

Post-Classical Ensemble

Angel Gil-Ordóñez, music director
Joseph Horowitz, artistic director

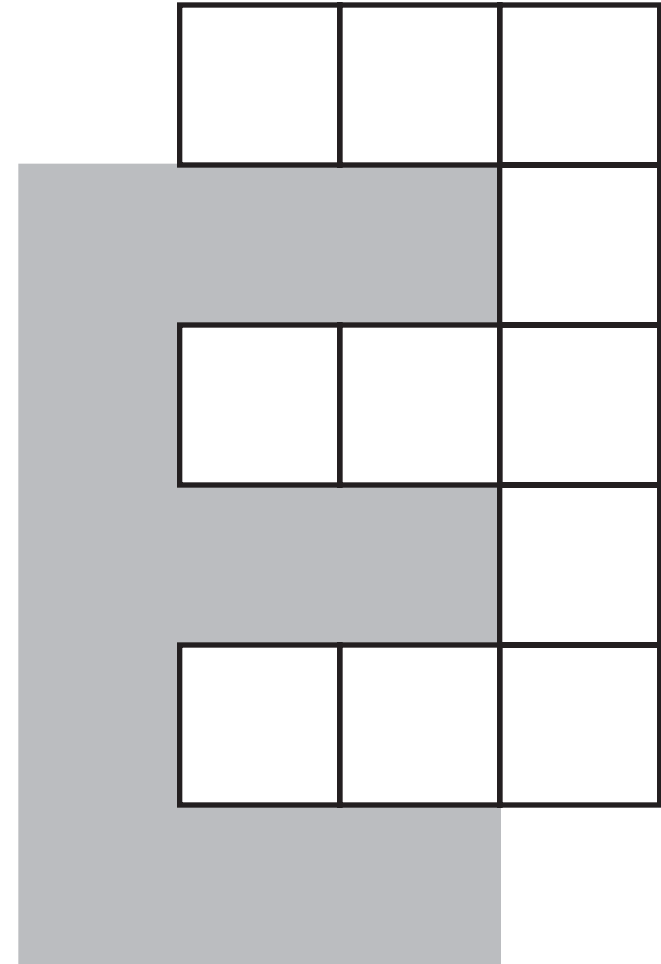
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Post-Classical Ensemble **Csárdás!**



February 5, 2004, 8pm
Gaston Hall, Georgetown University

Presented in collaboration with
the Georgetown University Program in Performing Arts
The Embassy of Hungary
and The Hungarian Cultural Center (New York)

Csárdás!

Post-Classical Ensemble

Angel Gil-Ordóñez, music director

Joseph Horowitz, artistic director

The Gázsa Hungarian Folk Music Band of Budapest (*Washington, DC debut*)

István Papp, violin

Dénes Németh, violin

Péter Arendás, viola

Péter Makó, wind instruments

József Bartók, bass

Dániel Szabó, cimbalom

Alexander Shtarkman, piano (*Washington, DC debut*)

Maria Strezova, piano (*Washington, DC debut*)

David Salness, violin

Sally McLain, violin

Tonight's Concert

Prelude at 7pm

The Gázsa Hungarian Folk Music Band of Budapest

in conversation with Joseph Horowitz

FRANZ SCHUBERT: *Divertissement a la hongroise* (D. 818, 1824)

Alexander Shtarkman and Maria Strezova, pianists

Concert at 8pm

GYPSY MEDLEY

Gázsa Hungarian Folk Music Band of Budapest

FRANZ LISZT: *Hungarian Rhapsody No. 11* (PUBLISHED 1853)

Alexander Shtarkman

GYPSY MEDLEY

Gázsa Hungarian Folk Music Band of Budapest

FRANZ LISZT: *Hungarian Rhapsody No. 12* (PUBLISHED 1853)

JOHANNES BRAHMS: *Hungarian Dances Nos. 1, 2, 3, 9, and 10* (PUBLISHED 1869)

Alexander Shtarkman

Maria Strezova

Gázsa Hungarian Folk Music Band of Budapest

Intermission

BÉLA BARTÓK: *Violin Duos* (1931)

No. 14 (Pillow Dance), No. 15 (Soldier's Song), No. 36 (Bagpipes)

David Salness and Sally McLain, violinists

With folk sources performed

by the Gázsa Hungarian Folk Music Band of Budapest

BÉLA BARTÓK: *Divertimento for Strings* (1939)

Allegro non troppo / Molto Adagio / Allegro molto

Post-Classical Ensemble conducted by Angel Gil-Ordóñez

BÉLA BARTÓK: *Six Rumanian Dances* (1915; *string arrangement by Arthur Willner*):

Dance with Sticks, Waistband Dance, Stamping Dance, Hornpipe Dance, Rumanian Polka, Quick Dance

Gázsa Hungarian Folk Music Band of Budapest

Post-Classical Ensemble conducted by Angel Gil-Ordóñez

Post-concert reception with the artists

Notes on the Program

JOSEPH HOROWITZ

Tonight's program is in two parts. Part one samples the urban music that Hungarian Gypsies played in the cafes and restaurants of Vienna and Budapest—music that inspired the Hungarian Rhapsodies of Liszt and the Hungarian Dances of Brahms. Part two samples the rural music traditionally sung and played by Gypsies and peasants alike—music that inspired Bartók at the beginning of the twentieth century.

To explore these juxtapositions, we hear two kinds of musicians: two pianists and a string orchestra, performing the three classical composers, and a folk band from Budapest, recreating the Gypsy and peasant strains. In addition, we hear a pair of dance medleys in which our classical and folk musicians (who met for the first time yesterday) intermingle as a single heterogeneous ensemble.

* * *

Liszt called Gypsy music “a kind of opium.” In his important book *The Gypsies and Their Music in Hungary*, he recorded such scenes as the following:

They started imitating castanets by cracking the joints of their fingers, which are always long They began throwing their caps into the air, following this by strutting about like peacocks . . . Suddenly, flying to their violins and cymbals, they began a real fury of excitement. The *friska* was not long in rising to a frenzy of exultation, and then almost to delirium. In its final stage it could only be compared to the vertiginous and convulsive writhing motion which is the culmination point of in Dervish ecstasy.

Liszt intended his **Hungarian Rhapsodies**, for solo piano, partly as a patriotic homage, partly as brilliant keyboard vehicles in which Gypsy orchestras were recreated by a single instrument.

I wanted to make a short of national epic out of Gypsy music. . . . Each of the Hungarian Rhapsodies always seemed to me to belong to a poetic cycle. The extracts do not narrate any events, it is true, but ears that know how to listen will catch the expression of certain of those states of soul in which a national ideal is summed up. . . . These rhapsodies were called “Hungarian” because it would have been unjust to separate in the future what had not been separate in the past. The Magyars adopted the Bohemians as their national musicians. . . . Hungary can therefore with justice claim as its own this art nourished by its wheat and vines, mellowed in its sun and shade.

But not all Hungarians agreed with Liszt's equation of “Hungary” with “Gypsy.” At the turn of the century, the field research Béla Bartók and Zoltan Kodály conducted in remote regions documented a truer Hungarian “folk music.” In

retrospect, the distinction between Gypsy and Hungarian is perhaps less pure than they claimed. And it bears mentioning that Bartók held Liszt in high regard. Of the Hungarian Rhapsodies, Bartók wrote: “The material that Liszt used here could not have been handled with greater beauty or genius.” And he applauded Liszt's appropriation of the *lassu-friss* (slow-fast) form of Hungarian folk music. To complicate matters, ethnomusicologists now agree that the Gypsy tunes Liszt used originated as melodies composed by urban Hungarians in Gypsy style and subsequently embellished almost beyond recognition by the Gypsies themselves.

Of the two Hungarian Rhapsodies we hear this evening, No. 11 begins with Liszt's most literal evocation of the twanging cimbalom of Gypsy bands. And we hear Dániel Szabó, of the Gásza Band, create a cimbalom solo inspired by Liszt's cimbalom imitation.

* * *

With Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsodies, Brahms' **Hungarian Dances** are the most famous of all nineteenth century concert paraphrases of Gypsy music. Brahms began collecting folk songs as a young man. Beginning in 1850, he toured with the Hungarian violinist Eduard Remenyi; their violin-and-piano repertoire including a group of Gypsy pieces. Brahms seems to have begun composing Hungarian Dances around this time. When his first set of Hungarian Dances for piano duet was published in 1869, a controversy erupted over their authorship even though Brahms told his publisher that these were arrangements, not original compositions. At one point, Remenyi accused him of plagiarism. Of the 21 Hungarian Dances Brahms eventually produced for piano duet, only for three (Nos. 11, 14, and 16) did he claim authorship of the tunes. Long after Brahms' death, musicological research showed that, as with Liszt's “Hungarian” melodies, the tunes Brahms borrowed were in fact composed by Hungarians in Gypsy style. Tonight, we hear several of these dance tunes as Gypsies might have played them, alongside five as recreated by Brahms for piano four-hands.

* * *

Western classical music has frequently drawn inspiration from folk and vernacular music. But for few composers did the music and dance of peasants figure as decisively as for Béla Bartók. Bartók was in fact a leading ethnomusicologist who spent a good part of his professional life collecting and analyzing peasant tunes. During his most intensive period of field research, before 1920, he transcribed nearly 10,000 of them. He once called this work “the happiest part of my life.”

The rural music Bartók and Zoltan Kodály recorded at the source, tangy and untamed, had never reached Budapest or Vienna. Bartók wrote: “In the so-called cultured urban circles, the unbelievably rich treasure of folk music was entirely unknown. No one even suspected that this kind of music existed.” And also: “It lives

untrammelled among the people themselves. If he allows himself to surrender to the impressions of living folk music, and if he can mirror the effect of these impressions in his works, then [the composer] has recorded a piece of life.”

Bartók not only insisted on the significance of peasant music; he insisted that it be experienced at first hand. “It was of the utmost consequence to us that we had to do our collecting ourselves, and did not make the acquaintance of folk melodic material in written or printed collections. The melodies of a written or printed collections are in essence dead materials. . . . one absolutely cannot penetrate into the real, throbbing life of this music by means of them. In order to really feel the vitality of this music, one must, so to speak, have lived it—and this is only possible when once comes to know it through direct contact with the peasants.”

In a famous 1931 essay, Bartók defined various degrees of folksong appropriation, beginning with the simple practice of adding an accompaniment, a prelude and a postlude—as in the folksong arrangements for voice and piano that he and Kodály created. The **Rumanian Folk Dances** and **Violin Duos** we hear this evening all hew closely to their sources—which we also hear. (Bartók’s own performance style for the Rumanian Dances may be gleaned from the piano roll version he recorded around 1920—a performance notable for such “peasant” traits as firm rhythm, loud accompaniments, and the absence of all sentimentality and prettiness. More revealing of Bartók the pianist, and again suggesting folk influence, is a live 1940 performance of Beethoven’s *Kreutzer* Sonata with Joseph Szigeti—the earthiest, most explosive rendition of this music I know, bristling with raw feeling and, from the magnificent violinist, raw tone.)

At a far remove from the Rumanian Folk Dances and Violin Duos is the **Divertimento for strings**. The year of composition—1939—cannot be irrelevant. The year before, Bartók’s publisher, Universal-Edition in Vienna, had been “nazified.” Bartók refused to respond to a questionnaire inquiring into his racial background. Tied to Hungary by patriotic feeling and an ailing mother, he hesitated to escape to England or America. But he summered in Switzerland as the guest of the conductor Paul Sacher, for whose chamber orchestra the *Divertimento* was composed. Bartók’s mother died the following December, and he moved to the United States, where he died in exile in 1945.

As practiced by Haydn and Mozart, a “divertimento” is a suite of more than four movements, including courtly dances; the Bartók *Divertimento*, in three movements, incorporates non-courtly dance as one component in a complex interplay of style and mood. Bartók also alludes to the pre-concerto grosso, in which a group of solo instruments, or *ripieno*, regularly branches off from the larger body—except that Bartók’s *ripieno* of solo strings seemingly emerges spontaneously and unsystematically.

The *Divertimento*’s first movement is a sonata form whose main subject is a pulsating dance. The third movement is a sort of rondo; a whirling introduction—a gathering of dancers—precedes the main dance tune. Coming in between is an indelible *Molto adagio* in which darker intimations of the fast flanking movements are searingly clinched. The *Divertimento*’s heart of darkness, midway through movement two, is a creeping, macabre march that builds to a frenzy of trilled chords. What follows is a ghost image of the movement’s opening—an amazing study in string color and sonority.

What kind of relationship may be drawn between this singular string orchestra work and the peasant strains Bartók adored? Bartók pertinently wrote in 1909 from Slovakia:

It is strange that in music the basis of motivation has so far been only enthusiasm, love, sorrow, or, at most, despair—that is, only the so-called lofty feelings. It is only in our times that there is place for the painting of the feeling of vengeance, the grotesque, and the sarcastic. For this reason the music of today could be called realist because, unlike the ideals of the previous eras, it extends with honesty to all real human emotions without excluding any.

“Real human emotions” were emotions unrefined by city norms. Stylistically, too, peasant music was something true and pure: “It is impulsively created by a community of men who have had no schooling; it is as much a natural product as are the various forms of animal and vegetable life.” As sound, as feeling, peasant music (like the performances of the Gázsa Band) was for better or worse unvarnished: never sentimental, never rhetorically inflated.

If these are mainly subjective impressions, the objective materials of folk music were, for Bartók, at least as absorbing. Though he cherished the “spirit” of folk performers, he also confessed that the melodies could grow tiresome. His interest was “scientific.” He categorized modes and rhythms. He studied and adapted unconscious techniques of construction—in particular, techniques of variation. Bartók’s aversion of literal repetition and sequential progression correlates with the spontaneous transformations of music improvised in performance.

These remarks furnish one listening context for the *Divertimento*, in which sophistication somehow co-exists with earthy vigor. Its guttural rasp and physical energy are rustic. The heavy throb of the opening copies the sawing of a peasant bass fiddler. A (wild) violin cadenza and a tipsy pizzicato dance spontaneously interrupt the spiraling, accelerating close. In place of “lofty feelings,” savage intensity and raw, raucous exultation invade the concert room.

Tonight's Performers

Formed in 1992, the **Gázsa Hungarian Folk Music Band of Budapest** comprises Hungarian musicians who have spent years studying and learning authentic village music from famous masters of folk music in remote rural areas. The band takes its name from the nickname of its leader, Istvan Papp, who was born and raised in Transylvania. A graduate of the Conservatory of Music of Kolozsvár (Cluj in Romanian), Gázsa was influential in starting the first Táncház (Community folkdance event) in Kolozsvár while still a student. This folk-revival movement offered the basic impulse to hundreds of young musicians to learn and preserve authentic folk music of the Carpathian Basin.

The Carpathian mountains, surrounding an area of Central Europe, are home to many ethnic groups each possessing distinctive folklore, music, and dance. Hungarians represent the majority, but Romanians, Slovaks, Serbians, Croatians, Ukrainians, Gypsies and others have also preserved their folk treasures. The most pure and archaic forms of music and dance may be found in Transylvania, now part of Romania. Here Hungarians, Romanians and Gypsies live together in many villages whose unique ethnic culture may be witnessed even today. Although the performers in the Gázsa Band are all Hungarians, they have explored the traditional cultures in the Carpathian Basin in great detail.

Alexander Shtarkman, a graduate of the Moscow Conservatory, frequently appears in concert in Moscow (where he performs Rachmaninoff's *Rhapsody on a Theme by Paganini* in a few days). He appeared widely in Europe as a result of winning the 1995 Busoni International Piano Competition. He also won the First Prize of the First Taipei International Piano Competition and was engaged for numerous concerts throughout Asia. He is profiled in Joseph Horowitz's *The Ivory Trade* as the pianist who should have won the 1989 Van Cliburn International Piano Competition, but did not. His subsequent recital debuts in California and New York were acclaimed by Peter G. Davis in *New York Magazine* and by Martin Bernheimer, who wrote in the *Los Angeles Times*: "Alexander Shtarkman. Remember the name... He plays the piano with all the strength, flash and eagerness that his age would suggest. He also plays with the sensitivity and mellow refinement one associates with certain grand old men of the keyboard, most of them Russian." He currently teaches at the Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore.

Maria Strezova, a native of Skopje, Macedonia, is a graduate of the Moscow Conservatory. She was a prize winner in international competitions in Stresa and Seregno. She performs throughout the republic of the former Yugoslavia and in the Russian Federation. She is married to Alexander Shtarkman.

Violinist **David Salness** has toured internationally for over twenty-five years as a soloist, concertmaster and chamber musician. His performances are regularly broadcast on National Public Radio, Radio France, and the British and Canadian Broadcast Corporations. Mr. Salness' critically acclaimed recordings are found on the RCA, Telarc, and Centaur Labels among others. Mr. Salness was for twelve years a member of the Audubon Quartet and won the Deuxieme Grand Prix as a member of Nisaika in the 1984 Evian International String Quartet Competition. Mr. Salness began his teaching career as an assistant to David Cerone at the Curtis Institute and the Meadowmount School having served as a faculty member at the latter from 1997-2002. His students have garnered top prizes from such major international competitions as Indianapolis, Menuhin, Naumburg, Evian/Bordeaux and Banff. Mr. Salness currently teaches violin at the Brevard Music Center, is an Associate Professor at the University of Maryland and Head of Chamber Music Activities at both institutions. He is a member of the popular Washington-area Left Bank Quartet.

Violinist **Sally McLain** performs throughout the Washington, DC area as a soloist, chamber musician and orchestral musician. Solo engagements have included performances at the Kennedy Center Terrace Theater, the National Gallery of Art, the Corcoran Gallery and Lisner Auditorium. She has performed chamber music on the Embassy Series, the Holocaust Museum Series, with National Musical Arts and the Twentieth Century Consort. She frequently performs as an orchestral musician with the National Symphony Orchestra and the Eclipse Chamber Orchestra and served as concertmaster of the Washington Chamber Symphony for ten seasons. Currently, Ms. McLain is a member of the Theater Chamber Players, the Left Bank Quartet and the Potomac String Quartet.

Angel Gil-Ordóñez

Angel Gil-Ordóñez has earned an outstanding reputation among Spain's new generation of conductors. *The Washington Post* has praised his conducting as "mesmerizing" and "as colorfully textured as a fauvist painting." Former Associate Conductor of the National Symphony Orchestra of Spain, Gil-Ordóñez has conducted symphonic music, opera and ballet throughout Europe, the United States, and Latin America. In the United States he has appeared with the American Composers Orchestra, Opera Colorado, the Pacific Symphony, and the Hartford Symphony. He leads the Brooklyn Philharmonic in a Spanish program at the Brooklyn Academy of Music later this season. Abroad, he has been heard with the Munich Philharmonic, the Solistes de Berne, at the Schleswig-Holstein Music Festival, and at the Bellas Artes National Theatre in Mexico City. In summer 200 he toured the major music festivals of Spain with the Valencia Symphony Orchestra in the Spanish premiere of Leonard Bernstein's *Mass*.

A specialist in the Spanish repertoire, Mr. Gil-Ordóñez has recorded four CDs devoted to Spanish composers with the Radio and Television Symphony Orchestra of Spain, the Madrid Symphony Orchestra, the Galicia Symphony Orchestra and the Camara XXI chamber orchestra. Born in Madrid, he worked closely with Sergiu Celibidache for more than six years in Germany. He also studied with Pierre Boulez and Iannis Xenakis in France.

In addition to directing Post-Classical Ensemble, Mr. Gil-Ordóñez serves as Director of Orchestral Studies at Wesleyan University in Connecticut and Music Director of the Wesleyan Ensemble of the Americas. As co-founder of IberArtists New York (supported by the Spanish Ministry of Culture), he has also planned and conducted programs of twentieth-century Spanish music in New York, Washington, and California, including works by Albeniz, Esplá Falla, Ernesto Halffter, Gerhard, Granados, Montsalvatge, and Turina; many of these performances have been local premieres. His explorations of North American repertoire have included rarely heard music by Carlos Chávez, George Chadwick, Conlon Nancarrow, and Silvestre Revueltas, as well as the Chinese and Chinese-Americans Chen Yi and Zhou Long.

Joseph Horowitz

Joseph Horowitz has long been a pioneer in classical music programming, beginning with his tenure as Artistic Advisor for the annual Schubertiade at the 92nd Street Y. As Executive Director of the Brooklyn Philharmonic Orchestra, resident orchestra of the Brooklyn Academy of Music, he received national attention for "The Russian Stravinsky," "American Transcendentalists," "Flamenco," and other festivals exploring the folk roots of concert works. Alex Ross wrote in *The New Yorker* (November 1997): "When Joseph Horowitz became its executive director, in 1993, the Brooklyn Philharmonic more or less went off the grid of American orchestral culture. . . . In Brooklyn, the subscription-series template—overture, concerto, symphony—has been thrown away. Programs have become miniature weekend festivals; often, an afternoon chamber concert takes the weekend's theme further."

Now an artistic advisor to more than half a dozen American orchestras throughout the United States, Mr. Horowitz has created more than two dozen interdisciplinary music festivals since 1985. As Festival Consultant and Humanities Coordinator of the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra, he most recently curated "American Roots," a three-week festival of American music from before 1920. As Artistic Advisor to the Pacific Symphony Orchestra (Orange County, California), he helps to create an annual American music festival.

Called "our nation's leading scholar of the symphony orchestra" by Charles Olton, former President of the American Symphony Orchestra League, Mr. Horowitz is also the award-winning author of six books dealing with the institutional history of classical music in the United States. As Project Director of an NEH National Education Project, he is most recently the author of a book for young readers, *Dvorak in America: In Search of the New World*, already scheduled for use by six American orchestras. His *Classical Music in the United States: A History*, supported by fellowships from the Guggenheim and Columbia University, will be published by Norton in February 2005.

A former *New York Times* music critic, Mr. Horowitz writes regularly for the Sunday *New York Times* and for the *Times Literary Supplement* (UK) and contributes frequently to scholarly journals. He lectures widely in the United States and abroad and taught at the New England Conservatory, the Eastman School, the Manhattan School of Music, and the Institute for American Studies at Brooklyn College.

Post-Classical Ensemble

Post-Classical Ensemble, called by the *Washington Post* “a welcome, edgy addition to the musical life of Washington,” was created by Angel Gil-Ordóñez and Joseph Horowitz in 2001. “More than an orchestra,” it breaks out of classical music, with its implied notion of a high-culture remote from popular art. Its concerts regularly incorporate folk song, dance, film, poetry, and commentary in order to serve existing audiences hungry for deeper engagement, and to cultivate adventurous new listeners.

The orchestra’s 2002-2003 Season included concerts at the residence of the Spanish Ambassador, the Shakespeare Theatre, the Cosmos Club, the Library of Congress, and the World Bank in addition to a May 1 formal debut at George Washington University’s Lisner Auditorium. This last event, a tribute to Silvestre Revueltas titled “Viva la Revolución!” attracted an audience of 1,200 and received a cheering standing ovation. The program included popular Mexican songs, performed by Lila Downs; commentary and poetry; and the 1935 film *Redes* with Revueltas’ film score performed live. *The Washington Post* commented on the “relentless zeal” with which “a dazzling array of information” was imparted. “Not just traditional program notes but also lectures, poetry, movies and popular song—all in a burst of three hours. Even the date—May Day—was selected to add meaning to the music of a composer fired by the idea of socialist revolution.”

In June 2005, in association with the American Film Institute and Naxos Records, Post-Classical Ensemble will present three classic American documentaries whose scores, by Virgil Thomson and Aaron Copland, will be performed live. These presentations will generate two Naxos DVDs.

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About Post-Classical Ensemble

Historically, “classical music” refers to a musical high culture distinct from popular entertainment. In the United States, the term was influentially employed by the nineteenth-century Boston critic John Sullivan Dwight—who disdained Stephen Foster’s “Old Folks at Home” as a “melodic itch.”

In our postmodern times, however, the notion of a pure high culture, transcending the popular, no longer holds—the meaning and pertinence of “classical music” grows confused. Among our important American composers, Steve Reich, Philip Glass, and John Adams cannot even be called “classical musicians.”

For institutions of performance, “post-classical music” dictates accommodation: new formats, new repertoire. To be sure, orchestras cannot abandon the works they have long served and perpetuated. But, without conscious strategies of renewal, they risk becoming an anachronistic sideshow.

In the 1990s, as Executive Director of the Brooklyn Philharmonic Orchestra at the pathbreaking Brooklyn Academy of Music, I had the opportunity to attempt a new symphonic template. I discovered that juxtaposing concert works with popular and vernacular “sources” could generate programming that was at once fresh, entertaining, and intellectually compelling. This is not a panacea—other orchestras will discover other ways of greeting the twenty-first century— but it is, I am confident, a formula that can be made to work not just in Brooklyn, but just about anywhere.

One of our BAM festivals, with the magnificent Spanish cantaora Carmen Linares, explored the flamenco roots of music by Manuel de Falla, Roberto Gerhard, and Carlos Surinach. “Flamenco” in Brooklyn also included dance and film, chamber and keyboard music, commentary and discussion. It was in planning this event that I met Angel Gil-Ordóñez. Angel had formed a chamber orchestra in Washington, D.C., that he called *musica aperta washington*. It creatively explored the music of Spain and Latin America. Some years later, Angel announced that he wanted to expand the mandate of his orchestra. He wanted to use the Brooklyn Flamenco festival as a model. The result is Post-Classical Ensemble.

— Joseph Horowitz
Artistic Director

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