

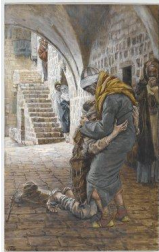
## Debussy - L'enfant Prodigue (2004)

Written by bluesever

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1. *L'enfant Prodigue* Jean Luc Chaignaud (Simeon) Lisa Daltirus (Lia) Marius Breciu (Azael) Radio Filharmonisch Orkest Valery Gergiev (conductor) 23 October 2004, Amsterdam, Het Concertgebouw - grote Zaal

This piece for voices and orchestra, often referred to as a cantata, is one of the Debussy's earliest large works. It dates from the composer's student years, during which he came under the spell of several influences that resulted in music often unlike the Debussy most listeners know. That is not to say this work is without merit, because it has its fair share. A 1906-1908 revision was undertaken by the mature composer who now looked with scorn, if not outright ridicule, upon some sections of the work. In any event, the music and vocal writing here are reasonably attractive, even if it belongs to the period of time before the composer found his own style.

Debussy scored *L'Enfant prodigue* for soprano, tenor, baritone, and orchestra, and used a text by Edouard Guinand. The music was heavily influenced by Massenet, though there are moments when the mature composer emerges (the opening, for example, bears a vague resemblance to some of the music in the composer's *Le Martyre de Saint-Sébastien*, from 1911). Debussy employs leitmotives that he associates with the three characters -- Lia, the mother, Simeon, the father, and Azael, the son. There are exotic elements in the score that some have linked to the composer's then-recent exposure to Russian music. The cantata is divided into eight scenes, with the procession and dance music from the third sounding perhaps the most Debussyan, not least because this was, along with the ensuing section -- *Ces airs joyeux* (These joyous airs) -- the most heavily revised music in the score. Debussy was only 22 when he wrote the original version, which was good enough to win first prize in the Prix de Rome contest in 1884. ---Robert Cummings, Rovi

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