Daniel-François-Esprit Auber's
La Part du Diable

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Edited by

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Cambridge
Scholars
Publishing

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This book first published 2019

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN (10): 1-5275-3424-3
ISBN (13): 978-1-5275-3424-7

Fig. 1 Frontispiece: Daniel-François-Esprit Auber (middle age, Hortense Haudebourt-Lescot, painting 1837)

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Life

Birth and Revolution

To discuss Daniel-François-Esprit Auber (1782-1871) can only be a pleasure. He was, by all accounts, a delightful person. The writer in the first Grove's Dictionary described his habits as "gentle and benevolent",[1] and all one reads about him conveys the impression of a gifted, witty but modest musician. He came into the world under rather strange conditions, being born in a stage-coach when his mother was travelling through Normandy, and in the depth of winter (29 January 1782). His constitution does not seem to have suffered from his rather unusual entry into the world—he lived to within a few months of his ninetieth birthday **[Fig. 1]**.

The world of music saw a great many changes during those 90 years. When Auber was born, the sons of J. S. Bach, Wilhelm Friedemann and Carl Philip Emanuel, were still living; when he died in 1871, Wagner had completed *Tristan und Isolde*, and Verdi's *Aïda* had been given its first performance in Cairo. These great changes in musical style were in some measure a reflection of even more violent changes in the material world. We think we live in troubled times, but really, poor Auber must have felt that he was living in a mad world. He was only 7 years old when the French Revolution broke out and his family had to go into hiding, to escape almost certain death. Then, when things settled down a little, along came the Napoleonic Wars, and after them a succession of upheavals, such as the 1848 Revolutions, the Crimean War (1853-56), and in 1870 the Franco-Prussian War. It is said that Auber's death was hastened by the terrible events of the Paris riots which followed this last war, riots which ended in the deaths of thousands of Parisians, men, women and children during this socialist dictatorship (the Commune). When Bizet heard of Auber's death he said, "He just couldn't survive the destruction of everything that was his life".

By a strange twist of fate, Auber himself was largely responsible for a revolution in Europe—one with far reaching consequences. Most of Auber's dramatic works belonged to the type known as *opéra-comique* but he was also one of the creators of the more serious form of French *grand opéra*, which with the librettist Eugene Scribe he redefined with his epoch-making work *La Muettte de Portici* (also called *Masaniello*) in 1828.

The plot is founded on an actual historical event, the 1647 revolution in Naples. (Incidentally, typical of the use of spectacular scenes in grand opera of the period is the introduction, at the climax of the opera, of a representation of the 1631 eruption of Mount Vesuvius. The heroine actually jumps to her death in the lava flow of this volcanic inferno.) The revolutionary scenes in the opera are stirring and spectacular, and when it was performed in Brussels in 1830, it set the spark to a popular uprising which resulted in the separation of Belgium from Holland and its establishment as an independent state. What could Auber's feelings have been when he realized that his opera had been the cause of one of those grim upheavals such as dogged him all his life?

Style and Overtures

Another strange thing is that, although turmoil and change surrounded Auber throughout his long life, his own music changed very little. Essentially a composer for the theatre, he turned out opera after opera, year after year, each filled with charming melodies, piquant rhythms and old-world sentiment. His last opera *Rêve d'Amour* (1869) was produced when he was 88. The operas themselves have virtually passed out of the repertoire, but their overtures live on, and sound as fresh and charming as their evocative titles—*The Bronze Horse*, *Masaniello*, *The Crown Diamonds* to *Fra Diavolo*, *The Black Domino* and so on. The delightful music from *The Bronze Horse* is irresistible.

It is interesting to note that the plot of *The Bronze Horse* written over a hundred-and-eighty years ago, has a distinctly modern science-fiction tinge about it—it concerns a magic horse, cast in bronze, standing on a rocky cliff near a Chinese village. The horse transports a number of people to a strange fairyland on the planet Venus. Alas for our illusions! Such is the inhospitable surface of Venus that could one step out of a spaceship on to it, one would be suffocated, corroded, scorched and crushed.

[1] Grove, George (ed.). *The Grove Dictionary of Musicians* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1879, 1880, 1883, 1890), 1:252-55.

As Composer

Auber's composing career began early in life. He was writing ballads and romances at the age of eleven, some of them achieved considerable popularity. And yet he maintained that he did not want to be a composer. So many famous compeers had to battle against parental opposition in order to study music—Johann Strauss, Handel, Berlioz and Delius for instance. Auber, although his father wished him to follow a career of music, asked to be trained as a bank clerk and man of business! Admittedly, it did not take many weeks in an office to convince him that commerce which he practised in London until the treaty of Amiens (1802) was not really a congenial world for him.

There were many strange sides to Auber's genius, like his method of composition, for example. Although he wrote over forty operas, it could hardly be said that he set the librettos to music. "It was his custom", wrote one biographer, "to conceive his music independently, and very often in advance of the words it was to accompany". His brilliant librettist would then provide words tailored to the metre and rhythm of the music!

A contemporary declared, "Monsieur Auber in general draws little inspiration from his subjects. His ideas, most of the time, come to him unpremeditatedly, while he is riding in the woods. He notes them down on bits of paper, and all find a place one day in some score". Scribe, the famous librettist, who wrote thirty-eight librettos for Auber, was apparently quite used to this strange method of writing operas, in which the words were fitted to the music rather than the music to the words.

Unusual Habits and Humour

One must allow for a certain amount of journalistic exaggeration in some of these reports, but even so, one has to admit that Auber had some unusual habits.

Most surprising of all was his firm refusal ever to conduct, or even attend, a performance of any of his own works. When asked why, he replied that if he did so, he would never write another note of music! On one occasion he went to the theatre expecting to hear an opera by one of his contemporaries. However, the programme had been changed, and one of his own operas substituted. As soon as Auber realized this, he walked out of the theatre. The usual explanation is that Auber was an abnormally shy and diffident man, but whether that is the whole truth or not is doubtful. After all, he was the Director of the Paris Conservatoire, a position which no abnormally shy person could have held, as Auber did, for nearly thirty years. Moreover, as one of the most influential musicians of his day, he was continually involved in public matters and functions—again hardly suggesting that he shunned contact with his fellows. Auber was, in fact, a highly successful artist.

His amiable nature enabled him to rub shoulders with fellow composers without his feeling either resentment or envy, a rare quality in those days. When Rossini settled in Paris in 1855 he was naturally not exactly welcomed by the resident composers of the French capital. But Auber seems to have accepted the Italian master with genuine admiration. When they first met at a friend's house, Rossini was persuaded to sing the "Largo al factotum" aria from his opera *The Barber of Seville* to his own accompaniment. Auber was ungrudging in his praise. He wrote:

> *Rossini avait une fort belle voix de baryton. ... Quant à son art d'accompagner, il était merveilleux ; ce n'était pas sur un clavier, mais sur un orchestre que semblaient galoper les mains vertigineuses du pianiste. Quand il eut fini, je regardais machinalement les touches d'ivoire ; il me semblait les voir fumer. En entrant chez moi, j'avais grande envie de jeter mes partitions au feu. "Cela les réchauffera peut-être" me disais-je avec découragement. À quoi bon faire de la musique quand on n'en sait pas faire comme Rossini?*[2]
>
> "I shall never forget the impression I received from that dazzling performance. Rossini had a most beautiful baritone voice. And as to his art as an accompanist, it was marvellous: his hands appeared to gallop not over a piano but over an orchestra. When he had finished, I mechanically looked at the ivory keys: I thought I saw them smoking. On returning home, I was sorely tempted to throw my scores on the fire. 'That would perhaps warm them up,' I observed, discouraged. What point is there in writing music if one does not know how to do it like Rossini."

Perhaps one thing that endeared Rossini to Auber was the dry sense of humour which they both shared. Auber asked him once what he thought of Wagner's *Tannhäuser*. "Ah!" said Rossini, "This is music one must hear several times. I am not going again."

Eugène Scribe

It would seem that Auber's success as an opera composer was, at least, partly due to his collaboration with Augustin-Eugène Scribe (1791-1861), who was an extraordinarily gifted librettist and who was famous enough to have one of the streets adjoining the Paris Opéra named after him **[Fig. 2]**. The two worked together for forty years and their names became as linked in the French musical world as did those of Gilbert and Sullivan across the Channel.

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[2] Benoît Jouvin, *D. F. E. Auber, sa vie et ses œuvres* (Paris: Heugel, 1864), p. 29.

Fig. 2 Augustin-Eugène Scribe (middle age, lithograph)

Scribe himself was an unusual person. He was the librettist for several composers, including Meyerbeer; his published writings filled 76 volumes. His genius lay in careful selection of collaborators. One man would be engaged for the story, another for the dialogue, a third for the humour, a fourth for the lyrics, and so on. Scribe was, in fact, as much an agent as a writer. It is pleasant to record that he was scrupulously honest in his dealings. Many unknown writers received cheques from him as "Payment for copyright in ideas" though they themselves were quite unaware of the plagiarisms.

A small correspondence between them survives. Three incidental letters, written between the creation of *La Muette de Portici* (1828) and *La Part du Diable* (1843), reveal something of the restrained cordiality of their collaborative friendship.

Scribe to Auber 1828 [concerning the creation of *Masaniello*]

> My dear Friend
>
> What has become of you? No news is good news, I suppose. It means that you are working. On Saturday I am leaving at 6 o'clock for Madeleine where I will spend a fortnight. The Delavignes have almost persuaded me to hope that you will come with me. Is this true? If it is, then I will offer you a place, not very attractive, it is true, if the weather is bad, but wonderful if it turns out good. This will help you, distract you, and not hamper you from working, because there we will all be at work, and you will be able to devise a good opera with us. Today and tomorrow I will be in Paris. Let me have a little word of response, but if you are not able to come, I would like to have your manuscript to show to the Delavignes and to ask their advice. Unfortunately, we do not have a copy. Should you decide to come, that will be quite a different matter, and you will bring it with you in any case. But please do come. It is only for 8 days, and 23 leagues are a small matter. There is a diligence for only 5 francs 50 centimes.
>
> Yours, E. Scribe

Scribe to Auber c. 1837 [concerning *Le Domino noir*]

> My dear Friend
>
> On reflection, I feel there are too many uncertainties for me to accept the invitation of Madame Baudin. It is such a rare pleasure to have an enjoyable engagement that I would not want to miss it for the world, but what will suddenly happen for sure is that on that evening there will be a performance, or at the very least, a general rehearsal.
>
> Yours, E. Scribe

Scribe to Auber 4 September 1843 [concerning *La Sirène*]

> My dear Friend, I have finished everything, but this has involved more than I had believed, because my first changes necessitated others in the rest of the work, and this has meant almost reshaping and rewriting all three acts. This is a double burden, but I do not regret it, because the work has gained in all kinds of ways—being now happier, more interesting, and less lengthy. I was very unhappy, I have to tell you, to write another role for Chollet who is still perhaps very good in exaggerated or supernatural parts, or in joking roles; but he knows nothing of nature or of truth, and even less about the genuinely comic or the involved. There was no way of doing anything else, and I was resigned to it, but from the moment when I first perceived the means of adapting this character with Roger in mind, I did not regret either the time or the effort, because with Chollet we would have had no success, as was the case with *Les Chaperons blancs*, but with Roger we will have, I hope, another *Part du diable*. His role is charming, and he will play it with gaiety, verve and feeling. I am sending the manuscript with my cousin Bonnet who has spent a few days here at Séricourt with us, and who is returning to Paris tomorrow. Please take note of the work as it is now; if you like, copy out the only piece that is entirely new, the finale, and the couplets for which you provided the *monstre*. I believe I have placed these couplets in the limelight for the brilliant entry of our young principal artiste in Act 2. Then please send the manuscript to Crosnier so that he can give us his advice and quickly have a second manuscript copied for the prompter [*souffleur de la théâtre*] since I do not have another draft and I fear I would never have the courage to start on a third version of the piece. I have already told you that I have done all I can to make no changes to the music. I have nevertheless had to make notable improvements in some of the pieces, which I have felt I could not overlook. I hope that you will soon come to Séricourt and we can discuss everything, but I will first provide you with all the pieces with new adjustments.
>
> Yours, E. Scribe

A Laconic Character

When one considers how much work was involved in the writing of Auber's many operas, one has to smile at his oft repeated remark: "I'm terribly lazy—I'm interested only in women, horses and the boulevards". Equally exaggerated was his claim to be excessively bored. "My happiest ideas", he told a friend, "were created between yawns".

Perhaps there was a grain of truth in all this. Bizet, one of the few people not charmed by Auber (his senior by 56 years) said of him, "He is never very deeply affected by anything. He never has any passions, but simply preferences, and those never very strong". Bizet was exaggerating. Auber certainly seems to have had a passion for horses. He kept a stable of twelve, and even when in his eighties used to get up at six in the morning to choose the particular horse he wished to ride that day.[3]

There can no doubt Auber was far removed from the passionate, often high-strung artist exemplified in Wagner, Tchaikovsky, Berlioz, Liszt and others of his contemporaries. But what he lacked in passion he made up in wit. Examples of his rather wry sense of humour are legion. When he was nearing ninety Auber attended the funeral of an acquaintance.

A friend asked him how he was feeling. "Not too good", was Auber's reply, "I think this is the last funeral I shall attend as an amateur."

Reputation

Daniel-François-Esprit Auber, a beautiful name to conjure with, the composer of *La Muette de Portici* and *Fra Diavolo*, was once one of the great figures of music, a staple of the operatic repertoire in France, and indeed around the world.[4]

It is now almost impossible to understand the enormous extent of his once universal fame, and his influence on French and foreign contemporary composers. His operas were in the theatre repertories of the world until the 1920s, and innumerable arrangements of them were published and sold everywhere. Auber's overtures were once instantly recognizable, favourites of the light Classical repertoire. His gracious melodies and dance rhythms had a huge influence, both on piano and instrumental music, and on the genre of Romantic comic opera, especially in Germany. Musical tastes and fashions have changed, and contemporary audiences are more accustomed to the heavier fare of *verismo*, high Wagnerian ideology, and twentieth-century experimentalism. The operas themselves, apart from *Fra Diavolo* (1830), are seldom performed, yet Auber's elegant, delicate and restrained art remains as appealing to the discerning listener as ever it was.

Now he occupies a shadowy niche in the general consciousness as the name of the metro station nearest the Palais Garnier—itself no longer one of the centres of the operatic world. His operas were loved in his native France until the years before the First World War, with *Fra Diavolo* and *Le Domino noir* last performed at the Opéra-Comique in 1909, and only revived there a century later, in 2009 and 2017 respectively. Reactions to Wagner, Impressionism and

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[3] Delphine Mordey, "Auber's Horses: *L'Année terrible* and Apocalyptic Narratives". *19th-Century Music*, 30:3 (Spring 2007): 213-29.

[4] Robert Ignatius Letellier, *Daniel-François-Esprit Auber. The Man and His Music* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), p. xxvii.

the Neo-Classicism of the Diaghelev-inspired Ballet Russe meant that there was no longer any interest in the ancient traditions of *opéra-comique*, with its charming plots, melodic directness and rhythmic *élan*. Boieldieu, Hérold, Adam and Auber were relegated to the dustbin of history, along with the 'unspeakable bombast' of *grand opéra* and its chief protagonist Meyerbeer, whose name was virtually unmentionable in aesthetically respectable circles. Only in Germany (where Meyerbeer was still performed until the rise of National Socialism) did the traditions of *opéra-comique* continue to flourish, with the kinship between the French and German traditions of nineteenth-century comic opera remaining something to be cherished. Auber's most enduring work is still performed there.

During his lifetime, Auber achieved the greatest success and recognition. Six biographies appeared contemporaneously[5] with another six appearing posthumously in the period up to 1914.[6] In the interwar years, so dark for France's operatic traditions, there were some reflective considerations of the phenomena of the changing aesthetic.[7] But after 1945, any notion of research and reassessment was left to English-speaking and German scholarship.[8] The research has been continued in the magisterial work of Karin Pendle,[9] and especially in the definitive studies by Herbert Schneider, who has assembled a record of all the musical publication associated with Auber's operas[10] and collected the extant correspondence between Auber and Scribe.[11]

The situation with Scribe has followed an analogous pattern. The famous playwright and librettist was acknowledged as a crucial cultural influence in the late nineteenth century.[12] But the scorn and disregard that has subsequently obscured his name has been relieved only by contributions from American scholars during the twentieth century,[13] in addition to the work of Pendle. It was only with the millennium that a French study of proportionate import appeared.[14] Yet Auber still remains unknown and neglected (apart of course from *Fra Diavolo*), although his impact on the nineteenth-century operatic theatre was just as great as Rossini's, and perhaps even more widespread. The time has surely come for Auber's life and work, especially in association with Scribe, to be reassessed; then perhaps the world will begin to hear more of his elegant gracious, life-affirming music. As long as charm and beauty, romance and transcendence have a part to play in the meaning of art and life, then his operas will be found to contain a wealth of untapped treasure.[15]

The aim of the present work is to present an insight into the life and work of Auber by close examination of his famous opera *La Part du Diable*—with consideration of origins, casting, plot, analysis of dramaturgy and musical style, and reception history. The analysis of the opera is illustrated by examples from the score, prints from the complete works of Scribe and other theatrical memorabilia, and is supplemented by reference to Nicole Wild, *Décors et Costumes du XIXe siècle*[16] and Sidney Jackson Jowers, *Theatrical Costume, Masks, Make-up and Wigs: A Bibliographical Iconography.*[17]

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[5] Eyma 1841, Loménie 1842, Fallouard 1857, Mirecourt 1859, Deléhelle 1861, Jouvin 1864.
[6] Legentil 1875, Pougin 1873, Carlez 1875, Blaze de Bury 1879, Kohut 1895, Malherbe 1911.
[7] Julien Tiersot, "Auber." *Revue musicale* 14 (November 1933): 265-278.
[8] Ray Morgan Longyear, "Daniel-François-Esprit Auber (1782-1871): A Chapter in French Opéra-Comique" (phil. diss., Cornell University, 1957), and W. Börner, "Die Opern von Daniel-François-Esprit Auber" (phil. diss., University of Leipzig, 1962).
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[10] The *Chronologisches Verzeichnis sämtlicher Werke von Daniel François Esprit Auber* (**AWV**) 2 vols. (Hildesheim, Zürich, New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 1994).
[11] *Correspondance d'Eugène Scribe et de Daniel-François-Esprit Auber publiée par Herbert Schneider*. (Sprimont-Belgique: Pierre Mardaga, 1998).
[12] Ernest Wilfred Legouvé, *Eugène Scribe* (Paris: Didier et Cie, 1874).
[13] Neil Cole Arvin, *Eugène Scribe and the French Theatre, 1814-1860* (Cambridge, MS: Harvard University Press, 1924) and Helene Koon and Richard Switzer, *Eugène Scribe* (Boston: Twayne, 1980).
[14] Jean-Claude Yon, *Eugène Scribe. La fortune et la liberté* (Saint-Genouph: Librairie A.-G. Nizet, 2000).
[15] Robert Ignatius Letellier, *Daniel-François-Esprit Auber. The Man and His Music* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), p. xxviii.
[16] Nicole Wild, *Décors et Costumes du XIXe siècle. Vol. 1 Opéra de Paris*. (Catalogues de la Bibliothèque de l'Opéra III.) (Paris, 1987).
[17] Sidney Jackson Jowers, *Theatrical Costume, Masks, Make-up and Wigs: A Bibliographical Iconography* (Motley Bibliographies) (London: Routledge, 2000).

LA PART DU DIABLE, OU CARLO BROSCHI

Opéra-comique en trois actes (AWV 36). Librettist: Eugène Scribe. First performance: Opéra-Comique (Deuxième Salle Favart), 16 January 1843. In repertoire: 1843-51, 179 times; 1858-6l, 63 times; 1868, 21 times. Number of performances: 263.

Cast

Rafaël d'Estuniga (*premier ténor, ou Laruette*) (Gustave-Hippolyte Roger)
Gil Vargas, his tutor (Ricquier)
Ferdinand VI, the King of Spain (*premier basse*) (Gérard)
Fray Antonio, the Grand Inquisitor (Victor)
Carlo Broschi, castrato singer, a travesty role *(première chanteuse*) (Juana Rossi-Caccia)
Casilda, his sister (*seconde première chanteuse, ou Dugazon*) (Anna Thillon)
Marie-Thérèse of Portugal, the Queen of Spain (*seconde chanteuse*) (Anoinette-Jeanne-Hermance Révilly)
Count de Medrano, governor of the Royal Palace (Louis Palianti)

Origins and Sources

The hero of the opera is the famous castrato Carlo Broschi, called Farinelli (1705-82). The story has nothing to do with the subject of C. Coppey's *Le Diable à Quatre* (*The Devil to Pay*, with four operatic versions between 1684 and 1809) as is sometimes stated. Scribe used the tradition that Farinelli, idolized throughout Europe, had, by his mellifluous singing, been able to soothe the melancholia of King Philip V of Spain (1683-1746).

The action is carelessly worked out by Scribe's standards, but presents many situations that are both comical and lyrical. The singular story of the castrato Farinelli gave Scribe the idea for his scenario. His soprano voice having excited delirious admiration in Italy and England, this pupil of Nicola Porpora (1686-1768) went to Spain in 1736. The libretto has the most tenuous connection with the historical incident on which it is based, the influence of the singer on King Philip (Felipe) V and his successor, Ferdinand (Fernando) VI. When Louis XIV placed his grand-nephew on the throne of Spain as Philip V, this caused the War of the Spanish Succession (1701-14). King Philip loved music very much, but after the death of his son, he fell into a state of severe depression to the extent of neglecting the affairs of state. Felipe's melancholia meant that he let his hair and beard become unkempt and received ministers and foreign ambassadors dressed only in his queen's underclothing. The Queen, Elisabeth Farnese (1692-1766), tried to use the power of music to heal the King of his melancholy. Farinelli had made a European reputation and had, at Handel's urging, finished his studies with Porpora when the Spanish ambassador was ordered by Queen Elisabeth to secure the singer's services at any cost. In 1737 Farinelli came to the Spanish court and sang anonymously for King Philip who instantly engaged him. Every evening Farinelli sang four arias to the King: three from Hasse's *Artaserse* (London, 1734) and one from Giacomelli's *Merope* (Venice, 1734). The royal recovery was amazing; the British ambassador soon reported that Felipe was in excellent health and totally indifferent to governing. Apparently Spain was ruled by Queen Elisabeth. The voice of Farinelli had worked a miracle, his mellifluous accents soothing the troubles of this latter-day Saul. If he did not become king himself like David, Farinelli at least won honours at court, and became first minister, or rather favourite of Philip V and Ferdinand VI (1713-59). The theme of royal madness would become even more topical at the turn of the century with the illness of King George III of Great Britain whose increasing insanity led to the regency of the Prince of Wales (1811-20). The theme would also become the subject of further operatic treatment (as parody) in the famous zarzuela by Ruperto Chapi, *El rey que rabio* (1891).

Scribe shifted the action to the time of Philip's successor, Ferdinand, at whose court Farinelli had exercised great influence as an opera impresario and favourite of the king. A source used by Scribe, either directly or indirectly, was Giovenale Sacchi, *Vita del cavaliere Don Carlo Broschi* (Venice, 1784). Early in his career Scribe had written a play with Dupin, *Farinelli, ou la Pièce de circonstance* (Vaudeville, 25 July 1816), using a visit by the singer to Paris to ridicule the use of topical events as a subject for drama. Scribe's novelle *Carlo Broschi* ("Nouvelle historique" 1839, appearing in the *Journal des débats*, and of course in the *Oeuvres complètes*, 5:2 [Paris 1874]) had nothing to do with the action of the opera, and even less with the life of Farinelli. Scribe seems to have been fascinated by his career. In 1857 he went on to publish a novel, *Carlo Broschi*, based on the singer's life. He understood the implications of Farinelli's operatic career, and in the tradition of that medium, designed the principal role for a woman, as in the earlier play. He also adapted historical fact for comic purposes.

The Libretto

Scribe drew on a small, paltry piece of this extraordinary story and wove into it his tale of the pact with the supposed devil to make up his ingenious and attractive libretto. The diverse incidents of the pact are in the nature of real comedy, and in the best of Scribe's manner. In a scenario dominated by concepts of isolation, disguise and confusion, the motivating force is always a search for support and restoration. The fraternal love shared by Carlo and Casilda immediately establishes a concept of dedication and integration as countersign, revealing from the outset the origins of Carlo's strength as a reconciling agent—something also reinforced in the last act.

Farinelli did not, as Scribe's libretto suggests, take advantage of his influence; on the contrary, he served as conciliator between various members of the royal family, furthered the succession of Ferdinand VI, and brought Domenico Scarlatti to Madrid as tutor to Maria-Barbara de Braganza of Portugal, Fernando's wife.[18]

The Overture (E-flat major 4/4 - c minor 3/8 - B-flat 4/4 - E-flat 2/4)

This three-act work, first produced on 16 January 1843, was only a moderate success compared with Auber's most popular works: 263 performances by 1881. It marks the beginning of Auber's third creative period, characterized by a more lyrical manner, and moreover, is one of Auber's best works, evincing a variety of effects, rhythmic combinations, finesse of orchestral detail, piquant and original harmony, verve and brio. The story, set around Madrid and Aranjuez, concerns the celebrated eighteenth-century castrato singer Farinelli (a *travesti* part), who was employed to sing in order to soothe King Ferdinand VI of Spain in his melancholia (played by Juana Rossi-Caccia, 1805-1892). Farinelli's sister Casilda was created by Anna Thillon (1819-1903), her admirer Rafaël d'Estuniga by the famous tenor Gustave Roger (1815-79). The opera was long performed in Germany under the twin titles of *Carlo Broschi* and *Des Teufels Anteil* **[Fig. 3]**. The music of *La Part du Diable* is not consistently inspired, but very effective in the lyrical moments, with most unusually differentiated movements in the ensembles. The overture is very attractive, especially the opening where one notes a mysterious effect of the violins *con sordine*, and then a splendidly handled *fanfare de chasse*, both drawn from the Act-1 finale of the opera.

Introduction:
Fanfare A
Theme B
Theme C
Exposition:
First Subject D^1 (twice)
D^2 (twice)
Second Subject E
Recapitulation D^1 & D^2, E
Coda

The overture begins arrestingly with a solemn dotted fanfare (*Andante sostenuto*, E-flat, 4/4), portentous and solemn in full broad chords [A]. It dies away and the tempo, key and metre change (*Andante*, c minor, 3/8) with a chain of high *dolce* descending figurations in the treble that create a sense of remoteness and expectation [B]. The passage transposes into the dominant B-flat 4/4 with the announcement of a theme on the *con sordine* strings, a sequence of phrases (joined minims and quaver-turns over a rustling tremolo), sustaining a muffled mysterious mood. The introduction becomes a transitional *Allegro* with staccato quaver figurations replacing the tremolo writing, punctuated by a descending octave figure (minim to crochet, F to C) that builds excitement, moving into a small crescendo on the development of the melodic line [C]. The key and tempo alter with the announcement of the first subject of the exposition in the tonic (*Allegro*, E-flat, 3/4) [D^1]. This is taken from the big duet for Rafaël and Carlo, embedded in the first finale, and thematically central to the story—the actual Faustian 'pact' between the 'Devil' and the needy hero Rafaël. The plucked arpeggio of the bass riding on a pedal of E2 launch a series of rising and falling semiquaver phrases, all very gentle and rather ghostly, and resolving into rich dotted fanfares and plunging string figures, before the immediate emergence of the melody of the cabaletta of the duet, Rafaël's smooth rising melody in measured crochets [D^2]. The crescendo is much reinforced and richer this time, before a shorter repeat of the melody. It is now presented much more openly and subject to foreshortened development transmuting into rising string figures. It leads enharmonically into the third subject (B-flat, 6/8) [E], the rhythmically exciting motif of the Royal hunt for the horns that shapes the contours of the Act-1 finale like a rondo. This establishes the importance of the King and the Spanish Court in the story line. The recapitulation begins with resumption of the music from the duet [D^1 & D^2] and the Hunt [E] all resolved into E-flat this time. This is subjected to brief variation (via very full chromatic treble chords) leading into the brief *tutta forza* peroration and coda.

[18] René Bouvier, *Farinelli, le chanteur des rois* (Paris, 1943), pp. 113-67.

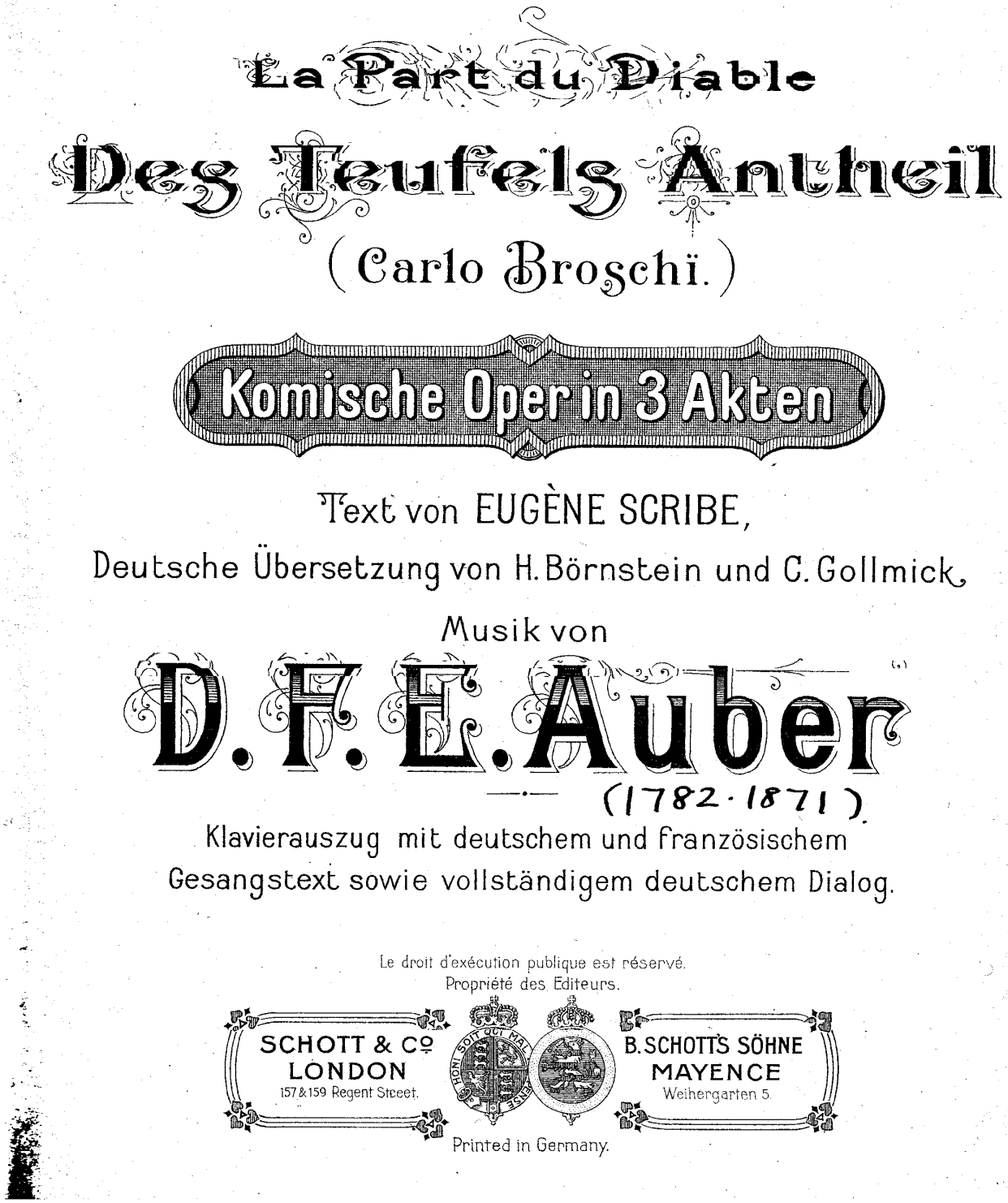


Fig. 3 *Des Teufels Anteil* (London and Mainz: Schott & Co.)

Plot and Musical Analysis

In and near Madrid and in Aranjuez, 1737.

Act 1. Inn in a wooded region in the vicinity of Madrid.

Rafaël d'Estuniga, a theology student, is blocked in his hopes of advancement at court **[Fig. 4]**. A young peasant, Carlo Broschi, and his sister Casilda enter; she falls in love with Rafaël while Carlo, through his sweet soprano singing, entices from a nearby monastery a proud woman and a dishevelled madman, who reveal themselves as Queen Elisabeth and King Felipe V of Spain. The King takes Carlo into his service and promises to grant his every wish. The King, who once wished to seduce Casilda but now does not recognize her, is as enchanted with Casilda's singing as he

is with her brother's **[Fig. 3]**. Rafaël d'Estuniga genuinely loves Casilda. As they are both about to flee, the dejected Rafaël calls on the devil. Carlo, who has overheard them, and thinking that he can help his future brother-in-law, passes himself off as Beelzebub, appearing in this guise, and fooling Rafaël into remaining at the palace with his sister. They strike a bargain that Rafaël will share his fortune equally with Carlo.[19]

Fig. 4 Gustave Roger as Rafaël (print)

1. Air (Rafaël) ("C'est elle qui chaque jour")

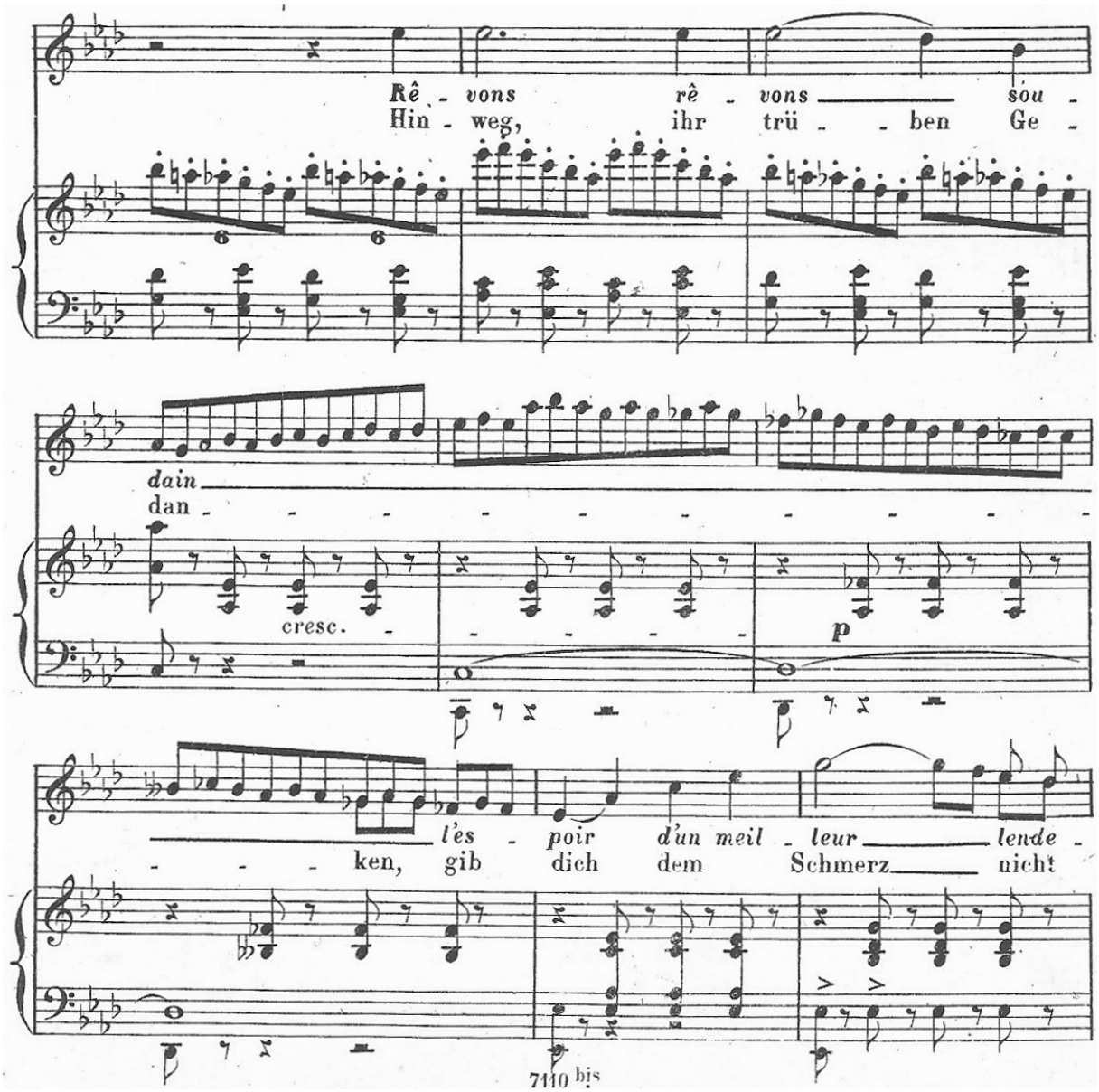
The composer's own personality is much in evidence with Rafaël's ternary aria "C'est elle qui chaque jour" (*Allegro*, A major, 4/4), perfectly realized by Gustave Roger. The aria has both passion and warmth. The opening (A) has a serene quality, the main theme couched in measured crochets rising from E5 to E6, lingering on the supertonic B, and quickening in a chromatically inflected sequence of quavers, all over a rustling arpeggio. The middle (B) is more agitated with a modified inversion of the rising crochet theme, with pulsing triad triplet figures in the bass, and a running series of chattering thirds in the treble, these becoming a single dotted figure after reprise (A^2) in the *plus animé* coda.

2. Air (Carlo) ("Le singulier récit…Sans amis et seul")

The second piece in the score shows strong Italianate tendencies, a characteristic of the music for Carlo Broschi (*Allegro*, A-flat, 4/4). The structure is the classic triple Italian manner: recitative, cavatina, cabaletta. The brisk ritornello and recitative leads into the *Andante cavatine* in the dominant E-flat, characterized as *legato*, a mood generated by the melody which is constrained within a narrow range B4 to F5 over gentle arpeggios and sustained

[19] Robert Ignatius Letellier, *Daniel-François-Esprit Auber. The Man and His Music* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), pp. 367-68.

octave chards in the bass. Only after the melody is repeated is there a sight change of mood with vocal embellishment and a more active chordal accompaniment. The cabaletta returns to the tonic E-flat, and is launched immediately with a decorated chord, and a pulsing triplet accompaniment, and incremental embellishment. The *Animato* middle section, initiated by cascading staccato treble figures, sees these quaver sequences taken over by the vocal line before the truncated reprise and climactic wide-ranging cadenza (from E4 to B5) and the exhilarating ritornello. Carlo's challenging situation in life is disclosed, as well as his reconciling motivation **[Ex. 1]**.



Ex. 1 From Carlo's entry aria (*Allegro moderato—animato*, 4/4)

Sans appui sur la terre,
Sans amis, sans soutien,
Je comprends sa misère;
Car son sort est le mien!
Mais j'ai tort, il me semble,
N'ai-je pas une soeur!
Et malheureux ensemble,
C'est presque du bonheur!

Without prop in this life,
Without friends, without support,
I understand his sorrows.
Indeed, his fate is mine!
But I fear, it seems,
That I have no sister!
And all sorrows together
Almost mean happiness!

3. Romance (Casilda) ("Oui, devant moi")

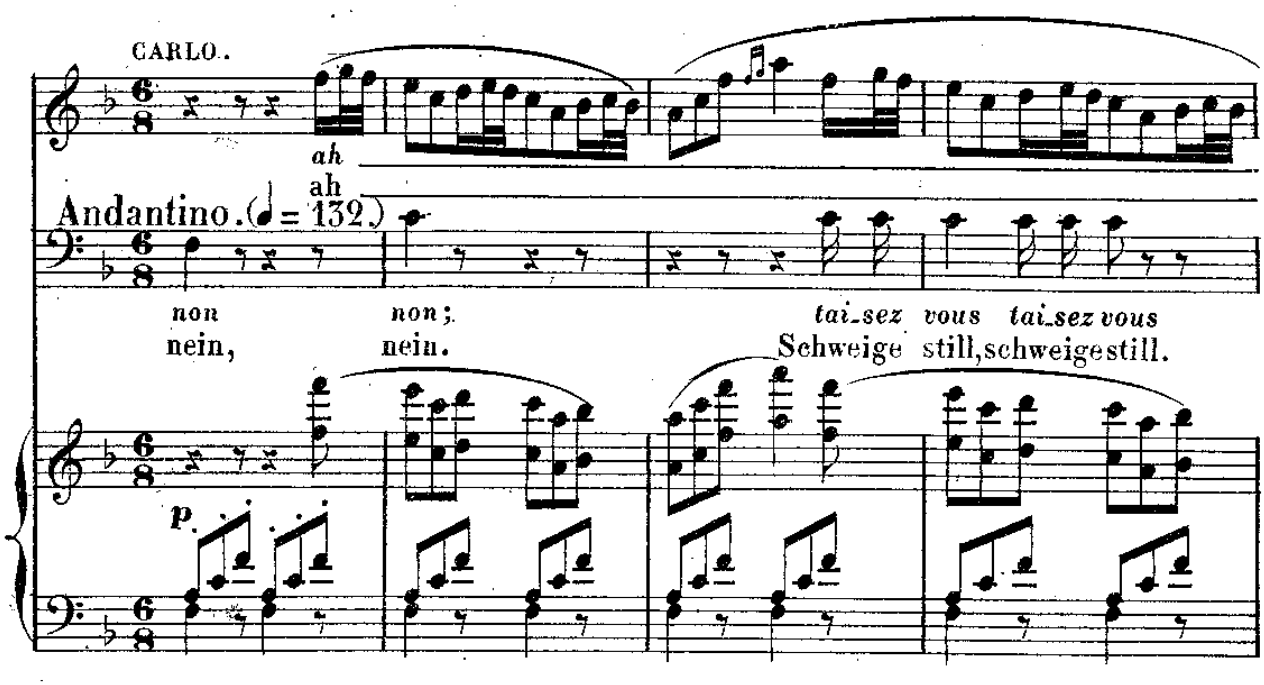
The romance "Oui, devant moi, droit comme une statue" (*Allegro non troppo*, B-flat major, 4/4), sung by Anna Thillon, is the third aria in a row, and in yet another style, this time in the strophic simplicity of the romance, with two identical verses, a simple vocal line supporting a naïve melody. A certain intensity is achieved by the narrow tonal range of the vocal line, a third above and below the tonic B (D5 to F4) in the first half, the measured crochets in the second half with a simple arpeggiated accompaniment, and a sustained pedal note B3 in the reprise and doubling of the vocal line. The effect is that of a folksong.

4. Duo (Casilda, Carlo) ("Ô mon frère")

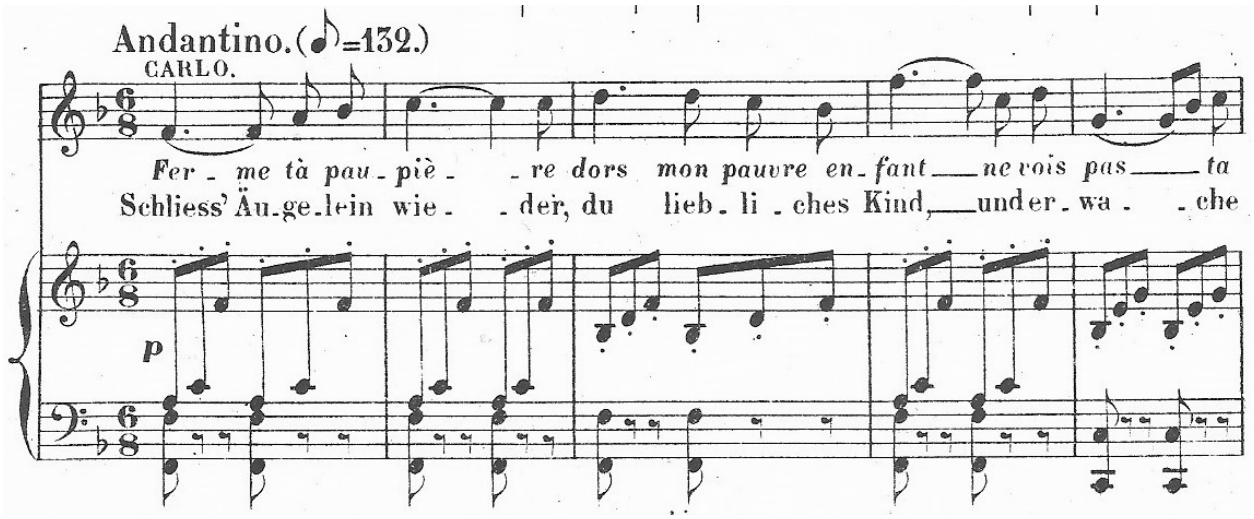
The following duettino between brother and sister ("Amitié constance et courage") (*Allegro assai/moderato*, A major, 4/4), is piquant in its writing for two sopranos, and in the *bel canto* tradition of writing for two female voices (cf. Rossini's *Semiramide* 1823, Bellini's *Norma* 1831). Brother and sister express their mutual devotion in the recurrent writing in thirds, with solo voice parts accompanied by the orchestra doubling the voice in thirds *in alt*, adding a beguiling emotiveness. Only the briefest of transitions leads to reprise and the beautiful ritornello, the whole an idyllic utterance.

5. Scène, Romance et Trio (La Reine, Le Roi, Carlo) ("Appuyez-vous sur mon bras") Romance ("Ferme ta paupière")

Yet another romance, this time for the Queen supporting her ailing husband (*Andantino*, F major, 4/4) means that this scenario is almost unique in Auber's work in presenting five solo arias in sequence. The simple line is given a dramatic twist by having the demented King take over the melody, his attention seized by the ornate vocalise of the concealed Carlo Broschi. The part is characterized by its florid vocal writing, and requires a mastery of the vocal techniques of the *bel canto* tradition that Farinelli so perfectly embodied **[Ex. 2]**. The Queen's attempt at soothing her spouse is surpassed by the lullaby Carlo sings for the King. This is the chief emotional moment in Act 1, the classic cantilena "Ferme ta paupière, dors mon pauvre enfant" (*Andantino*, F major, 6/8) which became very popular. The beguiling *legato* leads directly into a trio, the King and Queen singing beneath Carlo's exquisite high-lying vocal embroidery of the top line **[Ex. 3]**. The situation is similar to that described in Halévy's grand opera *Charles VI* (1843) where Odette, the King of France's confidante and mistress, soothes the troubled monarch who is given to bouts of insanity, by singing him a lullaby as if to a slumbering child.



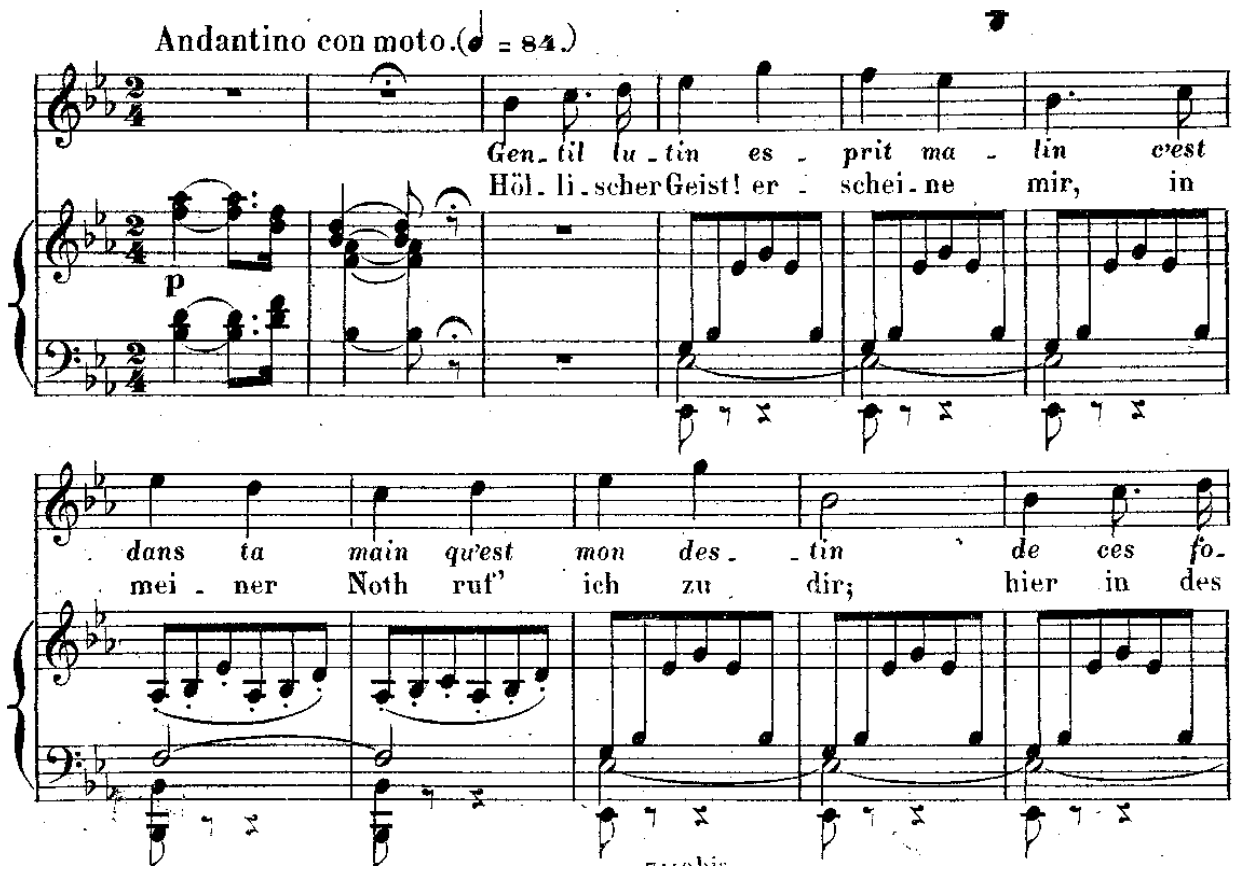
Ex. 2 Carlo sings for the King (Act 1) (*Andantino* 6/8)



Ex. 3 Carlo's Lullaby (Act 1) (*Andantino* 6/8)

6. Choeur et Duo (Choeur, Rafaël, Carlo) ("La chasse, la chasse")

The Act 1 finale begins with the powerful hunting chorus that plays such a prominent part in the overture (*Allegro*, B-flat major, 6/8). Rafaël finds himself alone, and gives way to his despair. His recitative (in 2/2) moves from G major to g minor as he calls on the demon Asmodeus for help. His evocation comes in the graceful cavatina "Gentil lutin" (*Andantino con moto*, E-flat 2/4), serene and beautiful, the melody rising by semitones and couched in measured crochets, the mood sustained by a rocking arpeggio and pedal note on B3, becoming more agitated, and breaking off into recitative as he calls on the spirit again **[Ex. 4]**. The second verse transmutes into a fuller cabaletta movement, broken by interjections from the hidden Carlo, and his sudden quick appearance on a series of quavers on D5. The scene that follows is a gentle parody of the great pact between Faust and Mephistopheles (*Andante*, f minor, 4/4) (see Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust I* 1808, Faust's Study [ii]). This is accompanied by treble pizzicato figures and tremolo bass chords, before transmuting into A-flat, Carlo's floriated soprano line increasingly shared in unison by the tenor. The key and metre change again (c minor, 2/4) for the actual pact which is concluded over sustained triads, diminished sevenths, and rising staccato bass figures. The "sorcellerie et diablerie" is immediately celebrated in a new movement (B-flat, 6/8) for both voices in unison, in a skipping metre. Carlo reminds Rafaël of his serious commitment and their refrain *à deux* is resumed, with strong orchestral doubling in sixths (mostly *in alt*). There is a sudden resumption of the serene opening theme in 2/4, the voices again in affecting duet. The hunt is heard approaching, the music of the pact recurs, the hunt draws closer, and the commitment of Rafaël to bestow on 'Asmodeus' half of his inheritance repeated in unison. The opening theme is reprised, and the joined voices become more passionate until the metre again becomes 6/8 as they bid farewell, and join each other in the fervent coda with strong and vocally ornate unison singing, before being swept up in the returning cavalcade, the hunting theme forming a satisfying binding inclusion around this whole Act-1 finale.



Ex. 4 Rafaël's aria (Act 1 finale) (*Andantino con moto* 2/4)

Act 2. Hall in the royal palace in Madrid.

The sleeping King is lulled by Carlos's art **[Fig. 6]**. The Grand Inquisitor, hoping to regain his hold on the King's mind, schedules a sermon which, at the Queen's instigation, is interrupted by Carlo's singing. Rafaël's old tutor, the theologian Vargas, is told of Rafaël's infernal bargain. Vargas is sceptical until Carlo's presence helps Rafaël to win at gambling and secures him both a colonelcy and Casilda. Vargas tells the Grand Inquisitor, who sends a squad of soldiers to arrest Rafaël. Casilda pleads for his release with the King, who recognizes her as a girl whom he had once abducted; the remorse for his deed had plunged him into melancholia. The King later surprises Rafaël and Casilda in an embrace and orders Rafaël to be the main attraction at an *auto-da-fé*.

7. Choeur, Scène et Air) (Choeur, La Reine, Carlo, Le Roi, Fra Antonio) ("Il dort, il dort!")

The second act is dominated by ensembles rather than the sequence of arias in the first. The opening scene has a dream-like quality, the brisk beginning of the entr'acte transmuting into a reverie with sequences of quaver figurations effecting a delicate tracery over triads in B-flat before smoothing into a lullaby for the sleeping King, with a densely wrought vocal sonority in six-parts. The lullaby encapsulates the exchanges between Carlo and the Queen, with their rapidly pulsing bass chords and fleeting ascending staccato treble figures. Carlo's solo (*Andantino*, B-flat, 6/8), the *canzonetta napolitana* "Qu'avez-vous, comtesse?", has a charming frankness, with exquisitely imagined mandolin accompaniment. It sustains the dreamy quality with its repeated notes on D5 and C5 adding a hypnotic quality, this intensified by the delicate tracery of *fioritura* that takes over the vocal line. The canzonetta is repeated twice, the third reprise seeing the King adding his voice with the Queen, the Inquisitor and the chorus joining in under Carlo's delicately decorated top line. The final ritornello is loud and fast.

Fig. 5 *La Part du diable*, Act 1 scene 7 (Pauquet in Scribe, *Oeuvres illustrées*, Paris 1854)

Fig. 6 *La Part du diable*, Act 2 scene 1

8. Choeur et Couplets (Choeur, Vargas, Rafaël, Carlo) ("Des jours de la jeunesse") Couplets ("Ô philosophe ou voyageur")

The centre of the act is devoted to the card game in which Carlo assists Rafaël in winning. The motif of gambling (with chorus officers celebrating the days of youth, and a young urgent hero trying his hand to win a fortune) is a recurring situation in opera, and this scene, with the insouciant male chorus (*Allegro*, C major, 3/4) and the fervent Rafaël, looks back to Robert at the end of Act 1 in Meyerbeer's *Robert le Diable* (1831), to Act 2 of Halévy's *Charles VI* (where Odette distracts the agitated King by playing him at a game of cards), and forward to Gaming Scene in Act 4 of Massenet's *Manon* (1884), and to Hermann in the Act-4 gambling den in Tchaikovsky's *The Queen of Spades* (1890). The orchestral figures of the dicing dominate the orchestral design, and underline the major tenor solo passages initiated by the brisk ritornello (*Allegro*, F major, 2/4) with dotted rhythms in the vocal line and the interplay of broad treble and bass chords in the orchestra. Rafaël's couplets "Ô philosophe" inserted into the chorus of officers, sees the key shift to the submediant A major, as Rafaël confidently sits at the table and affirms his trust in his guardian daemon. The two verses see him lose and then win as Carlo appears, secures Rafaël's success, and claims his share. The magic of the scene is emphasized by the striking of midnight, as Rafaël's fortune is secured. The key returns to the tonic C major (*Allegro moderato*, 3/4) as Vargas and Rafaël muse on the role of the daemon, while the officers resume their paen of youth before departing.

9. Quatour (Casilda, Le Roi, Carlo, La Reine) ("Sire" Sire")

The quartet, unusually for bass and three sopranos (*Allegro non troppo*, g minor—G major, 4/4), is in three parts, structured around the mid change of key which reflects the dramatic emotions of confrontation and reaction. Casilda approaches the King for clemency and he recognizes in her the subject of his grave mistake in her earlier abduction. The fourfold semiquaver sextuplets set a restless atmosphere for the dramatic recitative, the agitated figures giving way to sustained tremolos as the King's long line in measured crochets is joined by Carlo and Casilda for sixteen bars, before the King's troubled admissions and fear that Casilda is an avenging apparition return to the broken figures of the opening section, falling away into demisemiquaver figures. The key changes to the relative major with the entry of the Queen. The accompaniment becomes *leggiero* with busy string figurations and a pulsing bass, leading into a sustained binary ensemble section, Carlo's decorated top line higher than the other two sopranos. The latter and the King express their agitation in florid unison before all smoothing into a more sustained vocal line, with the King and Queen together, and Carlo and Casilda in unison. The reprise is foreshortened into a sustained crescendo over the King's long minims echoed in the bass octaves. The ensemble now becomes a 15-bar unison reflection for all four voices *a cappella*, without orchestra, before the final *Allegro vivace* when the orchestra re-enters *fortissimo* over the sustained notes of all four parts, and rounds off the piece with magisterial control.

10. Duo (Casilda, Rafaël) ("Après une aussi longue absence")

The duet for Rafaël and Casilda (*Allegretto*, C major, 4/4) is characterized by much unison singing in thirds, with a beautifully decorated vocal line, often richly doubled by the orchestra playing in sixths in high treble, and brought to an exciting but unhurried climax. The celebration of attraction is embodied in the essentially unified vocal parts typical of the Romantic duets of love and friendship.

11. Final (Vargas, Fra Antonio, Rafaël, Carlo, Choeur, Le Roi ("Grâce pour lui")

The finale of Act 2 is the musical and emotional centerpiece of the opera, a characteristic of the work of Scribe and Auber. The *Allegro vivace* (a minor, 4/4) begins with a grand statement from Fray Antonio over a bass ostinato provided by a chain of dotted figures and long notes moving through various tones up into the treble. An exchange between Vargas and Rafaël initiates another important theme in measured crochets, and sees the emergence of one of Auber's famous reiterated string motifs in a sequence of downward-moving quaver figures. The dotted ostinato chain reappears to accompany the portentous Chorus of Inquisitors whose dreaded presence is underscored by the change of key to the sombre c minor. In his fear Rafaël speaks of the Queen to a rising and reiterated orchestral figure in thirds. Vargas seeks to reassure him in the measured crochet theme (in C major), before the resumption of the Chorus of Inquisitors (in the characteristic minor mode with the ostinato). Carlo seeks to calm the situation as the orchestral movement is slowed into eight bars of sustained c minor chords. Carlo's plea to the King changes the mood, as his song initiates a rising melody (F4 to F5) (*Andantino*, F-major, 6/8) over a simple folk-like accompaniment, culminating in the exquisite vocal melismas that is characteristic of the vocal profile of this role. The King, moved by the lyric effusion, stops the arrest of Carlo by Fray Antonio, leading into the build-up of an ensemble dominated by Carlo's coloratura with emotional doubling of the treble line in octaves in the orchestra. Carlo pleads against the intransigence of the Inquisition in a more conversational passage in the tonic C major, with the King's perturbation at his witnessing of the closeness between Rafaël and Casilda given expression in deep a minor chromatic octave chords (A1 to A2) under sustained flattened pedal point on D4 & F4. The full ensemble is resumed, and again interrupted by Carlo who in c minor, to agitated treble figures in thirds, reminds the King of the healing help that he, Carlo, has brought to the troubled royal sensibilities. The music returns to the first part of the finale, in the beautiful measured crochet theme as the King, despite his displeasure at the prospect of the marriage between Rafaël and Casilda, orders

Rafaël to remain in the palace as colonel. The ensemble resumes, in the tonic C major, with Carlo dominating the top line, and the other protagonists musing over his powerful influence, or expressing their concerns at the change of events. All leads into a suitable peroration and brilliant orchestral coda.

Act 3. Hall in the royal palace in Aranjuez, with a terrace and garden in the background. Rafaël sings of his hopes. Carlo tries to intercede with the King, but the courtiers bar his way. He draws out the King through his singing and tells him that Rafaël and Casilda are to be married. The *auto-da-fé* is cancelled. Rafaël learns that he is the sole heir to the fortune of the Duque d'Estuñiga. Carlo hears of this bequest and demands half for Casilda as well. Carlo further secures the King's blessing by threatening to expose him as Casilda's kidnapper. Carlo then announces that he is no devil; and that Casilda's happiness is the only portion of the bargain that he will accept. Carlo works to bring about a good solution for all, and in helping to restore the king to good judgement, brings Casilda and Rafaël together.

12. Entr'acte et Cavatine (Carlo) ("Depuis longtemps…Reviens ma noble protectrice")

Act 3 contains the aria for Carlo "Reviens, ma noble protectrice", the most formally elaborate solo piece for the principal character. The act opens with the exhilarating entr'acte (*Allegro*, A-flat, 4/4) which smoothes into *piano* and *dolce* before cascading down in quaver figurations to Carlo's recitative. The aria (*Andantino*, A-major, 4/4) is characterized by its supple ascending melody in octaves with first and second inversion triads and a strong chromatic seasoning. The smooth line, with its narrow tonal range and rustling arpeggiated accompaniment, is unusually devoid of vocal embroidery, apart from some delicate turns. The contrasting middle section, with bass tremolos and small rising figures in the treble, is foreshortened, and returns rapidly to spinning out the melody again in the reprise. It leads directly into the cabaletta (*Allegro non troppo*, F-major, 4/4). This begins without a ritornello, the pulsing bass supporting demisemiquaver skirls and eventually gaining motor propulsion in Auber's favoured reiterated string figures, this time in semiquaver form. The vocal line is more embellished now, in the true style of the cabaletta, little semiquaver runs imitating the motifs from the accompaniment, and building excitement to the brief descending-ascending cadenza ending on a sustained high C, with the rush of the brilliant coda. **[Fig. 7]**

Fig. 7 *La Part du diable*, Act 3 scene 1

12b. **Marche (Allegro moderato, B-flat major, 4/4)**

The march is an exercise in dotted figures that are reminiscent of the ostinatos of the Act-2 finale.

13. **Duo (Casilda, Rafaël ("Lui faire accroire")**

The pretty duet which follows (*Allegro*, E-flat major, 3/4) is in a different style from the unison effusion of Act 2. The apprehensive Casilda's thinly punctuated observations are contrasted with Rafaël's hopeful asides which have a textured harmonic underpinning. The body of the first movement is accompanied by a *con delicatezza* staccato version of the favoured quaver figurations as the two pledge their troth with right and left hands, Rafaël pressing Casilda's right hand to his heart and lips **[Fig. 8]**. A key change to the lyrically favoured D-flat major initiates a section in growing unison, with a change of tempo and metre (*Allegro*, 2/4) into the relative minor (of b-flat) as Rafaël pretends to banish Asmodeus from his life. The key returns to the tonic E-flat and common time as Rafaël celebrates his freedom from the Devil's pact, and the two lovers are able to hail their independence and resolution in passionate unison, moving to a *plus animé* coda and final sustained note G5-B5.

Fig. 8 *La Part du diable*, Act 3 scene 8

14. **Final (Le Roi, La Reine, Vargas, Fra Antonio, Choeur, Carlo, Casilda, Rafaël) ("C'est trop d'audace")**

The burden of the act lies in the disentangling of the various strands of the intrigue in the Finale (*Allegro*, F-major, 4/4). The opening is dominated by the outburst of the King, followed by the advent of the Queen and the Court, leading into a brief ensemble. The Queen appeals to Carlo who now appears, and in agitated duet tries to soothe the King. In a solo passage (*Andantino*, C-major, 6/8) Carlo tells the King it is his religious advisors who sow the seeds of distrust, a beautiful melody sustained in the accompaniment. A change to F-major sees Carlo bringing his sister forward. The two supplicate the King in beautiful soprano unison. With change of tempo to *Allegro non troppo*, the