

**Maurice Maeterlinck,
Claude Debussy**



*Pelléas and
Melisande*

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Published by Good Press, 2021

goodpress@okpublishing.info

EAN 4064066462529

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IN FIVE ACTS

MAURICE MAETERLINCK

CLAUDE DEBUSSY

CHARLES ALFRED BYRNE

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IN FIVE ACTS

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TAKEN FROM THE PLAY BY

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CLAUDE DEBUSSY

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ENGLISH VERSION BY

CHARLES ALFRED BYRNE

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PUBLISHED BY
FRED RULLMAN. INC., NEW YORK. N. Y.

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ARGUMENT

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In the FIRST ACT Golaud, eldest grandson of old King Arkel, king of Allemond, while hunting in the forest, where he has lost his way, meets a weeping maiden at the edge of a fountain. She will not say whence she comes or what she is—only that she has been cruelly treated and that her name is Melisande. They depart together.

In the second scene. Genevieve, the mother of Golaud and Pelléas, reads a letter to Arkel in which Golaud writes to Pelléas that he has wedded the mysterious Melisande and if it is acceptable to the king a light should be placed on the highest tower at night so that it may be seen from his ship. If no light is there the ship will go on.

The third scene shows the castle. Melisande tells Genevieve how dark and gloomy the place is. The forest is so wild and old with trees that the sky is hidden. Pelléas comes to show the way to Melisande but she is timid of his aid.

In the SECOND ACT Pelléas and Melisande are seen together, close to a fountain in the park. Melisande is playing with her wedding ring, pitching it high in the air. Pelléas warns her to be careful. As he does so the ring eludes her grasp and falls into the water, where it sinks out of sight to a great depth. Melisande is much distressed and wonders what she will say to Golaud. Pelléas tells her to speak the truth.

The second scene is Golaud's sick room with Melisande in dutiful attendance upon him. His horse ran away at the precise moment Melisande lost the ring and Golaud was dashed against a tree. Caressing Melisande's hand he notices the disappearance of the ring and asks where it is. She says it slipped off her finger while seeking shells for little Yniold (Golaud's son) in the grotto by the sea. Golaud says he values the ring above all earthly possessions. She must go to seek for it at once. She is afraid in the dark. He tells her to get Pelléas to help her.

In scene three Pelléas and Melisande are in the grotto. As they enter, by a sudden ray of moonlight they see three blind old men, sleeping. Melisande is frightened. Pelléas says the blind men presage misfortune.

In the THIRD ACT Melisande is seen at a window of the tower arranging her long hair for the night. Pelléas enters the walk below and asks her for her hand to kiss before he goes away. She will not let him have it unless he promises to stay and, when he agrees, she leans so far out to let him reach it that her hair runs down over him in a flood and causes an ecstasy of love to bubble up. Both are so entranced that they give no heed to a menacing shadow in the darkness. It is Golaud. He comes upon them suddenly but treats their alliance as the play of children and leads Pelléas away.

Scene two shows the subterranean vaults beneath the castle. Golaud leads Pelléas to the edge of a rock overlooking a stagnant and miasmatic lake and causes him to look down into it while he holds him back. Pelléas grows faint but Golaud leads him away.

Scene three shows the outside of the vaults. Pelléas is happy at breathing the air of heaven once more. Golaud is gloomy and gives Pelléas a warning about Melisande.

Scene four shows the castle tower and Melisande's window. Golaud questions litte Yniold as to the actions of Pelléas and Melisande together. The child endeavors to shield the two. Melisande's window is lighted up and Golaud hoists Yniold so that he may see into the room. The child says that he sees both Pelléas and Melisande there, looking at each other, motionless.

The FOURTH ACT shows a passageway of the castle. Pelléas makes a hasty appointment with Melisande to meet him, one last time before he goes away, at the fountain in the park. Arkel comes in and sympathizes with Melisande's joyless life here, but Golaut, entering, is furious. He hints at danger to her and, growing distraught, seizes her by the hair, bringing her to her knees and dragging her one way and another. She takes it all silently but Arkel interferes and Golaud desists.

In scene two Yniold is lifting a stone to find his golden ball when a runaway flock of sheep is heard, followed by a shepherd. Yniold marvels at their number and that they do not know their way home.

Scene three is the fountain. Pelléas awaits Melisande in the dark. She is late but explains that Golaud had a bad dream and that in her haste the nails of the gate tore her dress. Pelléas, about to go, says that he must tell her that he loves her and she then avows her love for him. At this revelation both are overcome and alternate between joy and despair. Suddenly, in the moonlight, they see the