

THE ART OF NATI MISTRAL • Nati Mistral (voc); Various Artists • EMEC E-115/116
(2 CDs: 145:48)

GUILLOT *Me muero, me muero.* **SEGURA** *Envidia.* **ITURBE** *Yo lo comprendo.*
WASSERMAN *Un sueño imposible.* **C. GRANDA** *Fina estampa. Amarraditos. Gracia. Limeña. La flor de la canela. Callecita encendida. Caballo de paso.* **GARDEL** *Melodía de arrabal.* **YUPANKI** *Piedra y camino. Guitarra, dímelo tú.* **GUARANÍ** *Amar amando.* **J. JIMÉNEZ** *Amanecí en tus brazos.* **P. JIMÉNEZ** *Paisaje de Catamarca.*
SEQUIRA/FONESCA/FERREIRA *Una casa portuguesa.* **LOGAN** *Un son para Manguena. Mi perro y yo.* **AGUIRRE** *Río manso. Río rebelde.* **MAGUIÑA** *Viva el Perú y sereno.*
TORREALBA *Campesina.* **P. GALINDO** *La malagueña.* **VILLAMIL** *Llamarada.*
RODRÍGUEZ *Quien te amaba ya se va.* **MARÍN** *Lamento borincano.* **DALMAR** *Amor se escribe con llanto.* **MORENO TORROBA** *Luisa Fernanda: El soldadito. La Caramba.*
LUNA *El niño judío: De España vengo.* **GILES** *Soy de Aragón.* **CHUECA** *Los Barquilleros.* **BARBIERI/BRÉTON** *La Paloma: Medley.* **PIAZZOLLA** *Balada para un loco.* **DICENTA (HUJO)** *Leonor de Aquitania. Amar sin poderlo decir.* **GARCÍA LORCA** *Romance de la Luna.* **DE CASTRO** *Negra sombra.* **DE LÉON** *La profecía.*

This double CD set was issued in 2013 to commemorate the 85th birthday of the noted Spanish artist Nati Mistral. Her long acting career in both Spain and Latin America has primarily involved theatre—she has played with acclaim in Shakespeare and Lorca, for example—but she is equally known for her singing. Hers was a rich, hard-edged mezzo voice, very much in the flamenco tradition. With this and her fast vibrato, not to mention her desire to invest every phrase with as much dramatic point as possible, Mistral may be regarded as the Spanish equivalent of Edith Piaf. Her repertoire incorporates traditional Spanish and Latin American songs, zarzuela arias, and pop—bearing in mind that traditional music had a strong influence on Spanish pop music of the 20th century, as jazz did in the United States.

Mistral may be familiar to *Fanfare* readers through her recordings of Falla's *El Amor Brujo*. The three song settings in that work are perfectly suited to her vocal range; indeed, she is the real thing, while great singers such as Leontyne Price (in her recording with Reiner) simply remain deft imitators. Mistral recorded *El Amor Brujo* with Frühbeck de Burgos and the New Philharmonia Orchestra in 1967 (Decca), and with Mata and the LSO in 1976 (RCA). Due to her fiery contribution, the latter performance has always been my favorite. She also had a major success in the 1960s in the role of Aldonza (Dulcinea) in Dale Wasserman's musical *El Hombre de la Mancha* (*Man of la Mancha*) in Spain and Mexico. Her voice was nothing like that of Joan Diener who created the role on Broadway, in the West End, and in Paris (with Jacques Brel as Don Quixote!): Diener combined a Broadway belt with a dramatic soprano top. Mistral's completely different take, transposed down a key or three, is so authentic however that it works brilliantly, emphasizing an unexpected earthiness in the score. She may be heard in the role on the original Mexican cast recording, intermittently available on an MCA disc. On the first of the two discs in this new set we get her rendition of *The Impossible Dream*, although her character does not sing it in the show. (Dulcinea merely quotes a few bars of it in the Don's death scene at the end.)

This compilation brings together recordings Mistral made in her prime. It is very short on detail—the booklet consists entirely of photographs of the artist—but I would guess most of these tracks come from the 1960s and 1970s. Those on the first CD are usually accompanied by small, guitar-dominated ensembles. (No information is given about the other musicians.) The repertoire is basically trad/pop, and I must confess I know little about it. The greatest number of songs were composed by a well-known Peruvian singer, Chabuca Granda (1920-1983); her most famous song *La flor de la canela* (*The Cinnamon Flower*) is included. Mistral

is joined by an orchestra through most of the second CD where she sings excerpts from zarzuelas. A few familiar names crop up here, such as Federico Moreno Torroba, Federico Chueca and Tomás Bréton, and Mistral also gives us Pablo Luna's popular *De España vengo*, long associated with Montserrat Caballé and most recently recorded by Elína Garanča. Her singing of Lorca's *Romance de la Luna* is solemn, while the single tango on the album (Piazzolla's *Balada para un loco*) is aptly loco and quite over the top: Mistral channeling La Lupe, perhaps?

Sound quality varies. Some tracks, probably the earliest, produce a dull, covered sound, while most are bright and quite acceptable. The matter of sound quality is irrelevant, in any case. Fans of Nati Mistral will certainly know whether they want this extensive compilation. For others who are merely curious (as was yours truly), it provides an interesting excursion into exotic musical byways and a fine tribute to a compelling, individual vocalist. Unfortunately, no lyrics or translations are provided. **Phillip Scott**