

## Editor's Notes for *Villancico a la Santísima Virgen*

This original version of this piece was composed by Hilarión Eslava while in Sevilla in 1834 and was initially performed as a soprano choir + small orchestra piece, probably as accompaniment to a “Baile de Seises.” The composition became quite popular in its day, and the lyrics appear to have been adapted to suit various occasions. Later in his life, Eslava gifted the music to his hometown of Pamplona, where the words were adapted to honor the local Virgen del Camino, replacing the original dedication to the Virgen del Carmen. I include here Eslava’s original lyrics, as well as the modified lyrics used in Pamplona. The performance that I have synched to the score in Musescore, sung by the Coral de Cámara de Pamplona, has a somewhat different Pamplonese text as well.

Although in latter years this piece was described as a “Sevillana” or more specifically, a “Sevillana a la Virgen del Camino”, that was probably more of a reference to the fact that Eslava wrote it while in Sevilla and perhaps its lively style, but in reality the music has little in common with the popular dance form of Sevilla (re.: see Hernández Ascunce in “El antiguo repertorio de la Virgen del Camino” [1948]). That said, it is definitely dance-like (and is still sometimes danced to, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dv1Jd4XVIV0&feature=youtu.be>), but it is, I believe, really closer to a Navarrese “jota” dance in its style.

Here is an English translation of Eslava’s original “Sevilla” lyrics:

### INTRODUCTION

Hail, oh Virgin, clear star of the sea  
who makes this day still!  
Today your children proclaim you their Mother  
in loving affection to you.

### CHORUS

Of her purity, the heavenly Virgin,  
do joyfully sing,  
and of Spain’s immortal symbol,  
acclaimed as resplendent eternal Queen.

### VERSE 1 (as sung by the tenors)

Pure rose, graceful and bright,  
And of the land of Spain its handsome color,  
you joyfully spill on it  
a river of celestial perfume.  
From this sea with its unpredictable waves,  
from this sea with its unpredictable waves,  
you lead us to safe harbor,  
like an unfailing and precious lantern.

*(Back to chorus)*

### VERSE 2 (as sung by the tenors)

Hail Virgin, filled with grace,  
worthy mother of the Word turned human,

beautiful pearl gifted by God  
as a sacred token of love.  
Today your children, solicitous, reach  
and at your heavenly throne, Mary,  
to offer you perpetual love,  
to sing your name in praise.