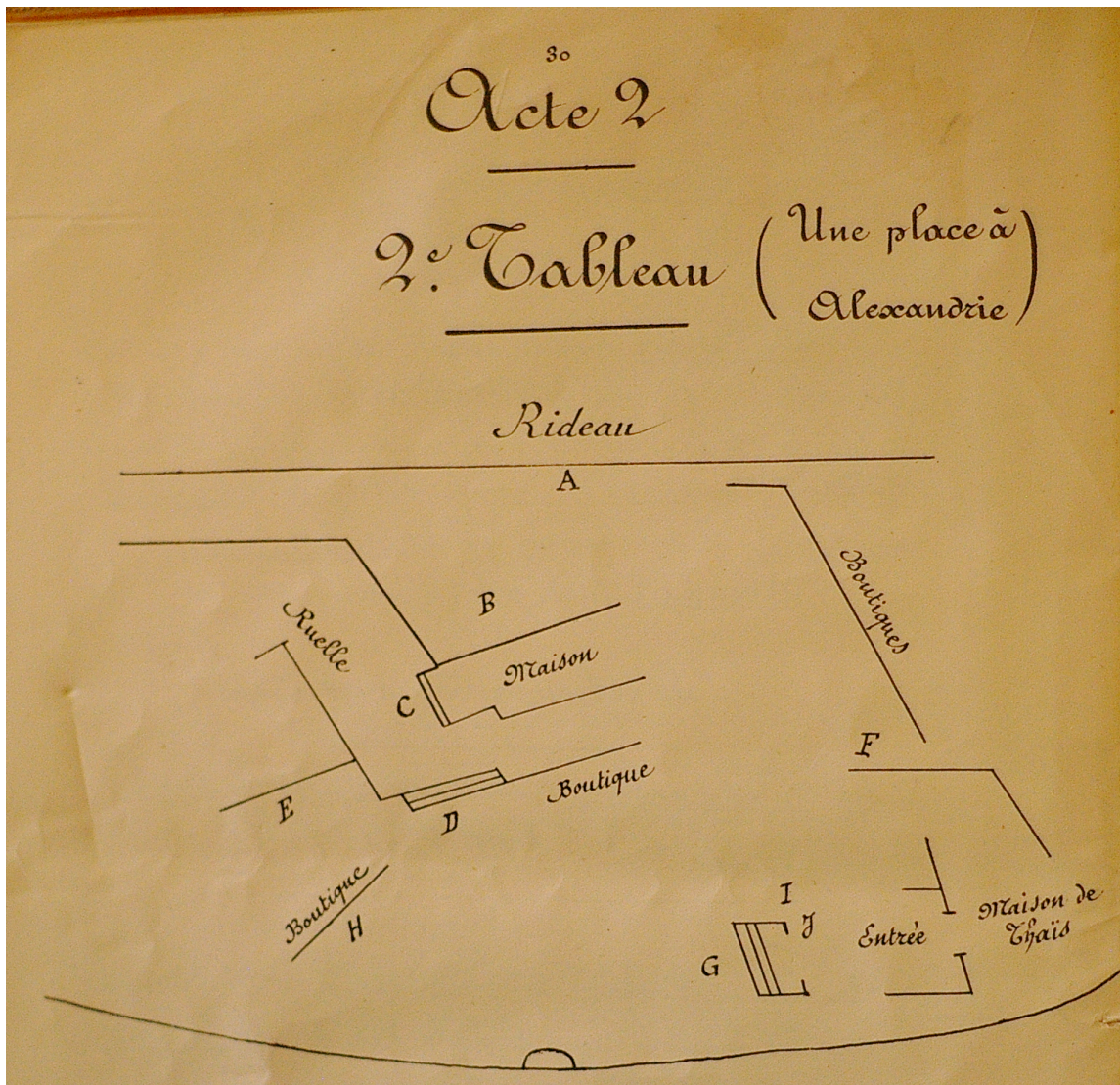


Figure 26: Act 2, Scene 4 Set Diagram

- A. Backdrop from the second scene from the first act.
- B. House behind which is the small orchestra (the windows are illuminated from within).
- C. Stairs to the house.
- D. Stairs to the alley.
- E. F. Entrances.
- G. Stairs to the house of Thaïs (a discreet and mysterious lighting inside the house).

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H. Oblique *châssis* (flat) representing a shop.

I. A small antique lamp, lit.

J. A small statue to "l'amour."

I. and J. are on a console table that is attached to the wall and can be well seen by the audience.

When the curtain rises, Athanaël is seated facing the audience on the stairs G. At the 21st bar, Thaïs exits the house H. She takes a lamp (I) that has been placed on the console attached to the wall. She lifts it over her head to see about her. She descends stairs G. When she sees Athanaël she places the lamp on the console and goes to him, speaking mysteriously and in a low voice, leaning toward him: "Father, God has spoken to me."

At the sound of her voice, Athanaël has risen and says in a voice that is equally low, "Thaïs, I was waiting for you."

(Diagram)

Thaïs speaks humbly again in a low voice, "Your words have remained in my heart like a divine balm..."; speaking submissively, "I come toward you as you have commanded."

Athanaël takes her hand and leads her on stage, "Have courage, my sister."

(Diagram)

Thaïs speaks humbly, "What must be done?"

Thaïs speaks with ambition, "Albine, daughter of the Caesars?"

Athanaël speaks normally, "And the purest of servants."

Now mysteriously, "There I will enclose you, etc...."

Enthusiastically, "Go! Have no doubt!"

With spirit, "So as to wipe away tears!"

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Thaïs says joyfully, "Oh, lead me, my father!" She moves upstage. Athanaël responds violently, with authority, "But first obliterate everything." He goes before Thaïs. Thaïs speaks with resignation, "Father, so be it." After these words, she goes toward the house, then stops and smiles in front of the little statue of Eros J. Athanaël reaches *côté jardin* (stage right). Thaïs takes the statue and shows it to Athanaël. (Bright moonlight shines upon Thaïs the whole while as she sings.)

(Diagram)

Athanaël explodes with anger and seizes the statue. “Nicias! Nicias! Oh, curse the poisoned source!” At these words, “Let him be destroyed!” he throws it violently away from him.

Thaïs speaks with her head lowered. She is shaking. “May everything that was me, return to dust.” At the words, “Come! Come!” they go up into the house. Gradually it becomes day.

Nicias and his friends, 2 first tenors, 2 second tenors, and 4 first basses exit the house B and come down the stairs D & C to *côté jardin* (stage right).

(Diagram)

The crowd of friends sing lightly to Nicias and point out the house of Thaïs. Within the house all are sleeping.

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Nicias says in a carefree manner, “Let them sleep.”

The words “Poor friend” are said with laughter.

Nicias continues in the same tone, “Fortune has at least compensated....”

The friends, still laughing, say, “Oh! Ah! Ah! Who will replace you to be at her side?”

Nicias, still with the same tone, says, “Perhaps!” Now with indifference, “Let’s enjoy ourselves since we can no longer love.”

Still gaily laughing, they say, “Oh! Ah! Let us sing of her victory.”

At the words, “No longer love,” Athanaël exits the house with a burning torch in his hand. He appears at the top of the stairs G. Upon seeing him, Nicias says with irony, “Oh, there is Athanaël!” The crowd repeats, “Athanaël!” All bow to him and say lightly, “Thaïs has robbed you of your reason?” They point out his face, saying, “Oh look, his face is radiant!”

(Diagram)

Athanaël has a stern voice. He throws the torch to the ground, where it goes out. “Be quiet!” He comes down the stairs G and moves to center stage. It is day.

(Diagram)

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At the words, “Here she is,” Thaïs exits the house and descends stairs G.

During this scene, the people, choir, ladies, and gentlemen come in through entrances E, C, and F. The stage is full. The choir is divided in two sections, one half on *côté cour*

(stage left) the second half on *côté jardin* (stage right). The crowd of Nicias' friends, basses, is part of the 1st choir and joins that section in *côté cour* (stage left). The women are grouped in back.

(Diagram)

There is general surprise to see Thaïs.

Athanaël takes Thaïs into his arms and says, "Come, my sister, let us go away forever."

(Diagram)

They prepare to cross the stage.

Nicias bars their way. "Never! No!"

There is movement in the crowd, which repeats these words.

Upon saying, "Thaïs, you will leave us!" Nicias takes Thaïs into his arms.

Athanaël comes back and separates them. He puts Thaïs in front of him.

(Diagram)

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After the words, "She belongs to God!" Athanaël takes Thaïs and vainly looks to find a way through. With each, "No! No! No!" the crowd makes a menacing movement.

A man (1st tenor of the *côté jardin* [stage right] group) steps out and throws a stone at Athanaël and says, "For you, satyr, for you." This excites the laughter of the crowd.

Athanaël and Thaïs are next to each other. They are very calm. They look at the menacing crowd. At the words, "Death! Death! Death!" The crowd jumps upon Athanaël.

Nicias briskly moves upstage and stands in front of Athanaël and Thaïs. He takes gold coins from his moneybag and throws them by handfuls, "This should calm you." The gold calms the mood. The crowd leaves Athanaël and Thaïs. and gradually they pick up the coins on the ground. Nicias calls out, "Go!" to Athanaël and Thaïs as they move across the stage toward the alley. They stop at the opening to the alley.

(Diagram)

Nicias says with great emotion, "Farewell, Thaïs." Thaïs responds with spirit, "It is forever, goodbye!" They exit. Nicias and his friends throw more gold to the crowd.

Côté cour (stage left) scene: There is a new and great clamor from the crowd.

The usual curtain falls quickly.

End of the Act 2

(Written in cursive.)

For the new scene: The Oasis = Go to the end (Appendix)

Act 3, Scene 6
The Thébaidé

Same decor as the first scene.

The two sections of the door to hut G are made of metal sheeting.

The fruit baskets are placed in front of *ferme* (framework) E.

The Cenobite tenors are grouped on *côté jardin* (stage right).

The Cenobite basses are grouped on *côté cour* (stage left).

Palémon is in the middle of the stage.

Notice: The thunder, the lightning, the wind, and the rain are on *côté jardin* (stage right). The lightning, thunder, and rain continue from the time the curtain rises to the entrance of Athanaël.

(Diagram)

All look toward the sky with a vague terror. Palémon addresses all present, "Let us go to our huts and our grain..." The Cenobite tenor, who is placed far off, comes up and says, "Who has seen Athanaël?"

As the *andante lento* begins, Athanaël comes out of his hut J in front of the *côté cour* (stage left) scene. His eyes are fixed. He has a wildness about him, and it seems his body is broken. He comes to the middle of the scene.

The Cenobites respectfully speak, "He comes." Athanaël comes among them as if

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he does not see them. This causes them to say, "He is absent of thought, she is with God!"

The Cenobites collect the fruit baskets and leave. "Let us respect his silence. Let us leave him alone, leave him alone!"

Athanaël turns toward Palémon, who is preparing to follow his brothers. He says to him humbly, "Stay with me."

(Diagram)

With a suffocated voice he says, "Well, in me... peace is dead." He trembles. "In vain have I flagellated my flesh." Finally, "Thaïs." He falls to his knees as though crushed with shame, facing the audience and at the feet of Palémon.

Palémon speaks softly and naturally. He puts his hand on Athanaël's head. "Haven't I told you? We should never mix with the people of this time." At these words, "May God come to your aid!" Athanaël stands up.

After saying "Goodbye!" Palémon leaves on the *côté cour* (stage left) side.

Athanaël goes slowly to bed H, kneels, and stretches out his arms for a silent and fervent prayer. After this he lies down with hands joined; he falls asleep.

Lower the lights in the hall and the *rampe* (footlights).

Notice: The following is from the ballet that was removed from the Paris Opéra.

At the beginning of the *andante* page 184, the spirits of temptation come out from wing F into *côté jardin* (stage right) and circle Athanaël's bed. The first spirit climbs onto the shelf above the bed and expresses in gestures the words

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spoken by the spirit placed in the hut. The singer who has this role should be enveloped in a large black veil, which hides the face. This singer will also sing the role of Albine. Athanaël rises under the influence of his dream, and the spirits pull him toward wing F and disappear. Black night onstage occurs following the three beats of the tam-tam for the change of scene.

The stage represents a wonderful garden dominated by brilliant architecture with ferns and flowers throughout the scene.

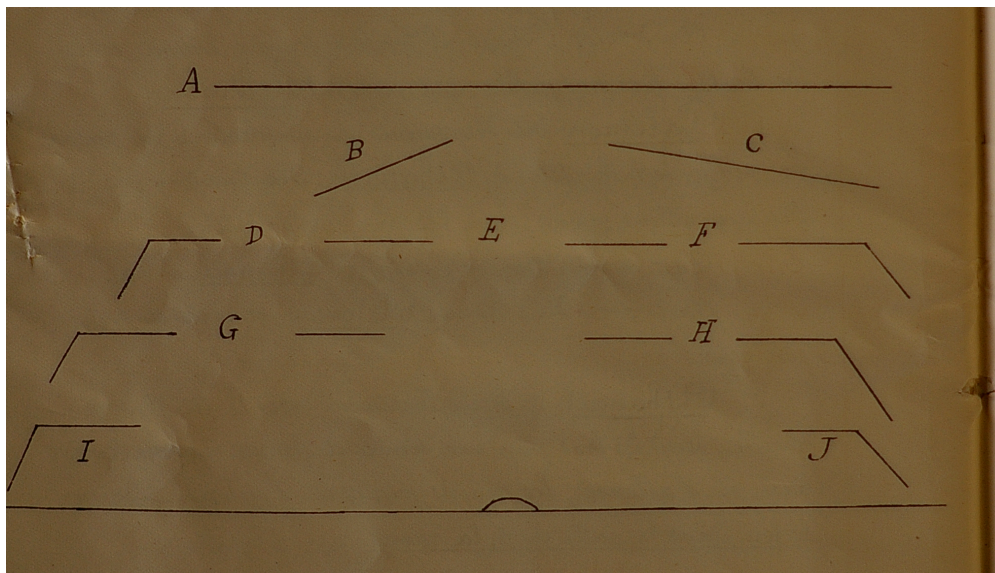


Figure 27: Act 3 Ballet Set Diagram

- A. Back curtain.
- B. C. Grounds with foliage and flowers between the curtain and the grounds in the apparition of Thaïs.
- D. E. F. Large *ferme* (framework) with openings and oblique sections.
- G. H. Large *châssis* (flats) with openings and oblique sections.
- I. J. *Châssis* (flats) with oblique sections.

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The change brings daytime.

Athanaël and the seven spirits come in from the back.

Athanaël is troubled and fearful.

They enter on the *allegretto moderato scherzando*.

They express the loveliness of their stay and evoke a light tone, mocking all the fallen souls. The fallen souls enter: 6 subjects, 6 coryphées, and 2 premier quadrille dancers.

Shortly the lost Athanaël is subjected to their domination. They announce to him with large gestures the oncoming Perdition, (in a cart pulled and followed by sixteen spirits of Perdition. The cart comes from the back of *côté cour* (stage left). At the *presto vivace*, Perdition enters. She takes center stage in the circle of the souls. Her promises seduce them on the *andante cantabile*. The seven spirits evoke the powerful guardians of the sea's riches.

On the *a tempo*, the sirens enter, six subjects with green hair covered with rose-colored shells, such as flesh-colored flowers, pearls, coral, mother of pearl, iridescent shells of the depths.

At the 6th bar on page 196, Perdition shows her treasures to Athanaël and offers them to him. He refuses them.

Scherzetto molto vivace: Solo of Perdition

Allegretto moderato: The gnomes' entrance, 9 Coryphées, 3 premier quadrille dancers

They bring fruit, perfume, gold, and precious stones. They refuse to give any of these to the crowd,

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which presses in greedily around them, and give them to the dazed Athanaël.

Stressso tempo. Perdition plays delicately with the gold and the gems.

Tempo I. Perdition charms Athanaël by her graceful dance.

Très lent. The four Sphinxes enter (The Spirit of the abyss and the twenty-four souls: 1st and 2nd quadrille dancers). They symbolize the doubt, mystery, and silence that troubles Athanaël.

Allegro maestoso. The already triumphant Perdition whirls around Athanaël. She surrenders her lips to the cup of impure drunkenness. Defeat is at hand.

Andante religioso (organ solo) signals the appearance of the electric star (Enquire at the Trouvel House at 12 Vixienne Street).

Deep night on stage.

Sempre crescendo Athanaël, seeing the star, kneels center stage, sings, and makes gestures: It is the awakening, salvation! He understands..., He understands!... But where was he? There is an explosion of joy and recognition. He is saved, saved!

P.P. – Perdition comes toward Athanaël with a perfidious smile. She calms him down, brings him toward her, consoles him, and takes him to her again.

The star gradually darkens.

Athanaël no longer has the courage to resist. He watches the star fade and disappear. Perdition gently helps him rise, then holds him in her arms.

Day returns with red lighting.

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Allegro vivace. The Triton subjects enter with twenty spirits.

M.M. of the ballet

On the 6th bar of p.213, signal for the steam brazier to come down.

The choir, “Oh!” They are far off *côté jardin* (stage right). (Use a powerful loudspeaker/megaphone.)

On the 13th bar of the *fff tutta forza*, close off the steam. The brazier disappears.

Perdition does a witch’s dance in a ring.

The *ffff* is a signal for Thaïs to appear. She is at the back and appears on the words, “Thaïs,” then disappears.

At the end of the ballet, it is deep night. The backdrop for La Thébaïde returns. Perdition

leads Athanaël to the foreground, where he falls to his knees. Perdition disappears by *côté jardin* (stage right) wing F.

Notice: If the ballet is eliminated, this scene immediately follows the one that preceded the ballet.

(After the ballet) On the *allegro moderato*, hut G lights up in blue. Thaïs is seen as dressed in Scene 2 of Act 1. She sings with a provocative, seductive charm, “What makes you so stern.” Athanaël rises and turns to answer, “Thaïs.”

(Diagram)

After these words, “What was your mistake?” Thaïs appears.

Gasping, Athanaël says, “Satan! Get back!”

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“My flesh burns,” he is lost, “I am dying.” The curtain *d’air* rises. At the final words, “Oh! Oh!” Thaïs backs up and enters into hut G.

Athanaël returns toward hut G and says, “Come, come, Thaïs!”

On the *allegro* the light in the hut goes out.

Light now illuminates the vision.

At the beginning of *lento* the monastery *côté jardin* (stage right) can be seen. Thaïs (the double of Thaïs) is lying on a bench surrounded by nuns kneeling in prayer.

Athanaël turns to see the vision. He emits a cry of horror and recoils, “Oh!” The voices are far back on *côté jardin* (stage right).

At the last phrase, “Thaïs is about to die!” The light goes out. The curtain falls abruptly. (During this last scene there is lightning and thunder.)

Athanaël says, “Thaïs is dying! Thaïs is dying!” His movement is one of a man lost. Then he goes downstage and sings with a furious passion, “Why then have the heavens...” He speaks in despair, without breathing, “My Thaïs, don’t go.” This next phrase is said in a delirium, “Stay with me.” Finally, “With me...” he stands quickly and exits by *côté jardin* (stage right).

The curtain falls (rideau de manoeuvre).

(The orchestra continues and does not stop for the recall.)

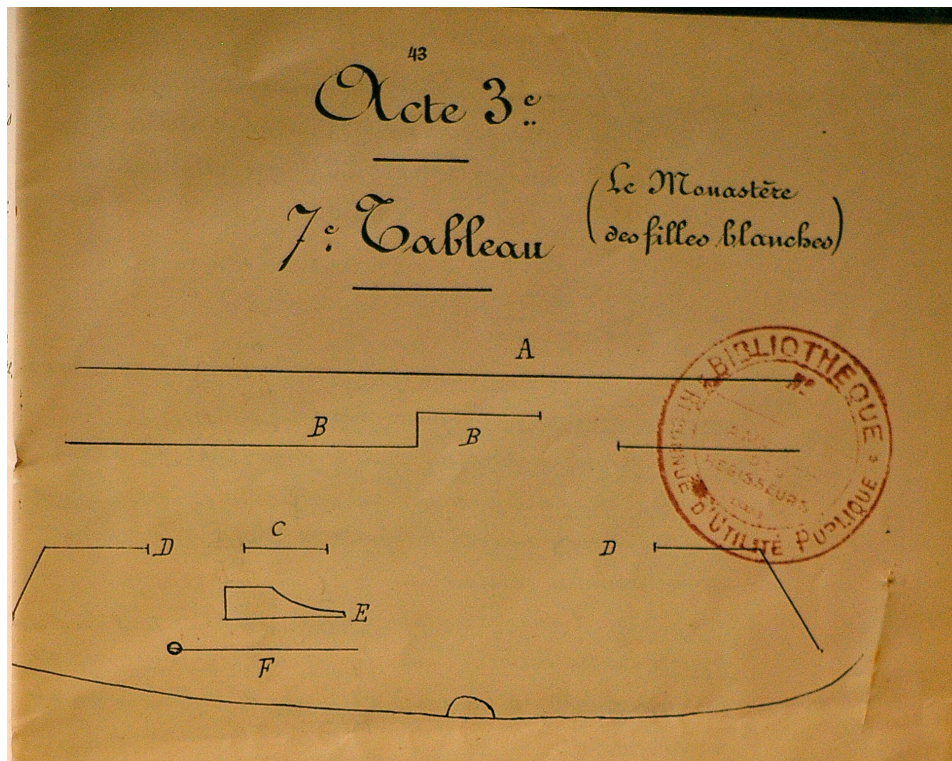
Act 3, Scene 7
The Monastery

Figure 28: Act 3, Scene 7 Set Diagram

- A. Back curtain (intense sky blue).
- B. Garden wall with a door going into it.
- C. A large tree (to contrast with the whiteness of the monastery).
- D. D. *Châssis* (flats) of trees with angled sections. The section angled toward *côté cour* (stage left) represents the door of a cell.
- E. Bed covered with a white cloth.
- F. A green carpet with a green cushion where Thaïs will fall at the end.

At curtain rise Thaïs is lying on the bed E. The song of the *filles blanches* is composed of three first sopranos, three second sopranos, three first contraltos, three second contraltos.

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Eleven are kneeling, hands held in prayer, around the bed where Thaïs is lying. The twelfth is standing behind the bench and is caring for Thaïs. Albine is standing next to her with eyes fixed on Thaïs.

(Diagram)

From this position the *filles blanches* are singing with barely a murmur, “Lord, have pity on me.”

On the bar that follows, Albine goes downstage *jardin* (stage right) to address the audience. She points to Thaïs. “God has called her to him tonight.” At the end of her line, she returns and takes her place.

On the *allegro agitato* a very troubled and very pale Athanaël comes quickly through door B. Albine respectfully comes toward him. When he sees her, he tries to control his emotion.

Albine bows and says unaffectedly, “Welcome.”

(Diagram)

Athanaël, trying to hide his torment, says, “Yes, Thaïs!” He expresses anguish in seeing her: “Thaïs.” The girls in white have risen and with Albine, they leave two by two behind *châssis* (flat) D. They sing the chorus, “Lord, have pity on me.” The singing finishes in the wings.

Athanaël comes over to the couch and falls on his knees.

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“Thaïs,” he says in a low and painful voice.

(Diagram)

Thaïs opens her eyes, sees Athanaël and softly says, “It is you, my father.”

On the *andante religioso*, Thaïs sits up and speaks in a dream, not hearing the words of Athanaël. “Do you remember the water in the fountain?”

Athanaël listens tenderly, “I have only memory of your mortal beauty.”

Athanaël says with ardor, “Oh! I remember only . . .” Anxiously he says, “When I spoke, I was lying to you.” Thaïs is still not listening and is in rapture. “The dawn comes.”

Athanaël is feverous and speaks as though to convince. “No! By heaven . . . nothing exists . . .” adoringly, “. . . I love you!”

On the *rall*, page 214, she rises to standing position and falls forward toward carpet F. She sings to the audience, “Two seraphim.” Athanaël also rises and stands over her. He says heatedly, “Come! . . . You belong to me.”

(Diagram)

At the words, “Oh! The heaven . . .” Thaïs raises her two arms toward the heavens as though waiting. She says, “I see God!” Thaïs sways. Athanaël is crazed with sorrow.

He approaches and receives her into his arms. “Thaïs.” He lays her on the green carpet and falls to his knees. He says with eyes raised to the heavens, “Pity!” Then he lets his head fall forward into his hands.

(Diagram)

The curtain falls.

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Music for the Scenes

Côté jardin (stage right)

1st Act: Mustel Organ
English Horn
Clarinet (During the *Vision*)
Flute
4 Harps

2nd Act: Harmonium accompanies the meditation choir, which sings with the curtain dropped (in between the bedroom and the square), in the back, invisible to the audience.
1 Oboe
1 Clavier de Timbres
1 English Horn, to accompany the whole beginning section of Scene 2
1 Piano
1 African Drum
Crotales or triangles

3rd Act: The far *côté jardin* (far stage right)
Harmonium for the vision of the *filles blanches*.

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Dance Crew

1st Act — 1st Scene
Thaïs’ Double – Coryphée

2nd Scene
10 Female Dancers – 8 Coryphées, 2 Premier Quadrille
6 Male Dancers – M.M. of the Ballet

2nd Act — 4 Female Dancers taken from the 10 from the 2nd Scene

Divertissement

3rd Act — 1st Scene

10 Spirits of Temptation – Subjects

2nd Scene

Perdition – Premier Subject

6 Lost Souls – Subjects

10 Lost Souls – Coryphées

2 Lost Souls – Premier Quadrille

6 Sirens – Subjects

7 Tritons – Male Subjects

12 Gnomes – 9 Coryphées, 3 Premier Quadrille

4 Sphinxes – Subjects

Spirits of the Abyss and the Souls – 24 Premier and Second Quadrille

Spirit Ghosts – 20 M. M. of the Ballet

Spirits of Perdition – 16 Dancing Ladies

Vision of Thaïs

3rd Act — Thaïs' Double, 5 *Filles Blanches* – Students

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Choir

1st Act — 1st Scene – Acclamation.

Female and Male Dancers, Itinerants

8 Sopranos, 4 First Tenors, 4 Second Tenors

8 Philosophers, 4 First Basses, 4 Second Basses

2nd Act — The Whole Company

3rd Act — The Whole Company

Last Scene — 12 *Filles Blanches*: 6 First Sopranos, 6 Second Sopranos

Thaïs Accessories

Act 1, Scene 1

2 Rustic tables of wood, painted white

3 Table stands (rustic, wooden, and cloth)

13 Stools (rustic, wooden, and cloth, the highest of which is for Palémon)

1 Plate of honey (paste board)

1 Bread basket (willow and cork)

1 Box of hyssop (wood and stems)
1 Salt cellar (wood)
2 Jars (paste)
13 Cups (metal)

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13 Plates (metal)
Staff for Athanaël

Scene 2

Masks of papier-mâché for female and male dancers

4 Copper rings, golden with precious stones
2 Bracelets, gold with precious stones
1 Crown, gold with precious stones
1 Robe covered with precious stones
1 Pair of slippers
1 Chest
1 Staff for the servant
2 Flutes
1 Stool
1 Staff for Athanaël, the same
1 Hand mirror
1 Perfume bottle

Act 2, Scene 1

1 Small statue of Venus with its pedestal (wood and papier-mâché, decorated with flowers)
1 Hand mirror
1 Stool (the same as used in Scene 2)
1 Couch
1 Alcohol lamp

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Act 2, Scene 2

1 Small statue
1 Alcohol lamp
1 Pedestal
1 Torch with spring for Athanaël
Gold coins for Nicias and for his friends

Act 3, Scene 1

Baskets of Willow Fruit

----- *Scene for the Ballet* -----

1 Cart with the statue of wood and pasteboard (decorated with flowers)
12 Garlands of flowers
2 Torches (branches with red flames)
12 Conch shells (cardboard and imitation jewelry)
6 Shells with necklaces and pearls
7 Horns (gold painted cardboard)
1 Cup (gold painted cardboard)
6 Veils (green muslin)
1 Tulip (velvet and canvas)
6 Straw bales
2 Braziers

2 Last Scenes (nothing)

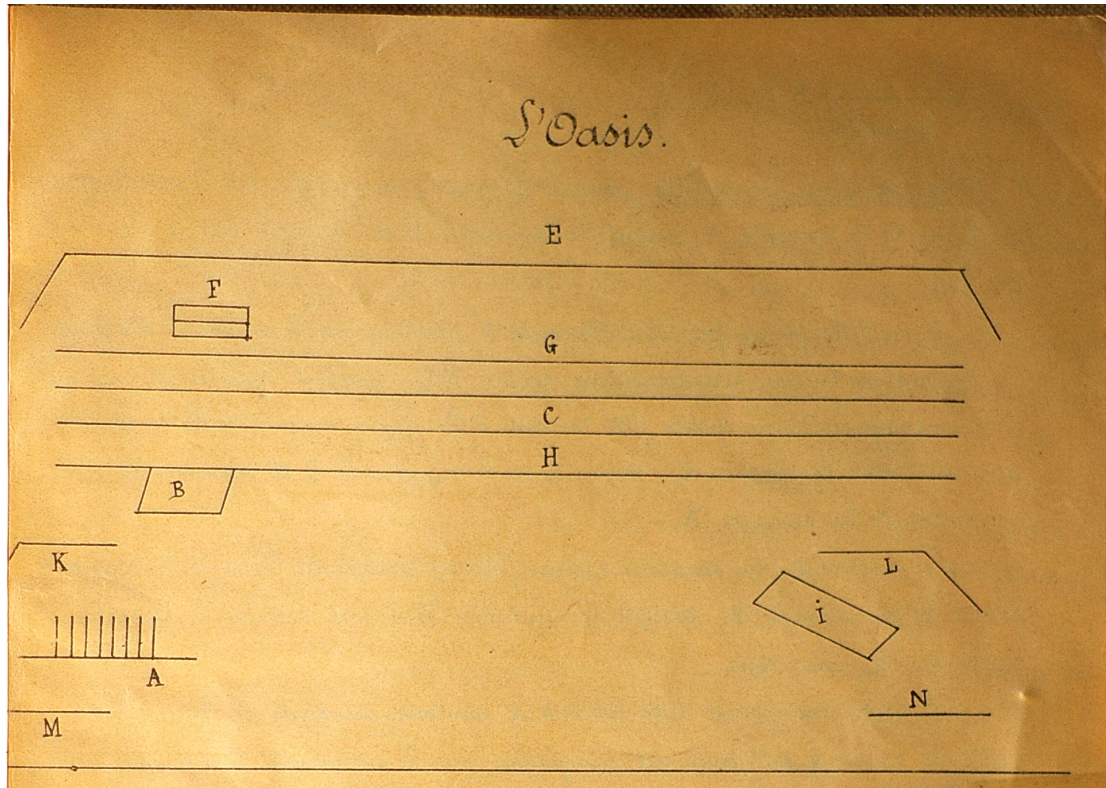


Figure 29: The Oasis Set Diagram

Letters: E. – Sunlit *fermes* (framework) on the horizon. *Côté jardin* (stage right), the cells of the *filles blanches*. F. – 2 steps. G. & H. – *Fermes* (frameworks) of palm trees that can be seen through. C – *Practicable* (platform) going from *côté jardin* (stage right) to *côté cour* (stage left). B. – Mound. A. – Land that hides the slope to the well. I – Sand in graduated levels. K. L. M. N. – *Châssis* (flats) of palm trees.

At the Opéra this décor is on four levels with only one ceiling.

Under the palm trees is a well. Further on for travelers is a shelter in the green space. Further away at the edge of the burning hot sand are the white huts of Albine's retreat.

Daylight on the *rampe* (footlights) in center stage, *côté jardin* (stage right) is dimmed.

The curtain rises on the 10th bar of the introduction. Once the curtain has risen there is a young girl holding a jar in front of her. She is standing near slope A on *côté jardin* (stage right) side, which leads to the well.

Appendix 2 (Diagram)

A second girl comes to the well with a jar on her shoulder. She comes to the top of slope A, goes up mound B, and disappears by path C on the *côté cour* (stage left) side. The girl in front of slope A takes her jar and goes to the well.

During this time a third girl comes, who is also carrying a jar, and is accompanied by a little girl who has a fruit basket in her hands. They come by path C, down over mound B, and go to stand in front of slope A.

At this moment the second girl has arrived at the top of slope A. She goes over mound B, goes down steps F, and behind the palm tree *ferme* (framework) G on the *côté cour* (stage left) side.

On her turn the third girl goes to the well. The little girl stays onstage and then goes with the girl, who is now with her, out by mound B and *côté jardin* (stage right).

All this movement takes twenty-seven bars of the symphony pages 204, 205, and 206.

On the 28th bar Athanaël and Thaïs walk in a line and arrive on the *côté cour* (stage left) side by path C. They stop on top of mound B. Athanaël holds a staff in hand.

(Diagram)

Thaïs is overcome with fatigue and can barely hold herself up. “The burning sun overwhelms me.”

Athanaël roughly answers, “No, keep walking! Subdue your body, overcome your flesh.” Thaïs responds humbly, “You’re right, father.”

The words “This perfect body you will surrender” are said with a hollow and dreadful voice; “To Nicias” with a sudden fury. “Yet God created it” in a powerful, tender voice and as usual with warmth, then roughly, “Now you know the truth.”

Thaïs speaks humbly and in a fearful tone, “Father, what you say is true.”

Appendix 3 “Are we far from the house of God?”

Athanaël answers roughly, “Walk!”

Thaïs wavers and says, “I can’t, forgive me, revered father.”

Athanaël sees her fall and holds her in his arms. They come off mound B and walk toward the sand I on the *côté cour* (stage left) side. Athanaël sits her down and falls on his knees before her. He gazes at her in silence for a moment. All his movements are in accord with the three bars that follow, “Revered father.”

(Diagram)

At the following measure, Athanaël’s expression softens. He speaks to the audience, “Oh, the drops of blood flow from her white feet.” Then he says to Thaïs, “O holy Thaïs,” in adoration, “Holy, holy Thaïs!” Thaïs looks at him for a long moment then in a caressing tone, “Your words are soft as the dawn,” then with resolution, “Let us walk now.”

Athanaël stops her with a gesture and softly says, “Not yet,” with affectionate solicitude, “Fresh water and fruit will give you strength.” He rises and shows her slope A. “Wait.” He points to the far off *côté jardin* (stage right). “See those white huts over there?”

(Diagram)

Sur le tempo, which follows the word “Pray!”, Athanaël, with eyes still fixed on her, moves toward slope A and disappears.

The light from the electric source is on Thaïs. She sings, “Oh messenger of God!”

On the *modere* Athanaël appears calm and aware at the top of slope A. He has a wooden cup in his hand. He approaches the sand (I) and kneels again. He offers the cup to Thaïs. It is in this position that they sing a tender and intimate but sustained duo, “Wash my hands and my lips.”

On the *rall.* that follows, Thaïs takes the cup and after drinking, offers it with a smile to Athanaël, saying, “Drink too.” Athanaël takes it. He is transfigured and tenderly radiant. He says, “No, seeing you revive, I taste a greater sweetness....” He puts down the cup.

The ensemble may be sung again;⁷⁶ so the choir leader, who is

Appendix 4

in the *côté jardin* (stage right) wing at C, should wait for the end of the applause to begin “Pater Noster qui est in coelis.” This is sung by the *filles blanches* in the *côté jardin* (stage right) wing at C.

Thaïs is surprised, “Who is coming?”

⁷⁶ This phrase was translated with the help of Marc Vanscheeuwijck.

Athanaël has risen, goes back up, and after looking in the direction of the voices, goes back down and says, “Oh, divine providence!”

Sur le tempo Albine and the *filles blanches* come on stage by path C. At the top of mound B Albine sees Athanaël. She stops and goes downstage. The *filles blanches* stop and form two rows on top of mound B.

Albine bows before Athanaël.

(Diagram)

At the words “So be it!”, Athanaël goes in search of Thaïs.

(Diagram)

Athanaël sings with a contained emotion, “I will not go any further.” He moves Thaïs in front of him. Albine takes her in her arms and says, “Come, my daughter.”

(Diagram)

After the words, “Pray for me each hour of every day.” Athanaël moves away by two or three steps.

Thaïs moves toward him. She takes his hands and says with deep emotion, “I kiss the hands that save,” with increasing exaltation, “Oh worshipful tears!”

Athanaël says aside, more tenderly, “How beautiful is her face!”

At the words, “Goodbye forever!” Athanaël is shocked. “Forever!”

After the words “We will find each other,” with Thaïs in her arms Albine goes up mound B and exits followed by the *filles blanches* by slope F at the end of the *côté jardin* (stage right) side. Athanaël watches as though in a dream: “She goes slowly”; gradually overcome with emotion: “The days will pass.”

After these words, “Without my being able to see her again!” and with despair, Athanaël goes upstage, almost running in agony toward the back, looking yet to see Thaïs, who has disappeared. Then he moves downstage, broken, saying the first “I will never see her again.” Then with a cry of desperation he falls to his knees. *Sur le tempo* that follows this second exclamation, “I will never see her again.” The curtain descends slowly.

The End

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