

Daniel-François-Esprit Auber:
La Sirène

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Edited and Introduced by

Robert Ignatius Letellier

**CAMBRIDGE
SCHOLARS**

P U B L I S H I N G

Daniel-François-Esprit Auber: *La Sirène*,
Edited and Introduced by Robert Ignatius Letellier

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D.F.E. Auber. Engraving from an ink drawing (c. 1850)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	ix
Ouverture	3
Act 1	
No. 1 Ballade (“Quand vient l’ombre silencieuse”)	11
No. 2 Quintette (“Qu’une heureuse rencontre”)	15
No. 3 Finale (“Une idée, à vous Monseigneur”).....	29
Couplets (“Ô Dieu des flibustiers!”).....	30
Quatuor (“Ô bonheur qui m’arrive”)	39
Act 2	
No. 4 Choeur (“Pour étourdir la misère”)	49
Air (“Qu’est-ce donc, mes amis?”).....	52
No. 5 Couplets (“Prends garde, Montagnarde!”).....	61
No. 6 Duo (“C’est quelqu’ouvrier?”).....	63
No. 7 Trio et Couplets (“De nos jeunes années”)	77
No. 8 Scène et Choeur (“Qu’est-ce donc?”)	91
No. 9 Finale (“Illustre Bolbaya, venez, on vous demande”)	99
Cavatine (“Ah! je n’ose pas”)	107
Act 3	
No. 10 Entr’acte et Choeur (“Les chagrins arrière!”)	151
No. 11 Choeur (“Les chagrins arrière”).....	163
No. 12 Duo (“Je fais mal, je le sais”).....	165
No. 13 Choeur sans accompagnement (“Les chagrins arrière”)	175
No. 14 Finale et Vocalise (“Voyez vous là-bas”)	177

INTRODUCTION

La Sirène, an *opéra-comique* in three acts, with libretto by Eugène Scribe, was first performed at the Opéra-Comique (Deuxième Salle Favart) on 26 March 1844.

The scene is laid in the Abruzzi Mountains, during the Restoration or, alternatively, around 1840. Three travellers, the operatic impresario Bolbaya, his aged servant Mathéa and the naval ensign Scipion, hear in the distance the entrancing song of the Siren, who lures unwary travellers to an ambush laid by her brother, the bandit chief Marco Tempesta. The innkeeper Scopetto and the Duke of Popoli appear. The Duke is upset because the Siren has threatened to expose the illegitimacy of his title. In a solo aria for which the others leave the stage, Scopetto reveals himself as Marco Tempesta.

In act 2 the bandits' ship has been captured, but Scopetto has a plan to smuggle their contraband through the Duke's estate, using Bolbaya's troupe as a front. Zerlina, the Siren, reveals she has fallen in love with a young ensign whom she saw at Naples. She recognizes Scipion as her officer, but the smugglers identify him as the ensign who seized their ship. Scopetto saves him from death at the cost of an oath that he will not reveal their identities. Bolbaya is forced to declare that the bandits are his opera troupe, with Zerlina as prima donna. Scopetto has Scipion arrested as the real Marco Tempesta, while reminding the ensign of the oath he has sworn.

As act 3 opens the contrite bandits plot how to release Scipion as they perform at the Ducal palace. Their off-key singing arouses the Duke's suspicions. Scopetto forces Bolbaya to identify himself as the real Marco Tempesta to the soldiers who come at the Duke's call. Scipion enters with a group of marines to arrest Scopetto. Mathéa then produces papers to show that Scipion is the rightful Duke of Popoli and that Scopetto is his cousin.

Robbers, smugglers, and counterfeiters play a significant role in the works of Scribe. The smugglers of this opera provide a variant on the popular robber motif. The bandit's sister Zerlina plays the role of the sirens of antiquity, attracting by her singing unsuspecting travellers into ambush where they are mercilessly robbed by her brother and his companions. Apart from his villainous profession, Marco Tempesta has a generous soul; he forgives his enemies, marries his sister to a young naval officer who has captured the fortune of the smugglers, and, having made them happy, escapes by opportune evasion and witty revelation of his true identity. The dialogue is agreeable, and the episodes ingeniously disguise a certain narrative thinness.

The music in its style and character belongs to Auber's third period. There is an expansiveness in the melodic phrases and a sensibility that speaks more powerfully than in the earlier works, with a preponderance of florid writing, especially in the finales of acts 2 and 3.

The overture is very arresting, made up as it is of a beautiful song for the violoncellos and an elegant series of waltzes. This *adagio* introduction evokes the character of the mysterious siren, and is taken from the quartet in the act 1 finale where the four male protagonists voice their hopes and expectations, all associated with the siren who is heard in the mountains, but remains invisible. The *Allegro non troppo* waltz sequence is made up of two different sets, each in several sections. The first set, with its perky melody for unison clarinets and piccolos, establishes the mood;

the second is taken from the duet for Zerlina and Scopetto in act 2. A transition leads back into the second waltz sequence, in the dominant (the tonic form reserved for the recapitulation). A triplet figure connects this waltz to the Tyrolienne—a motif relating to Zerlina’s identity as a siren of the mountains. The overture is brought to a climax in *Allegro assai* (6/8) by another whirling waltz. In all Auber’s waltzes, a square-cut 3/4 metre is present (without the rhythmic elaborations, like hemiolas, found in Chopin, Brahms, Tchaikovsky, or Glazunov).

Act 1 contains the couplets “Ô Dieu des flibustiers” which becomes a recurring motif throughout the work, appearing as solo, trio and duet. The quartet “Ô bonheur qui m’arrive” makes a considerable impact. Act 2 is orchestrated with remarkable talent, and contains the Siren’s couplets “Prends garde, montagnards”; a moving scene between brother and sister; and a romance intercalated in the trio “De nos jeunes années”. The soprano otherwise has few solos in this opera. But the truncated cavatina in act 2 “Ah! je n’ose pas la m’empêcher, hélas” illustrates how Auber sometimes introduces melodic charm by a sudden shift to the mediant, or wide leaps to non-triadic notes. The downward cascading roulades of the *cabalette* relate to the melodic contour of the dominant waltz motifs. One of Auber’s best examples of this type of dance is in act 2, and already familiar from the overture (“C’est quel qu’ouvrier?”). Here the central duet of the opera is realized in terms of a waltz modality. Act 3 is structured by the recurring chorus “Les chagrins, arrière”, another scene between brother and sister, the dénouement of the imbroglio and the vocalise of the prima donna.

The original cast consisted of: Gustave-Hippolyte Roger (Scopetto); Mlle Louise Lavoye (Zerlina); Marius Pierre Audran (Scipion); Ricquier (the Duke of Popoli); Henri (Bolbaya); Mlle Geneviève-Aimée-Zoe Prévost (Mathéa); and Charles-François Duvernoy (Pecchione, a companion of Scopetto). The work remained in the repertoire until 1887, numbering 164 performances (including 17 at the Théâtre-Lyrique, 1865-66). It was translated into German, English, Polish, Swedish and Russian, and was produced across Europe from London to St Petersburg, reaching London in 1844, Warsaw in 1845, and Stockholm, Prague and St Petersburg in 1846. In the Americas it was performed in New Orleans (1845), New York and Buenos Aires (both 1854).



Zerlina and Scopetto (act 2 scene 4). Engraving from Scribe's Works (1853-5)

Répertoire
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LA SIRÈNE

OPÉRA-COMIQUE EN TROIS ACTES

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OUVERTURE.

Adagio ($\text{♩} = 96$)

PIANO

The musical score is written for piano in 4/4 time, marked *Adagio* with a tempo of 96 beats per minute. The piece begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic and the instruction *mar. afai. canto*. The first system shows the piano's right and left hands. The second system includes a crescendo (*cresc.*) and a fortissimo (*f*) dynamic. The third system features a piano (*pp*) dynamic and a *smorz.* (diminuendo) marking. The fourth system continues with a piano (*p*) dynamic and a *smorz.* marking. The fifth system includes a piano (*pp*) dynamic and a *smorz.* marking. The sixth system features a piano (*p*) dynamic and a *smorz.* marking. The seventh system includes a piano (*pp*) dynamic and a *smorz.* marking. The eighth system features a piano (*p*) dynamic and a *smorz.* marking. The ninth system includes a piano (*pp*) dynamic and a *smorz.* marking. The tenth system features a piano (*p*) dynamic and a *smorz.* marking. The piece concludes with a final chord.

All.^o non troppo (♩ = 60)

The musical score consists of six systems of grand staves. The first system begins with the tempo marking *All.^o non troppo* and the tempo indication (♩ = 60). The first system includes a piano (*p*) marking and a *leg.* (leggero) marking. The second system also includes a piano (*p*) marking. The third system includes a trill (*tr*) marking. The fourth system includes a trill (*tr*) marking. The fifth system includes a piano (*p*) marking. The sixth system includes a piano (*p*) marking and a forte (*f*) marking.

The musical score consists of six systems of piano accompaniment. Each system is written for a grand piano with a treble and bass staff. The key signature is G major (one sharp). The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

System 1: The first system begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic marking. The right hand features a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes, while the left hand provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and moving lines.

System 2: The second system includes a crescendo (*cresc.*) marking and a fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic marking. It concludes with the instruction *ad libitum*.

System 3: The third system continues the melodic and harmonic development, featuring a variety of note values and rests.

System 4: The fourth system maintains the complex texture, with the right hand often playing sixteenth-note patterns.

System 5: The fifth system shows a change in dynamics, starting with a piano (*p*) marking and including a crescendo (*cresc.*) and a forte (*f*) marking.

System 6: The sixth system concludes the page with a piano (*p*) dynamic marking and a triplet of eighth notes in the right hand.

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 one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 3/4. The notation includes various musical elements such as eighth and sixteenth notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The first system shows a melodic line in the treble and a harmonic accompaniment in the bass. The second system includes a *marcato* marking. The third system features a *cresc.* (crescendo) marking. The fourth system shows a *f* (forte) dynamic. The fifth system includes a *p* (piano) marking. The sixth system concludes with a final chord and a repeat sign.

This musical score page for "La Sirène" contains seven systems of piano accompaniment. The notation is in treble and bass staves with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The score includes various musical markings and dynamics:

- System 1:** Starts with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The right hand features a melodic line with slurs and accents, while the left hand provides harmonic support with chords and moving lines.
- System 2:** Continues the melodic and harmonic development. A piano (*p*) dynamic is marked at the beginning of the system.
- System 3:** Includes a crescendo (*cresc.*) marking. The right hand has a melodic line with slurs and accents, and the left hand has a more active, rhythmic accompaniment.
- System 4:** Features a fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic. The right hand has a melodic line with slurs and accents, and the left hand has a more active, rhythmic accompaniment. The section is marked *ad libitum*.
- System 5:** Continues the fortissimo (*ff*) section. The right hand has a melodic line with slurs and accents, and the left hand has a more active, rhythmic accompaniment.
- System 6:** Ends with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The right hand has a melodic line with slurs and accents, and the left hand has a more active, rhythmic accompaniment.
- System 7:** Starts with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The right hand has a melodic line with slurs and accents, and the left hand has a more active, rhythmic accompaniment. A crescendo (*cresc.*) and piano (*p*) marking are present.

The image displays a page of musical notation for piano, consisting of seven systems of staves. The notation is in G major (one sharp) and 3/4 time. The first system shows a piano introduction with a treble staff featuring eighth-note patterns and a bass staff with chords. The second system includes the marking *cresc.* and *p marcato*. The third system continues the piano texture. The fourth system features a *f* dynamic marking. The fifth system has a *cresc.* marking and a *f* dynamic. The sixth system is marked *All.^o assai (♩. = 152)* and includes a *fp* marking. The seventh system is marked *8^{va}* and *ff*. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, beams, and dynamic markings.

First system of the musical score. It features a grand staff with treble and bass clefs. The treble staff contains a melodic line with trills and slurs, marked with *f* and *p*. The bass staff contains a complex, rhythmic accompaniment with many beamed notes. Dynamic markings *f* and *p* are present. A first ending bracket labeled *8va* spans the final measures.

Second system of the musical score. The treble staff continues the melodic line with trills. The bass staff features a steady accompaniment. A *ff* (fortissimo) marking is present in the final measures.

Third system of the musical score. The treble staff has a melodic line with slurs. The bass staff continues the accompaniment. This system does not contain any dynamic markings.

Fourth system of the musical score. The treble staff has a melodic line. The bass staff features a complex accompaniment. A *p* (piano) marking is present in the first measure.

Fifth system of the musical score. The treble staff has a melodic line. The bass staff features a complex accompaniment. Dynamic markings *f* and *ff* are present. A first ending bracket labeled *8va* spans the final measures.

Sixth system of the musical score. It features a grand staff with treble and bass clefs. The treble staff contains a melodic line with trills and slurs, marked with *f* and *p*. The bass staff contains a complex, rhythmic accompaniment with many beamed notes. Dynamic markings *f* and *p* are present. A first ending bracket labeled *8va* spans the final measures.

This page of musical notation for piano consists of six systems of staves. The notation includes various musical elements such as trills (tr.), dynamics (p, ff, cresc.), and tempo markings (Plus vite). The music is written in a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a 2/4 time signature. The first system shows a trill in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The second system continues the bass line with a crescendo. The third system introduces a tempo change to 'Plus vite' and features a piano (p) dynamic. The fourth system continues the fast tempo with a piano (p) dynamic and a crescendo. The fifth system continues the fast tempo with a piano (p) dynamic. The sixth system concludes the piece with a final chord in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand.

N° 1.
BALLADE.

All^o non troppo (♩ = 96)

PIANO.

MATHEA 1^{er} Couplet

Quand vient l'ombre silen-ci - eu - se, quand vient le cal-me de la nuit... voir loin -

2^d Couplet

J'ai lu dans un auteur ha - bi - le, et nos vieillards les plus ins-truits di-sent

M.

-tine et mysté - ri - eu - se, dans la mon-ta - gne reten - tit! O vous, que

que Naples la Si - ci - le, des Si - ré-nes sont le pa - ys... aus-si, Mes -

M. sa dou - ceur en - i - vre, et qui croyez l'atteindre, hé -
_sieurs et par pru - den - ce, quand vous ar - ri - vent de ces

The first system of the musical score consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line is written on a single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). It contains two lines of lyrics. The piano accompaniment is written on a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) and features a continuous eighth-note pattern in the right hand and a simpler bass line in the left hand.

M. -las! vo - ya - geurs, qui vou - lez la sui - vre, le préci -
lieux u - ne rou - lade, u - ne ca - den - ce, jo - li sou -

The second system of the musical score continues the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line has two lines of lyrics. The piano accompaniment maintains the eighth-note pattern in the right hand and the bass line in the left hand.

M. -pice est sous vos pas! Fuy - ez l'enchanteresse, fuyez, fuyez sa
_rire et deux beaux yeux.... fuy - ez l'enchanteresse, fuyez, fuyez sa

The third system of the musical score continues the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line has two lines of lyrics. The piano accompaniment maintains the eighth-note pattern in the right hand and the bass line in the left hand.

M.
voix traitres-se; le plaisir vous guida, la mort vous atteindra, car la Sirène est
voix traitres-se; le plaisir vous guida, votre perte en viendra, car la Sirène est



The first system of the musical score. It includes two vocal staves (soprano and alto) and a piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: "voix traitres-se; le plaisir vous guida, la mort vous atteindra, car la Sirène est" for the soprano and "voix traitres-se; le plaisir vous guida, votre perte en viendra, car la Sirène est" for the alto. The piano part features a complex rhythmic pattern with sixteenth and thirty-second notes, and dynamic markings of *ff* and *p*.

ZERLINA
Z.
Ah Ah
V.
là! écoutez-la voi-là!.. oui la Sirène est là!



The second system of the musical score. It includes vocal staves for Zerlina (Z.) and a vocal staff (V.). Zerlina's part has the lyrics "Ah Ah" and features a melodic line with a sixteenth-note run. The vocal staff (V.) has the lyrics "là! écoutez-la voi-là!.. oui la Sirène est là!". The piano accompaniment continues with a similar rhythmic pattern, marked *dolce* and *pp*.

Z.
Ah Ah
BOLBAYA (avec inquiétude)
B.
Que veut dire ce-la? quoi! la Sirène est



The third system of the musical score. It includes vocal staves for Zerlina (Z.) and Bolbaya (B.). Zerlina's part has the lyrics "Ah Ah" and features a melodic line with a triplet. Bolbaya's part has the lyrics "Que veut dire ce-la? quoi! la Sirène est" and features a more active melodic line. The piano accompaniment continues with a similar rhythmic pattern.

z. *6* *3* *6* Ah

Sci. **SCIPION**
Douce voix que voi - là! et qui m'arri - ve là

B. là!

pp *dolce*

z. douce voix qui m'ar - ri - ve là!

z. 2^d Couplet al Segno Segno Pour finir.

The musical score is written for three vocal parts (Z., Sci., B.), piano accompaniment, and a final section. The key signature is two sharps (F# and C#). The time signature is 4/4. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The lyrics are in French and describe a scene where a voice is heard from a distance.

N^o 2.

QUINTETTE.

All. assai (♩ = 103)

PIANO

SCOPETTO

SCIPION

Seco. Il est homme à ve_nir! Qu'une heu_reu - se ren - con - tre bien -

Sci. vrir? Qu'une heu_reu - se ren - con - tre bien -

p

Seco. _tôt vous le mon - tre; ce fer dé - ci - de - ra le - quel l'empor - te -

Sci. _tôt vous le mon - tre; ce fer dé - ci - de - ra le - quel l'empor - te -

f *p*

ZERLINA

Z Ah _____ Ah _____

Seco. -ra . (souriant avec mépris) La Si - rè - ne!

Sci. -ra . C'est la Si - rè - ne! Sa voix, tout à

p

1. Z. *Ah*

S. *Comment! vous, Ca-pi-taine, vous croy-*

S. *l'heu-re loin-taine, se rap-pro-che de nous...*

Z. *ez à ce-la?*

S. *Silence!*

Z. *O sur-*

p legato

Sci. *p*
 - pri - se nou - vel - le dont mes sens sont é - nus; cette voix me rap - pel - le des accens bien con -

SCOPETTO
 Sco. O sur - pri - se nou - vel - le comme il a l'air é - mu! il tres - saille! il chan -
 Sci. - nus. O sur - pri - se nou - vel - le cette voix, cette voix me rap -

Sco. - celle à ce bruit in - con - nu! Quoi! vous qui
 Sci. - pel - le des ac - cens bien con - nus, *un poco marcato*

Sco. pré - ten - dez sans crai - - - te, nous li - vrer Mar - co Tem - pes -