

SORGA L'ALBA EDITOR'S NOTES

This Cavatina for two sopranos is from the second opera by Hilarión Eslava, "Las Treguas de Tolemaida", which premiered in 1842 in Cádiz and Sevilla to critical acclaim. A good place to learn more about this composer and his music is <http://hilarioneslava.org/>

This is the only piece from this opera that we have been able to locate so far, although we recently found a copy of a libretto (by Luigi Bertochi) from likely its first performances in 1842, which provided the original lyrics and proved quite helpful in correcting illegible or erroneous lyrics found in the music.

The story takes place during the 3rd Crusade in the 12th century, during the siege of Jerusalem. Matilde is the sister of Riccardo (King Richard the Lionheart). She has been betrothed to Filippo (Philip II, the King of France). However, Riccardo decides to break this engagement to marry her off to Lusignan (Guy de Lusignan), the former crusader king of Jerusalem, who lost the city and his throne to Saladdin. The broken engagement does not sit well with either Matilde or Filippo, and I'll leave the opera synopsis at that.

This particular song occurs in Act 1 Scene 2 of the opera. The setting is the magnificent suite in Riccardo's Palace adjoining his bedchamber. Matilde is speaking with Berenguela of Navarra, the wife of Riccardo. Here is an English translation of the Italian lyrics:

MATILDE (with childish glee):

You want to take away with your doubts, which are fair, my peace of mind,
But I would like to tell you:
Whether the dawn is smiling or somber,
Whether the day is sad or bright,
When nature is buried in the night, I always find Filippo in my heart.
To me it seems that all young women, all young wives,
Say that Filippo is the virtuous warrior;
To me it seems that when I see him all roses shine;
To me it seems that all plants, all flowers smile.

BERENGUELA:

With the drunkenness of love, you rave;
Be mindful of its effects, oh Matilde...

MATILDE (lively and with childish passion):

You confuse foolish sighs with feelings born in the heart.
My mind is not in a delirium,
My desire is not foolish when to the valiant knight a sigh I consecrate.
A beautiful flattering hope fills my soul with happiness;

It is not a passing flame that love has lit in my heart.