



Review

Gioachino Rossini. *La Veuve andalouse = The Andalusian Widow = La viuda del naufrago: for voice and piano = para voz y piano*. Antoni Pizà and María Luisa Martínez, eds. Kassel: Reichenberger, 2022.

ALESSIO OLIVIERI

University of Nebraska–Lincoln

In 1855, Rossini returned to France and settled in Passy (Paris). He had abruptly abandoned the theater in 1829 and undergone a long period of inactivity. However, this new phase of his life reignited his passion for composing, leading to several small pieces for piano, voice and piano, or small ensembles. Such compositions, which Rossini ironically dubbed as *Péchés de vieillesse*, were not meant for public release but mainly for private concerts held at his residence. Thus, they remained manuscripts until after Rossini's death, when his widow, Olympe Pélissier, sold most of them, with the result that they were eventually published in various volumes over time. *La Veuve andalouse* (The Andalusian Widow) is one of Rossini's "sins of old age" that was not part of Pélissier's sale. Published in 1864 under unforeseen circumstances, potentially without Rossini's consent, *La Veuve* serves as an example of the alluring vocal repertoire with an exotic flair that fascinated the salons of Europe during the nineteenth century.

This new Reichenberger edition by Antoni Pizà and María Luisa Martínez is configured as an *urtext* based on what is believed to be Rossini's only autograph manuscript of *La Veuve*, recently discovered in the *Fondo Infanta* (the music library of Isabel de Borbón) at the Biblioteca del Real Conservatorio Superior de Música de Madrid.

The publication is structured into three sections. The initial section is a comprehensive examination of *La Veuve's* history, context, and dissemination, grounded in a thorough study of documents. Pizà and Martínez provide a micro-historical account of this Spanish song, which contemporary critics identified as a multifaced vocal solo, or a *scena*. According to their research, in 1863, Rossini sent *La Veuve* to its dedicatee, his Spanish friend Francisco Frontera de Valldemosa, and the song was published by Salazar in Madrid in 1864, allegedly without the composer's approval. As confirmed by the sources meticulously studied and reported by Pizà and Martínez, the first edition, which included French and Spanish texts, received grandiose announcements and reviews, leading to its widespread popularity in Europe. Subsequently, it was republished with French, Spanish, Italian, German, and English texts, often in conjunction with another Rossini's Spanish song, *À Grenade*.

Furthermore, the authors scrutinize the connections between Frontera de Valldemosa and the Spanish royal family, whom he had dutifully served for an extended period. They pay particular attention to the musical patronage by the Infanta Isabel de Borbón, who is widely acclaimed as one of the most significant supporters of Spanish music at the turn of the century. Isabel's involvement in the narrative of *La Veuve* is critical, as she was also a music student of Frontera de Valldemosa.

The authors contend that the autograph manuscript eventually surfaced in her library because it was gifted to her by Frontera de Valldemosa.

The subsequent section of the volume showcases the facsimile reproduction of the manuscript alongside an accurate rendition in modern notation with minimal editorial interventions. In the Notes to the Edition, the authors present a detailed description of the manuscript and compare it with the six available printed editions, providing an accurate idea of the main variants. The autograph analysis also enabled Pizà and Martínez to definitively confirm the author of the Spanish translation of the text as Antonio María Segovia, thereby eliminating any lingering uncertainty.

The third and final section, authored by Anna Tonna, centers on the musical interpretation of *La Veuve*. This section includes an International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) transcription of the French and Spanish lyrics, alongside an English translation of the French text. This section also features the texts in their original form as they appeared in the printed editions in French, Spanish, Italian, English, and German. However, there is one caveat here, which is that the IPA transcriptions could have adhered more closely to the principles of lyric diction rather than relying exclusively on the standard rules of spoken French and Spanish. For example, the inclusion of the ovular [R] in the French IPA, which is more characteristic of spoken French, limits the edition's usefulness for vocal performance. Adopting the flipped [r], commonly employed in lyric diction, would have been a more appropriate alternative.

The edition's appendix features a helpful "Cast of Characters" (an enhanced index of names) and a chronology of events spanning from 1807 (the birth year of Frontera de Valldemosa) to 1940, when the library of the Infanta Isabel was donated to Madrid's Royal Conservatory. This publication is of great value to both scholars and performers alike.

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