

The Marriage of Cascourös

**Libretto for a
Talossan Opera
in Three Acts**

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January 2008

PERFORMERS

Seltsamet.....tenor
Cascourös baritone
Nutz..... bass
Xhördi..... buffo caricato
Chilsa soprano
Trambeta mezzo-soprano
Chorusmale voices

SETTING

The story is set in Seville, Spain, and begins at the docks of this city. Many Sevillians have come to the piers in response to the rumour that a ship that carries Seltsamet, the star of the city's Berber football team, approaches the port. Seltsamet had left Spain to seek the Berber promised land after he had fallen in love with Chilsa, the beautiful soprano who sang (with her friend, Trambeta) during the football halftimes. Initially, Chilsa had rejected Seltsamet's affections for those of Nutz, a player on the team of Castile. However, later, she had professed her love for Seltsamet before he left Spain. Both Nutz and Cascourös (Seltsamet's best friend) are among the crowd at the docks.

SONGS

Act I

1. We heard that a ship is arriving.....Chorus
2. Who wants a beer? Solo (Seltsamet)
3. Seltsamet has returned!..... Solo (Cascourös)
4. I am Nutz! Solo (Nutz)

Act II

5. Today I marry..... Aria (Chilsa)
6. Today she marries Duet (Nutz and Chilsa)
7. Are you decent?Solo (Xhördi)

Act III

8. That was a great party! Duet (Seltsamet and Cascourös)
9. Fígaro!.....Solo (Xhördi)
10. Dearly beloved! Refrain (Xhördi and the cast)
11. The marriage is concluded Solo (Nutz)
12. What a shame!Chorus

ACT I. The docks of Seville

*(The members of the chorus arrive at the docks in growing numbers;
all joining in song, and looking offstage, as if they see a ship.)*

SONG 1 - CHORUS

Chorus: We heard that a ship is arriving
Maybe this does not seem very exciting to you
But look at us, acting as if it is a big deal
That we heard that a ship is arriving

We are a group of Sevillians
Apparently we don't have jobs
Because we have enough time on our hands to run to the docks
When we hear that a ship is arriving

We probably should get jobs
In fact, we could become singers in a chorus
Because, actually, singing seems like a skill we share
But we heard that a ship is arriving

It seems that the rumours were true
We can see the sails of a ship out there
If you can pretend that when we look off-stage
We see that a ship is arriving

The sails are red and green
You will just have to believe that
This causes us to think that maybe it is Seltsamet
Who sails the ship that is arriving

We thought that he had fallen into the abyss
That he had sailed off the edge of the earth
Or that he had been eaten by a sea monster
But now it is his ship that is arriving?

Seltsamet was the star of our football team
You would know this if you saw the first opera
The team colours were red and green, like the sails
On the masts of the ship that is arriving

The first opera didn't say anything about the team colours
It is hoped that directors will think about this song when they produce that opera
So that we can have this lame excuse to act excited
At the sight of a ship that is arriving

And now our excitement is very great
Because the imaginary ship off-stage has arrived
And yes, now we see that it is Seltsamet, our sports hero
Who debarks from the ship that has arrived.

RECITATIVE

*(Seltsamet enters, carrying a barrel.
Members of his crew follow him.
Seltsamet waves and instructs them.)*

Seltsamet:

Hurry! Hurry!
Fançarëli! Mälf! Cüninghäm! Uebër!
Arcola! Del Vëchio! Tacac'haschi! Tüscadero!
Hurry! Bring those barrels here!

SONG 2 – SOLO (Seltsamet)

Seltsamet: Who wants a beer?

First round's on me
I have brought these barrels
From the Berber promised-land
There, the beer flows as freely as the Milwaukee
The beautiful river that cascades to the Talossan Sea

I have returned to Seville
I have found my mythical roots
I have returned mainly to brag
About how great the life I have found there is
Because there is the Promised Land where they know our language
And there I have made my fortune

I have come back to ask the players of my football team
To return with me to the Berber paradise
Because although the people there are great brewers
When they play football, they suck
So my former team would be able to kick their asses regularly
Yes, my friends, step up and have a beer with me

Have you seen my friend Cascourös
Who played as the keeper on my team?
As I remember, he loved beer
And if he was not killed by the mob on the night I left
After he blew our game against Castile, I would like him to accompany me back
With any of you who want to go

Obviously, you people won't be missed here
Because you have the spare time to come to the docks like this
So join me, you bums, on my return
Especially if you like beer
The Berber Promised Land accepts all! The shining peninsula calls you!
Who wants a beer?

*(Seltsamet begins to speak sotto-voce with the chorus.
Cascourös enters and sees Seltsamet.)*

SONG 3 – SOLO (Cascourös)

Cascourös: Seltsamet has returned! The rumours were not mistaken!
It is true, he is here, giving beer to the hobos.
In fact, he asked for me, his friend Cascourös,
Which is who I am
If you don't recognize me, perhaps another singer portrayed me in the first opera
But in this opera it is I who portray Cascourös, so you should just get used to me

(Cascourös breaks through the crowd and embraces Selsamet, who is happy to see him.)

My lost friend, Seltsamet! I know that you are glad to see me
But I also know that you will not say so, because that would interrupt my singing
And I am the star of this opera
In fact, my name is in the title
So, with happiness but without words, listen to my song of welcome for you
Which tells of what happened while you were away

(Nutz enters, unseen. He listens with interest.)

Do you remember that girl Chilsa, the soprano?
Who you were so deeply in love with, or whatever?
Your love for her was the theme of the first opera that I mentioned earlier
Tell me if you don't remember her, okay?
Like me, she and you might have been portrayed
By other singers when the audience saw that opera

Chilsa dumped you on the night of our match against Castile,
The night when the angry mob hunted me after we lost
And as quickly as she dumped you, she returned to you after she dumped Nutz,
The star of the Castile team
Who stands here with us on the stage, dressed all in black
He is quite conspicuous to the audience, but we have no inkling that he is there

This Chilsa I spoke about is marrying me tomorrow
What an operatic coincidence that you would arrive here now!
And without any idea at all about my marriage!
Apparently you didn't even notice the title of this opera?
But coincidences like this happen all the time in opera
It is simply the way it is, and the audience always buys it

It is very nice that you would arrive, just in time for the marriage
I sure hope that the marriage will go well and that nothing dramatic or disastrous will happen
I know that you don't care that I will marry Chilsa
Because you left her in these docks on that night, as she cried
But now she doesn't care about that anymore; now she is head-over-heels about me
Because, after all, she is as fickle as they come, my Chilsa

RECITATIVE

Seltsamet:

My friend! It is good to be here!

Cascourös:

We hail the return of the Berber of Seville. You must be my best man tomorrow!

Seltsamet:

Yes, I must! Otherwise, I would have no reason to appear in the rest of this opera.

Cascourös:

Good, good!

Seltsamet:

Now we should exit the stage.

Cascourös:

Indeed; it seems that the unseen man over there wishes to sing.

*(Cascourös and Seltsamet exit arm-in-arm.
Nutz moves to the center of the stage.)*

SONG 4 – SOLO (Nutz)

Nutz: I am Nutz, I am Nutz, I am Nutz
Even though to you, I may not look like him
Maybe this is because someone else portrayed Nutz in the first opera
By now, you should be used to these explanations
But I am Nutz, I am Nutz, I am Nutz
And you probably should be aware
That in the second act, you will see people who also may not resemble
The characters who you remember
But the program is correct. We are a group of actors in these roles
So, with this out of the way,
As you heard, I was this Chilsa-girl's first choice
But she dumped me for that loser Seltsamet
Who ran away from here and left her crying
And now behold! she decides to marry Cascourös
Any normal person would simply shake his head and deal with it
But I am a character in an opera
So I must hatch an evil plan
That is excessively complicated
And that is sure to ruin all their lives
Also, I must stand here and tell you about this plan
While displaying many evil theatrical glances
However, if I tell you all about my plan
You would not need to watch the act that follows
In order to know what will happen
And how fun would that be?
So I will spend the rest of this song laughing like a maniac
While repeating over and over that I am Nutz

Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha, I am Nutz!
Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha, I am Nutz!
I am Nutz, I am Nutz, ha-ha-ha, I am Nutz!
I am Nutz, I am Nutz, ha-ha-ha, I am Nutz!
I am Nutz, I am Nutz, I am Nutz!

(CURTAIN)

ACT II. A dressing-room in a church

*(Chilsa is alone, and stands near a dressing-table and a mirror.
There is a large window that shows a view of the outdoors.)*

SONG 5 – ARIA (Chilsa)

Today I marry
That is why I am here in this dressing-room
Looking at myself in the mirror and brushing my hair
And wearing the traditional Berber wedding dress
The librettists were too lazy to do any research
To learn what such a traditional dress should look like
They have left that for the costume designer of this production
So, if my wardrobe is not correct, it is not their fault

Today I marry
Who would have thought that I would marry Cascourös?
At first, my heart was taken by Nutz, and later by Seltsamet
Now I have hitched my wagon to Cascourös, and I am totally in love with him
But obviously, I am flighty, so you shouldn't have great hopes that it will last
But for now, at least, I am the happiest very beautiful woman in the world
And soon, I will be Cascourös's wife
I wonder what his surname is, for soon it will be mine also

(Nutz appears at the window. He listens, unseen by Chilsa.)

Today I marry
And my best friend will be my maid of honour
Her name is Trambeta. You might remember her from the first opera
She received tremendous and undue standing ovations for her tiny part
She will arrive here at the church very soon
To be my maid of honour, like I said
This is a vital plot point, so I thought I would repeat it
I think that if I look out the window, I will see her approaching

Today I marry
And in the next act, you will see the wedding scene
And all will happen exactly as it was planned
If you assume that Trambeta, my maid of honour, will arrive without any problems
I wonder where she is. I will continue to look out the window
Which should signal to you in the audience that you should look out the window too
Because maybe something important will happen
Did you notice that this was another Talossan opera without females in the first act?

Today I marry

SONG 6 – DUET (Nutz and Chilsa)

Nutz: Today she marries
The third man of her dreams
That is what she thinks
But I will prevent it

I stand here at her window
In plain view
But like the men at the docks
She does not see me either

I am singing as loudly as I can
So that everyone in the theatre can hear me
But Chilsa over there doesn't hear me
And there is not even any glass in this window

Yes, I must get on with my plotting
Thank you for reminding me
I heard that she is waiting for Trambeta
So this is what I will do too

Yes, there is more to my plan
When Trambeta arrives, I will grab her
Before she knocks on the door of the church
Here she is, in fact. Wish me luck!

*(Trambeta nears.
Chilsa points at her.)*

Trambeta! Hello! Remember me?
I play for the Castile Poets
You are headed for the marriage of Cascourös
Please allow me to drug you with ether now

*(Trambeta puts her face into Nutz's hankerchief and falls unconscious;
Nutz drags her to the door of the church and knocks.
Chilsa hurries to the door.)*

Chilsa: Where is that damn Trambeta?
She will be late
I look out the window
And I see nothing

He is correct – I do not see him
I am looking out the window, directly at him
But I sing in ignorance of him
Suspend your disbelief

He is correct – I do not hear him
This lets him plot against me
While I continue to pretend ignorance
And sing the same tune as he sings

His plan doesn't seem very evil
Waiting for someone is not too nasty
This cannot be the complete plan
Is he crazy, or am I?

I have waited for her
So certainly I should see Trambeta now
But even though she is there, plain as day
Only you and Nutz can see her

Finally! My maid of honour arrives!
Her knock seems very masculine
But that's Trambeta for you
It's no surprise that all the boys prefer me

(Chilsa opens the door.)

Yes, it is Trambeta
But also it is I, Nutz
The first love of your life
For about eight minutes of the first opera

Oh, Nutz, hello!
I see that you have drugged Trambeta
Perhaps this is part of your evil plan
To ruin my wedding day

That is right
My next act will be to tie you up
But first, you should run around the room
Failing dramatically to escape

I can do that
I will wail and despair over my situation
While wishing frantically that I could be helped
By any of the people in the adjacent nave

Your cries will be useless
And although I find myself clear across the room
Somehow you will fail to walk through the open door
To alert anyone to my intentions

*(Chilsa stands in the open doorway, her arms flailing in the air;
she is mysteriously unable to exit through the door.)*

To escape does seem impossible
So I will bow to the inevitable
And struggle feebly when you bind me
And gag me, which will stop my singing

(Chilsa helps Nutz tie her up, and she inserts a gag into her own mouth.)

Now I remove the veil from your head
And Trambeta will marry Cascourös in your place!
Plans like this that involve mistaken identities
Are accomplished easily in opera

*(Nutz puts the veil on Trambeta with a dramatic gesture, and he points at her.
Trambeta begins to awaken.)*

Today she marries!

SONG 7 – SOLO (Xhördi)

*(Xhördi enters through the open door, with the cane of a blind man and the wardrobe of a priest.
Trambeta attempts to stand, but Nutz stops her with a threatening motion toward Chilsa.
Nutz is concerned that his plan is thwarted, but he sees that it is Xhördi, who is blind, and Nutz relaxes.)*

Xhördi: Are you decent?
Oh never mind! I am playing a blind man
It is I, the priest who will perform your marriage
(to the audience) You may remember me as the football referee in the first opera
Yes, I am the same blind man
But in this opera I have the collar and the role of a priest
Referee by profession, priest in my spare time
(to "Chilsa") Are you ready for the marriage?

(Trambeta tries to respond and to escape, but Nutz stops her.)

Hey over there!
Your guests sent me to see if everything is okay
We heard some sounds from in here that worried us
As if a kidnapping were taking place
So I was asked to go and see what is happening
I was happy to do it, because it augments my role
And God knows that my career could use the extra help
Are you prepared for the marriage?

(Trambeta tries and fails again to respond, but is stifled by Nutz's finger over his lips.)

Will you answer me?
I hope that everything is well here
Because if anything goes wrong in this ceremony
And I truly mean to say anything at all
I will double my fee, and I know that you cannot afford that
So you will be sold to the convent offering the highest bid
This might seem a bit harsh, but we priests of Spain ran the Inquisition
Are you ready for the marriage?

(Trambeta's spirit is broken by this; she resigns herself to substituting for Chilsa, and she rises.)

Nutz (in falsetto): I am nearly ready
But my damn maid of honour did not show up
That is why I made the sounds of a kidnapping

That explains it
Now hurry up and let's do this thing
(to the audience) I would not actually double my fee
That was a blind man's bluff
I use that threat often to force brides to ignore their cold feet
And to stop with the sounds of kidnappings
Of course, the part about the convent was true
(to "Chilsa") Are you ready for the marriage?

Nutz (in falsetto): Yes, I am ready for the marriage!

(Trambeta, veiled, takes Xhördi's hand. They exit while Nutz laughs like a maniac.)

(CURTAIN)

ACT III. The nave and the altar of a church

*(Seltsamet and Cascourös stand at the altar. A clothes rack with hangers is nearby.
Xhördi stands there also, prepared to perform the marriage.
He wears a stole over the uniform of a football referee, and holds a liturgical book, upside-down.)*

SONG 8 – DUET (Seltsamet and Cascourös)

Seltsamet: That was a great party!

The bachelor party last night

Yes, you did

I'm talking about where you and I went after leaving the docks

Now I will wear the traditional garb of a Berber best-man
The details of which were also left to the costume designer of this opera
I remove my distinctive apparel of red and green
And hang this change-of-clothes here where anyone could take them
I only hope that noone decides to steal these clothes
And disguise himself as me
The members of my ship's crew usually are too drunk to see well
And they would surely accept as me anyone who wears these garments
And an impostor could sail my ship to the Berber Promised Land
Where the beer flows as freely as the Milwaukeee

Cascourös: What party was that?

I didn't attend any party!

I went straight home from the theatre!
In fact, I asked you if you wanted to go for a beer
And you said no, and that you were tired
Now I find that you went to a party
And did not invite me

I don't know about you, but I just went backstage
Where I waited for the curtain to rise on this act
Which reminds me – this opera is named for me
And yet I did not appear at all in the second act
Does that seem fair to you?
Here we are for my wedding
We wait for my bride to walk down the aisle

Yes, that would suck
But I am still angry that you left me hanging last night
Maybe we could go for a beer after the performance?
That's a good idea, huh?
What do you say?

RECITATIVE

(Trambeta walks down the aisle, veiled.)

Xhördi:

What a beautiful bride!

Members of the Chorus:

She doesn't look like herself.

Seltsamet:

How strange! In that veil, she looks exactly like Trambeta.

Members of the Chorus:

Do you think that something has gone wrong?

Members of the Chorus (echoing):

Maybe, maybe, maybe, maybe.

*(Trambeta, veiled, stands next to Cascourös, facing each other, before Xhördi.
The Chorus is dressed in red and green like the players and fans of the football team, the Seville Dreamers.
Nutz lurks on the edges of the stage; he drags Chilsa, bound and gagged, and he watches the marriage.)*

SONG 9 – SOLO (Xhördi)

Xhördi: Fígaro! Fígaro! Fígaro!

(spoken): Oops! I'm sorry! That's the wrong marriage.

(Xhördi changes the page in his book.)

(singing): Cáscourös! Cáscourös! Cáscourös!

RECITATIVE

Cascourös:

Hang on! The stress should be on the final syllable of my name, not on the first.

Xhördi:

It's a song. The tune creates false stress. It's okay.

Cascourös:

But the Arestada on Spelling says that it is spoken with the stress on the "ös".

Xhördi:

This opera was written using the Old Spelling.

Cascoûrös:

Even so, the stress is the same, no?

Xhördi:

No one knows.

Cascourös:

Okay, but I don't think that the Committee will be happy with you.

Xhördi:

The librettists are members of the Committee.

Seltsamet:

And they made up your name.

Cascourös:

So?

Xhördi:

So maybe in the next opera we will find out that it becomes "Cáscourös", with irregular stress.

Seltsamet:

God knows they will have plenty of left-over diacritical marks for you.

Cascourös:

Whatever.

Nutz:

Still, Father, you are reading from the wrong page.

Xhördi:

What do you expect? I'm blind, after all. Give me a break.

(Xhördi changes the page again, and clears his throat.)

SONG 10 – REFRAIN (Xhördi and the cast)

Xhördi: Dearly beloved! Dearly beloved! Dearly beloved!
We are here to celebrate a marriage
Marriage is what brings us together today
Marriage, that blessed arrangement
That dream within a dream

Chorus (standing): Huzzah! A dream for a Dreamer!

The vows! The vows! The vows!
I'll ask you some questions most solemnly
The answers will bind you immediately
Completely, finally, and legally
So you must pay attention attentively

(Nutz peers at the ceremony from behind a piece of scenery.)

Nutz: Wow! My plan is almost achieved!

Cascourös! Cascourös! Cascourös!
Will you take this woman freely,
And promise to love her devotedly,
To cleave unto her exclusively,
By the rite of our Mother Church most holy?

Cascourös: I will! I will! I will!

Cascourös! Cascourös! Cascourös!
Will you always support her comfortably,
Whether you live richly or poorly,
And whether sickly or healthily,
Until you are dead most mortally?

Cascourös: I will! I will! I will!

And the bride! And the bride! And the bride!
Will you take this man absolutely,
And promise to honour him lovingly,
And to love and obey him reverently,
By the rite of our Mother Church most holy?

Trambeta: I will! I will! I will!

Miss! Miss! Miss!
Will you receive him as your spouse gladly,
And to stand by your man daily,
To unite to him exclusively,
Until you are dead most mortally?

Trambeta: I will! I will! I will!

Dear couple! Dear couple! Dear couple!
So treasure your love eternally
And now kiss your bride amorously
For by the power vested in me legally
I pronounce that you're officially:

Man and wife!
Man and wife!
Man and wife!
Man and wife!

*(Trambeta is unveiled clumsily by Xhördi in preparation for the kiss.
Everyone except Xhördi gasps dramatically.)*

Chorus: Who is that? Who is that? Who is that?
Oh no! Oh no! Oh no!

Cascourös: It's Trambeta!

*(Xhördi pauses –
for approximately the time of the first phrase of each verse of this song –
while everyone else stares at Trambeta in shock.)*

There's been some confusion here, obviously
But I must advise you, unfortunately
That though I may have erred insignificantly
Nonetheless this marriage binds you permanently

*(Xhördi points at Cascourös and Trambeta.
Nutz helpfully guides the arm of the blind man while Xhördi tries to point.)*

He said "I will"
She said "I will"
Cascourös will
Trambeta will

(Xhördi points at them both simultaneously, with Nutz's assistance.)

Man and wife!
Man and wife!
Man and wife!
Man and wife!

SONG 11 – SOLO (Nutz)

Nutz: The marriage is concluded
I have ruined all their lives
Also, the wish of the priest was granted
He has a larger part
In this opera than he had in the first
But I bet that still it isn't enough for him
Personally, I don't buy him as a blind man
But it's always nice to help a fellow actor

Now comes the best part
My excessive gloating
And my flamboyant escape
The substitution of the bride
Has put all the people into a stupor
So they are forced simply to suffer through my song
And put up with me and my nauseating boasts
Much like you in the audience

So now, my final flourish
My final words about my plan
Seltsamet's change-of-clothes was the final plot point
That the librettists came up with
They were stuck for what should happen after the marriage
And for what I would do after I gloated
They inserted his change of clothes at the beginning of this act
Rather clumsily, if you ask me

Their stupor is convenient
Now I dress myself in Seltsamet's uniform
While the crowd watches me, powerless
Now I rush out to claim his ship
His crew will believe that I am their captain
I will assume his life in the Promised Land
And I will leave him stranded here
Again he shall be the Berber of Seville

(Nutz releases Chilsa to the crowd, who only notice her when Nutz eventually tugs the shirt of a member of the chorus and Nutz hands her over to him. While Chilsa unties herself, Nutz exits the stage and escapes.)

(With Chilsa released, she, Trambeta, Cascourös, and Seltsamet fall to the stage with nervous breakdowns. They sob and wail loudly, all throwing tantrums.)

RECITATIVE

Seltsamet:

This sucks!

Cascourös:

Tell me about it!

Chilsa (to Cascourös):

My darling!

Trambeta:

My husband!

Seltsamet:

My beer!

Xhördi:

My fee?

(Chilsa, Trambeta, Cascourös, and Seltsamet sob uncontrollably for the remainder of the act. Xhördi wanders aimlessly, presenting his hand to collect his fee.)

SONG 12 - CHORUS

Chorus: What a shame! Nutz has succeeded
We would love to have prevented his escape
But this opera is a tragedy
So this is how it must end

(They repeat this verse many times.)

(Suddenly, the Chorus joins arms and dances a high-kick while exiting.)

Oh, we're the boys in the chorus
We hope you liked our show
We know you rooted for us
But now we have to go

(Chilsa, Trambeta, Cascourös, and Seltsamet continue to sob.)

(CURTAIN)