

"Orestes, last tango"

OPERA TANGO

Libretto: BEATRIZ GAMBARTES. Music: DIEGO VILA.

(Based on "El Reñidero" by Sergio De Cecco)

ACT I

1.0. "THE DUEL"

Overture. Dramatic Choreography.

Morales and another man.

In the middle of a storm, there is a glimpse of a duel between two men. One falls dead, a ray of lightning shows the other man adjust his hat and exit.

2.1. "THE FUNERAL"

The neighborhood (dancers). Elena, Nélica, Soriano, Teresa and Vicente. The Party Delegate. Morales. (Spoken over musical theme).

They mourn Morales. We hear diverse comments about the most feared and respected man of Palermo. They murmur about how his death occurred and about the relationship between his wife Nélica and Soriano, Morales' right hand and man of confidence.

Elena, distressed, remains alone. Nélica, her mother, accompanied by Soriano, with an attitude that contrasts with Elena's desolation, receives the condolences of the Party Delegate.

2.2. "CALLING YOU..."

Elena's Aria

Elena, submerged in grief, ponders the figure of her father and evokes it. His presence is still alive in the house. "How can I still live, lost, I look for you, I call you...and you are not there...". Distressed, she laments "It was just today that I was in your arms, until even today the world used to shine and now everything is the yesterday that wounds me". Her lament is intercalated with the neighbors' comments. The memory of her father is so intense: "I walk now without dreams, without course, abandoned, calling you, calling you, calling you..." that he appears on scene.

2.3. "THE MILONGA"

Choreography. Elena's flashback.

Morales, Soriano, The Lady of the Milonga and the *arrabal*.

Elena evokes her father as the most feared and admired man among the *malevaje*. It is a festive milonga in the outskirts of town, the *malevaje* makes a show of its skill and courage. Morales, the *guapo* of Palermo, stands out among them. A skilled dancer and knife-handler, he is respected by the men and coveted by the women. (The myth of the *guapo* is established).

2.4. THE FUNERAL. "CALLING YOU"

Elena's Aria (conclusion):

Elena comes out of flashback and returns to the scene of the funeral. Conclusion of her lament "Lost I look for you, I call you ...and you are not there".

3.1. "THE FUNERAL."

Dialogues a secco. Elena -Nélida – Soriano - Teresa - Vicente – The neighbors.

Nélida tries to approach her daughter, who rejects her. Soriano asks the women for moderation, since everyone is always anxious to lend their ears to the goings-on of the Morales household.

The relationship between the three characters is established: Elena's hatred of Nélida and Soriano and her doubts about her father's suspicious death.

3.2. "WHAT DESOLATION"

Nélida's Aria.

Nélida moves away to sing "What desolation, I am a stranger here, they hear no more my voice . What desolation, I am that barren earth where love has grown no more. I want to dream what never was". An old hag interrupts the funeral to accuse her, along with Soriano, of Morales' death and forebodes the arrival of Orestes.

3.3. "WHEN ORESTES RETURNS"

Trio Elena - Nélida y Soriano.

The name of Orestes unleashes different expectations.

Elena: "Orestes will be my avenger".

Nélida: "Orestes! Why speak his name? I want no more deaths."

Soriano: "I won't run like a coward. I was never humbled by the father, nor will I be now."

Nélida exits, pushed away by Elena's hatred, Soriano follows her.

4.1. "BUT NOT FOR ME"

Duet. Waltz. Elena and Vicente.

They run across Vicente, friend of Orestes, who arrives to give Elena his condolences. Vicente tries to distance her from the haughtiness and violence of the paternal world to which she has clung and encourages her to build a life of her own: "Outside there's another world, without duel, without worry, outside there's another life". Elena does not accept his arguments: "But not for me. Today I know I was happy once". She rejects him and demands of him the courage and manliness to execute justice with his own hands.

Elena's flashback.

Elena, who is left alone, begins to evoke the happy days with her father. The memory of the past moves her to bring those days to life once more. She rids herself of her mourning, taking the aspect of a young girl. She begins to call her father, who appears.

5.1. "SEDUCTION AND ABANDONMENT"

Choreography between Elena and Morales.

Elena, attracted to the presence of Morales, enters the flashback space. They are left alone, surrendered to the dance of seduction and abandonment. Each time she is abandoned by Morales in their dance, Elena painfully faces the ghosts that accost her, the different visions of her mother and the people who surround her.

5.2. "ELENA'S WORLD AND HER GHOSTS".

Dialogues and Choreographic situation..

Elena - Morales - Nélida - Teresa – Soriano.

Elena's different links are established. The relationship of competition and jealousy with her mother and the people who surround her.

Nélida-Teresa (the mother and young people of her age).

Nélida: "It would seem like Elena likes scaring men away".

Teresa: "Oh, Ms. Nélida, if she goes on like this she'll end up at home, dressing saints".

Nélida-Soriano (the feminine and seduction).

Nélida: "You do know how to speak to a woman".

Soriano: "Not always, depends".

Nélida-Morales (the woman):

Nélida: "Take it easy, you seem impatient...Don't grab me so hard, I'm not going to escape".

To escape these ghosts, Elena takes refuge once more in the arms of her father, only to be abandoned when she finds Nélida in Morales' arms. Teresa's reappearance separates her from that vision: "Elena, you'll never marry like that!".

5.3 Soriano's SONG. (Traditional theme: "WHEN YOU'RE NOT HERE") and Nélida's SONG. (Traditional theme "UNO").

Quodlibet of both themes. Dialogue between Elena and Teresa.

Elena, jealous, runs toward her mother: "You think my father will come back for you? No, it's for me! And I'll put the red dress on for him to see". We hear Soriano sing "When you are not here the flower has no scent, if you leave me here the mist too soon surrounds me". Elena, speaking to herself, maintains with rancor that the song is dedicated to her mother, while each day she feels more alone, now that her father – sole object of her interest- does not give her the attention she needs. Nélida joins Soriano's song "If I had the heart, the same one that I lost, if I could like yesterday love without apprehension" while Soriano continues with his. Elena listens with desperation and compares herself to her mother. She sees herself as older and more sad. She asks herself: "And if I change my hairdo?". Teresa reappears, indifferent to what has happened, and takes her to the neighborhood club.

5.4 "CRIOLLO PRIDE".

The Social Club Dance. Choreography, Song and Dialogues.

Elena – Nélida –Teresa – Morales - Soriano - Vicente- dancers.

The club orchestra irrupts. Familial setting typical to a neighborhood club in clear contrast to the shady Milonga of the *arrabal* of 2.2. Elena, Nélida and Teresa are seated, observing the dance. Nélida talks with Teresa. Elena seems disgusted and tense, as if she is waiting for someone. A group of young men approach to invite Elena and Teresa to the dance floor. Elena rejects them. Teresa accepts. Nélida talks with Vicente and observes the dance. Morales arrives with Soriano. His provocative and defiant attitude is not in tone with the cordial atmosphere of the place. Elena intercepts her father: "I've been waiting for you, papá". "I haven't danced with anybody". Paying no heed to Elena, Morales goes to Nélida and violently takes her away from the dance. Elena, ignored, desperately goes after them. The dance continues, indifferent to what has transpired.

5.5 "THE SHUTTERS"

Elena – Nélida and Morales.

A beam of light shows the figures of Nélida and Morales, interlaced. Elena spies on them with increasing anguish. Like a wounded animal, she falls, beaten. End of Flashback.

6.1 "I AM THE WOUND" THE FUNERAL..

Elena's Aria.

Shattered, Elena returns to her mourning, sings her need for vengeance: "I am the wound that will never heal. Resentment that relieves your absence, resentment that sustains my life".

6.2 DUET between Elena and Nélida.

Quodlibet of both themes.

Nélida enters, retakes her theme "What desolation! My life is this barren earth where love has grown no more....My dreams all devastated by a ruthless wind". Elena defies her mother: "Now

that they have torn you from my side, you have not gone. In my veins beats the pulse of your blood" joining her theme to Nélica's.

7.1 "THE ARRIVAL OF ORESTES". (*A secco*)

Entire company.

The musical atmosphere of the funeral returns, we hear the neighbors murmur. Nélica senses the arrival of her son. The figure of a dark man is outlined, for whom a path is opened with fear. Orestes has arrived. After the initial confusion, Nélica, emotionally, recognizes him "Orestes!" Elena runs to her brother to inform him of their father's death. Orestes responds "There is no stab wound that can kill a man like him". Elena embraces him while she exclaims: "Once more there's a man in this house!"

7.2 "YOU LEFT".

Orestes' Aria.

Orestes walks towards where his father lies. Oblivious to everyone he sings "You left and all life left with you. I was left with this anguish unbound. Now I am here to continue your line, now I am here so that you will not die."

7.3 "TRANSFER OF INHERITANCE"

Tango Ritual: Malevaje Choreography. Orestes, the malevaje, Morales and "The Lady of the Milonga".

The funeral is transformed into a metaphysical place, the assistants transform to participate in the ritual. Nélica, Elena and Soriano start disappearing from Orestes' view. The *malevaje* led by "The Lady of the Milonga" pays homage to Morales the guapo. The Lady of the Milonga moves towards Morales' body and lifts it in an embrace. Together they dance passionately, they are a symbol of this fierce, sensual and arrogant world. The entourage takes Morales' body. The Lady of the Milonga faces Orestes and puts Morales' knife in his hand with determination. Orestes, observed by Elena, is left alone looking at his father's weapon.

ACT II

8.1 "YOU STOLE MY ILLUSION OF LOVING YOU".

Nélica's Aria.

It is night, Nélica is alone, she looks at the empty circle of the fighting pit. In her hands she holds Morales' clothes. She looks at them until the touch of the clothes fills her with anguish. She throws them into the center of the ring. The duel now is between her and memory.

"Before I knew your name, I already dreamt you. I imagined your eyes, drew the outline of your mouth...you were the man that I was waiting for. So much fire, so much ardor and you left me empty...empty. You stole my illusion of loving you".

9.1 "THE ARRABAL".

Choreography and Soriano's Tango. (Soriano and the malevaje)

A milonga erupts. The suburb is peopled with *compadritos* and their wives. Soriano takes part in the dance. The daily life of the slums. Soriano sings his credo: his adhesion to the values of a man of courage and valor. "Arrabal threshold of courage, mark that molded my infancy, outside the world is distant and foreign...A true man in the milonga and on the track of life, I've won my fame by strength of boldness....When it's time to fight I know of no bowing or evasion".

10.1 "ORESTES' DOUBT".

Double Duet: Elena and Orestes. Nélica and Soriano, then a Quartet.

Elena and Orestes engage in a dialogue that intermixes with that of Nélica and Soriano. Elena tells her brother of how his father was left to bleed away in solitude and how it is his duty to find the culprit. Nélica asks Soriano to leave but he does not accept, considering it an escape. The texts of both duets are interlaced.

Elena: "You must unmask the culprit. It's your duty. Don't doubt, don't waver."

Orestes: "And if it was a clean duel and he died by his own laws?"

Nélica: "I will not let them confront each other, this time it's you and my son".

Soriano: "The cards are drawn. One can't live without honor."

Nélica: "What does honor matter to me next to life."

Elena: "Only with treason can a man like him be killed."

Orestes: "I know what my duty is if there is a culprit."

Soriano: "I'd rather lose you than lose my honor."

Orestes: "I do not lack the courage to honor my father."

Nélica: "Elena will harass him until someone dies!"

Soriano: "It's time to enclose the heart and face luck!"

Elena: "Revenge must be today."

10.2. DIALOGUES *A SECCO*.

Elena: "And if the murderer turns out to be Soriano?"

Nélica: "The hatred has her drowned". Soriano: "Until now I played deaf because Morales was here but as of today...". Orestes: "I am here, Soriano. You, my father's man, outside guarding the door and I, the son, inside my house."

Soriano restrains himself and exits. Nélica approaches Orestes with sadness but Elena, the victor, intercepts her: "You better not keep the other waiting". Nélica exits.

11.1. "THE AIR WAS BURNING"

Duet and Trio: Elena and Orestes. Soriano, in flashback.

Left alone, Elena unleashes her hatred: "Nobody seemed to notice...just me...only her, him and me...the three nailed on the same hook, the air was burning and I was blazing, blazing, blazing! Orestes intercalates "Your resentment is an ancient thing, always full of fury, spying from within the darkness like an animal in heat, ambushing inflamed... always alone, without a man...". With a rhythm that grows increasingly dizzying and anguishing, Elena remembers Soriano, who makes himself present singing his own malicious ballad "What a thing so awkward is a woman without a man, widow without being a wife, a field of nettles in bed, of a woman without a man...".

Violently, Elena confronts Soriano: "Be quiet! Don't sing!...You play the rooster when my father's not here! I would kill you!". Soriano, grabbing her hands: "How? With these two little hands?"

Elena scared by the closeness of Soriano's body, frees herself "You disgust me, don't touch me!"

Soriano: "I think all men disgust you".

Elena: "Damn you!" Soriano retakes the irony of the ballad and Elena interrupts: "And what is woman for whom one man is not enough?"

The vision of Soriano disappears. Orestes, oblivious to his sister's recollection, continues his song until Elena, desperate, tells him that she saw them "In the bed where you and I were born", and that is why they killed them.

Orestes accepts: "It is useless to shun our destiny". Elena, pressures: "It must be tonight". Orestes exits.

Elena: "I must not rest. Orestes is weak...he doubts. I must fill him with hatred".

12.1. "IT IS TIME TO ENCLOSE THE HEART"

Soriano's Aria.

Soriano confesses. "On her I anchored my affection and surrendered without mediocrity.... but destiny demands payment...it is time to enclose the heart".

12.2. "THE FIGHTING PIT"

Choreography. Orestes – Soriano – Vicente and the guapos.

Morales' men defy each other. The ritual: fighting is a festivity.

Orestes and Vicente observe without interfering. The men provoke Vicente, Orestes is held back so that he cannot intervene.

Vicente is beaten in the challenge and Orestes enters the pit to defend him, in the fighting he kills one of the men.

12.3. "IT IS USELESS TO SHUN OUR DESTINY"

Orestes' Aria.

Orestes is left alone "I am jailed in the trap that destiny has sown. Another has already written the direction of my days.

I'll have no more illusion, why should I dream, if chance has chosen another course for my life."

12.4. "THE CONFRONTATION"

Orestes goes in search of his destiny. Soriano appears, the two men face each other.

When they are close, Orestes reaches for his knife but Nélida's voice detains him. Orestes, overcome by his mother's voice, freezes.

Soriano withdraws, watching him with contempt.

Dialogues and flashbacks between Nélida and Orestes.

13.1. "YOU'RE NOT MADE TO KILL"

Duet and dialogue between Nélida and Orestes.

Nélida: "Orestes, you were not made to kill. You know not of hatred or rancor, you can still save yourself Orestes".

She affirms that Orestes was always like her and not like Morales. He rejects her, reaffirming his debt to his father.

Orestes: "You will not bend me, I am just like my father, I owe him everything that I am".

Nélida confesses that his father never loved him, that he hated Orestes, and that it was he who took him to commit the crime.

Orestes resists the affection his mother shows him: "I'm not the same as yesterday.

The prison, the loneliness and the remorse left nothing of the one I used to be".

Nélida starts singing a lullaby, to which Orestes surrenders for a few moments only to take up his initial attitude once more.

Nélida decides to tell him the truth.

13.2. "THE DECEPTION"

Nélida and Orestes. In flashback Morales - Soriano and the Delegate.

Morales, pressured by the Delegate of the Party, decides to turn in his son.

Nélida: "He took you to commit that crime and then he did not help you".

Soriano: (in flashback with the Delegate) "But what man would turn in his own son?"

Delegate: "Now Morales, you wouldn't want to be left out of the Party...would you? So Morales...should I take the good news to the candidate?"

Nélida: "He turned you in."

Orestes: "Coward."

13.3. "DUEL BETWEEN ORESTES AND MORALES"

Choreography. and "ALONE", Orestes' Aria.

Orestes falls apart "No, it cannot be, it isn't true". The figure of Morales grows like a large rooster ready for the fight, he goes to Orestes who, desperate, confronts him: "You betrayed me, I who gave you everything, who did it all for you".

Morales, indifferent to his pain, scolds him, lifts him and defies him. Contemptuously, he finally leaves.

Orestes: "What horror to know that I was nothing. What pain to know that I never mattered...I am no one, I am nothing. All I could win was your neglect and your treason.

Alone...like a pariah...alone...wounded and without faith, your loveless hand opened and condemned me".

14.1. "YOU WERE A FOOL"

Dialogue between Orestes and Vicente.

Vicente comforts his friend. He tells him that Morales was killed by time, that "*Guapos* like him strike less fear with each day".

Orestes: "But...who killed him?"

Vicente: "He killed himself, when he turned you in."

15.1. "THIS RELIEF"

Elena's Aria.

Elena, convinced that Soriano is dead, arrives in her red dress. She feels free of her obsessions.

"This relief is so new that I know not what to do. No more the moans that clamor, no more the whispers that howl. No more do the shutters creak at their closing. No more do the wood floors grumble under the weight of his feet...So much silence...so much it hurts."

15.2. "WE WERE TWO ORPHANS"

Duet between Elena and Orestes.

Orestes enters and observes Elena. "Poor Elena. I look at you and see that we were two orphans".

Elena, happy, asks her brother to not tell her anything, to not repent "Don't be afraid, just leave to me the bad, the sad, I can bear all of it without pain".

Both sing their liberty.

Orestes: "I have been freed. I can choose... a path, a tomorrow...to dream."

Elena: "I have been freed. I don't need... to watch, to ambush...to envy". Elena reaffirms her liberty because Soriano is dead.

Orestes responds that he did not kill Soriano because hatred does not become him.

Elena goes crazy.

15.3. "THIS IS WHERE COURAGE IS SHOWN"

Final Candombe. Entire company.

Elena: "You lost the final opportunity. Papá was right, you're not a man."

The men and women of the *malevaje* begin to enter.

Nélida, Vicente, the Lady of the Milonga, all appear to pressure Orestes who, desperate, oppressed by his sister and the *malevaje*, sees Morales enter.

He goes to him: "You never wanted to listen to me. I couldn't be like you". But his father ignores him once more, while Elena keeps scolding him.

Enter Soriano. Orestes in a last attempt to win his father, kills Soriano. Nélida runs to her son and stabs herself with the knife that he still holds in his hand.

Chaos is unleashed once more and everything starts up again. The deaths, Orestes' attempts to reach his father, Elena trying to reach Orestes and the *malevaje* surround them all.

Elena: "You lacked courage, you lacked valor to honor your father. To give it all for him."
The *malevaje*: "This is where courage is shown. To kill or be killed. Kill, kill."
Orestes: "I couldn't be just like you."
Soriano: "The house has lost control. There is no order."
Nélida: "My poor son! Orestes!"

In the end only the image of Morales is left standing.
Elena is thrown out of the group. She is left alone.

END

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