



# Óscar da SILVA

## PIANO MUSIC, VOLUME ONE

DOLOROSAS (MUSIQUE INTIME), OP. 11

IMAGES, OP. 6

ROMÂNTICAS

EMBALOS

Luís Pipa

INCLUDES FIRST RECORDINGS

# ÓSCAR DA SILVA: PIANO MUSIC, VOLUME ONE

by Miguel Campinho

The name of Óscar da Silva is one of the most important in the history of the Portuguese piano. During his long life he was successful as a pianist and composer in Europe, Africa and the Americas. His output for solo piano is one of the largest bodies of work in the Portuguese musical world, and most of it was published before his death. The majority of his musical manuscripts and other papers are housed in the Municipal Library of Matosinhos, the Biblioteca Florbela Espanca, just outside Porto, in northern Portugal – and so it is fitting that this recording was itself made in Matosinhos.

Óscar Courrège da Silva Araújo was born in Porto on 21 April 1870. He was a student of Miguel Ângelo Pereira in his native city and of Timóteo da Silveira in Lisbon. At the Leipzig Conservatoire in Germany, he was a student of Adolf Ruthardt and of Carl Reinecke. He also studied privately with Clara Schumann in Frankfurt.

Óscar da Silva began his public career as concert pianist and composer, performing, among others, three concerts in Paris in 1894, where the press remarked on the presence of several notable Portuguese, among them Eça de Queirós and his wife.<sup>1</sup> Following that triumph, he briefly returned to Portugal, only to leave again, this time for Berlin. There is documentary evidence that he might have worked with Heinrich Barth during this time, but there is no other mention of this distinguished pedagogue elsewhere in da Silva's life. The year in Berlin is marked by the publication

<sup>1</sup> José Maria de Eça de Queirós (1845–1900) was one of the greatest Portuguese writers of the nineteenth century. Critics of European literature consistently rank him alongside Charles Dickens, Honoré de Balzac and Leo Tolstoy. His most praised and studied work is the novel *Os Maias*.

of the collection *Bilder* (or *Images*), osI/21,<sup>2</sup> dedicated to Frau Schmidt-Lafourcade: she was Óscar da Silva's original connection with the musical world of the German capital, and she was the mother-in-law of Alexandre Rey-Colaço (1854–1928), one of the leading pianists and piano pedagogues in Lisbon at that time. The set was performed in concert in Berlin by the Hungarian pianist József Weisz (1864–1945) on 13 January 1896.

Returning to Portugal, da Silva settled in Lisbon for almost ten years. In 1898 he won a competition for the commemoration of the centenary of Vasco da Gama's arrival in India with his *Marcha do Centenário*, Op. 3, osI/22, and in 1901 his opera *Dona Mécia: Novela Lírica do Século XII* ('Dona Mécia: Lyrical Novella from the Thirteenth Century'), with a libretto by Júlio Dantas, was premiered at the Coliseu dos Recreios and praised by the Lisbon press. A collection of piano transcriptions of numbers from the opera was awarded a gold medal in the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St Louis, Missouri.

In 1905, da Silva moved north to Leça da Palmeira, just above Porto, to take care of his aging parents: they both died between the regicide (1908) and the October revolution (1910, the creation of the Portuguese Republic).<sup>3</sup> While there, both the *Mazurkas*, Opp. 9 and 10 (osI/28), and the *Dolorosas*, Op. 11 (osI/29), were published; the latter would become his best-known work for solo piano. In this time of political uncertainty, da Silva was a staunch defender of the monarchy, and he found the new order devastating. A period of soul-searching ensued, and he rebounded as a 'Portuguese composer': he clearly identified with the importance of re-affirming national identity through music, and worked closely with other artists toward that goal.

In March 1915, after a hiatus of seven years, he resumed performing. At the Salão do Teatro Gil Vicente in the Palácio de Cristal in Porto, he presented a programme

<sup>2</sup> This text uses the numbering from the chronological catalogue in my essay *Óscar da Silva (1870–1958): Life and Solo Piano Works*, The Hartt School, University of Hartford, Connecticut, 2015. There I present and order all of da Silva's works for solo piano.

<sup>3</sup> On 1 February 1908, the King, Dom Carlos I, and the Crown Prince, Dom Luís Filipe, were assassinated at the Praça do Comércio in Lisbon. On 5 October 1910, the monarchy was overthrown, and the Portuguese Republic was created. The deposed king, Dom Manuel II, spent the rest of his life in exile in England (he died in 1932). The Republic would last until a military *coup d'état* on 28 May 1926.

with only his own works: a piano quartet, the song-cycle *Endechas* ('Laments'; poem by Luís de Camões), a *Nocturno* (osl/34) and a *Tarantella* (osl/33) for solo piano, and a *Sonata Saudade*<sup>4</sup> for violin and piano. The Sonata, in particular, exhibited the new, engaged, composer. In a brief conference before the Sonata, the art-historian Aarão de Lacerda presented the characteristics of Portuguese folksong and the dominant aesthetic qualities of the 'Portuguese race'. The programme was printed with a quotation from Camões: 'but now, this grief-laden torment / for my former, sweet torment / has power to convert such raving / into sorrowful tears of love'.<sup>5</sup> Da Silva was now declaring himself a 'saudosist': *Saudosismo* was a strong aesthetic movement born in the aftermath of the republican revolution and aimed at the rebirth of the Portuguese national spirit in the arts; according to the poet Teixeira de Pascoais, it equated that spirit with the word 'saudade': 'There is in the Portuguese soul a *sentiment* which comprises it and is its very essence – a sentiment that was born of the marriage of Graeco-Roman Paganism and Judaic Christianity, and took in our language a word form without an equivalent in other languages. This is *Saudade*'.<sup>6</sup> The *Sonata Saudade* accompanied da Silva in his peripatetic life: he performed it in the Americas, in Europe and on the Portuguese and Spanish Atlantic islands.

Still in 1915, Teixeira de Pascoais wrote about Óscar da Silva in his inspired book *Arte de ser português* ('The Art of Being Portuguese'), saying that the musician was among those who 'gave to colour, to marble and to sound that sentiment of *saudade* of things and of life, a sentiment that shows, in a light of novel beauty, the intimate contour of our spirit'.<sup>7</sup> That same year the art-critic Alfredo Pinto published a book entitled *A Sonata 'Saudade' de Óscar da Silva: notas impressionistas* ('The Sonata "Saudade" by Óscar da Silva: Impressionistic Notes'), where he wrote:

<sup>4</sup> The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines 'Saudade' as 'longing, melancholy, nostalgia, as a supposed characteristic of the Portuguese or Brazilian temperament'.

<sup>5</sup> From Luís de Camões, *Canção X: Vem cá, meu tão certo secretário*; translation from *The Collected Lyric Poems of Luís de Camões*, transl. Landeg White, Princeton University Press, Princeton 2008, pp. 300–1.

<sup>6</sup> Teixeira de Pascoais, *O Espírito Lusitano ou o Saudosismo*, Renascença Portuguesa, Porto, 1912, p. 9.

<sup>7</sup> Teixeira de Pascoais, *Arte de ser português*, Renascença Portuguesa, Porto, 1915, p. 120.

we were missing a Portuguese musician who would want to translate ‘Saudade’; it was Óscar da Silva, the ‘poet of the piano’, the ideal interpreter of Chopin and Schumann. [...] Óscar da Silva, at the piano, is always the pianist of sentiment, and not the ‘acrobat artist’ who astonishes the ignorant audience: he is the poet, with his fingers playing phrases filled with an emotion that will make one cry, phrases that purify an Art!<sup>8</sup>

The crowning moment – literally, with a crown of laurels – of Óscar da Silva as a ‘saudosist’ came about in 1916, at the end of a performance of his *Dona Mécia* at the Teatro Sá da Bandeira in Porto. In his speech the conductor, Raimundo de Macedo, singled out da Silva as ‘our deepest romantic in music; he extols and exults the hidden passions of his dark Lusitanian soul; he vibrates with nervous excitement as he welcomes, from the surrounding ambience, impressions of colour, light and shadow!’<sup>9</sup>

In 1917 da Silva refused a teaching position in piano in the newly created conservatoire in Porto, arguing that, in order to remain faithful to the support he had received from Queen Amélia for his study in Germany, he could never work for a republican institution. This debt of gratitude towards the Queen Mother was a constant throughout da Silva’s life: she may have been the unspoken dedicatee of his *Dolorosas*, but she was the very public dedicatee of his piano collection *Queixumes* (‘Laments’) in 1948 (the dedication reads ‘to the most noble and illustrious Lady D. Amélia of Orleans and Braganza, Marquise of Vila Viçosa, the tribute and gratitude of the Composer’).<sup>10</sup>

In 1919, da Silva embarked on his first tour of Brazil. It would mark the beginning of thirty years playing around the world: the USA (1921), Madeira, the Azores and the Canary Islands (1922), Egypt and Italy (1923), Brazil (1924–25), Argentina and Uruguay (1926), Brazil (1927–29), Spain (1929–30), Mozambique, Rhodesia, the Belgian Congo, the French Congo, again Madeira and the Azores (1939–40) and

<sup>8</sup> Alfredo Pinto (Sacavém), *A Sonata ‘Saudade’ de Óscar da Silva: notas impressionistas*, Tipografia Ferin, Lisbon 1915, pp. 11–14.

<sup>9</sup> In Raul de Caldevilla, *Óscar da Silva: Opinião da imprensa, críticos, homens de letras e artistas*, Imprensa Nacional – Jayme Vasconcellos, Porto, 1919, p. 26.

<sup>10</sup> Marie Amélie Louise Hélène d’Orléans (1865–1951) was the queen consort of Portugal after her husband ascended to the throne as Dom Carlos I. She was a noted patroness of social causes and the arts. She was exiled at the same time as her son Dom Manuel II in 1910, and lived most of her remaining life in France. She visited Portugal one last time after World War II in 1945. She died in France and is buried in the Pantheon of the House of Braganza in Lisbon.

Brazil (1941–47). For three decades he would call Brazil his home, living first in Rio de Janeiro (in the 1920s and '30s) and then in São Paulo (in the 1940s). In these years he was also composing tirelessly, writing over thirty collections for solo piano, most of which were published during his lifetime.

His compositions for orchestra did not share the same fate, and have remained unpublished until the present day. In December 1922, in Lisbon, Fernandes Fão conducted a concert of works by Óscar da Silva, including orchestrations of original piano works, and the premiere of the 'lyric poem' *Marian*, for orchestra. In December 1923, Fão again conducted da Silva's symphonic poem *Alma Crucificada* ('Crucified Soul'), to considerable acclaim. As early as 1921, the younger composer Luís de Freitas Branco (1890–1955) had written that 'Óscar da Silva is, in the history of music in Portugal, a distinct individual, the true start of the modern note in Portuguese music'.<sup>11</sup>

In 1929 da Silva was part of the Portuguese delegation to the Ibero-American Exposition in Seville.<sup>12</sup> Other well-renowned musicians included the conductor and composer Francisco de Lacerda, the pianist and composer José Vianna da Motta, and the conductor and composer Pedro de Freitas Branco (the younger brother of Luís). Around this event, Óscar da Silva was able to organise several other concerts in Madrid and in Barcelona, where his string quartet *Ella* was performed. Especially celebrated were his *Páginas Portuguesas* for solo piano.

The Portuguese participation in the Ibero-American Exposition was one of the first cultural manifestations abroad of the new regime that arose from the military coup of 28 May 1926.<sup>13</sup> At the time, the military dictatorship was still in place, but the

<sup>11</sup> Luís de Freitas Branco, 'Óscar da Silva,' *Diário de Notícias*, 27 November 1921.

<sup>12</sup> The Ibero-American Exposition of 1929 in Seville was a world fair that was held simultaneously with the 1929 Barcelona International Exposition. The fair in Seville hosted Spain, Portugal and most of their former American colonies, while the fair in Barcelona hosted the other countries. The purpose of the Seville fair was to improve relations between Spain and Portugal and the American countries.

<sup>13</sup> The Portuguese First Republic, created in 1910, came out of World War I with a general feeling of instability, compounded by the international scene. This instability grew in the 1920s, with several cabinet changes per year. Finally, on 16 May 1926, a military *coup d'état* tried to restore order. The transition period of the military dictatorship ended in 1933, when the Constitution that formally created *Estado Novo* was approved.

future leader of the *Estado Novo* ('New State'), António de Oliveira Salazar, was already the Minister of Finance. The *Estado Novo*, a corporatist authoritarian regime, would rule Portugal and its colonies in Africa and Asia until 1974. Óscar da Silva viewed the *Estado Novo* and Oliveira Salazar from the beginning as a restoration of the idea of the Portugal he had grown up with and that had almost been destroyed by the republican revolution. In a 1937 interview in Rio de Janeiro, he said:

I travelled through the whole country, and everywhere I saw order, neatness, civil and moral education of the population, public works of great value, in short, vitality and evolution towards the most complete national restoration. What a contrast, the Portugal of the Estado Novo that I now discovered, and the material and moral decadence that I left thirteen years ago! – A true miracle, the work of Salazar!

To say, for example, that the people of Portugal are sad, is to believe in a tale! Everywhere I found in Portugal a popular atmosphere of healthy, spontaneous joy! Everywhere I saw singing societies, recreational societies, ranchos [folk-dance groups], virility, energy, new blood, in short!

And the Mocidade Portuguesa [Portuguese Youth] and the Legião Portuguesa [Portuguese Legion], what magnificent revelations of the patriotism of the boys who are the new Portuguese generation! I attended, in awe, the stately march of these noble armies of volunteers, at the grandiose parade of 28 May, and I marvelled at the vision, optimistic, of the Portugal of tomorrow, the Portugal of the Estado Novo, the Portugal of Salazar, the bigger Portugal!<sup>14</sup>

At the beginning of the 1930s, da Silva was struck with unspecified health problems and survived only with the help of friends in Rio. When he regained his health, his inspiration was rekindled, and he resumed composing in earnest. But his music was different: more angular, chromatic, harsher, more 'modern'. As he wrote to his old friend Júlio Dantas in 1933:

<sup>14</sup> 'Um notável artista português', *A Noite*, Rio de Janeiro, 29 September 1937.

In the bitter hours of this purposeful absence I have written some pages which are not anymore, I believe, the work of the romantic that I was, but scored by a musician drawing from the aesthetic aspirations of our time. [...]

These six works I mention must have suffered the influence of my present spirit, but I think that, in their subconscious, my sentiment of [the Portuguese] race is still dominant.<sup>15</sup>

Comparing his old and new works, da Silva wrote in the same year to a group of friends in Portugal:

about my published work, only parenthood gives me the patience to endure them... These are little pieces of my slightly morbid youth, with very modest artistic value. I think it best to archive them, because I fear that the somewhat depraved (!) taste of modern audiences will consider me backward-looking, a musician from thirty years ago... Instead, I trod in the last few years (with some success) through the path of modernism, even if it is softened enough not to fall for the nonsense that is the terrible feature of the vast majority of modern composers. Wretches! They lack inspiration; they lack knowledge of the science of music; they do not know classicism or romanticism [...].

For this, I cannot falter, as I trod this path because it is very interesting when done with sense, and sadly due to my age I have the obligation not to fall for nonsense, as you will have the opportunity to feel when you hear my new works.<sup>16</sup>

These new works were indeed published in 1934, under the sponsorship of the National Education Council of the Portuguese Ministry of Public Education. The most representative collections are *Nostalgies*, osI/49, *Vieilleries*, osI/50, *Moi...*, osI/52, and three collections of *Extras*, osI/53 and 55–56.

In another interview, this time in 1936, da Silva gave the most extensive contextualisation of his new style:

I could not continue in my romanticism, although I do not reject anything from my past work. But the current movement presents very different demands in rhythms, in modulations, and above all in harmonising. Music has to follow the evolution of

<sup>15</sup> Quoted in Orlando Courrège, '125. Carta para Júlio Dantas e outra para Armando Leça', *Jornal de Matosinhos*, 24 October 1997.

<sup>16</sup> Orlando Courrège, '126. Oscar da Silva na TSP do Rio: "Horas Portuguesas"', *Jornal de Matosinhos*, 31 October 1997.



all the other manifestations of the spirit, like Poetry, like Theatre, like Sculpture and Painting, in which the essentials of attraction are not the same as those in the last century. [...] Listen to Ravel and Debussy; to Respighi, Castelnuovo-Tedesco; to Falla, and even to Strauss.

At first sight, it may seem that it is a shocking art, in which the author tried perhaps to impress by being extravagant and abusing new liberties. But, if we reason, if we analyse the peculiar rhythm of these compositions, and especially its harmonisation, so different from the old one, we will feel immediately a broader range of emotions, and a more complex way of expressing them. [...]

Of course that the emotional foundation, these inspiring founts were born with music, and attained wonderful peaks with the great classics and romantics. [...] The moderns, however, working on the sense of harmony with largeness, enriched the musical process with an inexhaustible variety of combinations, making the [musical] phrase bizarre and, little by little, convincing the listener of its beauty and its strong expressive power. [...]

Whether in classical music, as in romantic [music], as in [music of] the future – the essential foundation, the eternal heart is the creating spirit, the intimate and profound inspiration that begets the emotive moments, and that in any case has to express itself in perfect phrases that will translate individual or collective sentiments, simple impressions or states of mind, impulses, raptures, outbursts of bravery or yearning, despair or rage, tenderness or unrest. If Music does not express any of this, if it does not evoke any of this – be it classical, romantic, or modern – then it portrays nothing, it is not Music. [...]

The near isolation to which I committed myself, in recent years, in Rio de Janeiro, brought me concentration and feverish study, which decisively influenced the transformation of my creative process. The old motifs, of longing [*saudade*] and sadness, of heroism or hope, I nowadays express with more breadth and deeper truth.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Álvaro Pinto, 'Óscar da Silva e a Música Moderna', *Diário de Notícias*, Rio de Janeiro, 4 April 1936.

In 1937, Óscar da Silva was awarded the grade of Commander of the Military order of Saint James of the Sword (ComSE)<sup>18</sup> by the President of the Portuguese Republic, General Óscar Carmona. After a tribute concert in Lisbon, Luís de Freitas Branco wrote:

Óscar da Silva is one of the most well-known Portuguese musicians abroad. [...] Some of the leading personalities in European music have paid tribute to his talent as a pianist and to his stature as a composer. In any period of the history of our music, even during the brightest ones, the Portuguese musicians that can amass such tributes – in quality and quantity – are rare. Finally, as the utmost distinction, Óscar da Silva even manages to be a prophet in his own land, a deed even rarer, if possible, than his celebrity in the best international cultural centres.<sup>19</sup>

After touring Africa in 1939–40, da Silva returned to Brazil for an extended period of time. There he would live, play, compose and publish for the coming ten years. After retiring from extensive concertising in 1947, he devoted his energies to another rush of publishing the music he had been composing for over a decade. His most representative collections from this time are the *Valsas*, osI/62, the *Prelúdios*, osI/63, the *Românticas*, osI/66, the *Embalos* ('Lullabies'), osI/69, and the *Queixumes*, osI/64, mentioned above.

In 1951 he returned to Portugal, following a personal request from António de Oliveira Salazar: the President of the Council of Ministers told him that 'the Instituto de Alta Cultura and the Secretariado Nacional expressed their desire that you could undertake, here, the collecting and selection of your works.'<sup>20</sup> Even at his advanced age (he was 81), this invitation resulted in the publication of new works for piano: *Saudades*, osI/71, *Divertimentos*, osI/70, and the larger *Estados de Alma* ('States of Soul'), osI/72. Fernando Lopes Graça summarised Óscar da Silva as

essentially a composer for the piano, and [he] has beyond any doubt enriched the scarce Portuguese literature for this instrument with a number of valuable pages. His fundamental romanticism, throughout a large part of his musical production, extends the

<sup>18</sup> This honorific military order recognises artists in Portugal. Recipients include Maria João Pires, José Saramago and Vianna da Motta.

<sup>19</sup> Luís de Freitas Branco, 'Música: Concerto de Óscar da Silva', *O Século*, 10 June 1937.

<sup>20</sup> Facsimile in Orlando Courrégue, '165. Salazar escreve a Óscar da Silva', *Jornal de Matosinhos*, 21 August 1998.

musical language of the 1800s, his style being similar to that of Schumann and Brahms. However, in some of his recent works, like the *Waltzes*, the *Preludes*, the *Queixumes* and the *Mazurkas*, one can notice in the composer a commendable intention of harmonic renewal. This, perhaps not without a certain loss in spontaneity, grants his organic romanticism a new hue.<sup>21</sup>

After some years in Lisbon, he re-established residence in Leça da Palmeira in 1954, where he would pass away on 6 March 1958. His funeral procession to the cemetery in Leça was broadcast live by national radio with the following words:

Óscar da Silva, a complete musician, was a romantic for whom formal beauty was not a convention, but an intimate and sincere expression. The romanticism of his music was the reflection of his soul. And in the geniality of his pages, in the gentleness of his notes, in the beauty of his themes, there was the portrait of himself. Óscar da Silva was truly, as has already been said, the last romantic in music.<sup>22</sup>

*Miguel Campinho is the author of Óscar da Silva (1870–1958): Life and Solo Piano Works, presented as a doctoral essay at The Hartt School, University of Hartford, Connecticut, in 2015. He has given the US premieres of many compositions by Portuguese composers, among them the pianist-composer Eurico Tomás de Lima (1908–89), of whose complete Sonatas and Sonatinas for piano he made the first recording, released by the label Numérica in 2013. He is currently Assistant Professor of Practice in Collaborative Piano at the Butler School of Music at the University of Texas at Austin.*

<sup>21</sup> Fernando Lopes Graça, 'Silva, Óscar da', in Tomás Borba and Fernando Lopes Graça, *Dicionário de música, ilustrado*, Vol. 2, Cosmos, Lisbon, 1956, p. 551.

<sup>22</sup> Transcript of the broadcast. Óscar da Silva Collection, Porto Conservatoire Library (P-Pc).

# ÓSCAR DA SILVA, THE SORROWFUL POET OF THE PIANO

by Luís Pipa

The piano music of Óscar da Silva is a thoughtful tribute to intimacy and depth of feeling. As his countryman, I relate closely to the expressively nostalgic dimension of his music. In 1997, well before I knew da Silva's works, I wrote a rather more wistful version of our rather martial Portuguese national anthem, and christened it *My Beautiful Blue Country*. It is music that seems to attest to that affinity.

The works chosen for this first volume of Óscar da Silva's piano music, celebrating the 150th anniversary of his birth, are not presented in chronological order, chiefly because I wanted to save the cycle *Dolorosas* ('Sorrows') for last. It is a wonderful eight-piece collection, which concludes in the mournful key of B minor with a *Lento funereo*, a sort of funeral march in  $\frac{3}{4}$  which ends with a highly mystical D major chord that dies away into silence, and in my opinion it deserves a respectful extended moment of inner contemplation, particularly bearing in mind that, at da Silva's own request, this last number of the *Dolorosas* was played by the Porto Symphony Orchestra at his funeral.<sup>1</sup>

The album starts, then, with *Images*, a set of seven character pieces, each with a descriptive title. None of them is dated, but the set was first published in Berlin by Raabe & Plothow with *Bilder* on the cover, *Images* appearing more discreetly in brackets.<sup>2</sup> That was in 1895, after a period of study in Germany, where, after graduating from the Leipzig Conservatoire, da Silva worked closely with the music

<sup>1</sup> Miguel Campinho, *Oscar da Silva (1870–1958): Life and Solo Piano Works*, doctoral essay, The Hartt School, University of Hartford, 2015, p. 110.

<sup>2</sup> The cycle became widely known as *Images*, as it would be later published by Sasseti and Ca., Lisbon. There would be an even later publication by Litografia Nacional in Porto with the title in Portuguese (*Imagens*), but the French designation remained a favourite.

of Schumann, following a series of lessons from his widow, Clara, in Frankfurt. The colourful and imaginative writing, together with the fondness for composing cycles of short pieces, are certainly not far from Schumann's poetic universe, and the 25-year-old da Silva was reputedly an outstanding interpreter of Schumann's music. The set opens with 'Indécision' [1], in D major. Contrary to the traditional tempo indications in the remaining pieces of the set, da Silva writes a mere *ad libitum* in the beginning. The word *rubato* appears also in the first bar, and the short semiquaver rests after each phrase portray a sort of permanent hesitation, even when the music reaches dynamic peaks. The lovely eight-bar *legato* middle section, with prolonged notes over the changing harmonies, could be seen as a sort of resigned inner reflection upon that incapacity for assertiveness. The second *Image*, 'Naïveté' [2], is an *Allegro espressivo* in G minor, written in ABA form. The fresh, plain, almost Baroque texture of the beginning gives this piece an innocent character, contrasting with the richer-sounding E flat major *Cantabile* middle part. The indication *languido* and the discreetly syncopated left-hand accompaniment support a nostalgic melody that flows into an emphatic cadential sequence, ending with an extended diminishing trill and melting into the *pianissimo* return of the first part. 'Constance' [3] is an *Andante con moto e espressivo* in A minor. The music is intense right from the beginning, with a highly expressive melodic discourse containing significant dynamic and agogic contrasts. The 'firmness' suggested by the title is represented through the constancy of the richly harmonic left-hand accompaniment, which remains similar throughout virtually the whole piece. The exception lies in the four-bar coda, where the left hand comes to a halt, giving way to a lyrical and softly ascending conclusion in A major.

The fourth piece of the cycle, 'Découragement' ('Dejection') [4], is premonitory of the emotional universe of *Dolorosas*, which would not be published until sixteen years later, by the time the composer was 41. This *Adagio non troppo* in G major, *con molto sentimento*, is a slow, mournful piece, occasionally interrupted by poignant moments of silence, where deep-sounding dominant pedal notes support suffering chromatic lines, which give way to anguished chords that fall hopelessly in descending, downhearted phrases. No. 5, 'Espérance' ('Hope') [5], is a *Molto vivace* in the luminous

key of A major, emerging suddenly in lively contrast with the previous piece. The swift chromatic passages give way this time to joyful ascending intervals supported by restless left-hand syncopated chords, as if symbolising an accelerated heartbeat in hopeful anticipation. 'Passion' [6] appears as a reinforcement of the emotional content of the cycle. The initial tempo indication, *Agitato*, and the frequent harmonic fluctuations, the foundations of which oscillate between B minor in the beginning and D major towards the end, illustrate a whirlwind of feelings that are further emphasised by marked dynamic contrasts and recurrent tempo inflections. The seventh and last piece, 'Coquetterie' [7], comes as a sort of temperate encore, after the intensity of emotions that traversed the previous pieces of the cycle. Perhaps da Silva intended to pay a tribute to Robert Schumann's 'Coquette', also No. 7 (a coincidence?) in the 21-piece *Carnaval*, Op. 9. The music is very different from Schumann's, but the frivolous, seductive and somewhat capricious characterisation is well depicted in the variable moods of the lively double-note right-hand sequences. The brief *più lento* section, with an emphasis on a sinuously expressive left-hand melody, offers a sensually flirtatious episode that gradually returns to the energy of the G major *Assai Allegro*, to end in a confident and affirmative manner, following a more introspective diminishing ascending passage.

Both *Embalos* ('Lullabies') and *Românticas* (there's no obvious English equivalent, although the title is self-explanatory) were published in 1948 in São Paulo, when Óscar da Silva was living in Brazil; again, the music itself is undated – da Silva did not date his manuscripts, some of which could be with him for several years before reaching their definitive versions. Although he was now an old man of 78, his music remained truthful to his Romantic soul, even if in these later works he explored more extended harmonies and timbres. *Embalos*, two cradle songs dedicated 'To the Portuguese Mothers' [8] [9], are lovely, melodic pieces which demand considerable delicacy of touch and fine control of the different textures and tone-colours from the performer. In these pieces, as well as in the cycle *Românticas*, the score advises 'using the pedals with the utmost care': one imagines that da Silva was concerned with the possibility of overloading the frequent harmonic inflections and subtle filigree passages.

The three pieces that form *Românticas* are fairly diverse: the first, ‘Romance’ [10], is almost reminiscent of a Schumann Lied, with its rich melodic lines built upon a steady chordal accompaniment, with contrasting dynamics and changing harmonies. The second, ‘Nocturnal’ [11], is more extended, exploring the extreme registers of the piano and allowing an occasional Impressionist flavour, not only because of the distended tonal spectrum but also through episodic successions of chromatic parallel major thirds; the last of the three, ‘Canção Triste’ (‘Sad Song’) [12], has an unequivocal taste of a Brazilian tune, full of rich harmonies and warm melodic inflections. The initial plain textural character of the piece gradually evolves towards a musical and pianistic climax, returning quietly to the initial melody, this time with a delicate harp-like accompaniment divided between the hands, ending in the extreme upper register with a fading succession of echoing arabesques.

Unlike the seven pieces in *Images*, the eight of *Dolorosas* were not given individual titles. Still, the designation chosen by the composer for the whole cycle (‘Sorrows’), supplemented by the subtitle of ‘Musique Intime’, immediately generates a comprehensive psychological setting, which is constantly nurtured through interpretative directions, with the traditional signs of dynamics, phrasing, articulation and agogics supplemented by words that suggest particular states of mind. Indeed, the many of the tempo indications establish the mood from the outset: I – *Lento serio*; II – *Andante malinconico* (*Triste canzone!*); IV – *Andante non molto* (*con dolore profondo*); VII – *Andante dolento*; and VIII – *Lento funereo*, as I have already mentioned. But it also happens in inner sections, as with IV – *Agitato con afflizione* and V – *Con generosa grandezza*. However, it is within the musical text that the most inspirational expressions may be found: I – *con sentimento elevato*; III – *rassegnadamente* (‘in a resigned manner’); IV – *con dolore profondo*; V – *violento, con scoramento* (‘with discouragement’), *molto disanimato* (‘very disheartened’). Those are only a few amongst the many that swarm throughout the whole cycle. This added richness was for me a continuous inspirational challenge, and these instructions acted as substitutes for more objective directions on tempo and dynamics, compelling me to introduce changes to the strict letter of the musical text, in order to find the correct characterisation for those expressions. To give an example from

the fifth number, the term *violento* impelled me to agitate the tempo and create sudden dynamic inflections; and later in the same piece, the words *molto disanimato* led me to slow down the tempo somewhat and prolong the resolution of particularly tense notes, creating at the same time an especially intimate singing tone.

The first piece, *Lento serio* [13], acts as a sort of introduction to the cycle, setting the general mood in which it will develop. To the aforementioned *con sentimento elevato*, da Silva adds the indication *cantabile grave* when an emphatic melody appears in the middle register. Although the piece ends in B major, a fair part of the musical discourse evolves around G sharp minor, contributing to the sombre atmosphere da Silva intended. In the second piece [14], the melancholic character suggested by the tempo indication (*Andante malinconico*) is highlighted by expressions such as *con dolcezza* and *con affeto*, together with the subtitle '*Triste canzone!*'. Cast in F sharp minor, the piece has a meditative slower middle section in C minor, in which the principal melody is accompanied by deep-sounding *mezza voce* bass lines, reaching a dynamic peak before returning to the initial key after a surprising diminishing D dominant-seventh chord cadence. The third of the *Dolorosas* is a solemn, mournful piece in B flat minor [15]. The melodic construction recalls 'La Folia', the theme that allegedly originated in early-sixteenth-century Portugal and became a favourite of uncountable composers throughout the centuries. Da Silva explores rich harmonic paths and textures in this moving piece, which ends with a disappearing subterranean sound, intersected by deep, murmuring octaves. The fourth piece [16] is the longest and formally most complex of the cycle. The B flat major initial theme, which returns near the end, is evocative of the thoughtful Chopin of the *Nocturnes*, or of pieces like the slow movement of the Third Sonata – Chopin being a composer whom da Silva had amongst his favourites and performed frequently. The extended virtuosic middle section – starting in G minor, with exciting octave passages and glittering cadences, and ending in D flat major, with the melody accompanied by softly floating left-hand arpeggios – reveals da Silva's own pianistic qualities and the consistency of his idiomatic writing for the piano. The fifth piece, an *Allegretto* in D flat major [17], is also very rich and full of contrasting moments. It begins with a two-chord meditative sequence repeated twice *pianissimo*, suddenly



bursting into a pleading phrase (*subito forte con imprecazione*) that ends with a long, suspended note. These sudden interactions terminate with a long silence, giving way to a most disheartened moment with sighing laments, after which a highly passionate *agitato* sequence occurs. A section of broad grandeur (*Con generosa grandezza*) prepares the return of the initial thematic material, ending in an intense manner. The following *Quasi adagio* [18] is another piece in which da Silva extends the formal structure by starting with a softly crystalline melody in B major that progressively, and agitatedly, moves into an imaginative cadence of recitatives, suspended notes and emphatic silences. This point marks the transition to a very long and gradual *crescendo*, where the *legato* melody is accompanied by restless syncopated quavers, culminating in an *agitatissimo* and *fortissimo* virtuoso passage that terminates in a broadly suspended C sharp major chord. The solemnly grandiose coda resumes the path to the initial key of B major.

I came across an interesting coincidence when I studied the seventh of the *Dolorosas* [19]: the striking resemblance of its first phrase to a piece by the Portuguese composer and Liszt disciple José Vianna da Motta that I have also recorded for Toccata Classics – *Méditation*.<sup>3</sup> Both pieces share the key of D flat major and the same anacrusic downward movement in quavers, with virtually the same notes in the left hand. Furthermore, da Silva's indication *con dolce [sic] ricordi* relates rather closely to da Motta's quotation from Dante's *Inferno* on the first page of his score: '*Nessun maggior dolore / Che ricordarse del tempo felice / Nella miseria*'. Both pieces follow very different paths after that extraordinarily similar beginning, but the coincidence is no less than remarkable, and it will remain a mystery as to whether da Motta's piece from 1933, written 22 years after the composition of *Dolorosas*, may in some way have been inspired by da Silva's musical reflection. The eighth and last piece [20] is, as I mentioned, my justification for saving *Dolorosas* for last. The idiomatic dotted rhythm of the funeral march<sup>4</sup> is present right from the beginning, and the chromatic descent that gradually

<sup>3</sup> Released on TOCC 0481.

<sup>4</sup> It is interesting to note that the 'march' is in  $\frac{3}{4}$ , and inevitably Schumann's last piece from *Carnaval*, 'March of the "Davidsbündler" against the Philistines', also in  $\frac{3}{4}$ , comes to mind. Although in Schumann's finale there is a clear and purposeful context of misalignment with tradition, in da Silva's case it may reveal an intention of not being passively conformist, which reflects positively on the quality of his music.

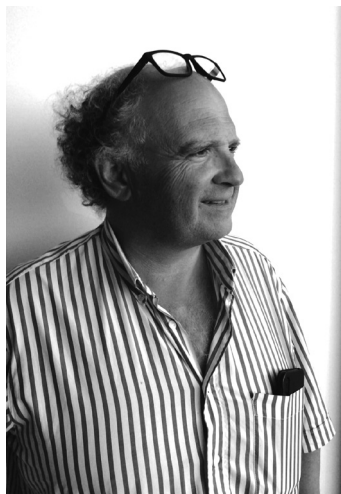
fades into its dying moments is intensely descriptive of the profound sentiment of grief associated with this moving cycle.

It has been a privilege for me to plunge into music of such depth and soulfulness, as I find the works of this remarkable and sensitive composer to be. The journey so far was not an easy one, not least because the published scores contained more than a few inaccuracies and questionable notes, requiring the taking of editorial decisions. I am thus looking forward to the further research that the preparation of the second volume of Óscar da Silva's piano music will require.

Born in Figueira da Foz, Portugal, **Luís Pipa** studied at the Conservatoires of Braga and Porto and the Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts of Vienna, later obtaining the degrees of Master of Music in Performance Studies and Ph.D. in Performance from the Universities of Reading and Leeds in the United Kingdom. He is currently professor of piano and chamber music at the University of Minho, near Porto, a member of the research group in music at the University Centre for Humanistic Studies (GIARTES/CEHUM) and the president of the Portuguese branch of the European Piano Teachers' Association.

As a pianist he has premiered numerous works, with a repertoire reaching from the Baroque to the contemporary. He has also himself composed some piano pieces and chamber music, as well as a number of songs. He is regularly invited abroad to give master-classes and to serve as juror for different musical competitions.

He has recorded for several labels, with music from Bach to the twentieth century. A review in the *Piano Journal* describes his album *Portugal*



(published by *Diário de Notícias*) as ‘remarkable and original’, stating that Pipa’s *Suite Portugal* will leave its mark on future Portuguese music anthologies, defining him as ‘a pianist of great depth, power and poise’. His first release on Toccata Classics, an album of music by José Vianna da Motta (TOCC 0481), prompted Daniel Morrison, reviewing it in *Fanfare*, to state that Luís Pipa

is clearly devoted to the music of his countryman, and the devotion shows in the sensitive, nuanced shaping he applies to these performances. He plays with precision, clarity, and poise. While I initially felt that he was sometimes too cautious, I came to appreciate his preference for subtlety over display. Most of the music he plays here is not extremely demanding from the technical standpoint, but when such demands do arise [...], they pose no problems for him.

His most recent recordings include a double album of sonatinas by Beethoven, Clementi, Dussek and Reinecke for Tradisom (TRAD 129/130) and, for Toccata Classics, a first volume (TOCC 0521) of piano music by Philipp Scharwenka (1847–1917). Future projects include an album of Beethoven piano sonatas and a recording of the complete Mozart piano sonatas.



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Recording engineer and digital editor: Nuno Couto  
Mixing and mastering: Jorge Simões da Hora  
Executive producer and recording supervision: Tiago Manuel da Hora



Booklet notes: Miguel Campinho and Luís Pipa  
Cover design: David M. Baker ([david@notneverknow.com](mailto:david@notneverknow.com))  
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Tel: +44/0 207 821 5020 E-mail: [info@toccataclassics.com](mailto:info@toccataclassics.com)

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# ÓSCAR DA SILVA Piano Music, Volume One

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<b><i>Images, Op. 6</i></b> (publ. 1895)	<b>13:33</b>
1 I Indécision	2:11
2 II Naïveté	2:54
3 III Constance	2:04
4 IV Découragement	1:55
5 V Espérance	1:04
6 VI Passion	1:38
7 VII Coquetterie	1:47
 <b><i>Embalos</i></b> ('Lullabies'; publ. 1948)*	<b>4:35</b>
8 I <i>Tempo di 'Berceuse'</i>	2:27
9 II <i>Tempo di 'Berceuse'</i>	2:08
 <b><i>Românticas</i></b> (publ. 1948)*	<b>9:38</b>
10 I Romance	2:02
11 II Nocturnal	5:12
12 III Canção Triste	2:24
 <b><i>Dolorosas (Musique Intime), Op. 11</i></b> (publ. 1911)	<b>29:55</b>
13 I <i>Lento serio</i>	1:47
14 II <i>Andante malinconico (Triste canzone!)</i>	3:31
15 III <i>Andante sostenuto</i>	3:47
16 IV <i>Andante non molto (con dolore profondo)</i>	6:26
17 V <i>Allegretto</i>	4:26
18 VI <i>Quasi adagio</i>	4:38
19 VII <i>Andante dolento</i>	2:11
20 VIII <i>Lento funereo</i>	3:08

**Luís Pipa, piano**

**TT 57:44**

\*FIRST RECORDINGS