

Editor's Notes for *Plegaria*, arranged for Guitar by José Costa

José Costa y Hugas (Torroella de Montgrí, Girona, Spain, 1826-1881), was an eminent Spanish guitarist of his time. In his *Musical Dictionary*¹, the renowned Spanish musicologist, fellow guitarist, and contemporary of Costa's, Felipe Pedrell, declares him a *true master* of the guitar. Costa started his guitar studies in his hometown in Catalonia (Spain), and then in Barcelona with guitarist Buenaventura Bassols and in Valencia under Pascual Pérez Gascón. He spent a few of his early formative years in Paris, settling eventually in Madrid. Also a lawyer by profession, Costa was an enthusiastic follower of the music and guitar method of Fernando Sor (1778-1839), considered by many the father of the contemporary classical guitar.

In his aforementioned *Dictionary*, Pedrell makes note of the close friendship and mutual admiration between Costa and Eslava with this quotation:

“Bravo! Very good! –Eslava would often remark– You are a complete artist. There is no instrument in the world that can *say* these notes like the guitar. But to be sure –he added– it can only be the guitar played by *you*.”

Costa wrote numerous works and transcriptions for the guitar, most of which sadly have been lost. One of the few surviving works is a collection of six pieces –some original, some composed by others published in Madrid by A. Romero (date uncertain). The copy I used comes from the National Library of Spain. The six pieces are arranged by difficulty and include a transcription of the *Gran Andante* of Felix Mendelssohn's 4th Symphony, rated “of some difficulty” and dedicated to Hilarión Eslava, and this *Plegaria*, rated “cuasi easy”, “composed by the eminent Spanish Maestro D. Hilarión Eslava” and dedicated “To the Professors” (presumably at the Madrid Conservatory? Eslava would have been one of them). In light of the friendship between these two musicians, the use (with due permission) by Costa of one of Eslava's compositions and the dedications are not surprising, but they must have been nonetheless greatly appreciated by Eslava. In a letter by Costa to Eslava referenced by Pedrell regarding these six-piece collection, Costa mentions that the *Plegaria* “will be one of my favorite pieces.”

The *Plegaria* is actually a guitar transcription of one of the *Elevaciones* (number 6, to be precise) found in Hilarión Eslava's great treatise for the organ, the *Museo Orgánico Español* (1854). The original organ score consists of a short *Adoración* (“Adoration”) followed by a *Plegaria* (“Prayer”), which in the canon of the Roman Catholic Mass correspond respectively to the elevation of the consecrated elements and the acclamation and the doxology that follow.

¹ Pedrell Sabaté, Felipe, *Diccionario biográfico y bibliográfico de músicos y escritores de música españoles, portugueses e hispano-americanos antiguos y modernos*, Vol. 2 (1897), pp. 425-427.