

# Ana Moura: Desfado

[Read other posts by Dorothy Potter Snyder](#) March 20, 2018

Fado is a sort of Portuguese blues that contains elements from traditional Cape Verdean music, and the songs nearly always mournfully contemplate lost love, death and the full range of dark emotions. The elegant [Ana Moura](#) is one of its primary exponents in the world today and, in addition to having caught the attention of Prince, she also recorded with The Rolling Stones. But her popularity with rockstars is not why she's on my list of favorites.

From the first note, I belong to her. Her intention and vocal attack is like a silver wire being expertly slipped into my spinal column and then delicately electrified—I know that doesn't sound nice, but it is exquisitely pleasurable to me. Her contralto voice, gorgeously dark, husky and sprinkled with silver dust, takes risks while remaining under her complete control during every second of the song. She leaves me swooning. I swear, I would follow Ana Moura into battle— and I have a feeling the men in her band would, too.

This song, by [Pedro da Silva Martins](#), is called “Desfado” because while it features the usual sorrowful nostalgia in the lyrics, the melody is as cheerful as it can be. In other words, it is a study in contrasts, an “un-fado”, that plays a game with the bipolarity of the human heart, which is never so happy as when it is sad, and never so sad as when it is happy. I saw Ana perform this, the title song of her fifth album *Desfado*, at the Carolina Theatre in Durham, NC in 2015 and was unable (unwilling!) to sleep that night, so drunk was I on her hypnotic voice. Here is the chorus in Portuguese and English, so you get an idea of what's going on:

Ai que saudade  
Que eu tenho de ter saudade  
Saudades de ter alguém  
Que aqui está e não existe  
Sentir-me triste  
Só por me sentir tão bem  
E alegre sentir-me bem  
Só por eu andar tão triste

*Oh how I long  
To have something to long for,  
To have longings for someone  
That has been here and does not exist,  
To feel sad  
Just because I'm feeling so well and happy,  
To feel happy  
Just because I'm feeling so sad.*

Please enjoy Ana Moura performing “Desfado”.

## ANA MOURA - "DESFADO" (ao vivo no 5 para a meia-noite)



[Dorothy Potter Snyder](#) is a writer, literary translator and consultant on Latin American music and culture. She has the honor of being NYFOS Artistic Director and co-founder Steven Blier's [Spanish language coach](#), and has contributed to his program notes for NYFOS concerts involving *el cancionero hispano*. A former New Yorker, she now lives in Hillsborough, North Carolina.