

## **GWENDOLINE**

Music by Emmanuel Chabrier

Libretto by Catulle Mendès

First Performance: Théâtre de la Monnaie, Brussels, April 10, 1886

**Act I.** Harald, king of the Vikings, has made war upon the Saxons under Armel whom he has conquered and condemned to execution. But the victor sees Armel's fair daughter, Gwendoline, the first woman he has ever beheld, and to him, matchless. Instantly his savage nature undergoes a radical change. He feels a deep and pure affection for Gwendoline and asks her to wed him.. With her father's consent Gwendoline accepts Harald as her future husband. But Armel secretly gives instructions to his men to slaughter the Danes at the marriage feast when they will be disabled by drink.

**Act II.** This transpires in the bridal chamber, whither Armel has followed the bride. He hands her a sharp dagger, exacting a promise that she will slay the sleeping Harald, as the foe of her people. She refuses to comply, and at the cry of the Danes she gives the weapon to her husband and remains by his side. But in the last scene, at sea, the Saxons kill all the Danes and Harald falls by the hand of Armel. Gwendoline stabs herself over his corpse.