

## Portuguese piano music: Notable moments from the 18th century until today

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### Objectives:

The objective of this paper is to present important milestones in Portuguese piano works from the 18<sup>th</sup> century until our times, taking into account Portugal's political, social, and cultural history, while focusing on solo piano, four-hand and two-piano works, instrumental chamber music without voice, piano concerti, and didactic piano works. What follows is a brief look at a topic that is currently undergoing more exhaustive research.

### Context:

#### *Introduction*

Portugal has been associated with piano music since the creation of the pianoforte. The first piano sonatas in music history – *Sonate da Cimbalo di piano, e forte detto volgarmente di martelletti* – were composed by Lodovico Giustini di Pistoia (1685-1743) in 1732 and dedicated to Dom António of Bragança, the younger brother of King João V of Portugal. The Portuguese court was amongst the first places where the early piano was frequently heard. Too, Portugal was instrumental in the creation of early pianos<sup>1</sup>. Foreign instrument builders, who were supported by the Portuguese King, were required to have Portuguese apprentices. Eventually, the entire Portuguese piano-building industry died out. Nevertheless, piano works by native composers living at home or abroad, or by foreign composers living in Portugal or its territories, gave rise to a considerable pianistic legacy. This legacy is distinguished by such composers as José António Carlos Seixas (1704-1742), Domingos Bomtempo (1775-1842), José Viana da Mota (1868-1948), Fernando Lopes-Graça (1906-1994), and others, as well as a growing and impressive number of contemporary composers.

Several problems exist in the identification of Portuguese piano music: cultural interchanges, political instabilities, social unrest, economic fluctuations, and other factors. The devastating Lisbon earthquake of 1 November 1755 with its tsunamis and fires destroyed a large number of valuable music manuscripts and books, which has made a continuous identification impossible. As well, the removal of the Portuguese court to Brazil, which was precipitated by the Napoleonic invasion in 1807 and culminated with Brazil's independence in 1822, accounts for some works falling into obscurity. The lack of continuity by a state or foreign publisher has not facilitated quick identification or access to a large amount of piano works. Many works have too frequently fallen into an early demise, remaining extant only if fortunate. To date, a

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<sup>1</sup> An excellent original piano by Manuel Antunes (1767) is preserved today at the University of South Dakota's Shrine to Music Museum in Vermillion.

large body of 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century manuscripts awaits publication. Finally, entire archives of some composers are located in the hands of family members, who reluctantly permit access to the works, if at all. Yet beyond these myriad problems lie many jewels of Portuguese culture awaiting a re-discovery. Fortunately, the proportion of recorded works to modern publications is relatively high and shows the interest that performers, be they Portuguese or foreign, have in this music.

### 18<sup>th</sup> Century

By mid-17<sup>th</sup>-century the Portuguese Royal Music Library was considered to be the best in the world. At the height of its glory, the 18<sup>th</sup>-century Portuguese court, under predominantly Italian musical influence, saw many new developments in the existing keyboard literature. Notable are the keyboard works of Carlos Seixas, the principal organist in Coimbra since a young age and called to serve in the Lisbon court of John V alongside of his Italian colleague, Domenico Scarlatti (1685-1757). Of Seixas' more than 700 keyboard sonatas/toccatas not 20% remain, disappearing during the Lisbon earthquake.

Principal 18<sup>th</sup> century solo piano (harpsichord, clavichord, and fortepiano) *genres* include single and multi-movement Baroque and Rococo Sonatas, Toccatas, Variations, Dances (Contradances, Minuets, Marches, other dances) and descriptive multi-movement suites that commemorated Battle victories, Royal matters, and other events. Chamber and salon music abound, with parts often being doubled or substituted on other instruments for which the works were originally written even in solo keyboard work. The solo "piano" concerto in Portugal is scarce. Two concertos for harpsichord (playable on fortepiano) are probably by Carlos Seixas, as well as a "Concerto" (Quintet) by José Palomino (1755-1810). Four-hand or two-piano works are almost non-existent, although there is a Sonata for two organs by António Joaquim Nunes, (fl. 1790-1826). Didactic works abound, as found in numerous figured bass treatises and it could also be said that most of the solo works from the 18<sup>th</sup> century had a didactic function.

### 19<sup>th</sup> Century

Portugal's dominance begins to notably wane in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Its musical production becomes dispersed. In spite of the removal of the Portuguese court to Brazil and the influence of Brazilian music on Portuguese composers, the importance of the piano gradually developed. Around 1809, there were reported to be approximately 20 fortepianos in Lisbon, followed by a precipitous increase in 1821 to more than 500 (Brito, Cranmer: 50) about the return of the Portuguese court. Home tutoring became a "cottage industry". A young woman was considered to be "cultured" if she spoke French and played the piano. However, by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a certain Dr. Waetesold warned young woman not to take up the study of the piano ("this disgraceful instrument") before the age of fifteen or sixteen for fear of developing a nervous disease.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century Portuguese women composers began to emerge: Amélia Augusta Azevedo (1846-1913), Josefina Amann (1848-1887), Julia R. C. Boulogne (fl. 18-), Julieta Pinho (ca. 1900), and Queen Maria Pia de Saboia (1847-1911). 19<sup>th</sup>-century solo piano *genres* included the Classical and Romantic multi-movement Sonatas, Variations, Dances (Gallops, Polkas, *Quadrilles*, Minuets, Waltzes and other Salon Dances), Fantasies (including Opera fantasies), Character pieces, and Arrangements (*fado*, folksongs, *Modinhas*, etc.). From the sheer quantity, although not outstanding quality, the sonatas and variations of Bomtempo have made a significant contribution to the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Portuguese repertoire. Liszt's visit to Lisbon in 1845 caused a sensation. "Lisztmania" inspired new works from Portuguese composers. His French Boisselot piano was acquired by the Portuguese state and now resides in the Music Museum in Lisbon. Four-hand works began to appear, including those by Marcos Portugal, Joaquim Casimiro Júnior, and a March by Queen Maria, with even

perhaps the first Portuguese work for 1 piano, 6 hands, by José Viana da Mota (*Fantasy on Meyerbeer's Opera 'O Roberto Diabo'*, op. 42, 1881). The piano concerto began to proliferate (Domingos Bomtempo, Artur and Alfredo Napoleão, Viana da Mota). Didactic works were found in the form of treatises or *Etudes* (Bomtempo's *Método* and *Studies*), or the solo works themselves, a unique one being Viana da Mota's youthful work *Resignação, Melodie composed for the Left Hand*, op. 39 (1880).

### 20<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> Centuries

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century Portuguese piano music not only begins to flourish but to gain international ground. The evolution of the piano is now stable, not having changed much since the 1860's and making it perhaps the oldest unchanged invention today. Questions of identity in Portuguese music begin to surge. According to Fernando Lopes-Graça (1906-1994), "there was no Portuguese music because there was no classical music tradition, no interest in popular music (almost unknown and neglected by the authorities), no interest in the development of a national musical life as it was understood in Germany, France, England..." (Monteiro: 6) Politically, Portugal arrived at Democracy on 25 April 1975 after passing through various stages from Monarchy to the right-wing New State. Musically, harmonic languages encompassed all that Europe experienced, but usually later. Viana da Mota, after his return to Portugal in 1917, assumed directorship of the National Conservatory and undertook a curriculum reform that remains today intact for piano students.

In the 20<sup>th</sup>-century, solo piano works include: Character pieces (sometimes as Miniatures or in collections); Preludes; large-scale Sonatas; Sonatinas; multi-movement Suites; experimental works with improvisatory or aleatoric elements for piano, prepared piano, harpsichord, and electronic music. This abundant and interesting corpus ranges from the Impressionistic Miniatures of Francisco Lacerda (1869-1934) and the Preludes of Luís Freitas Branco (1890-1955) – the father of Modernism in Portugal – to the large-scale poly-tonal, sometimes primitivistic, works of Fernando Lopes-Graça (6 sonatas, 2 sonatinas, multiple collections inspired from folksongs and dances, Preludes, Nocturnes, Variations, etc.). The few promising works of António Fragoso (1897-1918) are complemented by the large number of character suites by Óscar da Silva (1870-1958), a student of Clara Schumann and Carl Reinecke, together with the *œuvre* of Viana da Mota and Luís Costa (1879-1960) preserve the Romantic spirit and the Portuguese heritage.

On this wave into the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, solo piano works embrace: the "2nd Renaissance of Portuguese composers (Emmanuel Nunes, b. 1941); Experiments in aleatoric music by Filipe Pires (b. 1934); Expressionism and dodecaphony of Cândido Lima (b. 1939) and Victor Macedo Pinto (1917-1964); Neo-classicism by Filipe Pires and J. Croner Vasconcelos (1910-1974); Neo-Baroque forms by Armando José Fernandes (1906-1983); varied styles by António Victorino d'Almeida (b. 1940), Sérgio Azevedo (b. 1968); Prepared piano and theatricality by Jorge Peixinho (1940-1995), and Constança Capdeville (1937-1992); Post-modernism in works by Clotilde Rosa (b. 1930, particularly interesting is her Fortepiano Sonata); exploration of Silence by Tomás Henriques (b. 1963); Improvisatory-like works by Amílcar Vasques Dias (b. 1945); Jazz-or *fado* infiltrations by António Pinho Vargas (b. 1951) and Sara Carvalho (b. 1970); Acusmatic music by Isabel Pires (b. 1970); Electronic music with piano by João Pedro Oliveira (b. 1959), Eduardo Patriarca (b. 1970) and Cândido Lima.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries the category of 4 hand/2 piano music begins to find a respectable offering from such composers as Fernando Lopes-Graça, Cláudio Carneiro (1895-1963), Fernando Corrêa Oliveira (1921-2004), Christopher Bochmann (b. 1950), João Pedro Oliveira, Pedro Faria Gomes (b.1979), Sérgio Azevedo, Sara Claro (b. 1986), Bruno Ribeiro (b. 1982), Hugo Ribeiro (b. 1983), etc.

As well, the proliferation of instrumental chamber music takes on many forms. Especially notable are the the violin/piano sonatas of Óscar da Silva ("Sonata de

Saudades”), Luís de Freitas Branco, Cláudio Carneyro, Frederico de Freitas, and Lopes-Graça; the trios and quartets of Armando José Fernandes, Carneyro, and Lopes-Graça. Notable is Patriarca’s “exotic” *La nuit de temps* (2006) with its Tibetan bowls, Thailandese bells, and other percussion. Other important chamber music contributions have been made by António Victorino d’Almeida, Christopher Bochmann, Sérgio Azevedo, Eurico Carrapatoso (b. 1962), Sara Claro, Cândido Lima, Pedro Faria Gomes, Tomás Henriques, David Miguel (b. 1979), Ivan Moody (1964), João Pedro Oliveira, Isabel Soveral (b. 1961), Eduardo Patriarca, Edward Gançalves Pinto (b. 1989), João Rafael (b. 1960), Pedro Rocha (b. 1961), Clotilde Rosa, and Evgueni Zoudilkine (b.1965).

A wealth of piano concertos is found by: Ruy Coelho (1889-1986), Francine Benoit (1894-1990), Luiz Costa, Luís de Freitas Branco, Cláudio Carneyro, Ivo Cruz, (1901-1985), Álvaro Cassuto (b. 1938), Maria de Lourdes Martins (b. 1926), Joly Braga Santos (1924-1988), Armando José Fernandes, Clotilde Rosa, Fernando Lopes-Graça, António Victorino d’Almeida, António Chagas Rosa (b. 1960, *A ascensão de Ícaro / Icaro’s Ascent*, 1994-5), Rui Soares da Costa (b. 1958), Sérgio Azevedo, João Victor Costa (b. 1939), Joaquim dos Santos (1936-2008), Luís Tinoco (b. 1969), Eduardo Patriarca, as well as foreigners in Portugal: Pedro Blanco (d. 1918, *Concerto, op. 15*), Ernesto Halffter (1905-1989, *Rapsódia portuguesa*), Christopher Bochmann (*Monograph Expanded*, 1997), Ivan Moody (*Linnunlaulu*, for piano and chamber orchestra, 2003).

Most unusual Portuguese “piano” concerti are: the concertos for 2 pianos by Victorino d’Almeida (*Concerto de Pífaro e Fungágá op.14* for 2 Pianos, 1956, rev. 1960); and Sérgio Azevedo (2003), the Chamber Concertino (piano, oboe, viola, bass) the Harpsichord concerto (1999) by the latter composer; Lopes-Graça’s Concertino for Piano, Strings, Brass, and Percussion (1952/1954); the Clavichord Concerto by Jorge Peixinho (*Memoires...Miroirs, Concerto para Clavicórdio*, 1980); the Flute and Piano Concerto with String Orchestra by Fernando Lapa (b. 1950; 2002); the anti-piano concerto of Sara Claro (*Concertante*, 2007); keyboard or piano and electronics by Amílcar Vasques Dias (*Branda, Concerto para teclas, chocalhos e rebanho virtual* piano, sampler, sintetizador e controlador digital de sopros, 1998) and João Pedro Oliveira (*Tessares*, 1991, rev. 2006).

Didactic piano works appear more frequently: Eurico Thomaz de Lima’s *Para os pequeninos pianistas tocarem/For Little Pianists to Play* (1932) and *Gradual para Piano* (pub. 2006); Lopes-Graça’s *Album de Jovem Pianista/Young Pianist’s Álbum* (1953) and *Música de piano para as crianças/Piano Music for Children* (1937); Carneyro’s *Trio Infantil com Piano* (1966) and *Paciências de Ana Maria* (1938); Frederico de Freitas’ *O Livro de Maria Frederica*; and Corrêa Oliveira’s many works, plus unique reading system. Sérgio Azevedo’s *Caleidoscópio* of 150 didactic pieces is the largest collection by a Portuguese composer. Also notable are didactic works by Christopher Bochmann, Ivan Moody, Clotilde Rosa, Amílcar Vasques Dias, and João Pedro Oliveira (for piano and tape), as well as collections coordinated by Colien Honnegger (*Album de Colien*), A. Lopes & V. Dotsenko (*Manual de Piano*) and Olga Silva.

Although the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century has not yet been completed, there are no clear indicators as to how Portuguese piano music will be known by the end of the century. What is evident are the changing ways of handling material and form. These may depend on circumstances (be they for didactic purposes, for soloists, for ensembles, commissions, etc.) and aesthetic propensities. To date, we have seen a wide gamut of styles and *genres* including electronic music, acusmatic music, music for harpsichord or fortepiano, large-scale sonatas, short pieces, experimental works, didactic piano with tape, and even the anti-piano concerto. The tendency seems to be away from usage of Portuguese folk material (although composers such as Carrapatoso and Amílcar Vasques Dias draw inspiration from their patrimony) and towards more international or European trends, reinforcing the Portuguese inclination for “discoveries”.

## Methodology

The methodologies used in this research include a systematic investigation into national and international libraries, as well as bibliographic sources found in dictionaries, encyclopedias, histories of music and general histories, biographies, bibliographies, discographies, publishers' catalogues, music magazines, online references, and other sources. In addition, correspondence with living Portuguese composers in Portugal and abroad has yielded direct and important information.

## Conclusions

Because of Portugal's chequered political, dramatic historical, and often colorful socio-cultural past, it is important to note that there has been no one continuous state-run music publishing house in any century. Because of the many now defunct publishing houses, it is now more than ever important to identify lost, out-of-print, and current piano works into a single source. Although Portugal was at the forefront of musical development in the court of John V in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, it quickly fell behind because of unfortunate events, such as the 1755 Lisbon earthquake, the Napoleonic wars of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the end of the monarch in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and the resulting instabilities until democracy was declared on 25 April 1974. The dominance of other cultures and the slow-to-develop national identity has caused Portuguese music to lag behind its European counterparts. However, this problem had at least three positive sides – 1) because Portugal was some thirty years behind mainstream Europe, the Romantic spirit was well preserved far into the 20<sup>th</sup> century; 2) a Portuguese national identity associated with its rich folk and *fado* culture has emerged in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which remains to be seen if continued in the 21<sup>st</sup> century; 3) solo piano works, instrumental chamber music, and the piano concerto are compositional predilections in Portuguese music, while didactic works and 2-piano/4 hand works are less important.

Have there been any new inventions regarding the piano in Portugal? No, not like the Harmonic piano of Joshua Harrison, the Player Piano of Conlon Nancarrow, or Fazioli's 4<sup>th</sup> pedal. Nor do we see the tendency of teaching piano in groups as in Anglo-Saxonic countries, which may account for the lack of multiple-piano repertoire. There is currently no Portuguese piano method in wide usage.

Portuguese composers of the 20<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup>-centuries have quickly caught up to their European colleagues. Their exploration of the piano in an aesthetic and sonorous way is often most creatively and in unusual combinations. Portuguese piano music deserves to be known outside of Portugal and to become standard in every pianist's repertoire.

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6. Various archives (Archives of Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, Biblioteca Nacional do Brasil, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Library of Congress, British Library, Portuguese Music Centre, Atrio/Atrium, Shrine to Music): [www.bn.pt](http://www.bn.pt); [www.bn.br](http://www.bn.br); [www.bn.fr](http://www.bn.fr); [www.loc.gov](http://www.loc.gov); [www.bl.uk](http://www.bl.uk); [www.mic.pt](http://www.mic.pt); <http://sites.google.com/site/patrimoniomusical>, [www.usd.edu/smm](http://www.usd.edu/smm); as well as correspondence with some living composers.