



Camino
Sean Shibe





CAMINO

Manuel de Falla (1876-1946)		
1	Danza del molinero (from <i>El Sombrero de tres picos</i>)	3. 13
Antonio José (1902-1936)		
2	Pavana triste (third movement of Sonata for Guitar)	4. 50
Frederic (Federico) Mompou (1893-1987)		
Canço i dansa 10 (arr. Mompou)		
3	Canço	1. 44
4	Dansa	1. 34
Frederic Mompou		
Canço i dansa 6		
5	Canço	1. 54
6	Dansa	2. 40
Maurice Ravel (1875-1938)		
7	Pavane pour une Infante défunte	6. 30
Manuel de Falla		
8	Homenaje, pour <i>Le Tombeau de Claude Debussy</i>	3. 59

Frederic Mompou		
Suite compostelana		
9	I. Preludio	3. 08
10	II. Coral	2. 42
11	III. Cuna	3. 01
12	IV. Recitativo	3. 18
13	V. Canción	2. 32
14	VI. Muñeira	3. 19
Francis Poulenc (1899-1963)		
15	Sarabande, FP179	2. 38

Total playing time: 47. 13

Sean Shibe, guitar

Over the last year and a half I have gone through periods of believing that recording my feelings of isolation and solitude would be worthwhile, but it didn't take very long before I realised that I'd taken in enough meditations on loneliness for a lifetime. Instead, I've recorded something closer to the opposite. Some of these pieces are from my childhood; others reference a sort of ideal childlike state; but everything on this album has given me deep comfort and sustenance over a difficult and traumatic period.

Colleagues of mine have sometimes asked what it would take for me to get over my apparent aversion to the sentimentality of the Spanish repertoire traditionally associated with the guitar. I could, perhaps, tell those colleagues that a global pandemic would do the trick, but I would argue that all of the ostensibly Spanish composers presented here demonstrate the fecundity of the Franco-Spanish connection, and — to go further than that — Mompou, central to this programme, is perhaps more European than Spanish. He eschews all flamboyant piquancy; his homage to Santiago de Compostela instead softly adores, the ecclesiastical overtones never overbear; and, somehow, these pieces sum up pilgrimage at its most existentially humanist.

For Mompou, melancholy, aimlessness and a whole host of other feelings are not things to be avoided or fixed or solved, but experiences to be deeply felt; when his music reflects, it is less with sad nostalgia than genuine wonder and excitement at what this means for the future.

On which note, I want to mention that my producer, Matthew, recently told me that he's expecting his first child in August — congratulations, Matthew and Maanti, and thank you. Hearing this news under lockdown felt genuinely providential, as if it were a sign or a reason to hope, and I want to dedicate this album to your August child. Here's to you.

- Sean Shibe



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Frederic (Federico) Mompou is a composer of quiet but bewitching originality, and he was perhaps the most important musical figure in the Catalan cultural renaissance of the early twentieth century, exemplified in the visual arts by Miró and Dalí, and in architecture by Gaudí. He was born in Barcelona and was first inspired to take up music when he heard Fauré performing his own music. After studies in his native city, he went to Paris to study at the Conservatoire where his idol Fauré was the director.

Mompou's extreme diffidence meant that he could not face becoming a performer, turning instead to composition. His earliest pieces included *Suburbis* (1916–17) evoking the suburbs of Barcelona during his childhood, and *Cants màgics* (1920). When Mompou's *Scènes d'enfants* was performed by his teacher Ferdinand Motte-Lacroix, the critic Émile Vuillermoz hailed Mompou as 'the only disciple and successor to Debussy', though the composers who influenced him

most were probably Ravel, Satie and Fauré. Essentially a miniaturist he produced music of exquisite strangeness, most of it for piano or voice, though in the 1930s he went for years without finishing anything new. Fleeing the Nazi Occupation of Paris, Mompou returned to Barcelona in 1941 and started to compose again. Towards the end of the 1950s, he began the extraordinary series of twenty-eight pieces entitled *Música callada* ('Music of Silence'), inspired by the poetry of St John of the Cross. This occupied Mompou until 1967, but it was a fruitful time: the *Suite compostelana* dates from the same period.

Santiago de Compostela had been famous since medieval times: journey's end on the *Camino de Santiago*, the great pilgrim way to visit the shrine of St James in its cathedral. In 1958, Andrés Segovia founded the annual summer course *Música en Compostela* with the aim of giving young musicians a deeper understanding of Spanish music and developing their performing skills. Segovia's own masterclasses were a magnet for

guitarists from around the world, but *Música en Compostela* had a faculty that also included composers and Mompou taught at summer course for fourteen years. Galicia, and particularly Santiago de Compostela, was a region of Spain that enchanted him and in 1962 it inspired his only major work for guitar, the *Suite compostelana*.

Mompou and Segovia were exact contemporaries. Both were born in 1893 (Segovia in February, Mompou in April) and both died at the age of 94 in June 1987. Segovia had a great admiration for Mompou and was quoted by the Spanish musicologist Antonio Iglesias: 'Federico Mompou has given today's Spanish music an intimate and poetic voice. I hope that God will prolong his presence among us, so that the new sounds of his spirit can continue to resonate around the world, in the hearts of those sensitive to beauty.' Clearly, Segovia understood the unique qualities of Mompou's language, so it is unsurprising that he commissioned Mompou to write

something for him. Specifically, he requested 'a composition rooted in Galicia, suitable for concert performance', and offered whatever technical advice Mompou might need about writing for guitar. The result was the *Suite compostelana*, published by Salabert in Paris in 1964 in an edition prepared by Segovia. In April the same year, Segovia also made the work's first recording in New York. Sean Shibe for his recording has used the more recent edition by Angelo Gilardino and Luigi Biscaldi. Differences between the editions are relatively slight as Segovia remained faithful to his friend's intentions.

The *Suite compostelana* begins with a Preludio in which animated faster passages are interrupted by moments of stillness. The musical language certainly recalls Spain in some of its gestures, but in the most subtle and abstracted way. The Chorale that follows is slow, solemn and hymn-like, its melody coloured by the alluring dissonance of Mompou's harmonies. The third movement, 'Cuna', is a lullaby ('cuna'



is with the Spanish word for cradle), and once again the gentle melody is decorated by Mompou's characteristically individual harmony, its modal tints mingled with surprising dissonances. A slower central section has a richer, fuller texture before the piece returns to its opening mood. The 'Recitativo' is marked *Lento molto espressivo e cantabile*, and much of it is based on the angular four-note idea heard at the very start. As the title implies, there's more rhythmical and metrical freedom in the 'Recitativo' than elsewhere in the suite, and a slightly more acidic edge to some of Mompou's chords. The result is dark and serious. This contrasts with 'Canción', a lilting triple-time melody which is refined and rather nostalgic. The *Suite compostelana* ends with a 'Muñeira', a traditional Galician dance with something of the character of a jig. It is often performed at fiestas and is usually associated with the Galician instrument called a gaita (a type of bagpipes). Mompou hints at this with the repeated drone-like notes underneath much

of the melody. This exhilarating dance ends a flamboyant strummed flourish.

Between 1918 and 1972, Mompou composed fifteen pieces with the title *Canço i danza* (*Canción y Danza* in Spanish, or 'Song and Dance'). Most were for solo piano, though No. 13 was for guitar and No. 15 for organ. No. 10, composed in 1953, described by Mompou as 'based on two songs by Alfonso X', was transcribed by the composer himself for guitar. As well as being King of Galicia and Castille, Alfonso X (1221-1284), known as 'El sabio' ('the wise') was also one of the most important figures in medieval Spanish literature, assembling (and contributing to) the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*, a collection of over 400 Galician songs. All the pieces in Mompou's series are in two parts: a slow song and a livelier dance. In No. 10, the 'Canción' is based on 'Sancta Maria, strela do dia' from Alfonso's collection. It presents the melody unaltered, but provides it with a delightfully idiosyncratic

harmonisation. The quicker, triple-time 'Danza' is based on a folk-like tune from Alfonso's collection, 'The Lame Woman of Molina'. *Canço i dansa* No. 6 (for piano) was published in 1947 and dedicated to Arthur Rubinstein. Following a slow-fast pattern similar to that of No. 10, it draws on elements of Latin-American music.

Poulenc composed his *Sarabande* during a visit to New York in March 1960 and he dedicated it to the prodigiously gifted French guitarist, Ida Presti (1924–1967). An avowed self-borrower, Poulenc took the opening theme of this tiny work from his *Improvisation* No. 13 for piano, composed in 1958, and there's an allusion to the same melody in the last act of the opera *Dialogues de Carmélites*, completed in 1956. The version in the *Sarabande* is slightly reworked, not least through constantly changing time signatures. Conventional wisdom has it that a Sarabande is a slow dance in triple time, but Poulenc changes from bars in 5/4 to

3/4 and 4/4, creating a sense of rhythmic ambiguity. The score has the marking 'Molto calmo e melanconico' and the piece is wistful, fleeting, but also rather haunting.

The great Spanish composer Manuel de Falla wrote just one, short work for guitar. *Homenaje* was composed for the collection published by the journal *La Revue musicale* in December 1920 as a memorial to Debussy. Adorned with a cover designed by Raoul Dufy, this anthology included an early two-stave version of part of the *Symphonies of Wind Instruments* of Stravinsky and an extract from Ravel's Sonata for Violin and Cello (then a work in progress). Dukas wrote an exquisite miniature (*La Plainte, au loin, du faune*) and there were pieces by Bartók, Roussel, Satie, Malipiero, Eugene Goossens and Florent Schmitt. Falla's *Homenaje* is the only guitar piece in the collection and it is dated on the first edition Granada, August 1920. Marked 'mesto e calmo' it opens with an austere introduction in which the

notes F and E are played off against each other, setting the scene for what follows: a solemn, grief-laden reworking of the familiar rhythms of a Habanera. Shortly before the end, Falla quotes from Debussy's 'La Soirée dans Grenade' – the great Frenchman's own tribute to the Habanera from his *Estampes*. In the context of this memorial piece, that reference is an infinitely touching gesture. At the close, the notes F and E again dominate the music which dies away to an uneasy silence.

Though *Homenaje* was Falla's only piece written for guitar, it was often imitated in his other works. The 'Miller's Dance' from his ballet *The Three-Cornered Hat* (first performed in 1919) is a case in point, its vigorous Andalusian rhythms ideally suited to the guitar.

Ravel composed his *Pavane* for solo piano in 1899 while he was still studying with Fauré at the Paris Conservatoire. It was published the following year with a dedication to the great

Parisian musical benefactor, the Princesse de Polignac. In 1910 Ravel published a version for orchestra. Elegantly crafted and already bearing some of the familiar fingerprints of Ravel's style, it appeared in numerous different arrangements during Ravel's lifetime.

In 1933, the Burgos-born Antonio José composed a four-movement Sonata for solo guitar which he dedicated to the noted Spanish guitarist Regino Sainz de la Maza (later the dedicatee of Rodrigo's *Concierto de Aranjuez*). The third movement of José's Sonata is entitled 'Pavana triste'. This is music that combines emotional intensity with piquant harmonies that mark him out as a composer with an individual voice. Ravel clearly thought so, declaring that José would become 'the Spanish composer of our century'. This was not to be. On 11 October 1936, José was shot by a Falangist firing squad, suffering the same awful fate as the poet Federico García Lorca who had been assassinated by the Falangists two

months earlier. Highly prolific during his short life, José wrote with natural skill for orchestra (in the *Sinfonia castellana* and the *Suite ingenua* for piano and strings), and at the time of his death he left an unfinished opera, *El mozo de mulas* ('The mule driver'). His music is slowly being rediscovered and in 2018, Gregorio Méndez directed a documentary film, *Antonio José: Pavana triste*, about his life and work. José is a composer who deserves to be far better known, a gifted victim of the early months of the Spanish Civil War whose style had started to evolve with real character in the Guitar Sonata, and especially in the 'Pavana triste' which forms its emotional heart.

Nigel Simeone





Acknowledgements

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Recording producer **Matthew Swan**

Recording engineer **Dave Rowell**

Liner notes **Nigel Simeone**

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This album was recorded in August and November 2020 at Crichton Church, Scotland.

Sean Shibe performs on a 2020 Michael Gee spruce double top.

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Sit back and enjoy