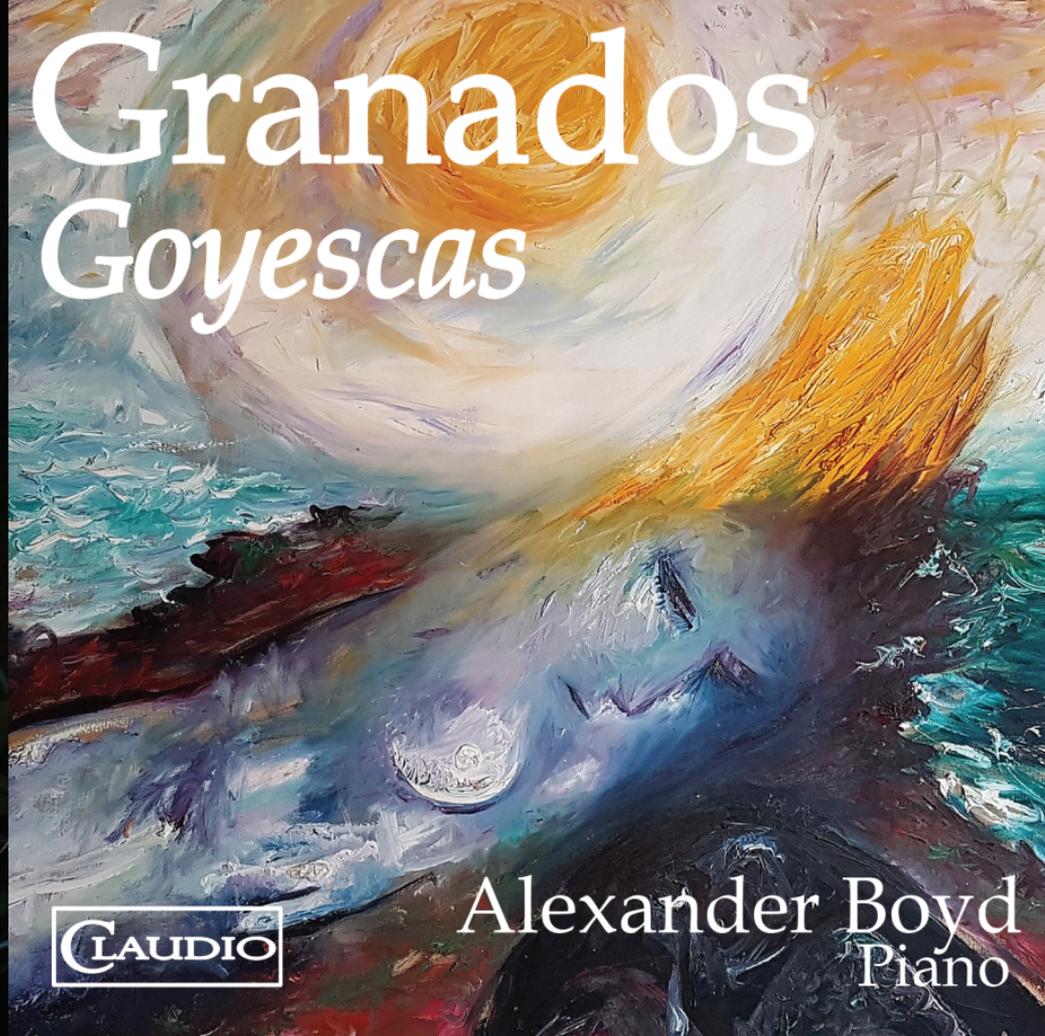




Alexander Boyd  
*pianist*



# Granados

## *Goyescas*



Alexander Boyd  
Piano

Spanish painter Francisco de Goya had a profound influence on Granados. Goyescas, meaning 'in the style of Goya' pertains to a large collection of Granados's compositions, including his opera of the same name, another set of piano pieces and his *Tonadillas* for voice and piano. The suite of six pieces entitled **Los majos enamorados** (*majos* in love) is the most well-known of his Goya inspired works and is considered his greatest creation. The suite is divided into two parts; part one being the first four pieces and the remaining two pieces comprising the second part. Each work is dedicated to a virtuoso pianist of the time, except for number 4 – 'The *Maja* and the Nightingale', which Granados dedicated to his wife Amparo.

Granados was fascinated with Goya's world, in particular with the way he used contrasts in colour and revealed the character and psychology of the subjects in his paintings. His later works took a darker direction, becoming satirical and depicting the more disturbing aspects of humanity. However the darker side of Goya wasn't so enthralling to Granados – it was the romantic imagery of bohemian *majos* and *majas* that really enchanted him. In a letter in 1910 he described the appeal 'of the rosy-whiteness of the cheeks contrasted with lace and jet-black velvet' in Goya's depictions of *majas*. The term *majo/a* (-a for a female, -o for a male or plural), now used to describe something or someone as attractive or charming, at that time referred to Spaniards of the lower classes who led a free-spirited lifestyle; indulging in flirtatious courtships, wearing vibrant clothes and enjoying life in a way that others could not. Their way of life, *majismo*, therefore became a fashionable fantasy for the nobility, many of whom tried to emulate their flamboyant dress and mannerisms.

The inspiration for **Los requiebros** (Flirtations or Compliments) was an etching by Goya entitled *Tal para cual* (Two of a Kind) depicting a *maja* and *majo* in a playful embrace. Buoyant dance rhythms evoke a cheerful and carefree mood, while capricious adornments to the theme conjure up a wonderful sense of sensuality and sheer delight in the moment. Granados quotes a melody taken from a *tonadilla*, a type of theatrical song very popular in 18<sup>th</sup> century Spain. Granados himself sketched the visual inspiration for **Coloquio en la reja** (Conversation at the Window.) With his back to us, the *majo* is standing as close to his lover as he can, though bars in front of the window separate them. His arms reaching up within his cape, his figure obscures most of the *maja* from view, leaving only her face

visible. What begins intimately and hesitantly becomes more passionate as the piece develops; the obstacle between them heightening their passion and longing. Dancing at night to **El fandango de candil** (Candlelit Fandango), the *majo* and *maja* relish the sensuous rhythms of the fandango. Granados instructs the performer to create the scene 'singing and dancing slowly' and 'with plenty of rhythm'. The inspiration for the Fandango was not directly from one of Goya's works, but Granados uses the dance to express the unrestrained passion between *majo* and *maja* in this exhilarating piece. In the most well-known of all six works in Goyescas, the *maja* pines for her love in **Quejas o La maja y el ruiseñor** (Laments, or the *Maja* and the Nightingale), pouring her heart out in a wistful song. Granados used the melody from a folk song he once heard a young girl singing in the Valencian countryside, in which the singer is enchanted by the beautiful song of a bird in the 'tree of love'. In a series of variations, Granados weaves this melody through increasingly rich and colourful textures, after which the nightingale responds with a florid song in a shimmering cadenza. The greatest of the six pieces, **El amor y la muerte**, (Love and Death) tells the story of Goya's etching of the same name in which the *majo* is dying in the arms of his lover after a duel, his sword discarded on the ground. The piece explores the darkest depths of despair through re-workings of themes from all four of the pieces in book one. Granados transforms these melodies from expressions of love, longing and gaiety into desperate cries of anguish and nostalgic yearning for a lost past. In the mysterious **Epilogo - Serenata del espectro** (Epilogue - The Ghost's Serenade) the tragic tale concludes with an ethereal account of the *majo*'s ghostly serenade. Repeated references to 'Coloquio en la reja' and fleeting fragments of 'Fandango' and 'Requiebros' drift into the music, accompanied by plucked chords and strumming from the ghost's guitar. Dies Irae, the Gregorian chant for the dead, is the source of the haunting central section, in this sparsely textured, dreamlike piece. Granados writes over the last few bars 'the ghost disappears, plucking the strings of his guitar' finishing with a whimsical E, A, D, G, B and E- the notes of open guitar strings.

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With deepest thanks to Robert and Olivia Temple, Ian Sienkowski, Jamie and Helena Boyd and Gemma Kateb.