

The NAXOS logo is a blue square with the word "NAXOS" in white, serif, all-caps font. Above the text are three horizontal lines, and below it are three vertical lines, resembling a stylized classical building facade.

NAXOS



Sérgio
Azevedo

**Hukvaldy
Cycle**

Ensemble Darcos
Nuno Côrte-Real

Sérgio
AZEVEDO

(b. 1968)

Hukvaldy Cycle

Two Pieces after <i>Po zarostlém chodníčku</i> (‘On an Overgrown Path’) (2016/2018)	2:57
1 No. 1. Angústia indescritível (‘Unutterable anguish’)	0:58
2 No. 2. A pequena Coruja que não chegou a voar (‘The little owl has not flown away!’)	1:59
Hukvaldy Sonata (2018)	19:45
3 I. Con moto, ma appassionato	4:13
4 II. The hunting for <i>Přihody lišky Bystroušky</i> (‘The Cunning Little Vixen’)	3:34
5 III. V mlhách... (‘In the Mists...’)	6:16
6 IV. Sbohem... (‘Goodbye...’)	5:29
7 Hukvaldy Trio (2015)	20:31
V mlhách...1912 (‘In the Mists...1912’) (2009)	18:35
8 I. Molto adagio	5:37
9 II. Molto adagio	3:02
10 III. Molto adagio	2:13
11 IV. Por um caminho frondoso	3:30
12 V. Molto adagio	4:06
13 À procura da raposa (‘Searching for the Fox’) (2019)	6:51

Ensemble Darcos

Marina Camponês, Piccolo 13, Flute 1 2 13 • Cândida Oliveira, Clarinet 13

José Pereira, Violin 3–13 • Reyes Gallardo, Viola 8–12

Filipe Quaresma, Cello 7–13 • Helder Marques, Piano

Nuno Côrte-Real, Music Director/Conductor 13

Sérgio Azevedo (b. 1968)

Hukvaldy Cycle

This series of five chamber pieces came about as a result of a commission from the Portuguese piano quartet Ensemble Darcos in 2009. Czech and Moravian culture has always been present in my spiritual and creative life, so I decided to take as my basis Janáček’s 1912 piano cycle *In the Mists*, using musical fragments to create a kind of doppelgänger of the original while at the same time sending the music in unexpected directions. The result, *V mlhách...1912* (‘In the Mists...1912’), is, like the mists of Janáček’s title, something indefinite and unclassifiable, a communication across epochs from one composer to another.

In the Mists...1912 (2009) marked the beginning of a decade’s adventure during which I explored the intimate corners of Janáček’s musical universe and my own. My desk filled with all manner of reference material: copies of Janáček’s letters, essays and other texts; sketches of his ‘spoken melodies’ (Janáček had a habit of writing down common speech he overheard while walking around the streets in the form of short melodies, together with the spoken text), photographs and all the biographies I could find, in several languages. Then, of course, there was his music. By the time I had finished what became the *Hukvaldy Cycle*, Janáček had become like family: someone with whom I could speak on my own terms through my music.

The connection between *In the Mists...1912* and the next commission, from Trio Pangea, *Hukvaldy Trio* (2015), is complex and ambiguous. In the former, three fragments from Janáček’s piano cycle are gradually abandoned as the music travels towards new regions; in the latter no Janáček music is used directly but instead there are fragments of my own material from *In the Mists...1912*. I had wanted to push the ideas behind *In the Mists...1912* further by gradually cutting all unnecessary elements in order to achieve maximum expression. With each successive piece I reduced the number of instruments: the piano quartet is followed by a piano trio which is followed by a violin and piano duo. The

final piece in the cycle, *Searching for the Fox* (2019), employs larger forces but the music comprises just a few notes which repeat more than they develop, thus upping the intensity.

After the first two commissions a third request in 2017, this time from the Dryads Duo (violin and piano), brought me again to the music of Janáček. The musicians had commissioned four composers to write a companion piece to perform alongside a work chosen from their repertoire. Because the Duo had recently recorded Janáček’s *Sonata* for violin and piano, this was the piece I chose. The resulting *Hukvaldy Sonata* (2018), for which I made a previous essay in the *Two Pieces after Janáček’s Po zarostlém chodníčku* (‘On an Overgrown Path’), takes material from several Janáček sources: the opera *The Cunning Little Vixen*, *In the Mists* and two short fragments from pieces I and II of the piano cycle *On an Overgrown Path* – music that relates to memory and the past. The act of incorporating my own material from the first two commissions brings to mind Freud’s book *Das Unheimliche* (‘The Uncanny’), which explores the feeling of shock that can result when a slight change is made to something known, producing something between the familiar and the unknown.

Just as the cycle appeared complete a request came from my colleague and friend Luís Carvalho, whose ensemble Camerata Nov’Arte needed a short piece for a tour of Slovakia. The ensemble comprises the same instrumental forces – flute, clarinet, violin, cello, and piano – as Schoenberg’s *Pierrot Lunaire*, written the same year (1912) as *In the Mists*. The coincidence of the date prompted me to write a fifth piece, one more ambitious in terms of instrumental scoring.

Searching for the Fox (2019), with its mixture of instrumental colours and the addition of new timbres in the flute/piccolo and the clarinet, distinguishes itself from the other works in the cycle. From a structural and formal point of view it is even more austere and objective than its companions – closer to late Janáček than the quartet, trio

or duo which rather reflect the post-Romantic intimism of impressionist and expressionist piano pieces. The piece takes a flute and piano motif from the fourth movement of Janáček's *Capriccio* for piano left-hand and chamber ensemble (1926). The connecting music between each repetition of the motif is removed and new elements added, derived from the other pieces in the cycle. *Capriccio* is subtitled *Vzdor* ('Defiance'), and this word informed my approach to *Searching for the Fox*. The effect is of a fight between the various musical cells, and the final gesture represents an existential challenge, one that refuses to give up. Less lyrical than *Capriccio*, *Searching for the Fox* nevertheless shares with that work a certain humour which softens the deep nostalgia of Janáček's music and my own *Hukvaldy Cycle*.

The title *Searching for the Fox* is a reference to Janáček's *The Cunning Little Vixen* and also acknowledges the Czech writer Milan Kundera who understood Janáček's genius more than most and whose favourite opera by the composer was *The Cunning Little Vixen* – a tender and incomparable reflection on life, death and the cyclical renewal of nature. The last part of the cycle is thus also a reflection on itself, and about my relationship with the music and personality of Léos Janáček through the mists of time.

Sérgio Azevedo



Ensemble Darcos

Ensemble Darcos was created in 2002 by composer and conductor Nuno Côrte-Real with the aim of interpreting European chamber music and the compositions of Côrte-Real. The group's permanent members, Filipe Quaresma (cello), Gaël Rassaert (violin), Helder Marques (piano) and Reyes Gallardo (viola), are regularly joined by leading international musicians, such as cellist Mats Lidström, violinists Massimo Spadano, Giulio Plotino and Junko Naito, pianist António Rosado, violist Ana Bela Chaves and the percussionist Miquel Bernat. Ensemble Darcos has performed at Magnus Hall and St John's Smith Square and is a regular participant at the Dias da Música Festival. Recordings include *Volúpia* comprising chamber music by Côrte-Real (Numérica, 2012), *Mirror of the Soul* (Odradek, 2016), *Lagarto Pintado* (Artway, 2019), *Agora Muda Tudo* (Odradek, 2019), *Cante* by Nuno Côrte-Real (Odradek, 2020) and *Time Stands Still* (Artway, 2020).

Nuno Côrte-Real

Photo: Jorge Carmona



Born in Lisbon, Nuno Côrte-Real is one of the most important Portuguese composers and conductors working today. He has twice been awarded the prize for Best Classical Music Work by the Portuguese Society of Authors: for the song cycle *Agora Muda Tudo* in 2018; and for the opera *Canção do Bandido* in 2019. He received a scholarship from the National Centre of Culture, and in 2003 he was awarded the Silver Merit Medal of the Torres Vedras City Council. Premieres of his works include *Seven Dances to the Death of the Harpist* at the Kleine Zaal of the Royal Concertgebouw Amsterdam; *Little Sea Songs* at the Purcell Room in London; *Concerto Vedras* at St. Peter's Episcopal Church in New York; *Novo Cancioneiro* at the Siglufjörður Folk Music Festival in Reykjavik, and the dance piece *Andarilhos* at the Casa da Música in Porto. He has conducted the Mahler Chamber Orchestra, Giuseppe Verdi Symphony, the Castilla y León Symphony Orchestra, the Orquesta Ciudad de Granada and Lisbon Metropolitan Orchestra, among others, and collaborated on numerous projects with Ensemble Darcos.



Sérgio Azevedo

Sérgio Azevedo was born in Coimbra, Portugal, in 1968. He studied with Fernando Lopes-Graça at the Academia de Amadores de Música and later with Constança Capdeville at the Escola Superior de Música in Lisbon, from where he graduated with the highest marks. Azevedo has won several important prizes in Portugal and abroad. His works are regularly performed around the world and are available on his more than 40 CDs. He has published two books on music, *The Invention of Sounds* and *Olga Prats – Piano Singular*, and he writes for *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* and for RDP (Portuguese National Radio Broadcasting). He is frequently invited to write programme notes and to present concerts at the National Theatre of São Carlos and the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation. Sérgio Azevedo completed his doctorate at the Minho University in 2011 and since 1993 he has taught at the Escola Superior de Música in Lisbon. His music is published by AVA – Musical Editions.

Photo: Carlos Mateus de Lima

Taking its title from the village in which Leoš Janáček was born, this album of chamber works by the prize-winning Portuguese composer Sérgio Azevedo reveals his deep affinity for the music and personality of the great Czech composer. Using fragments from Janáček's *In the Mists* and *On an Overgrown Path* has allowed Azevedo to create a 'doppelgänger' of the original material. It draws his music in unsuspected directions, either abandoning the fragments as the music develops or generating new aural contexts. The resultant music represents an unclassifiable but profound communication between two composers from two different epochs.

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Hukvaldy Cycle

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|-------------|---|--------------|
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***WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING**

Ensemble Darcos • Nuno Côrte-Real

A detailed track list can be found inside the booklet.

Recorded: 25–27 July 2020 at Atlântico Blue Studios, Paço de Arcos, Portugal • Producer: Nuno Côrte-Real
Engineer: Süse Ribeiro • Editors: Nuno Côrte-Real, Süse Ribeiro • Mastering: Mário Barreiros (MB Estúdio)

Booklet notes: Sérgio Azevedo • Publisher: AvA Musical Editions

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Cover photo by Sérgio Azevedo

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