



Joly  
**BRAGA SANTOS**

**Piano Concerto**

**Symphonic Overtures Nos. 1 and 2**

**Goran Filipec, Piano**

**Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra**

**Álvaro Cassuto**

## Joly Braga Santos (1924–1988)

### Eight Orchestral Works

José Manuel Joly Braga Santos (b. 1924, Lisbon–d. 1988, Lisbon), better known as Joly Braga Santos, was Portugal's greatest orchestral composer. The fact that he only composed six symphonies is misleading considering the importance the symphony orchestra had for him; but it is easily explainable.

Indeed, from 1946 through 1950 he composed his first four symphonies in a style which he inherited – and further developed – from his teacher and mentor Luis de Freitas Branco, whose four symphonies served as an example of the 'monumentality in music' which Freitas Branco and Joly himself advocated. (I recorded them for Naxos with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra and the RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra – 8.570765, 8.572059, 8.572370, 8.572624.) He then went to Italy to familiarise himself with the new trends of composition many of which he incorporated in his music. With the new style he subsequently developed being alien to the traditional form of the symphony, he concentrated on shorter orchestral works, and only returned to the full symphonic form after a 'break' of 16 years. However, he never neglected the orchestra, which was undoubtedly his most beloved musical instrument.

Joly (as he was generally called and known) and I were very close friends despite the 14-year age gap which separated us. Suffice to say that in 1959 he premiered my first orchestral work which I wrote at his suggestion, and in 1988 I premiered his last orchestral work, which I asked him to compose for the inaugural concert of the New Portuguese Philharmonia. And since the seven albums with 22 of his orchestral works which I recorded for Naxos were greeted with enthusiastic reviews, I accepted the suggestion of a good friend to dedicate another album to some of his works not yet recorded, and therefore unknown to the average music lover.

When selecting and assembling these works, it turned out that most of them belonged to his first period, before he studied in Italy. The only orchestral work on this

album which he composed many years later, and which has never been recorded, is his *Piano Concerto* – and since all of these works are a vivid showcase of his musical development, their most natural sequence is chronological order.

Regarding this sequence, I would like to point out that the first three works as well as the *Piano Concerto* were written for a large orchestra with full-bodied string sections, while the remaining four works are all short and composed for a reduced ensemble, without heavy brass or percussion, and quite naturally with a smaller string section in mind, although this is not specifically indicated. These four 'miniatures', or 'vignettes' as I call them, are based on four different Portuguese folk songs, and have a coherence which I will address after analysing the first three works on this album.

*Symphonic Overture No. 1* is the first work Joly composed for orchestra at the age of 21. It follows the well-established form of the orchestral one-movement overture with a slow introduction, similar to the first movement of many of the symphonies of the great masters of the past. The slow introduction played by the flute with a sustained accompanying note in the English Horn, follows Joly's style of this period, which is based on modal harmonies, and the systematic exclusion of the dominant seventh chord which so strongly prevailed in the Classical and Romantic periods. These were stylistic issues which had been adhered to by Luis de Freitas Branco, who also advocated and re-established in Portugal the symphonic tradition created in the first half of the 19th Century by João Domingos Bomtempo, and interrupted by the more than 50-year-long preference of Italian opera at the well-known, and then highly popular, São Carlos Opera Theatre in Lisbon. The main theme of the *Allegro* section which follows the slow introduction, is based on the same intervals as those of the initial flute solo, (another stylistic feature which Joly inherited from César Franck via Freitas Branco, who unified their works by basing their main themes on an initial musical 'cell' or 'motif', quite different

from, but not totally unrelated to, Wagner's Leitmotiv). After a lyrical second theme, and a climax, Joly returns to the slow introduction, now in the bassoon with the accompaniment of a sustained horn, after which we have the traditional recapitulation and coda.

*Symphonic Overture No. 2* – or 'Lisboa' (*Abertura Sinfónica*) according to the title page of the autograph score – is larger in concept than *No. 1* but follows the same basic structure. A slow introduction by the first horn establishes the 'musical cell' on which the strong and highly energetic main theme of the *Allegro* section is based. This *Allegro* section is in sonata form and has a highly expansive and lyrical second theme. At the climax of this section, there is the development which ends with a reminiscence of the initial 'motif', now in a 'distant' solo trumpet. After bringing the music to a complete stop, a soft-starting coda builds up in a faster tempo to a brilliant ending. Joly wrote a *Symphonic Overture No. 3* in 1954 and I recorded it for Naxos with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra (8.572815).

Meanwhile, in 1952 he wrote the radiophonic opera *Viver ou Morrer* ('To Live or To Die') for the National Portuguese Radio. This opera was preceded by a large *Prelude* which, due to its sombre and tragic character, establishes a vivid contrast to the two preceding works. It resembles more an independent symphonic poem than an operatic overture. Indeed, from a slow, dramatic, beginning with a unison low A in the pizzicato strings and a crescendo–diminuendo in the percussion, played twice, the woodwinds enter with the main theme. It is an intense and expressive lament emphasising the opening scene of the opera, a battlefield with a large number of dead soldiers, and the appearance of two ladies searching for the bodies of her husbands, with whom they develop an anguishing conversation throughout the 50-minute-long opera. The *Prelude* develops in the form of waves which come and go, underlined by fast 'runs' in the strings and contrasting sections. Quite naturally, it ends *pianissimo*.

After these three works, all of which use the full forces of a large orchestra, we have four independent 'miniatures', for a relatively small orchestra. I have ordered them according to the chronological sequence in

which they were written: *Pastoral* in 6/8 metre marked *Allegretto non troppo*, *Romance* in 3/4 marked *Andante tranquillo*, *Symphonic Prelude* in 4/4 marked *Adagio*, and *Intermezzo* in 2/2 marked *Allegretto*.

Each one has a different character (i.e. light and dancing, sombre and thoughtful, like a lament, happy and forward looking) which is brought forward through different tempi (almost fast, slow, very slow, fast) and noteworthy key relationships. Indeed, the *Pastoral* is in F (neither major nor minor but in Lydian mode which is close to F major), the *Romance* is in E minor, the *Symphonic Prelude* is in B minor, and the *Intermezzo* is in A major.

Did Joly intend them to form a four-movement 'suite'? I doubt it, but they certainly could be performed in this way, and they would form a very pleasant suite indeed.

The last work on this album, Joly's only *Piano Concerto*, opens to us a different world of sound and style. Here we are in the midst of Joly's second musical phase, which started in 1962 with his *Three Symphonic Sketches* (which are available on the same recording as the *Symphonic Overture No. 3* mentioned earlier).

The *Piano Concerto* has a large percussion section making it sound almost like a concerto for piano, percussion and orchestra. It is a vehicle for a virtuoso pianist, as are so many works by pianist-composers such as those by Chopin or Liszt. Other pianist-composers such as Mozart or Beethoven preferred a strong balance between orchestra and soloist and gave them equal importance. In Joly's concerto, however, it is clear that the composer gave the pianist a much more relevant role than the orchestra, although he himself was not a pianist. Neither was he, as a composer, prone to creating soloistic fireworks. He was, after all, a symphonist. However, exceptions often defy the rule.

The work has three movements: The first, *Allegro vivace* in 4/4, starts with a virtuosic display of the pianist followed by an orchestral *tutti*. The movement develops in the same fashion, with short sections for the full orchestra alone, and somewhat longer sections for the pianist accompanied by the percussionists. The only time in this movement where the piano and orchestra display

their 'ensemble', is in the last section, the coda. All in all, the movement is close to a *moto perpetuo*, due to its rhythmic impulse throughout.

The second movement, *Largo*, is, quite to the contrary, like an exercise of walking on ice with slippers: most of the time, no rhythm can be identified, and the only well-defined sections are the piano solo close to the beginning, and the highly expansive *tutti* close to the end, in which the full orchestra has, finally, a strong lyrical statement, while the piano is relegated to a mere accompanying role.

The third movement is the most accomplished one of all three. It is developed in a kind of *rondo* form, where some important sections are repeated a number of times. It starts with a most curious *tutti* for the strings, whose players are asked to use their instruments as percussion instruments, hitting them with their bare right hand as if they were drums! After a quite lengthy introduction which keeps us waiting for something important to happen, the main theme appears in the piano. It is a cute little tune,

like a puppet dancing around. It reappears once in the middle of the movement and then disappears for good.

As to the tonality of this work, not a single one can be identified. Actually, as far as harmony is concerned, Joly moves with total freedom and abandon from tonality to atonalism, using tone clusters (as in the piano solo part in the first two bars) as much as he uses major or minor chords, mainly at the end of a movement. While he systematically starts a movement without any harmonic definition, he systematically ends each movement with a clear tonal chord. Thus, the first movement ends with two E major chords, the second with a sustained chord in A minor, and the last movement with a glorious D major chord.

During Joly's lifetime, he moved from strict modal harmony to free atonalism, without relinquishing the main features of his orchestral writing, as these and my preceding Naxos recordings clearly demonstrate.

Álvaro Cassuto

## Goran Filipec



Photo: Josip Sore

Born in Rijeka in 1981, Goran Filipec studied at the Ino Mirkovich Academy in Croatia, at the Tchaikovsky Conservatory in Moscow, the Royal Conservatory in The Hague and the Conservatoire national supérieur de musique et de danse de Paris, and during his early career was a top prizewinner of several international piano competitions (Premio Mario Zanfi 'Franz Liszt', the Concurso de Parnassos, the José Iturbi International Music Competition and the Gabala International Piano Competition). He performs in Europe, the United States, South America and Japan as recitalist and soloist with the leading orchestras. Equally known for interpretations of standard piano repertoire as well as for discoveries of forgotten musical gems, he cultivates a particular leaning towards the Classical and Romantic repertoire and works of pronounced virtuosity. Filipec's recordings for the Naxos Music Group include the complete piano music of Croatian composers Ivo Maček (GP681) and Blagoje Bersa (GP767), an album entitled *Paganini at the Piano* (GP769), featuring brilliant transcriptions and variations by the pianist-composers of the so-called golden age of piano, as well as three contributions to the collection of Liszt's *Complete Piano Works* on Naxos: *Poems* (8.573794), *Dances* (8.573705) and *Paganini Studies* (8.573458) awarded the prestigious Grand Prix du Disque of the Liszt Society. [www.goran-filipec.com](http://www.goran-filipec.com)

## Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra



Photo: Mark McNulty

Founded in 1840 by a group of Liverpool music-lovers, the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic is the UK's oldest continuing professional symphony orchestra and one of the world's oldest concert societies. Vasily Petrenko was appointed principal conductor of the orchestra in September 2006 and in September 2009 became chief conductor. Petrenko joins a distinguished line of musicians who have led the orchestra, including Max Bruch, Sir Charles Hallé, Sir Henry Wood, Sir Malcolm Sargent, Sir John Pritchard, Sir Charles Groves, Walter Weller, David Atherton, Marek Janowski, Libor Pešek KBE, Petr Altrichter and Gerard Schwarz. The orchestra performs over 70 concerts each season at its home, Liverpool Philharmonic Hall, across other venues in the city, and also performs widely throughout the UK and internationally, most recently touring to China, Switzerland, France, Luxembourg, Spain, Germany, Romania, the Czech Republic and Japan. The orchestra has given world premiere performances of major works by Sir Peter Maxwell Davies, Sir John Tavener, Karl Jenkins, Stewart Copeland, Michael Nyman, James Horner and Sir James MacMillan alongside works by Liverpool-born and North West-based composers. The orchestra has a distinguished discography with international record labels. Recent additions include a third volume of Vaughan Williams' symphonies, award-winning surveys of Rachmaninov's symphonies, orchestral works and complete piano concertos with Simon Trpčeski and the complete symphonies of Shostakovich, Elgar, and Tchaikovsky's symphonies and piano concertos which have garnered worldwide critical acclaim. The recording of Tchaikovsky's *Symphonies Nos. 1, 2 and 5*, won Recording of the Year and Orchestral Recording of the Year at the *BBC Music Magazine Awards 2017*. [liverpoolphil.com](http://liverpoolphil.com)

## Álvaro Cassuto



Photo: Anita Ayash

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 50 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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Joly Braga Santos was Portugal's greatest orchestral composer, and this recording presents eight world premiere recordings including his very first work for orchestra, the *Symphonic Overture No. 1*. This and the *Symphonic Overture No. 2* share a unified structure and lyrical themes, contrasting with the sombre *Prelude*, originally written for an intensely tragic opera. Braga Santos's characterful four 'miniatures' (tracks 4–7) are brought together to form an attractive suite, while his only *Piano Concerto* is a virtuoso spectacle with a large part for percussion and a gloriously anarchic approach to timbre and tonality.



Joly  
**BRAGA SANTOS**  
(1924–1988)

|           |   |              |
|-----------|---|--------------|
| <b>1</b>  | <b>Symphonic Overture No. 1, Op. 8 (1946)</b>                                     | <b>7:17</b>  |
| <b>2</b>  | <b>Symphonic Overture No. 2, Op. 11,<br/>'Lisboa' (Abertura Sinfónica) (1947)</b> | <b>12:34</b> |
| <b>3</b>  | <b>Viver ou Morrer, Op. 19 – Prelude (1952)</b>                                   | <b>13:24</b> |
| <b>4</b>  | <b>Pastoral (1955)</b>  | <b>2:05</b>  |
| <b>5</b>  | <b>Romance (1955)</b>   | <b>2:29</b>  |
| <b>6</b>  | <b>Symphonic Prelude (1955)</b>   | <b>4:29</b>  |
| <b>7</b>  | <b>Intermezzo (1956)</b>  | <b>2:38</b>  |
|           | <b>Piano Concerto, Op. 52 (1973)</b>  | <b>16:40</b> |
| <b>8</b>  | <b>I. Allegro vivace</b>  | <b>5:42</b>  |
| <b>9</b>  | <b>II. Largo</b>  | <b>5:36</b>  |
| <b>10</b> | <b>III. Allegro moderato</b>  | <b>5:12</b>  |

**WORLD PREMIERE RECORDINGS**

**Goran Filipec, Piano** **8–10**

**Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra • Álvaro Cassuto**

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