

Editor's Notes on *Four Pieces for String Ensembles with Solo Woodwinds*

The four short demonstration pieces featured here come from Part 4 of Hilarión Eslava's five-part treatise on Composition ("Escuela de composición"), which deals with the subject of Instrumentation and was published in 1870. These beautiful, highly original compositions are found in Section 3 of the treatise, which Eslava titles "De los instrumentos de viento-madera" ("Of [About] woodwind instruments"). They are meant to serve as illustrations of scoring techniques for the flute, oboe, clarinet, and bassoon playing solo parts accompanied by small string ensembles. Eslava admonishes that as these are instruments powered by human breath, "they must be treated musically as voices would."

As these are relatively short pieces and all four are similarly scored, I have chosen to group them as a set. They flow well together and could perhaps be performed as a four-part *concertino* highlighting each of the four woodwind instruments in turn. With their harmonious, openly Romantic style they might also make a marvelous setting for a small ballet suite!

In his book, Eslava goes into some depth explaining the techniques meant to be highlighted for each instrument. Here, for brevity, I have only translated the basic descriptions of each of the pieces:

Modelo N^o4

Marked *Andante* and scored for solo flute, two violins, viola, cello, and contrabass.

"Condiciones. 1^a. Solo de flauta; 2^a. Obligado de viola; 3^a. Uso del *pizzicato* en el acompañamiento de cuerda."

("Features. 1st. Solo flute; 2nd. Viola *obbligato*; 3rd. Use of *pizzicato* in the string accompaniment.")

Modelo N^o5

Marked *Tempo di pastorella* and scored for solo oboe, two violins, two violas, cello, and contrabass.

"Condiciones. 1^a. Solo de oboe; 2^a. Uso del *sul ponticello* y del *col palo* en la cuerda; 3^a. Dos violas separadas."

("Features. 1st. Solo oboe; 2nd. Use of *sul ponticello* and *col legno* in the strings; 3rd. Two separate viola parts.")

The composer additionally notes that it is understood that when the instruction *staccato* appears in the strings, playing *sul ponticello* ceases, despite there not being a more explicit *loco* indication.

[NOTE – A more exquisite, standalone rendition of the *Pastorella* based on a re-edition by our collaborator Anai Telletxea, oboist and student at the Conservatorio Superior de Música de Aragón in Zaragoza, Spain, is also available on the hilarioneslava.org site. Anai's version is based on the original Eslava "Escuela de Composición" score and a later arrangement by Joaquín Pildáin Araolaza (1927-1997, Basque organist, composer and musicologist –see <https://dbe.rah.es/biografias/97438/joaquin-pildain-araolaza> (in Spanish).]

Modelo N°6

Marked *Andante* and scored for solo clarinet, two violins, viola, cello solo, and contrabass.

“Condiciones. 1ª. Solo de clarinete; 2ª. Uso del *tremolo* grave y agudo en la cuerda; 3ª. Acompañamiento de algún interés en el violín 1º y en el violón.”

(“Features. 1st. Clarinet solo; 2nd. Use of low- and high-pitched *tremolo* by the strings; 3rd. A somewhat more elaborate scoring of the first violin and the cello.”)

Modelo N°7

Also marked *Andante* and scored for solo bassoon, two violins, viola, cello solo, and contrabass.

“Condiciones. 1ª. Solo de fagot; 2ª. Uso de *sordina* en la cuerda; 3ª. Diseños dialogados en el acompañamiento; 4ª. Bajo glosado al fin”

(“Features. 1st. Bassoon solo; 2nd. Use of *sordina* (or *sordino*) or muting by the strings; 3rd. A phrasal design in the accompaniment; 4th. An adorned bass voice at the end.”)