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Recording, editing and mastering: Mário Dinis Marques

Producer: Alejandro Erlich Oliva

Co-editors: Alejandro Erlich Oliva, Luís Pacheco Cunha and Catherine Strynckx

Piano: Bechstein (c. 1920)

Piano technician: Fernando Rosado

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This CD is dedicated to Fernando Lopes-Graça on the twentieth anniversary of his death, and was recorded on his own piano in the Museu da Música Portuguesa, which holds his papers.

Executive producer: Martin Anderson

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Fernando LOPES-GRAÇA

Complete Music for String Quartet and Piano Volume One

Song of Love and Death
for piano quintet

String Quartet No. 1

Suíte Rústica No. 2

Olga Prats, piano
Quarteto Lopes-Graça

FIRST COMPLETE RECORDING

FERNANDO LOPES-GRAÇA: HIS LIFE AND WORK

by Teresa Cascudo

Born in Tomar, north-east of Lisbon, on 17 December 1906, Fernando Lopes-Graça began his musical studies in his hometown, completing them at the Conservatório Nacional in Lisbon, where from 1924 to 1931 he attended the classes of José Vianna da Motta (a pianist-composer who had studied briefly with Franz Liszt), Tomás Borba (a priest who was a central figure in Portuguese music-education) and Luís de Freitas Branco (a composer-conductor colleague of Debussy and Ravel). Between 1932 and 1936 he was a teacher at the Academia de Música in Coimbra. But these were the years of dictatorship, first under the *Ditadura nacional* (1926–33) and then Salazar's *Estado novo* ('New State'; 1933–74), and Lopes-Graça, an open dissident, was twice arrested, a fact that later prevented him teaching in public schools, although he had been given a position teaching piano at the Conservatório Nacional as early as 1931. They were also the years of his first period as a composer, during which his style showed the influences of such figures as Arnold Schoenberg and Paul Hindemith.

In 1937 Lopes-Graça settled in Paris, where he composed several works for piano, the music for the ballet-revue *La fièvre du temps* and his first harmonisations for voice and piano of Portuguese folksongs. This new phase in his style shows the strong influence of Béla Bartók and Manuel de Falla and of the writings of Koechlin, his teacher in Paris. Lopes-Graça returned to Lisbon in 1939, resuming his activities as musicologist and teacher and also turning his hand to concert-organisation and choral conducting. He taught at the Academia de Amadores de Música and founded 'Sonata', an association that between 1942 and 1960 did much to promote music by contemporary composers. His first major work after his return from Paris was the First Piano Concerto (1940), which gained a prize in a composition contest organised by the Círculo de Cultura Musical (he was awarded this prize three times in total). He also resumed his journalistic and literary activity, mainly around musical subjects.

After World War II, much of Lopes-Graça's life was determined by his militant membership of the Movement of Democratic Unity and the Portuguese Communist Party. He then began work on his choral *Canções Heróicas* ('Heroic Songs'), published in eight volumes between 1946 and 1985; along with many new

The **Quarteto Lopes-Graça** – Luís Pacheco Cunha and Anne Victorino d'Almeida, violins; Isabel Pimentel, viola; Catherine Strynckx, cello – was formed at the National Conservatory School of Music in Lisbon by four of its teachers with outstanding solo and chamber careers. It both bestows on the Conservatory a permanent teaching group, not least in quartet master-classes, and also promotes the school in Portugal and abroad. It has performed at all the major Portuguese venues, festivals and other musical events and has undertaken tours to Andorra (2010), the Azores (2008 and 2010), Brasil (2013) and Madeira (2011).



Its performance of contemporary Portuguese chamber music in several Portuguese cities in the framework of the 2010–11 Criasons Festival, with the support of the Portuguese Ministry of Culture, allowed the Quarteto Lopes-Graça to work directly with a number of living composers and premiere their music. Among the works dedicated to the Quarteto are the Quartet, Op. 148 (2007) by António Victorino d'Ameida, *Misericórdia* (2007) by João Nascimento, String Quartet No. 1, *Fado Luso*, Op. 104 (2009) by Jorge Costa-Pinto, *Prelúdio à Sesta das Cigarras* (2010) by Amílcar Vasques Dias and the String Quintet (2010) by César Viana, *Elegia* (2010) by Anne Victorino d'Almeida and the quartet *L'Homme Désarmé* by Eurico Carrapatoso.

Alongside the classics of the quartet repertoire, their programmes feature music by other Portuguese composers – among them the eponymous Fernando Lopes-Graça, Joly Braga Santos, Cláudio Carneiro, Frederico de Freitas, Luís de Freitas Branco, Luís Tinoco and José Vianna da Motta – and by North and Latin American and Spanish composers (Barber, Halffter, Revueltas and Turina).

In 2009 the Quarteto Lopes-Graça Quartet released its first CD with music by Fernando Lopes-Graça and António Victorino d'Almeida on the Numérica label (1182), which also released their recordings of music from the Criasons Festival (1218).

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Tel: +44/0 207 821 5020 E-mail: info@toccataclassics.com

Olga Prats has long been considered one of the foremost interpreters of Portuguese piano music, and that of Fernando Lopes-Graça in particular. She began her musical training at the age of five with her piano-teacher mother and then studied privately with João Maria Abreu e Motta. She gave her debut recital at the Teatro Municipal de São Luiz in Lisbon in 1952. In 1957 she completed her piano studies at the National Conservatory in Lisbon, still with Professor Abreu e Motta. With the aid of two scholarships from the German government and the Instituto de Alta Cultura, she attended courses at the Hochschule für Musik in Cologne with Gaspar Cassadó and Karl Pillney (1957–58) and, with a Gulbenkian scholarship, in Freiburg with Carl Seeman and Sándor Végh (1959). During this stay in Germany, one of the prizes she won was for best foreign student (1958), and her solo and concerto appearances were well received by the press. Upon returning to Portugal, she continued her training with Helena Moreira de Sá e Costa, having won, as her student, the prize Luís Costa for best interpreter of Spanish music (1965). She attended master-classes in Estoril with Rudolf Baumgartner, Jean Françaix and Karl Engel, having later been invited to take part as pianist in the chamber-music classes of Paul Tortelier, Ludwig Streicher and Karen Georgian.



Olga Prats taught at the National Conservatory in Lisbon from 1970 to 1984 and from 1983 was a member of the faculty at the Lisbon High School for Music, becoming co-ordinator of the chamber-music class. In tandem she was very active as a competition jury member and gave many lecture-courses on chamber music and twentieth-century Portuguese music.

She has played with the Chamber Orchestra of the Festival of Pommersfelden, the Gulbenkian Orchestra, the Symphony Orchestra of Buenos Aires, the Porto Orchestra and the Portuguese National Radio Symphony Orchestra, among many others, performing a wide range of composers, from Bach, Brahms and Schumann to Stravinsky and Xenakis. Her vast solo repertoire notwithstanding, she has focused mainly on chamber music: she established a duo with the violist Ana Bela Chaves in 1969 and was a founding member of the music-theatre ensemble Colecva in 1975 and the Opus Ensemble in 1980.

Her performances have laid special emphasis on the music of Portuguese composers from the nineteenth century to the present day, and she has worked closely with several leading composers, not least Fernando Lopes-Graça, Constança Capdeville and António Victorino d'Almeida, all of whom dedicated to her works she premiered and recorded; she was also the first Portuguese pianist to perform and record music by Astor Piazzola.

harmonisations of Portuguese popular songs, they provided the musical material for his work as a conductor of the choirs of the Grupo Dramático Lisbonense, which he had founded in 1945, and of the Academia de Amadores de Música, which he directed for decades, in a political and cultural crusade for a new role for music in society. In 1945 he also began a regular series of contributions to the journal *Vertice* where, throughout the second half of the decade, he published a number of articles presenting his aesthetic and political views and attitudes. Traditional music was a permanent source of inspiration in his other compositions of the time, in particular in the Third Piano Sonata (1952) and *Glosas* (1950), also for piano.

His teaching at the Academia de Amadores de Música was brought to an end in 1954 by a ministerial decree which forbade him to teach at all. But he managed to maintain his connections with the institution through the monthly journal *Gazeta Musical* (1950–57), which he had co-founded with João José Cochofel (its title notwithstanding, it covered all the arts); through the publication of a major dictionary of music (1954–58), a commitment undertaken in association with another staff-member of the Academy, his own former teacher Tomás Borba; and through the musical direction of the Academy choir, which then enjoyed a flourishing period of intense and socially relevant activity. An encounter with the Corsican ethnologist Michel Giacometti (1929–90) at the end of the 1950s initiated a collaboration that lasted for decades, one which was to prove fundamental for Portuguese musical culture. Starting in the 1960s Lopes-Graça and Giacometti edited the *Antologia da Música Regional Portuguesa*, a thorough compilation of recordings of the oral-music traditions of all regions of Portugal. It culminated in 1981 with the *Cancioneiro Popular Português*, featuring transcriptions of many of the recordings.

A new stage in Lopes-Graça's musical development was initiated by the work which opens this recording: the piano quintet *Canto de Amor e de Morte* ('Song of Love and Death') of 1961 and closed by the Piano Sonata No. 5 of 1977. These two works are among his most intense and demanding, both in expressive resources and formal terms, illustrating the stylistic changes underway in the 1960s. It was the time also of the *Concerto de camera col violoncello obbligato*, a 1965 commission from Mstislav Rostropovich who gave the premiere in a concert in Moscow; of the String Quartet No. 1, winner of the Rainier III of Monaco composition prize in 1965; of the *Fourteen Annotations* (1966) and *Suite Rústica* No. 2 (1965), both for string quartet.¹ In this period, too, he finally enjoyed some public recognition, with some of his major symphonic works being recorded for the first time by the Porto Orchestra under Silva Pereira.

Indeed, the end of the fascist *Estado Novo* brought about by the 'Carnation Revolution' in April 1974 resulted in official recognition of Lopes-Graça's importance for Portuguese culture. Many of his writings were re-published in a monumental re-edition of over twenty volumes, and a good number of his compositions were recorded and released under the supervision of the Secretary of State for Culture. Only the scores remained unpublished, until

¹ Volume Two of this series (TOCC 0254), currently in preparation, will present the Piano Quartet (1938; rev. 1963), the *Fourteen Annotations* for string quartet (1966) and String Quartet No. 2 (1982).

very recently, when AVA Editions began to bring them out. The years from 1974 until his death (on 27 November 1994) were creatively very fertile: he wrote, among other works, a *Fantasia* for piano and orchestra (1974), two further piano sonatas, Nos. 5 and 6 (1977 and 1981), the Second String Quartet, the moving *Requiem pelas Vítimas do Fascismo em Portugal* ('Requiem for the Victims of Fascism in Portugal'; 1979) and the *Sete Predicações dos Lusíadas* ('Seven Predications of the Lusíadas'; 1980), the ballet *Dançares* (1984), a *Sinfonietta* for chamber orchestra (1980), numerous songs, shorter instrumental compositions and other chamber works. His musical legacy, along with other artistic and personal belongings, is to be found in the Museu da Música Portuguesa in Monte Estoril, dedicated to his and Giacometti's memory and where this CD was recorded, using Lopes-Graça's own Bechstein piano.

Teresa Cascudo was the musicologist responsible for the organisation of the Lopes-Graça musical catalogue while she was on the research staff of the Museu da Música Portuguesa, Monte Estoril. She currently teaches at the Universidad de La Rioja, in Logroño, Spain.

LOPES-GRAÇA'S MUSIC FOR STRING QUARTET AND PIANO, VOLUME ONE

by Fredrick Gifford, Teresa Cascudo and Luís Pacheco Cunha

The works for string quartet and combinations of strings and piano assembled on this CD and the following one in the series span 45 years, nearly Lopes-Graça's entire creative output. They thus offer a kind of time-lapse portrait of the composer through his musical concerns at a number of points throughout his career. Lopes-Graça sought refuge from Salazar's repressive state in writing and making music, as well as in cultivating the music of the Portuguese people. His artistic reaction against the nationalist dictatorship was not a defiant embrace of the European modernist mainstream (although he was undoubtedly well acquainted with it) at the expense of Portuguese culture; rather, he sought to forge a distinctive compositional practice that drew as heavily from local traditions and forms of music-making as from the concert tradition. Much of his music from the 1960s onward is energised by the search for a synthesis of the two.

In an essay from 1931 Béla Bartók outlined three ways in which composers may incorporate what he termed 'peasant music' – perhaps a troubling term by contemporary standards, but Bartók does not consider the term in any way pejorative – into modern concert music: through the straightforward transcription of melodies with newly composed harmonisations, accompaniments, introductions, transitions or closes; through the invention of 'peasant-like' melodies without employing genuine ones;

B flat minor and major) provokes a rich harmonisation from the lower voices. As the viola and cello settle towards a point of repose, a duo in the violins closes the first half and transports the music to one of the most stunning textures in the entire suite. It is in this passage that the heritage of Stravinsky is most clearly felt: the tune is harmonised simultaneously in parallel minor thirds and minor sevenths (recalling techniques from the second part of *Le sacre du printemps*). The unique Lopes-Graça touch is to be found in the line set in counterpoint against this harmonisation: the cello embarks, alone, down a rhythmically and melodically awkward corridor of *pizzicato* notes, perhaps summoning the notion of the small fits and twitches that occur as the child slips into dreams. This line, despite all of its leaping and tumbling, never lacks a special kind of 'jagged grace', typical of the composer.

The last movement of the Suite [12] closes with the most original architectural construction of the entire work. Formally, this short piece subjects its tune to a rapid, kaleidoscope of treatments typical of the composer. In the brief (about two-minute) duration of the piece, the melody appears in a variety of contexts and textures that trace a small arch-form: there are several energetic chorales, including a diatonic harmonisation that is *pesante* and *arco*, and another that is chromatic and *pizzicato*; as well as a *spiccato* interlude that joins these two timbrally contrasted passages. Prolongations of the opening interval of the tune (a perfectly commonplace fourth – the melodic anacrusis of countless songs) are used to generate the introduction as well as the coda. This coda is particularly striking because it brings together the basic trend of the entire Suite (in a reflection of the technique cited in the opening movement) as the diatonic fourth (D/G) is set against a chromatic inflection (D flat/C), to create one of the most evocatively sonorous textures (*pianissimo*, *flautato*, with all instruments in a high register) in all of Lopes-Graça's output.

Fredrick Gifford (born in 1972 in Lancaster, Pennsylvania) is a composer; he received his bachelor's degree in composition from DePaul University in Chicago and his doctorate from Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. He is a teacher at DePaul University School of Music; he has also lectured at the Escola Superior de Música, Artes e Espectáculo in Porto. He has produced a number of recordings of Portuguese music, among them an earlier CD by the Quarteto Lopes-Graça.

Suite Rústica No. 2 (1965)

Lopes-Graça's decision to compose two 'Rustic Suites' for classical formations (orchestra and string quartet, respectively, in 1950 and 1965),⁵ bears witness to the importance that he attributed to incorporating pastoral idioms within canonic classical forms. In the Suite No. 2 he invokes the music of the Portuguese people through newly composed material, not through the harmonisation of extant tunes. The movements clearly allude to melancholic song (the shadow of ancestral song is omnipresent in Lopes-Graça), dancing [8], a lullaby (*In modo di Ninna Nanna* [10]), or a celebration (*Gaio* [11]) in terms of rhythmic or general melodic behaviour, but avoid presenting a catalogue of excerpts from regional music. Instead, the composer creates new melodies or fragments that sound so authentic that they could be confused with actual folksong but at the same time they can grow into harmonic idioms and formal schemes far removed from those of any real village dance.

The opening movement, *Melancolico* [7], begins by evoking the image of a solitary figure toiling away, far off in the fields: the first violin plays a simple and poignant modal tune (focused on C natural). But a chromatic accompaniment (frequently employing C sharp as an harmonic support) enters immediately in the lower voices, shattering any notion of a quaint or picturesque treatment of the subject matter. The modal tune continues in the violin and reappears at the beginning of what is nearly a strophic form, first in the viola then in the second violin. This process culminates in a magnificent *stretto* (or piling-up) of the modal and chromatic components (C against C sharp) that dissipates as quickly as it was conjured up. This careful balance of simple materials and sophisticated means exemplifies the composer's mature style.

The second movement, *Danzante* [8], presents its material (an innocuous, diatonic dance-tune noteworthy more for its rhythmic impulse than inherently striking melodic characteristics) first in a wildly accented and syncopated dancing tempo and then (marked *místico* in the score) in a vast, resplendent wave: the harmonic treatment here seems closer to Schoenberg's *Verklärte Nacht* than to the modally inflected chromaticism of the first movement.

The third movement, *Scherzoso* [9], is the closest of the five to its Bartókian counterparts (the *Romanian Dances*, for example), complete with folk-dance accompaniment figures and changing beat-lengths. After a brief introduction, the basic melody and accompaniment texture is established, but very quickly a harsh game of interrupting and restarting the dance removes any sense that this is light fare. Even the interruptions themselves are carefully constructed timbral transformations of the dance melody. Another *stretto* closes the piece (based on the interval of an ascending perfect fourth but imitated a minor ninth below in each instrument), but this time the voices are spread across what is nearly the entire possible range of the quartet in order to recapture the bold register of the introduction.

Tenderly marked *In modo di Ninna Nanna*, the lullaby-like fourth movement [10] begins with a gently arching tune in the second violin. From the outset, the unsettled tonality of the melody (it exhibits aspects of both

⁵ There is also a *Suite Rústica* No. 3 (1977) for 'orquestra de sopros' (wind band).

There is yet a third way in which the influence of peasant music can be traced in a composer's work. Neither peasant melodies nor imitations of peasant melodies can be found in his music, but it is pervaded by the atmosphere of peasant music. In this case we may say, he has completely absorbed the idiom of peasant music which has become his musical mother tongue.²

Bartók considers the latter solution to be the height of artistic integration, bordering on true poetry.

These concerns are crucial for understanding this aspect of Lopes-Graça's musical thinking: how to meld the erudite and vernacular into a coherent and expressive musical work. The chamber works included here are compelling cases in which this question receives special focus.

Song of Love and Death (1961)

The piano quintet *Canto de Amor e de Morte* [1], composed in late summer 1961, takes its title from a poem by Afonso Duarte written in 1952; but there is no programmatic intention in the music. It was written at a time of deep crisis in Lopes-Graça's life, on personal grounds (the death of his father that August had plunged him into deep depression), for social reasons (he was frustrated at the continued failure of Portuguese society to adopt more liberal policies) and because of artistic considerations (he found that his capacity to assimilate simple folk-music was no longer appropriate as his style evolved through expressionism towards atonality).

In one of the first thorough analyses ever dedicated to Lopes-Graça's music,³ the pianist and composer Jorge Peixinho underlined the relation of the *Canto de Amor e de Morte* to the unification of dodecaphony and serialism that was the major trend of the musical vanguard of the day. Peixinho emphasised in particular the unity of the piece, the motivic connections that, in the course of its seventeen minutes, organically interrelate the sections that the strong contrasts of expression and texture make readily audible. The 'Song' of the title is reflected in the use of a combination of linked cells and an accentuation familiar from the prosody of verbal language. The work also presents a combination of gestures which evoke lullabies and funerary marches (readily audible in the first part of the work and in the coda), underlining the poetic suggestions of the title.

The *Canto de Amore e de Morte* is a pinnacle in Portuguese music, the final point of a tension between diatonicism and chromaticism, resolved in a tonal context through a new organisation of musical material: a series of evolving variations based on a *Grundgestalt*, which is simply a group of four quavers on a single note. G. Peixinho considers it the most consequential and coherent work in its diverse levels of organisation that Portuguese music will ever attain.⁴

² Béla Bartók, 'The Influence of Peasant Music on Modern Music', in *Béla Bartók's Essays*, ed. Benjamin Suchoff, St Martin's Press, New York, 1976, pp. 341–44.

³ 'Canto de Amore e de Morte: Introduction and Essay in Morphological Interpretation', *Ex Tempore – A Journal of Compositional and Theoretical Research in Music*, Vol. VIII/2, Summer 1997; available online at <http://www.ex-tempore.org/ExTempore97/peixinho97.html>.

⁴ *Ibid.*

The first performance took place at the Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon on 8 November 1961, given by Rafael Couto and João Nogueira, violins, Alberto Nunes, viola, and Felipe Lorient, cello, with the composer at the piano.

String Quartet No. 1 (1964)

This first of Lopes-Graça's two string quartets earned international recognition after winning the first prize at the Prince Rainer III composition competition in Monaco in 1965. It has many characteristics in common with Bartók's Fourth and Fifth Quartets: a five-movement structure, reliance on arch-forms and cyclic motives, construction of a tonal architecture within a highly charged chromatic idiom, textures built on rhythmic ostinato and layering. The work does not so much feature elements of original folk-music as show a complex emulation of style, referring back to traditional music without recourse to actual quotation or fabrication of folk materials. Lopes-Graça thus joins a long tradition in quartet-writing: Mozart's 'Haydn' Quartets, the six in Beethoven's Op. 18, Mendelssohn's Op. 13, and Berg's *Lyric Suite*, for example.

The chief characteristics of the First String Quartet are the use of melodic patterns and motifs set around very short intervallic areas, giving the impression that they are 'searching for one another', a modally rooted chromaticism, the development of polyphonic textures that are imitative in nature, and sometimes symmetrical, and the use of insistent dissonant chords with diverse accents. Lopes-Graça also uses features immediately traceable to Bartók. The manipulation of traditional forms applied in each of the movements and the use of some striking sounds as formal markers are elements the origin of which must be located in Bartók's quartet-writing which, in turn, is directly related to the freedom revealed in Beethoven's last works.

For instance, the third movement of the Quartet, a Scherzo-Fantasia [4], displays an asymmetrical use of the traditional structure of this type of piece. The ghostly trio, which contrasts with the robust appearance of the first section, is succeeded by a reprise in which that appearance is, so to speak, dematerialised. The first movement, *Allegro moderato* [2], and the fourth, *Giocoso* [5], find their structural matrix in sonata-form. The first movement introduces a theme distantly inspired by Brazilian traditional music, transfigured with the use of polyrhythmic patterns confronting the upper and lower voices. The recurrence of those resources throughout the Quartet creates the feeling, at times, of a lack of togetherness in tempo and rhythmical punctuation as if all the voices had evolved in different, independent, directions. The same, indeed, could be said of the melodic constructions, which display considerable virtuosity in the polyphonic writing.

The second movement, *Larghetto* [3], corresponds to the typical lyrical character of the slow section. Lopes-Graça expands the motivic material in horizontal and vertical planes, generating contrasting textures that work independently. This is a trademark of his writing, particularly evident in the bass. The way in which Lopes-Graça uses the contrast structurally is also one of the regular features of his instrumental works. The avoidance of emotional empathy coupled with the succession of moments of tension and distension creates a



Fernando Lopes-Graça and Olga Prats playing Debussy in a concert
in the Academia de Amadores de Música in June 1972

peculiar expressive effect of detachment. The short fifth movement, *Epilogo – Adagio* [6], acts like a prayer for the restoration of a long-lost utopia.

The Quartet was dedicated to the Quarteto de Cordas do Rio de Janeiro and first performed in Madrid on 7 December 1970, at the Real Conservatorio Superior de Musica by the Portuguese ensemble Quarteto de Cordas da Oficina Musical, based in Oporto.