

Editor's Notes on *Misa de Canto Mixto*

The term “canto misto” (“canto mixto” in modern Spanish spelling, *Engl.* “mixed chant”) used by Eslava in the title of this Mass could refer to the ‘modern’ style of liturgical singing and notation that evolved from Gregorian plainchant in the years preceding the Council of Trent (1545-1563) and was thenceforth gradually adopted throughout Europe. Sometimes referred to also as “canto figurado” or “canto mensural” (“figured chant” or “measured chant”), this was a style that over time became the norm on hymns, sequences, and in the Ordinary of the Mass¹. It differed from the Gregorian canto llano (plainchant or plainsong) by the introduction of measured rhythms, including specific note durations, and later, polyphony. Eslava, considered by many the father of Spanish musicology, and a priest himself, was well versed in the various liturgical music styles and their history and might have simply been labeling the work as *Misa de Canto Misto* to draw a distinction from plainchant, which he sometimes used as inspiration in his sacred music and was (and is still) used for certain religious functions or in certain venues or settings.

Another explanation might simply be the structure of this particular sung Mass, with the many options it affords, including the possibility of antiphonal singing, which brings us specifically to this interesting and somewhat uncharacteristic work by Eslava.

Here we have a very simple melody repeated through all the litanies of the Mass, written in a key that any voice can sing easily, regardless of level of training. The organ accompaniment is equally repetitive and uncomplicated. Unlike the multiple elaborate, orchestrated masses written by Eslava, a piece like this can be performed by the smallest church, with minimal musical resources and practically no rehearsal time.

Simplicity aside, Eslava provided several suggestions for how one could utilize the voices available to add variety and interest. However, except for a single passage within the “Credo” section that he indicated should be sung ‘slowly’, he did not provide the slightest indication of any other tempo or dynamics. I believe this was an intentional omission, reflecting performance aspects Eslava felt could be varied based on the judgment, instincts and abilities of the choral director and singer(s).

The original used in this transcription is a digital scan of a printed score downloaded from the Biblioteca Digital de Castilla y León (the paper copy is kept at the Biblioteca Pública de León), at https://bibliotecadigital.jcyl.es/es/catalogo_imagenes/grupo.do?path=10130455 – see cover on the next page. We also have a facsimile manuscript version obtained from Eresbil – the Basque music archive.

¹ The *Ordinary of the Mass* encompasses the *Kyrie*, *Gloria*, *Credo*, *Sanctus*, *Benedictus*, and *Agnus Dei*, which are parts of the liturgy of the Roman Catholic Mass whose text is always the same, regardless of the occasion; hence the term.

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POR

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ADVERTENCIA.

Esta *Misa* puede cantarse toda ella seguida ó á versos, excepto el *Credo* que debe ser todo seguido. Si se canta á versos, la voz suprime lo que esta designado con la palabra *Organo*, para que este toque el verso respectivo.

