

MARIE-MAGDELEINE

Composer: Jules Massenet

Libretto by Louis Gallet

Marie-Magdeleine was Massenet's first major success and the first of his four dramatic oratorios. It was later restaged as an opera, but was not successful in this new form.

Act I

At the gates of Magdala, townspeople await the coming of Jesus of Nazareth. Mary, who has given up her evil ways for Jesus, arrives; the people mock her, reminding her of her former life. Judas advises her to continue living as she had done before her conversion, but Jesus appears and chastises the crowd for judging her.

Act II

At Mary's house, servants are preparing for Jesus' arrival; Judas fears that his master's dining in Mary's house will allow the Pharisees to bring Jesus down with gossip, but Martha will not listen to him. Jesus arrives and sings of the beauty of repentance. The disciples arrive, and Jesus tells them that one of them will betray him; Jesus and the disciples end the act with the Lord's Prayer.

Act III

Jesus is dying on the cross between the two thieves. The people passing by mock him, but he only prays for their forgiveness. Mary arrives, and throws herself at the feet of the Cross, asking Jesus not to leave them. He comforts her, then dies.

Act IV

Mary arrives in the garden of Joseph of Arimathea to see Jesus' body, but he instead appears to her alive. Angelic voices sing a hymn of praise, and Mary leads the chorus in a song of rejoicing.