

NAXOS

# FREITAS BRANCO

Two Melodies  
for String Orchestra

Camerata Atlântica • Ana Beatriz Manzanilla, Leader



## **Luís de Freitas Branco (1890–1955)**

### **Duas Melodias, Op. 5 (1909)**

Portuguese orchestral music was, until the 20th century, scarce. After the brilliant but short-lived career of Carlos Seixas (1704–1742), one of the first European composers (if not the first) to write a concerto for harpsichord and orchestra, some time before J.S. Bach wrote his own harpsichord concertos, audiences in Portugal had to wait for João Domingos Bomtempo (1775–1842) to finally hear a native Classical symphony (of which he wrote two) or piano concerto (four), written after the examples of late Mozart and early Beethoven. No Romantic orchestral music of any importance survives prior to the ambitious *Sinfonia 'à Pátria'* (*Symphony 'To the Fatherland'*) (1894) of José Viana da Mota (1868–1948), who was better known as a great pianist than as a composer. This work, which followed the models of Beethoven's symphonies and Liszt's tone poems while quoting Portuguese folk songs, thus inaugurating Portuguese musical nationalism, was written the same year as Debussy's *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*. Once more, Portugal was behind the curve where European musical evolution was concerned.

Portugal finally got its first modern composer – and 'spiritual father' in the lineage of the great Portuguese composers who followed – in the seminal figure of Luis de Freitas Branco (1890–1955).

Freitas Branco was a precocious talent, composing his first songs at age 14. His *Duas Melodias, Op. 5* ('Two Melodies') for strings was written in 1909 and predates by only one year the magnificent orchestral tone poem *Artificial Paradises* (*Os paraísos artificiais*), a piece that exhibits, for the first time in Portugal, the influence of Debussy. The *Two Melodies* is not as advanced as the tone poem, showing instead the influence of Grieg, but it is much more than a student derivative work. The young composer's command of complex chromatic harmony and intricate string writing are evidence of his early mastery, and the lack of originality was soon contradicted by *Artificial Paradises* (1910) and, above all, by *Vathek* (1913), one of the most astounding European orchestral works of the early 20th century. Only the second of the *Two Melodies* was performed during Freitas Branco's lifetime, and it attracted critical acclaim. It was not until 2006 that the complete diptych was performed and published. This is the first commercial recording of the piece.

**Camerata Atlântica**

## Ana Beatriz Manzanilla



Photo: Márcia Lessa

Venezuelan violinist Ana Beatriz Manzanilla founded Camerata Atlântica in 2013 and is the ensemble's artistic director. She has been a member of the Gulbenkian Orchestra in Lisbon since 1996 and she is also a violin teacher at the Escola Superior de Música in Lisbon. Manzanilla is the founder-director of the National Vasco Barbosa String Competition, and since 2018 she has been musical director of the Fernando Mascarenhas Music Festival at the Palace of the Marquesses of Fronteira in Lisbon. In 2019 she received the 'Relevance in the Community Award' in Arts, granted by the Polytechnic Institute of Lisbon. Ana Beatriz Manzanilla studied within the El Sistema de Orquestas Juveniles de Venezuela music programme, and at the European Mozart Academy in Krakow, Poland. She has performed in recital and with orchestra in Venezuela, Panama, Colombia, Costa Rica, Argentina, Spain, Italy, Poland, France, Norway, England and Belgium. She has made two recordings: of duets for violin and viola with Pedro Saglimbeni Muñoz, and as a soloist with the Gulbenkian Orchestra marking the orchestra's 50th anniversary.



## Camerata Atlântica



**First violins:** Ana Beatriz Manzanilla, Maria José Laginha, João Andrade

**Second violins:** Francisca Fins, Sandra Escovar, Beatriz Saglimbeni

**Violas:** Pedro Saglimbeni Muñoz, Isabel Pereira • **Cellos:** Nuno Abreu, Jeremy Lake • **Double Bass:** Marine Triolet

Camerata Atlântica was formed in Lisbon in 2013 by its artistic director, violinist Ana Beatriz Manzanilla. Comprising eleven string players, the ensemble has performed at the Centro Cultural de Belém and Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, both in Lisbon, and at festivals including the Festival de Música in Leiria, Festival das Artes in Coimbra and Festival ao Largo in Lisbon. Other appearances include concerts at the church of São Roque in Lisbon and the Teatro Joaquim Benite in Almada. In 2017 the ensemble released its first album, *Fuga para a América Latina*, featuring music by Piazzolla, Villa-Lobos, Alberto Nepomuceno and others. The recording was broadcast in Germany, Bulgaria, Croatia, Spain, Greece, Hungary, Czech Republic and Romania. The same year the group also toured Spain and performed as part of the official programme after Lisbon was elected 2017 Capital of Culture by the Union of Ibero-American Capital Cities. Since its founding Camerata Atlântica has engaged in educational programmes for young musicians and taught masterclasses at conservatoires in Portugal. The ensemble also created the National Vasco Barbosa String Competition, which inaugurated in 2015.

[www.camerataatlantica.pt](http://www.camerataatlantica.pt)

Luís de Freitas Branco was a prodigious talent whose early *Duas Melodias* ('Two Melodies') reveal the influence of Grieg. The young composer's command of complex chromatic harmony and intricate string writing in these pieces is clearly in evidence. Only the second of the *Melodias* was performed during Freitas Branco's lifetime, attracting critical acclaim. This digital single complements *Bows Up!* (8.579105), an album of 20th and 21st century Portuguese music for strings.

Luís de  
**FREITAS BRANCO**  
(1890–1955)

**Duas Melodias, Op. 5 (1909)**

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|---|--|-------------|
| 1 | <b>No. 1. Lento – Poco adagio ed agitato</b> | <b>5:20</b> |
| 2 | <b>No. 2. Andante</b>                        | <b>5:28</b> |

**WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING**

**Camerata Atlântica**

**Ana Beatriz Manzanilla, Leader**

Recorded: 22–23 December 2020 at Auditório Senhora Boa Nova, Estoril, Portugal  
Producers: Sérgio Azevedo, Ana Beatriz Manzanilla • Engineer: Guilherme Baptista  
A co-production with Câmara Municipal de Cascais, Fundação D. Luís I, Auditório Sra. Boa Nova  
and AvA Musical Editions

Booklet notes: Camerata Atlântica • Publisher: AvA Musical Editions  
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