

Overture from “La Tregua di Ptolemaide”

Editor’s Notes

I was delighted to find this orchestral overture from Eslava’s opera “La Tregua di Ptolemaide” mixed in with the pdf file I received from Eresbil for the Introduction and Grand Martial Air from the same opera, which I had previously edited. I’m not sure the folks from Eresbil even realized they had the two separate pieces mixed together like this – it was easy to miss given that the single scanned document consisted of 173 handwritten pages comprising the separate instrumental parts, and one needed to scrutinize it carefully to differentiate the two pieces.

The opera "Las Treguas de Tolemaida" ("La Tregua di Ptolemaide in the Italian libretto by Luigi (Luis) Bertochi, or "The Truce of Ptolemais"), premiered in May 1842 in Cádiz and then in November of that year in Sevilla, to great acclaim. It reached Madrid in August 1844, where it was performed at the prestigious Teatro del Circo. The story, *very loosely* based on the ca. 1810 romance “The Saracen, or Matilda and Malek Adhel” by French novelist Sophie Cottin, and a bit of an improbable pot-boiler, takes place during the 3rd Crusade, in the 12th century. It centers around the character of Matilde (sister of King Richard the Lionheart) and Filippo (Philip II, the King of France). This, the second of Eslava’s three operas, was written only a year after his very successful debut in the operatic genre with “Il Solitario”. Critics were mostly favorable, but as is often the case, never unanimous. The greatest challenges, however, came from within the church, led by powerful archbishop of Sevilla (and very aptly named) cardinal Cienfuegos, who according to some stories, forced Eslava to ultimately stop writing operas, an activity he, and the conservative Spanish Catholic church, considered unseemly for Eslava the priest. According to contemporary stories, having a singing part for an archbishop (Guillermo, the Archbishop of Tyre) in “La Tregua” probably did not help, either.

In transcribing this piece, I was especially challenged with regard to dynamics. *Staccatos* were not consistently used between nor within given parts, and *crescendos* (when provided) were indicated at the start but not the finish of the musical phrase. Much of the dynamic notations consisted of *piano* or *fortissimo*, shown in some instruments but not others, and with large sections devoid of such instructions. I did my best fill in the gaps with what I believe the composer probably intended but, consistent with past practice, did my best to avoid applying my own dynamic preferences. Anybody that actually uses this score should interpret the music based on their best judgment, and not necessarily rely on the dynamics I have shown.