

Editor's Notes for *Più misera chi vide mai* from *La Tregua di Ptolemaide*

Hilarión Eslava wrote three operas fairly early in his career (1841-1843), motivated at least in part by financial need caused by drastic budget cuts at the Cathedral of Sevilla, where he was employed at the time as Master of the Chapel. Opera writing, however, was not something Eslava's employer particularly approved of, and before long, this aspect of the composer's career came to an end. None of the operas have survived to this day in complete form.

The opera "*Las Treguas de Tolemaida*" ("*La Tregua di Ptolemaide*" in the Italian libretto by Luigi (Luis) Bertochi, or "*The Truce of Ptolemais*") was his second work for the lyric stage. It was 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 Third Crusade, in the 12th century. Matilde is the sister of Riccardo (King Richard I, the Lionheart). She has been betrothed to Filippo (Philip, the King of France). However, Riccardo decides to break this engagement to marry her off to Lusiñan, the former ruler of Jerusalem, who was deposed by a sultan. This does not sit well with either Matilde or Filippo, and I'll leave the opera synopsis at that. Historically speaking, the author appears to have confused Matilde with her younger sister, Joan, but other than that, the story does have a few kernels of truth to it.

This particular piece did not have a genuine name - rather its title translated to "soprano duet in the second act". It seems to reflect the entirety of Act 2 Scene 9 of the opera, and arguably incorporates 3 different soprano duets as well as the recitative portions in between. To give it a proper identity, I have assigned it the title "*Più misera chi vide mai*" ("The most miserable person ever seen"), because those lyrics feature prominently in the concluding duet and reflect the overall mood of this particular scene.

In this scene, Berenguela (the wife of Riccardo/Richard, historically known as Berengaria) has been informed by Richard that he called off the marriage arrangements with Filippo/Philip, and promised her hand to Lusiñan. Berenguela must now deliver that news to Matilde.

ITALIAN LYRICS	ENGLISH TRANSLATION
Matilde: Così mesta perchè? dimmi?	Matilde: Why so sad? Tell me.
Berenguela: Infelice!	Berenguela: I'm unhappy!

<p>M: É intenso il tuo dolor! Qual n'è la causa?</p> <p>B: Ma... se tu... qui... fra queste braccia voli or più che mai cara mi sei Matilde.</p> <p>M: Che vuol dir ciò? Mi fai tremar, ti spiega ascoso nel tuo dir, par che si trovi pel mio povero cor fatal presaggio.</p> <p>B: Or tu m'ascolta, e t'arma di coraggio. A turbar tuoi di sereni, marcia altero, e doppia il giro, il politico raggio e ti danno a lagrimar, ah! Sacri son gli affetti al trono della misera fanciulla, che vagi su regia culla quando al giorno i lumi aprì.</p> <p>M: Ma ti spiega, rissolvi favella, pel mio cor la pietade é un martiro.</p> <p>B: Non sò ben se fra sdegno, o deliro, te Riccardo, a Filippo rapí.</p> <p>M: Ah Riccardo! Filippo! Gran Dio, ogni speme di pace spari. Per chi nasce in regia culla, é mendace anche il pensiero, é capriccio passeggero il dovere, e la virtù, ah! Tutto cade a pié del trono, anche il giuro é vano accento, tutto cangia al par del vento, non ha fede l'amistá.</p> <p>B: Ma ti frena Matilde! ricorda che signor t'è Riccardo, e fratello.</p> <p>M: No, no, fratello non m'è che mi scorda, chi m'infrange i legami del cor. Ma del sangue al dover mi fa sorda d'odio solo d'infiamma, e d'orror, di Riccardo l'orgoglio discorda cogli affetti d'un tenero amor.</p> <p>B: Infelice il tuo pianto m'assorda, mi raddoppia nel seno il dolor, ma quell'odio a Ricardo discorda cogli affetti d'un tenero amor. Cesa al fine.</p> <p>M: Gia cade il flagello, gia cade sul mio capo.</p>	<p>M: Your pain is intense! What is the cause?</p> <p>B: But ... if you ... here ... fly into these arms, you are more dear than ever to me, Matilde.</p> <p>M: What does this mean? You make me shudder, Hidden in your words seems to be a fatal omen for my poor heart.</p> <p>B: Listen to me, and arm yourself with courage. To disturb the tranquility of your days, you march proudly and change the turn of the political scheme condemning you to tears. Sacred are the affections to the throne of the unfortunate family, which rocks in a royal crib, when it opens its eyes to the light.</p> <p>M: But explain yourself, make sense, for my heart, pity is a martyrdom</p> <p>B: I don't know if it causes you outrage or martyrdom, but Richard has denounced Philip.</p> <p>M: Ah Richard! Philip! Great God! I have lost all hope of peace. For the one born in royal cradle, even thought is false, and duty and virtue are a whim.</p> <p>Everything yields to the foot of the throne, even the oath is vain words, everything changes with the wind and friendship has no faith.</p> <p>B: Calm down, Matilde and remember that Richard is your lord and brother.</p> <p>M: No, it is not my brother who oppresses me and undoes my heart's bonds. But the duty of my blood makes me deaf with fear only of flame, and of horror, Richard's pride undermines the affections of a tender love.</p> <p>B: Your unhappy crying overwhelms me, And doubles the pain in my breast, but that fear for Richard undermines the affections of a tender love. He knows in the end.</p> <p>M: The scourge already falls on my head.</p>
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B: Matilde fa cor.

M: Di me più misera chi vide mai, quando di polvere mi piangerai, calma quest' anima ritroverá.

L'amica tenera scordar tu dei, e se una lagrima spargi per lei la fredda cenere sorriderá.

B: Di te più misera chi vide mai, amica tenera sempre m'avrai, la sorte barbara si placherá.

Al fin quell' anima scuoter tu dei, d'eterne lagrime ti piangerei se muta restasi per tè pietà.

B: Matilde, take heart.

M: I am the most miserable person ever seen, When I cry tears of dust, his soul will find calm again.

The tender friend forgets the gods, and if a tear reaches her the cold ash will smile.

B: You are the most miserable person ever seen, Tender friend, you will always have me, and this barbarous fate will subside.

In the end your soul will shake tears from the gods, I'd cry for you if it would change things, You have my pity.