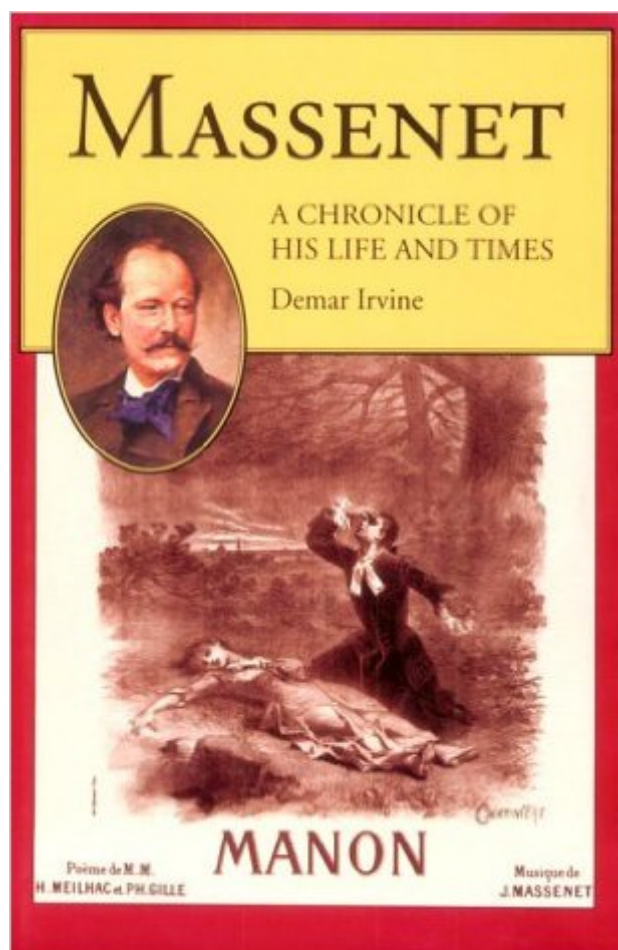


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Massenet: A Chronicle Of His Life And Times



Synopsis

This superbly detailed biography examines the life of Jules Massenet (1842--1912), who was at the heart of Parisian musical life during a period of extraordinary artistic vitality.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Musicologist Demar Irvine was repeatedly turned down in 1974 when he tried to publish his biography of French opera composer Jules Massenet. When no publisher would consider it, Irvine finally sent out a hundred typed copies to various places and assumed that was that. But Amadeus Press decided to offer his magnum opus, and here it is. There being no other recent book in English on Massenet, and precious little in French on the composer, it will have to do. Irvine is conscientious about his subject to a fault, one of those writers who often does not seem to be able or willing to differentiate between what belongs in the main text, what belongs in the footnotes, and what is best left out altogether. Although the title warns us this is not merely a bio of Massenet, but one of his "Life and Times", things frequently can become a bit much. For example, whole paragraphs are taken up sorting out the locations of Parisian buildings in the last century. Endless minor artists and figures receive the luxury of short bios. At times these notes on Massenet's contemporaries threaten to overwhelm the central character! The result is a book that at 400 pages might easily be cut by scores of pages. I have no idea how much Carol Odum, the editor, trimmed from the original typescript, but it most certainly wasn't near enough. Despite these serious reservations, Irvine's work does offer an outstanding review of the life and works of Massenet. The operas are discussed in

detail, with Irvine's incessant detailing paying dividends when it comes to the initial performances and casts, the public reaction, and so forth.

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