

## ATYS

Music by Jean-Baptiste Lully

Libretto by Philippe Quinault

First Performance: Saint-Germain, January 10, 1689 [1676]

**Prologue:** (10 January 1676) Time promises Louis XIV, the greatest of heroes, eternal fame; Flora, goddess of the Spring, complains that she is never able to pay her homages to the King, who is leaving for the wars in March, and wishes to join Time in his tribute. But Melpomene, anxious to alleviate all the royal concerns, drives away these gloomy shades who remind Louis too much of his duty, and the Muse proposes to tell him the story of the fair Atys in order to amuse him for while.

Act I: Dawn. Everyone is still asleep. Atys, exalted, calls the sleeping Phrygians to prepare for the arrival of the goddess Cybele. Idas scoffs at this elation: "Could Atys be in love, he who boasts of not being capable of loving?" Sangaride appears, as elated as Atys, but for different reasons: today her marriage to Celenus, King of Phrygia, is to be celebrated, and Cybele, Queen of the Gods, has promised to lend even greater lustre to the nuptials by her presence. A little later Sangaride is left alone. Her former joyousness was no more than show; she loves Atys, who neither will nor can love her, and she, resigned, surrenders herself to a fate that is repugnant to her. Atys surprises her in her distress, and in a moment of extreme tenderness, offers her a love of which he had been thought incapable. Sangaride is only a woman! How could she refuse?

Act II: King Celenus and the indifferent Atys contend for the honor of being chosen as High Sacrificer by Cybele. But behind their chivalrous compliments they conceal the agitation of their emotions at the sight of Sangaride whom they both love, and who is the subject of every digression in their conversation. Cybele comes and decides in favor of Atys whom she secretly loves. The goddess then explains the reasons for her coming to the Kingdom of Phrygia: the marriage of Celenus and Sangaride is only a pretext; she desired to see Atys and to tell him how much she loves him. But the Queen of the Gods, restrained by a delicate sentiment of reserve, cannot resolve on the vulgarity of an open declaration. Atys, acclaimed by the Nations, is deeply moved and receives the tributes due to his new office.

Act III: Fame can only too soon turn sour to a young man when his heart throbs with love; and gradually, renouncing his friendship for Celenus, Atys resigns himself, persuades himself to betray him. Hardly has this decision been taken that he falls into a deep sleep. This is a ruse of Cybele's to apprise him of her love. Morpheus, Phobetor, Phantasmus, allegories of Sleep, accompanied by pleasant Dreams, sings of the joys of love; the bad Dreams then appear and warn indifferent Atys of the danger of deceiving the gods. Appalled by this last vision, Atys awakens with a violent start before Cybele who reassures him and lovingly caresses him. Does Atys understand? Does he share her love? Sangaride then arrives in distraction and implores Cybele on her knees: she does not love Celenus, does not want to marry him. Atys, confused, distressed, intervenes on her behalf with the goddess who, through their incoherent gestures, guesses their passion. Then alone, she laments...

Act IV: The nymph Sangaride, who had also seen Atys's confusion, interprets it quite differently, sees in Cybele a happy rival, and laments over the ingratitude of the young man. Why should she then, after all, refuse herself to Celenus? But, Atys explains himself, Sangaride realizes her mistake, and the lovers swear eternal faith. Atys, Cybele's High Priest, decides to use the powers of his position, goes to speak to Sangarius, the father of his beloved and, in the name of Cybele, command him to break off the nuptials.

Act V: Celenus, who has just learnt of this decision, at once presents himself before Cybele. They both realize that they have been duped by Atys and decide to inflict the most horrible torments on the two vile lovers. Atys, driven mad by an artifice of Cybele, unaware of what he is doing, and believing that he sees a monster, throws himself on his beloved Sangaride and stabs her. When he recovers his reason, having accomplished his punishment, revolted by his monstrous deed, Atys tries to kill himself. Cybele prevents him and transforms him into a pine tree. And the goddess, once the tragedy is over, contemplating the disaster, laments over him whom she has vanquished, but whom she has lost forever.