

Serrat

50 Years of Songs
02.06 – 13.09.2015

SERRAT



Generalitat de Catalunya
Departament de Cultura

SANTAMÒNICA

Serrat: 50 Years of Songs reflected not only through music, but also objects, images, instruments, records, literature, memories, fragments of our most recent history: centring around nine important moments in relation to his work and life.



Serrat: 50 years of Songs

It all started on 18 February 1965, at the Toresky Studio, Ràdio Barcelona. That morning, Salvador Escamilla presented a young man from Poble Sec that had written some songs in Catalan. A few weeks later, the yet to be discovered Joan Manuel Serrat made his first record, joined Els Setzes Jutges and started to give his first public concerts.

However, the story began a little before that, on 27 December 1943. That day, Josep and Ángeles decided to call their son Joan Manuel. He was a bright boy who studied agriculture while he learned to play the guitar. He was influenced by French *chansons*, copla, zarzuela, and tango. This inspired his first song, *Ella em Deixa*, which signified the beginning of one of the most important artistic careers of the 20th century.

18 February 1965.
First performance in
the Toresky Studio,
Radio Barcelona.



Poster from one of the first performances in the Palau de la Música, Barcelona, 1968.

First advertising poster from Edisga Records, 1966. Poster designed by Llimós, from a tour in Mallorca with Joan Ramon and Maria del Mar Bonet, 1967.



A career that started out as a proper career. Serrat did not become a member of Els Setze Jutges to have a hobby to complement a “more serious” job. He wanted to be a singer and he was ready to achieve this objective. Serrat was the first member of Els Setzes Jutges to become a professional and the only one from the initial thirteen members that has had a continuous career in music, which has led to him celebrating fifty years in the profession. *Ella em Deixa* was followed by other songs that left an indelible mark on the Catalan music scene. *Cançó de Matinada* was a number one hit all over Spain –an unimaginable feat up until then.

The next logical step was to sing in Spanish, in spite of opposition from his colleagues, and go on to the Eurovision Festival, but that was precisely where things started to get complicated. Serrat refused to participate but recorded the song in various languages. His audience was not just Catalonia or Spain, his audience was the whole world and he was determined to prove it.

While Latin America welcomed him with open arms, censorship in Franco’s Spain took its toll on some of his songs, even more so after his statements against the last executions by firing squad inflicted by the regime. This meant a year of exile, an exultant return and Serrat becoming one of the icons of the Transition.

Since then Serrat has lived between the Iberian Peninsula and America (it is difficult to



From the charming closeness of the Palau de la Música Catalana to the gigantic stages in sports stadiums, Serrat's relationship with his audience has always been an intimate one.

Photography:

© Pep Puvill

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determine which side of the Atlantic loves and respects him more) and has become a personality that people easily bond over. His songs are popular in every sense of the word, as they are part of a collective memory, regardless of who wrote them.

When you listen to him you understand that it is no coincidence (this messy sentence belongs to him) that he has been saying it has been twenty years since he was twenty for more than twenty years. And the years that are still to come.

Miquel Jurado
Co-Commissioner of the exhibition

Una guitarra

1965

**February 18,
1965:
it all begins**

Photography:
© Pep Puvill

- "...Now, how to go about it..? Hey, I don't know anybody in the music scene...

But Jordi, always persistent, was convinced that I had a certain potential and insisted:

- We could go see Escamilla at Radio Barcelona... They have a morning programme where they present new people, even singing in Catalan. Don't freak out. You like doing it, right? You have a knack for it, trust me. Think about the success, the money, the prospect of a more satisfactory sex life.

You have to admit that Jordi Romeva presented some very sound and appealing arguments."

You bet they were. On February 18, 1965, Joan Manuel Serrat sang before Salvador Escamilla in the small office that the popular Radio Barcelona presenter used to try out new potential talents.

"I played my entire repertoire. Starting with El Mocador, followed by Ella em Deixa, La Mort del Avi and, lastly, Una Guitarra. The next morning I sang on the radio. My mother told all the neighbours. That is more or less how everything started."

Salvador Escamilla recommended him to the Edigsa record label, while Els Setze Jutges let him join their group. He became the thirteenth "Jutge" and on May first of that same year he made his debut, presented by Escamilla himself, on the stage of L'Avenç, in Esplugues de Llobregat, accompanied by two other "Jutges." An EP with his first four compositions, *Joan Manuel Serrat Canta les Seves Cançons*, was released to the market.



La, la, la

1968

Bilingualism, Controversy, Commitment and Exile

Photography:
© Lecturas

In 1968, coinciding with the publication of his first single in Spanish, TVE (Spanish National Television) asked Serrat to participate in the still prestigious Eurovision Song Festival, with a song by the Dúo Dinámico: *La, La La*.

“What do the people at the top think about the possibility of singing in Catalan?”

[Juan José] Rosón gave me a fatherly smile and responded: — Serrat, what do you want to be, an international artist or a provincial artist?

The next day I presented my refusal in Paris, convinced that being deeply provincial was the only way for a person to become international.”

That year Massiel sang and won, but public opinion was divided; some accused Serrat of being a traitor for singing in Spanish, others for continuing to sing in Catalan, while others for not having gone to Eurovision...

After his declarations in 1975, openly criticising the Franco regime firing squads, he was forced into exile in Mexico. Aboard *La Gordita* - his bus painted with the four stripes - the *Latin American from Barcelona* and his musicians toured various South American countries for a year (some dictatorships prohibited his entrance), before deciding to return to Spain and run the risk of imprisonment. A deeply provincial Serrat transformed into an international figure began the tour “Serrat als Barris” throughout the four corners of his city.



BUS STOP

QUEUE OTHER SIDE
9
14
19
22
38
38
97

Mediterráneo

1971

Landscape

Photography:
© Lecturas

From the third floor of the Batlle Hotel in Calella de Palafrugell there is a view of the sea, you can hear the murmur of the waves breaking on the rocks and the sandy beaches, breath in its salty aroma. A landscape that, accompanied by the human warmth of the cosy bar across from the hotel, bread with tomato, friends... marked the inspiration of a young Serrat.

“What else can I do? I was born in the Mediterranean. The sea is with me, an intimate part of me like my fingers or eyes. I cannot be away from it for long. I can sense that I’m missing something. That scent of pitch emanating from a port, or the tracks left in the sand at dawn. Just some mice or some buzzard that stopped by there, or the tracks left by a seagull... All of these are things that are deep, deep down inside of me. The sea. Another is death. Friendship is another. And for me, the sea is the Mediterranean...”

The Mediterranean is not just a landscape, it is many landscapes and the interior sea that it shares with other coastal dwellers of the four points of the compass. It's no wonder that these feelings, sensations and images could take such deep root and that his album, *Mediterráneo*, released in 1971, turned out to be a tremendous success, obtaining not only the First Gold Record of his career, but also the first awarded for sales in Spain. Interior and exterior landscapes already present in the first songs, which resurface throughout his work.



A su aire

1974

The Audience, the People In 1974, TVE (National Television) lifted the ban following the *La, La, La* affair, and the special programme “A su Aire” was recorded in the L’Aliança Theatre in Poble Nou, the first audiovisual testimony to the close relationship of Serrat with his public.

Photography:
© DR

It is hard to find words that describe this relationship, as close and intimate in Poble Sec as in The Rex in Buenos Aires or in Chile at the Festival Viña del Mar.

New York’s Lincoln Centre witnessed a particularly moving moment: Serrat lost his voice at the beginning of the concert, but the audience wouldn’t let him leave the stage; they sang all the songs while Serrat watched on, overcome with emotion. The next day the critic from the New York Times couldn’t believe what had happened: “He must be an amazing singer, although we were not able to see for ourselves.”

The list of important concerts throughout Serrat’s long professional career is immense: from concerts before some 50 people in halls with a special charm such as the Jamboree in Plaza Real, to those of 200,000 in the Buenos Aires Plaza Del Congreso (establishing a Guinness World Record), or emotion-packed returns, such as that experienced in the Santiago de Chile Stadium, after an absence of seventeen years of being banned by the dictatorship.







Material sensible

1984

**Personal,
Intimate
corner**

Photography:
© Antonio Espejo

**(Now that I'm twenty,
now that I still have strength,
and I don't have a lifeless soul
and I feel my blood boil.)
(1966)**

In 1984, twenty years had passed since Serrat was twenty, and he was still going strong. He probably already had that strength and felt his blood boil the very day he was born in the Clínica de la Alianza, or when he was baptised in the Church of Santa Mónica. Many things have happened since that baptism, some good things and some things that are not so good, as well as some bad, happy and sad things. Things that can be reflected on magazine covers half-way around the world, or in seemingly innocent comics, sticker albums, dog-eared song books or all the posters that reflect the relentless passage of time. Intimate moments, ranging from the birth of his children to his encounters with other prestigious cultural and social figures.

“Perhaps I am not an optimist, but I am a person who for nothing in the world wants to lose that wonderful gift I was given when I was born, that is, hope and the absolute necessity of taking one step after another, which makes living necessary. Live to live, because that is the only thing worth living for...”

Material Sensible, highly sensitive material.



Barcelona

i jo

1989

The Lost City

Photography:
© Martí E.
Berenguer

It would be impossible to imagine Serrat totally separate from the city of Barcelona. In 1989, the song *Barcelona i Jo*, clearly reflects this. Its streets, its plazas, its shops, its bars and, above all, the people of Barcelona, have formed part of his songs from the very start. Few artists have traversed the city's cobblestones in their works as much as Serrat. A city of memories and sensations that can be reflected explicitly or simply reflected in voluntarily subjective impressions or in references to hidden corners of the city.

"This city has all of my childhood hidden inside it; it possesses all of the memories of my life. But when any city grows, it also becomes less intelligent. It gets more and more difficult to live in it and with it. But it is my city, and the things that I love are here. Also, there is not just one Barcelona. Every corner is a city, every spot is a city."

A love for the city which, beyond his songs, is reflected in endless daily acts. He has received awards from the City Council, the Municipal Police, the florists of La Rambla and his street's neighbourhood association.

"Serrat the poet is associated with a sentiment, a theme, a language that is incomprehensible if we do not start from the coordinates of the neighbourhood culture. Serrat, at his best, sings based on a philosophy of life formed by the parallel ramps by which Poble Sec scales Montjuic. His best songs are those which contain an interpretation of popular philosophy, including an area with borders known as the "Barrio" (neighbourhood)."

Manolo Vázquez Montalbán



Los fantasmas del Roxy

1991

Radio, Films

Photography:
© Jordi Socias

Everything started in a radio studio but, in fact, everything had begun much earlier, through the radio that was permanently turned on in his home. And he returned to the radio as a star in 1991, directing and presenting the daily programme “La Radio con Botas” on the RNE national radio channel. This was an initiative aimed at perusing the most significant historic and cultural events, year by year, with a profusion of audio files.

“We do not want to look at history through a magnifying glass, but rather by using our sense of hearing, smell... drawing on all those sensations capable of unleashing collective memory. It is a programme that advocates memory versus chronology.”

In addition to radio, films also occupy a special place in the life of Serrat. In 1968, under the direction of Antoni Ribas, he filmed *Palabras de Amor* (Words of Love) (initially with the same name as the novel that inspired it: *Tren de Madrugada* (Train at Dawn)). This was followed by *La Larga Agonía de los Peces Fuera del Agua* (The Long Agony of Fish out of Water) by Francesc Rovira Beleta in 1970 and *Mi Profesora Particular* (My Private Teacher) by Jaime Camino in 1976. Serrat would not repeat the experience, with the exception of a short but intense and unforgettable participation in *La Ciutat Cremada* (The Burnt City) — also by Ribas— in 1976.

Recently Serrat wrote: *“I also succumbed to the temptation of a career in film, although I admit that I put little effort into it and I truly believe that my greatest contribution to the progress of cinema was my abandoning it.”* The song *Los Fantasmas del Roxy* evidences his passion for the double sessions of his childhood cinemas.



Kubala

1998

A Ball and Bicycle... first loves

Photography:
© Horacio Seguí

The night of November 28, 1998, celebrating Barça's centenary, Serrat sang the club's anthem in the middle of the stadium and 100,000 voices joined him in a makeshift chorus.

Serrat has stated on more than one occasion that he was born with the blue and red Barça colours and that it was a privilege to have been able to play as a centre forward – and even as goalkeeper – with the club's veterans, with the historic names that marked his childhood and that of many other Catalans and non Catalans.

Passion and devotion for football, in Barcelona and in other South American countries as well. For Serrat, being a fan of Boca Juniors is like being a fan of Barça and vice versa.

“Kubala was my great idol since I was a child, since I played soccer in the street. My Christmas present from the Three Kings was a shirt with the Barça colours (obviously not the official one) and my mother used the sewing machine to sew on the number 8. Later on I had the good fortune to meet Kubala, to discover the profound humanity locked in the heart of a child that had never completely grown up. A humanity comparable only to his football skills.”

But football was not his only devotion or passion: *“Bicycles were my first love. The first thing I ever fell in love with was a bike.”* That may be why, when he became a sports commentator, broadcasting the 1984 Tour de France for SER, the radio channel presented him as “the bike fan with the best singing voice.”



Hijo de la luz y de la sombra

2009

Poet of Poets

Photography:
© Archivo JMS

Serrat, poetry reader. Serrat, tireless reader of poetry. It was almost inevitable that poetry would find its way into his songs in a natural manner, without pretensions or triviality.

It is not by chance that the first was Antonio Machado, the poet of the Spanish Republic who fled the Franco regime, the poet of the losing side. Next came Miguel Hernández, another poet from the times of unpaved streets and horizons seemingly barren of hope. They were followed by Joan Salvat-Papasseit, Rafael Alberti, León Felipe, Joan Vergés, Ernesto Cardenal, Josep Palau Fabre, Josep Vicenç Foix, Josep Carner, Eduardo Galeano, Luis Cernuda, Luis García Montero, Mario Benedetti and Federico García Lorca.

It is also not a coincidence that the largest audiovisual project taken on by Serrat in his career focused on the work of the poet from Orihuela: Miguel Hernández. When he published the album *Hijo de la Luz y de la Sombra* in 2009 (Son of Light and Shade), Serrat asked several film-makers to work freely with one of his songs. The result was surprising and fascinating, featuring the revered self-restraint that characterizes Serrat's work. The list of film-makers is an authentic who's who of the profession: Manuel Gutiérrez Aragón, José Luis Garci, Bigas Luna, Manuel Hueriga, José Luis Cuerda, Montxo Armendáriz, Imanol Uribe, Pedro Olea, Rogelio Caballero, Manuel Gómez Pereira, David Trueba, Pere Portabella...





Joan Manuel Serrat's story can be explained easily using the hundreds of covers that magazines all over the world have dedicated to him.

Fermí Puig Archive

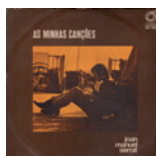
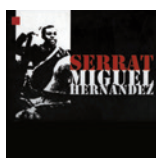
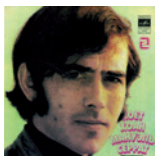






From the first record featuring four songs, to the legendary “bootleg” recorded illegally in the Greek Theatre in Barcelona in 1983, hundreds of different editions of the records were published all over the world.

Fermí Puig Archive



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Cantem Serrat

Fundació SGAE and Arts Santa Mònica invite musicians and public to sing Serrat songs

Tuesday, 2nd of June, exhibition opening at 7:00pm

Laura Simó & Francesc Burrull

& Jordi Bonell (+ guests)

Sing Serrat

Friday, 5th of June at 9:00pm

Andreu Rifé

3 versions of Serrat prepared especially for the concert

Friday, 26th of June at 9:00pm

Bruno Oro

2 versions of Serrat prepared especially for the concert

Saturday, 4th of July at 9:00pm

Salao

with a flamenco group and dance

2 versions of Serrat prepared especially for the concert

Saturday, 11th of July at 9:00pm

Maria Coma

2 versions of Serrat prepared especially for the concert

Vols cantar Serrat?

Saturdays 6 and 27 of June from 6:00 to 8:00pm

Saturdays 18 and 25 of June from 6:00 to 8:00pm

Public and guests sing Serrat with pre-recorded instrumental accompaniment

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Admission Free

Tuesday to Saturday 11am to 9pm

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Closed on Monday

Guided tours - no booking necessary

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Groups

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