

Editor's Notes for *Vísperas a Ocho*

Vespers are a liturgy of evening prayer, one of the canonical hours in Catholic (both Latin and Eastern rites), Eastern Orthodox, and some mainline Protestant traditions. The word for this fixed prayer time comes from the Latin *vesper*, meaning "evening". The musical aspects that can be incorporated into a Vespers service can vary widely, from simple chants and hymns to much more elaborate choral works, generally dependent on the liturgical occasion. Vespers typically follow a set order that focuses on the performance of psalms and other biblical canticles. The one required element is the *Magnificat* (Song of Mary).

We discovered this rich, beautiful setting of the of the Vespers, comprising three Psalms and the *Magnificat*, as a set of manuscript scores in the music archives of the Metropolitan Cathedral of Santiago, Chile. For more about this amazing archive and the story of how this music found its way from Spain to Chile, please refer to our Editor's Notes for Santiago's *Miserere a 8* (CPE-430), at <https://hilarioneslava.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Editors-Notes-for-Chile-Miserere-a-Ocho-Parts-1-3.pdf>.

The rich orchestration and the style of some parts of these Vespers suggest a musically mature Eslava, probably after he became Master of the Royal Chapel of Music in 1847. Unfortunately for Eslava and the musical world, works such as these were for a time declared "prohibited" in Roman Catholic liturgy, beginning with the issue by Pope Pius X in 1903 of his pastoral instruction or *motu proprio* "*Tra le sollecitudini*" ("Among the concerns"). The Pope's decree stated that "in the office of Vespers it should be the rule to follow the *Cæremoniale Episcoporum*, which prescribes Gregorian Chant for the psalmody", adding that "The psalms known as *di concerto* are therefore forever excluded and prohibited" (Art. IV.11). The definition for "psalms *di concerto*" was rather elastic, but no doubt was applied to Eslava's Vespers, as well those of his celebrated predecessors Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643), Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741), and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791), among others. That placed Eslava in good company, but it also meant that this music would be forced into an undeserved oblivion lasting more than a century.

As I started to work on transcribing these Vespers, I discovered that I had encountered all four of these pieces in one form or another already. However, my earlier sources for these works had been in most cases incomplete and/or illegible. Therefore I was very excited to at last find legible, complete scores, including instrument scores, which allowed me to correct errors and fully transcribe these pieces in a way that would most fully meet the intent of the composer.

I offer the following observations about each piece:

1. **Dixit Dominus:** My transcription of another version of this Psalm (CPE-663) can be viewed at <https://musescore.com/user/29381772/scores/6415920> and on <https://hilarioneslava.org/music/>, under *Salmos/Psalms*. I knew that I was missing at least one page at the time I did the first transcription – it turns out I was actually missing two pages! There are portions of this score that are reminiscent of Beethoven, and an especially beautiful chord in Measure 46 that is harmonically well ahead of its time. The *particellas* include timpani, which were not in the conductor's score, nor in my first source. Although there were clearly a few errors in the placement of the drum rolls, I think I was able to correct them in my transcription.
2. **Beatus Vir:** There is a fragment of this Psalm that Eslava used as an example of a fugue in Volume 2 of his 1864 treatise on music composition, entitled "*Escuela de Composición, Tratado Segundo: del contrapunto y fuga*" (CPE-069). The pages describing choral fugues include a series of examples in order of increasing complexity, and he concludes them with a fragment of this beautiful and intricate eight-part SSAT/SATB fugue with figured organ accompaniment. For my treatment of that fragment, see <https://hilarioneslava.org/music/> or <https://musescore.com/user/29381772/scores/7595624>. In his discussion of the example, Eslava indicates that the first version of this piece was composed in 1829, when he would have been only 21 or 22 years old, while serving as Master of the Chapel of the Cathedral of El Burgo de Osma.

In this Vespers version, there is a complex orchestral accompaniment that adds even more dimensions to the intricate fugue, and the result easily rivals anything written by JS Bach. This version was scored for SSATB/SATB choir, which is technically nine voices. However, the bass voice in the first choir appears to have been added somewhat later, and its purpose seems to be reinforcement of the tenor voice.

3. **Laudate Domine, Omnes Gentes:** Here there was very little difference between this and my original transcription (CPE-554), but I did locate and correct a few errors. For my original transcription, see <https://musescore.com/user/29381772/scores/6567096> or <https://hilarioneslava.org/music/>.
4. **Magnificat:** My first source for this piece (CPE-662) was largely illegible, and I had to make a lot of educated guesses on what the notes were. With this new source, I was able to confirm that my guesses were mostly correct. However, I did find a few discrepancies, which I was able to correct here. Like *Dixit Dominus*, the *particellas* included a timpani part, which was not shown in the conductor's score nor my first source. Although there were clearly a few errors in the placement of the drum rolls, I think I was able to correct them in my transcription here as well. My first transcription of this work can be found at <https://musescore.com/user/29381772/scores/5885333> and at <https://hilarioneslava.org/music/>, under *Santísima Virgen / Blessed Virgin*.

1. Dixit Dominus	
Latin Lyrics (Psalm 109, Vulgate Bible)	English Translation (Psalm 110, NRSV)
1 Dixit Dominus Domino meo: Sede a dextris meis, donec ponam inimicos tuos scabellum pedum tuorum.	1 The Lord says to my lord, 'Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool.'
2 Virgam virtutis tuæ emittet Dominus ex Sion: dominare in medio inimicorum tuorum.	2 The Lord sends out from Zion your mighty scepter. Rule in the midst of your foes.
3 Tecum principium in die virtutis tuæ in splendoribus sanctorum: ex utero, ante luciferum, genui te.	3 Your people will offer themselves willingly on the day you lead your forces on the holy mountains. From the womb of the morning, like dew, your youth will come to you.
4 Juravit Dominus, et non pœnitebit eum: Tu es sacerdos in æternum secundum ordinem Melchisedech.	4 The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, you are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.
5 Dominus a dextris tuis; confregit in die iræ suæ reges.	5 The Lord is at your right hand; he will shatter kings on the day of his wrath.
6 Judicabit in nationibus, implebit ruinas; conquassabit capita in terra multorum.	6 He will execute judgement among the nations, filling them with corpses; he will shatter heads over the wide earth.
7 De torrente in via bibet; propterea exaltabit caput.	7 He will drink from the stream by the path; therefore he will lift up his head.

2. Beatus Vir

Latin Lyrics (Psalm 111, Vulgate Bible)	English Translation (Psalm 112, NRSV)
<p>1 Beatus vir qui timet Dominum: in mandatis ejus volet nimis.</p> <p>2 Potens in terra erit semen ejus; generatio rectorum benedicetur.</p> <p>3 Gloria et divitiæ in domo ejus, et justitia ejus manet in sæculum sæculi.</p> <p>4 Exortum est in tenebris lumen rectis: misericors, et miserator, et justus.</p> <p>5 Jucundus homo qui miseretur et commodat; disponet sermones suos in judicio:</p> <p>6 Quia in æternum non commovebitur.</p> <p>7 In memoria æterna erit justus; ab auditione mala non timebit. Paratum cor ejus sperare in Domino,</p> <p>8 confirmatum est cor ejus; non commovebitur donec despiciat inimicos suos.</p> <p>9 Dispersit, dedit pauperibus; justitia ejus manet in sæculum sæculi: cornu ejus exaltabitur in gloria.</p> <p>10 Peccator videbit, et irascetur; dentibus suis fremet et tabescet: desiderium peccatorum peribit.</p>	<p>1 Happy are those who fear the Lord, who greatly delight in his commandments.</p> <p>2 Their descendants will be mighty in the land; the generation of the upright will be blessed.</p> <p>3 Wealth and riches are in their houses, and their righteousness endures forever.</p> <p>4 They rise in the darkness as a light for the upright; they are gracious, merciful, and righteous.</p> <p>5 It is well with those who deal generously and lend, who conduct their affairs with justice.</p> <p>6 For the righteous will never be moved; they will be remembered for ever.</p> <p>7 They are not afraid of evil tidings; their hearts are firm, secure in the Lord.</p> <p>8 Their hearts are steady, they will not be afraid; in the end they will look in triumph on their foes.</p> <p>9 They have distributed freely, they have given to the poor; their righteousness endures forever; their horn is exalted in honor.</p> <p>10 The wicked see it and are angry; they gnash their teeth and melt away; the desire of the wicked comes to nothing.</p>

3. Laudate Domine, Omnes Gentes

Latin Lyrics (Psalm 116, Vulgate Bible)	English Translation (Psalm 117, NRSV)
<p>1 Laudate Dominum, omnes gentes; laudate eum, omnes populi.</p> <p>2 Quoniam confirmata est super nos misericordia ejus, et veritas Domini manet in æternum.</p>	<p>1 Praise the Lord, all you nations! Extol him, all you peoples!</p> <p>2 For great is his steadfast love towards us, and the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever.</p>

4. Magnificat

Latin Lyrics (Luke 1:46-55, Vulgate Bible)	English Translation (Luke 1:46-55, NRSV)
46 Magnificat anima mea Dominum:	46 My soul magnifies the Lord,
47 et exsultavit spiritus meus in Deo salutari meo.	47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
48 Quia respexit humilitatem ancillæ suæ: ecce enim ex hoc beatam me dicent omnes generationes,	48 for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
49 quia fecit mihi magna qui potens est: et sanctum nomen ejus,	49 for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name.
50 et misericordia ejus a progenie in progenies timentibus eum.	50 His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.
51 Fecit potentiam in brachio suo: dispersit superbos mente cordis sui.	51 He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.
52 Deposuit potentes de sede, et exaltavit humiles.	52 He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly;
53 Esurientes implevit bonis: et divites dimisit inanes.	53 he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty.
54 Suscepit Israël puerum suum, recordatus misericordiæ suæ:	54 He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy,
55 sicut locutus est ad patres nostros, Abraham et semini ejus in sæcula.	55 according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever.