Complete Music for Solo Guitar

FEDERICO MOMPOU 1893-1987		ROBERTO GERHARD 1896-1970	
Cançó i dansa No.10		13. Fantasia	5'12
(Version for Guitar)			
1. Cançó	2'24	For whom the bell tolls	
2. Dansa	1'41	Revision by Marco Ramelli	
		14. I. Recoinnaisance:	
Cançó i dansa No.13		a. The bridge	2'01
(Version for Guitar)		15. I. Recoinnaisance: b. Pablo	1'30
3. Cançó	3'28	16. I. Recoinnaisance: c. Pilar	1'40
4. Dansa	1'27	17. I. Recoinnaisance:	
		d. Recoinnaisance	1'26
Suite Compostelana		18. II. The moon of May	2'15
5. I. Preludio (Prelude)	3'32	19. III. Verdict on Pablo:	
6. II. Coral (Chorale)	3'22	a. Un galán y su morena	1'38
7. III. Cuna (Lullaby)	3'39	20. III. Verdict on Pablo:	
8. IV. Recitativo (Recitative)	3'16	b. The bell	2'10
9. V. Canción (Song)	2'54	21. III. Verdict on Pablo:	
10. VI. Muñeira (Doll's dance)	2'51	c. La muerte y la doncella	1'14
		22. IV. The bridge	1'48
EMILIO PUJOL 1886-1980			
11. El cant dels ocells	3'15		
12. La plume de perdreau	0'43		
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Marco Ramelli guitar

"Our friendship has joined two different characters, which I greatly applaud because only opposites, for me, combined alternately and also jointly, form a whole." (Letter from Gerhard to Mompou, without date)

The present recording is dedicated to exploring the guitar music of two of the most significant Catalan composers of the 20th century: Federico Mompou (*Barcelona*, 16 April 1893 - 30 June 1987) and Roberto Gerhard (*Valls*, 25 September 1896 - Cambridge, 5 January 1970). Two different musicians with a strong personality, profound and charismatic who developed a personal and unique language in the panorama of XX century Spanish music. Despite their strong diversity in character and musical style, they were united by a profound friendship based on sincere mutual esteem.

On two occasions they tried to collaborate together. The first attempt was in Paris in 1921, when Gerhard, Adolfo Salazar and Óscar Esplá visited Mompou and decided to form the 'The group of four' which, however, had no concrete development. Ten years later, they attempted a similar enterprise with the establishment of 'Independent composers of Catalonia' together with other composers. Unfortunately, the only event created by this group was a concert organized in June 1931 in Barcelona.

The purpose of this CD is to gather the works by these two great composers so different in style but sharing a sincere and deep musical approach. Between the works of these two authors, I recorded two refined and gentle arrangements of Catalan songs by Emilio Pujol (*La Granadella*, 7 April 1886 – Barcellona, 15 November 1980), a guitarist and composer from Barcelona.

For this project, I used a guitar built in 1931 in Barcelona by Francisco Simplicio, one of the most important Catalan luthiers. Its intense and raw sound is an excellent companion to explore both the poetic atmospheres of Mompou and Gerhard's dissonances.

Federico Mompou

"The music is written for the inexpressible, I wish it seemed that it comes out of the shadows to return back into it."

Federico Mompou

The cd opens with the intimate and poetic music by Frederic Mompou i Dencausse, an extremely sensitive and genuine composer and pianist.

His music reflects his life, solitary and devoted to introspection, in which music was used as a medium to connect to his spiritual world. Born in Barcelona, like many Spanish composers of the time, after a period of study at the national level, he soon moved to France to study at the Conservatoire of Paris. After the Parisian parenthesis, he returned to his homeland where he continued his work of exploration of the most poetic soul of the piano both as a composer and interpreter. Despite the shy character and thanks to the help of other musicians including Roberto Gerhard, his music started to be widespread among pianists.

His compositional approach, guided by intuition and inspiration, found in the piano the intermediary to connect with the world of the invisible and impalpable, leading him to rarely compose pieces for other instruments, with the exception of the guitar.

In the melancholic and evocative sound of this instrument, Mompou identified an ideal medium to express his complex poetic world, in which sound and silence assume evocative values capable of transporting the listener to archaic places suspended in time.

The first compositions that open the CD are part of the collection of 15 *Cançons i Danses* (Songs and Dances) composed from 1918 to 1972. The collection is almost entirely written for piano with the exception of No.13 written for guitar and No.15 for organ.

Cançon i Dansa No.10, written for piano in 1953, was later transcribed for guitar by the composer himself. The manuscript of the new version was found at Linares, in the Segovia museum, on May 7th. 2001. The set uses two melodies from 'Canticles of Saint Mary by King Alfonso X of Castile'.

The *Cançon i Dansa No.13* was written in 1972 and is dedicated to the Spanish guitarist Narciso Yepes. The melodies for both movements are two famous Catalan songs; the first is 'El cant dels ocells' (The song of the birds) and the second 'El bon caçador' (The Good Hunter).

Mompou started to compose for the guitar after meeting the Andalusian virtuoso Andrés Segovia. The two met in Santiago de Compostela where Mompou taught from 1958 to 1972 at the International University Course of Spanish Music and where Segovia held summer courses.

Thanks to this friendship, one of the most important works written for the Spanish virtuoso was composed in 1962, the *Suite Compostelana*, a six movements piece emblematic of the composer's style.

The material used by Mompou is original except for the last piece movement that is expressly inspired by Muiñeira de Lugo, a typical Galician dance usually played on a form of bagpipe known as a gaita.

Roberto Gerhard

No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main. If a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as if a manor of thy friend's or of thine

own were: any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind, and therefore never send to know for whom the bells tolls;

it tolls for thee.

The above quotation from John Donne appears facing the first page of the text of 'For Whom the Bell Tolls' by Ernest Hemingway

Born in Valls to foreign parents, Alsatian mother and German-Swiss father, Gerhard began his training in Barcelona with Granados for the piano and Felipe Pedrell in composition. After Pedrell's death, he tried without success to study with Manuel de Falla, so he decided to move to Vienna where he studied with Arnold Schoenberg.

During the years in Vienna his language matures and incorporates elements of the Second Viennese School but still retaining its originality and a strong bond to the Spanish culture. His studies once completed, he returned to Barcelona, but soon after the outbreak of the Spanish Civil war he was forced into exile first in Paris and then in Cambridge, where he settled down.

Roberto Gerhard's *For Whom the Bell Tolls* was originally conceived as a background music for a BBC radio programme dedicated to the masterpiece of Ernest Hemingway.

The book, set during the Spanish Civil War, tells the story of Robert Jordan, a young American that joins, as a dynamiter, a republican guerrilla unit. Robert's

mission is to blow up a bridge, central in the strategy of resistance against the Francoist army.

The version presented in this recording is my reorganization of Gerhard's material as a concert piece that can stand the execution without text.

The composition is divided into four groups named as the four BBC episodes that retraces the dramaturgy of the book plot.

For episodes *I- Recoinnaisance* and *III - Verdict on Pablo*, longer and more structured, I decided to add subtitles to individual movements to create references to the book that could reveal my approach in the revision of the piece. The composition, poetic and dramatic, has features strong contrasts, as in the book: sensual and soft pieces expressing love and compassion are contrasted by dissonant movements that show the brutality of the war.

Great importance is ascribed to the theme of the bridge, that appears from the first bars of the composition, and the theme of death based on the melodic cell 'e - f', an echo of the Homenaje pour "Le Tombeau de Claude Debussy" by Manuel De Falla.

At the end of the piece the two themes reappear for the last time, the theme of the bridge is gradually transformed into a creep of grinding dissonance until the final explosion of the bridge, three chords in ff followed by two notes 'e -f' symbolize death of the protagonist.

Fantasia, written for Julian Bream is also present in the CD. The first draft of this composition was written in 1957 but perhaps it did not meet the taste of Bream. In the version published and presented in this CD, Gerhard makes significant changes transforming the central part and creating a musically more complex piece using a language related to serialism and polytonality.

© Marco Ramelli



Marco Ramelli is a guitarist, composer, lecturer and artistic director from Milano, Italy that has been awarded various first Prizes in international competitions in Italy, Spain, UK, France and Serbia. Marco has performed all over Europe appearing in important festivals and venues as soloists.

As a composer, Marco won the prestigious "World Guitar Composition Competition" in Serbia with his composition "Im Nebel, homage to Kengiro Azuma". His music is performed worldwide by internationally acclaimed soloists and ensembles including Sean Shibe, Andrea Dieci, Lorenzo Micheli e Andrea De Vitis.

Marco has established fruitful and continuous collaborations with some renowned contemporary composers, and he has premièred several pieces dedicated to him.

But his dedication to music is not only confined to his performances: Marco is also Artistic Director of some music festivals in Italy - for instance the increasingly important Festival Corde d'Autunno in Milan - and a very enthusiastic guitar teacher as well.

Marco is a lecturer at the DIT Conservatory of Music in Dublin and he is giving masterclasses and lectures worldwide.

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