

The NAXOS logo is located in the top left corner, featuring the word "NAXOS" in white capital letters on a blue rectangular background. Above the text is a stylized white architectural element resembling a classical pediment with columns.

NAXOS

# CATALAN CELLO WORKS

Casablanças • Casals • Cassadó • Granados • Mompou

The background of the entire cover is a photograph of a coastal landscape. In the center, a large, craggy rock formation rises from a pebbly beach. A single, well-developed tree stands on the peak of this rock. The sky is filled with soft, layered clouds, and the horizon shows a hint of a sunset or sunrise with a warm glow. The water in the foreground is calm and reflects the light from the sky.

Dmitry Yablonsky, Cello  
Laia Martín, Piano

|           |   |                      |
|-----------|---|----------------------|
| <b>1</b>  | <b>Gaspar Cassadó (1897–1966)</b><br><b>Requiebros (1931)</b>   | <b>4:46</b>          |
| <b>2</b>  | <b>Enrique Granados (1867–1916)</b><br><b>Madrigal in A minor (1915)</b>  | <b>6:07</b>          |
| <b>3</b>  | <b>Suite sobre cantos gallegos</b><br><b>II. Danza gallega (version for cello and piano) (1899)</b>   | <b>5:32</b>          |
| <b>4</b>  | <b>Pablo Casals (1876–1973)</b><br><b>Romanza for Cello and Piano (1899)</b>  | <b>5:50</b>          |
| <b>5</b>  | <b>Enrique Granados</b><br><b>Goyescas, Book I – IV. Quejas o la maja y el ruiseñor (1911)</b><br>(arr. Frank Marshall [1883–1959])                           | <b>7:11</b>          |
| <b>6</b>  | <b>Gaspar Cassadó</b><br><b>Sonata nello stile antico spagnolo (1925)</b><br>I. Introduzione e allegro  | <b>12:53</b><br>3:56 |
| <b>7</b>  | II. Grave   | 4:07                 |
| <b>8</b>  | III. Danza con variazioni   | 4:47                 |
| <b>9</b>  | <b>Benet Casablanca (b. 1956)</b><br><b>Cant per a Frederic Mompou ‘Remembrancha’ (1993)</b>  | <b>1:41</b>          |
| <b>10</b> | <b>Federico Mompou (1893–1987)</b><br><b>Cançons i danses: No. 1. La Filla del carmesí –<br/>Danse de Castellterçol (1918)</b><br>(arr. Gaspar Cassadó, 1924) | <b>3:13</b>          |
| <b>11</b> | <b>Pablo Casals</b><br><b>Rêverie (1896)</b>  | <b>4:53</b>          |
| <b>12</b> | <b>Full d’album (1897)</b>  | <b>4:09</b>          |
| <b>13</b> | <b>Enrique Granados</b><br><b>Intermezzo, from the opera Goyescas (1915)</b><br>(arr. Gaspar Cassadó)   | <b>4:00</b>          |

**Catalan Cello Works: Benet Casablanca (b. 1956) · Pablo Casals (1876–1973)**

**Gaspar Cassadó (1897–1966) · Enrique Granados (1867–1916) · 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 their rightful place at the top of the canon.

Around 15 years later 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.

This collection of works for cello and piano begins with a work connecting the two friends. Cassadó's passionate *Requiebro* ('Compliments') was written in 1931 and dedicated to his teacher. With highly ornamented melodies shared between cello and piano, its expansive phrasing and powerful accompaniment have made it a popular encore piece.

The Catalan composer and concert pianist Enrique Granados is remembered principally for his contributions to the piano repertoire, but he also wrote skilfully for cello. The soulful *Madrigal in A minor* is a late work, dating from 1915 – the year before the tragic death of the composer and his wife when the boat they were on was torpedoed by a German U-Boat in the English Channel. Another Casals dedication, the *Madrigal* has a thoughtful disposition, bringing out the mellow tones of the cello's middle strings before a powerful statement in the higher register.

The piece ends in the major key – which is also where we find *Danza gallega*, the second movement of the substantial but little-known *Suite sobre cantos gallegos* ('Suite on Galician Songs'), a four-movement work for orchestra completed in 1899. Here Granados leans on local folk motifs and dance rhythms to evoke scenes and characteristics of Galicia. This cello and piano arrangement from the composer himself gives the piano a drone figure over which the attractive cello melodies can flourish.

Also in 1899, Pablo Casals published a short *Romanza* for cello and piano in Barcelona. This airy piece has a comparable profile and mood to an excerpt from Schumann's *Fantasiestücke*, while its central section is a thoughtful piano solo.

Granados's piano music transcribes easily for the cello, the melodies sitting within easy reach of the instrument's range. An arrangement by the composer's pupil Frank Marshall of *Quejas o la maja y el ruiseñor* ('The Maiden and the Nightingale'), from the influential collection *Goyescas*, is illustrative of this. The cello is ideally suited for its portrayal of the bird towards the end of the piece.

Both Casals and Cassadó displayed a keen awareness of the cello's heritage, writing music that recognises previous historical periods and their use of the instrument. Cassadó's three-movement *Sonata nello stile antico spagnolo*, completed in 1925, enjoys a range of influences, reaching back to the Baroque and Classical periods for melodic inspiration and clarity of form. At the same time, it enjoys the relative freedom composers such as Respighi and Kreisler could bring to their historically informed compositions, adding Romantic feeling and virtuosity to the musical content. Cassadó's first movement introduction has a regal air, the ideal foil for the perky *Allegro* that follows. The second movement *Grave* is rich in tone and elegiac in nature, the piano accompaniment tolling once per bar while the cello explores deeply felt utterances. The *Danza con variazioni* is initially polite, with a jovial theme in triple time, but gradually Cassadó introduces technical challenges and deeper expression. The bullish second variation, marked *Risolto*, contrasts with an elegiac third variation in the minor key, before an inspired pizzicato fourth variation introduces quiet grace (marked *pppp*) and light humour. This mood holds for the final variation and coda.

By contrast, the *Cant per a Frederic Mompou 'Rememrança'* by Benet Casablanca is a centenary celebration. It pays homage to the Catalan pianist-composer and friend of Cassadó through music that starts in the depths, climbing upwards to the cello's high register by way of glassy harmonics. The piano responds with similarly extreme intervals, the piece developing into a concentrated elegy. Mompou may have been known primarily for his distinctive and often contemplative piano writing, but Cassadó was once again able to show the suitability of his music for cello and piano, converting the composer's *Cançons i danses No. 1*, based on *La Filla del carmesí*, into a warm-hearted recital piece in 1924.

Casals' *Rêverie* was published in Barcelona in 1896 but has a distinctly French air. Casals made an arrangement for cello and piano of Fauré's early song *Après un rêve*, later giving the premiere of the orchestral version of the *Élégie in C minor, Op. 24* with the composer in 1901. This work has similarly long-breathed phrases and rich, added-note harmonies. *Full d'àlbum* dates from a year later and is a delightful fantasy piece in E flat major led by the cello.

The collection ends with another successful Cassadó transcription, this time of the *Intermezzo* from Tableau 1 of Granados's landmark opera *Goyescas*, written in 1915 with melodies taken from his famous piano suite of the same name. Once again, the melody is an ideal fit for the expressive qualities of the cello, saving the high register for a particularly intense central section.

**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. Venezze 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 superb transcriptions and expressive original works with a strong sense of tradition and national melodic flavour. Casablanças' *Cant per a Frederic Mompou 'Rememrança'* pays homage to another great friend and colleague, while Enrique Granados's soulful *Madrigal* is accompanied by delectable arrangements of piano works with cello such as the *Goyescas*. A digital single featuring more pieces by Casals, Cassadó and Mompou is available on 9.70354.



Diputació de Girona

## CATALAN CELLO WORKS

- |     |   |       |
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\*WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING

**Dmitry Yablonsky, Cello • Laia Martín, Piano**

A detailed track list can be found inside the booklet.

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