

Daniel-François-Esprit Auber:
Le Domino noir

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Edited and Introduced by

Robert Ignatius Letellier

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P U B L I S H I N G

Daniel-François-Esprit Auber: *Le Domino noir*,
Edited and Introduced by Robert Ignatius Letellier

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Daniel-François-Esprit Auber, lithograph by Grèvedon after a drawing by Haudebourt

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INTRODUCTION

Le Domino noir, an opéra-comique in three acts, with libretto by Eugène Scribe, was premiered at the Opéra-Comique (Salle de la place de la Bourse/Salle des Nouveautés) on 2 December 1837. It was an instant success, and remained hugely popular, with the 1000th performance taking place on 3 April 1882. The opera was last revived in Paris at the Théâtre Porte Saint Martin on 10 June 1935, and was playing in the French provinces until 1940. This is one of Scribe's most elegant and witty comedies, satirically spicy and particularly exciting because at no point is the audience any more aware of the unfolding developments than the characters in the plot. With *Fra Diavolo* (1830), this score was to prove the best that Auber wrote for the Opéra-Comique. The music is employed with economy, mellifluous, but pared and pointed. Its wit and elements of parody look forward to Jacques Offenbach.

The action takes place in Madrid, around 1780; alternatively, some versions set the piece later, during the Restoration, around 1837. Angèle, a noblewoman who is about to take solemn vows and become the Abbess of a convent at the behest of the Queen of Spain, nonetheless still attends masked balls, disguised in a black domino. At one of the balls she falls in love with the handsome and eligible Horace de Massarena, who is equally smitten. Act 1 opens in a small salon adjoining the ballroom in the royal palace of Madrid, where another ball is about to take place. Angèle appears in her black domino with her friend Brigitte. Horace, who is sitting in the salon, recognises her as the woman he fell in love with, and pretends to fall asleep in an armchair in order to overhear her conversation with Brigitte. Angèle leaves her bouquet beside him as a token of her affection. Horace later disengages her from the crowd and declares his love, but she discourages him. At midnight Angèle leaves to return to the convent, but without Brigitte.

In act 2, Angèle tries to find her way back to the convent unaided but, frightened by the dark streets, knocks at the first door, that of Julianio, Horace's friend. The gentlemen, returning from the ball, enter for supper and are waited on by Angèle, disguised in Aragonese costume as the niece of Jacinthe, Julianio's housekeeper. Horace recognizes her, but she flees after frightening the porter of the convent, Gil Perez (who is Jacinthe's lover), into surrendering his keys.

Act 3 is set in the convent, where Brigitte is ably covering up for Angèle. Horace attends the installation of the new abbess and sees Angèle about to receive this great honour. Suddenly a messenger from the Queen of Spain appears, ordering the convent to select a new abbess and releasing Angèle from her vows. She and Horace are now free to marry.

The libretto is one of the best from the great dramatist. The choice of subject, characterized as it was by ideas current at the time of its creation—the emancipated view of womanhood and the daring treatment of religious themes—was felt by the middle of the nineteenth century not to be in the best taste. However, the unconventional daring and single-mindedness of the fashionable heroine becomes a kind of celebration of feminine independence and resourcefulness. The dynamic, protean heroine dominates this opera, with her activities, both religious and profane, blending in the metonymic black domino she uses to disguise and mystify her identity on all her nocturnal adventures. The concealing nature of this garment, and its black

colour, pertain to both the religious and secular dimensions of her experience. Her moment of self-disclosure in act 3 is full of the same ambiguity of identity and intention, and in its fusion of soliloquy and ballad, captures the mercurial and perplexing nature of the party-going abbess, where the mystique of religion and the glamour of high society are captured in her symbolic cloak and mask. Angèle is without doubt the most intriguing and original creation of the two masters of *opéra-comique*.

This independence of spirit passes down in variation to the other female characters of the scenario. The evocation of a gracious high society and the enterprising servanthood of the *opéra-comique* tradition, as well as the tender, romanticized evocation of the convent and religious life, invest the whole with the aura of an urban pastoral.

Le Domino noir was celebrated for its lightness, elegance and wit, the libretto and music complementing each other perfectly in realizing a masterpiece of this genre. This is Auber's most original *opéra-comique*, the one in which he most fully abandoned himself to charming fantasy and melodic grace. Nearly all the pieces became popular. The overture, which is perfect in itself, presents the context of the romance, and sketches the elusive charm of the heroine. Dramaturgically, it sets the scene for the opening party given by the Queen of Spain. In structure, it recalls the Baroque suite in a variety of linked dances; but this episodic character is fused into an effective whole by swift transitions and the all-pervasive mood of gracious restraint.

It begins with a chain of rather formal dance tunes in waltz-time. A processional *ritornello* in A-flat frames three contrasting episodes in F minor, all of them conjuring up a remote and faraway mood in their pared and exquisitely crafted recitals and delicate counterpoint. This sequence is succeeded by a syncopated melody taken from the duet for Angèle and Count Horace, who falls in love with the masked beauty at the ball—a melody that distills the quintessence of Auber's Gallic detachment, elegance and restraint, and captures both the mystique of Angèle's ambiguous character and its symbolic correlative in the mask and cloak of the black domino. Then follows the lively Aragonaise that Angèle, disguised as the servant girl Inesille, sings for the entertainment of the bachelor party in act 2. The conclusion, launching into a bustling bolero taken from the act 2 finale, brings the overture to an exciting climax.

The romances for Angèle ("Le trouble et la frayeur") and Horace ("Amour, viens finir mon supplice") have a suavity and enchanting distinction, as do Angèle's couplets "Une fée, un bon ange" and her dialogue with Juliano ("D'où venez-vous ma chère?"). The couplets for Gil Perez, the convent porter ("Deo gratias") and Dame Brigitte ("S'il est sur terre") have roundness and zest; the *aragonaise* for 'Inésille' ("La belle Inès fait florès") much ingenuity. Angèle's big syllabic aria "Ah! quelle nuit!" successfully depicts the range of emotions experienced by the imprudent abbess.

The big Supper Scene in act 2 is an ensemble of fleetness and mercurial moods. Auber's employment of Spanish rhythms adds a most appropriate *couleur locale* to the whole of the score, with its typical traits of excitable note repetitions, chromaticism, augmented seconds in the melody, and groups of triplets. The dramatic situation in the last act provided the composer with one of his most beautiful inspirations. The *cantique* with chorus ("Hereux qui ne respire") can by its very nature disarm those who could be tempted to reproach the authors for having treated religious matters with the daring frankness they have.

The roles were created by Laure Cinti-Damoreau (Angèle); Joseph-Antoine-Charles Couderc (Horace); Mlle Berthaut (Brigitte); Théodore-Étienne Moreau-Sainti

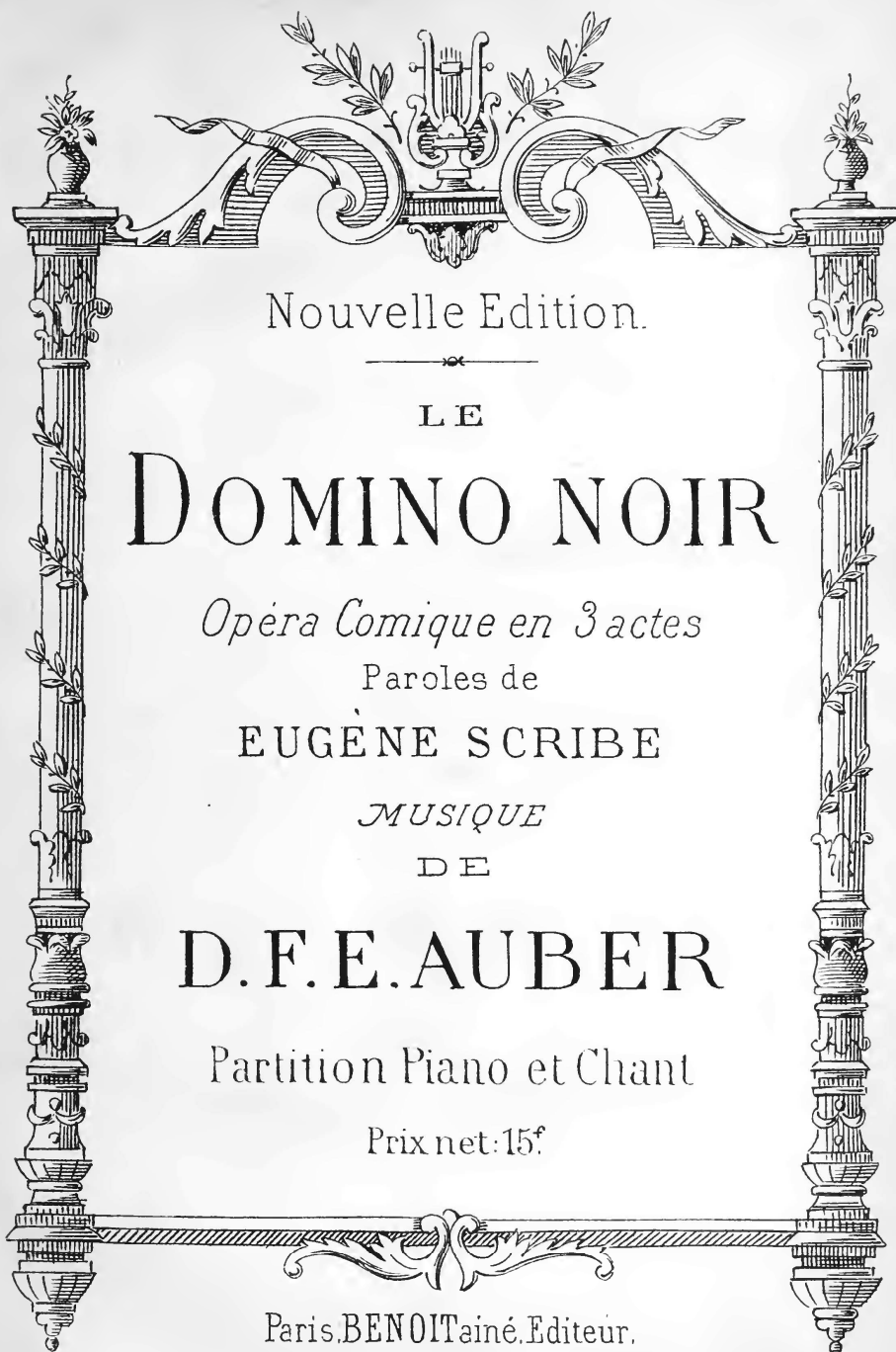
(Juliano); Marie-Julienne Boulanger (Jacinthe); Honoré Grignon (Lord Elfort); Roy (Gil Perez); Thérèse Olivier (Ursule, a lay sister) and Mme Roy (Gertrude, the tourière at the convent). Mme Cinti-Damoreau realized the role of Angèle in one of her greatest successes. That of Horace later became one of the best interpretations of Gustave Roger who, by his acting and sympathetic voice, almost managed to make the public believe in this taking of the veil.

This work was more popular in Paris than *Fra Diavolo*: the 1000th performance took place in 1882, the 1209th in 1909. Between 1838 and 1845 translations were made into German, English, Russian, Danish, Czech, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Hungarian and Swedish, with later versions in Finnish, Croatian, Polish and Norwegian. It was performed across Europe and beyond, from Moscow and St Petersburg to New York and Rio de Janeiro. The opera was particularly popular in England, where by 1846 it was already being presented at the Haymarket Theatre. By comparison with *Fra Diavolo* the opera was less popular in Germany, possibly because of its unique position between spoken and sung comedy. In 1929 a silent film of *Le Domino noir* was made with Harry Liedke as Horace and Vera Schmiterlow as Angèle. An Italian version of the libretto was set by Lauro Rossi (*Il domino nero*, Milan 1849).

In the second half of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries there were performances in Paris (ORTF, 1950, 1965), London (Opera Viva, 1979) and Compiègne (2006). The London recording of 1995 (Decca) features Sumi Jo, Isabelle Vernet and Bruce Ford, with the English Chamber Orchestra conducted by Richard Bonyngé. There is a DVD of the 2006 Compiègne Théâtre Impérial production with Sophie Fournier, Lucile Vignon and Alain Gabriel, conducted by Michel Swierczewski.



Angèle. Etching after Tony and Alfred Johannot from Scribe's Works (1847)



Nouvelle Edition.

LE

DOMINO NOIR

Opéra Comique en 3 actes

Paroles de

EUGÈNE SCRIBE

MUSIQUE

DE

D.F.E.AUBER

Partition Piano et Chant

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Opéra-comique en 3 actes

Paroles de
EUGÈNE SCRIBEMusique de
D. F. E. AUBER

PERSONNAGES

ANGÈLE.....	Soprano	Danoreau
BRIGITTE.....	Soprano	Berthaut
JACINTHE.....	Soprano	Audange
URSULE.....	Soprano	Glinier
LA TOURIÈRE.....	Soprano	Roy
HORACE.....	Ténor	Condore
JULIANO.....	Ténor	Moran-Saint
LORD ELFORT.....	Basse	Guignon
GIL PEREZ.....	Basse	Roy



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Paroles de
E. SCRIBE

Musique de
D. F. E. AUBER

OUVERTURE

Allegretto. (♩=104)

PIANO.

f

fz fz p fz fz p fz fz p

fz fz p fz fz p fz fz p fz fz p

fz fz p p

f

This page contains six systems of musical notation for a piano piece. Each system consists of a grand staff with a treble clef on the upper staff and a bass clef on the lower staff. The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat), and the time signature is 3/4. The notation includes various chords, arpeggios, and melodic lines. Dynamic markings are used throughout: *p* (piano) appears at the beginning of the first system and in the middle of the fourth; *f* (forte) appears at the end of the second system and in the middle of the fourth; *cresc* (crescendo) is marked with hairpins in the second, third, fifth, and sixth systems; and *decresc* (decrescendo) is marked with hairpins in the third and fourth systems. The piece concludes with a final chord in the sixth system.

This musical score is for the piece "Le Domino noir" on page 5. It is written for piano in a key with three flats (B-flat major or D-flat minor) and a 4/4 time signature. The score consists of six systems of music, each with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs).

- System 1:** Features a strong ***f*** (forte) dynamic. The right hand plays chords and moving lines, while the left hand provides a steady accompaniment.
- System 2:** The dynamic shifts to ***p*** (piano). The right hand has more melodic movement, including slurs and ties.
- System 3:** Continues the ***p*** dynamic. The right hand features a series of slurred eighth-note patterns.
- System 4:** Also in ***p*** dynamic. It includes a first ending bracket marked with a dashed line and the number "8".
- System 5:** Continues the ***p*** dynamic. It includes a second ending bracket marked with a dashed line and the number "8".
- System 6:** The dynamic returns to ***f*** (forte). The right hand plays chords, and the left hand has a more active bass line.

The score concludes with a final system of chords in the right hand and a sustained bass line in the left hand.

This page of musical notation is for a piano piece by Daniel-François-Esprit Auber. It consists of six systems of music, each with a treble and bass staff. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats). The first system begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic marking. The sixth system begins with a forte (*f*) dynamic marking. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and accidentals.

This page contains six systems of musical notation for piano accompaniment. Each system consists of a grand staff with a treble and bass clef. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats). The first system features a melody in the treble with eighth-note chords and a steady eighth-note bass line. The second system includes a first ending bracket in the treble. The third system has a melodic line in the treble and a more active bass line with eighth-note patterns. The fourth system continues with a similar texture. The fifth system features a more complex treble melody with sixteenth-note chords. The sixth system begins with a *pp* (pianissimo) dynamic marking and features a more intricate, flowing melody in the treble and a rhythmic bass line. The page concludes with a double bar line and repeat signs in the bass staff.

This page of musical notation for piano consists of seven systems of staves. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The first system begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The fourth system includes a *riten.* (ritardando) marking followed by a *1^o Tempo.* (first tempo) marking. The sixth system begins with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The seventh system includes a first ending bracket marked with the number 1. The key signature changes from C major to B-flat major in the fifth system and remains in B-flat major through the end of the page.

All^o non troppo (♩. = 63)

The musical score is written for piano and consists of six systems. Each system contains a grand staff with a treble and bass clef. The key signature is one flat (B-flat). The time signature is 3/8. The tempo is marked 'All^o non troppo' with a quarter note equal to 63 beats per minute. The first system includes dynamic markings 'f' (forte) and 'p' (piano). The music features a mix of chords and moving lines, with some systems showing more complex textures like triplets and sixteenth notes.

This page of musical notation, likely a piano accompaniment, consists of six systems of staves. Each system contains a treble staff and a bass staff. The music is written in a key with one flat (B-flat) and a 6/8 time signature. The notation is complex, featuring many beamed sixteenth and thirty-second notes, as well as various rests and dynamic markings. The first system begins with a forte (*f*) dynamic marking in the bass staff. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat signs, with the final measure of the bass staff marked with a 6/8 time signature.

Allegro assai.

The musical score is written for piano in 6/8 time, featuring a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The tempo is marked *Allegro assai.* The score consists of six systems of two staves each (treble and bass clef). The first system begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The second system includes a *cresc.* (crescendo) marking. The third system continues the piano texture. The fourth system introduces a forte (*ff*) dynamic in the right hand, which plays a series of accented chords. The fifth system also features a forte (*ff*) dynamic, with the right hand playing a more complex, arpeggiated figure. The sixth system concludes with a final chord in the right hand and a sustained bass line in the left hand.

This page of musical notation for piano consists of five systems, each with a treble and bass staff. The key signature is one flat (B-flat). The first system begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic marking. The second system continues the melodic and harmonic development. The third system features a forte (*ff*) dynamic marking. The fourth system includes a series of ornaments (trills) in the treble staff. The fifth system concludes the page with a final chord and a repeat sign. The notation is clear and professional, typical of a printed musical score.

This musical score is for the piece "Le Domino noir" on page 13. It is written for piano and organ. The score is organized into five systems, each with a piano part (treble and bass staves) and an organ part (treble and bass staves). The piano part features a melody with various ornaments and dynamics, while the organ part provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and arpeggios. The key signature is one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. The organ part includes a section marked *ff* (fortissimo) in the fourth system. The score concludes with a double bar line and repeat signs in the fifth system.

ACTE I

N° 1

TRIO

Allegro. (♩ = 92)

PIANO. *p*

ANGÈLE.
 Tout est-il prépa - ré? La voi - ture à mi -

BRIGITTE.
 C'est conve - nu! c'est dit!

A
 - nuit nous attendra. (à part) Et toi, songes-y bien, au rendez-vous fi -

HORACE.
 C'est elle!

A
 - dè - le, Dans ce salou à minuit! Un instant de re -

BRIGITTE.
 à minuit.

H
 à minuit.

A
tard, et nous serions per - dues; Et rien que d'y penser me fait

B
je le sais bien.

A
peur.

B
Allons Madame, allons du cœur, Et dans la fou - le con - fou -

ANGÈLE.
- dues, En songeant au plai - sir oubli - ons la frayeur.

f

p

A bel - - le soi_ré - e! mo_ment enchan_teur! _____

B bel - - le soi_ré - e! mo_ment enchan_teur! _____

H O dou - - ce soiré - - e! moment _____ enchan_teur!

A Mon âme en - i - vré - - e rê - ve le bon - heur. O

B Mon âme en - i - vré - - e rê - ve le bon - heur. O

H Mon âme en - i - vré - - e re_nait au _____ bonheur.

A bel - - le soi_ré - e! mo_ment enchan_teur! _____

B bel - - le soi_ré - e! mo_ment enchan_teur! _____

H O dou - - ce soiré - - e moment _____ enchan_teur!