

***Vísperas de Nuestra Señora del Pilar***  
**Joseph Ruiz-Samaniego (fl. 1653-1670)**

Fénix de los Ingenios Early Music Ensemble

Carolina Gamboa-Hoyos, Conductor

Sunday, May 24 7:00 p.m.

St. Thomas Lutheran Church

Villancico: *Sirenas del Viento*

Versicle: *Deus in adiutorium – Domine ad adjuvandum*

Antiphon and Psalm 1: *Domum tuam Domine - Dixit Dominus*

Antiphon and Psalm 2: *Domus mea domus orati – Confitebor*

Antiphon and Psalm 3: *Haec est domus - Beatus vir*

Villancico: *¡Al arma, al arma!* (Miguel de Aguilar, fl. 1635-1644)

Antiphon and Psalm 4: *Bene fundata est domus - Laudate pueri*

Antiphon and Psalm 5: *Lapides pretiosi omnes - Lauda Jerusalem*

Hymn: *Urbs beata*

Versicle: *Domum tuam Domine*

Antiphon and Magnificat: *O Quam metuendus est locus iste – Magnificat*

Villancico: *De esplendor se doran los ayres*

Fénix de los Ingenios Choir and Ensemble

## PROGRAM NOTES

The celebration of Vespers has been one of the most important ones among the great liturgical celebrations, not only for its intrinsic liturgical value, but because it was one of the biggest attraction points for parishioners. The celebration of Vespers for important church feasts truly united prayer with a magnificent feast for the senses: the eyes were entertained by the temple's architecture, paintings, and liturgical ornaments, abundant incense comforted the sense of smell, and music amazed and entertained the ears.

Many great composers since the sixteenth century left important Vespers collections. Such is the case of Spanish composer Joseph Ruiz Samaniego, who flourished in the Aragón region between 1653 and 1670. The music of Ruiz Samaniego represents the transition from the great Spanish Golden Age tradition, a period in which arts and literature flourished significantly, and the newer developments of the baroque musical aesthetic. His style is characterized by the juxtaposition of polyphonic and polychoral composition, which is accompanied by affective and expressive treatment of dissonance, and very interesting instrumental and vocal combinations that exist only in Spain and its colonial territories of the time.

The *Vísperas de Nuestra Señora del Pilar* (Vespers for Our Lady of Pilar), which was the most important festivity in Zaragoza (main city of the region of Aragón), represents a unique combination of musical genres and styles. Stemming from the traditional Spanish style of the time, it results in a unique musical celebration, not only in its original liturgical context, but particularly in a modern concert situation.

The research of several Spanish musicologists, especially the extensive research of Luis Antonio González Marín, has shown that a Vespers celebration of the importance of the feast of Nuestra Señora del Pilar in Zaragoza consisted in a lavish performance of both secular and sacred music by both vocal and instrumental ensembles. *Villancicos* (a lively vernacular musical and poetic form consisting of several stanzas framed by a refrain) were sung at the beginning and end of the service, and sometimes even after each psalm movement. Traditional plainchant settings introduced and alternated with polyphonic and polychoral movements for two or three choirs. Organ pieces and interludes of famous Spanish composers such as Cabezón and Cabanilles alternated with the soloists and the choirs.

Lavish was also the variety and quantity of the instruments used in the Spanish tradition of feasts of such importance. Independent continuo lines were assigned to each choir, and were played by different instruments, mostly harp and organ, but also Spanish guitar or vihuela. Instrumental choirs ranged from ensembles of *bajonzillos*, *chirimías* or *sacabuches* to strings or brass ensembles.

The reconstruction of this *Vísperas* by Fénix de los Ingenios in 2009 constitutes the first time that this piece is heard in the United States. It represents a unique opportunity to listen to a repertoire, a combination of voices and instruments, of forms, genres, and languages that is, unfortunately, not a frequent guest of the American musical scene.

Carolina Gamboa Hoyos