Editor’s Notes for Donostiako hiru damatxo (Three little damsels from Donostia)\(^1\)

Not all of Hilarión Eslava’s work was religious in nature, and he would occasionally indulge in small projects to preserve traditional folk music that, clearly, he loved\(^2\). This piece, transcribed from an undated, unsigned handwritten manuscript attributed to him, would be a good example of that.

“Donostiako hiru damatxo” (Three little damsels from Donostia\(^3\)) is a popular Basque folksong\(^4\). The origin of the tune is uncertain, but it was already circulating in the 18\(^{th}\) century\(^5\). The author of the lyrics has been hypothesized to have been José Ignacio de Larramendi (1786-1855)\(^6\). The original lyrics are in erdialdeko euskalkia, Basque Central (or Gipuzkoan) dialect, but other versions—including also different regional verses, exist\(^7\). The original score used here only contained the first, best known bertso or stanza. The other stanzas I have added have been compiled from a variety of online sources.

The attribution of this unsigned score to Eslava is based only on circumstantial evidence. Although we cannot be entirely certain that this was Eslava’s arrangement, the manuscript has been catalogued by Eresbil (the manuscript source) as a possible Eslava composition\(^8\). From what I can tell, the handwriting and certain stylistic elements are indeed similar to Eslava’s. The simplicity of the score indicates that this might have been written primarily as a diversion or as a student exercise.

\(^1\) For the preparation of these notes, we have relied in part on information provided by Eresbil, the Basque Music Archive (https://www.eresbil.eus/). We are especially indebted to Mr. Mark Barnés for his valuable help.

\(^2\) Further evidence of this are the wonderful arrangements Eslava wrote of Andalusian songs, namely ¡Ay, salero! and El pescador, both of which I have already had the pleasure of transcribing.

\(^3\) Donostia is the Basque name of the capital of the province of Gipuzkoa, better known by its Spanish name, San Sebastián.

\(^4\) In his Cancionero Popular Vasco (ed. Erein [2007], p. 28, in Spanish), the well-known Basque musician José Ignacio Ansorena points out that this song was at one point one of the best-known folk tunes in the entire Euskal Herria (Basque homeland). Today, a number of versions of the song can be found online in the form of modern scores (by other than Eslava), including for piano and a cappella choir, and in performance, on YouTube.

\(^5\) In his book (see preceding footnote), Ansorena quotes another Basque musicologist, Francisco Gascue, who suggests a possible musical link of this tune with folk songs from the British Isles and specifically the popular nursery rhyme “There Was a Jolly Miller Once” (also known as “The Miller of the Dee”).


\(^7\) Ibid. In this version of the song, Ansorena believes that the first four bertsoak (stanzas) might have been written at the same time, and the rest were gradually added later.

\(^8\) The handwritten, unsigned manuscript was found by Spanish organist and musicologist Joaquín Pildain among a number of Eslava solfège and piano materials that had been in the possession of Eslava student and biographer José María Esperanza y Sola. The notation style and calligraphy do seem to resemble Eslava’s.
My editorial changes for this transcription include:

1. Addition of a separate vocal staff (the original manuscript only had the piano staves);
2. There appear to be numerous spelling errors in the original score lyrics – these were corrected to match the lyrics available in modern Euskera (Basque language);
3. Addition of bertsoak (stanzas) 2-8 (only the first stanza was included in the source manuscript);
4. Addition of minimal dynamics (besides a fermata and single p notation in the piano secondo part, there were none provided) – these are merely suggestions and should be freely interpreted;
5. Notational clarification with regard to the repeats.

A set of Basque lyrics and an approximate English translation⁹ are provided below:

| Donostiako hiru damatxo | Three little damsels from Donostia
| Errenterian dendari. (repeat) | seamstresses in Errenteria.¹⁰ (repeat)
| Josten ere badakite, baina | They know how to sew, but
| ardoa edaten hobeki. | drink wine even better.
| Eta kriskitin, kraskitin, | With the kriskitin, kraskitin,
| arrosa krabelin, | rose and carnation,
| ardoa edaten hobeki. | drink wine even better.
| Donostiako Gaztelupeko | Gaztelupe in Donostia,
| sagardoaren gozoa, (repeat) | sweet cider (repeat)
| hantxen edaten ari nintzala | I was drinking there
| hautsi zitzaidan basoa. | and I broke my cup.
| Eta kriskitin, kraskitin, | With the kriskitin, kraskitin,
| arrosa krabelin, | rose and carnation,
| basoa kristalezkoa. | a cup made of glass.
| Donostiako hiru damatxo | Three little damsels from Donostia
| hirurak gona gorriak, (repeat) | all three in red skirts, (repeat)
| sartutzen dira tabernara ta | they enter the tavern and
| irtetzen dira hordiak. | they leave drunk.
| Eta kriskitin, kraskitin, | With the kriskitin, kraskitin,
| arrosa krabelin | rose and carnation,
| irtetzen dira hordiak. | they leave drunk.

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⁹ The Basque words have been copied from José Ignacio Ansorena’s book (see FN 4). The translation is drawn in part from the Spanish language translation included with that reference and from other sources online.

¹⁰ Errenteria is a Gipuzkoan town near Donostia. Known in Spanish as Rentería.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Donostiako hiru damatxo egin omen dute apustu, (repeat) zeinek ardo gehiago edanda, zein gutxiago mozkortu. Eta kriskitin, kraskitin, arrosa krabelin, zein gutxiago mozkortu.</th>
<th>Three little damsels from Donostia have just made a bet, (repeat) who drinks more wine, who is less drunk. With the kriskitin, kraskitin, rose and carnation, who is less drunk.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Donostiako hiru damatxo Errenteriko kalean (repeat) egunez oso triste ibili baina dantzatu gauean eta kriskitin, kraskitin, arrosa krabelin baina dantzatu gauean.</td>
<td>Three little damsels from Donostia on a street in Errenteria, (repeat) walk very sad during the day but dance the night away with the kriskitin, kraskitin, rose and carnation, but dance the night away.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donostiako neskatxatxoak kalera nahi dutenean: (repeat) –Ama piperrik ez dago eta banoa salto batean. Eta kriskitin, kraskitin, arrosa krabelin, banoa salto batean.</td>
<td>When the girls from Donostia want to go out they say: (repeat) –Mother, there’s no pepper I will leap out to get it. With the kriskitin, kraskitin, rose and carnation, I will leap out to get it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donostiako neskatxatxoak mandatuen aitzakian (repeat) mutilarekin egoten dira kalean jolaskerian eta kriskitin, kraskitin, arrosa krabelin, pozez algara haundian.</td>
<td>The girls from Donostia under the pretext of errands (repeat) stay with a boy on the street toying with the kriskitin, kraskitin, rose and carnation, with great joyous laughter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrosatxoak bost hosto ditu, krabelintxoak hamabi, (repeat) Mari Joxepa nahi duen horrek eska bezaio amari. Eta kriskitin, kraskitin, arrosa krabelin, eska bezaio amari.</td>
<td>The rose has five petals, carnations have twelve, (repeat) whoever loves Mari Joxepa can go ask her mother. With the kriskitin, kraskitin, rose and carnation, can go ask her mother.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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