

MIREILLE

Music by Charles Gounod

Libretto by Michel Carré

First Performance: Théâtre Lyrique, Paris, 19 March 1864

Mireille, daughter of the wealthy farmer Ramon, loves a poor young basket maker, Vincent, in spite of her father's choice of Ourrias, the bull tamer, as her husband. The benevolent sorceress Taven warns Mireille of impending misfortune, and the girl tells Vincent that if evil befalls them she will meet him at the chapel of the Saint-Maries. She laughs at Ourrias's rough importunities. Vincent's father, Ambroise, introduces his son and daughter Vincinette, and asks Ramon's advice about the love-sick Vincent. Learning that Mireille is the object of Vincent's devotion, Ramon swears that he shall never have her. Ourrias confronts Vincent in the fearful Val d'Enfer, strikes him, and leaves him for dead, growing more and more panic-stricken as he flees. He calls for the Boatman to ferry him over the Rhone, but the Boatman and supernatural creatures cause the boat to be swallowed up in angry waves. Meanwhile, Mireille, envying the carefree life of a wandering shepherd, is told by Vincinette that Taven has rescued Vincent, and goes to join him. Wandering through the desert of the Crau, she becomes crazed with heat and barely manages to reach the Saint-Maries. She dies of exhaustion in her lover's arms, as her father forgives and a voice from heaven welcomes her.