

## **The Crown Diamonds**

[Opéra comique, in three acts; text by Scribe and St. George. First produced in Paris in 1841; in English, at the Princess Theatre, London, May 2, 1844.]

### PERSONAGES.

Count de Campo Mayor, Minister of Police. Don Henrique, nephew of the Count. Don Sebastian, friend of Don Henrique. Rebelledo, chief coiner. Catarina, leader of the coiners. Diana, cousin of Don Henrique.

The scene is laid in Portugal; time, 1777.

The story of "The Crown Diamonds," one of the most melodious of Auber's works, is as follows: Don Henrique, nephew of the Count de Campo Mayor, Minister of Police at Coimbra, on his way to participate in the coronation ceremonies and at the same time to sign a marriage contract with his cousin Diana, daughter of the Minister of Police, is overtaken by a storm in the mountains and seeks shelter in a ruined castle near the monastery of St. Huberto. While there he espies Rebelledo, the chief coiner, and two of his comrades examining the contents of his trunk. The latter, discovering him in turn and thinking him a spy, rush upon him, but he is saved by Catarina, the leader of the gang, who returns him his trunk and allows him to depart upon condition that he shall not mention what he has seen for a year. He consents, but before he leaves, the gang is surrounded by soldiers led by Don Sebastian, a friend of Don Henrique. They make their escape, however, disguised as monks, while Rebelledo and Catarina disappear through an underground passage, carrying with them a mysterious casket of jewels.

The second act opens in the Château de Coimbra, and discloses Don Henrique in love with the mysterious Catarina and Diana with Don Sebastian. As Diana and Don Henrique are singing together, Don Sebastian announces that an accident has happened to a carriage and that its occupants desire shelter. Catarina and Rebelledo enter and accept the proffered hospitality. When Diana begins to read the account of a robbery containing a description of Rebelledo and his companions, that worthy vanishes, but Catarina remains in spite of Don Henrique's warning that she is in the house of the Minister of Police. He declares his love for her, and begs her to fly with him; she refuses, but gives him a ring as a souvenir. At this point the Count enters, and announces that the crown jewels have been stolen and Don Henrique's ring is recognized as one of them. Catarina is saved by Diana, who promises Don Henrique she will send her away in the Count's carriage if he will refuse to sign the marriage contract. He consents, and Catarina makes her escape.

The last act opens in the anteroom of the royal palace at Lisbon, where the Count, Don Henrique, and Don Sebastian are present, and Diana awaits an audience with the Queen. While they converse, Rebelledo enters, announced as the Count Fuentes, and an usher brings him word that the Queen will have private audience with him. While awaiting her, Rebelledo in a monologue explains that the real crown jewels have been pledged for the national debt, and that he has been employed to make duplicates of them to be worn on state occasions until the genuine ones can be redeemed. The Queen enters, declares she is satisfied with the work, and makes Rebelledo Minister of Secret Police. Count de Campo Mayor then announces to her the decision of the Council that she shall marry the Prince of Spain. She declares she will make her own choice, and when the Count remonstrates she threatens to confiscate his property for allowing the crown jewels to be stolen, and orders him to arrest his daughter and nephew for giving shelter to the thieves. Diana, suddenly entering, fails to recognize her as Catarina, and implores pardon for her connivance in the escape. Then Don Henrique still further complicates

the situation. He recognizes Catarina, and declares to Diana he will seize her and fly to some distant land. His purpose is thwarted by his arrest for treason upon the Queen's order. He rushes forward to implore mercy for Catarina, when the Queen reveals herself and announces that she has chosen Don Henrique for her husband and their King.

The principal musical numbers of the opera are Rebelledo's rollicking muleteer's song, "O'er Mountain steep, through Valley roaming," the rondo, "The Young Pedrillo," with chorus accompaniment, and the lugubrious chorus of the pseudo monks, "Unto the Hermit of the Chapel," in the first act; the nocturne, "The Brigand," closing in gay bolero time, "In the Deep Ravine of the Forest," Catarina's bravura aria, "Love! at once I break thy Fetters," the duet, "If I could but Courage feel," and the beautiful ballade, "Oh! whisper what thou feelest," in the second act; the usually interpolated air, "When Doubt the Tortured Frame is rending," originally written for Louisa Pyne, who really made the first success for the opera, and the charming cavatina, "Love, dwell with me," sung by the Queen in the last act.