

HERODIADE

Music by Jules Massenet

First Performance: Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie, Brussels, December 19, 1881

Several differences exist between this story and that of Salome (Strauss). The chief point is John the Baptist's kindness to Salome, who does not know that her mother is Herodias.

Il est doux, il est bon:

The Chaldean Phanael promises to help Salome in her search. Herod, who is pursuing Salome, is confronted by Herodiade, who complains of the prophet Jean's denunciation of her. Jean, entering at this moment, repeats his diatribe, and they retreat hastily. Salome rushes in, joyful at finding the man who has previously befriended her; he rejects her proffered affection.

In the Tetrarch's chamber, he longs for Salome and will not heed Phanael's warning against his profligate life. He sings of his "fleeting vision".

Vision fugitive:

Urged on by Phanael, Herod harangues the populace to throw off the Roman yoke. They are interrupted by the arrival of Vitellius, the Roman proconsul, whose suspicions of treason are lulled by Herod's declaration that the restoration of the temple is all the priest desire. Vitellius promises this shall be done.

At the entrance of Jean, Herod tells Vitellius that the prophet is a disturber anxious for power. Jean retorts that all power is from God. In an inner room, Phanael consults the start and informs Herodiade that Salome is her daughter. Herodiade exclaims that Salome is rather her rival. In the temple, Salome, despairing because Jean has been jailed, is offered help by Herod, but repulses him. The priests urge that Vitellius condemn Jean, but the proconsul turns the proceedings over to Herod, who is infuriated by Salome's intercession and sentences Jean to death. Salome joins Jean in prison and wins his reluctant admiration and affection by her devotion. But he bids her save herself. The High Priest secretly offers Jean a pardon if he will join Herod against Rome, but he refuses.

Herod and Herodiade entertain Vitellius with dancing. Salome appears, but Herod is deaf to her entreaty for Jean's pardon, and calls the executioner, who presently appears with a bloody sword. Salome turns on Herodiade and is about to stab her, when Herodiade claims her as a daughter; whereupon Salome stabs herself.