

Daniel-François-Esprit Auber:
Le Philtre

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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 Philtre*,
Edited and Introduced by Robert Ignatius Letellier

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Daniel-François-Esprit Auber (lithograph c 1830)

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INTRODUCTION

Le Philtre, an opera in two acts with libretto by Eugène Scribe, was premiered at the Académie Royale de Musique (Salle de la rue Le Peletier) on 20 June 1831. The work was an immediate success and remained in the repertoire of the Opéra until 1862. Scribe's libretto was based on an Italian story, Silvio Malaperta's *Il Filtro*, published in a French adaptation in the *Revue de Paris* by Stendhal in 1830.

The story is set in Mauléon, in the eighteenth century. Guillaume, a young farmhand, is in love with Thérèsine, the beautiful but aloof lady of the manor. He and his rival, the swaggering Sergeant Jolicoeur, both try in vain to persuade Thérèsine to marry them. In despair, Guillaume buys what he thinks is a love potion from Doctor Fontanarose, a travelling vendor of patent medicines, and a charlatan. The potion he sells to Guillaume is in fact a bottle of wine. Fontanarose tells the young man that it will not take effect for twenty-four hours—so giving the doctor enough time to leave town. As Guillaume drinks the wine he starts to feel more confident—so much so that he appears almost indifferent to Thérèsine, who is infuriated at this change in her formerly doting young lover. Hoping to make him jealous, she agrees to marry Jolicoeur. Still Guillaume seems untroubled, for he is certain Thérèsine will be in love with him at the end of twenty-four hours.

Act 2 takes place some hours later. The villagers are celebrating the approaching marriage of Thérèsine and Jolicoeur. Thérèsine, however, is unhappy that Guillaume is not there, since her revenge will have no effect if he does not see it. Guillaume asks Fontanarose for a love potion that will work at once. In order to pay for it, he has to join Jolicoeur's regiment, for which he receives twenty *écus*. Meanwhile the villagers find out that Guillaume's uncle has died and left the young man all his money. Guillaume becomes instantly popular with all the girls, and is convinced that the potion is working. Thérèsine then discovers Guillaume has enlisted in order to gain enough money to buy a love potion. She realizes how much he must love her and buys back his enlistment papers. When Jolicoeur returns, Thérèsine explains to him that she is going to marry Guillaume. Thérèsine and Guillaume then learn that the latter is rich. As the couple rejoice over their good fortune, Fontanarose leaves town with honour and gratitude from all sides.

This is a light canvas, and hardly offered situations worthy of the grand lyric resources of the Opéra. The deployment of the chorus and more substantial orchestra of the big theatre really demanded a stronger plotline. Many critics considered the work to be little more than an *opéra-comique* in which recitative replaced the usual spoken dialogue, although the transference of Scribe's *opéra-comique* techniques to the comic opera genre is not that simple. There is less action and a simpler plot than in most of the *opéras-comiques* despite a similarity of structural elements. Hence there is less need for recitative, with more of the action incorporated into the musical numbers which are in turn able to unfold at a more leisurely pace. This situation is underlined by the prevalence of arioso writing in the course of these longer musical numbers. These necessitate more complex musical forms. While none of these would be out of place in an *opéra-comique*, there are fewer strophic forms, less couplets, more arias and ensembles, and ensembles involving the chorus.

Both librettist and composer have subtly but formally demonstrated their

awareness of generic distinction: they are promoting the same message, but this time as a comic opera not an *opéra-comique*.

In matters of overall dramatic structure and musical style, *Le Philtre* is similar to Scribe-Auber *opéras-comiques*. The work is constructed along the same general lines. The music has distinguishing qualities. The overture focuses on the love triangle at the centre of the story, with themes from the act 1 trio for Thérèsine, Jolicoeur and Guillaume predominating: Jolicoeur's strutting military dotted rhythms, Guillaume's assertion of his faith in the efficacy of the philtre with its characteristic leaping fifths, the conclusion of the trio in thirds—a proleptic suggestion of the union of Thérèsine and Guillaume.

The pastoral atmosphere is developed and sustained from the very beginning, with the gentle 12/8 opening chorus with its chiming bell over the rich string writing, which returns to frame the first scene. The melodies are graceful and fresh, none more so than those written for the star tenor. Adolphe Nourrit played the role of the naive villager with a perfect naturalness, appearing in the smock of the farm boy Guillaume. His aria “Philtre divin” has a pathetic charm and diffident but serene character all its own—perfectly captured by the ritornello, with its four-part harmony for two flutes and two oboes, and the mysterious, recurring music of the philtre and its ingestion—a pedal note in octaves of E-flat, sustaining a rising sequence of chromatic triads in first inversion over eight bars.

Julie Dorus-Gras and Laure Cinti-Damoreau took turns in playing the role of Thérèsine, singing of the loves of “la belle Yseult aux blanches mains”. The proud and successful Thérèsine also has a *grand air* (“La coquetterie fait mon bonheur”), her independence and wilfulness illustrated with well-crafted coloratura. Other striking pieces are Jolicoeur's *couplets militaires* “Je suis sergent”; Doctor Fontanarose's *rondo-boniment* “Vous me connaissez”; the finale of act 1; the barcarolle for two voices (“Je suis riche, vous êtes belle”) both graceful and original; and the ensemble of the second act where the village girls press Guillaume to dance with them. Fontanarose is a particularly amusing comic creation, and his irresistible vending *couplets burlesques* a comic tour de force.

The original cast was: Adolphe Nourrit (Guillaume); Julie Dorus-Gras and Laure Cinti-Damoreau (Thérèsine); Henri-Bernard Dabadie (Jolicoeur); Nicholas Prosper Levasseur (Fontanarose); Elie (Fontanarose's valet); and Constance Jaruwek (Jeannette, a villager). The décor by Pierre-Luc-Charles Cicéri was much applauded. Had the work been transported to the Opéra-Comique, it would probably have had a longer career. It nonetheless enjoyed great success, and was given uninterruptedly from 1831 until 1849, with two further revivals, in 1852-59 and 1861-62. There were 243 performances altogether.

The opera was translated into German, Danish, English and Italian, and produced in Berlin, Brussels, Vienna, Copenhagen, Brünn, London, Amsterdam, Graz, Milan and New York. The subject became the basis of Felice Romani's libretto for Gaetano Donizetti, resulting in one of his best scores, *L'Elisire d'amore* (1832). After the latter became very popular, music from the two operas was mixed in a *pasticcio* which was sung in German at St. Petersburg in 1836.



FONTANAROSE. Prenez mon élixir, de tout il peut guérir. — Acte 1^{er}, scène 5.

Le Philtre act 1 scene 5: Dr Fontanarose vends his elixir of love

Nouvelle Edition.

LE

PHILTRE

Opéra en deux actes,

Paroles

de M^r E. Scribe,

Musique de

D. F. E. AUBER.

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JEANNETTE.	FONTANAROSE.



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LE PHILTRE.

3

OUVERTURE.

Andante con moto. (♩ = 104.)

PIANO.

This page contains the musical score for the Overture of 'Le Philtre', page 3. The score is written for piano and consists of six systems of music. The tempo is marked 'Andante con moto' with a metronome marking of 104 quarter notes per minute. The key signature is one sharp (F#). The score begins with a forte (ff) dynamic and features a variety of musical textures, including rapid sixteenth-note passages, sustained chords, and melodic lines. The dynamics fluctuate throughout, ending with a pianissimo (pp) section. The notation includes treble and bass staves with various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and articulation marks.

p *ff*

ff

tr *tr*

p *p*

All. vivace. (♩ = 126)

p *p*

5

The musical score consists of six systems of piano accompaniment. Each system is written on a grand staff with a treble and bass clef. The notation is dense, featuring many chords and arpeggiated figures. Dynamics include *ff* (fortissimo) and *p* (piano). The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#). The page number 5 is in the top right corner.

This page of musical notation, likely a piano accompaniment, consists of seven systems of staves. Each system contains a grand staff with a treble and bass clef. The music is written in a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#) and a 2/4 time signature. The notation is highly detailed, featuring numerous sixteenth and thirty-second notes, often beamed together in rapid passages. There are also many chords and rests. Dynamic markings such as *mf* (mezzo-forte) and *f* (forte) are present throughout the piece. The overall style is characteristic of 19th-century French musical notation.

This page of musical notation, titled "Le Philtre" and numbered 7, contains seven systems of piano accompaniment. Each system consists of a treble staff and a bass staff. The notation is dense and complex, featuring many chords and rapid passages. The key signature is one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 3/4. The music is written in a style typical of 19th-century French opera. The first system shows a treble staff with a melodic line and a bass staff with a rhythmic accompaniment. The second system continues the melodic line in the treble and the rhythmic accompaniment in the bass. The third system shows a more complex texture with many chords in both staves. The fourth system features a rapid passage in the treble and a rhythmic accompaniment in the bass. The fifth system continues the rapid passage in the treble and the rhythmic accompaniment in the bass. The sixth system shows a more complex texture with many chords in both staves. The seventh system features a rapid passage in the treble and a rhythmic accompaniment in the bass. The notation is written in a style typical of 19th-century French opera.

This page of musical notation, numbered 8, is a piano score by Daniel-François-Esprit Auber. It consists of seven systems of staves, each with a treble and bass clef. The music is written in a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#) and a 3/4 time signature. The notation is highly detailed, featuring numerous slurs, ties, and dynamic markings such as *p* (piano) and *p>* (piano accent). The first system begins with a *p>* marking. The second system features a *p* marking. The third system has a *p* marking. The fourth system includes a *p* marking and a *8^{va}* marking. The fifth system has a *8^{va}* marking. The sixth system has a *2* marking. The seventh system has a *2* marking. The notation is complex, with many notes and rests, and a high density of slurs and ties.

This page of musical notation, titled "Le Philtre" and numbered "9", displays eight systems of piano accompaniment. Each system consists of a treble and bass staff. The notation is characterized by dense, arpeggiated chords and complex rhythmic patterns. The key signature is one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 2/4. The music is written in a style typical of 19th-century piano literature, with a focus on harmonic texture and melodic movement. The page number "9" is located in the top right corner.

10

The musical score is written for piano and consists of six systems of grand staves. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. The score begins with measure 10, which is marked with a 'V' (crescendo). The notation is highly detailed, featuring many beamed sixteenth and thirty-second notes, particularly in the right hand. The left hand often plays chords or simple rhythmic patterns. The score includes various dynamic markings, including 'V' (crescendo), '>' (accent), and 'ff' (fortissimo). The tempo marking 'Animé' appears above the fifth system. The score ends with measure 19, which is also marked with an accent '>'.

This musical score page, numbered 11 in the top right corner, contains six systems of piano music. Each system consists of a grand staff with a treble and bass clef. The music is written in a key with two sharps (F# and C#) and a 3/4 time signature. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, beams, and slurs. Dynamics markings include *ff* (fortissimo) and *ff* > (fortissimo with an accent). The first system begins with a *ff* marking. The second system features a *ff* > marking. The third system has a *ff* marking. The fourth system has a *ff* marking. The fifth system has a *ff* marking. The sixth system has a *ff* marking. The page number 11 is located in the top right corner. A small number 3 is visible in the bottom left corner of the page.

INTRODUCTION.

Andantino con moto. (♩ = 80)

PIANO

*All. non troppo. (♩ = 104)*

CHORUS.

Soprano.
A - mis - a - mis - sous cet é - pais feuil - la - - ge - bré -

Tenors.
A - mis - a - mis - sous cet é - pais feuil - la - - ge - bré -

Basses.
A - mis - a - mis - sous cet é - pais feuil - la - - ge - bré -



15

Soprano: vous — bra — vous — le so — leil — et ses feux, gou — tons — gou — tons — en —

Alto: vous — bra — vous — le so — leil — et ses feux, gou — tons — gou — tons — en —

Bass: vous — bra — vous — le so — leil — et ses feux, gou — tons — gou — tons — en —

Piano accompaniment

16

Soprano: fin après l'ou — vra — ge le re — pos — le re — pos — qui seul rend heu — reux, à —

Alto: fin après l'ou — vra — ge le re — pos — le re — pos — qui seul rend heu — reux, à —

Bass: fin après l'ou — vra — ge le re — pos — le re — pos — qui seul rend heu — reux, à —

Piano accompaniment

17

Soprano: mis sous cet é — pais feuil — la — ge, à —

Alto: mis sous cet é — pais feuil — la — ge, à —

Bass: mis sous cet é — pais feuil — la — ge, à —

Piano accompaniment

18

Soprano: mis sous cet é — pais feuil — la — ge, à —

Alto: mis sous cet é — pais feuil — la — ge, à —

Bass: mis sous cet é — pais feuil — la — ge, à —

Piano accompaniment

14 *p* *Sop*

1^{re} Sop:

mis sous cet épais feuillage, a mis sous cet épais feuillage, a

Alto:

a mis sous cet épais feuillage, a mis sous cet épais feuillage

Ten:

bra_vons le soleil et ses feux, bra_vons le soleil et ses feux, bra_vons le soleil et ses feux,

Piano:

mis sous cet épais feuillage bravons le soleil et ses feux, sous cet épais feuillage bravons le soleil et ses feux, sous cet épais feuillage bravons le soleil et ses feux.

15

S. vous le soleil et ses feux sous cet épais feuil - la ge bravous le so -
T. vous le soleil et ses feux sous cet épais feuil - la ge bravous le so -
B. vous le soleil et ses feux sous cet épais feuil - la ge bravous le so -

S. leil et ses feux. gon - tons en - fin a - près l'ou - vra - ge le re - pos qui
T. leil et ses feux. gon - tons en - fin a - près l'ou - vra - ge le re - pos qui
B. leil et ses feux. gon - tons en - fin a - près l'ou - vra - ge le re - pos qui

S. seul rend heu - reux. gon - tons en - fin a - près l'ou - vra - ge le re -
T. seul rend heu - reux. gon - tons en - fin a - près l'ou - vra - ge le re -
B. seul rend heu - reux. gon - tons en - fin a - près l'ou - vra - ge le re -

16

S. pos qui seul rend heu - reux, amis a - mis sous cet épais feuil - la - ge bravons -
T. pos qui seul - rend heu - reux, amis a - mis sous cet épais feuil - la - ge bravons -
B. pos qui seul rend heu - reux, amis a - mis sous cet épais feuil - la - ge bravons -

8^{va}

S. le soleil et ses feux, amis a - mis sous cet épais feuil - la - ge bravons - le soleil et ses
T. le soleil et ses feux, amis a - mis sous cet épais feuil - la - ge bravons - le soleil et ses
B. le soleil et ses feux, amis a - mis sous cet épais feuil - la - ge bravons - le soleil et ses

S. feux, oui, le re - pos seul rend heu - reux, oui, le re - pos seul rend heu - reux.
T. feux, oui, le re - pos seul rend heu - reux, oui, le re - pos seul rend heu - reux.
B. feux, oui, le re - pos seul rend heu - reux, oui, le re - pos seul rend heu - reux.

8^{va}

17

GUILLAUME, (regardant Vézine)

Lavoi-la! *qu'elle est jo-li-e*

mais, mais de-

-puis qu'elle a mon cœur, il n'est plus dans ma vi-e ni re-pos ni de bon-heur,

Chœur

Sopranos *A-mis sous cet épais feuil-la-ge, bravons le so-*

Tenors. *A-mis sous cet épais feuil-la-ge, bravons le so-*

Basses. *A-mis sous cet épais feuil-la-ge, bravons le so-*

A-mis sous, cet épais feuil-la-ge, bravons le so-