

THE ROLE OF INSPIRATION IN THE PERFORMANCE OF PROGRAMME MUSIC: THE CASE OF “VIAGENS NA MINHA TERRA” BY FERNANDO LOPES-GRAÇA

Joana Gama

UnIMeM – Research Unit in Music and Musicology, Évora University, Portugal
gamajoana@gmail.com

Abstract

“Viagens na minha Terra” (Travels in my Homeland) is a piano cycle in nineteen movements by Portuguese composer Fernando Lopes-Graça (1906-1994). The work relates to Portuguese culture in many ways: the title of the work is from a novel by Almeida Garrett and each movement is based on a traditional folk song. The music also refers to traditional dances, musical instruments and religious festivities, all of which are associated with small villages or regional traditions. By tracing the composer’s original sources of inspiration, this paper examines how these extra-musical ideas can influence the way the piece is performed. It gives examples of how these ideas are incorporated into the piece and transcribed into the score. It also shows how analysing sound recordings of the traditional folk songs used in “Viagens na minha Terra” can determine the performer’s approach to the work in terms of tempo, rhythm, dynamics and sound.

Keywords: Fernando Lopes-Graça, programme music, performance studies

1. Introduction

Fernando Lopes-Graça (1906 - 1994) is without doubt one of the most important figures of Portuguese musical culture. Apart from being a prolific composer, with works for different instruments, his interest in Portuguese traditional music was crucial in the establishment of his identity as a composer. In a very personal way, he incorporated references to Portuguese folk music in almost all of his works. “Viagens na Minha Terra” is a very clear example of this and it represents an interesting challenge for the performer who is faced with many external references.

In the 1960s of the XXth century, Lopes-Graça accompanied the Corsican ethnomusicologist Michel Giacometti in his collecting of traditional music. Concerned with the authenticity of the collections made *in loco*, the composer said: “I think one of the main problems, if not the main problem, the main

difficulty that faces the collector of folk music, especially the one who wants to record it, is to find it live, that is, as a functional part of activities or moments that express it or are the purpose for it: the work songs during the agricultural labour or similar, the religious songs during the cult, the lullabies near the cradle, the songs of Pilgrimages in the Shrine or on the way to the Shrine, etc..” (Lopes-Graça, 1953). Being responsible for the transcription of the melodies, Lopes-Graça remarked that it wasn’t a comfortable task: “Many style particularities, certain accentuations, certain voice inflexions, like the attacks and characteristic *portamenti* are difficult to notate. The rhythm can constitute, sometimes, a real problem” (Lopes-Graça, 1953).

The relationship of Lopes-Graça with traditional music had two sides: its

collection/transcription for ethnographical purposes and its incorporation in his music.

2. The work: movements and comments

The piano cycle "Viagens na Minha Terra" (Travels in my Homeland) was composed between 1953 and 1954 and is dedicated to the Brazilian pianist Arnaldo Estrela who, like Lopes-Graça, was, politically, a left-winger. Lopes-Graça annotated the score with the following comments: «The little pieces that constitute "Viagens na Minha Terra" evoke mores, legends, the physiognomy of Portugal not in picturesque and flashy way, but more in a way of showing the soul [unreadable], simple and [unreadable], perhaps even rude, but profoundly spiritual of the people, its gravity. Intention: to preserve a certain number of melodies. "Viagens na Minha Terra" is a homage to Almeida Garrett on the occasion of the 1st century. The titles don't imply necessarily descriptive intentions. It's not only a simple harmonization. It wouldn't be worth for a composer to do so if in the process he didn't intervene with his personality» (Casculo, 2012). The title of the work is the same of one of the most famous Portuguese novels, which is authored by Almeida Garrett (1799-1854). The novel combines two layers: the description of a real journey between Lisbon and Santarém and the fictional narration of a love story. The idea of wandering is also present in the subtitle of the piano work: "Nineteen piano pieces based on traditional portuguese melodies." In the autograph of the work the composer even added a small comment next to the title of each movement (Casculo, 2012).

Here are the titles of each movement, followed by the comment of the composer (the composer didn't add comments to every movement):

1 - Procissão de Penitência em S. Gens de Calvos | Penitence Procession in S. Gens de Calvos

Comment: Dramatic piety;

2 - Na Romaria do Senhor da Serra de Semide | Pilgrimage to the Shrine of Senhor da Serra in Semide

Comment: Primitive material / simple rhythmic tetrachordal formula obsessively repeated / variation of the harmonic colour;

3 - Noutros Tempos a Figueira da Foz dançava o Lundum | In the olden days Figueira da Foz would dance the Lundum

Comment: Naturally, the syncopé represents the main element of the rhythmic structure;

4 - Um Natal no Ribatejo | Christmas in Ribatejo

Comment: Mysticism;

5 - Em Alcobaça, dançando um velho fandango | In Alcobaça, dancing an old fandango

Comment: Choreographic vivacity. Of Spanish origin or not, the fandango is one of the most vulgar dances in Portugal: various types. This one is very Portuguese;

6 - Em Ourique do Alentejo, durante o S. João | In Ourique from Alentejo during the S. João

Comment: Melody in an old style; ancestral rites suggested by the special idiosyncrasy of the people from Alentejo;

7 - Acampando no Marão | Camping on the Marão

Comment: Simplicity; bonhomie of the rustic people;

8 - Em S. Miguel d'Acha, durante as trovoadas, mulheres e homens cantam o Bendito | In S. Miguel d'Acha, during the storms, women and men sing the Bendito

Comments: A song with two voices; old song for exorcisms assimilated by the Catholicism, returning to its primitive magical function;

9 - Em terras do Douro | In the Douro valley

10 - Nas faldas da Serra da Estrela | At the foot of Serra da Estrela

11 - Em Silves já não há moiras encantadas | In Silves there are no more enchanted Moorish maidens

Comment: It involves a certain irony (ó minha caninha verde; banal corridinho);

12 - Cantando os Reis em Rezende | Singing the Reis in Rezende

13 - Em Pegarinhos, uma velhinha canta uma antiga canção de roca | In Pegarinhos, an old woman sings an ancient spinning song
Comments: A region of patriarchal habits;

14 - Na Citânia de Briteiros. | In Citânia de Briteiros

15 - Em Monsanto da Beira, apanhando a margaça | Gathering the margaça in Monsanto da Beira
Comments: Brightness, the brightness of the songs of Monsanto;

16 - Na Ria de Aveiro | On the estuary of Aveiro

17 - Em Setúbal, comendo a bela laranja | In Setúbal, eating the lovely orange

18 - Em Vinhais, escutando um velho romance | In Vinhais, listening to an old romance;

19 - Os adufes troam na romaria da Senhora da Póvoa de Val-de-Lobo | The adufes thunder at the pilgrimage of Senhora da Póvoa of Val-de-Lobo.
Comments: Pilgrimages of Beira Baixa / adufes / modal hexachord that proves the antiquity of the song.

3. Extra-musical references

Each movement of "Viagens na Minha Terra" is *per se* a vehicle for the Portuguese culture, not only because of the sonorities but also due to other references present in the titles. The most emblematic ones can be divided into the following categories:

- a) religious festivities (nº 1, 2, 4, 6, 12, 18)
- b) traditional dances (nº3, 5)
- c) rural places (nº 7, 9, 10, 13, 16)
- d) folk tales (nº 11, 18)
- e) regional traditions (nº 8, 15)
- f) traditional cries/tunes (nº 14, 17)
- g) musical instruments (nº 19)

Considering the composer's writings on the work and analysing the titles and categories into which they fit, the question emerges: what effect can it have in the performance?

By tracing the composer's original sources of inspiration, one can find a considerable amount of information that can have an impact in the understanding and, consequently, in the performance of the work. For now we will concentrate on the analysis of the information contained in the titles of each movement.

Regarding the following movements the composer seems to only draw attention on different locations in Portugal, probably relating the origin of the traditional melodies to the places identified in the titles. In some cases "the place" referred to is not a village or a parish but a region, which makes it difficult to trace the original songs. "In the Douro valley" and "At the foot of Serra da Estrela", ninth and tenth movements respectively, are those where the composer focuses on two Portuguese landmarks: the Douro valley, whose *vinhateiro* region has been classified as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO, and the Serra da Estrela (Estrela Mountains), the highest mountain range in Continental Portugal. The same happens to the pieces "In Citânia de Briteiros" and "On the estuary of Aveiro", the fourteenth and sixteenth movements. Citânia de Briteiros is an important archaeological site of Castro Culture in the North of Portugal. It was there that, in 1932, the English diplomat Rodney Gallop collected the tune of stonemasons used by Lopes-Graça in "Viagens na Minha Terra" (Giacometti, 1981). The estuary of Aveiro is located in the North of Portugal, on the Atlantic coast. It stands as one of Europe's last remaining untouched coastal marshland. "Singing the Reis in Rezende", the twelfth movement, refers to the religious Portuguese tradition of singing the Reis (Maji) on the 6th January. Lopes-Graça probably used a melody from the region of Resende (a parish located in the Central Inland of Portugal). The seventeenth movement "In Setúbal, eating the lovely orange" is based on a traditional cry for selling oranges collected by Jaime Cortesão in 1942 in Setúbal (Giacometti, 1981), a

Portuguese village known of its very sweet oranges.

The first movement, "Penitence Procession in S. Gens de Calvos" is based on a melody collected by Gonçalo Sampaio in S. Gens de Calvos, a small parish in the Minho region (Sampaio, 1986). The mood of this movement is "Solemn", the same of "Alerta, Alerta", the song in which it is based. The solemnity is related to the penitence procession, a Christian ritual that is part of the Lent, the preparation for Easter: "During Easter, those impressive, sometimes even terrifying, the Commendations of the Souls or the Pray for the Souls, night chants sung in the crossroads, in front of the chapels of the "alminhas" [little souls], a clear reminiscence of the ancestral cult of the dead that perhaps constitute one of the aspects more curious of our religious folklore" (Giacometti, 1981).

Although the second movement is related to a religious pilgrimage, "Pilgrimage to the Shrine of Senhor da Serra in Semide", it portrays the pagan feast associated with this shrine: "There mustn't be many pilgrimages in Portugal that are able to gather, regularly, for so few days, such a great number of pilgrims, as the Pilgrimage to the Shrine of Senhor da Serra" (Campos Neves, 1920). Lopes-Graça certainly testified the vivacity of this feast because he went of vacation to Senhor da Serra at least in the summers of 1940, 1942, 1944 and 1945 (Museu da Música Portuguesa, 1998).

Some titles are strongly connected with the traditional melody in which the movement is based. The original melody of the third movement is called "Lundu da Figueira" (Lundu from Figueira). The Lundu (or Lundum), which rhythmic specificities are the "habanera ostinato" and the syncopé, is a traditional song and dance of African-Brazilian origin brought to Europe around the 18th century. Although nowadays it is a very lively dance, it used to have a more discreet and slightly insinuating character - the piece by Lopes-Graça even contains the expression "languid" (Figure 1). Figueira (an abbreviation of Figueira da Foz, a seashore village in Centre of Portugal) is the place where the original melody (Figure 1.1) was collected (Tomás, 1934). In this case, the

original melody is clearly presented in the piece by Lopes-Graça.



Figure 1. "Noutros Tempos a Figueira da Foz dançava o Lundum" (bars 1 to 5).



Figure 1.1. "Lundu da Figueira" (bars 1 to 3).

The same happens in the case of the fifth movement: "In Alcobaca, dancing an old Fandango". M. N. Cruz and J. D. Ribeiro collected some fandango songs around 1917 in the Alcobaca area, in the Portuguese Extremadura province (Giacometti, 1981). The fandango is a lively dance that, as one of the main folk dances in Portugal, is still present in the pilgrimages around the country.

"Christmas in Ribatejo" is the fourth movement, to which the composer connects the idea of *mysticism*. The Ribatejo is a Portuguese province, a referential place in the history of the Order of the Templars in Portugal associated with the Convent of Christ (that is located in Tomar, the town where Lopes-Graça was born).

The title of the sixth movement only refers to the religious/pagan feast of São João (St. John) that takes place in Ourique do Alentejo (in the Alentejo province, South of Portugal). It is a very slow piece that is related to the "Cante Alentejano", the traditional musical genre of the Alentejo that is characterized by the repetitive nature of the strophes in a very slow tempo with some moments of silence.

Other titles require a more poetic interpretation as it is the case of the seventh movement called "Camping at Marão". The title may suggest a panoramic view of the Marão Mountains (Serra do Marão) that are located in the North of Portugal and have an altitude of 1415 m.



Figure 2. Serra do Marão in the 60s

"Bendito «das trovoadas»", the melody that appears in the eighth movement was collected by Lopes-Graça who considered it a "precious song" (Lopes-Graça, 1953). In the transcription of the collection, the melody is sung antiphonally by men and women (Figure 3). The structure of "In S. Miguel d'Acha, during the storms, women and men sing the Bendito" follows closely the structure of the original melody, clearly divided in two groups as seen in Figure 3.1. To clearly divide the phrases, both examples contain a *fermata* in the end of each phrase, which is followed by a breath mark in Figure 3 and the indication "corta" (cut) in the piece by Lopes-Graça.

BENDITO «DAS TROVOADAS» (S. Miguel de Acha)

Mulheres
Ben. di. to e lou. va. do se. ja — O San. tis. 'omo

Homens
Sa. cras. men. to da Eu. ca. ris. ti. a. Fru. to do ven. te. sa.

Mulheres
gra. do — da Vis. gem. ju. ris. 'oma San. ta Ma. ri. a.

Homens
Ao A. mor. tam. bém, Três. pres. so. as di. vi. nas.

— Se. ja a. go. ra a sem. pre, sem. pre, A. men.

Figure 3. Bendito «das trovoadas»

Em S. Miguel d'Acha
durante as trovoadas,
mulheres e homens cantam o
Bendito

Figure 3.1. "Em S. Miguel d'Acha, durante as trovoadas, mulheres e homens cantam o Bendito" (bars 1 to 17).

The eleventh movement contains different Portuguese references. In the title "In Silves there are no more enchanted Moorish maidens" and in the comments of the composer we can find many interesting layers. This movement refers to the Algarve region (South of Portugal), specifically the village of Silves that used to be the Moorish capital during the Muslim occupation in Portugal. It is mainly from XIIIth century that the legends around the enchanted Moorish maidens, supernatural beings, date back. Contrasting with this oneiric ambience suggest by these "characters", the composer constructs the music based on the song "Ó minha caninha verde", an example of the *corridinho*, the fast songs and dances from the Algarve that implicate and exquisite and rhythmic footwork. The title of this movement may be inspired in the book "The enchanted Moorish maidens and the enchantments of the Argarve", that contains a chapter called "The Moorish maiden of Silves" (Athaíde d'Oliveira, 1898).

Some examples may suggest the composer's personal experiences as in the thirteenth movement called "In Pegarinhos, an old woman sings an ancient spinning song". With the purpose of collecting folk music, Lopes-Graça was in Pegarinhos (a small parish situated in Trás-os-Montes, a Portuguese province in the Northeastern corner of the country) in 1953. Apart from being based in a melody collected in Pegarinhos, which is also cited in the fifth movement of the Rustic Suite nº 1 for orchestra by Lopes-Graça, this movement may relate to an encounter between the composer and an old woman that was especially kept in his memory.

In the eighteenth movement we are still in Trás-os-Montes, this time in the municipality of Vinhais. The title of the piece "In Vinhais, listening to an old romance" refers to the song "The Romance of the captive girl" collected by Kurt Schindler, a German-born American composer and conductor, in 1941 (Weffort, 2006).

In the fifteenth movement of "Viagens na Minha Terra" we are taken to Monsanto, a small village that was once considered *The most Portuguese village of Portugal* in a competition organized in 1938 by the Secretariado de Propaganda Nacional (Secretariat of National Propaganda), during the dictatorship of Salazar. "Gathering margaça in Monsanto da Beira" is based on a melody collected by Ernesto Veiga de Oliveira and Benjamim Pereira between 1960 and 1963 (Viana, 1947). The original melody is called "Margaça", which is a plant from the same family as the camomile. It is accompanied by the *adufe*, a traditional Portuguese instrument of Moorish origin. The *adufe* is a traditional square tambourine only played by women used mainly in the provinces of Beira and Trás-os-Montes. Figure 4 shows the *adufe* played by Catarina Chitas (1913 - 2003), a shepherdess from Penha Garcia, who was one the most important players of the instrument.



Figure 4. The *adufe* played by Catarina Chitas (1970)

In "The adufes thunder at the pilgrimage of Senhora da Póvoa of Val-de-Lobo", the last movement of "Viagens na Minha Terra", the *adufe* has also an important role. The piece is based on a song called "Senhora da Póvoa",

the name of the shrine and the pilgrimage that takes place in Vale de Lobo, a small parish located in the municipality of Penamacor, very close to the Spanish border. The song was primarily collected by Rodney Gallop and published in 1937 (Giacometti, 1981) and a recording of this song, collected by Giacometti and Lopes-Graça, will be referred to in the following chapter.

By analysing the information contained in the titles of each movement we were able to trace the sources that could influence each piece's performance. By connecting the pieces to religious/solemn rituals, to traditional dances, to the landscape, the pianist may feel more involved with the piece and therefore especially inspired in performance. These external references can influence the sound (the attack, the kind of sonority), dynamics and tempo (obviously taking into account the indications in the score of "Viagens na Minha Terra" but connecting these indications to the original pieces).

4. Original musical sources

To fully understand the characteristics of each song, one can listen to field recordings. Concerning rhythm, some interesting aspects were found when analysing the recordings of three folk songs that correspond to three movements of "Viagens na Minha Terra".

The nineteenth movement starts with an introduction played in the left hand (Figure 5). It is only when listening to the two field recordings of "Senhora da Póvoa" collected by Giacometti and Lopes-Graça that we fully understand "what it means".



Figure 5. "Os adufes troam na romaria da Senhora da Póvoa de Val-de-Lobo" (bars 1 to 5).

In these recordings, the introduction sets the character of the piece: "the tremulous rhythm of the *adufes* transport us, in a sense, to an "African" ritual or dance." (Giacometti, Lopes-Graça, 1991). The song starts with the

sound of the *adufes* played vigorously by a group of women, whose voices come in later. It is clear that in Lopes-Graça's piece the *adufes* correspond to the accompaniment (left hand) and the voices to the melody (right hand). The indication in the score *PP lontano*, an approach considerably different from the recording, seems to suggest a reminiscence of the original song, as if the *adufes* are sounding far away and we can only hear them vaguely. Considering the timbre of the *adufes* and the amateur approach towards the instrument, the sound of the left hand must be somewhat "tarnished" and the rhythm mustn't be taken too strictly.

The song "Margaça" or "A margaça é má erva" ("The margaça is a bad weed") is the original song for the fifteenth movement. Due to geographic proximity of the places where the songs were collected, in the a recording made in the 1960s, the *adufe* is also present, this time giving the pulse through the repetition of the rhythm of ♩ ♩ (crotchet, quaver). However not all performers strictly follow this rhythmic motif, which creates small variations that ornament the accompaniment. Although the motif is not present in Lopes-Graça's piece, by listening to the recording, the performer should feel that repetitive cell when performing this movement. Concerning the rhythm of this piece we found another relevant detail: if we compare one of the oldest transcriptions of the song, published in "Cancioneiro Monsantino" in 1947 (Figure 6) and the recording in question, we find that the rhythm of bars 2, 4, 6 and 8 is different. In the recording, the rhythm of these bars is ♩ ♩ ♩ (three crotchets), which creates a very interesting moment of ternary subdivision (opposed to the binary subdivision of the song). This rhythm is probably the most usual rhythm for the referred bars, because it is also followed in a recording made in 2012 by a Folkloric group called "Modas e Adufes" (Portuguese Folk, 2012). It is known that Giacometti recorded this song *in loco* but it is not known if Lopes-Graça was there. What is certain is that the composer didn't follow this transcription because he uses the syncopated rhythm. Another remark can be taken into account when performing the piece by Lopes-

Graça: in both recordings, the first crotchet of bars 2, 4 and 6 has a small accent, which makes the crotchet last a little bit more time before ending the phrase in *diminuendo*. When Lopes-Graça referred the "brightness" of the songs of Monsanto was probably thinking about this song: because of its high tessitura the timbre of the voices is very luminous and cheerful. The performer should therefore have this musical image in mind when playing the piece.

Figure 6. First published transcription of "Margaça".

Many recordings can be found of the Portuguese fandango. Fandango is a song without lyrics that is normally accompanied with a dance. Although the steps and movements vary according to the Portuguese regions, the music has always a lively character. "Dancing an old Fandango in Alcobaca" starts as a kind of reminiscence of the original dance: if we look at the left hand of the introduction we see quavers played in *staccato* and piano (Figure 7).

Figure 7. "Em Alcobaca, dançando um velho fandango" (bars 1 to 8)

This is very different from the original accompaniment that can be made by instruments like the bagpipe, the accordion or a traditional snare drum (called *caixa* or

bombo). The “vivacity” referred to by Lopes-Graça is reached ahead in the piece through the increase of the dynamics and the enrichment of the texture. Figure 8 shows the passage in question: this time the melody is presented in octaves (right hand) and the accompaniment is ornamented with an *appoggiatura* in the second beat (left hand). To set the new ambience this passage has the indications of *forte* (f), *molto ritmato* and *staccato*, which suggest the impetuosity associated with this dance.



Figure 8. “Em Alcobaca, dançando um velho fandango” (bars 39 to 46).

“In Citânia de Briteiros” is based on a very expressive stonemasons’ tune called “Ó, Ó, Ó, Pedra!” (Oh, Oh, Oh, Stone!). Figures 9 and 9.1 show respectively the original tune and the first bars of the piece by Lopes-Graça. Even without listening to a recording of the original piece, it is almost possible to imagine the low voices of the stonemasons singing. It can be very moving to foresee these voices singing a melody with the following particularities: the descending half-tones Ab/G, the *fermatas* in the end of each phrase, the indication of *Adagio*. To reinforce the ambience, Lopes-Graça included an expressive accompaniment in the left hand: the fifth chords seem to suggest the sound of the hammers hit the floor.



Figure 9. First collection of “Ó, Ó, Ó, Pedra!”



Figure 9.1. “Na Citânia de Briteiros” (bars 1 to 6)

5. Conclusion

Tempo, rhythm, dynamics and sound: in performance, these are the main parameters that can be influenced by taking into consideration the external references of “Viagens na Minha Terra”. Even the process of searching for the origin of these references would have pleased Lopes-Graça: during this phase, the pianist establishes a deep contact with many aspects of the Portuguese culture (from Geography to Music) that were evoked by the composer in the piece. Of course that prior the “internet era” it would not be easy to reach the primary sources referred to in this paper: the books where the folk songs were originally published - available not only in public libraries but also in online libraries - or the field recordings - downloadable for free or purchasable online. With the democratization and consequent facilitation of the access to the information, the contact with the external references can truly enlighten a deep knowledge of the piece, through its origin, its meaning and its message. The depth of knowledge of the external references depends, for sure, on the interest of the pianist; but it is easy to conclude that, as long as the skills of research and performance are equally developed, the pianist who knows more about the piece will perform better.

For a pianist, researching about the pieces one is practicing is a way of opening horizons: this process brings to the keyboard not only what it is written in the score (and that is interpreted by the pianist according to the personal and musical experience) but also the images and sounds that influenced the composer during the composition of the piece. In the particular case of “Viagens na Minha Terra”, a work full of references that co-exist with the personal style of the composer, the pianist who decides to pursue the clues given by the composer is awarded with never ending material that can greatly inspire and enhance the performance experience.

Nota Bene

The author is responsible for all translations.

The autograph of “Viagens na Minha Terra”, as well as the entire estate of the composer, is kept in the Museu da Música Portuguesa (Museum of Portuguese Music) in the city of Cascais.

Figures

Figures 1, 3.1, 5, 7, 8 and 9.1 are taken from the piano score of “Viagens na Minha Terra”.

Figure 1.1 - (Weffort, 2006) pp. 256.

Figure 2 - Picture by Eduardo Teixeira Pinto. Retrieved from

<https://plus.google.com/photos/117117577629872048745/albums/5633265019513703009/%205633286691949499602>

Figure 3 - (Lopes-Graça, 1953) pp. 584.

Figure 4 - Still from video. Retrieved from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nlz41dv4cZ4>.

Figure 6 - (Viana, 1947). “A Margaça”.

Figure 9 – (Giacometti, 1981)

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