

June 25, 2014 - Gustave Charpentier's *Louise*

The city of Paris is the star of this week's **Thursday Night Opera House**, Gustave Charpentier's *Louise*, a story about a young woman's desire for freedom in a great city. Born in 1860, Charpentier studied at the conservatory in Lille before entering the Paris Conservatory in 1881, where he studied composition under Jules Massenet, winning the Prix de Rome in 1887. *Louise* had its premiere on February 2, 1900 at the Opéra-Comique in Paris. Director Albert Carré took a calculated risk with *Louise*, which was shocking less because of its music than because of its subject matter: free love.

The opera takes place around 1900 in Paris. Not permitted by her parents to marry the painter Julien (tenor **Plácido Domingo**), Louise (soprano **Ileana Cotrubas**), a young working class woman, leaves home and goes to live with her lover in Montmartre. When her mother (mezzo-soprano **Jane Berbié**) tells her that her father (bass-baritone **Gabriel Bacquier**) is seriously ill and wishes to see her, Louise agrees to go home on the condition that she will be free to return to Julien. However, when her father has recovered, her parents will not allow Louise to leave. Eventually, a violent quarrel erupts and the young woman is expelled from the house, leaving her father to curse the city of Paris, which has stolen so much from him.

Georges Prêtre conducts the New Philharmonia Orchestra and the Ambrosian Opera Chorus in this 1991 Sony Classical recording, CD number 46429.

American soprano **Renée Fleming** sings the great Act III aria "Depuis le jour":
http://youtu.be/_d_8ovQHbF4.

Celebrate Independence Day early next Thursday, July 2nd, with a pair of Broadway musicals that require operatic voices in many of the leading roles: Irving Berlin's *Annie*, *Get Your Gun* with **Kim Criswell** and **Thomas Hampson**, and Cole Porter's *Kiss Me, Kate* with **Alfred Drake** and **Patricia Morison**.

The **Thursday Night Opera House** is heard every Thursday at 7:00 p.m. in the Eastern time zone on 89.7 FM in central North Carolina. We're streamed online at <http://www.theclassicalstation.org>, and you can listen on WCPE's Android or iPhone apps.

Bob Chapman

W. Robert Chapman, Host of the **Thursday Night Opera House**