

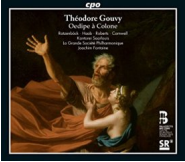
## Théodore Gouvy - Oedipe À Colone (2013)

Written by bluesever

Wednesday, 13 September 2017 17:35 -

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## Théodore Gouvy - Oedipe À Colone (2013)



1-01 Première Partie Nr. 1 Introduction 3:02 1-02 Première Partie Nr. 1b Chœur (Parez De Myrte En Fleur) 7:55 1-03 Première Partie Nr. 2 Thésée (Habitants De Colone) 0:51 1-04 Première Partie Nr. 2b Chœur Des Guerriers (Polynice, Salut!) 2:35 1-05 Première Partie Nr. 3 Marche Religieuse 3:02 1-06 Première Partie Nr. 4 Polynice (Ô Ciel! Ce Lieu Sacré) 0:36 1-07 Première Partie Nr. 4b Polynice (Seigneur, J'avais Un Père) 3:57 1-08 Première Partie Nr. 5 Finale. Thésée (Vous-que L'innocence Même) 3:31 1-09 Première Partie Nr. 5b Chœur (Vous-que L'innocence Même) 2:03 1-10 Première Partie Nr. 5c Chœur (Ah! Pitié) 3:33 1-11 Deuxième Partie Nr. 6 Antigone, Oedipe (Appuyez-vous Sur Moi) 8:29 1-12 Deuxième Partie Nr. 6b Antigone (Mon Sort, Je Le Préfère) 4:59 1-13 Deuxième Partie Nr. 6c Oedipe (Dieux Vengeurs! Que Vouliez-vous De Moi?) 6:39 1-14 Deuxième Partie Nr. 7 Chœur (Voyez Là-bas) 3:31 1-15 Deuxième Partie Nr. 8 Chœur (Oedipe Est L'ennemi) 1:56 1-16 Deuxième Partie Nr. 9 Antigone, Thésée (Ô Bonté Tutélaire! Ô Père Infortuné) 4:39 1-17 Deuxième Partie Nr. 10 Chœur (Infortunés Humains) 5:20 2-01 Troisième Partie Nr. 11 Chœur De Femmes (Sommeil, Doux Repos) 1:42 2-02 Troisième Partie Nr. 12 Polynice (Antigone, Ma Sœur) 7:07 2-03 Troisième Partie Nr. 13 Chœur (Ô Soupirs Du Remords) 1:39 2-04 Troisième Partie Nr. 14 Finale. Oedipe (Ma Fille, Écoutez Moi) 8:30 2-05 Troisième Partie Nr. 14b Oedipe (Et Maintenant Écoute, Ô Souverain D'Athènes) 4:05 2-06 Troisième Partie Nr. 14c Chœur Final (Édonée!) 3:11 Antigone – Christa Ratzenböck (soprano) Oedipe – Vinzenz Haab (bass) Thésée – Stephen Roberts (baritone) Polynice – Joseph Cornwell (tenor) Kantorei Saarlouis La Grande Société Philharmonique Joachim Fontaine - Conductor Rec.: Evangelische Kirche Saarlouis, 14-16.X.2012

Back in 34:3 I reviewed a premiere recording of Louis Théodore Gouvy's secular oratorio *Iphigénie en Tauride*, conducted by Joachim Fontaine. While admiring the composer's "usual fastidious craftsmanship and superior technical command of orchestration and of vocal and instrumental part-writing," I expressed reservations about "a lack of dramatic contrast and real passion" and added: "The music is too cultivated for its often harrowing subject....Instead, one elegant and decorous set piece follows another, all inhabiting a temperate emotional climate zone that fails either to inflame or chill. There is also a certain stasis and lack of flow from one number to the next." Having had a similar reaction to another one of the composer's oratorios,

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Électre , I speculated that “Gouvy may deliberately have been cultivating a degree of emotional restraint in these works in order to convey a stylized sense of classical antiquity that would have fit 19th-century sensibilities.”

Fontaine now leads the same choral and instrumental forces, though with mostly different vocal soloists, in the premiere recording of yet another oratorio by Gouvy on a mythic Greek subject, *Oedipe à Colone* . What a difference from *Iphigénie* ! Here there is no such emotional restraint or stasis; the beautiful and inventive music positively surges with genuine dramatic contrast and intense passion. While still remaining mostly within the melodic and harmonic bounds cultivated by Mendelssohn, Schumann, and Max Bruch, the richness of orchestration reflects Gouvy’s expressed admiration for the masterful orchestration (though not the vocal writing) of Wagner. This is by far the finest oratorio I have heard (and I’ve listened to a fair number) from the half-century interval between Mendelssohn’s *Elijah* and Elgar’s *Dream of Gerontius* . At its premiere in Leipzig on December 6, 1881, it enjoyed a tremendous success—indeed, to such a degree that Gouvy told his sister that it was the happiest day of his entire life. While it received further performances during his lifetime, upon his death it immediately fell into the same neglect that all his works have, until recently, so unjustly suffered.

The libretto of *Oedipe* has a somewhat complex lineage. As with *Iphigénie* , Gouvy once again did not write or commission an original libretto, but instead borrowed and adapted an existing one penned by the 18th-century librettist Nicolas-François Guillard (1752–1814). In this case, the original tragedy of Sophocles was first adapted by the great 17th-century tragedian Pierre Corneille (1606–1684). Guillard then turned it into a libretto for a *tragédie lyrique* by the composer Antonio Sacchini (1730–1786), premiered in 1785 at the royal court in Versailles.

The action of the plot, divided in the oratorio into three parts, is subsequent to that of the better-known *Oedipus Rex* . *Oedipe* (the French name for *Oedipus*), having blinded himself after learning that he had unwittingly fulfilled the prophecy that he would kill his father and marry his mother, was exiled from Thebes with the consent of his sons *Étéocle* (*Eteokles*) and *Polynice* (*Polyneikis*), to wander as an exile with his daughter *Antigone* as his guide. In Part 1, the citizens of *Colonus* offer sacrifices to *Poseidon* in thanksgiving for the safe return of their king, *Thésée* (*Theseus*), who brings with him *Polynice*. The latter, having lost out in a power struggle with *Étéocle* for the throne of Thebes and being now also an exile, is filled with shame and remorse for having spurned his father. He has gathered a band of armed supporters and hopes to launch an attack to regain the Theban throne. The two men kneel before the altar to discern the will of the gods and implore their favor, but are answered first by ominous silence and then by a thunderstorm that extinguishes the altar’s sacred flame and terrifies the people.

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In Part 2, Oedipe and Antigone approach Colonus, which the gods have prophesied is where the blind refugee shall at last find rest. Oedipe longs for death, while Antigone pleads for him to live. The exiled king experiences a terrifying vision of being pursued by the Eumenides, and curses Polynice for betraying him, before Antigone brings him back to his senses. The two of them unknowingly trespass on the sacred precincts of the temple; Thésée confronts and denounces them for sacrilege. Antigone begs for mercy and reveals the identities of herself and her father. The people react with horror and demand that the accursed pair be driven away, but Thésée angrily opposes the mob and, taking pity on the duo instead, offers them refuge.

In Part 3, Antigone and Polynice are reunited. Antigone brings her brother to their father so that Polynice can confess his guilt to Oedipe, beg forgiveness, and seek support for his scheme to dethrone Étéocle, offering to restore his father to the throne instead by way of atonement. Oedipe, however, rejects him and curses both of his sons, whereupon Polynice flees in horror. Oedipe then declares to all that the hour of his death has come, as he will descend to a secret burial place at the banks of the river Acheron. Antigone begs to be allowed to join him, but is commanded to live instead. Thésée leads Oedipe away as the people implore the mercy of the gods for the exile's final moments. --- FANFARE: James A. Altena, arkivmusic.com

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