

Fernando LOPES-GRAÇA

COMPLETE MUSIC FOR STRING QUARTET AND PIANO VOLUME TWO

FOURTEEN ANNOTATIONS FOR STRING QUARTET
STRING QUARTET NO. 2
PIANO QUARTET

Olga Prats, piano
Quarteto Lopes-Graça

INCLUDES FIRST 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 taught 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 as a piano-teacher 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, 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 Charles 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 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 all teaching. 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 publication of the *Cancioneiro Popular Português*, featuring transcriptions of many of the recordings.

A new stage in Lopes-Graça's musical development was initiated by the piano quintet *Canto de Amor e de Morte* ('Song of Love and Death') of 1961¹ 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. 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

¹ Recorded on Volume One of this series, Toccata Classics TOCC 0253, released in 2014, which also includes the String Quartet No. 1 (1961) and *Suite Rústica* No. 2 (1966).

the scores remained unpublished, until very recently, when AvA Musical 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 *Danças* (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.

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

by Frederick Gifford, Teresa Cascudo and Luís Pacheco Cunha

The works written for string quartet and combinations of strings and piano assembled on this CD and the former one in this 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:

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.¹

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.

Piano Quartet (1938; rev. 1963)

The Piano Quartet was completed in 1938, intended for presentation at an international composers' competition organised by the Quatuor Belge à Clavier; in the event, it was first performed, in a revised version, on 3 June 1963 at the seventh Gulbenkian Music Festival in Lisbon, performed by the Quarteto de Lisboa. It establishes an interesting turning point in Lopes-Graça's creative path, since it was then, during his stay in Paris, that Graça discovered the music of Bartók and Falla: not the Falla of *El Amor Brujo*, which Lopes-Graça disliked, presenting it as 'castañuelero' (a reference to the recurrent use of castanets in Spanish popular music), but the essential Falla who had written *Retábulo de Maese Pedro* and the Harpsichord Concerto. Through those composers, Lopes-Graça discovered that traditional music – in its form of 'imaginary folklore' – could represent a way to the (re)construction of a Portuguese national musical identity.

At this early stage in his career Lopes-Graça was already seriously experimenting with the idea of contrast, with ways to incorporate different musical styles within a single work, and so the Piano Quartet embodies a first attempt to synthesise a modern musical language, one that brings together references to the nineteenth-century heritage and to traditional music, combining the legacy of Beethoven (noticeable,

¹ 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.

for instance, in the motivic work which connects all three movements) with an appropriation of the kind of formal solutions which Falla adopts in his Harpsichord Concerto, and which Lopes-Graça introduces also in the two last movements of the Quartet. This work may well be considered the first step in a road he followed in the works which immediately followed, the Piano Sonata No. 2 of 1939, the two Piano Concertos and the Symphony, all composed in the early 1940s.

In the first movement of this Piano Quartet, *Allegro moderato* [1], for example, the principal material – a dance-like diatonic melody, which is suddenly interrupted by a rustic theme in the piano – constantly gives way to jarring changes: outbursts of quickly cascading scales in polyphony, unison rhythmic passages in octaves, a fugue, even passages where melody has been completely obscured. The alternation of simple and intensely complex elements to generate a dramatic architecture is a hallmark that recurs throughout his chamber music.

The second movement, *Largo con variazioni* [2], features an intensely dramatic construction deriving from a theme of utmost solemnity, presented by the strings in canonic sequence, over an ostinato *basso* in the piano, hence developing in sturdy ascending sequences, passages of trills, punctuated rhythms, tremolos, all melting into a demonic turmoil.

In stark contrast with the drama that has just unfolded, the third movement, *Allegro scherzando* [3], unfolds in a light, humorous atmosphere, recurring in effective imitations in the piano and the violin (soon joined by the other two players) which create a theatrical exchange – something of a ping-pong match, indeed. A middle section introduces another rustic theme wrapped in a music-box ambience, which soon gives way to child-like play, growing in intensity and musical elaboration. A piano cadenza returns the listener to the *Allegro scherzando* that opened the movement.

Fourteen Annotations for string quartet (1966)

These *Fourteen Annotations* put themselves at some distance from the norms heard in the earlier works in this series. The sparse textures of Anton Webern and the rhythmic ostinatos of Stravinsky's Russian period seem as important a lineage for these works as does the chamber music of Bartók. Each of these pieces rapidly explores a singular timbre, texture or musical gesture along its brief lifespan, only to be followed by a different, extremely contrasting example. The *Annotations* are fully developed miniatures that inhabit a highly chromatic world where individual sonority is an extremely important part of the discourse.

In contrast to the contemporary *Suite Rústica* No. 2, these brief pieces do not begin from the premise of real or imaginary popular songs, but boldly concentrate on more abstract concerns. And yet the overall network of influences is not so different. The *Annotations* immediately acknowledge the world of the

miniature that was so important in the freely atonal music of Schoenberg and Berg and, of course, the aphoristic output of Webern. The chromatic dissonance and rhythmic vitality of Bartók's Fourth and Fifth Quartets loom equally large behind Lopes-Graça's brief but powerful creations. Once again, Stravinsky's use of ostinato technique is invoked by Lopes-Graça to weave intricate, harmonically dissonant and static tapestries. It doesn't even seem too daring to hear the profiles of the songs of the people in the melodic shapes that at times slowly rise up and at other times suddenly cry out from the *Annotations*.

Lopes-Graça favours four basic schemes in the internal organisation of the *Annotations*: the development of an entire piece from one basic musical gesture, often imbued with a strong rhythmic character; the creation of textures through ostinato; an exploration of one basic and often striking timbre; and the use of symmetry to determine harmony or form or both:

4	No. 1	gesture			
5	No. 2	gesture			
6	No. 3		(ostinato)	timbre	(symmetry)
7	No. 4		ostinato		
8	No. 5	gesture			
9	No. 6		ostinato		
10	No. 7	gesture	ostinato		
11	No. 8		ostinato	timbre	symmetry
12	No. 9	gesture			
13	No. 10			timbre	
14	No. 11	gesture	(ostinato)		(symmetry)
15	No. 12		ostinato	timbre	symmetry
16	No. 13	gesture			
17	No. 14	gesture			

Although there is no single grand design that seems to dictate the overall arrangement of the *Fourteen Annotations*, there seems to have been far too much care for contrast among the compositional techniques and their resultant sound-worlds, and far too many symmetries (if the disposition above is seen as centered around the middle pieces) to consider the distribution haphazard. As if to highlight this near-symmetry, Lopes-Graça composes the last *Annotation* [17](#) as a near inversion of the first [4](#): the same motive appears in No. 1, played by first violin against a low pedal tone of D flat, and in No. 14, played by

cello, against a high pedal tone of D (the only instance of shared motivic material among *Annotations*). It is this type of chromatic mirroring through pitch-space that the chart attempts to convey through the indication 'symmetry'.

Indeed, this slightly skewed symmetry provides a fitting summary for the composer's method in general: rigorous to a point. It is as though the intellectual part of Lopes-Graça's outlook, concerned with formal symmetry and architectural beauty, finds its complement in a psychological part, concerned with vitality, energy and dramatic contrast. It is a mixture that results in a 'rough balance' more compelling than either approach alone could create. But the real joy of these miniatures lies in hearing the wealth of Lopes-Graça's invention, as he chooses and sculpts his materials.

String Quartet No. 2 (1982)

This late entry in the catalogue reveals a Lopes-Graça now twenty years along the path of exploring the intersection of the vernacular and the erudite. If the fusion is in some way the musical focus in earlier works like the First String Quartet, the synthesis now happens seamlessly and almost imperceptibly in this late work. Many of the precedents for this work fill the sixteen-year hiatus in Lopes-Graça's output of chamber music for strings: piano sonatas, ensemble pieces and a stream of choral works, many based on traditional songs and melodies (a category ever-present in his output). What served as episodic contrast (diatonic/chromatic, rustic/erudite) in earlier works is now transformed into a constant ebb and flow to create a truly distinct sound-world.

In the first-movement *Grazioso* [18], for example, straightforward diatonic material melts away even before the end of the first phrase. Isolated gestures in the style of the annotations are now worked into much longer continuities; the antagonistic drama of opposites has become an energised whole.

The second movement, *Burletta* [19], presents a newly composed melody in the style of a 'folk dance' but immediately extends it in a rigorous *stretto* (a development technique that might have been saved for dramatic emphasis much later in the narrative of an earlier work).

The 'song' harmonisation of the third movement, *Cavatina* [20] (a clear reference to the movement bearing the same title in Beethoven's String Quartet in B flat major, Op. 130) is both immediately recognisable as a song and at the same time otherworldly: singing has become idealised.

In the fourth-movement Finale [21] Lopes-Graça introduces very nervous rhythmic thematic material (in 7/8) that he subsequently develops into a whirlpool of ever-faster rotating figures, abruptly broken by the recurrence of the opening theme, now condensed into only four notes, posing a very expressive metaphysical question.

The manner in which these aspects are fully integrated into the discourse of this quartet is evidence of a real synthesis: Lopes-Graça has created a type of musical ‘prose poetry’ by embracing difference and thinking beyond style.

Fredrick Gifford (born in 1972 in Lancaster, Pennsylvania) is a composer, receiving his bachelor’s degree in composition from DePaul University in Chicago and his doctorate from Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. He teaches 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.

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 Karine Georgian.



Photo: André Roma

Olga Prats taught at the National Conservatoire 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 which she premiered and recorded; she was also the first Portuguese pianist to perform and record music by Astor Piazzolla.

The **Quarteto Lopes-Graça** – Luís Pacheco Cunha and Anne Victorino d'Almeida, violins; Isabel Pimentel, viola; Catherine Strynckx, cello – was formed at the National Conservatoire School of Music in Lisbon by four of its teachers with outstanding solo and chamber careers. It both bestows on the Conservatoire 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 the Azores (2008 and 2010), Andorra (2010) Madeira (2011) and Brazil (2013).



Photo: Helena Gonçalves

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'Almeida, *Misericórdia* (2007) by João Nascimento, the String Quartet No. 1, *Fado Luso*, Op. 104 (2009), by Jorge Costa-Pinto, *Prelúdio à Sesta das Cigarras* (2010) by Amílcar Vasques Dias, 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). Toccata Classics released the first CD in their two-disc survey of the complete Lopes-Graça music for string quartet and piano (TOCC 0253) in 2014.

Come and explore unknown music with us by joining the Toccata Discovery Club. Membership brings you two free CDs, big discounts on all Toccata Classics recordings and Toccata Press books, early ordering on all Toccata releases and a host of other benefits, for a modest annual fee of £20. You start saving as soon as you join. You can sign up online at the Toccata Classics website at www.toccataclassics.com.

Toccata Classics CDs are also available in the shops and can be ordered from our distributors around the world, a list of whom can be found at www.toccataclassics.com. If we have no representation in your country, please contact: Toccata Classics, 16 Dalkeith Court, Vincent Street, London SW1P 4HH, UK
Tel: +44/0 207 821 5020 E-mail: info@toccataclassics.com



Recorded in the Museu da Música Portuguesa, Monte Estoril, Portugal, on 24–29 June 2013

Piano: Bechstein (c. 1920)

Piano technician: Fernando Rosado

24Bit/96Khz recording (16bit/44.1khz CD)

Recording, editing and mastering: Mário Dinis Marques

Producer: Alejandro Erlich Oliva

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

Booklet notes: Fredrick Gifford, Teresa Cascudo and Luís Pacheco Cunha

Cover image of Fernando Lopes-Graça: Augusto Cabrita

Co-production: Musicamera Productions (www.musicamera.pt)

Music published by AvA Musical Editions (www.editions-ava.com)

Por favor consulte o website de Toccata Classics (www.toccataclassics.com/cd_notes/TOCC0254-cd-notes-pt.pdf) para aceder aos textos em português.

Cover design: David Baker (dmbaker@me.com)

Design and layout: Paul Brooks (paulmbrooks@virginmedia.com)

The Quartet would like to thank the following people for their essential support: Adriano Aguiar, Carla Raposeira (Inatel), Catarina Roquette and Conceição Correia (Museu da Música Portuguesa), David Erlich, Louise Rocha, Miguel Erlich, Natasa Sibalic, Taíssa Poliakova Cunha and all the crowdfunding supporters. We wish to acknowledge the important pioneering work of the Quarteto do Porto in assisting the composer and bringing to light these major works in the 1960s. A special thanks, too, to Cecília Fontes.

This CD was recorded on Fernando Lopes-Graça's own piano in the Museu da Música Portuguesa, which holds his papers.

Executive producer: Martin Anderson

TOCC 0254

© 2015, Toccata Classics, London

© 2015, Toccata Classics, London

