



César VIANA

PIANO MUSIC

SONATA NO. 3, 'WIE SCHÖN LEUCHTET DER MORGENSTERN'

SONATA NO. 1, 'OLD FOLKS AT HOME'

RETURN OF THE HERACLEIDAE

PRIME RHYMES

ÉLÉGIES

Carlos Marín Rayo

CÉSAR VIANA: A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

by Luís Pacheco Cunha

César Viana is a Portuguese composer, recorder- and shakuhachi-player, conductor and musicologist, born in Southampton, UK, in 1963 and currently living in Spain. His main composition teachers at the Escola Superior de Música in Lisbon were Christopher Bochmann and Constança Capdeville. He also holds diplomas in recorder from the Lisbon Conservatoire and musicology from the Universidade Nova de Lisboa, having obtained his master's in composition from the Centro Superior Katarina Gurska in Madrid, where he now himself teaches composition. He studied shakuhachi, the traditional bamboo flute of Japanese Zen Buddhism, under the guidance of Keisuke Zenyoji. He is currently completing his doctoral dissertation at the Universidade do Minho in northern Portugal, examining tonal practices in twentieth-century western art music.

His music reflects his deep engagement with western classical traditions (especially – but not exclusively – the master contrapuntists, from Palestrina and Bach to Hindemith and Bartók), while incorporating elements of Japanese shakuhachi music, the Arab maqam system, modal jazz and Iberian folk-modal traditions. It is characterised by its stylistic diversity, spanning opera, orchestral works, chamber music and piano compositions. His approach blends contrapuntal techniques – rooted in polyphonic traditions – with a personal modal framework that often employs combinations of tetrachordal structures. His worklist contains a number of early ballet scores, instrumental works, particularly for piano and for organ, chamber music (not least the string trio *Children from the East* (2015), wind quintet *Les 4 Saisons de Lisbonne* (2011) and *Aus der Tiefe* for string quartet (2017)), a number of scores for string orchestra (among them the *Divertimento per Archi* (2006), *Edzna*, with solo viola (2010) and *Lumen* (2012) and a setting of the *De Profundis*, with mixed choir (2010)), and, most ambitiously, the cantata

Carmina Passionis (2021) and the operas *Debussy e Méliande* (2023) and *O Último Canto – Camões e o Destino* (2024). His works have been included in the repertoire of such institutions as the Gulbenkian Ballet, the National Ballet of Portugal, Teatro da Trindade and Mafra International Festival, and his chamber music has been taken up by a wide number of performers, both in Portugal and further afield.

His own activity as a performer ranges from mediaeval to contemporary music, from the shakuhachi to the shepherd's bagpipes, from Baroque to Sephardic music – and beyond. As a multi-instrumentalist, while maintaining an active career as performer on both Baroque recorder and shakuhachi, he also plays piano, jazz guitar, Arabic oud and early-music reed instruments. All these musical references contribute to a rich and varied musical universe and have an obvious influence on his compositions. (His extensive collection of musical instruments can be visited at the Instrumenteca de Castelo Branco in central Portugal).

He has undertaken extensive research into little known Portuguese orchestral repertoire from the Baroque to the Romantic, having edited, restored and published many scores, presented them in concert and recorded them for international labels. The composers on whose music he has worked include João Domingos Bomtempo (1775–1842), João de Sousa Carvalho (1745–c. 1798), Francisco de Sá Noronha (1820–81) and Francisco dos Santos Pinto (1815–60). He has made many field recordings of Portuguese folk-music. Early in his professional career, he held roles as a ballet accompanist and performer of early music.

He was artistic director of the ensembles Sinfonia B and Cobras e Son, of Belgais – Centro para o Estudo das Artes (the arts centre north-east of Lisbon founded by Maria João Pires) and of the Early Music Festival in Sesimbra, just south of Lisbon. He also had directorial or co-ordination responsibilities at the Fundación Caja Duero in Salamanca and the Orquestra Metropolitana de Lisboa. Until 2013 he was a member of the board of OPART (which manages the Lisbon Opera House, Portuguese Symphony Orchestra and the National Ballet of Portugal) and artistic director of 'Festival ao Largo' in Lisbon.

As a conductor, flautist and composer, he has recorded for a number of labels (Bajja Records, BMG, EMI, RCA, Philips, Resonare, Strauss, Toccata Next and Xerais) and

has been invited to work with such orchestras as the Radio-Philharmonie Hannover (NDR), RIAS Big Band Berlin, the Orquestra Metropolitana de Lisboa, Orquestra Filarmonia das Beiras and the Orquestra Clássica da Madeira. He is music director of Concerto Moderno (a Lisbon-based string orchestra) and of the Bajja Jazz Ensemble, also in Madrid.

The diversity of César Viana's musical pursuits finds its confluence in his compositions, where these multifaceted influences converge organically and fruitfully, leading to a dextrous use of multifunctional compositional resources and a colourful instrumental palette, together with a profound emotional resourcefulness.

Luís Pacheco Cunha is a founding member and first violin of the Quarteto Lopes-Graça, an ensemble specialising in the performance of Portuguese music, with several releases on Toccata Classics, featuring the chamber music of Fernando Lopes-Graça and Joly Braga Santos. He completed a Master of Arts degree at the Tchaikovsky Conservatoire in Moscow, where he studied under Zoria Shikhmurzaeva. He also studied quartet and chamber music under Mikhail Kopelman (of the Borodin Quartet), Nikolai Zabavnikov (of the Beethoven Quartet) and Tigran Alikhanov. A scholarship from the Portuguese state accounted for several years of training at both the International Menuhin Music Academy, at Gstaad in Switzerland, and in London with Yossi Zivoni. He also attended master-classes with such musicians as Yehudi Menuhin, Maria João Pires and Sándor Végh.

NOTES ON MY PIANO MUSIC

by César Viana

Though I began my career playing the Baroque recorder, my early work as a ballet accompanist significantly shaped my technical and expressive command of the piano. The majority of my piano compositions, however, emerged after my consequential collaboration with the young Spanish virtuoso Carlos Marín Rayo, to whom much of my piano *œuvre* is dedicated.

Piano Sonata No. 3, *Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern* (2020)

Piano Sonata No. 3, composed in 2020, is dedicated to Carlos Marín Rayo, the pianist who plays it on this recording, and takes its title from the chorale melody *Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern* ('How brightly shines the morning star') in its fourth movement.¹ The work explores a musical *trompe l'œil* effect, using unconventional tetrachord combinations to create subtly distorted familiar scales that blur recognition and novelty. The first movement, *Deciso* [1], follows a relatively straightforward sonata form, with a clear two-voice contrapuntal texture in the two main themes, somehow contrasting with the romantic overtones of the development, infused with an intensely chromatic harmonic language. The second movement, 'Carillon' [2], is a metaphor of bell acoustics, layering distinct harmonic partials to produce shimmering, dense textures through complex overtone interactions. In the Scherzo [3] the manipulation of the two halves of a major scale are a particularly clear example of the *trompe l'œil* effect pervading the whole sonata. It is the the fourth movement, 'Chorale' [4], that is based on *Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern*. The structural design draws deeply from Bach's cantata-paraphrase techniques, where the chorale melody permeates the entire movement, serving both as *cantus firmus* and thematic basis for fugal developments.

Piano Sonata No. 1, *Old Folks at Home* (2020)

My Piano Sonata No. 1 was composed in 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, when millions were confined at home for months. The title *Old Folks at Home* alludes to that forced quarantine, building on Stephen Foster's classic melody – a tune often performed alongside Dvořák's *Humoresque* No. 7 in G flat major. The four movements retain the recognisable melodic traits of the song throughout, being particularly recognisable in the main theme of the *Andante* first movement [5], in the central section of the *Adagissimo* [6], in the left hand of the trio of the Menuet [7] and in the slow section of the final Toccata [8].

¹ *Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern* is a Lutheran hymn composed by the German pastor and hymnodist Philipp Nicolai (1556–1608) in 1597. Bach, Cornelius, Distler, Mendelssohn Pepping and Reger are among the many composers who have used the chorale in their own compositions.

***Prime Rhymes* (2012, 2018 and 2021)**

Prime Rhymes is a collection of short, independent piano pieces with no connection between them; each stands alone and can be performed separately. *Ajisai* (the Japanese for 'hydrangea') [9] is dedicated to the pianist Hortensia Hierro and was written in December 2021. The piece employs harmonies derived from the unique interval structures of traditional Japanese scales. *Sureña* (Spanish for 'southern') [10] is a brief, nocturne-like work that embraces Iberian musical scales and atmosphere; it dates from 2012. And the *Bagatela* [11] was composed for the 70th birthday of the Bolivian-born Spanish composer Miguel Bustamante in 2018, making an abundant use of tritone-based harmonies (Bustamante's iconic piano work is entitled *Diabolus in Musica*) and incorporating the number 70 into its rhythmic, tempo and pitch-organisation – similar to serialist techniques, though the final result diverges significantly from serialist aesthetics.

***Élégies* (2012 and 2021)**

These two *Élégies*, now a diptych, were composed in tribute to two close friends of mine. *O Maria, Deu Maire* [12], written in 2021 in memory of Maria Weissenberg (the daughter of pianist Alexis Weissenberg, and a prominent figure in the Madrid music-scene), builds upon a mediaeval Occitan melody, which serves as a *cantus firmus* throughout the work. *Pompe funèbre* [13], composed in May 2012 as a tribute to Bernardo Sasseti, the Portuguese jazz pianist, takes its title from the movement of the same name in one of Couperin's viola da gamba suites, though the music itself bears little relation, apart the dotted rhythm of the main motif and its austere contrapuntal texture.

***Return of the Heracleidae* (2014)**

Return of the Heracleidae was composed in 2014 as a homage to the Hellenist Maria Mafalda Viana, my sister, and dedicated to Carlos Marín Rayo. The three movements are largely based on the Dorian scale, a musical reference to the Heracleidae – the Dorians of ancient Greece, who claimed descent from Heracles. 'Dorian March' [14] evokes the militaristic ethos of the Heracleidae; 'Threnos' (Greek for 'lament') [15] reflects their mourning over their failure to conquer Sparta; and 'Katienai' (from Greek κατιέναι, 'to descend') [16] alludes to their legendary campaign to reclaim the city.

The critical and audience successes of **Carlos Marín Rayo** have taken him across Europe, performing in venues such as the Belgais Centre for Arts in Escalos de Baixo, central Portugal, where he played Schubert four-hands with Maria João Pires, founder of the Centre. He has also appeared in other major Portuguese venues and every major hall in Spain (Auditorio Nacional, Teatro Real, Fundación Juan March, Palau de la Música de Valencia, Fundación Botín in Santander and others). Further afield he has played in the Netherlands (the Concertgebouw and Muziekgebouw in Amsterdam, De Doelen in Rotterdam, etc.), Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Serbia, Switzerland and the United Kingdom, the United States and Australia. As a soloist he has performed concertos by Beethoven, Liszt, Mozart, Rachmaninov, Saint-Saëns, Shostakovich, Stravinsky and Tchaikovsky, with ensembles such as the Phion Orkest in Arnhem, Conservatorium van Amsterdam Symphony Orchestra, Orquesta Ciudad de Almería, Camerata Eutherpe, Concerto Moderno and others, the conductors including Antony Hermus, Jean-Bernard Pommier, Michael Thomas and César Viana. He is also a frequent guest with the National Orchestra of Spain.

Carlos Marín Rayo was born in Madrid. He is a graduate of the Amsterdam Conservatorium, where he studied under Frank van de Laar; before that, his main mentors were Mariana Gurfkova, Nino Kereselidze, Graham Jackson and Joaquín Soriano in Madrid. He has also studied historical keyboard performance with Olga Pashchenko in Amsterdam.

As an advocate of contemporary music, he has premiered and been the dedicatee of many works by eminent European composers, among them Miguel Bustamante Guerrero, Hugo Gómez-Chao, David del Puerto Jimeno and César Viana. He has been awarded prizes in various international competitions, including the First Prize at the Euterpe International Piano Competition in Corato, Italy, the Second Prize and Audience Prize at the prestigious Young Pianist Foundation Competition in Amsterdam (2019) and the Third Prize at the International Villa Rospigliosi Competition (Italy, 2023).

He receives support from institutions such as Juventudes Musicales de España, the Comunidad de Madrid, Fundación Eutherpe and Fundación 'la Caixa', which recently awarded him one of their prestigious postgraduate fellowships. In 2023, he was Artist in Residence at George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia.

www.carlosmarinrayo.com



Photograph: Anna Tena



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CÉSAR VIANA Piano Music

Piano Sonata No. 3, <i>Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern</i> (2020)	19:22
1 I <i>Deciso</i>	5:12
2 II <i>Carillon</i>	6:54
3 III <i>Scherzo</i>	2:27
4 IV <i>Chorale</i>	4:49

Piano Sonata No. 1, <i>Old Folks at Home</i> (2020)	15:32
5 I <i>Andante</i>	4:59
6 II <i>Adagissimo</i>	5:30
7 III <i>Menuet and Trio</i>	1:49
8 IV <i>Toccata</i>	3:14

<i>Prime Rhymes</i>	13:55
9 I <i>Ajisai</i> (2021)	6:22
10 II <i>Sureña</i> (2012)	4:44
11 III <i>Bagatela</i> (2018)	2:49

<i>Élégies</i>	11:03
12 I <i>O Maria, Deu Maire</i> (2021)	3:56
13 II <i>Pompe funèbre</i> (2012)	7:07

<i>Return of the Heracleidae</i> (2014)	8:19
14 I <i>Dorian March</i>	2:02
15 II <i>Threnos</i>	2:43
16 III <i>Katienai</i>	3:34

Carlos Marín Rayo, piano

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