

Editor's notes for "*Candor de luz eterna*" – *Villancico y Baile de Seises*

If given the daunting task of choosing my favorite work by Hilarión Eslava, this piece, with its jaunty Andalusian flavor, would be a top contender. I have previously transcribed a posthumously published version of this piece for voice/piano (see <https://musescore.com/user/29381772/scores/8665371>), but finally was able to obtain the full, original, orchestrated version from the archives of the Cathedral de Sevilla, via their custodian, the Institución Colombina.

The "*Baile De Seises*" is a form of children's church liturgical dance that has been traditional in some parts of Spain, most prominently in Sevilla, for many centuries and is still performed today on a few celebrations of the Roman Catholic liturgy. In the Cathedral of Sevilla, the *Seises* (singular "*Seise*") are a group of ten pre-adolescent boys who are dressed in traditional baroque-era costumes, striped in blue or red depending on the occasion, their heads covered by plumed hats of matching colors. Their name comes from the Spanish for "six" ("*seis*"), as they were originally six boys who were trained as leading choirboys, educated and boarded at the church's expense. Dancing was a tradition that was introduced centuries later, the origin being the popular dances that were part of the Eucharistic celebration of Corpus Christi, a tradition that recalled the biblical account of King David dancing in front of the Tabernacle. The *Seises* perform a stately choreography in front of the Cathedral's High Altar, playing castanets at certain points during the music. Although historically the dancers would also sing the "*villancicos*" (the lilting melodies in Spanish that accompany the dances, such as the present composition), these days it is more common for a separate choir to sing. The musical accompaniment (aside from the castanets) is provided by a small number of orchestral instruments.

For more historical context about this piece and information regarding *Seises* in general, see my editor's notes for the simplified posthumous version mentioned above, available at <https://hilarioneslava.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Ed-Notes-candor-de-luz-eterna-baile-seises.pdf>

During his time as Master of the Chapel at the Cathedral of Sevilla (1832-1844), one of Hilarión Eslava's responsibilities was to look after the education and well-being of the *Seises*. He also wrote nearly a dozen villancicos for the *Baile de Seises*, a task that he once referred to as "one of his greatest pleasures" as a composer. This particular piece was written in 1833, soon after Eslava arrived in Sevilla.

The lyrics for this particular *villancico* by Eslava originate from a series of Eucharistic poems written around 1820 by Fr. Pedro Manuel Prieto (?-1820), *Canónigo Magistral* (chief preacher appointed by the *cabildo*) of the Cathedral of Sevilla¹. The melody is at times reminiscent of a cheerful *sevillana* dance. Eslava clearly was fond of this particular melody, as he used a beautifully-embellished version of it about twenty years later (in 1858, when he was serving as a Professor of Composition at the Royal Conservatory of Music of Madrid) in the *Allegro moderato* section of a flute contest piece, which can be found on this web page and at https://musescore.com/rebecca_rufin/scores/7036119.

The original manuscript for this piece came to us in the form of an incomplete full score (which appeared to be in Eslava's own handwriting), and two collections of *particellas*, written in different keys and with instrumentation that varied from that indicated in the full score. This presented several challenges with respect to the transcription process:

¹ Prieto, Pedro Manuel, *Canciones sagradas á varios asuntos*, Imprenta a cargo de Anastasio López, Sevilla [1820].

1. The full score provided a single staff entitled “*Bajo*”, which was clearly intended to be played by a bass instrument of some sort. There were no staves provided for separate cello, contrabass, organ, or bass brass instruments. To me, this indicates that Eslava was open to using whatever bass instruments might be available for a performance. The *particella* sets both provided separate cello and contrabass parts (which were basically identical to the *Bajo* part). One *particella* set included a trombone part, whereas the other included an ophicleide (“*figle*”) part. These basically duplicated portions of the *Bajo* part. Based on my experience with Eslava’s work in general, I included parts for violoncello and contrabass, and a separate part that would be optional and could be played by any brass bass instrument. Eslava usually used the ophicleide, but a trombone or tuba would work well. The instrument I use in my synthesized version is actually a tuba.
2. There were conflicting dynamic instructions between the *particella* sets and the full score, and also between parts therein. I did my best to discern Eslava’s true intent, but it would be wise to consult the original version if in doubt.
3. No castanet part is mentioned in the full score, but this is a traditional “must” for *Bailes de Seises*. The *particella* sets were clear as to when to begin playing castanets, and for how long they were to be played. However, no rhythm was provided for the castanets. The rhythm I chose to use sounded well to my ears, but of course can be replaced by another.

For more about Eslava and his music, visit <https://hilarion eslava.org/home/home-en/>.

SPANISH LYRICS	ENGLISH TRANSLATION
<p>INTRODUCCIÓN Candor de la luz eterna, que para no deslumbrarme, ocultas tus resplandores, y me mandas acercarme; Mira que estoy en tinieblas, y que soy tan miserable, que hacia ti no puedo irme, si tú hacia ti no me traes.</p>	<p>INTRODUCTION Truth of the eternal light so as not to dazzle me you hide your brilliance, and draws me closer, See how I am in darkness and that I am so miserable that I cannot toward you walk if you do not bring me closer to you.</p>
<p>ESTRIBILLO Sol de justicia, que entre celajes te has escondido, Para incendiarme: haz que a mi pecho tu amor lo inflame.</p>	<p>REFRAIN Sun of justice, which among the clouds lies in hiding, So as to set me on fire, make it so my breast is by your love set aflame.</p>

<p>COPLAS</p> <p>Aunque estoy ciego, y desnudo, no debo desalentarme, porque en este Sacramento tengo con que remediarme.</p> <p>Dime, luz inaccesible, fuego de ardor inefable, ¿Cómo te recibe el hombre, y tan torpe, y frío yace?</p>	<p>VERSES</p> <p>Although I'm blind and naked I must not be discouraged, because in this Sacrament I can find my healing.</p> <p>Tell me, inaccessible light, ineffable burning fire, How does man receive you, as he so clumsy and cold lies down?</p>
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