

## Editor's Notes for *Sorga l'Alba* 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 *cavatina* for two sopranos 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, the wife of Riccardo. As I started editing this work, I found that the Italian lyrics in the source score were often erroneous and/or illegible. Fortunately, the libretto (by Luigi Bertochi) published likely for the first performances of the opera in 1842, supplied the original script and proved quite helpful in clarifying the lyrics. The piano accompaniment is a reduction of the original orchestrated accompaniment, which may no longer exist. The original score came from the Biblioteca Nacional de España in Madrid. It contains the annotation "Fernando Navarro lo gravó" (*sic*) referring to engraver, and the handwritten note on its cover "M. Guelbenzu/890" –perhaps indicating that the copy may have been the property of the composer and friend of Eslava's, Juan María Guelbenzu Fernández (1819-1886). Eslava's name is spelled as "Eslaba", using the Basque spelling of his surname.

The Italian lyrics and my approximate English translation are as follows:

<p>MATILDE: Togliermi vuoi co' dubbi tuoi la pace Che giusti son ma che sprezzar mi piace.</p> <p>Sorga l'alba ridente, od oscura Segua triste, o risplenda il meriggio Quando a notte sepolta è natura Trovo sempre Filippo nel cor Par che dica ogni figlia, ogni sposa é Filippo il pietoso guerriero par che brilli in vederlo ogni rosa par che rida ogni pianta, ogni fior.</p> <p>BERENGUELA: Nel l'ebbrezza d'amor tu deliri sugli affetti del veglia o Matilde!</p> <p>MATILDE: Tu confondi co folli sospiri quei trasporti che nascon dal cor.</p> <p>BERENGUELA: Oh, mia cara Matilde, tu deliri d'amor.</p> <p>MATILDE: No, no, ah no!</p> <p>Non vaneggia mio pensiero non é folle il mio desiro quando al prode cavaliere sacro un palpito del cor.</p> <p>Ah, bella speme lusinghiera M'empie l'alma di contento non é fiamma passeggera che ne accende in petto amor.</p>	<p>MATILDE: You want to cast doubt on my peace of mind, Fair doubts, but I disdain them:</p> <p>Whether the dawn rises smiling or somber, Whether the day is sad or shining, When nature is buried in the night, I always find Filippo in my heart. It seems that every daughter, every bride, says that Filippo is the virtuous warrior; Every rose seems to shine in seeing him Every plant, every flower seems to laugh.</p> <p>BERENGUELA: The intoxication of love is ravishing your waking mind, oh Matilde!</p> <p>MATILDE: You confuse foolish sighs with feelings that spring from the heart.</p> <p>BERENGUELA: Oh, my dear Matilde, you are deluded in love.</p> <p>MATILDE: No, no, ah no!</p> <p>My mind is not raving, My desire is not madness when to the valiant knight a heart's throb is sacred.</p> <p>A beautiful flattering hope fills my soul with contentment. It is no passing flame That kindles the love in my breast.</p>
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