



# Miguel Querol Gavaldá on His 70th Birthday

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MIGUEL QUEROL GAVALDÁ was born April 22, 1912, at Ulledecona in Tarragona province. Situated 20 km south of Tortosa, with a documented history ascending to 1222 or earlier, Ulledecona counted 7015 inhabitants in the 1910 census. Querol Gavaldá's family was a distinguished one that surrounded him from the earliest years with a propitious intellectual and cultural environment. After primary education in the Ulledecona municipal school, he studied for the *bachillerato* at a private academy where one of his teachers was the erudite priest and eminent musician José M. Mulet (well known in Ecuadorian annals as sometime chapelmaster of Quito Cathedral). P. Pascual Obiols, organist of Ulledecona parish church, gave him his first solfège lessons.

His next music rudiments teacher was the virtuous priest and excellent composer José María Peris, director of the Colegio de San José at Tortosa. In 1926 while studying rhetoric and poetry in San José colegio, he himself began writing poetry. That same year he entered the Benedictine monastery at Montserrat, famous throughout its long history for its nurturing of extraordinary composers and instrumentalists.

He remained ten years at Montserrat, studying humanities, philosophy, theology, and music with equal devotion. His first harmony teacher at the monastery was the chief organist, P. Ildefonso Pinell, who frequently played the youthful Querol's compositions. Querol, who at once showed his predilection for polyphonic music and the lied, organized a vocal quartet that sang not only numerous sixteenth-century polyphonic works, but also his own madrigals, songs, and his oratorio to his own text *L'hivern a Montserrat* ("Winter at Montserrat").

At Montserrat he continued writing original poetry. By age fifteen he had completed seven notebooks filled with his original poems. During a later spiritual crisis he destroyed six of these notebooks and would have destroyed the seventh, had not its stout leather binding prevented his doing so. In his poetry, whether early or late, Death preoccupies him. One notable poem running to three *jornadas* bears the title *La corda greu* ("The low string"). In it, Life and Soul converse on the ineluctable separation that Death imposes. In an ode dated July 29, 1927, the fifteen-year-old Querol contemplated life's brevity and vanity. Albeit religion and nature were the two strings on which his adolescent poetry harped, he added still other strings to his poetic lyre after 1939.

During the Spanish Civil War, he was held prisoner July 25 to October 9, 1936, on the ship *Río Segre* anchored in the port of Tarragona. He obtained his release in exchange for agreeing to direct gratis the municipal band and choral society at Ulledecona—then without money to pay directors. Next he transferred to Barcelona, where such important cultural leaders as Joan Lamote de Grignon (1872-1949; [see

*The New Grove Dictionary*, x, 415]) Charles Pi i Sunyer (1888-1971) took him under wing. He took lessons in counterpoint and composition with the first. The latter, who was Cultural Chief of the Generalitat de Catalunya from November 1937 to his exile in France at the close of the Civil War, gave him a document identifying him as a musician-poet in the service of the propaganda commissariat of the Generalitat de Catalunya. At the close of 1938 he was sent to the war front as hospital orderly. Providentially, he escaped various bombardments and attacks, unharmed.

At close of the war he spent six months as precentor in San Gil parish at Saragossa, whence he returned to Ulldecona to direct the municipal band and the parish choir. In order to support himself, he obtained an official permit to open in his own house a Colegio Querol preparing pupils for the *bachillerato*. In 1943-1944 he taught philosophy and Greek at Saragossa. In 1945 he obtained at Barcelona the *licenciatura* and in 1948 at Madrid University the doctorate in philosophy with a thesis on *La Escuela Estética Catalana contemporánea* (Madrid: Instituto "Diego Velázquez," CSIC, 1953; xiv + 349 pp.; preface by Dr. José Camón Aznar).

The decade 1945 to 1955 saw the composition of his best madrigals and large vocal works. Performances by the Cuarteto Philharmonia culminated in the premiere of his 25-minute psalm for choir and orchestra *In exitu Israel de Aegipto* (1952), repeated four times in the year of composition. His *Cant Espiritual*, a choral poem written between 1947 and 1951, was premiered in the latter year over RTV of Brussels. *Sero te amavi* for four voices and organ (1954) was premiered at Sage Chapel, Cornell University. More than half his compositions have been performed, some for the first time at points as distant as Berlin, Lisbon, and Istanbul.

On October 3, 1946, Higinio Anglés (with the assent of Jorge Rubio, Tomás Carreras Artau, and José Subirá) appointed him collaborator and secretary of the Spanish Institute of Musicology of the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas. Henceforth musicology joined composition to become his chief occupations (without, however, his abandoning humanities and philosophy). During Anglés's quarter-century residence at Rome, Querol ran the day-by-day affairs of the Institute—although always being counseled by Anglés on more important matters. From 1970 to his own retirement, Querol himself directed the Institute—with the brilliant results already well known to all Spanish music scholars.

From 1971 to 1979 he taught musical paleography in the Curso Manuel de Falla of the International Festival of Music and Dance at Granada, thereby stimulating a whole new generation of avid young Spanish musicologists. In November of 1971 (with Carlos Chávez, Rodolfo Halffter, and Blas Galindo as witnesses) he married Alicia Muñiz Hernández, then teaching harmony and musical analysis at the National Autonomous University of Mexico. From then on she became his most efficient and enthusiastic collaborator.

In the *New Grove Dictionary* article on him (xv, 504-505), José López-Caló provided a list of 29 writings and eleven editions published by Querol Gavaldá between 1947 and 1976. The music lexicon that best itemizes and dates his prolific compositional output between 1936 and 1958 is *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, x (1962), 1812. The article on Querol Gavaldá in the Catalonian *Diccionari Biogràfic* (Barcelona: Albertí, 1966-1970), iv, 18, carried his list of compositions forward from 1934 to 1966. A forthcoming issue of *Inter-American Music Review* will include a more complete bibliography of Querol Gavaldá's writings, editions, and compositions than has been hitherto attempted in any reference work.