

Sinfonía (Obertura) de la Ópera “Il Solitario del Monte Selvaggio”

Symphony (Overture) from the Opera “Il Solitario del Monte Selvaggio”

This is the full orchestral overture to Hilarión Eslava’s first and arguably most successful opera, “Il Solitario del Monte Selvaggio”, premiered in 1841. It incorporates orchestral renditions of both the “Marcha Militar” and the “Coro y Duetto de Tenores”, for which I have piano reductions, as well as several themes that I had not run across before.

This opera, in three acts, and sung in Italian, with libretto by César Perini, was based on a popular XIX century novella of the same title by French romantic writer Charles-Victor Prévot, vicomte d'Arlincourt (1788-1856). “Il Solitario” premiered in 1841 in Cádiz and soon thereafter in Sevilla, Madrid, and Pamplona to enormous acclaim. In Sevilla, for example, “Il Solitario” had 17 performances in just three months. The success of this work led critics to compare Eslava to many of the greatest opera composers of the time and showered him with much acclaim. In these excerpts it is easy to see why: These are beautiful, romantic melodies with flowing accompaniments and a great dramatic sense. Sadly, most of the opera score and the vast majority of the music from Eslava’s subsequent two operas, “La Tregua di Ptolemaide” (1842) and “Pietro il Crudele” (1843) have probably been lost forever.



Portrait of Charles the Bold, by Rogier van der Weyden (1399/1400–1464).
"Gemäldegalerien" of the "Staatliche Museen", Berlin

The highly melodramatic (and historically and geographically very much questionable) plot of the opera centers on the figure of Charles the Bold (in French, Charles le Téméraire, 1433-1477), the last duke of Burgundy from the House of Valois. In the story (as related to us in the opera’s Spanish language libretto), Carlos El Temerario (Charles the Bold) –thus called for his courage and cruelty, retires to live by himself in penance in the wilderness of The Terrible Mountain (translated as *Monte Selvaggio*, in Italian) in Switzerland, close to Lake Morat, where the monks of the Morat Abbey had years earlier been murdered by order of Carlos. There, unknown to all, he performs heroic deeds of charity. Living at the old castle of Underlach next to The Terrible Mountain is the angelic and beautiful Elodia (Elodie), daughter of the Count of San Mauro, also murdered by the cruel Burgundian. Upon her father’s death, Elodia’s uncle, the Baron of Herstatt, took her under his protection, and at the Baron’s death she was left under the custody of virtuous Father Anselmo (Anselm), the local parish priest. El Solitario (Carlos), ardently charmed by the beauty of Elodia, aspires to marry her; and she, having heard of his heroic deeds is very much in love with him. The inhabitants of the local mountains, and especially Ursula, whose son is saved from certain death by



The 1476 Battle of Morat (Murten), illustration from the Zürcher Schilling (1480/1484). In this battle, Charles the Bold was decisively defeated by the Swiss Confederate Army

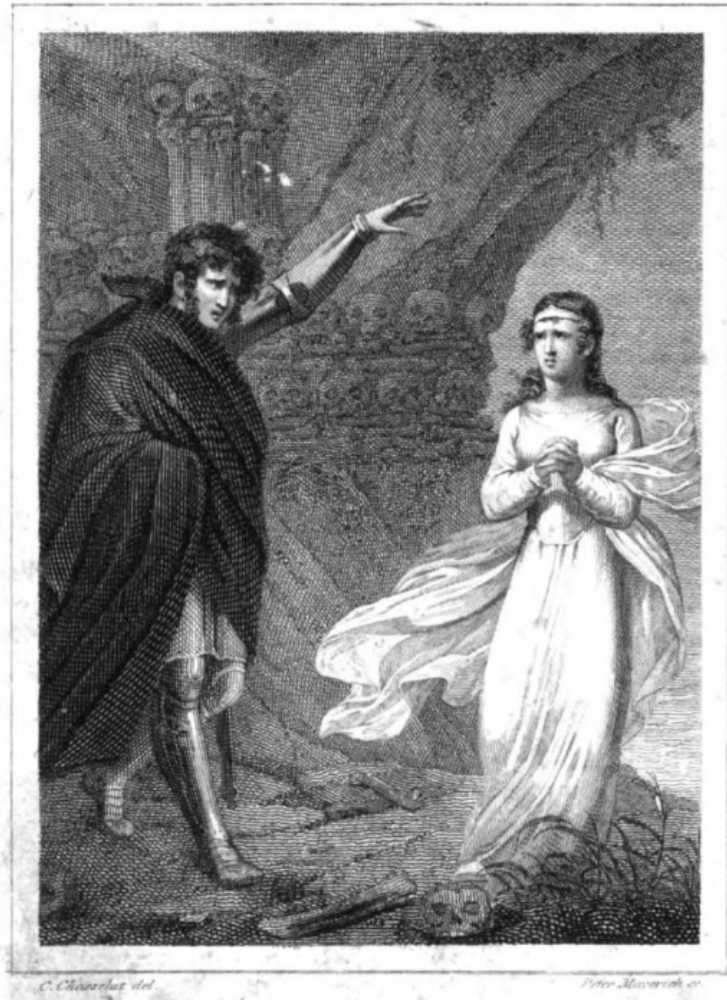
wracked with guilt, curses himself and asks to be taken to eternal torment. At that very moment, lightning strikes him and he falls dead. The opera ends with all witnesses to this tragic development contemplating it in terror. (Wow!)

The real story of Charles of Burgundy is considerably less romantic and his ending quite a bit more gruesome. Though during his time Charles was one of the wealthiest and most powerful nobles in Europe, he was not as fortunate in battle and died a terrible death in battle at the walls of the city of Nancy, in France.

The source for this transcription was a fairly modern handwritten manuscript obtained from Eresbil (Basque Music Archives). It was undated and unsigned, but based on the quality of the copy and handwriting I would estimate it to be circa 1970. It indicated the original instrumentation as well as the instrumentation utilized. For purposes of my transcription, I reverted to the original instrumentation

El Solitario, laud his virtues. Prince Palzo arrives at Underlach intent on asking for Elodia's hand. She refuses to follow the advice of Father Anselmo, who counsels her to accept the Prince's offer in marriage. Ecberto (Ecbert), Count of Norindall, whose amorous interest in Elodia had gone unrequited, decides to join Palzo in his desire to take revenge on her and on El Solitario. However, just as Ecberto is trying to kill Elodia, El Solitario appears, ready to take Elodia away, and makes himself known to Ecberto, who recognizes him as his old brother-in-arms, whom he had thought long dead. Upon this discovery, Ecberto changes sides and decides to help Carlos, but upon the arrival of Palzo's troops, Carlos has to escape, alone. In the final act, just as Palzo is getting ready to marry Elodia, El Solitario arrives dressed as a ghost. In the commotion that follows, Ecberto kills Palzo. Ecberto then persuades Father Anselmo to marry Elodia to El Solitario (whose identity is unknown to all present except Ecberto). After being questioned by the priest, the mysterious ghost reveals himself as Carlos (Charles) of Burgundy. In horror, Father Anselmo and all around him curse Carlos, guilty of having spilled the blood of so many innocents and of so much sorrow. Carlos,

(Cornets in E \flat and Horns in E \flat , whereas the source used Trumpets in C and Horns in F). The seemingly recent vintage of the source document gives me some hope that somewhere the full original score of this opera may still exist.



Engraving for an 1822 U.S. edition of "The Solitary; or the Mysterious Man of the Mountain" by the Vicomte d'Arincourt (New York Public Library)



TEATRO.

GRAN FUNCION para el *Miercoles 29 del presente mes de Enero de 1845.*

La Empresa lírica deseosa de manifestar su gratitud al ilustrado y benigno público de Pamplona, ha dispuesto en su obsequio poner en escena para dicho dia, el elegante y aplaudido drama lírico en tres actos, del célebre jóven Navarro D. Hilarion Eslava, titulado :

EL SOLITARIO DEL MONTE SALVAGE.

Que será exornado con el aparato de música militar y demas correspondiente, estrenándose al efecto dos decoraciones que, en obsequio del Sr. Eslava, ha costeado el M. Y. y H. Ayuntamiento constitucional de esta ciudad.

La empresa, persuadida de lo grato y satisfactorio que ha de ser á los Pamploneses el ver en su teatro el primer ensayo de esta especie de su ilustre paisano el jóven maestro Eslava, tiene el honor de dedicárselo en nombre de su autor, quien desinteresadamente ha consentido en ello, recordando que entre los mismos Pamploneses emprendió el difícil cuanto agradable arte de la música.

A las 6.

A 4 rs. vn.

NOTA. En la libreria de Ochoa plaza del Castillo, se vende esta ópera en castellano con su elegante cubierta á real vn.



IMPRESA DE OCHOA.

Bill for a performance of Eslava's opera "Il Solitario" in Pamplona on January 29, 1845