Editor’s Notes for “El Amanecer” and “El Crepúsculo”

Even though my sources for these two beautiful works for TTBaritonB men’s chorus consist of a score published in 1864 (“El Amanecer” – “The Dawn”) and an undated handwritten manuscript (“El Crepúsculo” – “The Twilight”), I think it possible that they were written as companion pieces. Certainly, they could be performed as such. They are quite similar in several ways:

1. Each is written for a cappella men’s chorus voicings;
2. They were intended for an “Orfeón” or choral society;
3. The “dawn” and “twilight” themes are often linked in music;
4. Eslava wrote the music for both pieces based on thematically and stylistically similar poems.

The cover page of “El Amanecer” mentions that this work was published as part of the collection “Biblioteca popular de Orfeones y Sociedades Corales de España”, Andrés Vidal, editor, Barcelona, with music by Hilarión Eslava and lyrics by poet Ángela Grassi.

Ángela Grassi was one of a small number of Spanish women writers of the Romantic era and a member of the so-called Hermandad Lírica (“Lyric Sisterhood”). Born in Italy in 1823, she moved to Barcelona as a child and spent most of her adult life in Madrid. She was a well-regarded author both in Spain and abroad during her lifetime, and received a number of literary awards. Her creative output included several novels, poetic anthologies, and a few essays and dramatic plays. Grassi died in Madrid in 1883. She was certainly a contemporary of Eslava both geographically and time-wise, and they may well have known each other.

The lyrics from “El Amanecer” were derived from a longer poem by Grassi. The full poem as originally published in the women’s journal “La Violeta” and an English translation are included at the end of these notes, to avoid confusion with the condensed lyrics in the actual song.

(Above) Ángela Grassi (1823-1883), from an ink drawing by Paciano Ross

“El Amanecer” was likely a paid commission by the choral society Orfeón Leridano (Orfeó Lleidatà in Catalan), a choral society founded in 1861 in Lérida (Lleida), Spain, and still active today (https://www.orfeolleidata.cat/). It was intended as a performance piece by the popular (initially men-only) amateur choral ensembles or orfeones that were being formed in the late 19th century and early 20th century in Spain, particularly in Catalonia, Navarra, and the Basque Country.

The origins and circumstances around the composition of “El Crepúsculo” are less clear. This work, also obviously intended for performance by orfeones, was not published, and its date is uncertain. The manuscript, obtained from the Biblioteca Nacional de España does not bear any identifying markings, and the original appears to have been acquired from an antique bookseller. The best educated guess is that this could have been a work composed for the Orfeón Pamplonés of Pamplona, Navarra (https://orfeonpamplones.com/) ca. 1865, on the occasion of a visit that year by the composer to his
Navarrese birthplace and on the founding of that institution. Hilarión Eslava was appointed an honorary founding member of the Orfeón.

The author of the lyrics for “El Crepúsculo is likewise a mystery. No names are indicated, nor have we been able thus far to find any published source where this poem appears. While it could be an unpublished work by Grassi, based on content, tone, and style, we have no way to know for sure.

Although Eslava did provide some guidance with the dynamics of "El Crepúsculo", I felt much more was needed, so I added quite a bit more detail in this regard based on my own judgment. This should be taken into account by anyone who chooses to perform this piece.

Lyrics and English translation for Eslava’s “El Amanecer”, by Ángela Grassi

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EL AMANECER</th>
<th>THE DAWN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Allá lejana,</td>
<td>In the far distance,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>triste campana</td>
<td>the plaintive bell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>va despertando</td>
<td>begins to awaken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>con sus tañidos</td>
<td>with its peal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>los blandos ecos</td>
<td>the soft echoes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>que están dormidos,</td>
<td>still asleep,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>y al hombre dicen</td>
<td>and tell man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>¡murió el ayer! (rep.)</td>
<td>yesterday’s dead! (rep.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>¡Oh! Bendito mi Dios</td>
<td>Oh! Blest be my God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>que dispones</td>
<td>who ordains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>que sucedan</td>
<td>the succession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>con orden eterno</td>
<td>in an eternal sequence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>primavera al hórrido invierno.</td>
<td>by spring of horrid winter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sol hermoso</td>
<td>Beauteous sun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>al eterno capuz</td>
<td>to the eternal cloak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>¡Oh! Bendito, bendito mi Dios.</td>
<td>Oh! Blessed be, blessed be my God.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ya el alba asoma,</td>
<td>The dawn already peering out,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>las sombras huyen,</td>
<td>shadows run away,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>la flor su aroma al viento da;</td>
<td>the blossom its fragrance yields to the wind;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>forman las aves</td>
<td>birds gather</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dulce conceto,</td>
<td>in a happy chorus,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>todo respira</td>
<td>all is breathing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vida y respira. (rep.)</td>
<td>life and goodness. (rep.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Rep.)
Lyrics and English translation for “El Crepúsculo” (author unknown)

**EL CREPÚSCULO**

Oíd, oíd, oíd, oíd,
oíd, oíd, oíd, oíd.

Besa voz suave y misteriosa
que cruza el aire vagarosa
ya de la tarde al morir, al morir,
que cruza el aire vagarosa
ya del crepúsculo al morir, al morir.
que cruza el aire vagarosa
ya de la tarde al morir, al morir.
Oíd, oíd,
la voz misteriosa el morir oíd. *(FIN)*

Es la plegaria que al Señor
rinde natura agradecida,
pres que del suelo desprendida
rauda se eleva al Creador,
rauda se eleva al Creador.
Del arroyo el murmurar.
Es de las flores el dormir.
Es de la alondra el suspirar,
es de la alondra el suspirar.
Es la lejana dulce voz
del bosque envuelto en sombras ya.
Es el trinar del ruiseñor
que la querella al viento da,
que la querella al viento da.
*(D.C. al FIN)*

**THE TWILIGHT**

Listen, listen, listen, listen,
listen, listen, listen, listen.

Kissing, a soft and mysterious voice,
which crosses the air with ease
as the evening dies, dies,
which crosses the air with ease
as the twilight dies, dies,
which crosses the air with ease
as the evening dies, dies.
Listen, listen,
to the mysterious voice dying listen. *(FIN)*

It’s the prayer to the Lord
that a grateful nature offers,
a gift which broken from the ground
swiftly rises to the Creator,
swiftly rises to the Creator.
From the brooks is its murmur.
From the flowers is their slumber.
From the lark is its sighing,
From the lark is its sighing.
It is the distant, sweet voice
of the forest by shadows now enveloped.
It is the trill of the nightingale,
which its grievance to the wind it casts,
which its grievance to the wind it casts
*(D.C. al FIN)*

Full poem and translation of “El Amanecer” by Ángela Grassi*

**EL AMANECER**

Allá lejana,
triste campana
va despertando
con sus tañidos
los blandos ecos
que están dormidos,
y al hombre dicen
¡murió el ayer!
¡Ayer!... ¡misterio
que agobia el alma!...
Risas y lágrimas,

**THE DAWN**

In the far distance,
the plaintive bell
begins to awaken
with its peal
the soft echoes
still asleep,
and tell man
yesterday’s dead!
Yesterday!... Mystery
that troubles the soul!...
Laughter and tears,
oprobio y palma,
a oculto cauce
se lleva el noto...
¿Do el mar ignoto?
¿Do está el no ser?
¿Do está?... Decidlo,
egregios sabios;
pendiente el orbe
de vuestros labios,
escucha ansioso...
Decid: ¿qué genio
guarda celoso
la llave mágica
del porvenir?
¿Calláis?... Espléndido
del caos oscuro,
va el hoy surgiendo
alegre y puro.
¡Dirige al cielo
su planta osada,
la frente ornada
de oro y zafir!
Ya el alba asoma,
las sombras huyen,
la flor su aroma
entrega al viento;
forman las aves
grato concento,
todo respira
ventura y paz.
¡Qué es lo que dicen
con sus rumores
brisas y fuentes,
aves y flores?
¿Qué es lo que dice,
sabio orgulloso,
ese armonioso
eco fugaz?
"¡Piensa en el grande
Criador del mundo,
de tantos bienes
cauce profundo,
de aquel que gime
dulce alegría,
que engendra el día,
da al sol fulgor!
¡Oh! ¡Sé bendito,
Dios sacrosanto;
dishonor and laurels,
to a hidden stream
the tide away carries...
Where is the unseen ocean?
Where is life’s absence?
Where?... Tell,
eminent wise men;
the world your lips
intently watches,
expectantly listens...
Tell: What genie
zealously guards
the magic key
of what is to come?
You keep silent?... Resplendent
out of the dark chaos,
the new day is emerging
glad and pure.
It raises to heaven
standing bravely,
its forehead crowned
of gold and sapphire!
The dawn already peering out,
shadows run away,
the blossom its fragrance
yields to the wind;
birds gather
in a happy chorus,
all is breathing
good tidings and peace.
What do they say
in their murmur
breezes and fountains,
birds and flowers?
What does it say,
o proud wise man,
that harmonious
fleeting echo?
“Think of the great
Creator of the world,
of so much goodness,
a deep river,
out of whom
sweet gladness moans,
who gives birth to the day,
and its brightness to the sun!
Oh! Be blessed,
Most holy God;
tú el alma acoge
bajo tu manto!
¡Bendiga el hombre
doquier tu nombre;
tu nombre, símbolo
de paz y amor!"

shelter the soul
under your cloak!
Let man bless
everywhere your name;
your name, symbol
of peace and love!”

*Spanish original as published in the periodic journal “La Violeta”, number 59, January 11, 1864, Madrid, Spain. From the archives of the Biblioteca Nacional de España.