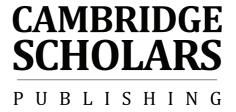
Daniel-François-Esprit Auber: *Actéon*

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Edited and Introduced by

Robert Ignatius Letellier



$\begin{array}{c} \text{Daniel-François-Esprit Auber:} \\ Act\'eon, \\ \text{Edited and Introduced by Robert Ignatius Letellier} \end{array}$

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D.F.E. Auber: lithograph of the composer as a younger man

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INTRODUCTION

Actéon, an opéra-comique in one act with libretto by Eugène Scribe, was first performed at the Opéra-Comique (Salle de la place de la Bourse) on 23 January 1836.

The story is set in eighteenth-century Sicily. Prince Aldobrandi has jealously shut up his wife Lucrezia and his sister Adèle in a palace where only women are permitted. Count Léoni, wishing to see Adèle, disguises himself as a blind street-singer to gain the attention of the ladies. Lucrezia is painting a picture of Diana and her nymphs being surprised by Actaeon, and persuades her husband to allow the blind man to pose as a model. Léoni's deception is revealed when Adèle catches him reading a letter sent to her by the Cherubino-like page Stéfano, who jealously betrays the Count to Aldobrandi. A poignarding is narrowly averted when Léoni admits that he came to see Adèle and not Lucrezia; the chastened Prince then graciously consents to pose as Actaeon.

The score of this *lever de rideau*, originally destined for the Opéra, was written for the agile voice of Laure Cinti-Damoreau. It is overshadowed by the other more popular creations of the composer, but nonetheless contains several remarkable pieces. The overture, with its perky introduction broken by slower cello and oboe sequences is dominated by Mediterranean rhythms: a vigorous bolero encloses a beautiful hushed central movement, the sicilienne, which is dreamily passed from horns to clarinets to oboes.

Of real elegance are: the aria "Il est des époux complaisants"; the romance "Jeunes beautés, charmantes desmoiselles" and the syllabic quartet "Le destin comble mes voeux". Mme Damoreau excited general enthusiasm when she sang the Sicilienne ("Nina, jolie et sage"), an *air à vocalise* which is a masterpiece of grace and finesse in this small work.

The opera is unique among the works of Scribe and Auber for its brevity, for its use of a classical framework (the myth of Diana and Actaeon) to provide an updated contemporary fable that celebrates art and love. All these elements, and the gift of the vocally challenging part for Cinti-Damoreau, come together in the brilliant finale.

The original cast was: Jean-Francois Inchindi [Hinnekindt] (Aldobrandi); Laure Cinti-Damoreau (Lucrezia); Louis-Benoît-Alphonse Révial (Léoni); Mlle Camoin (Adèle); and Mme Félicité Pradher (Stéfano). The work was in the repertoire between 1836 and 1852, with a total of 92 performances. It was translated into German, and produced in Brussels, Berlin, Vienna, London and Philadelphia.



Actéon, Scene 12. Woodcut from the Complete Works of Scribe



DES OPÉRAS FRANÇAIS.



ACTÉON,

Opéra-Connique en un acte,

Musique de

D. F. E. AUBER,

VARE VECOMBY CHEMENL DE BIFMO"

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