

MOMPOU

Becquerianas • Comptines

Complete Songs • 2

Marta Mathéu, Soprano
Jordi Masó, Piano



Frederic Mompou (1893–1987) Complete Songs • 2

1 Cançoneta incerta (Little song of uncertainty) (1926) (Josep Carner, 1884–1970)	2:49	15 Le nuage (The Cloud) (1928) (Mathilde Pomes, 1886–1977)	3:48
2 Sant Martí (St Martin) (1961) (Pere Ribot, 1908–1997)	3:16	16 Cant de la victòria (Song of victory) (1949) (Ricard Permanyer, 1877–1958)	1:17
3 El niño mudo (The mute boy) (1955) (Federico García Lorca, 1898–1936)	1:59	17 Et sento que véns (I hear you coming) (1944) (Frederic Mompou)	2:06
4 Aureana do Sil (Goldpanners of the Sil) (1951) (Ramón Cabanillas, 1876–1959)	2:27	18 Ets l'infinit (You are infinity) (1944) (Frederic Mompou)	1:37
5 Cançó de la fira (Song of the fair) (1949) (Tomàs Garcés, 1901–1993)	2:35	19 El testament d'Amèlia (Amelia's last will and testament) (1938) (Anonymous)	3:57
6 Primeros pasos (First steps) (1964) (Clara Janés, b. 1940)	2:35	20 Ave María (1957) Becquerianas (1970) (Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer, 1836–1870)	3:50
Comptines (Counting rhymes) (Anonymous)		21 No. 1 Hoy la tierra y los cielos me sonrien (Today earth and heaven smile upon me)	1:55
7 No. 1 Dalt d'un cotxe (On a carriage) (1926)	0:44	22 No. 2 Los invisibles átomos del aire (The invisible atoms of the air)	1:48
8 No. 2 Margot la pie (Margot the magpie) (1926)	1:49	23 No. 3 Yo soy ardiente, yo soy morena (I am passionate, I am dark)	1:24
9 No. 3 J'ai vu dans la lune (On the moon I saw) (1926)	0:48	24 No. 4 Yo sé cuál el objeto (I know the reason why)	3:37
10 No. 4 Aserrín, aserrán (1943)	1:37	25 No. 5 Volverán las oscuras golondrinas (The black swallows will return)	4:33
11 No. 5 Petite fille de Paris (Little girl from Paris) (1943)	2:02	26 No. 6 Olas gigantes (Towering waves)	2:16
12 No. 6 Pito pito colorito (1943)	1:05	27 El viaje definitivo (The final journey) (1947) (Juan Ramón Jiménez, 1881–1958)	1:53
13 No. 7 Frédéric tic tic (1948)	0:53		
14 No. 8 Rossignol joli (Pretty nightingale) (c. 1948)	1:09		

Catalan composer Frederic Mompou was always fascinated, even obsessed, by a quest for musical concision, as this second (and last) volume of his complete songs clearly reveals. “I aim to express as much as possible as simply as possible”, he once said. “The more white space left on a page, the happier I am. That’s what I work towards. And it’s why I hate the fact that when people talk about my music they invariably label my works miniatures, little pieces ... thereby destroying their true meaning and scope.” Mompou’s relatively small catalogue of works is primarily made up of music for his own instrument, the piano; his

focus on shorter forms dates back to the 1920s and his earliest piano pieces (collected together in such evocatively titled collections as *Impresiones intimas*, *Cants màgics*, *Charmes*, *Fêtes lointaines*, etc.). In these works, he stripped the music of anything he judged to be superfluous, be it the excesses of Romantic virtuosity or the stridency of the avant-garde. His epigrammatic style can be heard at its most pared-down in *Música Callada* [Naxos 8.554332], the set of 28 piano works he composed between 1959 and 1967.

The delightful song that opens this album, *Cançoneta incerta* (Little song of uncertainty), sets a poem by the

Catalan poet Josep Carner and was written in 1926, not long after Mompou had moved to Paris (where he was to live until 1941). That same year he also wrote the first three of his *Comptines* [Naxos 8.570956], traditional children's counting rhymes based on folk-songs of Catalan, Spanish or French origin. All three are very short, and have a fresh, naïve air. In 1943, Mompou composed a second set in the same genre (*Comptines IV–VI*), and he later wrote two more which remained unpublished in his lifetime: the comic *Frédéric tic tic* of 1948, and *Rossignol joli* (Pretty nightingale), written for the young Clara Janés (who in 1972 was to publish an influential biography of the composer entitled *La vida callada de Federico Mompou*). As *Rossignol joli* was a first-communion gift, the song was probably written in around 1948 or 1949 (Clara was born in 1940).

Mompou's Paris years also yielded the songs *Le nuage* (The Cloud, 1928), setting a French poem by Mathilde Pomes, and *El testament d'Amèlia* (Amelia's last will and testament, 1938), his own arrangement of a Catalan folk-song that he later used again in his *Canción y danza No. 8* [Naxos 8.554332] for piano (1946).

Et sento que véns (I hear you coming) and *Ets l'infinít* (You are infinity), both written in 1944, with lyrics by the composer himself, were not published during his lifetime. Both works underwent an unusual transformation: not satisfied with them, Mompou removed their vocal lines and slightly modified the piano writing, turning the songs into solo piano pieces: *Preludes Nos. 9 and 10* [Naxos 8.554448], published by Salabert in 1952.

In 1947, Mompou set a poem by Juan Ramón Jiménez, *El viaje definitivo* (The final journey), this time without piano accompaniment. Four years later, he returned to the *a cappella* style in *Cantar del alma* [Naxos 8.573099]: there are clear affinities between the two songs, both in the transcendental themes of their texts and in the plainchant-like settings created by Mompou.

Although it was written in 1949, *Cançó de la fira* (Song of the fair) – a setting of a poem by Tomàs Garcés – has the festive quality of the much earlier *Fêtes lointaines* or *Suburbis* [Naxos 8.554448], although the final bars seem tinged with melancholy and nostalgia. Also from 1949 is *Cant de la victòria* (Song of victory), the final piece in *Ballet*, a curious artistic experiment that brought together in a single book the music of Mompou – in the form of thirteen piano

miniatures each less than a minute long – drawings by the artist Josep Mompou (the composer's brother) and poems by Ricard Permanyer. *Cant de la victòria* is the last of Mompou's thirteen musical epigrams and the only one not written for solo piano (the other twelve can be heard on Volume 5 of Mompou's complete piano works, Naxos 8.570956).

Aureana do Sil (Goldpanners of the Sil) is the result of a commission – in 1951 music critic Antonio Fernández Cid invited thirty or so Spanish composers to create songs from lyrics by Galician poets. Mompou chose a poem by Ramón Cabanillas and composed a work of great intensity, with echoes of the music of Poulenc, a composer he knew and admired. *El niño mudo* (The mute boy) was written four years later, in 1955, and sets a poem by Federico García Lorca. The song was not published during Mompou's lifetime, and he re-used large parts of the piano material in the second of his *Becquerianas*, written some fifteen years later.

The austere *Ave María* was composed in 1957 as a wedding present for Josefina Mompou, the composer's niece; *Sant Martí* (St Martin), a song based on a poem by writer and priest Pere Ribot, was commissioned by the mezzo-soprano Anna Ricci, who gave its première, in an orchestral arrangement, in 1961.

Mompou published the first book of his *Música Callada* in 1959, and the second in 1962: this work's influence on the song *Primeros pasos* (First steps) is clear. Written in 1964 to a poem by Clara Janés, *Primeros pasos* has the economy of means, sombre character and pared-down sound so characteristic of *Música Callada*, the work he thought of as his most personal and meaningful composition (declaring it to be “all my true music”).

Becquerianas, his penultimate work for voice and piano – the last being the *Cinq mélodies sur des textes de Paul Valéry* [Naxos 8.573099], completed in 1973 – is also the most extensive and one of the most ambitious of his song cycles. It was commissioned by Spain's Comisaria Nacional de Música to mark the centenary of the death of poet Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer in 1970. Mompou was not fond of commissions because of the obligation to deliver music on a set date, a difficult requirement for someone who aspired to “compose without haste”. “With endless patience,” he wrote, “I carry on until I reach a satisfactory conclusion,

having by that point shaped, synthesized, distilled and, very often, given up and let a great deal of time pass, years if necessary, realizing that time is, always, the best judge.”

The six songs that make up *Becquerianas* are unusually diverse in character for Mompou. The romantic intensity of the first, *Hoy la tierra y los cielos me sonríen* (Today earth and heaven smile upon me), with its sinuous vocal lines and voluptuous harmonization, contrasts starkly with the evanescent *Los invisibles átomos del aire* (The invisible atoms of the air), whose gentle melodic profile tends to move in chromatic intervals. The third song, *Yo soy ardiente, yo soy morena* (I am passionate, I am dark), is based on a typical flamenco rhythm, the *polo* – a surprising, and

unprecedented incursion by Mompou into Andalusian folk music. The next, *Yo sé cuál el objeto* (I know the reason why), is more reflective and meandering, as is the contemplative *Volverán las oscuras golondrinas* (The black swallows will return), the longest of the six, whose piano part includes imitations of birdsong. *Olas gigantes* (Towering waves), the final song in the cycle, stands out for its unusually virtuosic piano writing and a vocal line of almost operatic dynamism, again unprecedented in Mompou’s production.

Jordi Masó

English translation by Susannah Howe

Marta Mathéu

Marta Mathéu was born in Tarragona where she studied at the Conservatory, continuing in Valencia. She was taught by Montserrat Caballé, Helena Obratzova, Nelly Miricioiu, Isabel Penagos, Carmen Bustamante, Miguel Zanetti, Robert Expert, François Le Roux and Wolfram Rieger. She has sung in leading national and international concert halls with distinguished conductors as well as in chamber groups and with well known colleagues. She has won awards in several international contests and festivals, and has a wide repertoire ranging from baroque to contemporary music. She made her operatic debut in 2008 during the Salzburg Mozart Festival in *Le nozze di Figaro* and has since sung Donna Anna (*Don Giovanni*), Servilia (*La clemenza di Tito*), Berta in Montsalvatge’s *Babel 46*, Woglinde in *Das Rheingold*, a Norn and Gutrune in *Götterdämmerung* and *Die Richterin* in Janaček’s *Jenůfa*. She has recorded for the Klassicat, Brilliant and Opus Arte record labels.

Jordi Masó

Jordi Masó was born in Granollers (Barcelona, Spain). He studied at the Conservatory there with Josep M. Roger, at the Barcelona School of Music with the pianist Albert Attenelle, and at the Royal Academy of Music of London with Christopher Elton and Nelly Akopian, graduating in 1992 with the DipRAM, the highest distinction of the academy. He has won first prizes in many National and International competitions in Spain and has performed extensively in most European countries in piano recitals and in chamber music concerts. He is regularly invited to play with the most important Spanish orchestras. Jordi Masó’s wide repertoire, covering all periods and styles, with special emphasis on music of the twentieth century, has brought first performances of many piano works written for him by the foremost Spanish composers. He has recorded over forty discs, acclaimed by the most important publications. His recordings include the 1993 world première recording of the complete works for piano of Roberto Gerhard [8.223867], six discs with the complete piano music by Frederic Mompou [8.554332, 8.554448, 8.554727, 8.554727, 8.570956, 8.572142], the complete piano music by Padre Donostia [8.557228], Xavier Montsalvatge [8.570744, 8.570756, 8.572636], and Joaquim Homs [8.225099, 8.225236 and 8.225294], two recordings with music by Josep Soler [8.225235 and 8.225083], one each devoted to Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco [8.555856], Benet Casablanca [8.570757], as well as the complete piano works of Joaquín Turina [in progress, to date 8.557150, 8.557438, 8.557684, 8.570026, 8.570370, 8.572141, 8.572455, 8.572682, 8.572915 and 8.573183] and Déodat de Séverac [8.555855, 8.572428, 8.572429]. He is piano professor at the Granollers Conservatory and at the Esmuc (High Music School of Catalonia), and since 1996 has been a member of the contemporary music group Barcelona 216. In 2008 he was awarded the ARAM (Associate of the Royal Academy of Music). www.jordimaso.com

Frederic Mompou (1893–1987)

Canciones • 2

Este segundo –y último– volumen de las canciones de Frederic Mompou (1893-1987) es una buena muestra de la fascinación por la concisión que siempre obsesionó al compositor catalán. “Busco la más extrema simplicidad con la máxima expresión”, declaró. “Cuanto más blanca está la página, más satisfecho estoy. Esto es lo que persigo. Por esto detesto que, siempre que se habla de mi música, invariablemente se la etiqueta de miniaturas, piezas breves, piecitas... destruyendo su verdadero significado y toda su grandeza”. Autor de una obra poco extensa y centrada en su instrumento –el piano–, Mompou cultivó las formas breves desde sus primeras composiciones pianísticas en los años 20 (piezas reunidas en colecciones con títulos sugestivos como “Impresiones íntimas”, “Cants màgics”, “Charmes”, “Fetes lontaines”, etc.). En estas obras, Mompou despojaba a la música de aquello que él juzgaba accesorio, tanto de los excesos del virtuosismo romántico como de las estridencias de las vanguardias de la época. Su estilo epigramático alcanzaría su mayor grado de depuración en “Música Callada” [Naxos 8.554727], la colección de 28 piezas para piano que compuso entre 1959 y 1967.

La deliciosa canción que abre la presente grabación, “Cançoneta incerta” (“Cancioncita incierta”), sobre un poema del poeta catalán Josep Carner, fue escrita en 1926, al principio de la estancia del compositor en París, donde vivió entre los años 1924 y 1941. Ese mismo año, Mompou compuso sus tres primeras “Comptines” [Naxos 8.570956] basadas en tonadas populares –catalanas, españolas y francesas– que los niños utilizan para contar. El resultado son unas piezas brevísimas con un perfume *naïf*. En el año 1943, Mompou volvería al género con una segunda serie (“Comptines nº 4, 5 y 6”) a las que añadiría otras dos que no se publicarían en vida del compositor: la humorística “Frédéric tic tic”, que data del año 1948, y “Rossignol joli”, escrita para la pequeña Clara Janés (quien en 1972 publicaría una importante biografía del compositor, “La vida callada de Frederic Mompou”). El hecho de que “Rossignol joli” fuera un regalo para la primera comunión de la niña hace suponer que la canción fue escrita alrededor de los años 1948 y 1949 (Clara Janés nació en 1940).

A sus años parisinos pertenecen también “Le nuage” (“La

nube”), compuesta en 1928 sobre un poema en francés de Mathilde Pomes, y “El testament d’Amèlia” (“El testamento de Amèlia”) de 1938, armonización de una bellísima canción popular catalana que Mompou volvería a utilizar en su “Canción y danza nº 8” [Naxos 8.554332] para piano, compuesta en 1946.

“Et sento que véns” (“Te siento venir”) y “Ets l’infinit” (“Eres el infinito”), escritas en 1944 sobre textos del propio compositor, no fueron publicadas en vida de Mompou. Las dos canciones experimentaron una transformación muy curiosa: insatisfecho con su trabajo, Mompou suprimió la línea vocal, introdujo leves modificaciones en la parte de piano y las dos canciones pasaron a ser dos piezas para piano solo, los Preludios nº 9 y nº 10 [Naxos 8.554448], que publicaría Salabert en 1952.

En el año 1947, Mompou puso música a un poema de Juan Ramón Jiménez, “El viaje definitivo”, prescindiendo del acompañamiento del piano. Cuatro años después, en 1951, el compositor volvería a recurrir al canto *a capella* en “Cantar del alma” [Naxos 8.573099], pieza con la que “El viaje definitivo” guarda afinidades evidentes, no sólo por el carácter transcendente de la temática sino también por la melodía de contornos gregorianos, cercana al canto litúrgico.

A pesar de haber sido escrita en 1949, “Cançó de la fira” (“Canción de la feria”) –sobre un poema de Tomàs Garcés– se aproxima al aroma festivo de las tempranas “Fetes lontaines” o de los “Suburbis” [Naxos 8.554448], aunque la melancolía y la nostalgia parecen teñir los compases finales. Del mismo año 1949 data “Cant de la victòria” (“Canto de la victoria”), última pieza del “Ballet”, un curioso experimento artístico que unió en un mismo libro la música de Mompou –en forma de 13 miniaturas pianísticas de menos de un minuto–, los dibujos del pintor Josep Mompou –hermano del compositor– y la poesía de Ricard Permanyer. “Cant de la victòria” es el último de estos 13 epigramas musicales y el único de la colección no escrito para piano solo (los otros 12 pueden escucharse en el volumen 5 de la integral pianística: Naxos 8.570956).

“Aureana do Sil” nació fruto de un encargo que en el año 1951 el crítico musical Antonio Fernández Cid propuso a una treintena de compositores españoles, a quienes invitó a

escribir una canción sobre textos de poetas gallegos. Mompou musicó un poema de Ramón Cabanillas y el resultado fue una pieza de gran intensidad con ecos de la música de Poulenc, compositor que Mompou conocía y admiraba. “El niño mudo” fue compuesta cuatro años después, en 1955, a partir de un poema de Federico García Lorca. La canción no se publicó en vida del compositor y Mompou utilizó buena parte del material del acompañamiento pianístico en la segunda de las “Becquerianas”, escrita quince años después.

El austero “Ave María” fue escrito en 1957 como regalo para la boda de Josefina Mompou, sobrina del compositor; “Sant Martí”, canción basada en un poema del poeta y sacerdote Pere Ribot, fue un encargo de la mezzosoprano Anna Ricci, quien la estrenó en un arreglo orquestal en el año 1961.

Mompou publicó el primer cuaderno de “Música Callada” en 1959 y el segundo en 1962: es inevitable no ver la influencia de esta obra en la canción “Primeros pasos”. Compuesta en 1964 sobre un poema de Clara Janés, “Primeros pasos” muestra la misma economía de medios, la sobriedad, la depuración sonora que caracteriza las 28 piezas de “Música Callada”, obra que Mompou consideraba su aportación más personal y significativa (“*esta es toda mi verdadera música*”, afirmó).

“Becquerianas”, su penúltima obra para voz y piano – antecede en dos años a las “Cinq mélodies sur des textes de Paul Valéry” [Naxos 8.573099] – es la más extensa y una de las más ambiciosas. Fue un encargo de la Comisaría Nacional de Música para conmemorar el centenario de la

muerte del poeta Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer en el año 1970. A Mompou no le gustaban los encargos porque conllevaban la obligación de entregar la música en una fecha fija, exigencia incompatible para quien aspiraba a “*componer sin prisas*”. “*Con una paciencia sin límites*”, escribió, “*prosigo, infatigable, hasta el logro de una conclusión satisfactoria, habiendo antes perfilado, sintetizado, alambicado y, muchas veces, abandonado y dejado transcurrir un largo espacio de tiempo, de años si es necesario, comprobando que el tiempo es, siempre, el mejor juez*”.

Las seis canciones que conforman “Becquerianas” muestran una mayor diversidad de caracteres que la mayoría de obras de Mompou. La intensidad romántica de la primera canción, “Hoy la tierra y los cielos me sonríen”, de sinuosas líneas vocales y armonización voluptuosa, contrasta con la evanescente “Los invisibles átomos del aire”, cuyo leve perfil melódico tiende a moverse cromáticamente. La tercera canción, “Yo soy ardiente, yo soy morena”, presenta un ritmo típico del flamenco –el “polo”– y supone una sorprendente –e inédita– incursión de Mompou en el folklorismo andaluz. Más reflexiva y errante es la cuarta pieza, “Yo sé cual el objeto”, carácter que comparte con la contemplativa “Volverán las oscuras golondrinas”, la canción más extensa del ciclo, en la cual aparecen en la parte de piano imitaciones del canto de los pájaros. La canción que cierra el ciclo, “Olas gigantes”, destaca por una parte de piano inusualmente brillante y una línea vocal de un vigor casi operístico, insospechado en Mompou.

Jordi Masó

Marta Mathéu
ENFOC



Jordi Masó
Jordi Ribó



This second and final volume of Frederic Mompou's complete songs features the cycle *Becquerianas*, one of his most ambitious and also one of his most diverse, with its unprecedented fusion of Andalusian folk-music, virtuosic piano writing and vocal opulence. *Comptines*, by comparison, are joyful and simple traditional children's counting rhymes. Also included are five recently discovered songs: *Et sento que véns*, *Ets l'infinít*, *El testament d'Amèlia*, *Ave María* and *El viaje definitivo*. '... an enticing first offering in a welcome series, and the performers are warmly to be applauded' (*Fanfare* on Volume 1 / 8.573099).



Fundació
Frederic Mompou

Frederic MOMPOU (1893–1987)

Complete Songs • 2

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1 Cançoneta incerta (1926)
CA 2:49 | 16 Cant de la victòria (1949)
CA 1:17 |
| 2 Sant Martí (1961) CA 3:16 | 17 Et sento que véns (1944)
CA 2:06 |
| 3 El niño mudo (1955) SP 1:59 | 18 Ets l'infinít (1944) CA 1:37 |
| 4 Aureana do Sil (1951) GA 2:27 | 19 El testament d'Amèlia
(1938) CA 3:57 |
| 5 Cançó de la fira (1949) CA 2:35 | 20 Ave María (1957) LA 3:50 |
| 6 Primeros pasos (1964) SP 2:35 | 21–26 Becquerianas (1970) SP 15:50 |
| 7–14 Comptines (1926, 1943,
1948) CA•FR•SP 10:28 | 27 El viaje definitivo (1947)
SP 1:53 |
| 15 Le nuage (1928) FR 3:48 | |

Sung in Catalan (CA), Spanish (SP), Galician (GA), French (FR) and Latin (LA)

Full track details will be found in the booklet



Marta Mathéu, Soprano
Jordi Masó, Piano



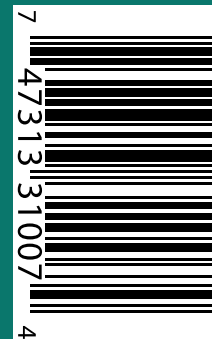
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village where Mompou used to spend the summers (photo by Jordi Ribó, used with permission)



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Playing Time
61:18



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