



MUSÉE DES BEAUX-ARTS DE MONTRÉAL
THE MONTREAL MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS

J. W. WATERHOUSE **GARDEN OF ENCHANTMENT**

WATERHOUSE AUDIOGUIDE

TRACK 1

Introduction

Hello. My name is Liz MacRae. On behalf of Nathalie Bondil, Director of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, and the entire staff, welcome to the exhibition *J. W. Waterhouse: Garden of Enchantment*.

The paintings of John William Waterhouse cast a spell all their own. To enhance this magical effect, we felt it would be appropriate to envelope visitors in a musical atmosphere as entrancing as the paintings themselves. In order to do this, we asked Kent Nagano, Music Director of the Orchestre symphonique de Montréal to select music to accompany this remarkable exhibition. Because little is known about Waterhouse's musical taste, Maestro Nagano's approach aimed to initiate a dialogue between the celebrated painter's works and some well-known, well-loved musical works from the 19th and early 20th century. These compositions by Berlioz, Fauré, Debussy and Wagner will add a further dimension to your visit. The length of these selections varies between 4 to 21 minutes so they are long enough to allow you to take in the images along your musical promenade at your leisure. So don't be in a hurry: find a comfortable seat and enjoy the pleasure of combining paintings and music.

Before you immerse yourself in this enchanted world, we would like to thank the Arte Musica Foundation for coordinating this project and the Museum's Volunteer Association for their collaboration in producing and distributing this audioguide.

TRACK 2

Hector Berlioz (1803-1869)

The Death of Cleopatra

Waterhouse painted *Cleopatra* in 1888. To echo this painting, Kent Nagano has chosen a piece by the French romantic composer Hector Berlioz. Even in his earliest compositions, Berlioz had already mastered the creation of an aural architecture and varied textures. With the cantata *The Death of Cleopatra*, the young Berlioz – an inspired innovator and skilled craftsman – produced a dense score that must have startled the jury for Prix de Rome, a competition he entered in 1829.

This cantata places great demands on the singer, both vocally and dramatically. It vividly portrays the fallen queen's last moments, at times with violence, at times with anguish. The role of Cleopatra is sung by Dame Janet Baker, who is accompanied by the London Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Alexander Gibson.

TRACK 3

Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924),

“Sicilienne” from the suite *Pelléas and Mélisande*, Opus 80, (1898)

“Some musicians tried to suppress feeling in their works and replace it with sensation, forgetting that sensation is after all the initial state of feeling.”

Gabriel Fauré

Now let's turn our attention to the paintings in which Waterhouse depicts three passages from Alfred Lord Tennyson's poem “The Lady of Shalott.” Kent Nagano has paired them with the “Sicilienne” from Gabriel Fauré's incidental music to *Pelléas and Mélisande*, a play by the Symbolist author Maurice Maeterlinck .

This play is a timeless drama steeped in legend. Not only Fauré, but also Sibelius, Schoenberg, Debussy and William Wallace based musical compositions on it. Fauré's work forms a transition between romanticism and the upheavals music would undergo in the 20th century. Harmonically innovative and melodically inspired, it speaks a unique, highly fluid language. One of Fauré's best-loved pieces, the “Sicilienne” admirably expresses the very essence of this language. Its strength of inspiration and purity of orchestration are sublimated into a ravishing whole. Here, it is performed by the Orchestre symphonique de Montréal under Charles Dutoit.

TRACK 4

CLAUDE DEBUSSY (1862-1918)

***La Mer* (The Sea)**

2nd movement: “Play of the Waves”

3rd movement: “Dialogue of the Wind and the Sea”

“The true conservatory is in the eternal rhythm of the sea, the wind rustling in the leaves and the thousand little sounds one listens to attentively,” French composer Claude Debussy once said.

Water plays a prominent role in the paintings of J. W. Waterhouse. In *La Mer* (The Sea), a set of three complex symphonic sketches, Debussy strove to capture the nature of the sea, which has always inspired poets and painters. His composition is not so much a tone painting of a constantly mutating landscape as it is a montage of impressions, memories and emotions aroused by the evanescent expanse. You are listening to the second and third movements of *La Mer*, “Play of the Waves” and “Dialogue of the Wind and the Sea,” performed by the Orchestre symphonique de Montréal under Charles Dutoit.

