

Editor's Notes for *Magnificat*

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 based on the text are often used during the Christmas/Advent season. It is one of the eight most ancient Christian hymns and perhaps the earliest Marian hymn.

The *Magnificat* has had numerous musical settings from the likes of Palestrina, Bach and Mozart, and Hilarión Eslava has written at least four different settings, which can be found at hilarioneslava.org and on my MuseScore pages. This one is the simplest in terms of accompanying instrumentation, and is rather fugue-like in its form. It is one of five choral works contained in a handwritten journal attributed to Hilarión Eslava. Although the title literally reads "*Magnificat a 4*", there are clearly eight singing parts that would appear to represent a double choir at first glance. No solo parts are formally indicated, but I surmise from the title that the first choir was most likely intended to be for solo voices. That said, there are a few places where a first choir part divides, and my presumption there is that the soloist could choose the part best suiting his/her vocal range – but I could be wrong.

To the best of my knowledge, none of the works in this particular journal were ever formally published, and they all seem to lack composer's instructions that would have been necessary to create the intended performance. Therefore, this *Magnificat* was likely never performed except under the direction of Eslava himself, who would have provided such instruction personally. Because of the paucity of instruction, I have made quite a few assumptions in the transcription process, which anybody performing this piece should bear in mind. These include:

1. There were no tempo indications whatsoever. I have indicated "*Andante*" at the beginning because I like the piece at that tempo. Except for one fermata, any other variances in tempo through the remainder in the piece were added by me (sometimes hidden, sometimes visible), simply because I felt they were needed.
2. There was no indication of solo voicings. The first set of SATB clefs was unmarked as being either solo or choral intent. The second set of SATB clefs was marked as second choir.
3. Neither the flute nor the violin parts were actually labeled as such. I have chosen those instruments based on the way they were notated and patterns observed in other Eslava works. I am fairly positive about the violins, but the flutes could just have easily been oboes or even clarinets or perhaps a mix. The horn part was labeled as such, and the bass part was labeled as "accompaniment". I believe Eslava likely played this himself on the organ, as it is provided with figured bass notation, but other bass instruments would probably work just as well.
4. The small notes I have shown in the bass accompaniment do not appear in the original score; rather they are my simple interpretation of the figured bass markings, which I added as a guide. These may be played, modified, or ignored as desired.
5. There were only about five or six dynamic notations in the entire piece, all of which were piano (*p*). I showed these where they occurred, but also added them to parallel parts for consistency. I

have added many more dynamic notations based on my familiarity with Eslava's style and my own preferences. The conductor should exercise his/her own judgment in actual performance.

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 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*").

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

Latin Lyrics	English Translation
<p>Magnificat anima mea Dominum; Et exultavit spiritus meus in Deo salutari meo, Quia respexit humilitatem ancillae suae; ecce enim ex hoc beatam me dicent omnes generationes. Quia fecit mihi magna qui potens est, et sanctum nomen ejus, Et misericordia ejus a progenie in progenies timentibus eum. Fecit potentiam in brachio 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 misericordiae suae, Sicut locutus est ad patres nostros, Abraham et semini ejus in saecula.</p> <p>Gloria Patri, et Filio, et Spiritui Sancto, sicut erat in principio, et nunc, et semper: et in saecula saeculorum. 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.</p> <p>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 Ghost, As it was in the beginning, is now, and forever, world without end, Amen</p>