

Additional Notes for “Pasodoble para banda militar” by Hilarión Eslava

This interesting and rather uncharacteristic piece (for Eslava) is found in his treatise “Escuela de Composición, Tratado Cuarto – De la Instrumentación”, published ca. 1870. It is presented as part of the treatise’s seventh section, on the specific subject of band and *charanga* music, *charanga* being defined in this context as a band grouping without reed or percussion instruments.

This particular piece is described as a “pasodoble con un breve trio” (“a *pasodoble* with a brief *trio*”). Originally a form of military quick-march, *pasodobles* (lit. “double-step”) are a popular form of band music in Spain and parts of Latin America played in military functions, bullfights, festivals, and as dance pieces.

At the conclusion of the piece, Eslava offers the following additional notes:

“Note in the preceding piece: First, that although it is given the classification of “simple period”, as in earlier examples, this piece really features two periods: the first one, which is the principal one, consisting of three phrases and the *coda*; and the second one, which is the *trio* added for the practice of the elements of the *charanga*, containing a single phrase 16 measures long; secondly, that in the first of those two phrases, the instruments that sing the melody are given the character of *forte*, while the accompanying instruments are assigned *mezzo-forte*, and although this is not of great importance, as it is well known that the melody part must always dominate the harmonic part regardless of other indications, it is written thus here in order to make this point more obvious, which is often not scrupulously followed in the printed score; third: that in the second phrase, which begins in the twentieth measure and is the one that requires the greatest strength and energy, the singing instruments are assigned the character *ff*, while the accompanying ones are set as *f*. Note also that in this second phase, the bass drum and cymbals, which could have been used in the former first part, have been reserved for this second one, in order to further highlight it and that so it is played with the greatest possible energy and brilliance; fourth: that in the third phrase, the effects of alternating *mf* and *f* are combined; and fifth: that in the fourth phrase, which is the *trio*, although the dominant character is *f*, the effect of variety is achieved by simply silencing the sharper instruments and the percussion.

The purpose of these indications is to call to the attention of the students the means that must be used in order to avoid monotony, which is the most common defect in pieces of this genre that require energy and brilliance by their own nature.

Caution: As bands and *charangas* not only play pieces composed for them, but also works arranged from orchestral, voice, or piano compositions, it is necessary that the arranger carefully select the key signature that is best suited for the band or *charanga* that is closest to the original signature. So, for example, a piece written for orchestra in the key of D major, should be arranged for band in the key of E-flat. One written originally in E-minor, should be arranged for band or *charanga* in D-minor or in F-minor, etc.”

Some of the instruments for which the original *pasodoble* was written, for example, some of the higher-pitched sarrusophones and the contrabass saxhorns are seldom used today. Piccolos likewise are now mainly pitched in the key of C, instead of the original D-flat. For this piece, therefore, two instrument settings are offered: the original Eslava scoring, and an alternative one based on current, more commonly available instruments. Other choices are, of course, possible, at the discretion of the bandmaster.