

Federico Mompou

(1893-1987)

selected works VOLUME II

Clélia Iruzun piano

SOMMCD 0155



ADD

1	Canción y Danza No. VII - Lento	2:57	16	IV Afflito e penoso	2:36
2	Canción y Danza No. VIII - Moderato cantabile	3:15	17	V (legato metallico)	2:32
3	Canción y Danza No. IX - Cantabile espressivo	4:06	18	VI Lento	2:03
4	Canción y Danza No. X - Larghetto molto cantabile	3:08	19	VII Lento	2:57
5	Canción y Danza No. XI - Lent et majestueux	3:58	20	VIII Semplice	0:45
6	Canción y Danza No. XII - Molto cantabile	2:58	21	IX Lento	2:36
7	Canción y Danza No. XIV - Moderato cantabile	4:11	22	Fantasia sobre 'Au clair de la lune'	3:00
Scènes d'enfants			23	Glossa sobre 'Au clair de la lune'	1:48
8	Cris dans la rue - Gai	1:26	24	Tango (1919) - Lent - dolorós	3:08
9	Jeux sur la Plage No. 1 - Vif	1:36	Trois Variations		
10	Jeu No. 2 - Vif	1:22	25	Thème - Simplement	0:22
11	Jeu No. 3	2:05	26	Variation 1 - Les Soldats (Temps de marche)	0:36
12	Jeunes Filles au Jardin - Calme	2:56	27	Variation 2 - Courtoisie (Très aimable)	1:00
Musica Callada			28	Variation 3 - Nocturne (Lentement modéré)	1:34
13	I Angelico	1:47	29	Chanson de Berceau	3:55
14	II Lent	1:31	30	El pont de Montjuïc	6:04
15	III Placide	2:03	Total duration: 75:14		

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PIANO SOLO | VOLUME II



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In our notes accompanying Clélia Iruzun's first volume of music by Mompou, we commented on the remarkable individuality of the Spaniard's music – so individual, in fact, that even the composer's means of committing it to paper abjured parts of conventional notation whilst retaining such as would enable the pianist to grasp the nature of the individual piece with conviction.

We were describing, therefore, the music of a wholly individual composer, one whose character may be discerned from his answers to several questions put to him in 1976 by Roger Prevel. On being asked to name his favourite composers, Mompou replied: 'Almost all, with the exception of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven', an answer which, to very many musicians, would appear to be more than surprising. But to lone individuals, it makes perfect sense when set alongside Mompou's comments as to his preferred cities: 'The solitude of all large towns, Barcelona and Paris, where my dearest memories are preserved', and stating that his favourite pastimes are 'contemplation, meditation and the cinema.'

With such answers, one can readily imagine the loner in a big city, walking the strange streets that gradually become familiar, the recognition of their solitude, and the fascination with the latest art-form of all – the cinema, offering a combination of juxtaposition of image and close-up, both impinging on the consciousness of the individual in the cinema seat, watching the same scenes with many others, yet never a part of their neighbours' consciousness.

His answers afford rare insights into Mompou's character, part of the view of those who forever place themselves – or are placed – to one side of the mass of humanity, quietly observing, rather than participating in, the lives of others. Mompou is, therefore, no 'heart on sleeve' Romantic composer, for his creative heart lies elsewhere: his is not music for every day, but it speaks to us all in our private moments, those moments of reflexion and solitude.

Mompou may indeed inhabit his own sound-world, as all composers should, but not so secretively as to pose intractable problems for the listener or performer. As with other composers of not wholly dissimilar individuality – for examples, the Frenchman Erik Satie, perhaps, or the English-born Frederick Delius among them – the music-lover, and musician, has to rid themselves of preconceptions or expectations, and experience the music as all music is – a living organism in time.

Of course, any composer may retreat into an ivory tower, similar to those who inhabit their private world and abandon society in general, but it is wrong to infer that Mompou is such a composer. One does not have to learn a new language to enter his world, for his language is music, and his choice of such titles as ‘Theme and Variations’, ‘Songs and Dances’ or other readily understood designations indicates his desire to communicate, presenting us with starting-points in understanding his music, without attempting to align with ‘Classical’, ‘Romantic’ or ‘Impressionist’ schools.

Naturally, perhaps, given the era into which he was born and grew to maturity, Mompou would have begun as an Impressionist, and just as in any composer’s earliest work, his or her ethnicity cannot be wholly subjugated. The mature Mompou recognised this, in believing that his work might fall into three groups, the first being the essence of rural Catalan scenery: suburbs, distant scenes of children and Fiestas. The second group includes those pieces inspired more by human nature, perhaps secret and mysterious: charms, *Cants Màgics*, essentially quiet music; and the music of the third group being linked directly to Catalan folklore: songs and dances.

As we observed in our notes for the first Volume, Mompou’s *Cançons i Danses* [Songs and Dances] were composed between 1921 and 1979 and eventually comprised a collection of 15 pieces, 13 of them for piano, with one for guitar and one for organ. Almost all are based on traditional Catalan melodies, and were not ostensibly intended as a set, or suite, but serve the

purpose well. Volume I contained numbers I to VI and here we have the succeeding seven.

The dualism of ‘song and dance’ unites these pieces, but having been composed – or, should we say, ‘put together’ – over almost 60 years what is wholly remarkable from a musicological point of view is that although we may discern changing threads in Mompou’s work over such a long compositional cycle the consistency of expression remained central to his art – in these works, at least.

Many of the dual ‘movements’ in each piece are themselves based on pre-existing music, that of the G minor Canción in No 8 (the ‘Testament of Amelia’) being known almost throughout Europe. No 9 (the ‘Nightingale’) is dedicated to the fine Spanish pianist Gonzalo Soriano, No 11 to the famous Columbian-born harpsichordist Rafael Puyana. Although folk elements in terms of bi-partite structure may be discerned in these pieces, any resemblance to, say, the ‘lassú-friss’ of Hungarian folk music would be an exaggeration, yet the essentially archaic nature of the form is underlined in No 10, based on two songs attributed to the great 13th-century Catalan King Alfonso X, and No 12 is dedicated to the memory of the French symbolist poet and essayist Léon-Paul Fargue (1876-1947), close friend of many composers, particularly Ravel. Mompou brings his solo piano pieces in the set to an end with an original *Danza* of No 14 – the concluding No 15 is for organ.

Mompou's *Scènes d'enfants* suite comes from the earliest period in the composer's life; eventually being comprised (as here) of five movements, the central three (all entitled *Jeux*) were written in Paris in 1914, to which he later added the opening *Cris dans la rue* (Cries in the Street), and, to conclude, the movement which became one of his earliest successes, the well-known *Jeunes filles au jardin* (Girls in the Garden).

For all of Mompou's pursuit of his lonely path, he was not so withdrawn as to ignore the comments of his contemporaries. We noted in Volume I the 1924 assessment by the distinguished musical compatriot and commentator Pedro Morales in quoting a French critic, who stated that some of Mompou's music 'could be dictated in words without making use of any conventional music-writing method.'

The notion of 'music without sound' is, on the face of it, absurd, but to the strain of Catholic mysticism as exemplified in the concept of 'the music of silence' (or, as Mompou termed it in his four books of 28 short pieces entitled *Música Callada* - 'Music without sound'), the Mompou authority Victor Estapé claims the concept derives from the *Cantico Espiritual* of St John of the Cross.

Book 1 (Nos 1-9, 1959) of the *Música Callada*, – as a glance at the tempo indications will strongly suggest – ideally encapsulates that personal sense of stillness and inward contemplation that make up this unique

composer's fingerprint. Mompou left some fascinating insights into his *Música Callada* when he wrote: 'this music has no air or light. It is as a weak heart beat, you cannot ask it to reach more than a few inches into space, as its mission is to reach the most profound depths of our soul and the secret regions of our spirit's spirit. This music is quiet (callada) because one listens to it as it were from within. Contained and reserved. Its emotion is secret and only becomes sound from resonance under the cold cape of our society. It is my desire that this music should bring us closer to the warmth of life, and the expression of the human heart, that is always the same and constantly changing.'

When Mompou died in Barcelona, the city of his birth, in 1987 at the age of 94, he left a number of unpublished compositions and first drafts of planned works in three large folders. They remained unknown until 2008, when his residence was being renovated, since when most of those previously unknown pieces have been published. Among them were a *Tango* and two studies for solo piano on the folk-tune 'Au clair de la lune', the first study being a Fantasia on the melody, and the second a *Glossa* (or, say, 'Commentary') on it. It may be uncertain as to when these two studies on the four-versed song (the *Fantasia* being a third longer than the *Glossa*) were written, but the *Tango* is dated 1919 – this last being a gentle evocation of the essence of the dance, as one might expect from such a self-effacing composer, the *Tango* enveloped in the gentlest prelude and postlude music.

The Theme and Three Variations show the essence of Mompou's art at the time of the work's composition – 1921. Here, in the immediate post-World War I of musical Paris, the composer distils the essence of the three French composers Wilfrid Mellers identified as having had such a profound influence upon Mompou at that time: Debussy, Ravel and Satie – to which, one might add the name of the then elderly (and increasingly deaf), Gabriel Fauré. Indeed, there is something almost tangibly Fauré-esque in the gentle theme, ostensibly built around six notes (without harmony), which forms the basis for this miniature set. So gossamer-like in texture are the three variants (possibly the more suitable word) that *Les soldats* of the first variation could almost be mere ghosts from a battlefield, the conflict long past with the faint calls of, say, Hill 60 around Ypres being merely wisps of memory, but – given Mompou's personal delineation of his music – perhaps the soldiers are no more than toys, the military connotations far removed from human memory. In *Courtoisie* (Politeness) and *Nocturne*, the tempos are virtually identical, but the subtlest of emphases show the retreat from confrontation in the second Variation – the 'confrontation' here a *memoria*, perhaps, of a ballroom – and in the third the enveloping balm of night, the nocturnal animals half-asleep – a haunting series of emotions of memory, expressed within a few minutes.

This recital ends with two studies: the first, from 1951, is a discreet Lullaby – *Canción de Cuna* – with the second, *El pont de Montjuic*, a musical act of homage to that district of Mompou's home city where, on the bridge, we can

transport ourselves in observing the composer enjoying the 'solitude of... Barcelona...where my dearest memories are preserved', being one of those personal solo piano pieces which he did not offer to the world during his lifetime, and which we may now contemplate, as he did, in his memory.

Robert Matthew-Walker © 2015



Clélia Iruzun

With her combination of colourful Brazilian spirit and musicianship, London-based pianist **Clélia Iruzun** is one of the most exciting musicians to emerge onto the international scene in recent years.

Clélia studied at the School of Music at Rio de Janeiro Federal University and at the Royal Academy of Music graduating with the Recital Diploma and several prizes. She also worked with prestigious pianists such as Nelson Freire, Jaques Klein, Stephen Kovacevich and Fou Ts' Ong and the prestigious Brazilian teacher Mercês de Silva Telles in Paris. Great Brazilian composers such as Francisco Mignone and Marlos Nobre have dedicated works to her.

She won major prizes in her native Brazil and in international competitions such as the Tunbridge Wells, in the UK and the Santander and Zaragoza in Spain.

Clélia Iruzun leads a busy international career as soloist having performed in Europe, the Americas and Asia, including concerts at the Grand Theatre in Shanghai, the Forbidden City Concert Hall in Beijing, Konserthusets in Gothenburg and Stockholm, Poznan Philharmonie, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Purcell Room, Wigmore Hall in London and in her native Brazil where she tours every year. She has also appeared several times on radio and television in many countries, including broadcasts for BBC Radio 3.

She has made several successful CDs with a variety of repertoire, from Latin American composers to the Mendelssohn Concertos, including Maconchy's *Concertino* with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, and, on the Lorelt label, piano music by Marlos Nobre and Ernesto Nazareth's *Portrait of Rio*.

This is the second volume of a selection of piano music by Mompou on the SOMM label.



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