

# Choral Tapas: Scores by 21st Century Spanish Composers, Part 1

*Marian Dolan (USA), Nuria Fernández Herranz (Spain) and Elena Gonzalez Correcher (Spain)*

A visit to Spain opens the door to explore the ancient and the modern, an array of cultural influences and customs, a variety of languages and festivals, and, of course, music: *zarzuela, jota*, Mozarabic, Sephardic, *txistu, gaita*, Morales, Victoria, Rodrigo, Albéniz, Savall, Casals, *flamenco*, Domingo, Carreras, Carmen and more. To truly 'taste' Spain, however, means having tapas: visiting bars or cafés to enjoy a variety of small food 'tastings' in the company of good friends. So here, with you as our guest, we have prepared for you a 21<sup>st</sup> century choral tapas: 'tastings' of Spanish and Basque chefs (the composers), foods (the scores), and ingredients (texts, rhythms, melodies, stories). With great care and affection, we serve you a musical tapas of *energía, sentimiento, vitalidad, ritmo, alegría, inteligencia, narración, compasión y cultura*...the 'flavors' you will discover as you 'taste' these vibrant scores. The first serving here in Part 1 is from our Basque composer-chefs in the north. Part 2, in the next ICB, will present scores from other Spanish composers. Whenever possible, we included web links to score samples and videos, so you can 'taste' the music yourself. Que aproveche! On egin! Enjoy!

**David Azurza** (b.1968; Tolosa; [www.oihuhau.com](http://www.oihuhau.com))



David Azurza, a professional singer (countertenor) and graduate of Madrid's conservatory, is also a choral conductor currently directing the Orfeón Bergares and Gabero (Gazte Bergaratar Orfeoia) youth choirs, as well as the Hodei Truk de Tolosa children's choir. A self-taught composer, Azurza has written more than 100 works for equal, mixed and professional ensembles, but his passion and specialty is writing stylistically and vocally appropriate repertoire for children and youth ensembles. His scores are self-published at Oihu Hau Musika.

### *Ave Virgo Sanctissima*

(SSATB; 3'; Latin; Oihu; <http://bit.ly/x990v9> and <http://bit.ly/wsImcC>)

One Spanish conductor aptly described this score as full "of creative dissonances and impeccable atmospheric harmonies." It was the compulsory score for the 2010 Tolosa competition, but was written by Azurza in 2005 in memory of a choral colleague.

### *Oihu Hau*

(SATB or SSAA; 5'30; Basque; Oihu; <http://bit.ly/yDwTsd>)

The score's first section is a poetic exaltation of spring, depicting the 'snowfall' of the petals from the apple trees. An ethereal polyphony, initially whispered, then evolves into melodic fragments sung independently by each singer, thus creating an intense but delicate atmosphere. The second section continues with the harvesting of apples, displaying the joyful rhythms of the cider festival with its deep roots in Basque folklore. The story is accompanied by sticks that

singers hit against the floor reminding us of the *txalaparta*.

Oihu was sung by the World Youth Choir in 2010.

### *Ihauteri habanera / Carnival Habanera*

(SSA, pf. opt.; <http://bit.ly/yxRTbl> & <http://bit.ly/w0v1PT>)

Yes, a children's choir can also sing and enjoy *habaneras*, such as these two from Tolosa, which were also the required score in the 2008 Tolosa competition.

### *Kanbon palangak pagoz*

( <http://bit.ly/zKfhPc>; <http://bit.ly/xAz4Kv>)

A fun, rhythmic canon with piano support...and a pdf of the score is free!

**Javier Busto** (b.1949, *Hondarribia*; [www.bustovega.com](http://www.bustovega.com))



Javi Busto is a person who leaves a huge impression on those who meet him for the first time and musicians who have the good fortune to work with him. The energy and affability of this choral music icon are immediately inviting. And then his passion for the score is revealed. As one singer-colleague explains: "When you approach Javi's music, you discover it is what he is: energetic, with enormous fidelity to the texts and their meanings, a strong love for Basque traditions and rhythms, and a special passion for the choral arts." He knows the choral voice, its abilities and its limitations, and applies this understanding to his writing. He often encourages a choir to 'tell the story' more than just 'sing,' such is the importance

that he always gives to the texts. His is also a model and guide for composers and directors, many of whom deeply appreciate his strong words of encouragement for and support of their work. Busto is a true 'master teacher' whose vision and passion inspire all who are a part of the Spanish and Basque choral community. More information about Busto and his music is at [www.bustovega.com](http://www.bustovega.com); and an ICB composer's interview with him is here (ICB 03/2011 – <http://goo.gl/uDfUq>). Check the Bustovega website for: print scores (<http://bit.ly/yKqw9q>), pdf's (<http://bit.ly/xd9ghs>), and a list of his scores by other publishers (<http://bit.ly/yFMF0t>).

## **Mixed**

### *Ave Maria*

(SATB div, opt. organ; 3'15; Latin; Gehrmans and Walton; <http://bit.ly/yQ7JPE> Warland )

This score is the music door through which both Spanish and international singers and conductors may initially encounter Busto's music. American singer and radio host Brian Newhouse writes, "His 1980 Ave Maria is lovingly straightforward. The harmonies are conventional, made lush with the intervals of 2nds and 7ths; the melodies are as prayerful and lovely to sing as they are to hear."

### Missa Brevis 'Pro Pace' Gloria

(SSAATTBB div; 6'; Latin; BV & Alliance AMP-0094 <http://bit.ly/xuQ7QC>; <http://bit.ly/yGwIE7>)

Experienced choirs may appreciate this early work. Marco Garcia, conductor of the renowned El León de Oro choir, considers this Gloria as one of Busto's best scores: "an

extraordinary work: virtuosic and forceful, modern, exciting, and full of contrasts.”

### *O magnum mysterium*

(SATB div; 5'; Latin; BV; <http://bit.ly/ygbbB6> The Madz)

The hushed, whispered, *ad libitum parlato* opening captures the mystery of the incarnation, as if in the voices of the people, as the news of the birth quietly spreads. A lyric 3×3 iteration of the 'O magnum' text intensifies in melodic strength, building to the extended, exultant 'alleluia.'

### *A tu lado* (By your side)

(SATB; 3'15; Spanish/Mena; BV; <http://bit.ly/yrgbXk> The Madz  
<http://bit.ly/zL7wP3> Coro Fecocova)

One of Busto's most beloved scores, *A tu lado* was commissioned by Spain's 'Torrevieja Habaneras' Contest ([www.habaneras.org](http://www.habaneras.org)) as the required score for 2005. The sensuous, romantic text of Matías Mena is carried by Busto's lyric melody, lush harmonies and his unique flavor of habanera. Once you hear *A tu lado*, you won't forget it!

### *Sagastipean* (In the Apple Field)

(SATB div; 5'15; Basque; BV; <http://bit.ly/yTrX2n>  
Conservatorio Leioa)

Inazio Mujika's Basque text tells a three-part story of a man lying in a field of apple trees, dreaming, then celebrating, dancing, reflecting on life, and finally saying farewell to this lovely place. Basque rhythms, sonorities and melodies permeate the score. On the festive invitation "let's sing and

dance," the women sing in the style of the 'alboka', a reedy Basque instrument. Many excellent international choirs have this score in their repertoire.

**Female** – In 1995, Busto founded the Kanta Cantemus Korua (KCK) women's choir, with which he has performed many of his own scores as well as supporting other Basque composers. Recommended adult treble-voiced works by Busto include:

*Agur Maria/Ave Maria* (SSAA; 2'; Basque; BV)

*Missa Augusta* (SSAA; 9'15; Latin; BV)

*Magnificat* (SSA; 7'30; Latin; Gehrmans; <http://bit.ly/wkkB6a>  
*Graduale Nobili*)

*Responsorio de Navidad/O Magnum* (SSA; 3'; Latin; BV) and

*Oi Bethleem!* (SSAA; 4'; Basque; Oxford)

*A tu lado* (SSAA; 2'45; Spanish/Mena; BV; <http://bit.ly/wVgdIK>  
*VokalArs*)

*Zai Itxoiten* (SSA, adults or children; 3'20; Basque; <http://bit.ly/xF5ZzJ>  
*Kantika Korala*)

**Male** – Busto's male choir scores include the following:

*Cuatro cantos penitenciales: De Profundis, Tristis est anima, Christus factus est, Tenebrae factae sunt* (TTBB; 15' total; Latin; BV)

*A tu lado* (TTBB; 2'45; Spanish/Mena; BV)

*Axuri beltza* (TTBB; 2'; Basque folk text; BV)

*La noche en la isla* (TTBB div; 5'30; Spanish/Neruda; BV)

**Josu Elberdin** (b.1976, Pasaia; <http://elberdin.com>)



Whenever you hold a score by Josu Elberdin, you know you are looking at a special work. His sensitivity is evident. The children's choir scores (text and music) are filled with stories of great tenderness. His sacred scores for adult singers are soul-filled, whether a single Alleluia or the great *Missa Ioannes Paulus II*, which will premiere this year. His folk-influenced scores are infused with that culture's soul. His musical versatility, vitality and optimism radiate from the page in sound and spirit, and are a joy to sing or conduct. Whether his scores are in Spanish, Basque, Latin or English, Elberdin's music reaches right into the soul. No transitions are needed, just open the score and the invitation is there to breathe and sing! Visit <http://elberdin.com> for complete biographical and score information, and good audio/video links.

## **Mixed**

### *Cantate Domino*

(SATB; 4'; Latin, Basque, Eng; Elberdin- <http://bit.ly/ywH1EJ>; <http://bit.ly/wdQAjJ> SLVA)

Elberdin's setting of Ps.95 was written for the Salt Lake Vocal Artists (USA) and their performances at the 2011 IFCM World Choral Symposium in Argentina. Elberdin explains: "I wanted to unify in a single work all three languages: the choir's, mine, and that for 'international' religious music. Each language gives a different character to those parts of the work." The relaxed and very harmonic "Sing to the Lord" intro represents the chorus. The Latin verses provide energy,

power and seriousness, while the recurring Basque refrain, in a festive *floklórico* style, makes this score truly a 'new song'!

### *Anoche cuando dormía*

(SATB; 5'; Spanish/A. Machado; Elberdin- <http://bit.ly/yG0cbY>;  
<http://bit.ly/A3SVhw>)

Dedicated to his daughter Haizea, this score reflects the beauty, solitude, faith and introspection of renowned Spanish poet Antonio Machado's text (<http://bit.ly/wSMTXD>). Elberdin's homophonic, tonal 4-5v setting supports the telling of the poem's dream-story with clarity and sweetness.

### *Izar ederrak / Beautiful Star*

(SATB div; 3'20; Basque/Elberdin; Elberdin-  
<http://bit.ly/xi3Qyr>; <http://bit.ly/yD97f3> KUP)

The beautiful shining star, surrounded by eight angels, one of whom is 'lovesick' for the star – such is the tender story of Izar, written in 2011 for the KUP Taldea ensemble. Elberdin's gift for melody and gentle harmonic contrasts gives this score its 'yearning' ambiance.

### *Segalariak / The Reapers*

(SATB div; 2'30; Basque/Elberdin; CM- <http://bit.ly/ACtU85>;  
<http://bit.ly/wgSllU> El León de Oro)

This score's pure rhythmic vitality and joy conveys the exuberant story of a harvesting competition between Basque farmer friends, with their jovial high spirits, and friendly wagers on who can mow a field the fastest. The compulsory



score for the 2010 Tolosa competition, Segalariak's rapid alterations between 6/8 and 3/4 create a rambunctious and very enthusiastic musical challenge!

## **Treble / Women**

### *Álami*

(SSA, accp't; CM – <http://bit.ly/yLqjLM>; <http://bit.ly/znm03U> and <http://bit.ly/yt968c>)

This unique longer work for SSA choir of young voices, piano and narrator tells the story of a very special leaf, 'Álami', who 'dreams that I can fly high.' Initially breaking the forest's dark silence with her singing, she then disconnects from the tree, and flies away to see the world, eventually finding a new home with a little girl in the park. *Álami* is available in Basque, Spanish or English (text by Elberdin), and in three different versions/lengths: an excerpt (4'30), full story (15'), or orchestral version (21').

### *Magnificat*

(3 equal voices, children or adult, S & Mz soli; with org, or org+Basque instrs., or orch.; 25'; Latin: Josu)

As in some of his other works, Elberdin mixed traditional and folklore styles to create a Magnificat setting that is refreshing and unique. The inclusion of Basque folk instruments ('alboka', 'txalaparta', 'trikitixa') gives this vocally accessible work a distinctive musical flavor, especially in "Fecit potentiam" and the exuberant final movement. Each soloist has a separate movement, plus one as a duet. Watch the Kantika Korala singers in the opening (<http://bit.ly/zYf4EE>) or the folk-influenced "Quia" (<http://bit.ly/wcN5zh>) with a sample-pdf of the full

(<http://bit.ly/z75zqq>) or organ (<http://bit.ly/x4pnE6>) versions.

*Segalariak* and *Izar ederrak* / Beautiful Star (SSAA women – see above) are also both available in treble voice settings.

**Junkal Guerrero** (b.1968, San Sebastian)



Born in the Gipuzkoa region of Spain, Junkal Guerrero holds a degree in singing, piano, music education and choral conducting from the Conservatory of San Sebastián. Her experience as a singer in Kanta Cantemus Korua, a female ensemble conducted by Javier Busto, left a strong influence on her as a conductor and a composer. Currently a piano teacher at the Conservatory Francisco de Escudero, she is also the conductor of Luberri Abesbatza choir and the new director of the award-winning Loinatz Abesbatza choir. As a composer, Guerrero's score *Bi Bihotz* was selected as requested score at 'Tolosa Children Competition' in 2007 and *Kalera gazteak* in 2011. She is frequently commissioned by Spanish choirs and is published by C.M. Ediciones.

## Treble / Women

### *Bi bihotz* / Two Hearts

(SSA adult, pf; 4'30; Basque/Guerrero; CM  
<http://bit.ly/AbnOVL>; <http://bit.ly/wA0DpW> La Kantoria)

A fascinating song about the expectant mother and her child, the 'two hearts' beating together, and the woman's good

sensations. The piece has optional movement designed to develop the score rhythmically and to sharpen the skills of the choir. A beautiful and very creative piece. This was the required treble score for Tolosa in 2007.



*La Cantoria, Leioa, Basque Country, Spain – The Leioa Choral School at the Municipal Music School of Leioa*

*Non degu, non?*

(SSA div children, pf; 5'; Basque; CM <http://bit.ly/zAEIca>; <http://bit.ly/A6k6B2> Kantika Korala)

This a two-part Christmas song. The story about compassion for the stranger. The first melody is a traditional Basque carol that says, "Lord, I would give you an old coat, if I had one, to cover your precious little body." The second melody, written by Guerrero, mirrors the Holy Family's flight to Egypt, by telling the story of African immigrants coming to Europe by sea in small boats, seeking a better life for their families. As the composer explains, this score's melodies are a lesson for young people to "not forget them or look the other way."



*Leioa Kantika Korala,  
Basque Country, Spain – The  
Leioa Choral School at the  
Municipal Music School of  
Leioa*

*Kalera gazteak / Street Youth*

(SSA children, pf, body perc; 3'30; Basque/Salamero; CM  
<http://bit.ly/zjFvjq>; <http://bit.ly/w8QILV>)

This is a joyous song that invites the young people to go outside with their friends and have fun. Body percussion helps the singers to bond as an ensemble. This was the compulsory score for treble voices at the 2011 Tolosa competition.

*Iturengo arotza*

(SATB x2, pf, perc opt; 4'45; Basque; CM;  
<http://bit.ly/w6vf04>)

This is a double-choir harmonization of a traditional Basque song that speaks jokingly about an ironsmith who melts the church's statues of the saints to create bells.

## Xavier Sarasola (b.1960, Beasain)



Xavier Sarasola, from the Basque town of Beasain, combines his work as music teacher with that of conductor, choral singer and composer. Currently on the faculty of the Council Music School of Beasain, Sarasola was Choirmaster for the Guipuzcoan Youth Choir and the the Loinatz Choir. A teacher of conducting in courses organized by the Federation of Choirs of Guipuzcoa, he is also a member of its technical committee. Sarasola also sings in the Orfeón Donostiarra and the vocal group Kea, dedicated to contemporary music. Not only have his scores been chosen as compulsory works in major festivals and competitions, he has also served as a jury member for the 2004 and 2007 European Grand Prix of Choral Singing championships. A singer in one of his workshops, explained her experience this way: "The key to life that Xavier gave us is *vitalista*. He repeatedly told us to enjoy every moment and to appreciate the details, not just in his music but in life!"

### Mixed

#### *Ut queant laxis*

(SATB; 3'00; Latin; CM <http://bit.ly/yB0fXH>;  
<http://bit.ly/xPKsRK> El León de Oro)

Composed in 2010 as a wedding gift for director Marco Garcia and his chorus El León de Oro, this score is based on the 8c *Ut queant laxis* hymn (<http://bit.ly/zAihkx>). The first syllable of each half-verse is one of the Guidonian tones, the scale subtly hidden in the gentle lyricism and harmonies of Sarasola's musical language until it gently emerges in the final cadence. Cleverly written and beautiful to sing, *Ut queant* contains a treasure of old, new and inter-cultural

stories that inspiring all sorts of creative teaching and programming ideas.

### *Neskatx' Ederra*

(SATB div; 3'30; Basque; CM <http://bit.ly/zlC5NR>;  
<http://bit.ly/wwCozl> El León de Oro)

This Basque love-song was a favorite recommendation to us for this article by many singers and conductors, perhaps because it embodies a deeply felt melancholy. The lover's lament is expressed in the shifting modal harmonies as the story unfolds alternately among the voices. Written in 2003, it was a required work for the 2008 Tolosa competition.

## **Female**

### *Pater Noster*

(SSA adult, pf; 3'30; Latin; CM <http://bit.ly/z4s9Hq>;  
<http://bit.ly/x40xyY> VokalArs)

A well-known and very lyrical work sung frequently by Spanish women's choirs, this score is also well-received by listeners. The gentle homophonic treatment of the text alternates between unison and 2-3 part textures.

### *Veni Creator Spiritus*

(SSAA + SSAA; 3'45; Latin; CM;

Double chorus scores for female voices are rare. This lovely work was the mandatory score for treble choirs in the 2002 Tolosa competition.

**Eva Ugalde** (b. 1973, San Sebastian)



Basque composer Eva Ugalde, truly embodies the 'choral artist.' As a young musician, she enrolled in the local conservatory to study piano, composition, choral conducting, and music pedagogy. A founding member of the Kanta Cantemus Koroa (KCK), Ugalde credits director Javi Busto for 'accompanying' her on the 'first steps of my journey of passion: creating.' She explains, "one day, Javi heard me playing a piece I had written on the piano. He suggested I bring the score to the choir – and a new world opened up for me: I began creating music. And since that time I have had the pleasure of meeting people who enjoy, or are touched by or even amused by my pieces. It is a wonderful feeling!" Ugalde now works at the Francisco Escudero Conservatory, teaching *sofège*, choir and piano. Most of her scores are for treble ensembles. Although her music is principally tonal, the influence of jazz harmonies and rhythms are present, as is a love for the way in which asymmetric rhythms often capture the natural inflection of text accents. Esteemed choral festivals often select her scores as compulsory works.

## **Female**

*Ave maris stella*

SSAA; 3'45; Latin; CM; [http://youtu.be/AlKRtJ\\_k5D8](http://youtu.be/AlKRtJ_k5D8)

The Gregorian-style opening moves into the main section marked 'con humildad, como un rezo / with humility, like a prayer' maintains the chant-like quality in its chordal texture. The "solve vincla / loosen the chains" section begins an extended mixed-meter section while still maintaining a chant-like

fluidity. The closing returns to the gentle spirit of the opening. Ugalde writes, "It was my last score for the KCK choir before its dissolution. It is dedicated to the Cantabrian Sea, the water I am lucky to see every day; the sea that nourishes me, both physically and spiritually."

### *Miserere*

(SAA div; 3'45; Latin; CM, sample <http://bit.ly/w1ocCb>; <http://bit.ly/yq940T>)

Behind this elegant, lyrical score is a profound story. Ugalde explains, "When 9/11 happened, something moved me to ask for forgiveness. All of us are involved in the way the world goes, and we will always have a reason to say 'miserere mihi / have mercy on me.' So this score is dedicated to All the victims of wars." The gentle, opening 3v prayer for mercy expands via *divisi* into a heartfelt 'clamavi/cry.' The 'Domine suavis ac mitis / sweet and mild Lord' is captured musically and emotively by a tender alto melody with dual sustained and arpeggiated accompaniment in the two soprano lines. The opening section returns but with richer *divisi* harmonies to carry the final prayer for compassion. A truly extraordinary score, deeply satisfying to sing.

### *Tximeletak / Butterflies*

(SSA div, pf; 2'30; Basque/Atxaga; CM sample <http://bit.ly/AC2ypo>; <http://bit.ly/xY3TqM> VokalArs)

This early score, mentioned in the bio above as overheard by Javi Busto, sets a text by the Basque poet Bernardo Atxaga. The piano's cascades support the ever shifting homophonic rhythms in the voices, comparing a butterfly's capricious flight with the motion of the sea.



*Uraren Besotik / Through the Water*

(SSA; 3'20; Basque/Josune López; CM <http://bit.ly/xrwbYD>)

Uraren was composed for and premiered at the World Festival of Women's Singing (USA) in 2001.

*Dizdizka zeruan*

(SSAA, pf; folk; CM sample <http://bit.ly/w11RAw>)

Echoing the bells, singing, dancing and stars of Christmas, Dizdizka was the compulsory score for treble choirs in the 2010 Tolosa competition.

**Publishers:**

Alliance Music (USA) – [www.alliance.com](http://www.alliance.com)

Bustovega (Esp) – [www.bustovega.com](http://www.bustovega.com)

CM Musical Ediciones (Esp) – [www.cm-ediciones.com](http://www.cm-ediciones.com)

Josu Elberdin (Esp) – <http://elberdin.com>

Gehrmans Musikförlag (Sw) – [www.gehrmans.se](http://www.gehrmans.se)

Oihu Hau Musika – (Esp) – [www.oihuhau.com](http://www.oihuhau.com)

Walton (USA) – [www.waltonmusic.com](http://www.waltonmusic.com)

**Info:** The website "<http://coralea.com>" is an excellent reference for Spanish choral activities.

**Basque pronunciation** – <http://bit.ly/zqFM1Z>

**Playlist:** a playlist of all videos cited in this article is at <http://bit.ly/ICBSpain1>