

José
VIANA DA MOTA

À Pátria – Sinfonia
(To the Homeland)

Inês de Castro • Chula • Three Impromptus • Vito
Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra • Álvaro Cassuto



José Viana da Mota (1868-1948)

À Pátria • Inês de Castro • Chula • Three Impromptus • Vito

José Viana da Mota was a towering personality in the field of Portuguese music, not only as the most distinguished pianist of his generation, but as a brilliant pedagogue and a highly gifted composer.

He was born in 1868 on São Tomé Island, off the West Coast of Africa, while it was still a Portuguese colony. When he was very young, his family moved back to Portugal where he studied piano and composition, excelling in both and winning the attention of the Royal Family, who later sponsored his musical studies in Berlin at the Scharwenka Conservatory. He then went on to have lessons with Franz Liszt in Weimar and Hans von Bülow in Frankfurt before embarking on a brilliant career as a concert pianist.

Viana da Mota was a highly motivated all-round musician who was equally involved in music theory and even wrote programme notes for a series of concerto concerts given by Ferruccio Busoni in Berlin as well as many essays about musical interpretation. In 1915 he became the head of the piano department of the Geneva Conservatory, and a few years later he was appointed Director of the Lisbon Conservatory, retaining this position until his retirement in 1938. He died in Lisbon in 1948.

As a composer, Viana da Mota was strongly influenced by Wagner and Liszt whilst becoming the first Portuguese composer to introduce Nationalism in his compositions. He wrote many works in different genres and his complete orchestral works are found on this recording. Viana da Mota stopped writing music around 1910, probably out of disagreement with the 'modernistic' compositional tendencies of the time.

First published in São Paulo (Brazil) in 1908, the symphony *To the Homeland*, composed in 1895, holds an important place in the pantheon of Portuguese music, as it is the only work of its genre composed during a whole century (between João Domingos Bomtempo's *Second Symphony* of 1822 [Naxos 8.557163] and Luís de Freitas Branco's *First Symphony* (1924) [Naxos 8.570765]). The symphony is also of interest as it is a musical

representation of a political manifesto written in reaction to the controversial British Ultimatum of 1890 issued in response to Portugal's intention to rule over the territory between its colonies of Angola and Mozambique (nowadays encompassing Zambia and Zimbabwe.) *To the Homeland* is a musical paean to Portuguese prowess and discovery, as evidenced by its Wagnerian grandeur and the fact that each of its four movements is inspired by quotations from Luís de Camões' epic poem published in 1572, *The Lusians* (the Latin designation for the Portuguese people when their country was a Roman province called Lusitania).

The first movement, *Allegro eroico*, starts under the auspices of Camões' invocation 'Oh! lend me here a noble strain elate, / A style grandiloquent that flows untiring'.¹ The movement is in sonata form, and its three main themes, as well as the transition section between the first two themes, are structural elements unifying the first and last movements. Indeed, the first theme is initially presented in 3/4 time, highly developed throughout the movement, and reappears in the fourth movement in 4/4 time, while the second theme develops into the fourth movement's main theme.

The second movement, *Adagio molto*, is in 2/4 time (actually 4/8) and has the strings divided into two groups, the second group with mutes. They are used either as a statement and an echo-like answer, or to enrich the texture by adding more voices to the music. The movement is divided into two parts, the second part starting with a *molto appassionato* section with the full orchestra, which soon subsides to give way to an expressive violin solo with delicate accompaniment.

The third movement, *Vivace*, is a Scherzo and, in true nationalistic fashion, it is based on a variety of folk dances and songs. It starts with a dance in 3/8 followed by a trio in which the solo wind instruments alternate. After a return to the Scherzo, a second trio in 2/8 appears, starting with a solo oboe and gradually involving the whole orchestra. After a huge build-up this section is then followed by a return to an interesting variation of the initial Scherzo.

The last movement, the largest and most complex of all four, has an independent title: '*Decadence – Fight – Resurgence*'. It starts with an *Andante lugubre*, a slow and dark introduction in 4/4, with the bass clarinet reminding us of the main theme of the first movement, followed by the strings with a variation of the transition section from the first movement. This opening is repeated, now with the solo English horn making its first appearance in the work, and finally the solo flute introduces the main theme of the *Finale*, a variation of the first movement's second theme. After a loud build-up the music reaches an *Allegro agitato* – the *Fight* mentioned in the title. Finally, we reach the *Resurgence*, a series of variations on the two themes of the first movement, bringing the symphony to a grand conclusion.

It is testament to Viana da Mota's brilliant compositional technique and musical intelligence that the unifying use of variations throughout the symphony never affects the work's extraordinary vitality and spontaneity.

The tone poem *Inês de Castro* dates from 1886 when the composer was only eighteen, and its subtitle *Overture* follows the tradition of using this term to designate one-movement works before Liszt introduced the term of *Tondichtung*, or tone poem. A tone poem it most certainly is, being based on a famous drama that occurred in Portugal in the fourteenth century and inspired a large number of plays and operas in many countries: in 1340 the crown-prince Pedro, son of King Afonso IV, married a Spanish princess, in whose entourage was the fifteen year old Inês de Castro. Young Pedro fell madly in love with Inês against the violent opposition of his father. Unable to change his son's mind, the King ordered her death. Pedro chased her three murderers, caught two and had them publicly executed. After the death of King Afonso, at Pedro's coronation, he placed Inês' exhumed body next to him on the throne.

The correlations between the music and the drama are not immediately apparent, and the gifted teenager limited himself to indicate tempo changes in German without indicating the stage of the story to which they refer. The work is clearly heavily influenced by Liszt's tone poems, while in terms of form, it is a kaleidoscope of short sections, each one clearly defined by contrasting musical ideas, which are successfully unified by thematic interrelations as well as by well-crafted transitions. There is a slow introduction formed by three different musical units, leading to the main *Allegro* section. Momentarily interrupted by a slower, middle section, this *Allegro* leads to the *fff* climax of the work, grand and majestic, before a slower section returns to the initial theme, and, after a short break, leads the work to an exuberant conclusion.

The three short pieces *Chula of the Douro*, *Three Impromptus on Portuguese Popular Motifs* and *Vito* are best viewed as a suite portraying the contrasting variety of the musical landscape of traditional northern Portuguese folklore, whence these three works, originally written for piano, originated. An unusual feature of the *Three Impromptus* is its pair of contrasting dances based on two unrelated motifs, A and B. Presented in ABA form, this effectively creates three impromptus, A, B and A.

Only *Three Impromptus on Portuguese Popular Motifs* was orchestrated by Viana da Mota; *Vito* was orchestrated by an unknown musician and later revised by me, and the *Chula* was orchestrated by the well-known composer and conductor Frederico de Freitas (1902-1980).

Álvoro Cassuto

¹ Translation by Richard Francis Burton, 1880.

Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra

The award-winning Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra is the UK's oldest continuing professional symphony orchestra, dating from 1840. The dynamic young Russian, Vasily Petrenko, was appointed Principal Conductor of the orchestra in September 2006 and in September 2009 became Chief Conductor.

The orchestra gives over sixty concerts each season in Liverpool Philharmonic Hall and tours widely throughout the United Kingdom and internationally, most recently touring to China, Switzerland, France, Spain, Germany, Romania and the Czech Republic.

In recent seasons world première performances have

included major works by Sir Peter Maxwell Davies, Sir John Tavener, Karl Jenkins, Stewart Copeland, Michael Nyman, Michael Torke, Nico Muhly and James Horner, alongside works by Liverpool-born and North West-based composers.

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Álvaro Cassuto

Álvaro Cassuto is Portugal's foremost conductor. He has been Music Director of the Portuguese National Radio Symphony Orchestra, the University of California Symphony Orchestra, the Rhode Island Philharmonic, the National Orchestra of New York, the Israel Raanana Symphony Orchestra, and the Lisbon Metropolitan Orchestra.

He was also the founding Music Director of three other Portuguese orchestras, the Nova Filarmonia Portuguesa, the Portuguese Symphony Orchestra and the Algarve Orchestra.

Born in Porto, he studied in Lisbon, and after establishing himself as one of the most

promising young composers of the avant-garde of the early 1960s, went on to study conducting with Herbert von Karajan in Berlin. After graduating from the Law School at the University of Lisbon, he obtained his conducting degree in Vienna.

A recipient of the Koussevitzky Prize in Tanglewood among many other honours, he has enjoyed a career of high international acclaim, and spent almost two decades in the United States where his annual subscription concerts at Carnegie Hall with the National Orchestra of New York were enthusiastically received by *The New York Times*.

He has been a frequent guest of many leading orchestras, including the London Symphony, the Royal Philharmonic, the London Philharmonic, The Philadelphia Orchestra, and dozens of others across the world. He has a discography encompassing over fifty recordings with a variety of orchestras and for different labels, among which a highly successful ongoing series for Marco Polo and Naxos, initiated in 1997 and dedicated to Portugal's most important composers, which has met with enthusiastic and unanimous praise from the international press.

In 2009 the President of Portugal bestowed on him the degree of Grand Officer of the Military Order of Sant'Iago da Espada, the highest honour ever granted to a musician.



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The most distinguished pianist of his generation, a brilliant pedagogue and a highly gifted composer, José Viana da Mota was a towering personality in the field of Portuguese music. Disapproving of ‘modernistic’ compositional trends he stopped composing around 1910 but not before he had written his *Symphony ‘To the Homeland’*, a brilliantly orchestrated paean to Portuguese prowess and discovery which makes use of Portuguese folk dances and songs. Based on the dramatic life and murder of the 14th-century noblewoman Inês de Castro, Viana da Mota’s Lisztian symphonic poem is an early work notable for its kaleidoscopic sections full of inspiring contrasts. This recording presents the complete orchestral works of Viana da Mota.

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	À Pátria (To the Homeland) – Sinfonia, Op. 13 (1895)	43:23
1	I. Allegro eroico	9:40
2	II. Adagio molto	13:51
3	III. Vivace	6:14
4	IV. Decadence – Fight – Resurgence	13:38
5	Inês de Castro – Tone Poem (1886)	13:27
6	Chula do Douro (orch. Frederico de Freitas (1902-1980)) (date unknown)*	2:12
7	Três improvisos sobre motivos populares portuguesas (Three Impromptus on Portuguese Popular Motifs) (date unknown)*	3:55
8	Vito (orch. unknown, rev. Cassuto) (date unknown/2015)*	4:25

***WORLD PREMIÈRE RECORDING**

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Álvaro Cassuto

Recorded at The Friary, Liverpool, England, on 7th and 8th April, 2015

Producer and engineer: Phil Rowlands • Publisher: AvA Musical Editions, Lisbon, Portugal

Booklet notes: Álvaro Cassuto • Cover: *Torre de Belém, Lisbon* by Punto Studio Foto (Fotolia.com)