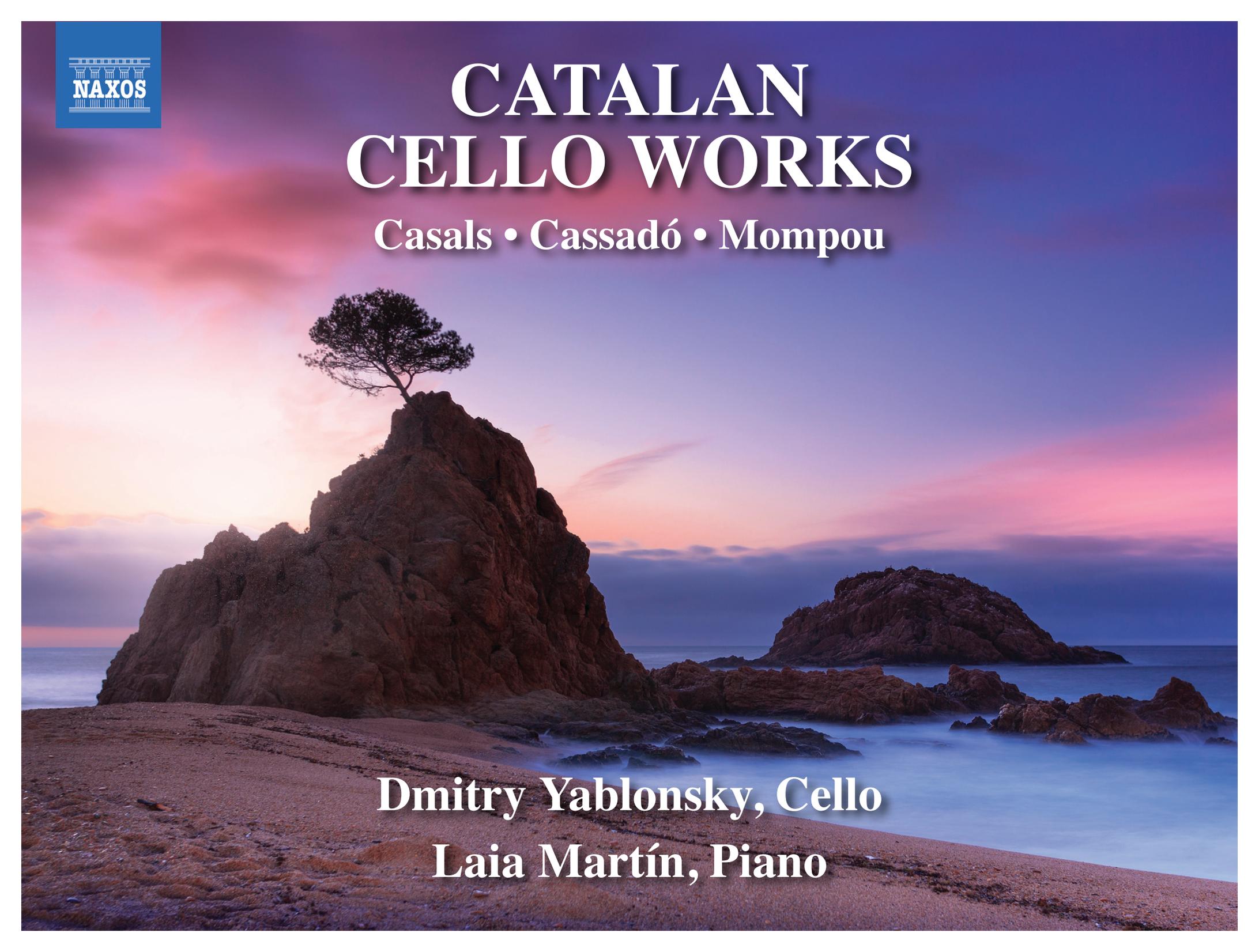


The NAXOS logo is located in the top left corner. It consists of the word "NAXOS" in a white, serif font, centered within a blue square. Above the text are three stylized white columns, and below it are three horizontal lines.

# CATALAN CELLO WORKS

Casals • Cassadó • Mompou

The background of the entire cover is a photograph of a coastal landscape at sunset or sunrise. The sky is a mix of soft pinks, purples, and blues. In the foreground, there is a sandy beach. A large, dark rock formation dominates the middle ground, with a single, dark tree growing out of its peak. The ocean is visible in the distance, with some smaller rock formations in the water.

Dmitry Yablonsky, Cello  
Laia Martín, Piano

## Catalan Cello Works

**Pablo Casals (1876–1973) • Gaspar Cassadó (1897–1966) • Federico Mompou (1893–1987)**

The cello was a vital part of Catalan musical expression in the first half of the 20th century. In return, two Catalan cellist-composers became crucial to the development of the instrument and its performance practice. Pau Casals (known predominantly under his Spanish name Pablo Casals) was a revolutionary force, transforming cello technique and with it the expressive capabilities of the instrument. He was also responsible for the reintroduction of J.S. Bach into the cello repertoire, discovering the six *Suites for Solo Cello* in a Barcelona music shop around 1890 and elevating them to the top of the canon.

Soon after his discovery of the Bach suites, the composer Isaac Albéniz heard Casals playing and introduced him to the Queen Regent of Spain, María Cristina. Casals began living under her patronage, writing a *String Quartet* and the *Messe 'De Gloria'*. The *Pastoral* of 1893 was his first major published work for cello and piano, at the age of 16. An attractive piece, it has the profile of a Schumann *Fantasiestück*. Beginning in pensive mood, the piano quotes a popular Catalan theme, the anchor of the piece – before an animated central section gives the cello a broad, legato melody against flowing piano. The main theme then returns with touching simplicity, back in the home key of A minor.

In 1904 Casals was introduced to Gaspar Cassadó, a promising cellist making an early public concert appearance at the age of nine. Instantly impressed, Casals offered to take the youngster on as a student. Securing a grant from the Municipality of Barcelona, Cassadó joined his new teacher in Paris, where he also took lessons in composition from Maurice Ravel and Manuel de Falla.

Both cellists wrote expressive original pieces for their instrument with melodic references to their heritage, as well as introducing a large number of highly proficient transcriptions. Despite his obvious promise as a composer with a particular empathy for the cello, Casals gravitated towards the disciplines of performer and teacher. In these roles he brought the instrument into the 20th century with renewed potential as a solo instrument, providing opportunities that composers were quick to exploit.

One of those composers was Cassadó himself, writing his own *Cello Concerto* and a body of chamber works featuring the instrument, not to mention transcriptions thought to number around 80. These included versions for cello of Mozart's *Horn Concerto No. 3 in E flat major, K. 447*, Weber's *Clarinet Concerto No. 2 in E flat major, Op. 74* and an adventurous concerto built from nine of Tchaikovsky's piano pieces *Op. 72*. With these works he was drawing on the example of Franz Liszt, exploring the full potential of the cello.

Like Liszt, Cassadó had both the ability and inspiration to write programmatically for his principal instrument. *Lamento de Boabdil* is an intense example of this process, being a musical depiction of the lament of the exiled Muhammad XII, the last Moorish ruler of Granada who went by the nickname of Boabdil. Muhammad ruled from 1482 until 1492, when Granada fell to the Catholic Kings. The passionate cello part captures the moment where Boabdil looks back at the conquered city, lamenting his fate amid his mother's stinging criticism of his character.

Both Cassadó and Casals were good friends with Federico Mompou, the Barcelona-born composer known primarily for his distinctive and often contemplative piano writing. Cassadó was able to show the suitability of his music for cello and piano, converting the composer's *Cançons i danses No. 1* into a warm-hearted recital piece in 1939. Mompou himself wrote original music for the duo combination, with his most substantial piece, *El pont* ('The Bridge') published in 1977 as a centenary tribute to Casals. Originating as a piano piece in 1947, *El pont* was expanded by the composer, becoming a substantial utterance in several sections. The most striking of these finds the cello in an outpouring of emotion in the higher register, after which the piece retreats to a thoughtful close.

**Ben Hogwood**

## Laia Martín



Spanish pianist Laia Martín has completed studies in various areas of music including a PhD in Music Performance at the Aveiro University, a Bachelor's degree in piano at the Liceu Conservatory of Music, a Master in Musical Performance degree at the Conservatory F. Venezzè in Rovigo, and a Master in Music Research degree at the Valencia International University. She performed her first recital for Jeunesses Musicales Spain and since then has performed at venues in Spain, Germany, Italy, France, Andorra, Portugal, Greece and Israel. She is a piano teacher at the Issi Fabra Music School and at the Pirineus Music Conservatory, and a music history teacher at the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya. She is the co-director of the Puigcerdà Music Festival and of the Musical Nights of Santa Cecilia with Dmitry Yablonsky and Janna Gandelman, co-director of the Oxana Yablonskaya Piano Institute with Oxana Yablonskaya, and the director of the Conference on Artistic Research in Music of the Pyrenees.

## Dmitry Yablonsky



Born in Moscow, GRAMMY Award-nominated cellist and conductor Dmitry Yablonsky's career has taken him to Carnegie Hall, Teatro alla Scala and Théâtre Mogador, among other such celebrated venues. As a conductor he has worked with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra, Orquesta Filarmónica de la UNAM, Mexico, and the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra. In 2010 he received the Diploma of Honorary Academician at the Independent Academy of Liberal Arts at the Russian Academy of Sciences. He has transcribed and edited works for cello which have been published by the International Music Company and Dover Publications. In 2008 Naxos released his recording of Popper's *Forty Études* for solo cello (8.557718–19) to critical acclaim. He is a professor at the Buchmann-Mehta School of Music at Tel Aviv University and has served as artistic director of the Wandering Stars Music Festival in Israel since 2019. Yablonsky is currently music director of Kyiv Virtuosi. He plays two cellos, a Joseph Guarnerius, filius Andrea and a Matteo Goffriller.

[www.dmitryablonsky.com](http://www.dmitryablonsky.com)

The cello was a vital part of Catalan musical expression in the first half of the 20th century. Pablo Casals as composer and cello virtuoso was its revolutionary force, and his student Gaspar Cassadó joined him in writing expressive original works with a strong sense of national heritage. Casals' touching *Pastoral* was his first major published work, while Cassadó's *Lamento de Boabdil* is a musical depiction of the last Moorish ruler of Granada's exile. With its striking outpouring of emotion, Mompou's *El pont* is a tribute to Casals, and is his most substantial piece for cello and piano. The album *Catalan Cello Works*, featuring more works by Casals, Cassadó and Mompou as well as pieces by Casablanças and Granados, is available on 8.579097.



## CATALAN CELLO WORKS

**Pablo Casals (1876–1973)**

**1 Pastoral (1893) 8:29**

**Gaspar Cassadó (1897–1966)**

**2 Lamento de Boabdil (1931) 2:52**

**Federico Mompou (1893–1987)**

**3 El pont (1976) (version for cello and piano) 7:58**

**Dmitry Yablonsky, Cello**

**Laia Martín, Piano**

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