

July 19. 1905

— THE —

Grand Theatre,

— Church Street, Blackpool. —

OWNER AND MANAGER MR. T. SERGENSON.

FLYING MATINEE,

Wednesday, July 19th,

PELLÉAS ET MÉLISANDE

Play in Five Acts, by Maurice Maeterlinck, with

MADAME SARAH
BERNHARDT

AND

MRS. PATRICK
CAMPBELL

And Company, from the Theatre Sarah Bernhardt, Paris.

Music by Gabriel Fauré.



SYNOPSIS :

"Pelléas and Mélisande," which was originally produced in 1892, belongs to the early stage of Maurice Maeterlinck's work, the period in which such curious and characteristic pieces as "La Princess Maleine," "Les Aveugles," "L'Intruse," "La Mort de Tintagiles" and others were written. The series was ended by a piece which represents the culmination of the earlier movement of ideas, "Aglavaine and Selysette." Of all these "dramas of unconsciousness and instinct," as Mr. Alfred Sutro has styled them, much the same description might be used. They are, in a sense, dramas for marionettes ; they can only be understood in the half wondering, half mystical spirit of a brooding child. We have not to deal with real life as we know it, but with a romantic scene, full of the fantastic and playful imagination of an inspired youthfulness. The curtain rises on ancient forests, old castles, with wonderful subterranean chambers, winding staircases, secret passages, endless corridors, and never far away, the sound of the restless sea. Sometimes we look down from a circle of mountains upon some old-world dungeon or keep, where the shadows which gather round the walls are emblematic of danger, or evil, and the air of the valley is tainted with miasmatic odours. If the scenery is thus of that primitive type which appears in the drawings of a romantic child, the figures of the drama are equally remote from experience and life, pale, ethereal phantoms, hovering between the world we see and the world of which we dream, pure abstractions, whose names are of such little account that to all intents and purposes they can remain nameless, being called "a King," or "a Servant," or "a Doctor," or "a Queen," or still more vaguely, "an old man," or "the stranger." It is not Maeterlinck's fault if we go wrong in discussing dramas of this kind. He has told us as clearly as he possibly could that the sphere of his plays is a place of dreams, and the atmosphere such as never was on land or sea.

Thus also in "Pelléas and Mélisande" we move in a world which is vague, insubstantial, bloodless. All these creatures that come from nowhere, that live in a country never yet seen by human eyes, are moved by forces too great for their feeble selves, subject to an iron dominion of fate which pushes them to issues which they cannot help but follow. In a sense, it is a story of young love, but the atmosphere is quite distinct from that which bathes "Romeo and Juliet" in eternal sunshine. The air here is always still and mystery-laden; the light struggles painfully through great dense forests which shut out the sun. Mélisande is a lost princess found weeping at a spring by King Golaud, who takes her home and makes her his bride. Then his younger brother, Pelléas, sees her and loves her, and the rest of the play is full of their romantic meetings, always in terror of discovery, in absolute fear of the fate which they know awaits them and which they cannot move a little finger to alter. One figure alone has ordinary flesh and blood; it is King Golaud, who is jealous with some of the passionate agony of an Othello. As to Pelléas and Mélisande, the two lovers of the story, they cannot be judged by ordinary human standards. They are unconscious children without any sense of responsibility, dream-figures or types of youthful love.

Nearly all the incidents have a symbolic meaning which we may interpret as we will. At the opening of the fable Mélisande has lost her crown, which may mean that her old life of innocent childhood is over. She then, in a fit of playfulness by the spring, loses the ring which Golaud had given her—another and easily interpreted symbol. Yniold, the little child of Golaud by a previous wife, is perpetually symbolic visions. Now it is the swans fighting with the dogs, that is to say childish lives beating themselves against great human laws of passion and jealousy; now it is sheep that desire to go to their accustomed fold and are being driven to the slaughter-house—an obvious emblem of the destiny of all creatures led by unconscious instinct. The drama grows towards a tragic conclusion, because there is no other end possible for fate-driven children, he cannot help himself for Golaud kills his brother, Pelléas, and even wounds Mélisande; whether they mean it or no, the lovers are destroying the fabric of his too hastily desired happiness. All the time the servants of the household are in their dim fashion aware that death is

abroad and that the beating of his wings can be heard through every room and corridor of the castle. Thus in the final scene they talk in whispers, fearing what is to come, and enter the room where Mélisande lies, being more sure than any doctors that the issues of such a romance mean death. Mélisande the child, mother of a child smaller and more childish than herself, yields up her latest breath almost without effort, and goes back to the shadow home whence she came.

In a succession of dream pictures the play passes before our eyes. If we press the symbolic meanings too far we only get a parable of the powerlessness of humanity in the grip of an ancestral and despotic fate. But no one of Maeterlinck's early plays must be judged in any hard or philosophic fashion. They are only indistinct romances, in which creatures, bloodless and vague, move before us in a characteristic atmosphere of their own. They belong to the bodiless imagination of a man who is both poet and mystic, dreaming in a sphere far remote from the common light of day.



COSTUME worn by _____

MADAME SARAH BERNHARDT

as Pelléas in "Pelléas et Mélisande."

—:0:—

A tunic of elaborately worked chain mail semi-fitting with pure black homespun silk tights, black velvet shoes. A graceful tabard of a soft shade of azurite manne velvet with a delicate steel edging and rose flowers magnificently embroidered in apricot silk, and lined with pale rose shade of mouslin de soie. This is placed over the tunic. A mediæval pointed black hat of velvet, embroidered with the same kind of silk and steel edging as the tabard, and underneath this hat a fair moyenage wig harmonises with the dress.