

Cesare Pugni:  
*Esmeralda and Le Violon du diable*



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Edited and Introduced by

Robert Ignatius Letellier

**CAMBRIDGE**  
**SCHOLARS**  

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**P U B L I S H I N G**

Cesare Pugni: *Esmeralda* and *Le Violon du diable*,  
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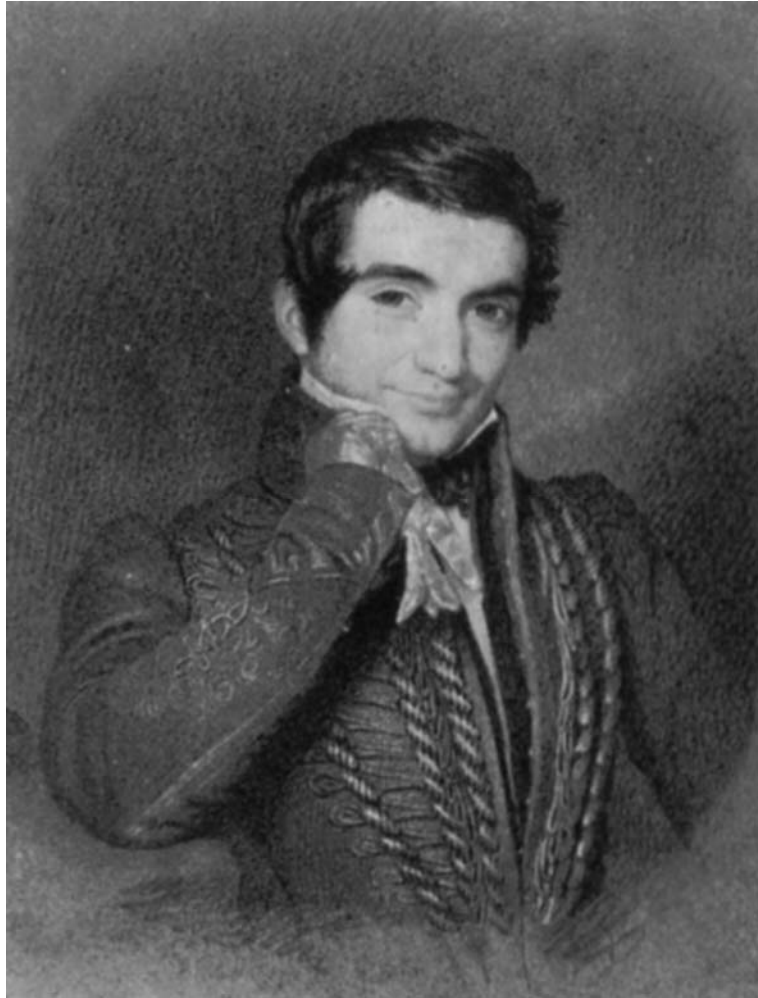
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Cesare Pugni in London (c. 1845)



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## INTRODUCTION

### *Esmeralda*

Ballet in 3 acts and 5 scenes

Scenario and choreography: Jules Perrot

Music: Cesare Pugni

Sets: William Grieve

Costumes: Mme Copère

Machinery: D. Sloman

First performance: London, Her Majesty's Theatre, 9 March 1844

Principal dancers: Carlotta Grisi (Esmeralda), Jules Perrot (Pierre Gringoire), Arthur Saint-Léon (Febo), Louis-François Gosselin (Claude Frollo), Antoine-Louis Coulon (Quasimodo), Adelaide Frassi (Fleur-de-Lys), Mme Copère (Aloisa)

The ballet is based on the story of Victor Hugo's *Notre-Dame de Paris* (1831), somewhat altered and without the final catastrophe. It depicts the hopeless love of the deaf and hunchbacked Quasimodo for the gypsy girl Esmeralda. She has inadvertently become the wife of the student poet Gringoire during the follies of the Cour de Miracles, and is also being pursued by the evil archdeacon Claude Frollo. Her principal rescuer from Frollo's attempted abduction is the handsome Captain Phoebus, with whom Esmeralda falls in love. Frollo's jealous intrigues cause her to be accused of murder, and she is awaiting execution when Quasimodo exposes Frollo as the real villain. The early versions of the ballet have this happy ending.

The poet Gringoire is captured by pickpockets and taken to their lair, 'the Court of Miracles'. There he is condemned to be hanged for the crime of having no money in his pockets. He will be reprieved only if some woman among those present will consent to marry him. The young Esmeralda, moved to pity, consents to the bargain, but the archdeacon of Notre Dame de Paris, Claude Frollo, enamoured of her, plans to possess her that very night. The gang who have taken them prisoner, together with Frollo's servant and henchman the hunchbacked Quasimodo, are foiled by the arrival of the officer Captain Phoebus. Love between Phoebus and Esmeralda blossoms immediately, although he is engaged to marry Fleur-de-Lys. Esmeralda and her husband Gringoire are invited to dance at the wedding as an entertainment. Forgetting all prudence, Esmeralda and Phoebus turn towards each other, and dance together to the despair of the bride and the indignation of the guests. Leaving the crowd, they declare their mutual love. Frollo, who has been watching unseen, throws himself at Phoebus, and stabs him. Esmeralda is accused of Phoebus' murder, and condemned to death. Just as the gallows are being erected, Phoebus appears. Frollo's blow was not mortal after all. Reunited with him, Esmeralda shows the crowd who the real villain is.

The ballet was reasonably successful, and Carlotta Grisi was pronounced the perfect personification of Esmeralda, combining the innocent gaiety of Fanny Cerrito, the sparkling coquetry of Fanny Elssler, and the ineffable poetry of Marie Taglioni. A year after the London premiere, Grisi introduced two of the variations from *Esmeralda* into Mazilier's *Le Diable à quatre*. Another great Esmeralda, especially praised for her superlative dramatic interpretation, was Fanny Elssler, prima ballerina of the first performance in St Petersburg on 21 December 1848. Her partners were Didier (Quasimodo), Perrot (Gringoire), and Golts (Frollo). Elssler chose the part again for her farewell performance at the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow in March 1851. Cyril Beaumont recounted an

anecdote passed on by Prince Egalytchev, who was an eyewitness on that occasion. So many bouquets, over 300, were thrown on the stage at the end of the first act that Elssler used them in place of a sofa in the second. In this act she used to write her lover's name, Febo, on a wall in chalk, instead of composing it with cut-out letters according to established tradition. But that evening the ballerina wrote Moscow in Cyrillic letters ('Mockba') which set off an ovation that seemed endless.

*Esmeralda* was in the vein of historical romantic dance that had given rise to *La Sylphide* and *Giselle*. It was almost half a century before this vein was exhausted, lasting into the Second Empire until the death of Saint-Léon, one of the leading figures of the last phase of the Romantic ballet. In spite of the great interpretive opportunities it offered, *Esmeralda* made little enduring impression in England, France and Italy. On the other hand, when it reached Russia, it immediately established itself in the repertory. The ballet became immensely popular and was repeatedly revived and adapted. Fanny Elssler enjoyed one of her biggest triumphs in the title role. Among other distinguished ballerinas who danced the role were Marie Petipa, Carolina Rosati, Nadejda Bogdanova, Claudia Cucchi, Eugenia Sokolova, Virginia Zucchi, and Matilda Kschessinskaya. For the production of 1888 by Marius Petipa, Riccardo Drigo was asked to compose several new numbers, including the *Esmeralda* Pas de Deux and the Diana and Acteon Pas de Deux. These became very popular in their own right.

Other notable versions of the ballet include:

- 1) Arthur Saint-Léon (after Jules Perrot), Berlin, Court Theatre, 19 January 1847;
- 2) Hippolyte Monplaisir (after Perrot), New York, Park Theater, 18 September 1847;
- 3) Domenico Ronzani (after Perrot), Milan, La Scala, 31 January 1854; with scenery by Filippo Peroni and Luigi Vimercati; principal dancers: Caroline Pochini, Effisio Catte, Domenico Rossi;
- 4) Ferdinando Pratesi (after Perrot), Milan Canobbiana Theatre, spring 1865;
- 5) Marius Petipa (after Perrot), St Petersburg, Bolshoi Theatre, 17 December 1886; then at the Maryinsky Theatre, 21 November 1899;
- 6) Agrippina Vaganova (after Perrot), Leningrad, Kirov Theatre, 3 April 1935, with scenery by V. Khodasevich;
- 7) Nicholas Beriozoff (from the original), London, Festival Hall, 15 July 1954; scenery Nicola Benois; principal dancers: Nathalie Krassovska, John Gilpin, Anton Dolin, London Festival Ballet.

Cesare Pugni was born in Genoa on 31 May 1802, and studied in Milan from 1815 to 1822 with Antonio Rollo and Bonifazio Asioli. He made his debut as a composer at La Scala in 1826 with the opera *Elerz e Zulmida*. He became a cymbalist in the theatre orchestra, and on the death of Vincenzo Lavigna was appointed musical director. He later moved to Paris where he became director of the Paganini Institute. There he met the great choreographers of the time and started an artistic collaboration that was to prove one of the most productive in the history of ballet. He began working closely with Jules Perrot, first in Paris, then in London. He later followed him to St Petersburg and became official composer of the Imperial theatres in St Petersburg. His most famous collaboration, with Marius Petipa, now followed, lasting until his death on 26 January 1870.

Pugni is known above all for his enormous output of musical works, including more than 300 ballets, a dozen operas, over 40 masses, other polyphonic works and a few symphonies, among which was a *Sinfonia a canone* highly praised by Meyerbeer. This extremely prolific composer was very popular with the public, his ballets being so easy to listen to and to understand. He also found no difficulty in adapting his music to suit all sorts of choreographic needs, and many different performers. His versatility and facility in composition helped him succeed in his international career, even when they set limits on his artistic achievement. His time in Paris with

Perrot was marked by an extraordinarily intense activity, which became even more evident when he reached Her Majesty's Theatre in London. Here Pugnè presented some of the most renowned ballets of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, such as *Esmeralda* and the *Pas de Quatre* (in 1844 and 1845 respectively), which still find their place in some modern repertoires. He also worked with Saint-Léon, Paolo Taglioni, Marius Petipa, and some of the greatest dancers of the century. Some of his ballets already well-known in Europe were transferred to St Petersburg, although he also composed new ballets for that city.



Jules Perrot & Carlotta Grisi in *Esmeralda*

## *Le Violon du diable*

Fantastic Ballet in 2 acts

Scenario and choreography: Arthur Saint-Léon

Music: Cesare Pugni

Sets: Despléchins and Thierry

Costumes: Lormier

First performance: Paris Opéra, 19 January 1849, with Fanny Cerrito, Arthur Saint-Léon and Jean Coralli

Urbain, a young violinist, is deeply in love with the beautiful Hélène de Vardeck, but she prefers her suitor Saint-Ybars. The sinister Doctor Matheus offers Urbain the power to play his violin so irresistibly as to win the heart of his beloved, but in return he asks for the player's soul. Urbain refuses, and the doctor breaks his magic instrument. Everything works out for the best through the intervention of a holy man, Pater Anselm, the violinist's friend and master. He provides Urbain with another violin possessing beneficent powers no less effective than the evil forces of the first. When it is discovered that Urbain is not only a distinguished instrumentalist, but also a youth of noble heritage, his marriage with Hélène is approved, and the ballet ends with an independent *divertissement* based on a theme of hothouse flowers which transport their gardener to the land of roses where he marries their queen.

Arthur Saint-Léon (1821-1870) had married the famous dancer Fanny Cerrito (1817-1909) in 1845. They were to be separated five years later and divorced in 1851, but in the meantime worked well together. Saint-Léon was not only a choreographer, he was the best dancer of his day, after Jules Perrot. His elevation and *ballon* were exceptional. But he was also a violinist, a virtuoso in the tradition of Paganini. He played with an accomplishment and brilliance much admired by Adolphe Adam. In the review written in 1847 for *La Fille de marbre* (which Saint-Léon had adapted from *Alma*, 1842), Théophile Gautier had suggested that "Saint-Léon, as well as being a dancer and choreographer, is an excellent violinist, according to what people say who have heard him. Surely it must be possible to find a subject that will show off his talents as both dancer and musician" (*La Presse*, 25 October 1847). The result was *Le Violon du diable* in which he devised the role of the violinist Urbain for himself.

The ballet was a revival and elaboration of an earlier version called *Tartini il violinista* (with scenario by Saint-Léon after Gavarini, choreography by Emmanuele Viotti, and music by Saint-Léon, Felis and Pugni, first performed in Venice at La Fenice on 29 February 1848). The posters for the Venetian entertainment describe the ballet as "taken from an opera by Gavarini and written by Arthur Saint-Léon, with music by Saint-Léon and Felis, except the second act music composed by Cesare Pugni". At the Paris premiere, however, subject and choreography were attributed exclusively to Saint-Léon, and the music exclusively to Pugni.

The ballet was well received. The music was praised: "M. Pugni's score is very pleasing. In the second act one singles out a charming waltz and a number of captivating themes". The *mise-en-scène* and choreography were also admired: "The inn at Roscoff, the Chateau du Poulighein, the farm, the green-house, and the rose kingdom are all pictures full of colour, splendour and attraction....The dances in general are delightfully imagined" (*Le Corsaire*, 22 January 1849). There were also some critical comments: "Coralli is a bit plump for the devil. If he had not taken care to have little horns peeping out of his wig, and thrown in a terrifying glare from time to time, he might have been mistaken for an abbé..." *Le Corsaire* further observed that "Fanny Cerrito exhibits her rare and diverse qualities, but is perhaps not dramatic enough; at her first appearance one could describe her as a cold and pallid statue revolving on a marble pedestal. Elssler would have made a memorable interpretation of the part!...In the *pas de deux* with her husband, all Cerrito's gestures were of the greatest tenderness. It would be difficult to find more grace, freshness, lightness, or elevation".



Arthur Saint-Léon & Fanny Cerrito in *Le Violon du Diable*



**ESMERALDA**

**GRAN BALLO**

*Composto dal S.<sup>r</sup>*

**PRIMO**

*Fel Reale Teatro di Londra e riprodotto dallo Stesso sulle Scene*

*dell' R. Teatro alla Scala*

MUSICA

*DEL M.<sup>o</sup>* **CESARE PUGNI** *RIDOTTA*

PER

**Piano Forte**

## LA CORTE DEL MIRACOLI.

INTRODUZIONE.

Allegro.

The musical score is written for piano and consists of four systems of music. The first system is an introduction of 16 measures. The second system continues the melody and accompaniment. The third system features a first ending bracketed over measures 1-8. The fourth system features a second ending bracketed over measures 1-8. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 2/4.



This musical score is for a piano piece, likely from a 19th-century repertoire given the notation and key signature. It consists of five systems of staves, each with a grand staff (treble and bass clef). The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 3/4. The first four systems feature a complex, flowing melody in the right hand, often with triplets and sixteenth notes, while the left hand provides a steady accompaniment of eighth or sixteenth notes. The fifth system shows a change in texture, with the right hand playing a more rhythmic, chordal pattern and the left hand continuing the accompaniment. The score is written in a clear, professional hand, typical of 19th-century musical notation.

This image displays four staves of musical notation, likely for a piano piece by Cesare Pugni. The notation is written in a single system, with each staff containing a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The music is in 2/4 time and features a key signature of one sharp (F#). The first staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The second and third staves are grand staves. The fourth staff is a grand staff. The music is characterized by a steady eighth-note accompaniment in the bass and a more melodic line in the treble. There are several measures of eighth-note runs and chords throughout the piece. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

**Allegro giusto.**

This page contains five systems of musical notation, each consisting of a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The tempo is marked 'Allegro giusto.' and the first system includes a dynamic marking of 'f' (forte). The music is written in a key with two flats (B-flat and E-flat) and a 3/4 time signature. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, accidentals, and slurs, indicating a complex and rhythmic piece.

## SPOSALIZIO DI ESMERALDA

Allegretto

The musical score is written for piano and consists of five systems. The first system begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one flat (B-flat), and a 6/8 time signature. The tempo marking 'Allegretto' is placed to the left of the first system. The first system features a rapid, continuous sixteenth-note melody in the right hand, while the left hand plays a steady eighth-note accompaniment. The subsequent four systems continue the piece with varying melodic and harmonic textures, maintaining the 6/8 time signature and one-flat key signature. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

This musical score is for a piano piece, likely from the 'Esmeralda' suite. It consists of five systems of staves, each with a treble and bass clef. The music is written in a key with one flat (B-flat major or D minor) and a 3/4 time signature. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, accidentals, and dynamic markings. The first system shows a melodic line in the treble and a rhythmic accompaniment in the bass. The second system continues the melodic development with some chromaticism. The third system features a more complex texture with multiple voices in both hands. The fourth system shows a return to a more melodic focus. The fifth system concludes the piece with a final cadence.

**Allegro giusto**

The musical score is written for piano and consists of five systems. Each system contains a grand staff with a treble clef on the upper staff and a bass clef on the lower staff. The tempo is marked 'Allegro giusto' at the beginning. The key signature is one sharp (F#). The first system begins with a piano (p) dynamic marking. The second system features a 'tremolo' marking over a sixteenth note in the bass staff. The notation is characterized by rapid sixteenth and thirty-second notes, often beamed together in groups. The piece ends with a double bar line and repeat signs at the end of the fifth system.

*meno mosso*

*più mosso*

meno mosso

più mosso

*sf*



## BALLABILE

Allegro

The musical score is for a piece titled "BALLABILE" in 2/4 time, marked "Allegro". It consists of five systems of piano accompaniment, each with a treble and bass staff. The key signature is one sharp (F#). The music features a variety of rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. The first system includes a "f" (forte) dynamic marking. The notation is in a standard musical style with clefs, key signatures, and various musical symbols.

This page of musical notation for piano consists of five systems of staves. Each system contains a treble and a bass staff, both with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The notation includes various musical elements such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The first system features a melodic line in the treble staff and a rhythmic accompaniment in the bass staff. The second system continues this pattern with more complex melodic figures. The third system introduces a new melodic line in the treble staff. The fourth system features a more active melodic line in the treble staff. The fifth system concludes the page with a final melodic line in the treble staff and a rhythmic accompaniment in the bass staff. The notation is written in a clear, professional style, typical of a musical score.

This page of musical notation, titled 'Esmeralda' and numbered '13', presents five systems of piano accompaniment. Each system consists of a treble and a bass staff. The music is written in a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#) and a 2/4 time signature. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like 'f' (forte) and 'p' (piano). The piece concludes with a double bar line at the end of the fifth system.

This page of musical notation consists of five systems, each with a treble and bass staff. The key signature is two sharps (F# and C#). The notation includes various musical elements:

- System 1:** The treble staff begins with a melodic line featuring eighth and sixteenth notes, with a dashed line above it. The bass staff provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and moving lines. A dynamic marking of *f* and *cres.* appears towards the end of the system.
- System 2:** Continues the melodic and harmonic development. The treble staff has more complex rhythmic patterns, while the bass staff maintains a steady accompaniment.
- System 3:** The treble staff features rapid sixteenth-note passages. The bass staff continues with chords and moving lines.
- System 4:** The treble staff has dense sixteenth-note textures. The bass staff includes a *f* dynamic marking and a *cres.* marking towards the end.
- System 5:** The final system on the page, showing continued melodic and harmonic activity in both staves.

This page contains five systems of musical notation for piano accompaniment. Each system consists of a treble staff and a bass staff. The music is written in G major (one sharp) and 2/4 time. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, beams, and slurs, indicating a complex and rhythmic piece. The first system shows a continuous flow of eighth and sixteenth notes in the treble, with chords in the bass. The second system continues this pattern with some melodic lines in the bass. The third system introduces a measure with a fermata in the treble. The fourth system features a more melodic line in the treble with some rests. The fifth system concludes the page with a final cadence in both staves.

*Allegretto.*

The musical score is written for piano and consists of four systems. The tempo is marked *Allegretto.* The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 2/4. The first system begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic marking. The notation includes treble and bass staves with various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like *p* (piano). The music features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, often beamed together, and some triplet markings. The piece concludes with a final cadence in the fourth system.