

LE MACON

Music by Daniel-François-Esprit Auber

Libretto by Eugène Scribe [& Germain Delavigne]

First Performance: Opéra-Comique, Paris, May 3, 1825

The first act represents the merry wedding of Roger, a mason, with Henrietta, sister of Baptiste, a locksmith. A jealous old hag, Mistress Bertrand, who would fain have married the nice young man, is wondering whence the poor mason has the money for his wedding, when suddenly a young nobleman, Léon de Mérinville, appears, greeting Roger warmly. He relates to the astonished hearers that Roger saved his life, but would not take any reward, nor tell his name. Roger explains that the nobleman put so much money into his pockets, that it enabled him to marry his charming Henrietta, but Mérinville is determined to do more for him. Meanwhile Roger tries to withdraw from the ball with his young wife; but Henrietta is called back by her relations, according to custom. Roger, being left alone, is accosted by two unknown men, who, veiling his eyes, force him to follow them to a spot unknown to him, in order to do some mason-work for them. It is to the house of Abdallah, the Turkish ambassador, that he is led. The latter has heard that his mistress Irma, a young Greek maiden, is about to take flight with a French officer, who is no other than de Mérinville.

The lovers are warned by a slave, named Rica, but it is too late; Abdallah's people overtake and bind them. They are brought into a cavern, the entrance to which Roger is ordered to wall up. There, before him, he finds his friend and brother-in-law, Baptiste, who was likewise caught, and is now forced to help him. Recognizing in the officer his benefactor, Roger revives hope in him by singing a song which Léon heard him sing at the time he saved his life.

Meanwhile, Henrietta has passed a dreadful night, not being able to account for her husband's absence. In the morning Mistress Bertrand succeeds in exciting the young wife's sorrow and jealousy to a shocking degree, so that when Roger at last appears, she receives him with a volley of reproaches and questions.

Roger, unhappy about Mérinville's fate and ignorant of where he has been in the night, scarcely listens to his wife's complaints, until Henrietta remarks that she well knows where he has been, Mistress Bertrand having recognized the carriage of the Turkish ambassador, in which he was wheeled away.

This brings light into Roger's brain, and without more ado he rushes to the police, with whose help the poor prisoners are delivered. Roger returns with Mérinville to his wife's house, where things are cleared up in the most satisfactory manner.