

Editor's Notes for *Cor mundum crea*

Psalm 50 of the Vulgate Bible (Psalm 51 in the English Revised Standard Version of the Bible) is a famous expression of penitence. It is believed to have been composed by King David as a confession to God after he was confronted by Nathan the Prophet with the sins he had committed by seducing Bathsheba (a beautiful woman married to the faithful soldier Uriah), arranging the death of Uriah, and taking Bathsheba as his wife.

This Psalm of contrition is also called "*The Miserere*" and has been used by the Catholic Church as part of the liturgy of Holy Week for centuries. It has been set to music by many composers, typically as a cantata, and Hilarión Eslava wrote about 10 different settings of it (that we know of), perhaps more. Of these, I have previously transcribed the "*Miserere Breve*", and we know of 3 settings that have been edited (and thoroughly analyzed) by others, including his best known "*Gran Miserere*" written for the Cathedral of Sevilla in 1835 and revised in 1837. We have potentially located several of the remaining settings but have not yet been successful in securing digital images thereof for transcription.

We have run across some tantalizing possible fragments of some of these other settings, including the tenor vocal parts from a distinct "*Miserere a 4*" previously received from the Biblioteca Nacional de España. We couldn't really do much with that. However, we recently received this tenor solo titled "*Cor mundum crea*", which is a verse from the *Miserere*. The scanned manuscript comes from the collection of tenor Manuel Villalba (with the kind permission of his heir) via the Centro de Documentación Musical de Andalucía (CDMA) in Granada.

When we compared this score with the tenor section from *Miserere a 4*, the tenor solo parts basically matched, with the exception that there are 11 measures of instrumental introduction indicated in the *Miserere a 4*, and also this score omits some 64 measures. Although the source was handwritten, it utilized the modern tenor G-clef (Eslava's choral works typically use the archaic tenor C-clef), so it was clearly written at a later time. Perhaps the copyist decided to shorten the piece a bit for his own reasons. Certainly the missing measures could be considered repetitive in terms of the lyrics. At any rate, the score also includes a keyboard accompaniment that provides some insights regarding the original orchestral accompaniment.

We look forward to the day when we finally obtain and transcribe this magnificent cantata in its entirety.

PSALM 50:12 VULGATE (LATIN) LYRICS:

Cor mundum crea in me, Deus, et spiritum rectum innova in visceribus meis.

PSALM 51:10 REVISED STANDARD VERSION (ENGLISH) TRANSLATION:

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me.