SAMSON AND DELILAH

ACT I
The Hebrews of Gaza, in bondage to the Philistines, bewail their misfortune. The exceptionally strong Hebrew hero Samson encourages active resistance, and rouses such enthusiasm that Abimelech, Satrap of Gaza, comes to quell the disturbance. Samson slays Abimelech, and the Hebrews carry their revolt into the city. The High Priest of Dagon curses Samson, yet he cannot bring courage to the terrified Philistines. It is Samson’s great hour of triumph. But the priestess Delilah and her ladies come from the Temple of Dagon, bringing the triumphant hero garlands of flowers. In the aria “Printemps qui commence” Delilah tells Samson he already reigns in her heart. An Old Hebrew warns Samson; but the young hero is utterly fascinated by Delilah.

ACT II
Delilah awaits Samson in her luxuriant garden. In the aria, “Amour, viens aider ma faiblesse,” she prays that the god of love may help her to render this enemy of her people powerless. The High Priest of Dagon reports that Samson’s rebellion is gathering strength. He offers Delilah a rich reward if she can weaken Samson. She vows to make Samson a slave to sexual passion, and the two eagerly anticipate victory.

As a storm begins, Samson stumbles in, muttering to himself that he has only come to break off with Delilah. He had not reckoned with her determination, her seductiveness, anger, tears, and sentimental references to past pleasures. As he begins to weaken, she sings the aria, “Mon coeur s’ouvre à ta voix”. She asks for the secret of his great strength. When he refuses to reveal it, she calls him coward and rushes away. Distraught, Samson follows her. As the thunder breaks overhead, a troop of Philistine soldiers surrounds the house. Delilah appears at a window, Samson is heard shouting that he has been betrayed, and the soldiers rush in to take him captive.

ACT III
SCENE ONE. The defeated Hebrews complain that Samson has betrayed the god of his fathers. Samson, blinded and chained to a millstone, calls upon Jehovah to take his life as atonement.

SCENE TWO. In the Temple of Dagon, the Philistines are worshipping their god. Samson is led in by a little child. Everyone mocks him, including Delilah and the High Priest. Samson is to be
made to kneel to Dagon. The child leads Samson between two great pillars, and the huge man tells the boy to flee the temple. Samson grips the two pillars, prays for a last show of strength, and starts the pillars swaying. The Philistine mob screams in terror and tries to rush from the hall. Too late: the whole temple crashes down, destroying everyone inside.