



Joly BRAGA SANTOS

COMPLETE CHAMBER MUSIC, VOLUME ONE

STRING QUARTET NO. 1 IN D MINOR, OP. 4

STRING QUARTET NO. 2, OP. 29

STRING SEXTET, OP. 65

Quarteto Lopes-Graça
Leonor Braga Santos, viola
Irene Lima, cello

FIRST COMPLETE RECORDING

JOLY BRAGA SANTOS: HIS LIFE AND WORK IN SUMMARY

by Piedade Braga Santos

José Manuel Joly Braga Santos was one of the most important composers in the history of Portuguese music – and my father. He was born in Lisbon on 14 May 1924 and was also living there at the time of his death (from a stroke) on 18 July 1988, aged only 64 and at the peak of his musical creativity. Having studied violin and composition at the National Conservatoire of Lisbon, he became a pupil of Luis de Freitas Branco (1890–1955), the leading Portuguese composer of the preceding generation. After the Second World War, he was able to go abroad, studying conducting with Hermann Scherchen (Venice, 1948; Lugano, 1958) and Antonino Votto, and composition with Virgilio Mortari (Rome, 1957–61). His six symphonies constitute the most important series in the genre in twentieth-century Portugal. His musical language drew on an intuitive sense of orchestration and feeling for musical architecture as well as an ear for drama, a fondness for long melodic phrases and a natural instinct for structural development, which together resulted in perfect formal coherence. In his own words, he wanted ‘to contribute toward a Latin symphonism and to react against the predominant tendency of the generation that preceded me to reject monumentalism in music’.¹

In his first works Braga Santos showed a tendency to modality, motivated by the desire to establish a connection between contemporary music and the golden period of Portuguese music, the Renaissance. One can also find melodic outlines of the oldest Portuguese folksongs. Although he was not particularly interested in Portuguese folklore, studying and composing at the country home of his mentor, Luís de Freitas Branco, in the rural south of Portugal, the Alentejo, he was naturally

¹ Article in the magazine *Arte Musical*, mid-1960s.

influenced by the ancient local folklore and considered it to be ‘of mesmerising originality and grandeur.’²

The first four symphonies followed one another quite rapidly (while Braga Santos was between the ages of 22 and 27) and were immediately performed by the Portuguese Radio Symphony Orchestra in Lisbon and well received. The founder and conductor of the Portuguese Radio Symphony Orchestra was the eminent Portuguese maestro Pedro de Freitas Branco (1986–1963), the younger brother of his teacher, a friend of Maurice Ravel and of Manuel de Falla, and former director of the Orchestre Lamoureux in Paris. Early on, Pedro de Freitas Branco recognised his brother’s pupil’s talent and launched Joly Braga Santos’ international career during the 1950s, conducting several premieres of his works around Europe. Other works of this period are the *Concerto for Strings*, *Variations on an Alentejo Theme* and three *Symphonic Overtures*. Most of these works were recorded, from the 1970s onwards, by the Portuguese label Strauss SP and, more recently, by Naxos/Marco Polo.

From 1960 onwards, in keeping with the works of many other post-War European composers, his style became more chromatic. A period of travel and the time he devoted to conducting provided him with what he described as a useful period of rest, decisive in the evolution of his style towards increased chromaticism and less traditional use of form. To this period belong the *Three Symphonic Sketches* (distinguished with an award by Donemus in 1963), the *Sinfonietta*, the Requiem, his Fifth and Sixth Symphonies and the *Divertimento* No. 2. The Fifth Symphony won recognition from the UNESCO ‘Tribune Internationale des Compositeurs’ in 1966.

Braga Santos also wrote three operas, chamber music for a wide variety of instruments and ensembles, film scores and several choral works based on poems from the major classical and modern Portuguese and Spanish poets, such as Camões, Antero de Quental, Teixeira de Pascoaes, Fernando Pessoa, Garcilaso de la Vega, António Machado and Rosalía de Castro.

² *Ibid.*

He lectured on composition at the National Conservatoire of Lisbon, where he introduced a chair in musical analysis. He was director of the Oporto Symphony Orchestra and one of the founders of Juventude Musical Portuguesa ('Portuguese Musical Youth'). As music critic and journalist, he produced a vast range of work for several Portuguese and foreign newspapers and journals. In 1977 he was distinguished with the Order of Santiago de Espada (the most important civil order in the country) by the President of the Republic of Portugal.

From the mid-1990s the series of recordings of Braga Santos' orchestral works made by the conductor Álvaro Cassuto on the Marco Polo/Naxos labels quickly spread awareness of his music across borders, finally gaining it stable international visibility. The 2004 recording of the Symphony No. 4 received the Cannes Classical Award in the category 'Premier CD'. The publication of my father's scores, not least by Ava Musical Editions in Lisbon, has also been important in making his music available to a wider public. This series of his chamber output will plug another gap, making it better known to audiences both outside and inside Portugal. But much more remains to be done.

I am aware that in this brief outline of Braga Santos' life and work I have not said anything about him as an individual and a father. He was, indeed, quite a special person. Kind and generous, he loved his two daughters dearly, with a kind of enchanted passion – he called us 'his little wonders' or 'his little masterpieces'. He was quite eccentric – a very absent-minded man, often lost in his inner musical world – and the first to laugh at himself because of his distractions. As we saw it, he was the perfect companion for two little girls. And he took us everywhere: to concert rehearsals, to the National Radio, where he worked, to the zoo on weekends.... My mother was a singer, a lyric soprano. She was always a bit worried when we went out with him alone, and would say to us: 'Take good care of your father!' And we were, of course, very proud to do exactly that. But I can't hope to do him justice in these few paragraphs, and so I hope to discuss his personality and his achievements more fully in the later volumes in this series.

Piedade Braga Santos is the elder daughter of Joly Braga Santos. She took a BA in History and Master of Historical Sociology at the New University of Lisbon, completing her music education at the Lisbon National Conservatoire. Since 2006 she has been organising her father's scores and documents and has also written widely about him. She has also lectured at the Lisbon School of Economics and Management and was research assistant at the Gulbenkian Institute for Science.

JOLY BRAGA SANTOS: COMPLETE CHAMBER MUSIC, VOLUME ONE

by Bernardo Mariano

Although it is Braga Santos' orchestral music that put his name before an international audience, his output of chamber music (eighteen works in total) is no less important for the understanding of his musical personality and career. This Toccata Classics series of recordings of his complete chamber music by the Quarteto Lopes-Graça and guest artists – the first systematic survey yet undertaken – will help establish a broader appreciation of his achievement.¹

José Manuel Joly Braga Santos was one of the leading figures of twentieth-century Portuguese music, along with Luís de Freitas Branco (1890–1955), Fernando Lopes-Graça (1906–94) and Jorge Peixinho (1940–95). A prolific composer, he was also active as a conductor and music critic. Of precocious musical ability, he was a private student of Luís de Freitas Branco, whose strong personality would mark his first creative phase, which lasted until a period spent in Italy, from 1957 to 1961.

Braga Santos' first works date from his seventeenth and eighteenth years, but more noteworthy and impressive was the sudden awakening of his symphonic gift

¹ Some of this output has already been recorded. Of the three works in this album, there is a recording of the Quartets by the Lisbon Quartet, on Strauss SP 4356, released in 1990 but long since unobtainable, and another of the Sextet, on PortugalSom ps 5015, from 2009.

(a medium more in keeping with his expansive personality), which resulted in four symphonies written from the ages of 22 to 26. His orchestral output also benefited from the encouragement of Pedro de Freitas Branco,² then music director of the National Symphony Orchestra of Portugal.

When, in 1945, aged 21, Braga Santos decided to write a string quartet, there was little in Portugal in the way of precedent for him to draw on. At the time, the two quartets by Vianna da Motta (1868–1948) would not have been known; Luís de Freitas Branco composed his one and only quartet in 1911 (aged only twenty); Lopes-Graça did not begin to dedicate himself to the genre until 1964; and another relevant composer of the time, Frederico de Freitas (1902–80), had written one in 1926 and would compose another in 1946.

Braga Santos' two quartets, dated 1945 and 1957 respectively, belong to his first creative phase, one in which a melodic, harmonic and contrapuntal modal language, framed in European Neo-Classical aesthetics, predominates.

The **String Quartet No. 1 in D minor, Op. 4**, was first performed on 28 February 1946 at the Academia de Amadores de Música in Lisbon, in a recital³ in the Sonata Society concert series.⁴ The work is dedicated to his teacher and mentor Luís de Freitas Branco. The performers at the premiere were Ilídio Gomes and João Nogueira (violins), Fausto Caldeira (viola) and Carlos de Figueiredo (cello), all members of the National Symphony Orchestra.⁵ It is a work of considerable scope, in four movements, lasting about 36 minutes. The tonality is a modal D minor.

² The younger brother of composer Luís de Freitas Branco and a conductor of international reputation, Pedro de Freitas Branco (1896–1963) premiered many of Braga Santos' works, in Portugal and abroad. He was also his first teacher of conducting.

³ The programme of this recital also featured works by Stravinsky (his Piano Sonata and *Piano Rag Music*) and Shostakovich (the Cello Sonata, Op. 40), all having their Portuguese premieres.

⁴ The Sonata Society was created in December 1942 by Fernando Lopes-Graça and presented a total of 85 concerts before it was wound up in 1960. It was an important centre for the promotion and dissemination of modern and contemporary Portuguese and international chamber and piano music in Lisbon, establishing links with the International Society of Contemporary Music (ISCM). Two other works by Braga Santos were performed there: his Violin Sonata (on 11 November 1947) and the *Concerto for Strings* in D minor, Op. 17 (on 22 June 1953). Coincidentally, one of the reviews of the inaugural 'Sonata' concert (on 28 December 1942), published in the magazine *Arte Musical* (of which the editor was Luís de Freitas Branco), was signed by Joly Braga Santos, then eighteen years of age.

⁵ As early as 1947, Braga Santos received a request for the score of the First Quartet from the Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires, which was aiming to mount a performance.

It opens with an *Allegro moderato* in a modified sonata form [1]. The first subject (on the first violin) is a long (27-bar) cantilena; the second has an eminently rhythmic character. In place of a development, there is a central section (though its material is derived from the exposition) with two highly contrasted subsections: the first, *Calmo*, dominated by a viola solo, and the second, *Tempo I*, with a dense texture and motoric drive (based on patterns). A relatively orthodox recapitulation ensues, which in the transition to the coda assumes a rather Bartókian sonority.

The *Allegro con fuoco* [2] is in ternary form, with the characteristic that part B – which can be subdivided into B1 and B2 – is much larger than A. A is defined by metric irregularity and strictly parallel writing (in unison or triadic) for the four instruments. By contrast, the B section, which is made up of two very disparate subsections, is metrically and rhythmically very regular: B1 is distinguished by a melody with accompaniment texture (violin solo, in a modal D), and B2 is characterised by an additive and then homophonic texture. The return of A is at first literal, but later includes an idea from B2 (the additive texture), with the characteristic irregular metre, to end the movement.

The slow movement, *Andante tranquillo* [3], also in ternary form, highlights each of the instruments as soloist, with *cantabile* sections interspersed with parallel, homophonic, ‘plain’ ones. Section A has two themes: the first on the first violin, lyrical and hovering over undulating semiquaver sextuplets; and the second on the second violin (later moving to the first) of a generous and more ‘earthy’ lyricism. Part B (‘Slow’) has a theme with a ‘Siciliano’ rhythmic flow first performed solo on the viola and then treated as a melody with accompaniment and contrapuntally. This theme is interspersed with the homophonic sections, which now take on an ominous character. Part A then returns, with an abridged second theme. The coda consists of reminiscences (‘Siciliano’ theme) and recurrences (second theme, homophonic), eventually dissolving into long rhythmic durations.

The vast *Allegro molto energico ed appassionato* [4] is formally the most original movement: it perfectly fuses sonata and rondo form and still manages to introduce variation to both frames. There are three main themes, but in the second and third

feature rhythmic cells that become ‘detached’ and acquire a prominent autonomous role in the course of the movement. There is also a canonic section (exploring various performing techniques) that acts as a formal separator throughout. The final section (*Andante*, then *Pesante* and finally *Meno mosso*), although prepared and with a genesis in some moments of the third movement, sounds like a world apart. It is only 76 bars (out of a total of 403 for the entire movement), but the slow tempos mean that it takes up more than two-fifths of its total duration. Given the year in which the Quartet was written, who knows whether Braga Santos might not have wished to evoke, in an elegiac tone, the death and destruction of World War II?

The **String Quartet No. 2, Op. 27**, comes from the beginning of a pivotal period in Braga Santos’ career, the four years he spent in Italy. In the opinion of musicologist João de Freitas Branco,⁶ this quartet is ‘the most significant work of the composer’s first creative phase.’⁷ It was written in Milan in the final months of 1957 and dedicated to his wife.⁸ Whereas the First Quartet had shortly preceded the composition of the First Symphony in the mid-1940s, the writing of the Second coincided with that of another important work, the opera *Méropé*, a decade later.⁹ Compared to its older brother, this Second Quartet is clearly a more refined, more concise work (it takes a total of 668 bars, in comparison with the 1,199 of the First) and sounds more ‘objective’, in that the movements go more clearly with their purpose. Moreover, this Second Quartet lacks both a slow movement and a slow ending; and the element of rusticity, whether generic, dance-like, Portuguese-inspired or Bartókian, is much more clearly present here. It employs a cyclical procedure (the theme of the initial *Largo* returns in the remaining

⁶ João de Freitas Branco (1922–89) was the only son of the composer Luís; he was also active as a mathematician. He was widely respected as an historian of Portuguese music.

⁷ *Homenagem à Memória de Joly Braga Santos: Recordações amplificadas*, *S. Carlos Revista*, No. 9, 1989, pp. 29–41.

⁸ The opera singer Maria José de Melo Falcão Trigo Braga Santos (1935–2012). They married in January 1957 and in June left for Italy with a scholarship from the Institute of High Culture. There the generous and cinematic characteristics of Braga Santos’ orchestral music did not go unnoticed, and he was invited to work as a composer of soundtracks for the Cinecittà studios, then in their golden period. Braga Santos and his wife returned to Portugal in the summer of 1961.

⁹ The three-act *Méropé*, the second of Braga Santos’ three operas, was composed (with interruptions) between 1954 and 1958 and premiered in May 1959 at the Teatro Nacional de São Carlos, the principal opera theatre in Portugal, situated in the historical centre of Lisbon.

movements); and in terms of language there is a broadening of scope compared to the First Quartet, since here the modalism is enriched with pentatonism, chromaticism, tritonal relations and harmony based on the cycle of fifths-based harmony (in both vertical and horizontal dimensions). The Second Quartet is basically in A minor, but Braga Santos decided not to attribute a specific key to the work. The premiere took place on 16 December 1986, in the Salão Nobre ('Noble Hall') of the Teatro Nacional de São Carlos, given by the Quarteto Capela.

The first movement opens [5] with a *Largo*, written as a large instrumental polyphonic arc and ending in a viola solo.¹⁰ This theme will reappear throughout the work. It leads into an *Allegro moderato* in an undeveloped sonata form, with two themes: the first, on violins, an accompanied melody in two segments, with a *pizzicato* passage separating it from the second theme, which is rhythmic in character (viola and cello, then violins). There follows a violin-led transition which has some affinity with the *Largo* melody and links with the recapitulation, where the second theme is abbreviated. A brief and concise coda concludes the movement.

The second movement [6] is a polyptych with five sections. The initial *Adagio molto*, which puts the cello in the spotlight, is followed by a rustic *Andante con moto*, where the violins take the lead. A new *Adagio* brings a fresh texture: over undulating demisemiquavers, the first violin and cello (always in the highest register) intone a song, rich in a chromaticism that is later softened by more modal inflections. In the following section, over cello *pizzicati*, the other instruments unfold a theme clearly derived from the initial *Largo*. To conclude this movement, the 'rustic' theme returns, further emphasised in character and with ostinati, displaying a dynamic arc that ends *ppp*, with the first violin on harmonics.

The cyclic theme returns in the introduction to the third movement (again *Largo*) [7], now led by the first violin, which, over undulating *pizzicati* from the second violin and viola and cello *pizzicati*, gives it a more lyrical turn. The demonic *Allegro molto vivace* that ensues brings to mind Bartókian peasant dances. This section in turn

¹⁰ This *Largo* is reminiscent of the beginning of the Sixth Symphony of Sibelius, whose death, on 20 September 1957, coincided with the writing of the Second Quartet.

will contrast with a calmer one, where both melody and rhythm are more Portuguese in character and also display dance-like aspects. This contrasting pair returns, but with the second section (*Più tranquillo*) even smoother and more lyrical, with the rhythm of Portuguese dance heard only in the background. The Bartókian *Allegro* returns with progressing intensity, culminating in a *Presto* coda.

The **String Sextet, Op. 65**, is a late work: the manuscript is dated 16 March 1986. The impetus for its composition was a concert Braga Santos attended at the Gulbenkian Foundation, at which Alberto Lysy's Camerata Lysy Gstaad performed Schoenberg's *Verklärte Nacht* (also a sextet); indeed, Braga Santos' Sextet is dedicated to Alberto Lysy, the Argentinian, Swiss-based violinist and conductor who had previously taught his daughter Leonor. *Verklärte Nacht* is often performed by string orchestra and that, indeed, was how this Sextet was first heard, with the Gulbenkian Orchestra conducted by Grzegorz Nowak, on 10 June 1986, in Portimão, as part of the X International Algarve Music Festival. The premiere of the original version was posthumous, on 10 July 1989, at the Teatro Nacional de São Carlos.¹¹

The Sextet uses a language quite different from that of the two Quartets, as might be expected, given its date. But it is not so much a question of adopting a new technique but rather an expansion of existing techniques, which include accentuated chromaticism, atonal melodism, alternative ways of dividing the octave, intervallic motivic thinking, harmony based in superimposed fourths, and extremely varied and detailed modes of execution (attack, articulation, phrasing). Braga Santos' language is really a synthesis here, in which the old is never completely relinquished: his stylistic fingerprints are still there; only now they are diluted amid more recent acquisitions. As with the Second Quartet, Braga Santos' Sextet is basically in A minor, but here, too, he decided not to attribute a specific key.

The opening *Molto largo* [8] is in ABA-coda form, with A marked by pungent melodies (first violin, cello) and B by harmonically static landscapes, both stripped

¹¹ The performers on that occasion were Alexandra Mendes and Vasco Brôco (violins), Leonor Braga Santos, daughter of the composer (who performs on this Toccata Classics recording), and Jorge Lé (violas), and Clélia Vital and Paulo Gaio Lima (cellos). Leonor Braga Santos and Paulo Gaio Lima also performed on the PortugalSom recording of the work.

and desolate, in which melodic gestures (including fleeting evocations of the A section) appear as if lost.

The second-movement *Allegro ben marcato* [9], which comes *attacca subito*, is almost an exercise in the gradual acceleration of tempo. Formally, there is an exposition, with two themes, and a recapitulation, but the development is replaced by a tense kaleidoscope of different rhythmic ostinati – a pretext for a study of different modes of execution, within a charged texture punctuated by torn, urgent melodies. The coda condenses the rhythmic events without easing the tension.

The *Andante* which opens the third movement [10] revisits the atmosphere of the opening *Molto largo*, concluding with seven bars in harmonics. Then comes an *Allegro*, which operates in a similar manner to the middle section of the second movement, with two main catalysts: melodic transformation and metric oscillation (mixed metres). An abridged return of the initial section connects directly to the coda, where a torrent of semiquavers ends in an airy final chord of superimposed fifths.

Bernardo Mariano is a musicologist, artistic programmer and music critic. He teaches at the Escola Superior de Artes Aplicadas in Castelo Branco in central Portugal, and is a member of the musicology research group Centro de Estudos de Sociologia e Estética Musical (CESEM), affiliated to the Nova University in Lisbon. He writes frequently about music and is an annotator for several leading Portuguese music institutions and festivals. He is also very active as a choral singer.

Formed in 2005 by musicians with notable careers as soloists and chamber musicians, the **Quarteto Lopes-Graça** has established itself as one of the most important ensembles in its area, known particularly for its specialism in recent and contemporary Portuguese music. It has performed in all the major Portuguese venues and musical events, as well as undertaking tours to Madeira, the Azores, Andorra, Brasil, Argentina and Peru.

The Quartet has gained the support of the Portuguese Ministry of Culture for various projects, notably two editions of the festival 'Criasons' dedicated to the creation and performance of new Portuguese music. This promotion of contemporary Portuguese music, a feature of the Quartet's activities from its earliest years, has led to many first performances of works dedicated to the ensemble.



Photograph: Quarteto Lopes-Graça by Diego Kovadihoff

In 2010, the Quartet brought a programme of music promoting Portuguese contemporary culture to Andorra. In 2013 it represented Portugal in Brazil at the Portugal Brazil Festival with concerts in Curitiba, Brasilia and Sorocaba. In November 2014 it gave three performances at the XII International Festival of Contemporary Music in Lima, Peru, and in 2016 it visited Argentina, playing in the two most prestigious venues in Buenos Aires (the Teatro Colón and the Usina del Arte) and giving a master-class at the Instituto Superior de Arte do Teatro Colón.

In May 2009 the Quarteto Lopes-Graça completed its first recording: a CD entitled *Portuguese Music for String Quartet*, with works by Fernando Lopes-Graça and António Victorino d'Almeida (Numérica 1182), a recording which won the RTP (Portuguese Radio and Television) award for the 'Best Work in Classical Music'. Other recordings feature live performances at the Criasons Festival (Numérica 1218). For Toccata Classics, with the pianist Olga Prats, the Quartet recorded the complete works for string quartet and piano of Fernando Lopes-Graça (TOCC 0253 and 0254).

Leonor Braga Santos, viola, was a member of Leonor Prado's class at the National Conservatoire of Music in Lisbon and won a scholarship from the Gulbenkian Foundation in Gstaad to continue her studies with Alberto Lysy. Shortly afterwards, having chosen to specialise, she studied viola with François Bross and Rainer Moog and chamber music with the Amadeus Quartet.

Since 1988 she has been a member of the Lisbon-based, world-renowned Gulbenkian Orchestra, with which she has also appeared as soloist. She is much in demand as a chamber-music player and has been a life-long champion of the music of her father, Joly Braga Santos. She gave the first performance of his *Aria a Tre con Variazioni* for clarinet, viola and piano at the Goethe Institut in Lisbon in 1984 and the German premiere at the Pommersfelden Festival in 1987. She has also appeared at the Sion Festival and toured throughout Europe with the Ensemble Cologne.



A native of Lisbon, **Irene Lima** is principal cellist with the Orquestra Sinfónica Portuguesa, having previously held principal positions with the Orchestra of the Theatre Royal in Liège and the Orchestra of the Teatro Nacional de São Carlos in Lisbon. She also lectures in chamber music at the Escola Superior de Música in Lisbon.

She began her studies with Adriana de Vecchi e Fernando Costa at the Fundação Musical dos Amigos das Crianças ('Musical Foundation of Friends of Children'), later moving to Paris to study with André Navarra and Philippe Muller. She has appeared as soloist and chamber musician across Europe and further afield, including performances with the RTL Symphony Orchestra in Luxembourg (playing the *Concerto de Câmara com Violoncelo obbligato*, by Fernando Lopes-Graça), Macau Symphony Orchestra and the Sinfonia



Varsovia. Her dedication to the music of her native Portugal is shown in her choice of solo repertoire and her recording, for EMI Classics, of the Sonata for Cello and Piano by Luís de Freitas Branco, and recognised in the dedication to her of two solo works by Portuguese composers, Filipe de Sousa and Alexandre Delgado.

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JOLY BRAGA SANTOS Complete Chamber Music, Volume One

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Quarteto Lopes-Graça

Luís Pacheco Cunha, violin

Maria José Laginha, violin

Isabel Pimentel, viola

Catherine Strynckx, cello

Leonor Braga Santos, viola 8–10

Irene Lima, cello 8–10

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