

Editor's notes for "*Gloria a ti joh Dios!*" – *Villancico y Baile de Seises*

Here is another of Hilarión Eslava's *Villancicos* intended as a *Baile de Seises* from the archives of the Cathedral of Sevilla, obtained via the Institución Colombina. *Villancicos* are a traditional form of Spanish song, frequently (though not necessarily) on a religious theme and, in olden times, not exclusively associated with Christmas, as they are today. *Villancicos* 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 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 *Baile de 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 freely draw on traditional Spanish folk music.

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.

Thematically, this is intended to celebrate the Immaculate Conception. The introductory section of this piece is in A-minor, creating a stately, reverent atmosphere. This is in vivid contrast to the refrain that follows, with a cheerful *jota*-like tempo, "*sin miedo y sin zozobra*" ("without fear or hesitation").

The original manuscript for this piece came to us in the form of a general score (which appears to be in Eslava's own handwriting), and a collection of *particellas* of less certain hand and date. The trombone was only included as a *particella*, so may have been added at a later time. 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.

Following are a few more detailed observations about the score:

1. 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 it would be wise to consult the original version if in doubt.
2. This is the first *villancico y baile* I have encountered that actually provides specific rhythm for the castanets. There are basically two castanet parts, one played by soprano sections 1 & 3, and the other played by soprano sections 2 & 4. These sections included staff text "*rep*" and "*piz*". I am uncertain what these terms mean. The copyist for the soprano *particellas* included several variations of "*piz*" or "*pizc*", the obvious interpretation being *pizzicato*, but this makes little sense for castanets. I suspect it may have to do with which castanet is to be used, since true castanets are pitched differently, with

a slightly higher pitch for the right hand (for right-handed players; the opposite for left-handed players). The higher pitch is referred to as “Pi”, and the lower pitch as “Ta”. I theorize that “piz” equates to “Pi”, and “rep” equates to “Ta”, but I could be mistaken. At any rate, I included the staff text as provided by Eslava, and this can be interpreted at the Conductor’s discretion.

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

As a final note, the audio rendering of this piece on the hilarioneslava.org music page (<https://hilarioneslava.org/music/>) was created using MuseScore 4’s improved soundfonts. You can also check it out by accessing the audio file itself, at <https://hilarioneslava.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Gloria-a-ti-oh-Dios-MS4.mp3>.

SPANISH LYRICS	APPROXIMATE ENGLISH TRANSLATION
<p>INTRODUCCIÓN Gloria a ti ¡oh Dios! y a ti, Virgen dichosa, concebida sin mancha de pecado: Hoy alza España el pabellón sagrado, Dulce Patrona, y te celebra hermosa.</p>	<p>INTRODUCTION Glory to Thee, O God and to Thee, Blessed Virgin, conceived without the stain of sin: Today Spain raises the sacred banner, Sweet Patroness, and celebrates Thee, fair Lady.</p>
<p>ESTRIBILLO Cantemos, compañeros, sin miedo y sin zozobra, de Dios la grande obra, que Él mismo celebró.</p>	<p>REFRAIN Let us sing, comrades, without fear and without hesitation, of God's great work, which He Himself has celebrated.</p>
<p>COPLAS</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. ¡Oh cuánto el Poderoso de bienes muy cumplidos el alma y los sentidos de su amada dotó! Así el dragón furioso, que al hombre vencería, postrado ante María al Tártaro cayó. 2. ¡Oh! Tú del alto Cielo, do riges las estrellas, atiende a las querellas del pueblo que te amó. Si no de Tí el consuelo de sus acerbos males, ¿Por quién a los mortales jamás se le otorgó? 	<p>VERSES</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. O how the Mighty One of virtues most worthy the soul and the senses of His beloved He endowed! Thus, the furious dragon who would have vanquished man, prostrate before Mary into (hell's) Tartarus fell. 2. O Thou of high Heaven, where Thou rulest the stars, attend to the grievances of the people who loved Thee. If not from Thee the consolation of their bitter woes, who else could mortals have ever received it from?