

Friday 12 &amp; Saturday 13 June 7.30pm Snape Maltings Concert Hall

# Pelléas et Mélisande

**Jacques Imbrailo** Pelléas  
**Sophie Bevan** Mélisande  
**Gordon Bintner** Golaud  
**Sarah Connolly** Geneviève  
**Nicolas Testé** Arkel  
**Beth Stirling** Yniold  
**Fabian-Jakob Balkhausen\*** Doctor  
**David Kennedy\*** Shepherd

**BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra**  
**Ryan Wigglesworth** conductor

**Rory Kinnear** director  
**Vicki Mortimer** set & costume design  
elements  
**Paule Constable & Imogen Clarke**  
lighting designers

**Chorus** (onstage):Alto: Camilla Seale\*, Phoebe Rayner\*,  
Myrna Tennant\*

Tenor: Richard Dowling

Bass: Samuel Pantcheff

## (offstage):

Alto: Lauren Young

Tenor: James Robsinson, John Bowen

Bass: David Kennedy\*, Stephen Whitford\*,  
Jimmy Holliday

\*Britten Pears Young Artist

**Pre-performance talk:** 6.30pm Britten Studio 30'  
Ryan Wigglesworth, Rory Kinnear and Dr Lucy Walker

**Claude Debussy** (1862–1918)

Pelléas et Mélisande (1893–5, rev. 1898–1902)

200'

Libretto adapted from Pelléas et Mélisande (1892) by **Maurice Maeterlinck** (1862–1949)

performed by arrangement with G. Ricordi &amp; Co. (London) Ltd. using the new critical edition by David Grayson

Act I  
Act II  
Act III

INTERVAL

Act IV  
Act V

NB exact timings for each half will be  
available from Friday morning, following the  
dress rehearsal

**Duration: approx 225'**  
including an interval of 25'

This performance is surtitled

**Sebastian Wybrew** répétiteur

**Helene Mathiesen** producer  
**Ryan Watson** production manager  
**Bonnie Poole** company stage manager  
**Amy Batty** deputy stage manager  
**Helen Johnson** costume supervisor  
**Frances Straker** hair and make-up consultant  
**Martin Rodges** wardrobe assistant  
**Rachel Luff** lighting programmer  
**Jonathan Burton** English surtitles  
**Kelly Lovelady** surtitle operator

Kindly supported by the Opera Circle:  
The Lord Morse of Aldeburgh & Lady Morse,  
Grant & Caroline Masom, and anonymous donors

## Synopsis

### Act I

Prince Golaud, lost while out hunting, stumbles upon a beautiful young girl, frightened and weeping by a fountain. She refuses to tell him anything beyond her name – Mélisande – but reluctantly agrees to go with him.

In the castle of Allemonde, King Arkel, Golaud's grandfather, learns of Golaud's marriage to Mélisande. In a letter to his half-brother Pelléas, Golaud explains his strange encounter with his bride six months earlier, and expresses his fear of returning, knowing that a political alliance would have pleased Arkel better. He asks Pelléas to test the waters: if Arkel is not angry, then Pelléas must shine a light from the tower overlooking the sea. If Golaud does not see it, then he will stay away. Pelléas asks his grandfather's permission to leave the castle: his friend is dying. Arkel refuses. Pelléas must stay with his own sick father, and greet his brother and his new bride.

Golaud's mother Geneviève introduces Mélisande to the dark kingdom of Allemonde and to Pelléas, whom she asks to look after the new Princess. Pelléas tells Mélisande that he may soon have to go on a journey.

### Act II

Pelléas and Mélisande are by a well in the forest. Mélisande is playing with a ring Golaud has given her, throwing it high into the air and catching it again. As the clock chimes noon she suddenly drops it into the water. She is horrified and scared to confess the loss to her husband, but Pelléas reassures her. At the same moment, Golaud is thrown from his horse while out hunting.

When Mélisande comes to her husband he sees that she is unhappy in Allemonde. Is it Pelléas, he asks? Mélisande denies it. Golaud notices her lost ring. Scared, she lies, telling him she lost it in a sea-cave. Although it is night, Golaud insists she goes to look for it, accompanied by Pelléas.

Pelléas and Mélisande enter the sea-cave. At that moment the moon emerges from behind a cloud, revealing three beggars asleep inside. Frightened, Mélisande begs to leave. Pelléas explains that there is a famine across the kingdom, and suggests they return another time.

### Act III

Mélisande is in a castle tower, singing a song and brushing her hair. Pelléas arrives below and tells her he is leaving. He marvels at the length of her hair, and since he is unable to reach up to kiss her hand he kisses her hair instead, tangling it in the process. Golaud catches them together, and tells them both off for behaving like children.

Golaud takes Pelléas down into the vaults below the castle where it is dank and airless, and forces him to look down into the darkness below. Pelléas is grateful when they return to the surface and the fresh air. Golaud warns Pelléas to stay away from Mélisande: she is pregnant and delicate, and there can be no repeat of last night's silliness between them.

Golaud's jealousy is stirred. He questions his son Yniold (born to his first wife) about Pelléas and Mélisande, but the small boy knows nothing. Golaud holds him up to the window to spy on the pair, but Yniold only sees them sitting and staring at a light, not even talking. Golaud's jealous fantasies are not soothed.

### Act IV

Pelléas' father is now well, and the young man prepares to leave, asking Mélisande to meet him one last time by the well. Arkel tries to reassure Mélisande that she may yet be happy in Allemonde, but Golaud interrupts and becomes angry with her, questioning her innocence and throwing her to the ground.

Yniold has lost his golden ball. It is trapped beneath a rock. As night begins to fall, he meets a shepherd and his flock of sheep.

Pelléas and Mélisande meet by the well. They confess their love and kiss. But Golaud is waiting in the dark and stabs Pelléas, before pursuing a fleeing Mélisande and turning the knife on himself, unsuccessfully.

### Act V

Mélisande has given birth to a daughter, but is dying. Golaud visits her and tries to discover the truth of her relationship with Pelléas, which still consumes him. She innocently confesses that she loved Pelléas. Golaud is tormented. She dies, leaving Arkel to comfort Golaud.