

## **LES HUGUENOTS**

Music by Giacomo Meyerbeer

Libretto by Eugène Scribe and Emile Deschamps

First Performance: Opéra, Paris, February 29, 1836

The core of the story is the massacre of the Huguenots on St. Bartholomew's Day in Paris, in August 1572. Peace between the Catholics and Huguenots is finally to be declared on the occasion of the marriage of Queen Marguerite de Valois. Count de Nevers therefore includes in a banquet to his Catholic friends the Huguenot nobleman Raoul de Nangis. When each is called on to relate an amorous adventure, Raoul tells of an unknown beauty he cannot forget. A lady is announced; Raoul recognizes her as his unknown. She is Valentine, Nevers' betrothed, who asks Nevers to release her from the vow. As it is the Queen's wish, Nevers accedes. The Queen's page, Urbain, summons Raoul to an interview with the Queen, his eyes blindfolded. The Queen brings Valentine and Raoul together, but Raoul refuses the betrothal since he believes Valentine still to be attached to Nevers. Valentine, deeply hurt, marries Nevers. Her father, the Comte de St. Bris, swears vengeance, challenges Raoul to a duel, and arranges to have him set on by assassins. But the Queen intervenes, and Raoul learns the truth about Valentine. He secretly says goodbye to her and overhears the plot for the massacre of Huguenots. The signal is to be the tolling of the bell of St. Germain; the monks consecrate the swords of the conspirators in a stirring ceremony. Raoul leaves his love to join the victims, and with his servant and companion Marcel, who is wounded, seeks refuge in a church. Valentine finds him with the news that Nevers has been killed; she may marry him if he will convert to Catholicism. He refuses, whereupon she declares herself of his faith, and Marcel pronounces nuptials over the couple. St. Bris discovers them, and as the trio defy the Cross of Lorraine, murders them all.