

## CANTIGA NO. 14

Here we have Hilarión Eslava's take on a Cántiga de Santa Maria, one of hundreds Spanish medieval songs written in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, often describing miracles and veneration of Santa Maria, the mother of Jesus. As can be seen by the images on the cover page of this score, these pieces were written in beautifully illustrated codex form.

This particular cantiga is attributed to King Alfonso X, also known as "The Wise". Although Eslava refers to it as No. 14, it is actually No. 13 – the story of Elbo, the Thief, who was hanged for his crimes, but survived through the divine intervention of Santa Maria. Eslava only used the refrain and the first of the six verses included in the cantiga.

Eslava's orchestral arrangement starts out rather simply, but grows steadily in grandeur and complexity as the piece progresses. It's really quite beautiful!

Included Lyrics:

Assi como Jesucristo estando na cruz salvou  
un ladron, assi sa madre outro de morte livrou.

E por end' un gran miragre vos direi desta razon  
que feze Santa Maria dun mui malfeitor ladron  
que Elbo por nom' avia mas sempr' en sa oraçon  
a ela s' acomendava e aquelo lle prestou.

This Cantiga is more fully described in the Oxford University "Cantigas de Santa Maria" database, which can be explored at [http://csm.mml.ox.ac.uk/index.php?p=poem\\_list](http://csm.mml.ox.ac.uk/index.php?p=poem_list). Oxford provides the following synopsis of the full text of Cantiga 13:

A thief named Elbo always prayed to the Virgin and commended himself to her. One day he was caught stealing and the magistrate ordered him to be hanged. As Elbo was hanging on the gallows, the Virgin supported his feet so that he did not choke. He stayed on the gallows for three days. The magistrate passed by, noticed the thief was still alive, and had the rope adjusted. The Virgin continued to protect Elbo. The thief spoke to the magistrate and his men, explaining that the Virgin had been keeping him alive. The magistrate praised the Virgin and had him taken down from the gallows. Elbo joined a monastery.

A useful pronunciation guide for the lyrics can be found at <http://www.cantigasdesantamaria.com/csm/13>