

Preface

This volume contains papers presented at the 5th International Workshop on the History of Speech Communication Research (HSCR), held in Porto in May 2022. This conference departed from the 2-year rhythm established by the earlier meetings in Dresden (2015), Helsinki (2017), Vienna (2019) and Prague (2021) because it was designed to commemorate the 120th anniversary of the birth of Portuguese phonetician Armando de Lacerda (1902–1984). Entitled “Lacerda 120” it was the first such meeting to be dedicated to the memory of an individual scholar.

Born in Porto, Lacerda was a pioneer in the field of twentieth-century speech sciences. In 1932, Lacerda invented the chromograph, a type of inkjet oscillograph which overcame many of the limitations of kymography, the antiquated method which remained in use at experimental phonetics laboratories up until the mid-20th century. In 1933, in collaboration with the German phonetician Paul Menzerath, he developed the concept of coarticulation, which has played a major role in phonetic theory ever since. He went on to establish Portugal’s first phonetics laboratory and to found a significant journal. By mid-century both Lacerda himself and his Coimbra laboratory had acquired an international reputation.

The workshop was not restricted, however, to the work carried out by Lacerda or in his laboratory. The aim was to increase our wider understanding of the development of experimental phonetics in the mid-20th century, with presentations from various countries on a range of actors, laboratories, techniques and instruments. Lacerda’s place in the development of experimental phonetics is thus illuminated from different angles by reports from Europe and around the world.

The keynote speaker at the Porto meeting was António Almeida, a disciple of Lacerda’s, who first learned about phonetics at the Coimbra Phonetics Laboratory in the years 1966 to 1968. Almeida gave a personal account of his experience of working alongside Lacerda and provided an introduction to Lacerda as scientist. He particularly focused on Lacerda’s final piece of research, a neglected study of Portuguese intonation. It was an important study in Almeida’s view, which went largely unnoticed among members of the international community of phoneticians as a result of being published in Portuguese.

The workshop was jointly organized by the International Speech Communication Association (ISCA) Special Interest Group on “The History of Speech Communication Sciences”, the Institute of Contemporary History (NOVA University of Lisbon; University of Évora), the University of Porto (Rectory; Linguistics Centre), Ferraz de Lacerda, Lda., and supported by the International Phonetic Association (IPA). It was also sponsored by the University of Coimbra Faculty of Letters and the University of Coimbra Science Museum, which played a key part in the “Lacerda 120” exhibition. Inaugurated during the workshop in the house that belonged to Armando de Lacerda in the historic centre of Porto, the exhibition featured some of the instruments he created, especially chromographs, on public display for the first time. Instruments that were used at the Coimbra Phonetics Laboratory from the 1930s to the 1970s were lent to the exhibition by the University of Coimbra Science Museum.

The book ends with a chapter devoted to the exhibition, which featured not only Coimbra Phonetics Laboratory instruments but also a selection of documents from Lacerda’s personal files and other archives containing historical sources that throw light on his career and scientific work.

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