

Editor's Notes for Miserere Breve

The *Miserere* is the name traditionally given to Psalm 51 (Psalm 50 in the Vulgate/Orthodox Bible), attributed to King David, in which he expresses his repentance after the incident where he had a loyal lieutenant killed so he could take the man's wife (Bathsheba), which David had previously seduced, as his own.

The *Miserere* has been set to music by many composers, dating back to the 16th century, at least. Eslava wrote several full-length versions of it, which over the years have been meticulously researched, and in some cases updated, transcribed, and published by others, which is the reason I haven't tackled them. Some of these full-length *Misereres* are performed regularly in Spain (usually during Holy Week), making them perhaps the composer's single best-known works. Those versions are quite elaborate in terms of instrumentation and voicings, and generally take close to 90 minutes to perform. Some of them have been turned into recorded performances, and a few freely available online on *Youtube*. However, the "*Miserere Breve*" is much shorter in length (around 9-10 minutes total, hence the name), with minimal instrumentation (only four instrumental parts, not including the keyboard reduction I have provided). It is thus also within reach of smaller choirs with limited resources. Even though this piece was officially published in 1861, I have not found any recordings of it.

A curious aspect of Eslava's musical setting of the *Miserere Breve*, which applies not only to this work, but his other *Misereres* that I know of, is that he only uses about half of Psalm 51, essentially skipping every other verse. The full-length *Misereres* by Eslava typically are prefaced with "Christus Factus Est", which is based on text from Paul's Epistle to the Philippians (and has little to do with Psalm 51), but the *Miserere Breve* does not incorporate this.

Movement	Biblical Source	Latin Text	English Translation
1. Miserere Mei	Psalm 51:1(a)	Miserere mei, Deus: secundum magnam misericordiam tuam.	Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love
2. Amplius Lava Me	Psalm 51:2	Amplius lava me ab iniquitate mea: et a peccato meo munda me.	Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.
3. Tibi Soli	Psalm 51:4	Tibi soli peccavi, et malum coram te feci: ut justificeris in sermonibus tuis, et vincas cum judicaris.	Against you, you alone, have I sinned, and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are justified in your sentence and blameless when you pass judgment
4. Ecce Enim	Psalm 51:6	Ecce enim veritatem dilexisti: incerta et occulta sapientiae tuae manifestasti mihi.	You desire truth in the inward being; therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.
5. Auditui Meo	Psalm 51:8	Auditui meo dabis gaudium et laetitiam: et exsultabunt ossa humiliata.	Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have crushed rejoice.

6. Cor Mundum	Psalm 51:10	Cor mundum crea in me, Deus: et spiritum rectum innova in visceribus meis.	Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me.
7. Redde Mihi	Psalm 51:12	Redde mihi laetitiam salutaris tui: et spiritu principali confirma me.	Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit.
8. Libera Me	Psalm 51:14	Libera me de sanguinibus, Deus, Deus salutis meae: et exultabit lingua mea justitiam tuam.	Deliver me from bloodshed, O God, O God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing aloud of your deliverance.
9. Quoniam Si Voluisses	Psalm 51:16	Quoniam si voluisses sacrificium, dedissem utique: holocaustis non delectaberis.	For you have no delight in sacrifice; if I were to give a burnt offering, you would not be pleased.
10. Benigne Fac	Psalm 51:18	Benigne fac, Domine, in bona voluntate tua Sion: ut aedificentur muri Jerusalem.	Do good to Zion in your good pleasure; rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.
11. Tunc Imponent	Psalm 51:19(b)	Tunc imponent super altare tuum vitulos.	Then bulls will be offered on your altar.