

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* (*Orfeo 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

<i>EL AMANECER</i>	<i>THE DAWN</i>
Allá lejana, triste campana va despertando con sus tañidos los blandos ecos que están dormidos, y al hombre dicen ¡murió el ayer! (<i>rep.</i>) ¡Oh! Bendito mi Dios que dispones que sucedan con orden eterno primavera al hórrido invierno. Sol hermoso al eterno capuz. ¡Oh! Bendito, bendito mi Dios. Ya el alba asoma, las sombras huyen, la flor su aroma al viento da; forman las aves dulce conciento, todo respira vida y placer. (<i>rep.</i>)	In the far distance, the plaintive bell begins to awaken with its peal the soft echoes still asleep, and tell man yesterday’s dead! (<i>rep.</i>) Oh! Blest be my God who ordains the succession in an eternal sequence by spring of horrid winter. Beauteous sun to the eternal cloak. Oh! Blessed be, blessed be my God. 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 life and goodness. (<i>rep.</i>)

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

<i>EL CREPÚSCULO</i>	<i>THE TWILIGHT</i>
Oíd, oíd, oíd, oíd, oíd, oíd, oíd, oíd.	Listen, listen, listen, listen, listen, listen, listen, listen.
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. (<i>FIN</i>)	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. (<i>FIN</i>)
Es la plegaria que al Señor rinde natura agradecida, prez 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. (<i>D.C. al FIN</i>)	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 (<i>D.C. al FIN</i>)

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

<i>EL AMANECER</i>	<i>THE DAWN</i>
Allá lejana, triste campana va despertando con sus tañidos los blandos ecos que están dormidos, y al hombre dicen <i>¡murió el ayer!</i> ¡Ayer!... ¡misterio que agobia el alma!... Risas y lágrimas,	In the far distance, the plaintive bell begins to awaken with its peal the soft echoes still asleep, and tell man <i>yesterday's dead!</i> Yesterday!... Mystery that troubles the soul!... Laughter and tears,

<p> oprobio y palma, a oculto cauce se lleva el noto... ¿Do el mar ignoto? ¿Do está el <i>no ser</i>? ¿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 contento, 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; </p>	<p> 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; </p>
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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!"
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*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.