

## **MONNA VANNA**

Music by Henri Fevrier

Libretto by Maurice Maeterlinck

First Performance: Opéra, Paris, January 10, 1909

Guido of Pisa, besieged by the ruler of Florence, his city starving waits the return of his father Marco, who has gone as a messenger to Prinzivalle camped nearby. The old man enters and relates that Prinzivalle will send reinforcements, food, and arms on one condition: Guido's wife Vanna shall visit him that evening, unclothed save for a mantle. Guido scoffs at the idea that his loyal wife would agree, but the old man says she will go. Vanna herself appears to reaffirm her decision. Guido raves, pleads, and finally casts her off as she goes to her infamous mission. Prinzivalle is approached by Trivulzio, who accuses him of treachery to Florence in sparing Pisa. Prinzivalle shows him his own intercepted letters, wherein he has reviled Prinzivalle, and orders Trivulzio imprisoned, though sparing his life. When Vanna enters, he overwhelms her with professions of his love, for it appears he has loved her since they were children together. She claims to love Guido still. But as noise heralds the approach of the Florentines, she resolves that Prinzivalle shall come with her to Pisa. Voices from Pisa in the distance hail Vanna as their deliverer. Guido, determined to take revenge on Prinzivalle, curses his father and will not believe Vanna's protestations of innocence. He orders Prinzivalle imprisoned, whereupon Vanna, realizing his vindictive nature, employs a stratagem to free Prinzivalle. Reversing herself, she claims Prinzivalle did indeed dishonor her, and demands that he be immured in a deep dungeon. She alone has an extra key to this cell, and as soon as possible, leads him to freedom.