

Editor's notes for "Ay! ay! ay! que desfallezco" – Villancico y Baile de Seises

Villancicos are a traditional form of Spanish song, frequently (though not necessarily) on a religious theme. They typically consist of an introduction, a refrain ("*estribillo*") and "*coplas*" or verses, each part with its own prescribed meter. 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 specific celebrations of the Roman Catholic liturgy. In the Cathedral of Sevilla (the object of this particular piece), 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.

I have previously transcribed and described several other *Villancicos y Bailes de Seises* by Eslava, so for additional historical context, rather than repeat myself here, I direct you to <https://hilarioneslava.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Ed-Notes-candor-de-luz-eterna-orchestrated.pdf> In these notes I will focus on the specific music.

The lyrics for this particular *villancico* by Hilarión Eslava were excerpted from three different Eucharistic poems written around 1820 by Fr. Pedro Manuel Prieto (?-1820), Canónigo Magistral (chief preacher appointed by the *cabildo* or chapter) of the Cathedral of Sevilla. The melody is flowing, elegant and graceful, with the accompaniment matching that character beautifully.

The original manuscript for this piece came to us from the archives of the Cathedral of Sevilla, via the Institución Colombina, in the form of a general score (which appeared to be in Eslava's own handwriting), and a collection of *particellas* of less certain hand and date. The original composition dates to 1835, in the first few years of Eslava's appointment as Master of the Chapel of the Cathedral of Sevilla.

1. The full score provided a single staff labeled for both violoncello and contrabass. The *particella* sets both provided identical cello and contrabass parts, as well as a trombone part that basically duplicated portions of the bass strings. 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 bass brass instrument. Eslava usually used the ophicleide (now an archaic brass instrument), but a trombone or tuba would work well. The instrument I use in my synthesized version is actually a trombone.
2. In some cases, the identical bass string parts resulted in a grinding bass sound that I thought was simply too low. In those instances, I raised the contrabass part by an octave. This is consistent with patterns I have observed in Eslava's later works.
3. There were conflicting dynamic and articulation instructions between the *particella* sets and the full score, and also between individual parts. I did my best to discern Eslava's true intent, but it would be wise to consult the original version if in doubt.
4. Castanets are called for in both the general score and the vocal *particellas*, but 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.
5. Beginning at Measure 96, the general score and the *particellas* stopped matching. For the next ten measures in the general score (or eight measures in the *particellas*), the scores differ significantly.

Both versions are nonetheless actually quite lovely. Since I had mainly been following the *particellas* in my transcription, I did not notice the difference until I was well along in the transcription process. Therefore, the continuous score reflects the *particella* version, but I have included an *Ossia* section at the end of the score that reflects the general score. This is clearly marked in my edition. The mp3 is reflective of the *particella* version. To play the general score *ossia* section audio, you will need to visit the MuseScore version for this piece and scroll toward the end of the score where the *ossia* section is located, select the first measure of that, and then click play.

6. On a related note, as already mentioned, the general score did not include a trombone part. For purposes of continuity with the rest of music, I have added a trombone section for the *ossia*, drawing on the patterns used for the trombone *particella* throughout the rest of the piece.

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

SPANISH LYRICS	ENGLISH TRANSLATION
<p>INTRODUCCIÓN ¡Ay! ¡Ay! ¡Ay que desfallezco, a la consideración del amor incomprensible, que me tiene mi Pastor! Quiere entrarse en mis entrañas, y hacernos uno a los dos; transformándome en sí mismo, trocándome de hombre en Dios.</p>	<p>INTRODUCTION Oh! Oh! Oh, I am fainting As I consider the ineffable love, that my Shepherd has for me! He wants to breach my heart and make us both one; transforming me into Himself, converting me from man into God.</p>
<p>ESTRIBILLO Hostia viva, inmaculada, de inestimable valor, precio del mundo, y asilo de esta peregrinación. Mira que somos tu pueblo, que cuenta con tu favor, y como a su Dios te rinde la suprema adoración.</p>	<p>REFRAIN Living, immaculate Host, of priceless worth, the world's recompense, and refuge of this pilgrimage. Remember that we are your people, who count on your favor, and as their God they Thee render supreme adoration.</p>
<p>COPLAS</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. El amor que Jesucristo nos muestra sacramentado, nos ejecuta a traerle in pecho, y brazo sellado. 2. Buen Jesús, no es tolerable que estés tú siempre abrasado de amor al hombre, y el hombre para contigo esté helado. 	<p>VERSES</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The love that Jesus Christ shows us turned into holy sacrament obliges us to carry Him in breast, and arm branded. 2. Good Jesus, it is unbearable that Thou are always burning with love for man, and man towards Thee is frozen.