



SAMSON ET DALILA, recorded 1946,
w.Fourestier Cond. L'Opéra Ensemble;
Hélène Bouvier, José Luccioni,
Paul Cabanel, Charles Cambon, etc.
(Canada) 2-St Laurent Studio YSL T-1053,
taken from pristine copies of the original Pathé 78s.
Transfers by Yves St Laurent.

CRITIC REVIEWS:

“This 1946 recording remains the only SAMSON ET DALILA performed by an entirely French cast, played by a French orchestra, and led by a French conductor. It is true that opera is an international art, but it is also true that there is something to be said for the comfort with their native language and the vocal style that a cast like this exhibits. Of course, this would not count for a lot unless we were getting a first-rate performance, and this one is.

The Corsican tenor Jose Luccioni possessed the ideal voice and vocal production for the role of Samson. The voice has plenty of metal and power, but it also has beauty at its core. Luccioni is a persuasive vocal actor, conveying both the strength of the warrior and the tenderness of the lover. He was an important part of the tradition of French dramatic tenors that included Paul Franz, Léon Esclaïs, César Vezzani, and Georges Thill, all of them the kind of voices a role like Samson was written for. In Hélène Bouvier Luccioni has an ideal partner. Her voice is warm, the top secure, and she conveys seductiveness without overdoing it. She and Luccioni know exactly how to phrase the music and shape the words so that one really has the sense that they are communicating with each other rather than singing at the listener. ‘Mon coeur s’ouvre à ta voix’ comes as a natural outgrowth of the scene of which it is the centerpiece, not as an aria inserted for a mezzo-soprano in which to show her skills. Before, during, and after it the interaction between Bouvier and Luccioni is extremely persuasive.

Paul Cabanel is a very strong High Priest and Charles Cambon a very effective Abimélech. At the center of it all is the conducting of Louis Fourestier. From 1938 to 1965 he was the principal conductor of the Paris Opéra. His comfort with the idiom and the naturalness of his pacing are perfect for Saint-Saëns’ score. While there is no ‘aha’ moment where you take note of some striking orchestral effect, the flow of the opera is so seamless that you don’t think about the conducting. Even with the limitations of a 1946 monaural recording Forestier’s sense of orchestral color and balance is evident.

The original Pathé recording has been transferred before, first by EMI (not particularly well) and then by Naxos (quite well). If you already own the Naxos edition, I wouldn’t replace it with this new one. But Yves St. Laurent has done a fine job, correcting some pitch problems with the original 78s and striking the right balance between filtering out noise and retaining the quality of the voices and orchestra.

In many ways this remains the finest recorded performance of SAMSON ET DALILA, and if you love the opera, it makes for an easy and strong recommendation. As usual, St. Laurent Studio includes no notes or libretto but good documentation."

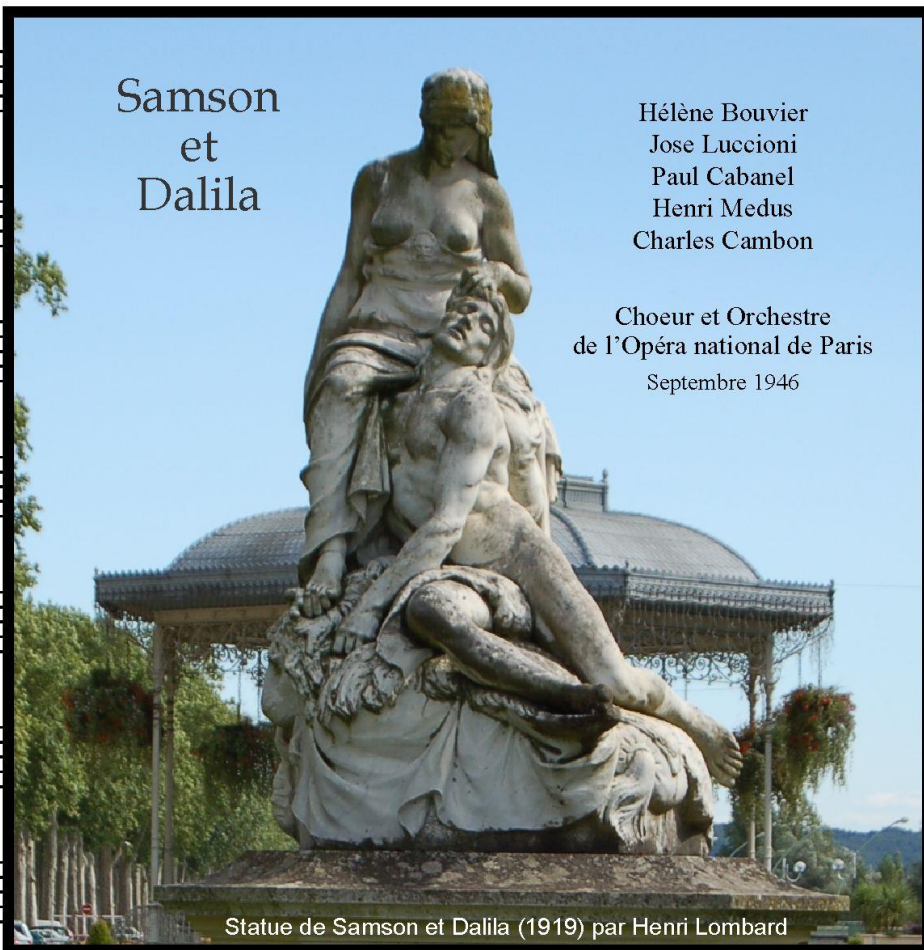
- Henry Fogel, FANFARE

Louis Fourestier Vol. 1

Samson et Dalila

Hélène Bouvier
Jose Luccioni
Paul Cabanel
Henri Medus
Charles Cambon

Choeur et Orchestre
de l'Opéra national de Paris
Septembre 1946



Statue de Samson et Dalila (1919) par Henri Lombard

St-Laurent Studio

