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## European Female Wind Band Composers and Their Works

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Research Exposition  
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## Table of Contents

### *Chapter 1.*

- Introduction
  - 1. Research Question p.3
  - 2. Motivation and Goals p.3
  - 3. Contextualization p.4
  - 4. Methodology p.5
  - 5. Format of Documentation p.5

### *Chapter 2.*

- Literature Review p.6

### *Chapter 3.*

- Research p.7
  - 1. Process
    - A. *Building the Catalogue* p.7
    - B. *The Critical Edition* p.9
    - C. *The Commission of a New Piece* p.12
  - 2. Specific Conclusions p.14

### *Chapter 4.*

- General Conclusions p.16

*Sources* p.17

# Chapter I

## Introduction

### 1. Research question

Can shedding new light on women composers' contributions to the wind band and ensemble repertoire via the creation of a catalogue, the preparation of a critical edition, and the commission of a new work, help to encourage more Portuguese women to compose for this genre?

### 2. Motivation and Goals

With my research question I tried to reflect the three-tiered intentions of this massive project. I want to find out *who* the women composers for wind band were/are, and to essentially match faces to their names by also gathering pictures, biographical information and their music, to make them more well known.

This research does not intend to be a social-political investigation or reflection about *why* so few female composers write for wind band ensembles, or even about *whether* gender stereotypes still drive women away from the composing profession. It is my belief that a Masters degree in conducting is not the appropriate frame within which to provide answers to these, among other equally interesting and relevant, questions. I decided not to focus on the past but rather to find and learn more about existing composers, to listen to their music, and also to try and motivate new composers to write for wind band ensemble.

My initial goal was to catalogue as many female European composers and their works as possible in an online and physical catalogue. But this research project has other goals as well: not only to make female composers more known in the wind band scene, but also to make the wind band scene itself more known to composers. Again, I do not intend to delve into discussions of gender stereotypes nor analysis but I do feel that there is a double misconception at play: one has to do with female composers and the other concerns music for wind band. It is my hope that this project and its three major outputs will not only help create a place for female wind band composers, but

also contribute to the acknowledgment of wind band music as an important body of work that, often, is regarded as being of secondary importance.

In order to achieve these goals, this research project has three outputs: the creation of an online and physical catalogue of European female composers who wrote for wind band and/or wind ensemble; the commission of a brand new piece (10 - 12 minutes) for wind band by a female Portuguese composer; and the creation of a critical edition of a manuscript of *Porto Heróico* by Berta Alves de Sousa. It is important to note that the first output, the catalogue I researched and compiled, is located in a separate text document of nearly 70 pages, and includes biographical sketches and a list of works for every European female composer that has written at least one piece for wind ensemble (chamber or wind band).

### **3. Contextualization**

In Portugal, as far as it is possible to assess at this moment, only two established women composers have written works for wind band or large wind ensemble: Berta Alves de Sousa, who composed *Porto Heróico* in 1943; and Maria de Lourdes Martins, who composed *Rapsódia de Natal*, *Rondó*, and *Suite de Danças Tradicionais Portuguesas* in 1978. In a country with such an important tradition of wind band musical practice as Portugal, it seems strange that so few women composers have used this medium to convey their musical ideas. In order to put the production of female composers for this medium in perspective I researched relevant works from as many European female composers as possible, created a critical edition of De Sousa's work, and worked closely with a female Portuguese composer in order to create a new piece for wind band. Ultimately, the hope is that after more than 40 years of a Democratic regime in Portugal, during which time we have seen a large influx of women as instrumentalists in wind bands, we will not have to wait another 40 years or more before another work is written for wind band by a Portuguese woman.

#### **4. Methodology**

The creation of the catalogue involved systematic review and research. I carried this research out online, at a number of libraries, and by contacting anyone who might have information on this topic. The creation of the critical edition involved in-depth analysis of the De Sousa manuscript, editing and typesetting this manuscript into *Sibelius*, and also editing parts for each instrument. The commission of the new piece also involved researching and contacting current Portuguese female composers, as well as encouraging and working closely with one such composer during their composition process.

#### **5. Format of documentation**

The dissemination of the results of this research project has two parts: the first is primarily textual and includes a catalogue of virtually all European female composers who have written for wind ensemble (including biographical data and a list of their works), a critical edition of the De Sousa manuscript and reflections on its creation, and the commissioned work as well as reflections on its creation; while the second is primarily performance-based and involves at least one concert conducted by myself, during which we will perform pieces by European female composers as discovered during the cataloguing process, premiere the new work I commissioned, and perform De Sousa's work from the critical edition I have prepared.

## Chapter II

### Literature Review

As far as it was possible to research and access, the body of research dedicated to female composers is not very large. One important resource is Aaron L. Cohen's *International Encyclopaedia of Women Composers*<sup>1</sup> and another is Rhian Samuel's *The Norton/Grove Dictionary of Female Composers*.<sup>2</sup> I was particularly impressed however with Aaron Cohen's *Encyclopaedia*, not only by its size (two volumes with over six thousand names from over 70 countries) but also because the author of this large resource was neither a musician nor a musicologist. Cohen worked simply out of his love for music and curiosity about international perspectives and constructed these volumes over the course of eight years.<sup>3</sup> He outlines his intentions in creating this work when he notes: "The principal aim of this volume is to fill a significant gap in the history of music and the history of women's lives regarding the contributions of these creative women."<sup>4</sup>

*The Norton/Grove Dictionary* on the other hand lists the lives and works of 875 female composers from the Western musical world, following the standards set by the *New Grove Dictionary of Music*. It was gathered by a team of international experts with the same goals as Cohen: to fill a crucial gap in the current comprehensive collected knowledge pertaining to women composers. I should also perhaps mention the book *Sounds and Sweet Airs* by Anna Beer (2016), whose subtitle *The Forgotten Women of Classical Music* already gives a clue to its intentions (as well as the current state of knowledge in this field).

Finally, my online research also helped me to find some extra listings of women composers in online platforms such as Wikipedia.<sup>5</sup> There is however something in common with all of the above-mentioned references: they discuss female composers that either wrote for any musical ensemble (like Cohen's for example), or they gather the names of women who wrote 'classical music' for orchestra, opera, voice, and so on.

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<sup>1</sup> Aaron Cohen, *International Encyclopedia of Women Composers* (New York: Books & Music USA,

<sup>2</sup> Rhian Samuel, *The Norton/Grove Dictionary of Female Composers* (W.W. Norton, 1994).

<sup>3</sup> Cohen, foreword.viii

<sup>4</sup> Cohen, preface.xiii

<sup>5</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_female\\_composers\\_by\\_name](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_female_composers_by_name)

Until this moment I have not found a reliable resource or catalogue of women composers who wrote for wind band. And this is also why I decided to take on this task—to, using Cohen's words, 'fill a significant gap in the history of (wind band) music.'

## Chapter III

### Research

#### 1. Process

##### *A. Building the Catalogue*

This part of the research project began by systematically going through both volumes of Aaron Cohen's *Encyclopaedia of Women Composers*. Right away this gave me the first two dozen names for my own catalogue.

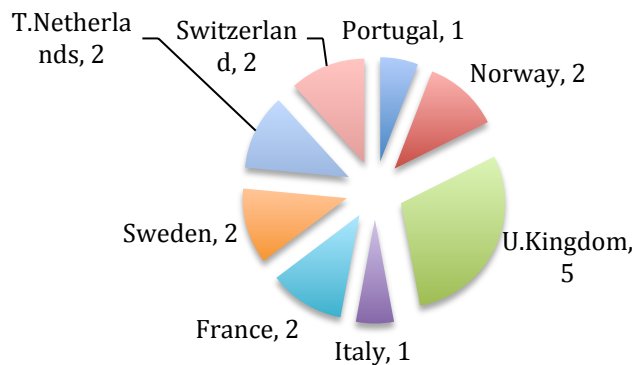
After this I decided to find a list of national and international wind band music publishers. Felix Hauswirth's books<sup>6</sup> provided this list, from which I selected around 50 publishers, whom I then contacted by email asking for names of European female composers with works for wind band or, at least, works for wind ensembles including eight or more instruments. I received replies at a rate of a little over 50% (see Chart 1.), and proceeded to painstakingly go through online catalogues of these publishers. From this information I was able to discover new music and new composers, which are listed now in my catalogue.

To have a closer look at the Portuguese national scene in particular, I spoke to teachers, conductors, musicians and composers, asking them to list as many Portuguese composers as possible. I then interviewed 10 of these composers to find out if they have created works for wind band, and to discover their personal opinions on the wind band

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<sup>6</sup> Felix Hauswirth, *1000 plus - Ausgewählte Werke für Blasorchester und Bläserensembles* (Adkiswil/Switzerland: RUH Musik AG, 2010).

scene and whether they consider the wind band as a means for their musical expression as composers.<sup>7</sup>



**Chart 1.** Number of Publishers that answered by Country

As I continued to compile the composers I was discovering, I kept updating the list of names and biographical information in my catalogue with each new piece of information that arrived by email, or that I discovered during online searches, or that I learned from professional colleagues—who kindly made much more information available to me for this project than would have otherwise been the case.

Soon it became clear to me that, in order to reach as many people as possible, my catalogue could not have only a physical form but an online one as well. It was thus necessary to build a catalogue on a website platform that would not only facilitate the accessibility of information about these composers' lives and works, but that would also allow for the inclusion of much more information and many more media files than a physical catalogue alone. So having built this website, it is now possible to access the same information found in the physical Composers Catalogue, only with added pictures, links to composers' personal websites, Youtube links to their interviews, and audio files of their pieces.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Names of composers interviewed: Adriana Sá, Ana de Ataíde Magalhães, Ângela da Ponte, Ana Seara, Anne Victorino d'Almeida, Patrícia Oliveira, Sofia Rocha, Svetlana Meinichuck, Mariana Vieira, Svetlana Filatava.

<sup>8</sup> <https://renataoliveira84.wixsite.com/femalecomposers>



## B. The Critical Edition

*Porto Heróico* by Berta Alves de Sousa is the only piece that this important Portuguese composer and conductor wrote for wind band. Berta was born in Liege (Belgium) in 1906 but her family came from Oporto and returned there when Berta was very young. She studied at the Oporto Conservatory under Moreira de Sá, Luis Costa, Lucien Lambert and Claudio Carneyro, and graduated in piano. In Paris from 1927 to 1929, she studied piano under Wilhelm Backhaus and Theodore Szanto, composition under George Migot, and improved her piano technique with Vianna da Mota in Lisbon. She studied conducting under Clement Krauss in Berlin and Pedro Freitas Branco in Lisbon, attended interpretation courses for piano under Alfred Cortot, and studied music pedagogy under Professor Edgar Willems. She was also a music critic for several notable presses after 1939. She taught chamber music and piano at the Oporto Conservatory and performed in numerous recitals and concerts as a soloist, accompanist and conductor. She experimented in Sound Symmetry together with the movement's creator, composer Fernando Correia de Oliveira, and received many prizes and awards including the Moreira de Sá Prize in 1941. She wrote *Porto Heróico* for military band (1950) as well as a wind quintet: *Moleirinha* (1971).

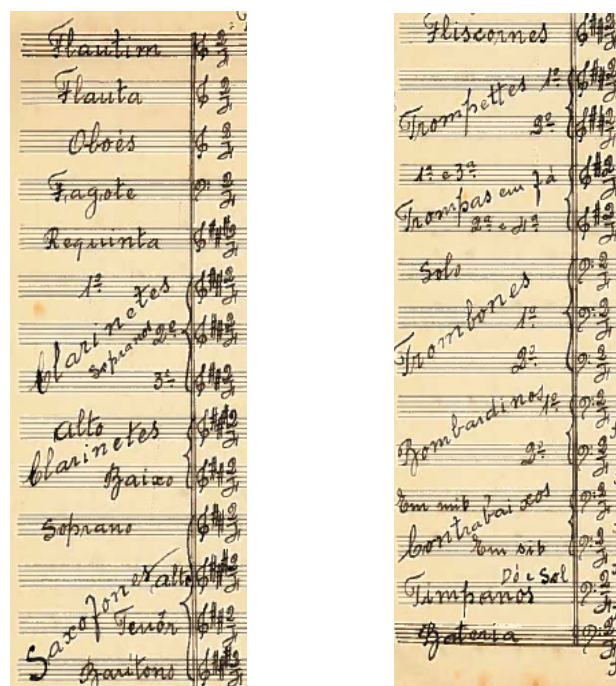
*Porto Heróico* was written in 1950, when the composer was 44 years old. It is a concert march written for the Oporto Army Band, and was premiered in January 1951. The original manuscript has yet to be found, and may unfortunately be lost. As such, the manuscript I consulted for the creation of my critical edition of the work is held in the Oporto Music Conservatory library. To access this manuscript I established a collaborative relationship with another on-going research project led by Dr. Helena Marinho<sup>9</sup> who kindly made it available to me. This partnership works together with AVA Musical Editions, a Portuguese publisher, who will eventually publish my critical edition. Nuno Caetano did the Sibelius work for the creation of this edition, according to AVA's regulations, and any musical editing was done by myself.

As outlined above, Berta Alves was a very talented composer who for some time studied in Paris. A strong French influence in the Portuguese military band scene was

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<sup>9</sup> Helena Marinho, *Euterpe Unveiled: Women in Portuguese music creation and interpretation* (Universidade de Aveiro, FCT).

already present at the time, which is clearly visible in the manuscript excerpts shown below.



**Fig.1** – Instrumentation in the Berta Alves de Sousa Manuscript

Regarding the work's instrumentation, one can see it includes: piccolo, flute, oboe, bassoon, Eb clarinet, Bb clarinet (I, II, III), alto clarinet, bass clarinet, soprano, alto, tenor and baritone saxophone, bugels, Bb trumpets, F horns (I to IV), trombone (Solo, I and II), euphonium (I and II), Eb contrabass saxhorn, Bb tuba, timpani, bass drum and cymbals (under the name *Bateria*). This is the instrumentation of a first class Portuguese Military Band—not every Portuguese military band was able to have such complete instrumentation as this.

The only instrument that raised my curiosity here however, is the alto clarinet, as it is not usually present in traditional Portuguese band settings and is also not present in works by other Portuguese composers.<sup>10</sup> The inclusion of this instrument, in my view, may have two possible explanations: either the Oporto Army Band (unusually) had an alto clarinet at the time, or it is a sign of the French influences Berta assimilated while studying in Paris. After questioning the presence of this particular instrument I came across a new book by Pedro Marquês de Sousa, which shows that the Banda da

<sup>10</sup> For example, Works from Sousa Moraes dating back to 1919, use a similar band setting without Alto Clarinet.

Armada from Lisbon already included an alto clarinet as early as 1919.<sup>11</sup> Although this is a different military band, it is reasonable to assume, for practical reasons, that the tendency was for the majority of military bands to be organized in a similar manner whenever possible. And although amateur community wind bands organized themselves in a similar way to military bands, the alto clarinet was not standard at the time, and is still very rarely included in community wind bands—a tendency I believe is now being reversed by increased awareness of conductors and band board members.

As stated above, this is a concert and not a street march (note the presence of timpani for example), and it is classified as a *Marcha Triunfal* (Triumphant March). I cannot say whether this subtitle was supplied by Berta herself or by the person who prepared the copy of the manuscript I had access to. What is clear however, is that the spirit of the march certainly matches the *Triunfal* adjective. Given that this was written for an outdoor military concert, we can easily understand the spirit of this short piece (about 4 minutes). Concert marches were, and still are, played as the opening piece in a typical wind band concert in Portugal. As André Granjo points out:

*The symphonic march or major march also has a structure similar to that of street marches, being, nonetheless, more developed in what concerns themes and harmony. Concert marches may include small tempo variations, particularly in soloist or trio sections, and frequently there is a rallentando that precedes the final section, besides including coda sections.*<sup>12</sup>

This certainly supports the structure of Berta's march (see Table 1). As regards other structural features, the *Grandioso* is a common section of a march that we can find in such well-known examples as *The Stars and Stripes Forever* by John Philip Sousa. It is a *Finale*-like passage with a majestic feeling, and in full *tutti*.

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<sup>11</sup> Marquês Pedro Sousa, *Bandas de Música na História da Música em Portugal* (Porto: Fronteira do Caos, 2017), 237.

<sup>12</sup> André Granjo, *The Wind Band Movement in Portugal: Praxis and Constrains*. (Maastricht: Master Thesis, 2015), 61.

	Intr.	AA	Bridge	A	Bridge	Trio BB	Bridge	Grandioso	Da Capo	Coda
Bar	12	16 (x2)	24	16	24	16 (x2)	24	14	Opt.	14
Key	C Major	-	-	-	-	F Major	Ab Major	C Major	-	-

**Table 1.** – General Structure of Berta de Sousa's *Porto Heróico*.

Given that Berta was a gifted composer and, probably, because I was consulting a very clean (not original) manuscript, there were not a lot of corrections to be made while preparing the critical edition. With Nuno Caetano's help however, some minor mistakes were easily found and corrected (see bar 14 of the manuscript for example, where there is an extra point on the quarter note of the snare drum). There is also no specific tempo indication in the manuscript so the one found in my critical edition was chosen by me according to two factors: the first being the typical tempo indication in Portuguese military marches (about 112 MM), and the second being the character of the music itself. In my opinion, when looking to the score and listening to this march, 100 MM is the tempo that I, as a conductor, would personally choose for its performance. Therefore, I have suggested an interval of between 95 and 105 MM. I also added an extra tuba in C and euphonium in C to the parts in order to facilitate the performance of this march in the future, given that in Portuguese community bands it is very common to find Bb or C tubas and euphoniums, even within the same wind band.

### *C. The Commission of a New Piece*

The first decision to be made when commissioning a new piece is, obviously, one's choice of composer. It was thus necessary to research: a) which female Portuguese composers are active at the moment, and b) how to contact them. After this research I made a few contacts and decided to engage composer Anne Victorino d'Almeida for the commissioned work.

As stated in the catalogue, Anne was born in 1978 in Poissy (France). Being the youngest daughter of composer António Victorino d'Almeida, her desire to study music

was present at an early age, and she started piano lessons at the age of four in Vienna, Austria. At the age of seven, now in Portugal, she began to study the violin for a period of eleven years. In 1997 she joined the Rueil-Malmaison Regional Conservatory (France), studying in the class of Dominique Barbier. A year later she returned to Lisbon and joined the class of Agnès Sarosi at the National Superior Academy of Orchestra, graduating in 2003. She has recently been dedicating part of her musical career to the composition of soundtracks. Extremely dedicated to teaching, she has also taught violin from 2000 to 2012 at the Metropolitan Music Conservatory of Lisbon, and has been a teacher at the Music School of the National Conservatory in Lisbon since 2004. Anne wrote her first piece for brass ensemble in August 2017. For the purposes of this research project, Anne agreed to write a piece of around 10 minutes in length, at a level of difficulty suited to a professional wind band, and she was given a deadline of February 2018 and complete creative freedom.

In many ways, this commission also served the larger purpose of this research project. During a conversation, conductor and teacher Alberto Roque suggested that I invite Portuguese conductors currently working with wind bands to have a look at this new commissioned piece. Given that this commission was initially made in an individual capacity (meaning that no funding was available), and that the larger purpose of this project was to encourage and promote female composers, this suggestion made complete sense. So I contacted Anne for her permission and invited 5 other colleagues from the Portuguese wind band scene to become co-commissioners for this piece.<sup>13</sup>

After the piece was completed, but before it was edited, Anne kindly agreed to send me information about the piece and its composition process, and I in turn provided some suggestions for changes in the parts. AVA Musical Editions will publish Anne's piece, *O Soldado da Misarela*, in the coming months.

About this piece, Anne wrote the following text:

*This piece tells the story of a soldier who lost his life on the Misarela Bridge in May 1809. Like most of the soldiers, he was young, possibly in love, with all his dreams still to come true. Someone, a maiden with long, pretty braids, embroidering her beloved's name on a sheet, would long for his return to give her hand, and away from the looks and gossip,*

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<sup>13</sup> Commission group: André Granjo, Alberto Roque, Fernando Marinho, Hugo Oliveira, Paulo Martins, Renata Oliveira, Tiago Alves.

would embrace him and exchange promises of love. But it was under the command of Maréchal Soult that he did not resist one of the greatest calvaries of the French troops in the Napoleonic Invasions in Portugal.

*On this fateful day, exhausted Portuguese soldiers found themselves cornered on a narrow bridge, the famous Misarela Bridge, located in Gerês, stretched about 30 meters and folded over the clasp of a single arch of 12 meters high and extremely narrow. Unexpectedly caught by the enemy's shots, the troops immobilized, unable to maneuver to protect themselves. Many men tried to advance at all costs by pushing the front soldiers, trampling each other to the vicinity of the bridge. Many men were thrown into the abyss by clenching and confusion.*

*A young man's life was lost. We lost a love story, a destiny, a journey like many others but that we all wish to live. Many lives have been lost.*

*The story of this soldier is unfortunately repeated. Every day. Be soldiers, be they civilians. Be it children, women or men. As if our life and our dreams were worth less than the interests of those who rule.*

## **2. Specific Conclusions from the Catalogue**

After compiling the names, biographical information and works of the 122 women composers included in my catalogue, some statistical analyses became possible—shedding an interesting light on this output from a European perspective. For starters, these 122 composers represent a total of 23 different nationalities from across Europe.<sup>14</sup>

Taking a closer look at the kinds of pieces they wrote for winds, one can see that only 78 of them have written ‘concert pieces’ for wind band. This means that 17 of them only wrote marches (mainly composers from Germany and Soviet Union, with royal duties), 22 of them only wrote for wind ensembles (of various formats), and 5 of them only wrote for brass band (4 of which are composers from the United Kingdom, where the brass band tradition was born, and where it is still the strongest wind tradition).

When thinking about the European wind band scene we might expect to find the majority of composers working in countries such as England, France, Germany or the

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<sup>14</sup> I took into consideration the continental, rather than political-economic, definition of Europe.

BeNeLux nations, given their strong tradition of wind music and the number of important composers they have at present on the international scene. That being said, it was thus surprising that the two countries with the most number of female composers writing pieces for wind band are, by far, Sweden (18) and Norway (12). Combined, these two countries have 38,5% of the total number of women composers writing for wind band that I was able to find when compiling the catalogue. I can think of two possible reasons for this interesting result: the first being a more open-minded society as regards the role of women, and the second being more well-organized and accessible information resources. I will continue to avoid discussing gender and societal matters, but I can personally testify to the very well-organized websites of the Swedish Music Information Center<sup>15</sup> and the Norway Music Information Center.<sup>16</sup> These two resources already include works for wind band, as well as those written by female composers, and thus proved very helpful for this research project.

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<sup>15</sup> <https://www.svenskmusik.org/en>

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.mic.no/>

## **Chapter 4**

### **General Conclusions**

One of the goals of this research project was to better understand the state of Portuguese production in this genre and to place it within a European context. For this, I am grateful to have discovered many more composers than I was previously aware of, and also to see that, on average, we are at the same level of production as other European countries. Before beginning this research project I only knew about the two composers mentioned at the very beginning of this paper: Berta Alves de Sousa and Maria de Lourdes Martins. During the research process, and thanks to my colleagues and the commission of the piece for wind band by Anne Victorino d'Almeida, I was able to list a total of 7 female Portuguese composers, 5 of whom have written works for wind band. This number puts Portuguese wind music production from female composers at around the same level as countries such as France, England and Austria—all of which are known for having a strong wind music tradition.

Another positive aspect is that there are young female Portuguese composers who are studying at the moment or with degrees in composition, who are building their careers, and who are well aware of the important wind band tradition in their country. With the right incentives (increased awareness, funding, commissions, promotion), it would not be difficult to make these numbers grow in both quantity and quality.

As a final conclusion, I can answer *yes* to the question of whether shedding new light on this field can encourage more female Portuguese composers to write for wind band. This research project was presented in October 2017 during a Wind Band Music Conference in Lisbon, which helped begin many of these important discussions while also raising awareness. I hope that this research project, and particularly the online catalogue, will help shed even more light on the contributions of Portuguese women composers in this field.



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