

**MANUEL MARÍA PONCE**  
**AGUSTÍN BARRIOS MANGORÉ**  
**FEDERICO MOMPOU**

## Manuel María Ponce Cuéllar (8 December 1882 - 24 April 1948)

was a Mexican composer and the founder of Mexican musical nationalism, often incorporating the melodies of harmonized folksongs into his music.

Heitor Villa-Lobos, who met Ponce in Paris in the 1920s, wrote: *"It gave me great joy to learn that in that distant part of my continent there was another artist who was arming himself with the resources of the folklore of his people in the struggle for the future musical independence of his country."*

Widely travelled - he studied in Europe, at first in Bologna and then, between 1925 and 1933, as a pupil of Paul Dukas in Paris - Ponce assimilated a wide range of styles and influences, including European Romanticism, indigenous idioms and a more advanced harmonic language.

Ponce's guitar music is a core part of the instrument's repertory, and many of these works were dedicated to his long-time friend and guitar virtuoso Andrés Segovia.

Raphaëlla Smits about this Homage to Weiss:

*"I got this score during my time as a student in Alicante. José Tomas, being the assistant for decades to maestro Segovia, passed this score onto his students, and advised us to learn this beautiful piece. In the end, I did too, but only some forty years later."*



*From the suite, I selected the prelude, allemande, sarabande and gigue. Those movements give a great impression of the knowledge of Ponce and his sympathy for the so-called 'old music'.*

*Segovia had programmed the piece for many years. Ponce mastered the ability to write in a very baroque way, but still it was very much in the spirit of the 20th century. Some elements wouldn't be possible at all in the Baroque, but this is exactly what grabbed my attention and gave me the enthusiasm to finally play it - a tribute to one of my very favorite music genres: the Baroque.*

*Ponce's homages to Sor, to Schubert, to Weiss etcetera were examples of the influence of Andres Segovia. Ponce has written more wonderful scores for the classical guitar, sometimes in styles that were not available for our instrument in the first half of the 20th century."*

## **Agustín Barrios Mangoré** (5 May 1885 - 7 August 1944)

was a Paraguayan virtuoso classical guitarist and composer, largely regarded as one of the greatest performers and most prolific composers for the guitar. His music (over 300 compositions) remained undiscovered for over three decades after his death.

At the age of eighteen, he made his debut at the National theatre in the capital Asuncion, where he mingled with a group of intellectuals and artists. In 1910 he moved to Buenos Aires where he met the famous tango singer Carlos Gardel. There he became one of the first guitarists who made vinyl recordings.

While recovering from a serious illness, his first editions were published. He was called the 'Paganini of the Guitar' and praised by Villa-Lobos as unsurpassable. He met several times with maestro Andres Segovia who expressed his admiration, but who later refused to play his music.

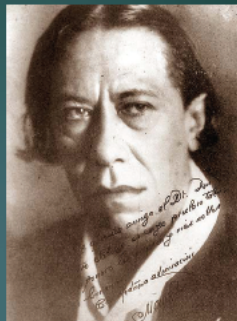
At the age of 40, Barrios decided to leave Paraguay for good. Five years later he transformed himself as 'Chief Nitsuga Mangoré from the jungle of Paraguay', most likely for marketing reasons. He travelled successfully through French Guyana, Trinidad, Venezuela, Costa Rica, San Salvador and Honduras. Later he visited Mexico, where the Paraguayan ambassador convinced him to drop his unconventional attire and also got him an official diplomatic passport allowing him to travel freely. In September 1934 he came to Belgium, met Igor Stravinsky, and gave a prestigious concert at the Brussels Conservatory, with the royal family present. After almost one year in Germany without performing, he returned to Brussels to play for the high society. Next, he was able to meet Regino Sainz de la Maza and Federico Garcia Lorca. Following his contact with the Spanish royal family, he received a Morant guitar from the Queen as a present.

With World War II about to start, Barrios moved back to Venezuela and returned to touring in South America, performing and composing. He died in San Salvador. In execution of his last will, his sketches and latest manuscripts regrettably were burned.

Raphaella Smits about the selected pieces:

*"Preludio in c-menor n°3 (San Salvador 1940) and la-menor (dedicated to his friend and benefactor Salazar, Costa Rica) are both small but beautiful creations. In the forties, Barrios being in a melancholically and even depressive mood, he used the music as a reflection of his mind.*

*The Leyenda Guarani, originally with four movements, is one of the lesser known pieces, so far.*



*Some years ago Richard Long gave me a collection of music by Barrios (Tuscan Publications), including this piece.*

*It must be said that the score had been completed for this printing, as parts of it were lost. I have taken the liberty to use this score as a base, as an inspiration, to make it a piece that now will remain one of my favorites, as it does obviously to the public as well. It's a sincere ode to the great Barrios."*

**Federico Mompou** (16 April 1893 - 30 June 1987) was a Catalan pianist. Too shy for a solo career, he devoted his life to composing. The essential objective for Mompou was to acquire *"the greatest expressive force with maximum simplicity and economy of means, as well as a return to primitivism in order to present the musical idea naked and pure"*.

Federico Mompou without a doubt is the most representative composer of Catalan music. Born in the same year as the painter Joan Miró and the great Catalan poet Carles Riba, the name of Mompou is associated with the Catalan renaissance movement that has given rise to such significant figures as Antonio Gaudí, Salvador Dalí and Pablo Casals. However, Mompou refuses to be a folklorist. His principal influences were connected to Francis Poulenc, Erik Satie, Gabriel Fauré, Claude Debussy and Maurice Ravel.

Mompou also rejected the appellation of a composer. *"I have always protested when I am called a composer, I am not a composer; I do not wish to be a composer. I believe, quite simply, that I am music, which is not made by me, for I always have the feeling that it comes into me from outside. Yo no pens la music, només la transmeto."*

Mompou was deeply committed to the bliss of solitude. The French philosopher and musicologist Vladimir Jankélévitch confirmed: *"Mompou's desire in seeking this solitude in sound, is to reach the unattainable point where music becomes the very voice of silence, where silence itself becomes music. Silent music, sonorous solitude."*

Raphaella Smits about the 'Suite Compostelana': *"Santiago de Compostela was an important meeting place for many world-class musicians, among them, the legendary Andrés Segovia. Every summer they came together to make music and give master classes. In the 70s and 80s, José Tomás assisted in Segovia's class. There, I was introduced to the music of Mompou, for voice, piano and guitar."*

*This six-part Suite Compostelana, written in 1962 for Segovia, contains the traditional Spanish idiom as well as the 20th century harmonic sensitivity. The starting point for this recording is not the Segovia version, but the manuscript of Mompou himself, which I arranged for 8-string guitar.*

*Mompou is best known as a miniaturist: short, relatively improvisational music often described as delicate or intimate. He was fond of obstinate figures, bell imitations (a memory of his father playing bells), and a kind of incantatory meditative sound (the use of Catalan folk sources). For Mompou, sonority is not a sound in itself. Sonority arises from an interval, a harmony. Sonority then transcends the instrument, and Mompou achieves his own voice."*

