

## Editor's notes for "Dulce amor de mi vida" – Villancico y Baile de Seises

Here is another of Hilarión Eslava's *Villancicos* and *Bailes de Seises* from the archives of the Cathedral of Sevilla, we have obtained thanks to the Institución Colombina. *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 sacred 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.

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 *Seises*, a task that he once referred to as "one of his greatest pleasures" as a composer. I believe he enjoyed this form of music because it gave him opportunity to draw on traditional Spanish folk music and dance styles, and because of the appreciation with which this form of music was always received by the people of Sevilla.

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 first four lines of the introduction and the refrain for this *villancico* were excerpted from two 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. I was not able to ascertain the origins of the remaining lyrics; they could have been written by Eslava himself, or taken from other poetry by Prieto or someone else entirely. The melody and accompanying orchestration are stately and elegant, with the *Coplas* specifically described to be played "*Aire (de) Bolero*" (resembling a *bolero* dance).

The original manuscript for this piece came to us 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 1834, in the first few years of Eslava's appointment as Master of the Chapel of the Cathedral of Sevilla.

1. The general 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). The *particellas* included a single part labeled for bassoon and trombone, written in a different key. This basically duplicated portions of the *Bajo* part, with occasional divergences between the bassoon and trombone shown in different voices. Based on my experience with Eslava's work in general, I included parts for violoncello and contrabass, and created separate parts for a bassoon and trombone (or other bass brass instrument), transposed to the original key. For the bass brass instrument, Eslava usually used the (now archaic) ophicleide, 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 sparse as well as conflicting dynamic and articulation instructions between the *particella* set and the full score, and also between individual parts. I did my best to discern Eslava's true intent, but if in doubt it would be wise to consult the original version if in doubt.
4. Castanets were not mentioned in either the general score or the *particellas*. However, there is a lengthy instrumental section in the *Estribillo* that clearly lends itself to insertion of castanets in accordance with the *Baile de Seises* tradition. I have therefore added castanets, with a rhythm that sounded well to my ears, but of course can be omitted or replaced by another.

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

SPANISH LYRICS	ENGLISH TRANSLATION
<p><b>INTRODUCCIÓN</b>  Dulce amor de mi vida,  Sacramentado dueño,  amante de los hombres,  finísimo en extremo,  haz Señor que a tus voces  corramos todos llenos  de amor y confianza,  de alegría y contento.</p> <p><b>ESTRIBILLO</b>  Venid a mi cena,  hijos muy amados;  la mesa está puesta,  todo preparado,  nadie se me excuse,  ni enfermo, ni sano,  ni pobre, ni rico,  que a todos aguardo.  Yo soy quien convido,  Yo quien hago el gasto,  y quien me doy todo  a todos en pasto.</p> <p><b>COPLAS</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ay que mi pecho salta  ¡Oh buen Jesús,  viendo en las aras el cordero de Dios,  Hostia sin mancha!</li> <li>2. Mi alma se enajena  ¡Oh buen Jesús,  considerando a mi Dios y Señor  Sacramentado!</li> </ol>	<p><b>INTRODUCTION</b>  Sweet love of my life,  Master turned Sacrament,  lover of men,  finest in the extreme,  Lord, make it so upon hearing your voice  we all run full  of love and trust,  of joy and contentment.</p> <p><b>REFRAIN</b>  Come to my supper,  very beloved children;  the table is set,  all is ready,  let no one give me any excuses,  neither sick nor well,  nor poor, nor rich,  for I await you all.  I am the one who invites,  I am the one who pays for the expense,  and I am the one who gives himself fully,  to all in nourishment.</p> <p><b>VERSES</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Oh, my breast leaps,  O good Jesus  seeing in the altar the Lamb of God,  Host without blemish!</li> <li>2. My soul is blinded in awe,  O good Jesus  As I stand before my God and Lord  In Sacrament!</li> </ol>