



Pedro
FARIA GOMES

Chamber Works

Sarah Thurlow, clarinet
Saul Picado, piano
Carla Santos, violin
Nancy Johnson, viola
Miguel Fernandes, cello



Pedro FARIA GOMES (b. 1979)
Chamber Works



This set of chamber works by the Portuguese composer Pedro Faria Gomes plays on a number of seeming paradoxes: a longing to return that accepts the inevitability of change; abstract processes that conjure vivid images and remarkably concrete gestures; a profound stillness marked often by fleet and rapid surface motion; and a nostalgia that resists sentimentality. Composed between 2007 and 2018, they encompass themes of memory, change, returning, waiting, and the empty spaces of night. But their central preoccupation is arguably time itself: not time so much as regular, incessant pulse nor as unchanging stasis (though both possibilities exist at the music's outer limits), but rather the

malleable spaces of subjective, experiential time (markings such as 'freely', 'with flexibility' and 'non-mechanical' abound in these scores). Time in this sense equally signifies distance, lost time: the past as another country and another country as past. Such time has change as its measure, whether gradual transformation or violent upheavals that leave the remnants of the past unrecognisable.

Born in Lisbon in 1979, Faria studied the piano from the age of four, and later composition with two eminent Portuguese figures, João Madureira at the Academia de Música de Santa Cecília and Eurico Carrapatoso at the Escola Superior de Música de Lisboa. He then completed Master's and Doctoral degrees in composition at the Royal College of Music in London, where his teachers were David Sawer, Kenneth Hesketh and Mark-Anthony Turnage. After an eight-year spell of teaching in Portugal, he spent a year as a composition and music theory professor at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (2011–12). In 2015 he settled in Wales, as a lecturer at Cardiff University. He has received commissions from the Teatro Nacional de São Carlos, the Lisbon Metropolitan Orchestra, the National Ballet of Portugal and the London Symphony Orchestra. His music has also been performed by the Gulbenkian Orchestra, the Orquestra Sinfónica do Porto Casa da Música, Lontano and the Endymion Ensemble.

Recognition for his work has included the Lopes-Graça Prize in Portugal and the PRS Sir Arthur Bliss Memorial Award in the UK.

While geographical displacement features prominently in Faria's biography, he is quick to stress that the introspective turn in his chamber music predates his move from Portugal. Of the works recorded here, the two drawing directly on Portuguese sources are also the most recent. In *Memória* (2012) for clarinet and piano, the folk song in question, a Christmas melody from the village of Casegas near Castelo Branco, emerges unobtrusively against a tolling pedal note, which instantly gives the tune a fresh harmonic aspect, not only defamiliarising it for listeners who know it, but creating for those that do not a reassuring illusion of *déjà entendu*. Following this distant echo, however, the tune proves elusive, the clarinet's attempts to take it up dissolving into juddering repeated notes, cascades and trills. After the violence of this central section, only half-recalled fragments remain, stretched over softly sustained chords, as if in calm acceptance of irreversible change.

The second movement of the *Sonata* (2018) for violin and piano is on the surface a more conventional folk song setting, the tune present in the violin throughout. Yet there is considerable subtlety too. Each iteration of the melody ends on an irresolution that forms the upbeat to the next, forging a continuous cycle even before further elements of circularity are superimposed: slowly descending and ascending scales in the piano, and the tune itself in canon. The third movement

creates continuity of a different kind in a rapid *perpetuum mobile*, albeit disturbed by constant jolts and cross-accents. It is the outer movements, though, that demonstrate the closest affinities. The first alternates two types of material: one slow (foregrounding the five-note arc of melody heard in the solo violin towards the opening) and one faster and more aggressive, which on its last appearance freezes onto tense, tremulous clusters before the measured return of the slow music. It is that music – specifically the five-note arcing phrase – that returns midway through the fourth movement, permeating the texture right to the end if never quite resolving its own modal ambiguity.

By contrast the outer sections of *Thanatos* (2008) for clarinet and string trio offer a study in gradual, incremental transformation. The gently rocking motion at the start recalls the association of the deathly Thanatos with his mythic twin Hypnos, god of sleep (or even his half-brother Charon, boatman of the Underworld). These oscillations gradually drift apart and quicken, until two sharp accents (a slap-tongue in the clarinet combined with a Bartók pizzicato in the cello) set off a sinister central section, driven by ominous trills and violent outbursts from the lower strings. *Thanatos* is also the Freudian death-drive, whose opposite, *eros*, the life-drive, is glimpsed briefly in a passionate outburst leading back to the undulating movement of the opening. There, *Thanatos* fulfils its tendency, in Faria's words, 'to die, to fade, to stillness'.

The shortest pieces on the disc are also the earliest. *Elegia* (2007), a 'short piece written as a sorrow over unnecessary loss', served as a test

piece for the 'Young Musicians' prize ('Prémio Jovens Músicos') of Portuguese Radio (RTP Antena 2). Meanwhile, the title of the piano piece *Escape* (also 2007) signifies retreat rather than flight, its marking 'reflective' borne out in both static, resonating chords and the contrary-motion palindromes that pervade the melody, as if to generate space from time.

These pieces frame two longer single-movement works: *Espera* (2009), written for the composer's wife, violist Sophie Faria, and *Returning* (2010), for clarinet, violin and piano, composed for the Eidos Trio and premiered at Wigmore Hall in 2011. In *Espera*, meaning 'wait', the muted solo viola views the same material repeatedly from different perspectives – different attempts, perhaps, at adapting to a stubborn reality. The phrases of melody unfolded at the start are juxtaposed and subtly refracted, first slowly, then at a flowing tempo, before succumbing to anxiety and frustration in the central section. The subdued questioning then returns, the melodic phrases re-explored in close counterpoint before congealing into chords beneath wispy harmonics and *portamenti*. Though this ending fails to bring the comfort of a resolution, neither is it without hope: its latent promise was subsequently realised in the *Sonata*, where the final chord of *Espera*, along with its main melody in retrograde, is used to begin the fourth movement.

Where *Espera* folds melody into harmony, *Returning* at its start enacts the reverse process. The notes of the bold initial gesture – two (and

later three) ringing chords across the strings of the violin – later unfurl as a continuous line against the clarinet's first sustained note. Meanwhile, the brief arch-like flourishes of these opening bars move from figure to ground, becoming the steadily undulating backdrop to the next section. From this point, the 'returns' enacted in the music are unpredictable in both form and consequence – for Faria, a manifestation of returning as both 'inevitable, due to its cyclical nature, and as impossible, because of change'. After the chords' last appearance against fragile glissando harmonics, the piece gradually disintegrates: the clarinettist breathes silently into the instrument, and all that remain are the hollow and disembodied sounds of key-clicks and wood on string – residual traces of gestures and actions now past.

Nachtmusik (2012) for clarinet and piano not only deals, in the composer's words, with night's 'richness of colours and its variety of psychological angles' but also, in the first piece especially, with the strange elasticity of nocturnal temporality, in which events can appear stretched out or compressed. In the second piece night-time obsessions rear up as quickly as they subside, while the florid *cantilena* of the third gives way in the fourth to an animated portrayal of hyper-alert wakefulness. The set ends, as it began, in solitude, the last, fragmentary echoes of the final piece fading away against strings stroked inside the piano, like the gentle brush of a curtain on a sill.

Charles Wilson

Sarah Thurlow

Sarah Thurlow studied at the Royal College of Music (RCM) with Robert Hill, Michael Harris and Andrew Marriner. An English-Speaking Union scholarship enabled her to attend the Aspen Music School in Colorado as a pupil of Theodore Oien, and the RCM Mills Williams Junior Fellowship led to further study with Hans Deinzer in Italy and Sabine Meyer in Weimar. She has performed concertos with the Philharmonia Orchestra and the BBC Concert Orchestra, and has given recitals at the Purcell Room, The Bridgewater Hall and St John's Smith Square. She has appeared in the clarinet sections of the London Symphony Orchestra, the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment. She founded the ensemble Contemporary Consort in 1998.

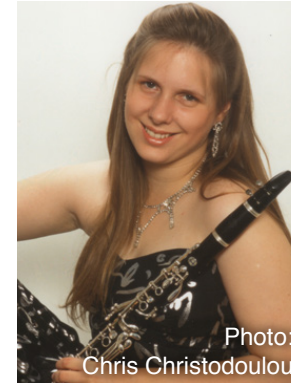


Photo:
Chris Christodoulou

Saul Picado

Portuguese pianist Saul Picado began his studies with João Paulo Cunha in Castelo Branco. In 2010 he graduated with distinction in piano accompaniment and chamber music from the Academia Nacional Superior de Orquestra in Lisbon, where he studied with Alexei Eremine. In 2011 his ensemble the Dryads Duo (with violinist Carla Santos) was awarded First Prize at the Prémio Jovens Músicos competition in Portugal. The duo has since recorded albums of works by Janáček, Ravel and Enescu (2012) and Elgar, Szymanowski and Respighi (2016). Saul Picado obtained his Master's degree in performance in 2012 from the Guildhall School of Music & Drama, studying with Peter Bithell and Martin Roscoe. Alongside his work as a performer, he teaches piano in London and Windsor.



Photo:
Krystian Data

www.saulpicado.com

Carla Santos

Portuguese violinist Carla Santos studied with Ana Sofia Mota at the Conservatório de Música Calouste Gulbenkian, Aveiro (Portugal), gaining a Diploma (2004), and later with Ágnes Sárosi at the Academia Nacional Superior de Orquestra in Lisbon, where she gained a Bachelor's degree (2009). She then continued her studies in London at the Royal College of Music with Radu Blidar, obtaining a Master's degree in Performance (2011) and an Artist Diploma (2012). She is a member, with pianist Saul Picado, of the Dryads Duo, which was awarded First Prize at the Prémio Jovens Músicos competition in Portugal. The duo has since recorded albums of works by Janáček, Ravel and Enescu (2012) and Elgar, Szymanowski and Respighi (2016). Alongside her work as a performer, Carla Santos teaches the violin in London and Windsor.



Photo:
Krystian Data

Nancy Johnson

A graduate of The Juilliard School, Nancy Johnson is a freelance viola player, working principally with the London Symphony Orchestra, while also appearing with the BBC Symphony Orchestra, the English Chamber Orchestra, the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, the Academy of St Martin in the Fields and Music Theatre Wales. As a chamber musician she has performed at the Wigmore Hall and Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall, and toured internationally as a member of Triocca, with whom she has released an album on the RTÉ lyric fm label. She is also a founder member of the Zoltan Ensemble and performs with her recital partner, pianist Lauretta Bloomer. She teaches the viola and the violin at the Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama and at Cardiff University.



Photo:
David Massey

Miguel Fernandes

Miguel Fernandes is currently sub-principal cello of the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra (CBSO), touring internationally with the orchestra and working with conductors such as Semyon Bychkov, Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla, Elisha Inbal, Michail Jurowski and Kazuki Yamada. During his studies with David Strange at the Royal Academy of Music (2009–12), he was awarded several prizes and scholarships, including the Vivian Joseph Prize and awards from the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation and the GDA (Gestão dos Direitos dos Artistas). Performing alongside pianist Teresa Douror, his ensemble the Cavatine Duo was awarded First Prize in the chamber music category of the Prémio Jovens Músicos competition, and subsequently recorded an album of sonatas for cello and piano by Janáček, Myaskovsky and Poulenc.

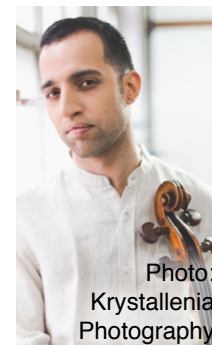


Photo:
Krystallenia
Photography

This selection of chamber music by leading Portuguese composer Pedro Faria Gomes was written between 2007 and 2018. The works encompass themes of memory, change and waiting, with the concept of time being a central preoccupation. Though he has drawn on music from his country's folk traditions – in *Memória* and in the *Sonata* – it is always with new harmonic insights and subtlety, creating undeniably invigorating additions to contemporary chamber music repertoire.



Pedro FARIA GOMES

(b. 1979)

Chamber Works

1	Memória (2012)	6:09	9	Returning (2010)*	9:23
	Sonata (2018)*	20:51	10	Elegia (2007)	3:01
2	I. Lento e libero	6:43		Nachtmusik (2012)	11:45
3	II. Andante non troppo	3:34	11	I. Slow and freely	1:10
4	III. Molto vivace	4:40	12	II. Very lively	1:21
5	IV. Calmo	5:42	13	III. With flexibility, non-mechanical	1:57
6	Thanatos (2008)*	8:22	14	IV. Unpredictable, with sudden changes	1:12
7	Escape (2007)*	1:36	15	V. Slow and freely	5:43
8	Espera (2009)*	6:18			

* WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING

Sarah Thurlow, Clarinet **1** **6** **9** **11–15** • Carla Santos, Violin **2–6** **9**
 Nancy Johnson, Viola **6** **8** • Miguel Fernandes, Cello **6** **10**
 Saul Picado, Piano **1–5** **7–9** **11–15**

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 Producer: Oscar Torres and Pedro Faria Gomes • Engineer and editor: Oscar Torres
 Booklet notes: Charles Wilson • Publisher: Pedro Faria Gomes **1–9** **11–15**, AVA Musical Editions **10**
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