

Editor's Notes for *Magnificat en Re*

The *Magnificat* is the Virgin Mary's hymn of praise to the Lord, often called the *Song* or *Canticle of Mary*. It is traditionally incorporated into the liturgical services of the Catholic Church (at vespers) and of the Eastern Orthodox churches (at the morning services), but the text and music are most often used during the Christmas/Advent season. It is one of the eight most ancient Christian hymns and perhaps the earliest Marian hymn. The text of the canticle is taken directly from the Gospel of Luke (1:46–55) where it is spoken by Mary upon the occasion of her visitation to her cousin Elizabeth. In the narrative, after Mary greets Elizabeth, who is pregnant with John the Baptist, the latter moves within Elizabeth's womb. Elizabeth praises Mary for her faith (using words partially reflected in the traditional Hail Mary prayer), and Mary responds with what is now known as the *Magnificat*. The title "*Magnificat*" comes from the incipit (first line) of its Latin lyrics ("*Magnificat anima mea Dominum*").

The *Magnificat* has had numerous musical settings from the likes of Palestrina, JS Bach and Mozart, and this is in fact just one of several versions by Hilarión Eslava I have transcribed to date. This particular *Magnificat* (in the key of D major) came from the music archives of the Cathedral of Sevilla via the Institución Colombina, in Sevilla, Spain. The original manuscript consisted of a general score and particellas. The inscription on the cover of the general score reads (*sic*):

Magnificat
A 8 voces
Con
Violines, Obueses, Trompas
Organo obligado
Y Bajo
Compuesto
Por el Señor Mtro. De Capilla
Dⁿ Ylarión Eslaba
1834

(*Magnificat* for 8 voices with violins, oboes, horns, and *obligato* organ, composed by the Master of the Chapel, Ylarión Eslaba, 1834 [Note: The spelling of the composer's name is the way Eslava used to write his own name, following contemporary Basque spelling practice, until after he moved to Madrid in 1844]).

The date (1834), which also appears on some of the particellas, places the composition of this work to within two years of Eslava being appointed Master of the Chapel in Sevilla, setting his age at 26 or 27. This beautiful *Magnificat* is basically in the form of a fugue, and displays the composer's talent for melody and elaborate sacred choral works present also in his Sevilla *Misereres*, composed around this time (1833-1837).

A few additional notes concerning this work:

- The score includes a part for "*bajones*" (Sp. sing. *bajón*), which I have translated as "dulcians", an archaic double-reed woodwind considered the predecessor of the modern bassoon. In Spanish church music up to the 19th century, *bajones* were frequently used to support the vocal bass parts and were considered the most important among the wind instruments.
- The particella for the *obligato* organ provides the following general instruction (*sic*): "*Lengüeteria en los fuertes y Pifano con la voz en 26 y bajete en los Dolces.*" I am not an organ expert –much less so regarding pre-20th century Spanish organ construction, but as best as I can interpret, the closest English

modern translation of this instruction might be “Reed registration on the *fortes*, with (combined) piccolo (typically at 2’), vox at 16’, and dulcian/dulcian (typically at 4’) on the *dolces*.” It is quite possible that some of these latter registers may have been settings available at one or more of the organs at the Cathedral of Sevilla at the time and may not be available in most modern organs today. For the sake of fidelity to the composer’s instructions, I have nonetheless left the Spanish original indications on my transcription, but it is obviously up to the organist to find, using their best judgment, the most suitable registration for their instrument and venue.

- The main score did not include separate staves for the violoncello, contrabass, or the bassoon –only a single staff entitled "*Bajo Gen.*". However, there were individual parts for all these instruments, with the parts for the cello & contrabass identical to the "*Bajo Gen.*" staff in the main score. There was also a part titled for a viola, but it was written in the bass staff and otherwise identical to the parts for the cello and contrabass. It would be impossible to play it on a viola as written; therefore, I did not include this in the score. Given that the parts appeared to be written by a different hand than Eslava's, I assume this viola part was erroneously included by the copyist.

Lyrics and approximate translation:

<p>Magnificat anima mea Dominum; Et exultavit spiritus meus in Deo salutari meo, Quia respexit humilitatem ancillæ suæ;</p> <p>ecce enim ex hoc beatam me dicent omnes generationes. Quia fecit mihi magna qui potens est,</p> <p>et sanctum nomen ejus, Et misericordia ejus a progenie in progenies timentibus eum. Fecit potentiam in bracchio suo; Dispersit superbos mente cordis sui.</p> <p>Deposuit potentes de sede, et exaltavit humiles. Esurientes implevit bonis, et divites dimisit inanes. Suscepit Israel, puerum suum, recordatus misericordiæ suæ, Sicut locutus est ad patres nostros, Abraham et semini ejus in sæcula.</p> <p>Gloria Patri, et Filio, et Spiritui Sancto, sicut erat in principio, et nunc, et semper: et in sæcula sæculorum. Amen.</p>	<p>My soul magnifies the Lord And my spirit rejoices in God my Savior; Because He has regarded the lowliness of His handmaid; For behold, henceforth all generations shall call me blessed; Because He who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is His name; And His mercy is from generation to generation on those who fear Him. He has shown might with His arm, He has scattered the proud in the conceit of their heart. He has put down the mighty from their thrones, and has exalted the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent away empty. He has given help to Israel, his servant, mindful of His mercy Even as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his posterity forever.</p> <p>Glory to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, As it was in the beginning, is now, and forever, world without end, Amen.</p>
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