

Editor's Notes for *Ah! Se morir di pena* from the opera *Il Solitario* (Orchestrated version)

"*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 later, in 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 a voice/piano version of this piece in 2019, which was revised earlier this year (that version can be found on the hilarioneslava.org music page, at <https://hilarioneslava.org/music/> and on the MuseScore site, at <https://musescore.com/user/29381772/scores/10219111>). However, we were delighted to recently find a (likely) original orchestrated manuscript of this piece as well as three other opera fragments (two of those also orchestrated) in a public library in Spain's Galicia region, at the Fondo Canuto Berea of the Biblioteca Provincial, Deputación da Coruña. We are indebted to the Deputación da Coruña for granting us access to this music and to Adela Sanz and Pedro Gómez for obtaining the digital images that are the basis for this transcription.

This dramatic aria belongs to Scene I of the second Act. In this scene, Elodia is waiting impatiently in a monastery gallery, contemplating her love for her beloved but mysterious "*Il Solitario*". The lyrics align with the original Cádiz libretto except for about four lines.

The source manuscript for this transcription consisted of a set of instrumental parts, missing the soprano part and associated lyrics. Therefore, I had to reconstruct Elodia's (the soprano's) part using the voice/piano version. There were significant differences between these two versions that forced me to exercise major editorial discretion in creating this transcription, as follows:

1. Measures 13-24 were not actually included in the orchestrated manuscript but were present in the voice/piano version. Here, I created the orchestral parts by drawing on repetitive patterns and clues in the piano part.
2. In the concluding measures (Measures 154 to the end) there was no match at all between the orchestrated and voice/piano versions. The orchestration was longer and clearly supported an entirely different melody. In this instance, I chose to follow the orchestrated version, and adapted Elodia's part (as well as the piano reduction) to fit it. Since there were considerable similarities between the flute and Elodia's part throughout the aria, I drew heavily on the flute part in this soprano adaptation.
3. There were various minor inconsistencies between articulations and dynamics, as well as probable musical errors, that I addressed in a manner that I felt made the most musical sense.
4. The orchestrated manuscript oddly includes an additional "*Vals*" ("Waltz") fragment that I did not musically recognize and plan to publish separately. Given that in several of the instrumental parts, the beginning of the *Vals* appears on the same page as the conclusion of this aria, I can only assume it might have been part of the opera, but the libretto does not seem to allow for a dance (particularly a waltz) in the remainder of Act 2 Scene 1, nor do I have a part containing potential lyrics to help me locate where it might fall elsewhere in the opera, if at all.

Such deviations 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 that may have prompted some of the discrepancies, an incident I have previously described. 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. At this time, it is not possible to discern whether the orchestrated manuscript source or printed voice/piano source represents Eslava's original (Cádiz debut) version, the Madrid version, or perhaps yet another version.

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

ITALIAN (C. PERINI) LYRICS	APPROXIMATE ENGLISH TRANSLATION
<p>Ne giunge'ancor! Che visto ei non avesse della Nortica Torre il mio fanale? Ah no! Che qual la speme in duol profondo. Ei brillava così trà denso orrore! Ah! vieni, il mio timor diledgua, vieni.</p>	<p>He may yet come! Has he not seen my light from the Northern Tower? Ah no! What hope is there such deep pain, He shone so, amid such dense horror! Ah! come, my fear is gone, come.</p>
<p>Ah! se morir di pena, oggi così degg' io accanto all' idol mio. Io voglio al men morire, io voglio al men, sì, morir. Così vedrà se l'amo, se caro me' il suo affetto, se può un accesso petto penare, soffrire, penar così e soffrir. Te chiamo, e l'eco rendimi soltanto la mia voce.</p>	<p>Ah! if I die of grief, I shall do so today beside my idol. I want to die, I want to die, yes, to die. Thus he will see how I love him, How his affection is dear to me, How he can make my heart ache, suffer, ache like this and suffer. I call to you, and there is only the echo of my voice.</p>
<p>Quest' ore intanto passano vola il pensier veloce. Te chiamo, mio bene. Non so dir se pena sia quel ch'io provo, o sia contento, ma se pena è quel ch'io sento, oh! che'amabile penar! E'un penar che mi consola, che m'invola ogni altro affetto, che mi desta un nuovo in petto ma soave palpar</p>	<p>During these hours the thoughts fly quickly. I call to you, my dear. I can't say whether sorrow is what I feel, or contentment, But if sorrow is what I feel, oh, what lovely sorrow! It is a pain that consoles me, That robs me of every other affection, That awakens in me a new but sweet heartbeat.</p>