

Notes about *Larghetto para grande orquesta con adición de corno inglés y arpa*

This short orchestral jewel comes from Eslava's five-part treatise on Composition ("Escuela de composición") and specifically Part 4, which deals with the subject of instrumentation and was published in 1870. The piece, titled "Periodo-Modelo Nº13 – Grande orquesta con adición de corno inglés y arpa", is one of a series of practical illustrations by Eslava highlighting various instruments and orchestral scoring techniques, focusing in this instance on the English horn and the harp.

This re-edition of Hilarión Eslava's music is the work of Anai Telletxea Aguilera, an oboe student at the Conservatorio Superior de Música de Aragón (CSMA) in Zaragoza, Spain (<https://csma.es/en/>) training under Prof. Francisco José Gil Ferrer. We have had the privilege of working with Anai Telletxea since early 2021 and are very pleased to have his first transcription of the composer's music join our own works on the hilarioneslava.org site. In a wonderful coincidence, Anai happens to hail from Burlada (Navarra), Eslava's hometown.

The piece is scored as follows:

Piccolo (*Octavín* in the original Eslava score) = Piccolo
Flautas = Flutes
Oboes = Oboes
Corno inglés = English horn/Cor anglais (playing here as a solo instrument)
Clarinetes en si bemol = B-flat clarinets
Fagotes = Bassoons
Cornetines en la bemol = A-flat cornets
Trombones y fígle = Trombones and ophicleide (scored here on the same line)
Trompa 1ª en la bemol = First (natural) horn in A-Flat
Trompa 2ª en re bemol = Second (natural) horn in D-Flat
Trompa 1ª de pistones en fa = First piston (valved) horn in F
Trompa 2ª de pistones en mi bemol = Second piston (valved) horn in E-flat
Timbales = Timpani
Violín 1º = First violin
Violín 2º = Second violin
Viola = Viola
Violonchelo = Cello
Contrabajo = Contrabass/Double bass
Arpa = Harp (playing *obbligato*)

(Notice that the scoring listed above follows the composer's own original specifications; performance of this music by a modern orchestra will obviously require a number of substitutions in the woodwinds and brass sections –please contact us if we can be of assistance in this regard.)

Concerning the solo instruments in this piece and in order to better understand Eslava's approach to scoring them, it is worth reading the composer's own views, paraphrased from his Treatise:

"El carácter del arpa es poético, solemne y aún religioso. Sus notas graves, por lo mismo que son veladas y oscuras, tienen un tinte misterioso; las del centro son dulces, nobles y apacibles; y las de sus dos últimas octavas agudas tienen un timbre puro y argentino. Es digno de notarse que los

sonidos del arpa se unen mejor con los instrumentos de viento, especialmente con los de metal, que con los de cuerda.”

(“The character of the harp is poetic, solemn, and even religious. Its lower registers, being veiled and dark, lend an air of mystery; the middle range is sweet, noble and tranquil; and the sounds created by its two upper octaves have a pure and silver-like timbre. It is worth noting that the sounds from the harp are better matched with the wind instruments, especially brass, than with the strings.”)

“El carácter del corno inglés es triste y melancólico, y su timbre, un poco velado, parece oírse en lontananza. Se presta naturalmente a expresar sentimientos de piedad, de ternura maternal, de amor infortunado de una joven, de plegaria que eleva a Dios un ser débil, etc. Puede también expresar alguna vez sentimientos de calma, reposo y resignación.”

(“The character of the English horn is sad and melancholic and its timbre, slightly veiled, makes it as if it were heard in the distance. It naturally lends itself to express feelings of piety, of a mother’s tenderness, of a woman’s unrequited love, of prayer raised to God by a meek person, etc. It can also sometimes express feelings of calm, repose, and acceptance.”)

Finally, here are Eslava’s own notes about this particular work, paraphrased (with a few minor edits) from his Treatise:

“Condiciones: 1ª. Cuatro Trompas en cuatro tonos diversos, ejecutando ellas solas el preludio: 2ª. Solo de Corno-inglés con acompañamiento obligado de Arpa.

Nótese en la primera frase ó preludio del precedente periodo, en que juegan las cuatro trompas solas que la parte superior que ejecuta la 1ª trompa en la bemol y la inferior que dice la trompa de pistones en mi bemol observan con gran corrección todas las reglas respecto a los movimientos de las partes armónicas, aún en la pequeña progresión que hay del 2º al 6º compás; pero no sucede así respecto a las partes intermedias, las cuales marchan en el modelo de diverso modo que en la repetición de la progresión mencionada. Esta pequeña incorrección y otras análogas son toleradas cuando juegan las trompas ordinarias, por la necesidad de buscar las notas buenas y sonoras, y evitar las malas y oscuras.

En la segunda frase, así como en todo el periodo, la parte de arpa está dispuesta de modo que en todas las modulaciones que en él tienen lugar, está calculado el tiempo que el arpista necesita para la mutación de uno o más pedales.

En la tercera frase en que toma parte la cuerda, el viento-madera y parte del viento-metal, los instrumentos que llevan la parte principal, y que son el Corno-inglés, el violón y el arpa, no se oirían si no se tomase la precaución de hacer el acompañamiento en acordes cortados, por cuyo medio se consigue que aquellos dominen debidamente, sin embargo de no estar dotados de gran sonoridad.

En la cuarta frase de cuatro compases, que es un *tutti* de toda la orquesta, el bajo glosado con que está acompañada, se halla reforzado por la viola y violin segundo, cruzándose estos dos instrumentos con las partes intermedias de la armonía, lo cual constituye también una leve incorrección; pero este procedimiento, que se ve practicado por Weber y otros autores respetables es tolerable, cuando su

efecto es bueno como en el presente caso, en que el bajo doblado a la octava por la cuerda en su parte grave, recibe un vigor y energía que no se podría obtener de otro modo.

En la quinta frase o coda, que la constituyen los últimos seis compases, debe notarse que en la segunda parte de los compases 2º y 4º hay en el arpa un acorde incompleto por falta del fa bemol; pero esto se hace así para evitar la dificultad del cambio rápido del pedal que resultaría poniendo ese fa bemol en la armonía de dicha segunda parte, y haciéndose uso del fa natural en la escala melódica de la tercera. Este procedimiento puede practicarse cuando completan la armonía los demás instrumentos acompañantes, como sucede en el caso presente.”

(“Settings: 1st. Four horns, each tuned in a different key, playing the prelude by themselves: 2nd. English horn solo with *obbligato* harp accompaniment.

Note in the first phrase or prelude to the preceding piece, in which the four horns play alone, that the higher part that plays the 1st horn in A-flat and the lower part played by the piston horn in E-flat observe all of the rules with great propriety with respect to the movements of the harmonic parts, even in the small progression from the 2nd to the 6th bar; but this is not the case with respect to the intermediate parts, which operate in a model that is different from a repetition of the aforementioned progression. This small deviation from the norm, and other analogous ones are permitted when ordinary horns are played, so as to bring up good and sonorous notes and avoid the sour and dark ones.

In the second phrase, as in the whole period, the harp part is arranged so that in all the modulations that take place within it, the time that the harpist needs for the transitions among one or more pedals is taken into consideration.

In the third phrase, in which the strings are joined by the woodwinds and part of the brass, the instruments that carry the main part, namely the English horn, the violin, and the harp would not be heard if one would not take the precaution of making the accompaniment in abrupt-ending chords, allowing those chords to properly dominate, despite not being endowed with great sonority.

In the fourth phrase, consisting of four bars, which is a *tutti* of the whole orchestra, the bass voice, which plays in parallel, is reinforced by the viola and second violin, these two instruments coinciding at the intermediate parts of the harmony, which is also a slight misstatement; but this procedure, which is practiced by Weber and other respectable composers is tolerable when its effect is good as in the present case, in which the bass, doubled by the lower strings, receives a strength and energy that could not be obtained otherwise.

In the fifth phrase or *coda*, which is made up of the last six bars, it should be noted that in the second part of bars 2 and 4 there is an incomplete chord on the harp due to lack of an F flat; but it is done thus to avoid the difficulty of a rapid change of the pedal that would result in putting that F flat in the harmony of said second part, and making use of the natural F in the melodic scale of the third. This procedure can be used when the harmony is completed by the other accompanying instruments, as in the present case.”)

(Rebecca and Antonio Rufin, July 2021)