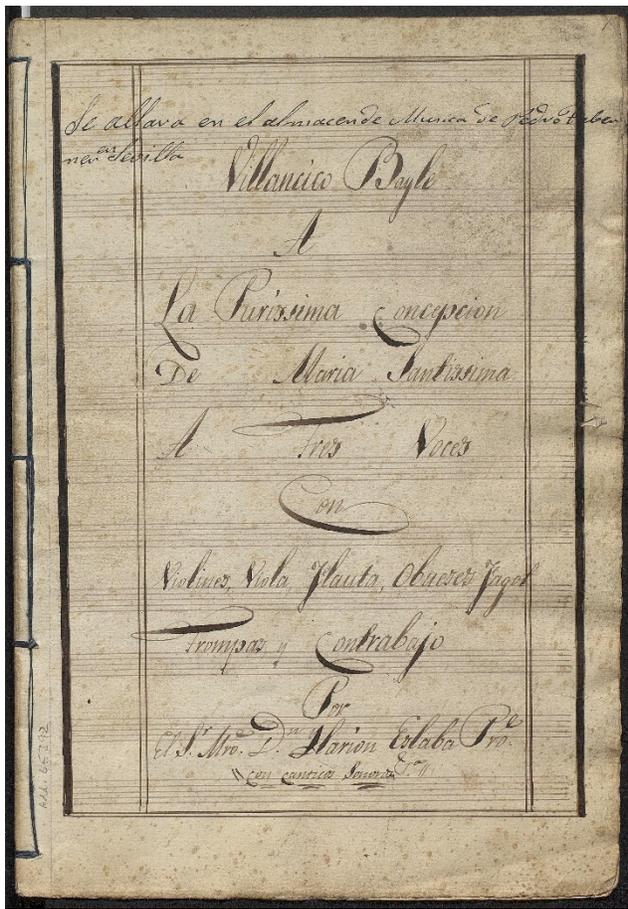


## Editor's Notes for *Villancico y Baile de Seises a la Purísima Concepción de María Santísima* ("Con cánticos sonoros...")

The *Baile* (or *Bayle* in the archaic Spanish spelling) *de Seises* is a form of children's sacred ritual dance performed to a religious-themed song, or *Villancico*, sung in Spanish. This part of the liturgy for certain high feasts of the church has been traditional in parts of Spain for many centuries—especially in Sevilla, where it still takes place today. In Sevilla, this tradition is celebrated at its Cathedral a few times during the year, two of the most important occasions being the Feast of Corpus Christi (Blessed Sacrament) and the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. One of Hilarión Eslava's duties as *Maestro de Capilla* (Master of the Chapel) at the Cathedral of Sevilla was to look after and direct the musical education of the *seises*. He composed several *villancicos* for them, a few of which I have already transcribed and can be accessed on this site.

This piece was created specifically for the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, which is celebrated on December 8, and its *octave*, the eight days that follow. The ten—not six, as the name in Spanish might imply, boy dancers are dressed as 17th century court pages, wearing for this occasion white and sky-blue costumes (in honor of the Virgin) and broad, white and blue-plumed hats. Originally, the *seises* sang, danced and, during certain musical interludes, accompanied their dance with castanets. Today, the singing assigned to the *seises* is performed by a separate children's choir.



The original score upon which this transcription is based came to us from the British Library in London, England, catalogued as part of the so-called Novello Collection, Vol. XI, under Ref. Add MS 65392. A manuscript copy in other than Eslava's hand, it is believed to date to ca. 1841, when Hilarión Eslava was Master of the Chapel of the Chapel of the Cathedral of Sevilla, at the apogee of his career in the Andalusian capital (1832-1844). The manuscript contains the following handwritten annotation on its cover, above the title of the piece: "Se allava en el almacén de musica de Pedro Taberner en Sevilla" (sic) ["It was kept in the music storehouse of Pedro Taberner in Sevilla"]. Pedro Taberner was a music publisher and builder and purveyor of pianos and other musical instruments in Sevilla around the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. His shop was on calle Sierpes 50, right in the center of the city. The copied score must have been purchased there, rather than being acquired directly from the Cathedral archives, where we believe Eslava's original likely still resides.

Cover of the British Library score

Vincent Novello (1781-1861) was an English chorister, music teacher, and organist of Italian descent. He is best known for bringing to England many works now considered major standards and creating a major publishing house in partnership with his son.

The British Library’s Novello Collection, consisting of 144 volumes, is made up of autograph manuscripts of various composers, copies or arrangements in the hand of Vincent Novello, and copies in other hands. The contents of the collection were gathered by Novello himself during his lifetime and have been augmented by many posthumous additions.

This score appears to have been acquired by Novello (or on his behalf, during his lifetime) and was placed in the collection’s Vol. XI (“Works by individual composers, arranged alphabetically”), under “Eslava, Hilarion, Unspecified, Composer.” It is thanks to Novello’s passion for choral music and collecting that this music has reached our hands.

This cheerful *villancico* (“Con cánticos sonoros...” – “With sonorous canticles...”) is accompanied here by a small orchestra consisting of two sets of violins, viola, flute, two oboes, bassoon, and horns in E, a traditional setting in Eslava’s time. The voice setting is SSS. There is no indication of where precisely castanets would have been used (if at all) by the dancers, so I have chosen not to include them in my transcription. I have, however, added my own keyboard reduction (none was available in the original score), which may be used for vocal practice.

The origin of the lyrics –a Marian prayer arranged in the form of loosely rhyming *octavas* (eight-verse stanzas –probably a reference to the day of the month upon which the Feast of the Immaculate Conception falls, December 8, and its octave) is unknown.



**Vincent Novello,  
by Edward Petre Novello (1836)**

**ORIGINAL SPANISH LYRICS AND ENGLISH TRANSLATION**

<p>Con cánticos sonoros, con música suave a la siempre Pura nuestras voces alaben, que por más que se empeñen, en trinar y cantarle, jamás llegará el punto en que sus himnos basten.</p>	<p>With sonorous canticles, with soft music to the always Pure our voices praise, which as hard as they try, in trilling and singing to Her, the time will never come when their hymns suffice.</p>
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*Estrillo 1*

Alegrémonos que hoy día  
es la solemne función  
de la Pura Concepción  
de nuestra Madre María.  
Cielo y tierra en su alegría,  
de gracia os canta colmada,  
Reina y Madre, dulce y pía.  
¡O, María Inmaculada!

A ti Dios predestinó  
antes que siglos hubiera,  
darte la gracia primera  
y en su tiempo te la dió,  
y de gracia te llenó.  
Obra la más admirable,  
Dios de los cielos bajó  
y de Él Vos fuiste su Madre.

*Estrillo 2*

Sin pecado concebida  
quiso Dios en gracia hacerte,  
libre de culpa y de muerte,  
llena de gracia y de vida;  
por culpa nuestra perdida,  
mas por la gracia ganada,  
dadnos la gracia perdida  
pues sóis nuestra Madre amada.

*Chorus 1*

Let us rejoice that today  
is the solemn celebration  
of the Immaculate Conception  
of our Mother Mary.  
Heaven and earth in their joy,  
of grace filled to You sing,  
Queen and Mother, sweet and pious.  
O Mary Immaculate!

God predestined You  
before there were ages,  
to give you the first grace  
and in time he granted it to You,  
and with grace He filled you.  
(But) In a most amazing feat,  
God from heaven came down  
and You became His Mother.

*Chorus 2*

Conceived without sin  
God chose to fashion You in grace,  
free from guilt and death,  
full of grace and life;  
by us willfully lost,  
but by the grace regained,  
give us the grace we've lost  
for you are our beloved Mother.