

# Robert le Diable

Opéra en cinq actes  
First performance:  
21.11.1831,  
Paris, Opéra



Meyerbeer's first work for the Paris Opéra represents a high-point in the history of the genre. With the title figure, Scribe and Meyerbeer created the typical vacillating hero, reacting naively and almost helplessly. Many saw Robert as representing the July Monarchy; thus even this work was being credited with a political accent which was to become far more prominent in the later operas. The character of the 'fallen angel' Bertram, who must destroy what he loves, enables Meyerbeer to raise the work above the sphere of melodrama, and endow it with the dimensions of a modern character drama.

It is not beauty that is central to the work, but characterisation and expressive force. There are considerable parallels to E.T.A. Hoffmann, but also to the Faust theme. The invocation of the sinful nuns, who rise from their graves with a lascivious dance, is a dramatic innovation in the history of opera. Here ballet is fully integrated into the plot for the first time. Meyerbeer establishes formal connections with the aid of particular sounds: the fanfares evoking Bertram and the Andante cantabile for the dance of the abbess Héléne are notable examples: paradigms that constantly recur in new but similar compositions by other composers.

The critical edition is based on the autograph text (locations: Paris and Cracow), and the printed scores of 1831 and 1837. It takes into account the performance material of the Paris premiere as well as numerous autograph sketches, expansions and arrangements. Previously unknown material is presented here for the first time, making possible performances of a completeness hitherto unknown.

Critical Edition, edited by Wolfgang Kühnhold and Peter Kaiser

## Text:

Eugène Scribe and Germain Delavigne

## Characters:

Robert, Duke of Normandy (t)  
Bertram, his friend (b)  
Raimbaut, a Norman peasant (t)  
A Priest (b)  
A Majordomo to the King of Sicily (t)  
A Herald (t)  
Alberti, a knight (b)  
4 knights (2 t, 2 b)  
5 gamblers (3 t, 2 b)  
8 heralds (4 t, 4 b)  
Isabelle, Princess of Sicily (s)  
Alice, a Norman peasant (s)  
A lady-in-waiting to Isabelle (s)  
Héléne, abbess

## Silent roles:

King of Sicily  
Prince of Granada  
Robert's chaplain

## Corps de ballet

## Chorus

## Extras

## Orchestra:

2 picc, 2 fl, 2 ob (2nd also c.a.), 2 cl, 4 fg, 4 hn, 2 tpt, 2 keyed tpt, 3 tbn, ophicleide, 4 timp, perc (bs dr, cym, tamtam, trg, bell in B), 2 hp, strings; stage ensemble: picc, 4 hn, 2 tpt, 2 keyed tpt, 3 tbn, b tbn, ophicleide, cym, trg, mil dr, tamtam, 2 hp, org, thunder machine

## Place and Time of the Action:

In and around Palermo, about 1300

## 7 Scenes:

Act I: Harbour of Palermo  
Act II: Hall in the palace of the King of Sicily  
Act III: Rocks near St. Irène  
A ruined convent  
Act IV: Isabelle's room  
Act V: In front of Palermo Cathedral  
Inside the cathedral