1 El Testamento de n’Amelia

This Catalan folksong was set by Miguel Llobet Soles (1878 – 1938), a Spanish guitar virtuoso and possibly a teacher of Segovia.

The following is recorded by Jorge de-la-Calleja-Mora in *Legends of Old Catalonia* (1864), translated by Arthur Fletchworth (B.A., M.A.), Oxford U. Press, 1931.

**Saint Amelie’s Trial**

On this dank, drizzly day, the Cathedral is gloomy. Amelie, in a clear steady voice, answers the charges and professes her innocence and faith to those assembled. She pauses, and it seems the wind catches the church’s bells, which softly repeat her testament. The peons and burghers look up, then at each other. The Church officials look steadfastly down.

Again she speaks in calm, assured phrases; a single sunbeam breaks through the clouds and falls on her through the Great Window. It casts the image of the Madonna on Amelie and bathes her rough prison dress with the blue radiance of the Virgin’s gown. Again she falls silent, and now the audience, both the awestruck and the ashamed, all must hear it – a seraphic choir is echoing her words.

The implacable Inquisitor, however, is unimpressed. Sarcastically, he repeats her last words to himself as his quill scribbles the order for her execution.

The church bells toll a single death knell.
2 Twelve Carulli Romances

2.1 Program Notes

Ferdinando Maria Meinrado Francesco Pascale Rosario Carulli (1770? – 1841).

Many of the pieces now regarded as Carulli’s greatest were initially turned down by the publishers as being too hard for the average player, and it is likely that many masterpieces were lost this way. Undeterred, Carulli started publishing his pieces himself. However, the great majority of Carulli’s surviving works are those that were considered ‘safe’ enough to be accepted by other publishers, mainly for the teaching of certain techniques or for beginners.

Following are notes to Carulli’s Opus 333II (Twelve Romances).

In his Life of Carulli (1873, Impresso Battaglio), G. LaGorgia states: “Upon his death, among his books was found a tattered and worn copy of Szeni-Costa’s Illustrated Romantic Folktales and Songs of Central Europe (ca. 1762, pub. unk.), with childish carrot-jam stains and later, more mature notations in Carulli’s hand.” These tales were among them.

2.2 Programs I: Six Romances

1. Le Nid et la Rose — Das Nest und die Rose — The Bird and the Rose

A little bird in a nest, too young to fly, is entranced by a rosebud nodding gently in the breeze below. The bird sings to the rose but gets no reply. The next day the baby bird sings as a thunderstorm slowly builds, high on the mountain. Lightning strikes the tree, which falls to earth, crushing the rose. The day is now quiet, and smells faintly of roast chicken.

2. La Laterne magique — Laterna magica — The Picture Show

The townspeople are gathering in their best attire for the visiting magic lantern show. The mayor and his wife arrive, as do the madame and some of her girls, looking fantastic. The overture starts; the curtain rises. The show is about a priest who has an innocent friendship with an alter boy and then lives happily ever after.
4. L’Angelus — Vesperauten — The Sexton Rings Vespers

The old sexton is ringing the bells for vespers while his young son watches. Taking a sudden thirst, the sexton leaves his son to ring the final round while he nips across the muddy road for a quick pint. His son calls a merry farewell and continues ringing vespers. A chilly wind from the mountains is finally too much for the ancient, decrepit steeple: it collapses, sending its bells tumbling down on top of the hapless youth.

11. La mere et l’amant — Mutter und Geliebter — The Old Story I.

The mother walks elegantly into a shop rumored to have have mangelwurzels today. She sees another, a younger, woman, a girl really, wearing the necklace that her husband said he pawned to pay the man who wormed the goat. She confronts the young woman, who laughs defiantly. The mother leaves the store with dignity, but the laughing lover skips down the street behind her chanting “Nyah, nyah, I’m the beloved, you’re the mother. You Old Hag!”

7. Le petit doigt — Der kleine Finger — Sticky Fingers

The boy’s finger was always getting into somewhere it shouldn’t. His nostril, his sister’s ear, his mother’s rutabaga tart, his granny’s churn. His mother said: “someday your finger will be stuck where it doesn’t belong. What will you do then?” One day the little finger was carefully placing a big copper dinar on the tracks of the Trans-Transylvanian Transit train when it really did get stuck. Fortunately the train was not running on time. Unfortunately, it was early.

10. Le petite Mendiane — Die kleine Bettlerin — The Beggar-Girl

On Christmas Eve the blind beggar girl is walking out of the village to visit her cousin, newly moved to a farm nearby. She passes a tavern from which emanates the smell of stale beer and the sound of atonal folksongs badly played on the balalaika. A passing nun gives her a groat. A gentleman on a spavined donkey ignores her. Suddenly she is slipping! She has stepped off the unfamiliar road into a gravel pit. She struggles upward but the gravel slides under her. Again she scrambles up, again she is carried down. They find her in the spring. A rose grows nearby and a little bird is singing.
2.3 Programs II: Six More Romances

3. *Autant qu’il m’en souvient — Erinnerung — Memories*

I remember Buddy: we used to play chase before breakfast and after the
day’s work. I remember plowing that field over there many, many seasons.
I remember Moustache, who beat me up occasionally, and his son Red Hat
—we used to share stolen wormy apples. I like it under this tree. The flies
are a nuisance; if Buddy were here we’d swat them together. I remember
seeing out of my left eye: the world was bigger and brighter then. I loved
it when we pulled the cart with Moustache and Red Hat into town and we
would visit with Thunder, Robotnic and the others... but that was when
Buddy was here.

8. *Je revenais de mon village — Ruckkehr aus der Heimat — The Old Story II*

My sweet Sonja,

The horse carries me once again back to my old home and old mother, but
I’ll return to you soon. It’s her rheumatism, or possibly sciatica, or her
anniversary — that always depresses her. You remember last time her dearest
great-aunt passed away, and then she had that little fall, and then she went
to pieces when the pig died, and then she thought she had dropsy. But I’m
sure things will go smoothly this time and that I’ll be back before Little Vlad,
Marcia, Slobo, Stanko, Petra, and Misha finish school: (if not, you should
see if they’ll let you cut your hours at the foundry).

Your loving husband, Vladimir

P.S. Send six dozen of your special beet and turnip cookies by the next oxcart
— mum does love them so. I’ll be sure she thanks you this time.

6. *L’Inquietude — Besorgnis — Restless*

The little boy was disturbed: why beat donkeys to haul sacks up the trail
when a windmill could lift a heavy weight that could then be slowly dropped
to do the pulling? He was preoccupied: with 100 crowns he could loan a little
money to scores of desperately poor peons so they could start businesses:
they’d be enriched and with his profits he could help more people. By a
stream, worried about his rheumatic old mother: he thought of a laundry
device using paddles dipping in the stream to turn a barrel, and — but
suddenly a squat and warty troll blocked the trail! Winking, it croaked:
"Don’t worry, be happy!" The boy’s face smoothed and henceforth he just
played dominoes, chased milkmaids, and drank raki. His last words were:
"It’s a wonderful life!".
9. Le bon pasteur — Der gute Hirte — The Good Shepherd

Ratko counted twice: a sheep was definitely missing. He heard a still, small voice within him: “a Good Shepherd lays down his life for his sheep. You must leave these sheep safe in the fold and go rescue the prodigal ungulate.” Ratko thought: “'Prodigal ungulate?' Who is this guy?” Then he reflected: “Brigands have been seen about. Two goats and the tanner’s son-in-law disappeared last week: probably a new sucking bog has sprung up. And wasn’t that sheep looking depressed, even suicidal? Besides, it’s probably insured.” So he simply amused himself with the remaining sheep. When the landowner learned of Ratko’s prudent decision, he gave Ratko a shiny zloty.

12. Les trois ages du Troubadour — Die drei Lebensalter des Troubadours — History of the Troubadour

Troubadours are itinerant, peripatetic and often impecunious musicians. Stone Age troubadours made music by clashing rocks together. They were quite strong from carrying their instruments up and down muddy tracks, and the bass players often had flat feet. Early iron age troubadours played the iron triangle by clashing an iron rod around in it. Later, the triangle was replaced by squares, dodecagons, and higher-order polygons, culminating in the circle, whose infinite sides took years of practice to master. String age troubadours used fingers to stroke balls of twine, which quickly evolved to vole-gut stretched in straight lines over some framework, as in the koto, oud, washtub bass, and ukelele.

5. La Coquette du village — Die Dorfschoene — The Village Coquette

The beautiful village coquette lived with her lazy, conniving stepsisters and her hardbitten stepmother. Her poor father had died shortly after his marriage to this formidable woman with short, iron-gray hair and sensible shoes. The coquette flirted shamelessly, but spurned the suitors who flocked in from the neighboring creosote mines, turnip fields, and hog farms. For that matter, she spurned the son of the local squire and of the banker. The stepmother noticed all this spurning, and the girl noticed her noticing. One morning they were simply gone from the village. Years later, on her birthday, the eldest lazy sister got a postcard, apparently from an Aegean island. There was no message.
2.4 Programs III: Alternates or Drafts

8. Je revenais de mon village — Rückkehr aus der Heimat — I Shall Return to my Village
Oh, I shall return to my village –
I shall someday return –
Someday,
When they understand.
Or when they forgive.
Or when they forget what I did,
Did do what they said?
Was it so wrong? I do not know.
Thunder growls in the west.
I shall return to my village
As a ghost.
8. Title mistranslation: I Return to my Village
I was coming home. As I approached I saw a gathering and I smelled the scent of flowers. A family reunion? A wedding? No... wasn’t this the graveyard? An old man staggered from the crowd, his face distorted with grief and his eyes blinded by tears. “Hold my hand and lead me away from here,” he said. “I’ve just brought these flowers for Alma – I haven’t seen Alma in years.” He poured out a story of young love, an abandoned child, his failure as father and husband, his remorse. “If I could bring her back I would make her so happy, but she’s gone to a place I’ll never see.” I embraced the old man and called his name but his suffering was so great he never recognized me. After all, I hadn’t seen Papa in years.

2. La Laterne magique — Laterna magica — The Picture Show
The townspeople are gathering in their best attire for the visiting magic lantern show. The mayor and his wife arrive, as do the madame and some of her girls, looking fantastic. The overture starts; the curtain rises. The show is about a man who must tend to his aging and manipulative mother in another town while trying to keep his wife and children together as a family. At the end there wasn’t a dry sleeve in the house.
3 Afterword

The Testament of Amelia Program is meant to be extremely close to the music. The Carulli Programs I form a little cycle, and I actually meant them to reflect what I hear in the tunes: they are much more of a stretch than the Llobet, however. Programs II and III generally have nothing to do with the music and were only based on the titles, except for the more PC version of Number two.