

MOMPOU

Song of the Soul

Complete Songs • 1

Marta Mathéu, Soprano
Jordi Masó, Piano



Frederic Mompou (1893–1987)

Complete Songs • 1

Combat del somni (Dream Battle) (1942–51) <i>(Josep Janés, 1913–1959)</i>		13 La cançó de l'àvia (Grandma's Song) (1915) <i>(Anonymous)</i>	1:37
1 No. 1 Damunt de tu només les flors (Above You Only Flowers)	3:55	14 Cantar del alma (Song Of The Soul) (1943) <i>(San Juan de la Cruz, 1542–1591)</i>	4:51
2 No. 2 Aquesta nit un mateix vent (Tonight The Same Wind)	2:50	15 L'hora grisa (The Twilight Hour) (1915) <i>(Manuel Blancafort, 1897–1987)</i>	2:02
3 No. 3 Jo et pressentia com la mar (I Sensed You Like The Sea)	1:32	Quand l'amant sortit (When Her Lover Left) <i>(Maurice Maeterlinck, 1862–1949)</i>	
4 No. 4 Fes-me la vida transparent (Make My Life Transparent)	2:50	16 Third setting (1919)	1:03
5 No. 5 Ara no sé si et veig encar (Now I Know Not Whether I Can Still See You)	2:45	17 Second setting (1915)	1:06
Deux mélodies (1945) <i>(Juan Ramón Jiménez, 1881–1958)</i>		18 First setting (1914)	1:17
6 Pastoral	2:43	19 Psalm (1936) <i>(Bible: Old Testament)</i>	5:04
7 Llueve sobre el río (Rain Falls On The River)	2:08	Cinq mélodies sur des textes de Paul Valéry (1973) <i>(Paul Valéry, 1871–1945)</i>	
8 Mira quina resplendor (See What Splendour) (1966) <i>(Anonymous)</i>	2:07	20 No. 1 La fausse morte (The Seeming Corpse)	2:25
Quatre mélodies (1925) <i>(Frederic Mompou)</i>		21 No. 2 L'insinuant (Insinuation)	2:16
9 No. 1 Rosa del camí (A Rose On The Path)	1:24	22 No. 3 Le vin perdu (Lost Wine)	3:28
10 No. 2 Cortina de fullatge (Curtain Of Leaves)	2:02	23 No. 4 Le sylphe (The Sylph)	1:10
11 No. 3 Inceritud (Uncertainty)	0:57	24 No. 5 Les pas (Footsteps)	3:08
12 No. 4 Neu (Snow)	1:43		

"I have absolute faith in the forms of expression I carry within me. I cannot subordinate my spontaneity to theories, the need for which escapes me. Music is a pure form of inspiration." Frederic Mompou is a unique figure in the history of Catalan music (Vladimir Jankélévitch took this even further when, in 1969, he wrote, "Mompou is unique in the world!"), in that he was an intuitive composer who shunned theories ("first the work, then the treatise", was his view), and loved brevity ("my only aim is to produce works in which nothing is missing but which are not over-long"). Even his earliest pieces reveal a distinctively personal, French-influenced idiom, which remained on the fringes of the aesthetic currents that characterized the twentieth century ("only one thing can be expected of a musician, namely that

he always be faithful to that which he is"). On more than one occasion he declared his indifference to the great composers of the Germanic tradition – Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven – and although links have been made between his work and that of Chopin, Satie, Debussy and even Webern, the most important influence on Mompou was Fauré, whose music first inspired him to devote himself to composing.

Although he wrote primarily for his own instrument, the piano, Mompou also composed a significant number of vocal works. His first two completed songs date from 1915 but are very different from one another in terms of character: *L' hora grisa* (The Twilight Hour), setting a poem by his childhood friend and fellow composer Manuel Blancafort, is not far removed from the minimalist stasis of the *Charmes* suite,

while *La cançó de l'àvia* (Grandma's Song) has more in common with the traditional Catalan folk-tunes of his long series of piano works entitled *Canciones y danzas* (Songs and Dances). This second song remained unpublished throughout Mompou's lifetime and the lyricist's name is unknown, although it may well have been the composer himself. Also unpublished were his three unfinished settings of symbolist poet Maurice Maeterlinck's *Quand l'amant sortit* (When Her Lover Left), one of the *Quinze chansons* published along with his *Serres chaudes* (Holhouses) collection. Mompou created three surprisingly varying versions: that of 1914 is reflective, that of 1919 agitated and that of 1915 features a sinuous vocal line – as if the composer were experimenting with the different states of mind suggested by the poem.

The *Quatre mélodies* of 1925, which set poems in Catalan by Mompou himself, are a faithful reflection of his ideal of concision. "I always strive to achieve something very simplified, a true synthesis", he stated in 1974. "Composers are usually happy to keep adding more and more pages to a score. I, on the other hand, enjoy cutting things out, eliminating anything I feel is superfluous, until I'm left with the essential. Then I'm happy." The extremely succinct *Quatre mélodies*, similar in spirit to Japanese haikus, are a good example of this process of distilling music to its pure essence.

The *Psalm* is a mysterious work. Dated 30th May 1936, it was never intended to be published. The Latin text is based on that of Psalm 130 and the song is one of the composer's few sacred works, other than the oratorio *Los improperios* (The Reproaches) and *Ave María*. In 1949 Mompou transformed the piano solo in the central section into the *Pavana* of the suite of piano miniatures entitled *Ballet. Cantar del alma* (Song Of The Soul, 1943) is based on *La fonte* (The Source), a poem by St John of the Cross, the mystic poet who years later would also inspire Mompou's great masterpiece, *Música callada* (Silent Music). Built on a very unusual structure, *Cantar del alma* presents a plainchant-inspired vocal recitative which alternates with refrain-like interventions from the piano, so that voice and instrument remain separate throughout.

The very beautiful *Deux mélodies* of 1945, setting poems by Juan Ramón Jiménez, seem to anticipate the lyricism and dramatic intensity of the *Combat del somni* cycle composed at around the same time. Based on

sonnets by poet Josep Janés (1913–59), a close friend of Mompou's, *Combat del somni* (Dream Battle) originally comprised three songs written between 1942 and 1948: *Damunt de tu només les flors* (Above You Only Flowers: one of the composer's most famous creations, and rightly so), *Aquesta nit un mateix vent* (Tonight The Same Wind: a restrained song of hypnotic qualities) and *Jo et pressentia com la mar* (I Sensed You Like The Sea: for Mompou, an unusually impassioned, turbulent piece). Then, in 1951, the composer added a fourth song to this triptych: *Fes-me la vida transparent* (Make My Life Transparent). The fifth, *Ara no sé si et veig encar* (Now I Know Not Whether I Can Still See You), was written in 1950 but remained unpublished and Mompou, years later, used some passages from it for *Le vin perdu*, the third of the *Cinq mélodies sur des textes de Paul Valéry*. For this reason he was always reluctant to publish *Ara no sé si et veig encar*, although it is no less inspired a piece than his fellows.

At Christmas 1966 Mompou wrote *Mira quina resplendor* (See What Splendour), a carol for children's chorus. The version for solo voice and piano has remained unpublished until now. A few years later, in 1973, Mompou chose some poems by the French poet Paul Valéry to set to music. He had met Valéry in Paris in 1925, at a lunch held to mark the poet's election to the Académie française. "During our conversation," Mompou explained, "Valéry asked if there was any connection between my piano work *Charmes* and his collection of the same name. I should love to have replied in the affirmative, given the great admiration I had for his work, but I had to confess, in some confusion, that at the time I wrote my work (1920), I had not yet come across his." The composer did however tell Valéry that it would be a pleasure to set some of his texts one day. And, almost fifty years later, he kept his word and created the *Cinq mélodies sur des textes de Paul Valéry*, probably his greatest vocal work. Although these pieces are still tonal, there is more harmonic tension in them than in the rest of Mompou's songs, as well as an unusually angular vocal line featuring complex leaps. The overall tone of the set is bleak and sombre, with an atmosphere of desolation that not even the lighter nature of the fourth song, *Le sylphe*, can ease.

Jordi Masó

English translation: Susannah Howe

Photo: ENFOC



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 Richter* in Janaček's *Jenůfa*. She has recorded for the Klassicat, Brilliant and Opus Arte record labels.

Photo: Jordi Ribó



Jordi Masó

Jordi Masó was born in Granollers (Barcelona, Spain). He studied with Josep M. Roger, Albert Attenelle, and at the Royal Academy of Music of London with Christopher Elton and Nelly Akopian, graduating in 1992 with the highest distinction. He has won first prize in many National and International competitions in Spain and has performed extensively. 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. He has made over forty recordings, including the 1993 world première of the complete works for piano of Roberto Gerhard (8.223867), the complete piano music by Frederic Mompou (8.554332, 8.554448, 8.554727, 8.554727, 8.570956, 8.572142), Padre Donostia (8.557228), Xavier Montsalvatge (8.570744, 8.570756), Joaquim Homs (8.225099, 8.225236 and 8.225294), Déodat de Séverac (8.555855, 8.572428, 8.572429), Benet Casablanca (8.570757) and Joaquín Turina (8.557150, 8.557438, 8.557684, 8.570026, 8.570370, 8.572141, 8.572455, 8.572682). He is piano professor at the Granollers Conservatory and at the Esmuc (Escola Superior de Música de Catalunya), and since 1996 has been a member of the contemporary music group Barcelona 216. In 2008 he was made an Associate of the Royal Academy of Music (ARAM). www.jordimaso.com

Frederic Mompou (1893–1987)

Canciones • 1

"*Otorgo plena confianza a las formas de expresión que llevo en mí. No puedo subordinar mi espontaneidad a teorías, la necesidad de las cuales se me escapa. La música es una inspiración pura*". Frederic Mompou es un caso único en la historia de la música catalana (Vladimir Jankélévitch iba incluso más allá y en el año 1969 escribió: "¡solo hay un Mompou en el mundo!"): fue un compositor intuitivo, enemigo de teorías ("en primer lugar la obra, después el tratado teórico", afirmaba), amante de la brevedad ("mi único objetivo es producir obras en las que nada falte pero que no sean demasiado largas"). Desde sus primeras composiciones dejó patente un lenguaje plenamente personal, muy afín a la música francesa, que se mantuvo al margen de las estéticas que marcaron el siglo XX ("sólo habría de exigirse una cosa de un músico: que sea siempre fiel a lo que él es"). En más de una ocasión declaró su indiferencia por los grandes compositores de la tradición germánica (Haydn, Mozart y Beethoven). Aunque su música se ha vinculado a Frédéric Chopin, Eric Satie, Claude Debussy o incluso a Anton Webern, su principal influencia fue la obra de Gabriel Fauré: Mompou confesaba que el impulso de dedicarse a la composición provino de la audición de la música del gran compositor francés.

Aunque dedicó la mayor parte de su producción a su instrumento, el piano, Mompou dejó también una producción vocal muy significativa. Sus dos primeras canciones acabadas datan del año 1915 y son muy dispares: *L'hora grisa*, a partir de un poema del compositor Manuel Blancafort – su gran amigo de juventud –, es una pieza que no está lejos del estatismo minimalista de la suite *Charmes*, mientras *La cançó de l'àvia* se acerca más a las evocaciones de la canción popular catalana características de las *Canciones y danzas*. *La cançó de l'àvia* no fue publicada en vida de Mompou y se desconoce el nombre del autor de la letra, aunque bien podría ser el propio compositor. Tampoco se publicaron nunca *Quand l'amant sortit*, tres intentos de Mompou de poner música a un poema de la colección *Serres Chaudes* del poeta simbolista Maurice Maeterlinck. Sorprende la heterogeneidad de caracteres de cada una de las versiones – reflexiva la versión del año

1914, inquieta la del 1919 y de sinuosa línea vocal la de 1915 –, como si el compositor experimentase con los diferentes estados de ánimo que le sugería el poema.

Las *Quatre melodies*, compuestas en 1925 a partir de poemas en catalán del propio Mompou, son un fiel reflejo del ideal de concisión de su música: "*Siempre intento conseguir algo muy simplificado, una verdadera síntesis*", afirmó en el año 1974. "*Los compositores suelen estar contentos cuando pueden añadir más y más páginas a su partitura. Yo no. Yo disfruto suprimiendo, eliminando todo lo que considero innecesario o superfluo, hasta que me quedo con lo esencial. Entonces soy feliz*". Las *Quatre melodies*, piezas extremadamente breves, cercanas al espíritu de los haikus japoneses, son un buen ejemplo del resultado de la destilación de esta esencia.

El *Psalm* es una obra enigmática. Fechada el día 30 de Mayo de 1936, Mompou nunca pensó en publicarla. Su texto en latín se basa en el *Salmo 129* del *Libro de los Salmos*. Junto con el oratorio *Los improperios* y el *Ave Maria*, ésta es una de las pocas composiciones de inspiración religiosa del compositor. El solo de piano en la parte central se transformaría en 1949 en la *Pavana* de la suite de miniaturas pianísticas *Ballet*. *Cantar del alma* de 1943 se basa en *La Fonte*, poema de San Juan de la Cruz, el poeta místico que años después inspiraría la obra cumbre de Mompou, *Música callada*. Siguiendo una estructura muy peculiar, *Cantar del alma* presenta un recitativo de la voz – de ascendente claramente gregoriano – que se alterna con intervenciones del piano solista – a modo de estribillo –, sin que voz e instrumento coincidan en ninguna ocasión.

Las bellísimas *Deux melodies* de 1945, escritas sobre dos poemas de Juan Ramón Jiménez, parecen prefigurar la atmósfera de lirismo e intensidad dramática del ciclo *Combat del somni*, compuesto en la misma época. Basado en sonetos del poeta Josep Janés (1913-1959), buen amigo de Mompou, *Combat del somni*, constaba originalmente de tres canciones escritas entre 1942 y 1948: *Damunt de tu només les flors* (una de las creaciones más justamente celebradas del compositor), *Aquesta nit un mateix vent* (una canción hipnótica y contenida) y *Jo et*

presentia com la mar (una pieza apasionada y turbulenta, registro inhabitual en Mompou). A este tríptico añadió el compositor una cuarta canción en 1951: *Fes-me la vida transparent*. La quinta canción, *Ara no sé si et veig encar*, fue escrita en 1950 pero quedó inédita y Mompou, años después, utilizó algunos de sus compases para *Le vin perdu*, la tercera de las *Cinq mélodies sur des textes de Paul Valéry*. Por este motivo, Mompou siempre manifestó reparos en publicar *Ara no sé si et veig encar*, aún siendo una pieza no menos inspirada que sus compañeras.

En las Navidades de 1966 escribió Mompou *Mira quina resplandor*, un villancico para coro infantil. La versión para voz y piano permanecía inédita hasta ahora. Pocos años después, en 1973, Frederic Mompou puso música a poemas de Paul Valéry. Mompou conoció al poeta francés en París en 1925 durante un almuerzo para celebrar el ingreso de Valéry en la Academia de Francia. “*A lo largo de la conversación*”, explicó Mompou, “*Valéry me preguntó si mi obra para piano Charmes tenía relación con sus*

poesías agrupadas bajo el mismo título. Hubiese querido contestarle afirmativamente, dada la gran admiración que sentía por su obra poética, pero tuve que confesarle, algo confuso, que en la época en que yo compuse mi obra (1920) ignoraba la existencia de la suya”. No obstante, Mompou aseguró a Valéry que sería un placer poner música a algunos de sus textos algún día. Y casi cincuenta años más tarde, el compositor catalán cumplió su promesa con sus *Cinq mélodies sur des textes de Paul Valéry*, probablemente la mejor contribución de Mompou al género vocal. A pesar de mantenerse fiel al sistema tonal, hay en estas cinco canciones una mayor tensión armónica que en el resto de sus canciones, y una línea vocal inusualmente angulosa y con saltos complejos. El tono general de la obra es oscuro, lóbrego, una desolación que ni siquiera la ligereza de la cuarta canción, *Le sylphe*, consigue aliviar.

Jordi Masó

Frederic Mompou's purely intuitive music has a unique place in Catalan history. He was initially inspired by the music of Fauré, but the early *La cançó de l'àvia* also represents an affinity with traditional Catalan folk-tunes, and his *Quatre mélodies* reflect a love of brevity. Mompou's beautiful *Damunt de tu només les flors* [Track 1] is one of his most famous creations, while the sombre *Cinq mélodies sur des textes de Paul Valéry* is probably his greatest vocal work. Jordi Masó's six-volume set of the complete piano works of Mompou has been widely acclaimed.



Fundació
Frederic Mompou

Frederic
MOMPOU
(1893–1987)

Complete Songs • 1

1–5	Combat del somni (Dream Battle) (1942–51) CA	14:04
6–7	Deux mélodies (1945) SP	4:53
8	Mira quina resplendor (See What Splendour) (1966) CA	2:07
9–12	Quatre mélodies (1925) CA	6:14
13	La cançó de l'àvia (Grandma's Song) (1915) CA	1:37
14	Cantar del alma (Song Of The Soul) (1943) SP	4:51
15	L'hora grisa (The Twilight Hour) (1915) CA	2:02
16–18	Quand l'amant sortit (When Her Lover Left) (1914–19) FR	3:30
19	Psalm (1936) LA	5:04
20–24	Cinq mélodies sur des textes de Paul Valéry (1973) FR	12:35

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

Full track details will be found in the booklet



Marta Mathéu, Soprano
Jordi Masó, Piano



Recorded at the Auditori 'Can Roig i Torres', Santa Coloma de Gramenet, Spain, 24–25 November 2012
Producer & Engineer: Marc Dalmases • Booklet notes: Jordi Masó • Publishers: Editions Salabert (tracks 1–7, 9–12, 14); Editions Boileau (8, 13, 16–19); Unión Musical Ediciones (15); Editions Max Eschig (20–24)
This recording is sponsored by Fundació Frederic Mompou • Cover: *Mompou landscape*, near La Garriga, the small village where Mompou used to spend the summers (photo by Jordi Ribó, used with permission)