



AMERICAN CLASSICS

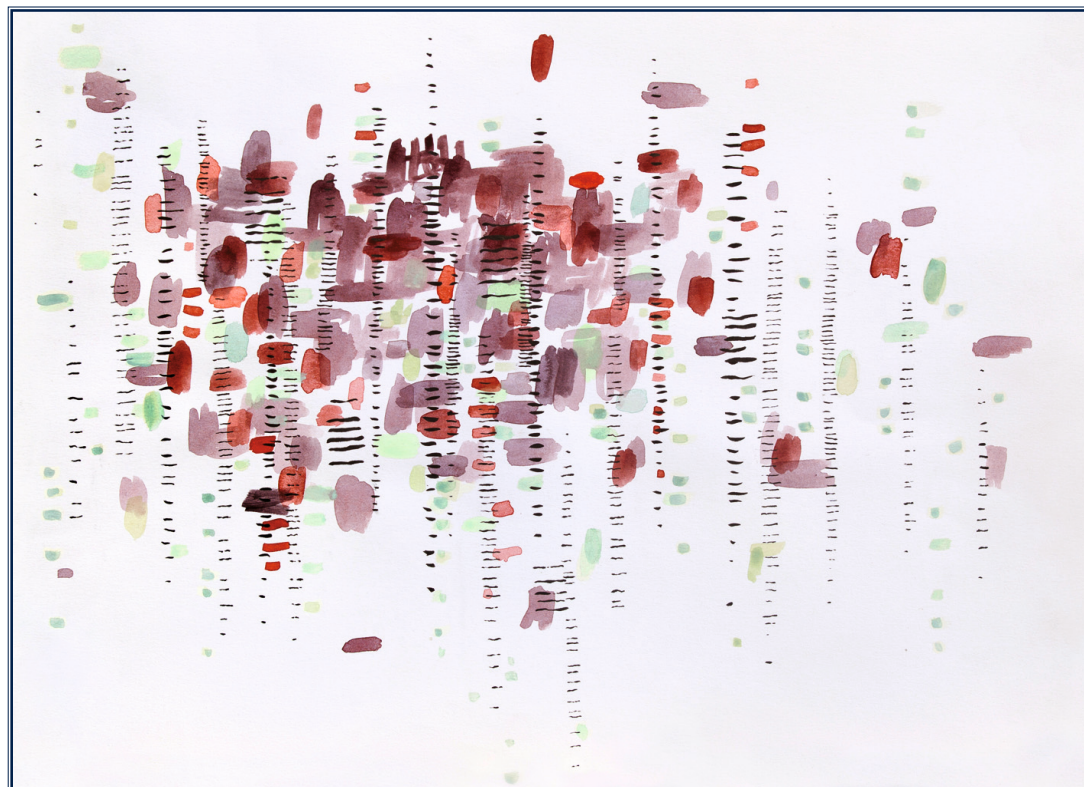


JOSÉ LUIS GRECO

Geografías del silencio

In Passing • Swallow • Off with its Head!

**Duncan Gifford, Piano • Netherlands Wind Ensemble • Enigma Ensemble
Czech National Symphony Orchestra • Adrian Leaper**



José Luis Greco (b. 1953)

Geografías del silencio • In Passing • Swallow • Off with its Head!

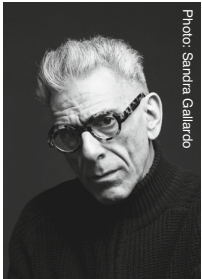


Photo: Sandra Gallardo

Born in New York City, José Luis Greco is the son of the Spanish dancers José Greco and Nila Amparo, and nephew of the great Metropolitan Opera star Norina Greco. As a youngster, he studied piano and guitar and performed as an actor and dancer. After years involved with rock and jazz, he obtained a B.F.A. in music from the City College of New York, where he studied with John Lewis of

the Modern Jazz Quartet, among others, and a Master's Degree and Doctorate (ABD) in composition from Columbia University, studying with Mario Davidovsky, Jack Beeson, Chou Wen-chung and George Edwards. Before moving to the Netherlands, he had transcribed and orchestrated Ravi Shankar's *Raga-Mala (Sitar Concerto No. 2)*, premièred by the New York Philharmonic under the direction of Zubin Mehta, and composed and conducted the production of his first opera, *Aria Da Capo*.

Greco first achieved recognition in the 1980s as composer, performer and co-founder of Cloud Chamber, an Amsterdam-based multi-media, dance, theater and music company specializing in site-specific projects, and supported by the Dutch Ministry of Culture for ten consecutive years. Commissioned by the same Ministry in 1992, his Spanish lyric opera *Cuentos de la Alhambra (Tales of the Alhambra)* received its world première in Haarlem and Amsterdam in February 1996.

Since 1994, Greco has lived in Madrid, Spain, where his symphonic works have been premièred by the major orchestras conducted by Sergiu Comissiona, Adrian Leaper, Andrés Salado, Miguel Romea and Enrique García Asensio, among others. His solo, chamber and choral compositions have enjoyed interpretations by some

of Spain's most distinguished performers and ensembles.

He has also composed for the Ballet Nacional de España and the Compañía Nacional de Danza.

Composer's note

The difficulty of saying something meaningful about music is fairly obvious, since music expresses things that words cannot. The difficulty is compounded when a composer is called upon to write about his or her own music. That, at any rate, is my personal dilemma. Of course, it is possible to write about the circumstances surrounding the composition of a work, about the technical/formal considerations that were part of the creative process, the idea(s) that inspired a piece, a step-by-step rendering of the instrumental interplay, etc. However, all of that is really a circumvention around the music itself, nothing more than a tip-toeing around a fact that many would rather ignore: music speaks for itself, and in a language whose meanings are different for each listener. Even if I, as the composer, could somehow successfully convey verbally what I was trying to get at, to communicate in music, there is no guarantee that a listener would interpret the music as I *intended*. And quite honestly, I am glad of that. The idea that my music might have as many different meanings as there are listeners is a very satisfying notion. Therefore, I would rather not limit the listener's imagination by subjecting it to my account of things.

Having said this, I should also admit that I'm never quite sure what it is that I'm exactly intending in a piece of music I compose. Usually, after starting out with a vague sound image for the beginning of a work, and once I've got that worked out, the music itself seems to dictate what its intentions are, what it wants to say, where it wants to go, from one bar to the next, passage to passage, harmony to harmony. "You gave birth to me," it seems to say, "now let me live my life." My job then seems to be to give form to, to provide a vessel for what I sense its story to be.

Having heard the remark several times that the titles of some of my works don't reflect more than the opening passage of any given piece (notwithstanding those that don't seem to reflect *any* aspect of the work), this indeed makes sense to me. If a title epitomizes the idea which bestows the work with its first breath, the opening bars are likely to musically mirror that idea. But since from that moment the music takes on a life of its own, where it will go after that is anybody's guess.

Let's take as an example the first track on this recording, *Geografías del silencio* (Geographies of Silence). This is the last piece I wrote before embarking on the two-year journey of composing my third opera, *Malaspina, or the Idea of Happiness* (to a libretto by Pierre Elie Mamou), and I was already very absorbed by the opera's subject. Malaspina was a late 18th-century Italian navigator in the service of the Spanish crown. His last, five-year scientific expedition to all the Spanish colonies that dotted the globe at the time was probably the most important of its kind since that of James Cook. Unfortunately, upon his return, and after the hero's welcome he received, he got involved in politics, made powerful enemies and was thrown into prison for seven years, then exiled, and all the scientific documentation of his expedition was stashed in the corner of some warehouse, where it lay forgotten until a century later. His legacy was doomed to be enveloped in the most absolute silence. So, two ideas, geographies and silence, were on my mind; and *Geografías del silencio* begins with an evocation of silence, and then silence moving through different geographies. But that is as far as the ideas took me. From there on in the music itself led me through uncharted territory. I only hope that the listener will feel, as I do, that the rest of the piece flows logically out of those initial ideas. Pierre Elie Mamou has elsewhere referred to the nature of this piece as "a quest in which melancholy and dream states are mingled."

The genesis of the next work is somewhat different. *In Passing* is the English translation of the Dutch title of a movement-theater piece by Barbara Duijffjes, for which this music was composed. Together, Ms. Duijffjes and I negotiated the overall form, and the length and emotional thrust of each movement, but the choice of instrumentation was exclusively mine.

Towards the end of my ten-year sojourn (1984-1994) in Amsterdam I lived in my studio on the top floor of a building overlooking a canal. I kept a nocturnal schedule and when finished working, weather permitting, would go up to the roof and watch the sun rise. At some point a squadron of swallows would burst into view from below the edge of the rooftop before dispersing and zooming about in pairs or groups. This is the image that gave rise to the opening of *Swallow*. However, as is usually the case with my works, the music soon began to dictate its own path through regions I could hardly have imagined when I began the composition. Nonetheless, if memory serves me correctly, "the devout coming and going of migratory birds" (Pierre Elie Mamou once again) was a notion that like a specter hovered at the back of my mind throughout the composing of this work.

Like most children of my generation in the US, I grew up glued to the television. Early on, cartoons were my preferred fare, but as I grew older these gave way to sitcoms, sci-fi and adventure series. And all that eclectic music, that marvelous, zany, catchy, spooky, kaleidoscopic, humorous and dramatic music provided the soundtrack of my youth. And I never forgot it; it's still with me today. So at some point it was just an imperative to compose something that would distill those many lasting impressions, "churning up childhood as if memories were the forebodings of a future" (Pierre Elie Mamou). And what of the title *Off with its Head?* Need I explain the association? Alice is a wonderful girl. She grows with one and yet never grows old. I'm sure to fall in love with her again sometime in the future.

José Luis Greco

Duncan Gifford



Duncan Gifford is an Australian-born, award-winning concert pianist and teacher. He has performed with orchestras and in recitals throughout Europe, Russia, Japan, Australasia and the United States, where he gave his Carnegie Hall debut recital in 1999.

Jan Kouwenhoven



Jan Kouwenhoven started his oboe studies at the Conservatorium van Amsterdam where he graduated *cum laude* in 1973. He joined the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra that same year. In 1975 he won a special prize at the Tromp International Music Competition in Eindhoven. Jan Kouwenhoven has been a member of many chamber music ensembles and is principal oboist of the Concertgebouw Chamber Orchestra.

Peter Brunt



Peter Brunt studied at the Amsterdam Conservatory with Davina van Wely and Herman Krebbers and continued his studies at The Juilliard School with Dorothy Delay and with Sándor Végh in Salzburg. In 1981, he won first prize in the (Dutch) National Violin Competition. He is concertmaster of the Amsterdam Sinfonietta and teaches at the Conservatoires in The Hague, Amsterdam and Lucern.

Arjen Uitenbogaard



Arjen Uitenbogaard was born in Eindhoven, The Netherlands, and studied at the Conservatories of The Hague and Amsterdam. His teachers were Fred Pot and Harro Ruijsenaars. He has played with the most important Dutch orchestras and since 1990 he has worked with the Radio Philharmonic Orchestra. He regularly does freelance and studio work and teaches at the Amersfoort School of the Arts.

Ellen Corver



Ellen Corver studied with Else Krijgsman and Naum Grubert at the Royal Conservatory of the Hague. Ellen regards preparing performances in close collaboration with composers as being decisive in her formation as a pianist. As a soloist, she has performed with all the major Dutch orchestras and ensembles. She is a founding member of the Osiris Piano Trio and has recorded fifteen albums.

Netherlands Wind Ensemble



The Netherlands Wind Ensemble (NBE in Dutch) comprises musicians from all the major Dutch symphony orchestras. Playing together for the sheer joy of it, the NBE's twenty or so members meet up around eighty times a year to perform special programs both in The Netherlands and abroad. The ensemble is famous for its high level of performance and its unique and adventurous programming. The ensemble was founded in 1959 by Thom de Klerk, principal bassoonist of the Concertgebouw Orchestra, who had formed a student wind quintet at the Amsterdam Conservatory, later expanded in order to perform wind serenades such as those by Mozart, Dvořák and Gounod, and ambitiously aimed to make the ensemble into the "I Musici" of wind instruments. The ensemble is joined on this recording by guest pianist Marja Bon.

Marja Bon



Marja Bon studied piano with Maria Stroo and is a winner of the *Prix d'Excellence*, the Elisabeth Everts Prize and National Piano Competition. She continued her studies in New York with Martin Canin and in Budapest with Ferenc Rados. She also took courses with Géza Anda. As a soloist she has played with many orchestras and is the pianist for the renowned Schönberg Ensemble.

Ensemble Enigma – Grupo Enigma

Klaus Simon, Conductor · Juan José Olives, Artistic director · Victor Parra, Violin I · Chus Castro, Violin II
Carlos Seco, Viola · Zsolt G. Tottzer, Cello · Esteve Colomes, Contrabass · Fernando Gómez, Flute/piccolo
José Javier Belda, Oboe · Emilio Ferrando, Bass clarinet · Juan Carlos Segura, Harpsichord · César Peris, Percussion



The Chamber Orchestra of the Zaragoza (Spain) Auditorium, Grupo Enigma, gave its inaugural concert on 21st November, 1995. Since then, it has established itself, season after season, as one of the most original and unique ensembles to appear on the Spanish music scene in the last twenty years. Supported by the Zaragoza Auditorium, the orchestra focuses on the performance of music of the last century and the contemporary, spanning repertoire from Schoenberg and Stravinsky to Britten and Boulez, from Hindemith and Weill to Takemitsu and Berio, with particular attention to the work of younger Spanish composers.

Klaus Simon



The pianist and conductor Klaus Simon was born in Überlingen am Bodensee and studied music, German and geography in Freiburg. He studied piano with Michael Leuschner and participated in masterclasses with Aloys Kontarsky (piano) and Hans Zender and Johannes Kalitzke (conducting). He founded and is the artistic director of the Holst-Sinfonietta and the Opera Factory Freiburg (known as the Young Opera Company until 2014), both of which dedicate themselves to music of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In Freiburg he organised a series of *Lieder* recitals, and as an accompanist he combines standard repertoire with less frequently heard works, including songs by Schoenberg, Pfitzner, Korngold, Alfano, Argento, Clarke and Crumb. Recently he recorded the complete songs of Schulhoff (published in three volumes, edited by Simon for Schott Music, Mainz). His recordings for Naxos include the complete songs of Pfitzner and Korngold, chamber works by Schwantner, *I was looking at the Ceiling* and *Then I saw the Sky* by John Adams, and chamber works by Martinů. In 2017 he will add to the catalogue a recording of solo and ensemble works by Steve Reich. Simon has recorded Korngold's last stage work, *Die Stumme Serenade*, for cpo. He was awarded the Preis der Deutschen Schallplattenkritik for his recording of Claude Vivier's 'Opéra-rituel de Mort' *Kopernikus* for bastille musique. Since 2007 he has worked as an arranger with Universal Edition, Vienna. His chamber ensemble arrangements of Mahler's *Symphonies Nos. 1, 4, 5 and 9* and many other smaller works for chamber orchestra are played widely throughout the world. His own recording of his arrangement of Mahler's *Symphony No. 5* with the Holst-Sinfonietta was recently released on bastille musique.

Czech National Symphony Orchestra



Celebrating its 22nd birthday in 2015, the CNSO has gained a position as one of the top symphonic ensembles both in the Czech Republic and elsewhere in Europe. Renowned for its versatility, the orchestra annually presents a broad program ranging from classical music concerts to contemporary genres, film scores, jazz and musicals. The CNSO also organizes the summer Prague Proms Festival which presents outstanding international performers. The orchestra takes pride in several Gold CDs, and also in the Gustav Mahler Prize, awarded for its interpretation of Mahler's works. Other achievements include the prestigious worldwide representation contract with IMG Artists London, and their long-standing recording project in association with Tokyo Victor Entertainment. The Czech National Symphony Orchestra was established in 1993 by the trumpet player Jan Hasenöhrl. Legendary conductor Zdeněk Košler was a spiritual father at the birth of the CNSO.

Adrian Leaper



Adrian Leaper's career began with a five-year tenure as Assistant Conductor of the Hallé Orchestra in Manchester. He was later Principal Conductor of the Gran Canaria Philharmonic for eight years and Principal Conductor and Artistic Director of the RTVE Symphony Orchestra in Madrid for nine years. He has conducted orchestras all over the world and has recorded a series of Spanish twentieth-century music albums for ASV.

José Luis
GRECO
(b. 1953)

- 1 **Geografías del silencio (2004)** 24:14
- 2 **In Passing –
Six Passes for Oboe/English horn,
Violin, Cello and Piano (1993)** 19:54
- 3 **Swallow (1992)** 15:32
- 4 **Off with its Head! (2002)** 11:03

WORLD PREMIÈRE RECORDINGS

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Czech National Symphony Orchestra 1
Adrian Leaper 1
Jan Kouwenhoven, Oboe/English horn 2
Peter Brunt, Violin 2
Arjen Uitenbogaard, Cello 2
Ellen Corver, Piano 2
Netherlands Wind Ensemble 3
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Recorded live at the Church of Simon and Judas, Prague, Czech Republic, on 13th November, 2007 1; at Studio 150, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, on 31st May, 1993 2; live at the Concertgebouw, Amsterdam, on 8th November, 1992 3; and live at Zaragoza Auditorium, Spain, on 22nd February, 2011 4 • Producers: Czech Radio 1; José Luis Greco and Peter Rieback 2; José Luis Greco 3; Technical Department of the Auditorium of Zaragoza 4 • Engineers: Tomáš Zikmund 1; Jacco Lenstra 2; Boris Capaan 3; Alberto Moreira 4 • Publishers: Music Sales/ Union Musical Ediciones 1 2 4; Donemus, Amsterdam 3
Booklet notes: José Luis Greco • Cover painting: Pilar Novo



AMERICAN CLASSICS

American-born but of Spanish descent, José Luis Greco enjoys a wide-ranging career. His music embraces traditional and eclectic contemporary elements, and his interests in pop, rock and jazz have been enriched by the creation of multimedia performances. *Geografías del silencio* illustrates the quality of silence via ‘a quest in which melancholy and dream states are mingled.’ Greco is the son of dancers and *In Passing* demonstrates his vivid choreographic imagination. Avian memories permeate the beautiful *Swallow* and kaleidoscopic childhood impressions surface in *Off with its Head!*



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Playing
Time:
70:42