



SEUNGHEE LEE • JP JOFRE

# ASPIRE

JOFRE • PIAZZOLLA • VILLA-LOBOS

LONDON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

ENRICO FAGONE, CONDUCTOR





Clarinetist Seunghee Lee and composer-bandoneonist JP Jofre collaborated on the recording *Aspire*, presenting several of Jofre's compositions, including his Double Concerto for the two soloists, alongside selections by Astor Piazzolla and Heitor Villa-Lobos, two masters of the tango. They are accompanied by the renowned London Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Enrico Fagone, for which Jofre created memorable and skillful arrangements.

"Primavera" opens the album with a zesty ode to Spring. Like his countryman Piazzolla, Jofre is a virtuoso player of the bandoneon, a signature instrument of tango. Lee also shows her versatility and fluency with tango styles, the supple rhythms and emotive inflections. One of the striking things about their partnership is how well the tone of Lee's playing blends with that of Jofre, creating a warmly suave ambience.

The pieces by Piazzolla and Villa-Lobos follow. The former's "Tango Etude No. 3" is filled with florid, syncopated lines in successively more virtuosic passages that lead to a midpiece cadenza. The return of the main tune is embellished and elevated by jazzy rhythms. This etude was originally written as a solo flute piece. Lee had long sought an accompaniment for its melody, and when she began to work on the Double Concerto with Jofre, she commissioned the clarinet and piano version as well as one for clarinet and strings.

"Bachianas Brasileiras No. 5" is perhaps Villa-Lobos's most famous piece, arranged here by Lee for clarinet

solo instead of voice. Lee plumbs the lyrical plangency of the piece with considerable eloquence. Lee leads the piece sans conductor, creating a chamber music atmosphere, with an ear towards balancing the various counter melodies to create a web of sound around the clarinet. The collaborative nature of the project extended to the string sections' leaders, in particular principal cellist David Cohen, who contributed a glistening solo and stalwart guidance to his colleagues in the cello section.

Jofre's Double Concerto is the centerpiece of the recording. The dovetailing of clarinet and bandoneon in liquescent lines, underscored by alternating pizzicato strings and bold orchestral tutti, provides a bold leadoff for the first movement. The central section affords Lee a wide-ranging solo capped off by a high register glissando, resembling "Gershwin gliss" from *Rhapsody in Blue*. This is followed by Jofre's own solo turn that begins in tango style and culminates with dissonant swells. Trading off, this leads into a *misterioso* clarinet solo punctuated by percussion and bandoneon in ostinato gestures. A sudden stop is followed by a transition back to a lyrical solo section for Lee, haloed by colorful chords. Pizzicato strings return and we are treated to a truncated version of the duet first heard in the opening, this time capped off by a cadential flourish.

The concerto's second movement begins with a mournful duet between the soloists. Their phrases pulse with running lines, while the accompaniment surges beneath. The tempo shifts and the pitched percussion



provide a tintinnabulation that is then succeeded by swelling strings and solo cello. Once again, the soloists are given room to exchange phrases, while pitched percussion closes out the center section. Sustained melodies in the strings open one final passage that features solo cadenzas and a long diminuendo to close.

The final movement, "Aboriginal", is a perpetual motion version of a dance, with forceful instrumental writing juxtaposed with lengthy solo passages - once again, the glissando is featured in both soloists' excursions. The middle section changes texture to a slow and sci-fi ambience with an angular clarinet line. Eventually, the soloists break up the texture with tremolandos, once again interrupted by a sinuous clarinet line. The close of the piece is a playful recasting of the main section with both soloists blazing to a percussion-supported cadence. Jofre's concerto is an enlivening piece that versatily draws upon classical and popular traditions, particularly in the realm of rhythm, with equal avidity, melding them into a polyglot musical language that is considerably compelling.

Two affecting duets follow. "Como El Agua" ("Be Like Water") gradually unspins long, poignant melodies on the clarinet with chordal underpinning and countermelodies played on the bandoneon. Partway through, Jofre holds a long, swelling note that veritably sobs before returning the tune to Lee. "Sweet Dreams" is a touching lullaby.

Joined by pianist Steven Beck, the final two pieces, "Tangodromo" and "Taranguino," are extended meditations on the Tango style through a neoclassical lens. "Tangodromo" is particularly Stravinskyian, with alternating short textures and tempo shifts to create a kaleidoscopic lens through which to hear the versatile fluency with which Jofre approaches his material. "Taranguino" creates a musical game of cat and mouse, with each of the performers trading off figures alongside Beck's boisterous accompaniment. Throughout, Jofre and Lee are sensitive to one another's musical choices and entirely in sync in the often challenging rhythms the music contains. *ASPIRE* reveals bold aspirations—and realizations—indeed.

—Christian Carey is Associate Professor at Westminster Choir College and edits *Sequenza 21*, the original new music community.

## ASTOR PIAZZOLLA (1921-1992)

As a child, Argentine-born Piazzolla moved to New York City where he first heard jazz and classical music but also retained his interest in the tango and began to play the bandoneon. In 1932, at the age of eleven, he composed his first tango, "La Catinga." The following year he studied with classical pianist Béla Wilda, a student of Rachmaninoff. Inspired by the tango, he returned to Argentina in 1941 and began his studies with Alberto Ginastera which led him to studies in Paris with the legendary Nadia Boulanger. Piazzolla gives a wonderful account of his reluctance to admit to her that he played the bandoneon rather than the piano. He presented to her what he called his "kilos of symphonies and sonatas." She responded that they were "well-written," but that she could not find Piazzolla in them. Finally, he played his tangos for her to which she responded, "You idiot, that's Piazzolla!" He commented, "And I took all the music I composed, ten years of my life, and sent it to hell in two seconds."

## HEITOR VILLA-LOBOS (1887-1959)

Born in Rio de Janeiro, Villa-Lobos was a composer, conductor, cellist, and classical guitarist renowned for his impact on 20th century Brazilian music. He composed over two thousand works that reflected both his interest in Brazilian folk music and European traditional classical style. He made many trips to Brazil's primitive interior to collect the folk music that would affect his own compositions. Although he received a sophisticated musical education and created a whole Brazilian system of pedagogy, his work remains personal, idiosyncratic, and non-academic. It even reflects, at times, his early years as a café musician.



## LONDON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

The London Symphony Orchestra, based in London's Barbican Center, is consistently ranked as one of the world's leading orchestras and was named by Gramophone as one of the top five orchestras in the world. It is also one of the world's most recorded orchestras. Conductors include Sir Simon Rattle as Music Director, Gianandrea Noseda and François-Xavier Roth as Principal Guest Conductors, and Michael Tilson Thomas as Conductor Laureate.

## ST. LUKE'S CHURCH

This recording was done at the London Symphony Orchestra's St. Luke's Church, an 18th century church restored to become the home of the London Symphony Orchestra's community and education program, LSO Discovery. St. Luke's is the foremost UK orchestral music education center and represents LSO's aspiration to draw in more people to enjoy music, from the local community and around the world. In the mid-1990's when the LSO raised the idea of rebuilding the disused church close to its home at the Barbican, it approached the global finance firm UBS, who were delighted to back the project and continue to do so today.



SEUNGHEE LEE



JP JOFRE



SEUNGHEE LEE

Clarinetist Seunghee Lee is a multi-faceted recording artist and a music entrepreneur based in New York City. Recognized as “an uncompromising soloist, destined to be an upcoming contender of top stature” by the Clarinet Magazine, Ms. Lee was included as one of the ‘Top 30 Classical Stars Under 30’ by KDFC Classical Radio in San Francisco upon the release of her debut album *Brava*, and her multiple solo albums were selected as “CD of the Week” worldwide and were featured on New York’s WQXR, Classic FM Nederland, NPR, WFMT, Fine Music Radio in Cape Town and Symphony 92.4 Singapore, among many others.

Ms. Lee is the founder of Musica Solis Productions, an independent classical record label, sheet music publisher and a creative concert presenter based in New York City. Mentored by multi-Grammy® Award-winning producer Joanna Nickrenz and legendary recording engineer Marc Aubort, Ms. Lee aims to guide and mentor emerging classical musicians to become independent entrepreneurial leaders of their generation. As a frequent guest speaker on *Music Entrepreneurship*, she was invited by the Harvard Business School to speak at the 2019 Asia Business Conference titled, “*The Game Changers*”, the 2019 Yale Alumni Association Career Panel topic “*Careers in Music*”, Seoul National University and many others. As a guest lecturer, she enjoys performing solo recitals, giving master classes on the topics of mental awareness and shifting your mindset, and presenting her signature lecture series entitled “*You are the Company*”.

At her core, Ms. Lee is passionate about using her music to bring comfort and healing to those silently suffering from personal tragedies. She is the founder of *Concert For Cause*, an intimate home concert series dedicated to shining a light on current humanitarian issues.

Ms. Lee received her Bachelor of Music degree from the Eastman School of Music, studying with Charles Neidich and Eli Eban, and her Master of Music degree and Artist Diploma from the Yale School of Music, studying with David Shifrin.

A native of San Juan, Argentina, Juan Pablo Jofre Romarion, aka JP Jofre, is an award-winning bandoneon player and composer. Mr. Jofre has been repeatedly highlighted by the New York Times and praised as one of today's leading artists by Great Performers at Lincoln Center.

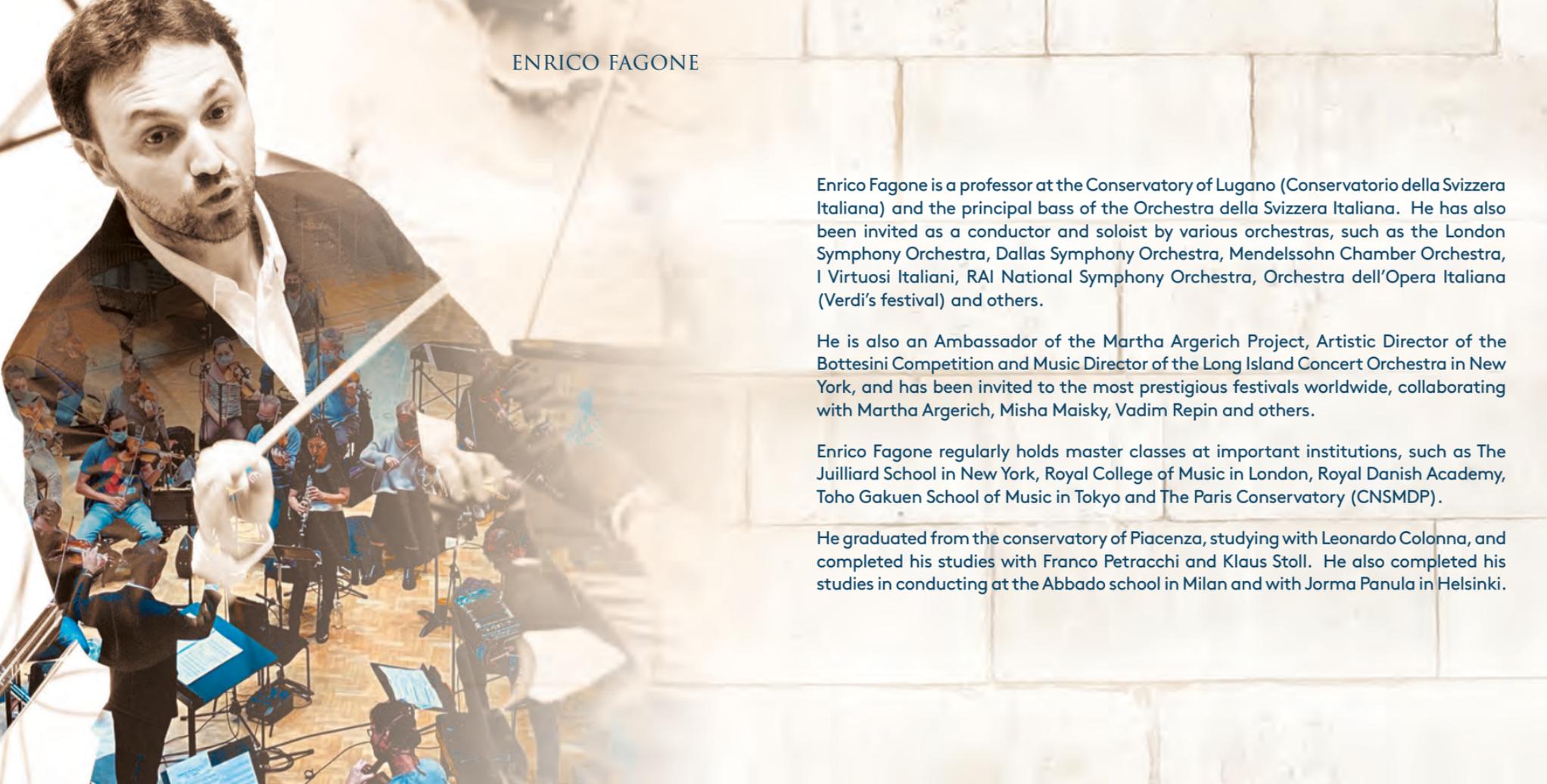
His music has been recorded by the London Symphony Orchestra, 16 Grammy®-winner Paquito D' Rivera, and Orpheus Chamber Orchestra. He has performed and given lectures at Google Talks, TEDtalks, The Juilliard School of Music, The New School and other venues.

A recipient of the National Prize of the Arts grant in Argentina, Mr. Jofre has been part of many prestigious festivals, including the Celebrity Series of Boston, Umbria Jazz Festival, Great Performers at Lincoln Center, and Seattle Town Hall, among others.

Mr. Jofre's music has been performed at concert halls around the world such as Carnegie Hall, The Kennedy Center, Los Angeles Music Center, Morlacchi Theater, Mariinsky Theater, Mikhailovsky Theater, Stanislavsky Theater, Beijing National Concert Hall, Seoul Art Center and Taiwan National Theater.

Mr. Jofre studied bandoneon with Julio Pane, double bass with Nestor Castillo, harmony with Horacio Lavaise, composition and orchestration with Ezequiel Viñao and Adrian Rusovich, and took master classes given by Ingrid Zur and George Heyer.





## ENRICO FAGONE

Enrico Fagone is a professor at the Conservatory of Lugano (Conservatorio della Svizzera Italiana) and the principal bass of the Orchestra della Svizzera Italiana. He has also been invited as a conductor and soloist by various orchestras, such as the London Symphony Orchestra, Dallas Symphony Orchestra, Mendelssohn Chamber Orchestra, I Virtuosi Italiani, RAI National Symphony Orchestra, Orchestra dell'Opera Italiana (Verdi's festival) and others.

He is also an Ambassador of the Martha Argerich Project, Artistic Director of the Bottesini Competition and Music Director of the Long Island Concert Orchestra in New York, and has been invited to the most prestigious festivals worldwide, collaborating with Martha Argerich, Misha Maisky, Vadim Repin and others.

Enrico Fagone regularly holds master classes at important institutions, such as The Juilliard School in New York, Royal College of Music in London, Royal Danish Academy, Toho Gakuen School of Music in Tokyo and The Paris Conservatory (CNSMDP).

He graduated from the conservatory of Piacenza, studying with Leonardo Colonna, and completed his studies with Franco Petracchi and Klaus Stoll. He also completed his studies in conducting at the Abbado school in Milan and with Jorma Panula in Helsinki.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This album, *Aspire*, was born out of my fascination with the reedy, organ-like sound of the bandoneon and the idea of blending it with the versatile sound of the clarinet; two very diverse instruments and musicians from different backgrounds coming together to create incredible synergy through music.

We began this project in New York City where I met JP Jofre and heard his compositions for the first time. Being very intrigued by the sound of the bandoneon, I immediately thought, "I wonder if he can write something for the clarinet and bandoneon?" Three years later, the world's first Double Concerto for Clarinet and Bandoneon was created, and this incredible recording project started taking shape.

A heartfelt gratitude to the London Symphony Orchestra for taking a chance on a new work, and in so doing, enabling us to make this project come to life. A very special thanks to David Cohen, principal cellist of the LSO, for his soulful playing and leadership in the Villa-Lobos piece. Huge thanks to pianist Steven Beck, for supporting us throughout our learning process and recording with us in New York City.

Thank you to Mario de Sa, Concert & Recordings Manager of LSO, for coordinating multiple schedules in the midst of a pandemic and for patiently guiding us throughout. Last but not least, our immense respect and gratitude go to our producer/recording engineer Jonathan Allen and his team for their incredible work capturing our sounds in the most stellar audio quality.

I believe that all aspirations begin with a vision, and with a lot of perseverance and a "never give up" mindset, we can make any dream into a reality.

–Seunghye Lee, Clarinet

SEUNGHEE LEE, Clarinet • JP JOFRE, Bandoneon • ENRICO FAGONE, Conductor  
LONDON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

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1. Jofre: Primavera (Clarinet, Bandoneon and Orchestra) (4:13)\*
  2. Piazzolla: Tango Étude No. 3 for Clarinet and Orchestra (Arr. Jofre) (3:31)\*
  3. Villa-Lobos: Bachianas Brasileiras No. 5 Aria (Cantilena) (Clarinet and Eight Cellos) (Arr. Lee) (6:21)\*
- Jofre: Double Concerto for Clarinet, Bandoneon and Orchestra (20:47)\*
4. I. Vals Irreal (6:43)
  5. II. La Noche (7:05)
  6. III. Aboriginal (6:59)
  7. Jofre: Como el Agua (Clarinet and Bandoneon) (3:57)\*
  8. Jofre: Sweet Dreams (Clarinet and Bandoneon) (3:40)\*
  9. Jofre: Tangodromo (Clarinet, Bandoneon and Piano) (5:53)+^
  10. Jofre: Taranguino (Clarinet, Bandoneon and Piano) (7:37)+

\*World-Premiere Recording +Steven Beck, Pianist ^Piano part arranged by Miho Hazama  
Recorded at LSO St. Luke's, London / October 16-17, 2021 (1-8)  
Recorded at Sear Sound, New York City / March 2, 2022 (9-10)

Executive Producer: Seunghye Lee  
Recording Producer and Editor: Jonathan Allen, Jonathan Allen Recordings  
Recording Engineer: Jonathan Stokes, Classic Sound Ltd. (1-8)  
Recording Engineer: Steve Sacco, Sear Sound (9-10) • Pianist: Steven Beck (9-10)  
Program Notes: Christian Carey  
Art Direction and Design: Darren Melchiorre  
Photography: Melanie Aldridge  
Record Label: Musica Solis

Total Time (56:00)

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