

Editor's Notes on *Moderato for a Large Orchestra*

This piece (Modelo Nº 12) concludes (chronologically) my transcriptions of Eslava's original compositions contained within Part 4 of his five-part treatise on Composition ("Escuela de composición"), which deals with the subject of Instrumentation and was published in 1870. With each successive example piece contained in this treatise, Eslava adds more instruments and stylistic elements. The expectation is that students will analyze them and use them as templates to gradually explore their own variations on technique, tempo, and the basic characteristics of each setting.

This cheerful composition is found in Section 5 of the treatise, which Eslava titles "De algunos instrumentos que se añaden a la grande orquesta" ("Regarding some instruments that are added to a large orchestra"). Accordingly, in addition to the other instruments in the prior Modelo (sample) Nº 11, *Allegro Moderato* (already edited here), Eslava has added a piccolo and an ophicleide.

Marked *Moderato*, this example is scored for Piccolo, Flute, Oboe, A-Clarinet, Bassoon, D-Trumpet, Horn in A, (piston) Horn in E, Trombone, Ophicleide, Timpani, two Violins, Viola, Cello, and Contrabass. Though normally I will convert parts written for rarer antique instruments to more common modern close equivalents (e.g., I typically substitute a tuba for the ophicleide), I have chosen not to do so in this example, because Eslava would have selected these instruments for specific reasons related to ease of playing and/or nuances of their sound/timbre.

In his book, Eslava goes into some depth explaining the specific characteristics of the instrument(s) he is introducing, as well as techniques utilized within every example. Here, for brevity, I have only translated the basic description of the piece and the corresponding postscript:

Initial Description:

"Condiciones. 1ª. Uso del octavín y del figle; 2ª. Frases en que el viento-metal figure en primera línea ó canto solo."

("Features. 1st. Use of the piccolo and ophicleide; 2nd. Phrases in which the brass is highlighted or plays solo.")

Postscript:

"Nótese en el precedente periodo que siendo el tono primitivo mi menor, sus dos últimas frases están en mi mayor. Si en lugar de ser un periodo corto, fuera una pieza de alguna extensión, podría hallarse ocasión para que los instrumentos transpositores cambiasen de tono; pero no siendo esto posible, mediando sólo seis compases de silencio, es necesario elegir en cada uno de esos mismos el tono o rosca que ofrezca más ventajas o menos inconvenientes para todo el periodo. Esto ofrece siempre ciertas dificultades que obligan a usar algunas veces en dichos instrumentos tres y aún cuatro alteraciones en la clave, como sucede en el periodo que analizamos. Cuando esto acontece, es necesario evitar dificultades mecánicas en esos mismos instrumentos transpositores, mientras duren dichas alteraciones en la clave.

Por lo que acaba de indicarse se podrá conocer la razón por la cual los instrumentos transpositores no cambian de tono en los diversos periodos que se han presentado; puesto que para ello sería

necesario que fuesen piezas de cierta extensión las que sirviesen de modelo, contra el plan que nos propusimos en este tratado.

Analizando ahora el periodo anterior respecto a los efectos particulares de la orquesta, resulta que el pequeño preludio de cuatro compases que ejecutan los timbales y la cuerda pizzicato, lo acompañan los trompas entrando sucesivamente. La primera frase ejecutada por el octavín y la flauta primera, es acompañada por la cuerda pizzicato, y notas tenidas de clarinetes y fagotes. La segunda es ejecutada por el viento-metal con un acompañamiento vigoroso de la cuerda al unísono. La tercera está encomendada al viento-madera sobre un trino prolongado del octavín y flauta primera, con acompañamiento de la cuerda y algunos acordes cortados del viento-metal. La cuarta es análoga en todo a la primera; y la quinta, que es semejante a la tercera, es ejecutada por toda la orquesta.”

“Note in the preceding sample that though initially in the key of E minor, its last two phrases are in E major. If instead of being a short piece this were a composition of some length, there might be an opportunity for the transposing instruments to change pitch; but with this not being possible, as there are only six rest measures, it is necessary to choose for each of these the pitch or setting that offers the most advantages or fewest disadvantages for the whole piece. This always brings about certain difficulties, requiring key signature changes for these instruments, sometimes as many as three or even four, as is the case in the piece we are analyzing. When this happens, it is necessary to avoid mechanical difficulties in these particular transposing instruments, as long as these key alterations persist.

Based on what has just been stated, it will be possible to understand the reason why the transposing instruments do not change pitch in the different musical samples that have been provided here, as this would have required that they were compositions of substantial length serving also as examples, which would have been against the plan that we set out to follow for this treatise.

Analyzing the previous sample in terms of specific orchestral effects, it turns out that the small prelude of four bars played by the timpani and the pizzicato strings is accompanied by the horns coming in sequentially. The first phrase played by the piccolo and the first flute is accompanied by the pizzicato strings, and sustained notes from clarinets and bassoons. The second one is played by the brass with a vigorous unison string accompaniment. The third phrase is entrusted to the woodwinds over a prolonged trill of the piccolo and first flute, with string accompaniment and a few chopped chords from the brass. The fourth phrase is analogous in every aspect to the first; and the fifth, which is similar to the third, is played by the entire orchestra.”