

THAIS

Music by Jules Massenet

Libretto by Louis Gallet

First Performance: Opéra, Paris, March 16, 1894

Act I. Scene 1. Athanael, a Cenobite monk, is distressed by the sensation in Alexandria caused by the courtesan Thais, whom he had known in his earlier, prereligious days. He resolves to convert her from a life of dishonor to piety.

Scene 2. At Alexandria he is received by Nicias, an old friend and Thais' current lover, and is invited to a banquet which Thais will attend. Two slaves, Crobyle and Myrtale, array the monk in appropriate dress.

Act II. Scene 1. At first Thais mocks Athanael; later she invites him to her home to hear him further. On the verge of acquiescing to his wish, she temporizes and sends him away. The "Meditation" suggests her thoughts.

Undiscouraged, Athanael waits at her threshold.

Scene 2. In a few hours Thais appears, her conversion finally complete. In spite of the efforts of a crowd of revelers to prevent her going she follows Athanael to a convent.

Act III. Scene 1. Oasis Scene.

Scene 2. After the nuns have led her away, Athanael realizes that he loves her desperately.

Scene 3. In a dream he sees her dying. He hurries to the convent where Thais is, indeed, in her final extremity. The frustrated monk confesses his earthly love as his convert dies a holy death.