

## Editor's Notes for *Di Mia Vita* from the opera *Il Solitario*

"*Il Solitario*" was Hilarión Eslava's first opera, sung in Italian from a libretto by Cesare Perini. Premiered in 1841 in Cádiz, it was met with enthusiastic acclaim in Cádiz, Sevilla, Madrid, and Pamplona. For a more complete description of the opera and its plot, please see the Editor's Notes for its overture, at <https://hilarioneslava.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Sinfonia-de-la-Opera-Editors-Notes.pdf>

I originally transcribed this piece in 2019 – one of the first results of a project to recover the music of Hilarión Eslava. The source score contained numerous errors in its Italian lyrics, with practically no punctuation, making it difficult to determine the accuracy of the text, nor did I have then the Italian libretto that would have provided a means of correcting/clarifying the lyrics. My husband and I have recently been able to access the libretto used for the opera's Cádiz premiere, so now I am able to revisit this piece, making appropriate corrections to the lyrics (where I can) as well as applying improved MuseScore formatting and playback techniques I have learned during the past couple of years.

The original source for this transcription is a printed score obtained from the Biblioteca Nacional de España in Madrid. It appears to have been part of a set (it is labeled "Nº 2") and bears the signature "P.E. Calahorra." The printer is unknown. Printed musical scores were not common in Spain until the late 1850's or early 1860's, so this work would have been published well after the opera was composed, and when the dramatic works of Eslava were no longer being performed in theatres. The piece is labeled as a "cavatina" and features a solo soprano part with a piano reduction "arranged by the author."

This dramatic cavatina most likely belongs to Scene VI of the first Act. In this scene, Elodia is visiting the mausoleum of her late uncle, the Baron of Herstall, who took her in as an orphan after the murder of her father. She lays a wreath at the tomb and sings a song of tribute to him. The lyrics match the libretto quite well up to a point, specifically Measure 28 (at "*te devuto*"). After that, there is little to no resemblance, neither in Scene 6, nor anywhere else in the entire libretto. The title words "*Di mia vita*" in fact do not occur at all in the libretto, nor do any of the remaining lyrics, except for a few common words here and there. Furthermore, there was no chorus of handmaidens present during Scene VI in the libretto – rather the entire scene consisted of Elodia rhapsodizing a more prolonged version of the tribute to her uncle. Although I had no libretto to help me with the remaining lyrics of this lengthy piece, I have done my best to correct the text as needed.

This deviation may be due to changes introduced by the composer after the libretto was printed. We do know of an incident that occurred when the opera was performed in Madrid in 1842, which could have prompted these and other revisions. One of Eslava's contemporary biographers points out that during the rehearsals for the opera in Madrid, a few of the lead singers in the local company were dissatisfied with some of the existing arias, and, with less than a week to the first performance, threatened to quit unless their solos were changed to their satisfaction. The impresario apparently was unable or unwilling to oppose this obviously unreasonable demand. In a feat of incredible musical heroism and talent, Eslava revised the score and added new numbers to suit the singers' wishes in a matter of a few days, saving the performance. This might have well been one of the new or revised pieces.

The Italian lyrics (transcribed to the best of my ability) and my English translation follow:

ITALIAN LYRICS	ENGLISH TRANSLATION
<p>ELODIA:  Oh! Cener muto che una pietra guarda!  Santissim' ombra di quell' uom cortese,  che orfanella mi accolse, ond' ai perigli d'empia  Corte sottrarmi e al assassino di mio Padre,  ricevi in pio tributo questo serto d'amore a te  devuto.</p> <p>Di mia vita, sul mattino, più per me oscurato e il  cielo, ogni speme, un mio destino vieni a togliermi  crudel.</p> <p>Giorno e sera mesto il cuore pianto amaro verserá,  sí, pianto amaro, amaro, verserá, ah! sí, ne il sorriso  dell'amore per me al fine splenderá  Che fu?  L'ancelle riedono...</p>	<p>ELODIA:  Oh! Mute ashes guarded by a rock!  Holiest shadow of that courteous man,  who adopted this orphan, so that I could escape  from the perils of an impious Court and from my  Father's murderer,  receive in pious tribute this wreath of love due  to thee.</p> <p>In my life, each morning the sky is more  darkened, and every hope is taken away by my  cruel destiny.</p> <p>Day and evening, my sad heart will weep  bitterly, yes, bitter tears will pour. Ah! Yes, in  the end the smile of love will shine for me.  What was that?  The handmaidens return...</p>
<p>CORO DI DONNE:  Serena o mai, quel ciglio, della vittoria il figlio  prepara a te l'imen.</p>	<p>WOMEN'S CHORUS:  Serene or not your brow, the victorious son  prepares your wedding.</p>
<p>ELODIA:  Cessate! Ah, mio periglio, non più straziarmi il sen.  Quel uom terribile, oh Dio, tacete, voi m'uccide, te  non più parlar.  Celeste folgore tronca il mio accento, fine al  tormento, fine al penar.</p>	<p>ELODIA:  Cease! Ah, my peril, tear my breast no more.  That terrible man, oh God, be silent, you kill me,  speak to me no more.  A celestial thunderbolt cuts short my speech,  end the torment, end the pain.</p>
<p>CORO DI DONNE:  Il suo delirio chi pu calmar?</p>	<p>WOMEN'S CHORUS:  Who can calm her delirium?</p>