

**JOHN  
ADAMS**

**I was looking  
at the ceiling  
and then I  
saw the sky**

**Libretto by  
June Jordan**

**Soloists**

**The Band of  
Holst-Sinfonietta**

**Klaus Simon**

# I was looking at the ceiling and then I saw the sky (1995)

Song Play in Two Acts

Music by **John Adams (b. 1947)**

Libretto by June Jordan (1936-2002)

## CD 1

72:37

### Act I

<b>1</b> No. 1 Ensemble “I was looking at the ceiling and then I saw the sky” (The Cast)	8:21
<b>2</b> No. 2 A Sermon on Romance (D. de Haas, J. Friedrich)	3:09
<b>3</b> No. 3 Leila’s Song of the Wise Young Women (J. Friedrich, M. Mühlpointner)	4:55
<b>4</b> No. 4 Solo in Sunlight (K.X. Trotman)	3:48
<b>5</b> No. 5 ¿Donde Estàs? (M. Mühlpointner)	4:21
<b>6</b> No. 6 Mike’s Song About Arresting a Particular Individual (J. Holst)	3:29
<b>7</b> No. 7 Tiffany’s Solo (L. Gardell)	4:47
<b>8</b> No. 8 Song about the On Site Altercation (K.X. Trotman, L. Gardell, J. Holst, J. Friedrich)	2:54
<b>9</b> No. 9 Song About the Bad Boys and the News (M. Mühlpointner, L. Gardell, J. Friedrich)	6:35
<b>10</b> No. 10 Your Honor my Client He’s a Young Black Man (M.A. Neisser, K.X. Trotman)	5:42
<b>11</b> No. 11 Consuelo’s Dream (M. Mühlpointner)	6:10
<b>12</b> No. 12 Rick’s Cross-Examination of Tiffany and Mike (M.A. Neisser, J. Holst, L. Gardell)	4:12
<b>13</b> No. 13 Song About Law School as the Natural Follow-up to Jail (K.X. Trotman, D. de Haas)	4:50
<b>14</b> No. 14 Leila’s Solo: Alone (Again or At Last) (J. Friedrich)	4:39
<b>15</b> No. 15 Song About the Sweet Majority Population of the World (D. de Haas, M.A. Neisser, K.X. Trotman, J. Holst)	4:44

## Act II

<b>1</b> No. 16 Duet: Three Weeks and Still Im Outta my Mind (D. de Haas, J. Friedrich)	5:06
<b>2</b> Earthquake-Sounds	1:01
<b>3</b> No. 17 Earthquake Music (Holst-Sinfonietta Band)	3:07
<b>4</b> No. 18 Crushed by the Rock I Been Standing On (D. de Haas, Background Chorus: L. Gardell & M.A. Neisser, Offstage Solo: M. Mühlpointner)	4:25
<b>5</b> No. 19 Duet in the Middle of Terrible Duress (J. Holst, L. Gardell, M.A. Neisser)	11:29
<b>6</b> No. 20 Dewain's Song of Liberation and Surprise (K.X. Trotman)	6:24
<b>7</b> No. 21 Este País/This Country (M. Mühlpointner, K.X. Trotman)	4:33
<b>8</b> No. 22 One Last Look At the Angel in Your Eyes (M. Mühlpointner, K.X. Trotman)	2:19
<b>9</b> No. 23 Finale (The Cast)	4:58

## Cast (in order of appearance)

Consuelo .....	Martina Mühlpointner
Dewain .....	Kimako Xavier Trotman
Rick .....	Markus Alexander Neisser
Leila .....	Jeannette Friedrich
David .....	Darius de Haas
Tiffany .....	Lilith Gardell
Mike .....	Jonas Holst

Young Opera Company Freiburg  
The Band of Holst-Sinfonietta  
Klaus Simon

Recorded at Tonstudio Oase, Freiburg-Wolfenweiler, Germany, from 28th January to 1st February,  
and at Tonstudio R, Vienna, Austria, on 21st April 2004.

Produced and engineered by Andreas Bertram and Felix Dreher

Publisher: Hendon Music, Inc. (BMI), a Boosey & Hawkes Company

# I was looking at the ceiling and then I saw the sky

Music by John Adams (b. 1947) · Libretto by June Jordan (1936-2002)

## Introduction

It is difficult to categorise John Adams's *I was looking at the ceiling and then I saw the sky*. Initially it seems easier to define it as what it is not. For example it is not an opera. To be sure, it consists exclusively of music. There are, however, no through-composed scenes, no dramatic arch-forms in music, such as distinguish operas, as with the two John Adams operas *Nixon in China* and *The Death of Klinghoffer*. We are not here concerned with that serious music expected in an opera, but rather with a varied series of popular styles: gospel follows pop, jazz ballad to rock number, Whitney Houston to Supertramp. There is no orchestra playing, but instead just a rock band of clarinet, saxophone, keyboards, guitar, bass and percussion.

Is this then a musical? Perhaps in a certain sense, but certainly not as the term is generally understood. Neither in the choice of material nor in form is it to be compared with *My Fair Lady* or *Starlight Express*, lacking the typical dialogue and the obligatory dance numbers. The social criticism of the material recalls rather the engaged political theatre of a Bertold Brecht that also contains songs.

The novelty and individuality of this song play is, rather, the abandonment of explanatory connecting dialogue, recitative, or anything like that: as in a song-cycle - or a pop album - 23 songs in five-minute format follow one another. In its course, however, it tells a story, forms a theatre piece, a play. Although the piece takes over formal elements from all current music-theatre genres, the result is quite original.

## The Composition

This unique art-form is the product of the collaboration of three great figures in American culture, the composer John Adams, the poet and civil rights champion June Jordan, and the stage director Peter Sellars who already had joined with the composer in the development of his

earlier operas. Adams obviously wanted to produce a piece in Broadway style, and after June Jordan was recruited as librettist, the theme of the work was established: a combination of social criticism and love story, characteristic of June Jordan's poetry. From the first, love was in the foreground for the authors, as June Jordan wrote in an article for the programme book of the first performance, explaining that they were agreed on love as the first and principal focus of the work; at the centre of it was the question "Who is this man?" or "Who is this woman?", and what is their relationship; in the most natural way there is drawn together a vast amount of information that ranges from the characters' probable favourite foods and favourite music to the political implications of their identities.

## On the Characters

There are seven everyday characters, all young people from Los Angeles of different social and ethnic backgrounds: there is the preacher from a black Baptist congregation, David, always good-humoured, very self-confident, and notorious for his constant womanising. His latest flame Leila rebuffs him; she is an educated, socially engaged counsellor in a family planning clinic, who is not afraid publicly to take sides. Among her clients is Consuelo, an illegal immigrant with two children from El Salvador, who leads a life of poverty and suffering in the United States. She is loved by Dewain, a black gang-leader, who, although personally a decent man, often spends time in prison for minor crimes. In the ghetto he is nevertheless very much liked, even by the policeman Mike, who tries to improve his social attitudes as a sort of street-worker. He himself would rather be a 'hard' type. He is, at all events, admired by Tiffany, a television-reporter, who is investigating police-work and is in love with Mike, tries to win his heart, but is distressed to admit that it will not work. There is also Rick, a lawyer of Vietnamese origin, very ambitious and engaged, but still inexperienced in

his profession and in love.

Consciously great store is set by the creation of a group of real people who correspond to the reality of American society - especially their inner side. John Adams, in his programme note, compares the work to *The Threepenny Opera*, feeling compelled to write about poor people.

### On the Text

June Jordan adapted this into a decidedly lyrical libretto, the verbal skilfulness of which shows her to have been a great poet. She effortlessly takes up different speech patterns, whether ghetto slang, official police jargon or the halleluia cries of the Baptist preacher and develops these creatively. Speech appropriate to various situations functions on different levels: relatively everyday-sounding dialogue stands next to formally metrical verse, free prose to poetry, and often one moves into the other. Beside this Jordan makes use of the general American tendency to create new words, when required, and does not shun such creations as '*the I-run-four-miles-a-week-just-to-keep-my-perspective legs*'.

### On the Musical Language of Adams

The music of Adams is more or less adapted to the characteristic style of English speech, drawing from this its own form, often with a complex rhythmical structure that never goes against the feeling of the words. Specifically it seems that where he puts clear emphasis on a certain style, pop, rock or jazz, always his own post-minimalist musical language shines through the popular music disguise. According to his own words, there is no consistent principle according to which these styles go with the libretto or the characters. It is striking, however, that always where somewhat longer developments are written, the popular tends to give way to Adams's more 'elevated' style.

This, then, is a varied, multiform series of 23 songs that individually and altogether present the plot, without too much pressure.

## Synopsis

### Act I

#### ① No. 1 Ensemble "I was looking at the ceiling and then I saw the sky"

Before the story begins, the principal characters come forward. In hindsight they recognise their respective problems.

*Instrumental introduction as homage to the minimalist music of the late 1970s with a hit title-song*

#### ② No. 2 A Sermon on Romance

David courts Leila and praises the beauty of women in the highest tones. Leila remains sceptical. Finally he runs after all women.

*Gospel, Soul à la Stevie Wonder*

#### ③ No. 3 Leila's Song of the Wise Young Women

Leila strongly advises Consuelo to use condoms and only to associate with faithful men. They do not understand one another; Consuelo believes in her love for Dewain.

*Lively duet with Latin-American rhythms*

#### ④ No. 4 Solo in Sunlight

Dewain is just out of prison and is finally back in his own district.

*Hard Blues Rock à la Joe Cocker*

#### ⑤ No. 5 ¿Dónde Estás?

Consuelo is worried: her six-year-old son has disappeared without a trace. Have the immigration authorities taken him, in order to track down his mother? Memories arise of her homeland, El Salvador; here, like there, she must hide.

*Tender song characterised by acoustic guitar*

#### ⑥ No. 6 Mike's Song About Arresting a Particular Individual

Mike arrests Dewain, who has just stolen two bottles of beer. Tiffany captures the whole thing on camera. Mike shows her how a policeman correctly carries out an arrest.

*Hard Rock*

**7 No. 7 Tiffany's Solo**

Tiffany reflects on her situation and her admiration for Mike. She has long tried to attract him and form an intimate relationship, but has not made her feelings known to him.

*A jazz ballad, based on various styles of cool jazz (bebop, Monk-style)*

**8 No. 8 Song About the On Site Altercation**

Continuation of the arrest scene: Leila comes along, and there is a heated discussion that grows, ending almost in a brawl.

*Rhythmically fixed speech-song over aggressive free jazz à la Herbie Hancock*

**9 No. 9 Song About the Bad Boys and the News**

The three women step outside the story to declare openly their enthusiasm for bad boys.

*Lyrical a cappella terzetto, then rock'n roll with unusual variations of beat*

**10 No. 10 Your Honor my Client He's a Young Black Man**

Dewain stands before the court. Since he has already been in prison twice, he is threatened with life imprisonment according to the Californian Three Strikes Rule. His defence lawyer Rick tries eloquently to save him from a sentence; Dewain thinks that because of his skin colour he has no chance.

*Song characterised by funk und minimal music*

**11 No. 11 Consuelo's Dream**

Meanwhile Consuelo dreams of a life with Dewain and her children in peace and security.

*Very lyrical ballad, characterised to some extent by heavenly synthesizer sounds and a soft electric guitar solo*

**12 No. 12 Rick's Cross-Examination of Tiffany and Mike**

In court Rick cross-examines the witnesses Mike and Tiffany. Both claim they have no intimate relationship with one another. Rick thinks this is incredible, whereupon Tiffany becomes abusive with racist remarks about his Vietnamese origin. In spite of this Rick is all the more in love with her.

*Very minimalist style song with vigorous swing for piano duet, with synthesizer-loop and clapping*

**13 No. 13 Song About Law School as the Natural Follow-Up to Jail**

David visits Dewain in prison to tell him that he has collected enough money for bail. David's arrogant manner nearly drives Dewain to despair; he reproaches David for his womanising and talks of his plans, after his release, to become a lawyer, to be able to help himself.

*Bebop*

**14 No. 14 Leila's Solo: Alone (Again or At Last)**

Leila has finally turned David down. She feels herself alone and longs for fidelity and reliability in a relationship.

*Lyrical ballad à la Whitney Houston, accompanied only by solo keyboard and bass*

**15 No. 15 Song About the Sweet Majority Population of the World**

Before the end of Act I all the men in the cast express their enthusiasm for the fair sex. After the women's number "Song about the Bad Boys and the News" (No. 9) now a piece for the men, an extended *Intermezzo* only very loosely connected with the plot. *Groovy relaxed blues with scat song passages*

## Act II

### ① No. 16 Duet: Three Weeks and Still Im Outta my Mind

Leila and David are in love in David's church. They cannot part from each other and must learn simply to accept their faults. They are surprised by an earthquake. *Rock à la Supertramp*

### ② Earthquake-Sounds

#### ③ No. 17 Earthquake Music

*Aleatoric improvisation à la Witold Lutoslawski in rock style*

#### ④ No. 18 Crushed by the Rock I Been Standing On

The earthquake has brought the church down; Leila is buried alive and lies dying. David is in despair: how could this happen in his church? Too late he realises his real love for Leila.

*Rock song with electric guitar riffs and background chorus à la Queen*

#### ⑤ No. 19 Duet in the Middle of Terrible Duress

Mike finds Tiffany in the ruins. He is glad that she has survived the earthquake unscathed. Tiffany finally speaks of her odd relationship and comes to the realisation that Mike must be homosexual. He rejects this at first, but admits it later. Rick comes in: he too wants to look after Tiffany, since he can no longer hide his love. They are more and more attracted to each other.

*The longest and most dramatic scene of the song play, in which fragments of Act I appear again. Formally related to an opera scene, with very many different changes of tempo and mood. Musically the most complex and demanding number, mainly in Adams's 'elevated' style*

#### ⑥ No. 20 Dewain's Song of Liberation and Surprise

The prison too has been brought down in the earthquake: unexpectedly Dewain is free. Astonished he realises that he once more has the chance of a new life in real freedom.

*Lyrical and intimate piano ballad with final saxophone solo*

#### ⑦ No. 21 Este País/This Country

Dewain and Consuelo have found each other - and immediately lose one another again: Consuelo will go back to El Salvador to fight for democracy, but Dewain must stay in the United States to struggle for human rights.

*Refined polymetric duet, marked Latin influence*

#### ⑧ No. 22 One Last Look At the Angel in Your Eyes

Moving scene of parting of the lovers Consuelo and Dewain.

*Very touching, simple duet, just with piano accompaniment*

#### ⑨ No. 23 Finale

From the situation of David, in mourning, the plot is resolved: we return again to the retrospective of the beginning.

*A wonderful passacaglia over which themes and fragments of text from the whole song play are brought together, leading to a return of the opening song: the circle is closed.*

## John Adams

John Adams was born in 1947 in Worcester (Massachusetts). In 1965 he began his study of the clarinet, conducting, and composition with Leon Kirchner, David Del Tredici and Roger Sessions at Harvard University. In 1971, after taking his Master's Degree, he moved to the west coast and settled in San Francisco, where he taught theory and composition at the Conservatory and directed the New Music Department that made available to him a field for experiment. Intensive study of electronic music convinced him of the importance of tonality, to which he turned again in his music. In 1974 he heard for the first time Steve Reich's *Drumming*, an event that converted him to minimalism. He began to write minimalist pieces, but rather in his own style. In 1978 began his fruitful friendship with Edo de Waart, principal conductor of the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra. Adams first became New Music Adviser to the orchestra and later Composer in Residence. In 1981 he ended his work at the Conservatory and since then has worked as a free-lance composer and conductor in Berkeley, near San Francisco. In the 1980s and 1990s Adams's work witnessed increasing popularity in the United States and has now achieved the rank of a modern classic. To this his major orchestral works such as *Harmonielehre* and *Short Ride in a Fast Machine* have contributed, together with his opera *Nixon in China* (1985-87), which brought Adams sudden national fame. In 1991 there followed another opera, *The Death of Klinghoffer*, which after its first American performance aroused controversial discussion and almost a scandal. Other works that contributed to his growing success are the *Violin Concerto* (1993), the *Piano Concerto: Century Rolls* (1997), the orchestral *Naive and Sentimental Music* (1999), the Christmas oratorio *El Niño* (2000) and particularly *On the Transmigration of Souls* (2002), a commission for the New York Piharmonic Orchestra for a memorial concert after the terrorist attack of 11th September 2001. That Adams was chosen for this equally prestigious and delicate task shows that he had become regarded as the American composer who might be trusted to speak for the nation. It is then no surprise that he was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 2003.

The music of Adams owes its success to a way of writing that is on the one hand new and original and on the other relatively accessible and audience-friendly. There are several reasons for this. Adams belongs to those contemporary composers who believe in the innovative strength of tonality and seek to develop it. This attitude allies Adams with the postmodern movement that sees a practical way forward in the linking of the known from classical and from popular music and giving up pure avant-garde and advanced ideas. In fact many influences from this can be heard in Adams, but he integrates this subtly in his own musical language.

This was essentially influenced by American minimalism, as seen in the works of Terry Riley, Philip Glass and Steve Reich. Minimalist music consists of repeated short phrases, so-called patterns, that are gradually varied in the course of the piece. The attention of the listener is thus drawn away from a single event to the complete process, with a new experience brought about in time. Adams saw in this kind of composing a new and promising way, yet showed from the start a new, independent means of using this method of composition: this resulted in not only gradual processes but clear, dynamic developments that also follow an emotionally directed dramatic form not known in minimal music. From this came an extending, gripping musical event that works like a journey through a changing landscape - it is not by chance that one piece has the title *Short Ride in a Fast Machine*. Adams can be described as a minimalist bored with minimalism. From his striving for variation and emotional expanse grew a stylistic development that over the years distanced his music ever further from minimalist models so that the designation post-minimalist is a truer description of his work.

**Cornelius Bauer**

*English version by Keith Anderson*



Original Cast of the Young Opera Company Freiburg\*, Jubilee Production, 2004 (tenth anniversary of YOC)

17th January 2004, AAK im E-Werk, Freiburg (Germany)

Musical Director: Klaus Simon

Stage Director: Joachim Rathke

Stage design: Philipp Kiefer

Dramaturgy: Cornelius Bauer

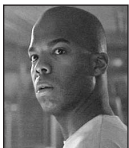
\*except Darius de Haas as David, a member of the original cast (Dir: Peter Sellars) 1995

## Martina Mühlpointner



Martina Mühlpointner was born in Munich in 1982 and first studied musicology at the Ludwig Maximilian University, before devoting herself to performance with study at the Leipzig Hochschule für Musik und Theater, after her earlier training in Munich as a violinist, singer and stage performer, and success in a number of singing competitions. The composer John Adams was particularly pleased with the quality of her voice as Consuelo in *I was looking at the ceiling and then I saw the sky*. She made her operatic début with the Young Opera Company in 2005 when she sang the rôle of Ianthe in the European première of the chamber opera *Iphis* by Elena Kats-Chernin.

## Kimako Xavier Trotman



Born in New York, Kimako Trotman lives in Europe. A singer/actor/writer he began his career as a pianist and cellist, and received his Diploma at the New York High School of Music and the Arts. Upon graduation, he studied Music and Voice at Yale University and at the Aspen Music Festival. During his period at Yale he joined the premier College *a cappella* Group The Whiffenpoofs, with which he toured around the world, singing for dignitaries such as former United States President Bill Clinton and Mother Theresa. He received his Master's Degree at the Juilliard School, where he performed in Master Classes with Marilyn Horne. He studied further with her and Warren Jones at the Music Academy of the West. Kimako Trotman is also a Fulbright Scholar, and has performed not only in New York City (Alice Tully Hall), but in European cities such as Paris, Vienna (Vienna Volksoper) and Holland (Gaudeamus Festival Amsterdam). He speaks six languages, which he has used in music and in various European film and television productions. He is a noted pop-song writer and is equally committed to screenwriting. He is especially fond of singing the words of June Jordan, who had a major success with a children's book, aptly entitled "*Kimako's Story*".

## Markus Alexander Neisser



Markus Alexander Neisser was born in 1982 at Haag in Upper Bavaria and began his vocal training in 1998 with Erika Rügeberg. In 2000 he joined the Munich Vocalists under Roberto Seidel in a performance of Rossini's *Petite Messe solennelle*, and in 2001 took the title rôle in *Jesus Christ Superstar*, in which he was responsible for the concept and arrangements. After completing his studies at the Erding Kreismusikschule in 2002 he attended Studio BEN in Munich for jazz and modern dance, followed by training as a pop-singer and performer in musicals. He subsequently completed his training as a singer at the Bavarian Theatre Academy.

## Jeannette Friedrich



Jeannette Friedrich began singing lessons at the age of thirteen, making her first stage appearances three years later. At the age of 21 she entered the Frankfurt Stage and Musical School, taking vocal lessons with Pari Samar and completing her studies in three years. She has appeared in various musicals, including *Cabaret* and *Jesus Christ Superstar*, and in 2003 appeared in the Frankfurt Theater 695 as Countess Anastasia in *The Gypsy Princess*. Other performances have included the rôle of King Louie in the Mannheim version of *The Jungle Book* and a diamond girl in the German première of *Bal au Moulin Rouge* in the Mannheim Capitol.

## Darius de Haas



Darius de Haas has appeared on Broadway in *Kiss of the Spiderwoman*, *Carousel*, *Rent*, *The Gershwin's Fascinating Rhythm*, *Marie Christine*, and *Dreamgirls in Concert*. Off-Broadway, regional, and touring performances include his Obie winning performance in *Running Man* (Music-Theater Group), and the première of the John Adams/June Jordan opera *I was looking at the ceiling and then I saw the sky*. His film work includes *Anastasia*, *Malcolm X*, *Martin and Orloff*, and *Chicago* (soundtrack). As a concert artist, his singular abilities have served him in a wide assortment of repertoire ranging from jazz to pop to art song to musical theatre to the American Songbook. He is a frequent soloist with The New York Festival of Song and a member of The Broadway Inspirational Voices. He is featured on numerous recordings including his solo début CD, *Darius de Haas: Day Dream, Variations on Strayhorn*. Other recordings include *Children of Eden*, *Marie Christine*, *I was looking at the ceiling ...*, *Myths and Hymns*, *Dreamgirls in Concert* among many others.

## Lilith Gardell



Lilith Gardell had her musical and dramatic training in Hamburg and in Vienna. Her career has brought a tour in Germany and Austria of the musical *Beauty and the Beast*, and appearance in the leading rôle and as co-director of *Bang! All Things Bright and Beautiful*. She was a soloist in *Being Alive*, a Sondheim concert in Freiburg, and appeared as Tiffany in *I was looking at the ceiling and then I saw the sky* and as Sally Bowles in *Cabaret* in Vienna, during the course of a busy and diverse career that has seen her in musicals ranging from *The Little Shop of Horrors* to *Hair*.

## Jonas Holst



The lyric baritone Jonas Holst had his earlier vocal training at the Gothenburg University of Music and Musicology in Sweden, graduating in 1996, after already having appeared in operas by Mozart and Menotti, and as Mack the Knife in Kurt Weill's *Threepenny Opera*. His subsequent career has brought a succession of leading rôles in musicals in Sweden, Denmark and Germany, appearance as God in Elena Katz-Chernin's *Iphis* with the Young Opera Company, and concert work, notably as a member of the Rilke Ensemble in Gothenburg and of the Danish Radio Choir in Copenhagen. His recordings include a release of works by Per Nørgård with the Rilke Ensemble.

## Holst-Sinfonietta Band

The Freiburg chamber orchestra, the Holst-Sinfonietta was founded by Klaus Simon in 1996, taking as its name that of the English composer Gustav Holst and employing professional musicians from South Germany for whom the adventurous programming of the ensemble was a particular stimulus. Programmes have included first performances of works by composers such as John Adams, Joseph Schwantner, Samuel Barber, HK Gruber, Mark-Anthony Turnage, among others. From the beginning the Holst-Sinfonietta has been associated with the Young Opera Company Freiburg, for which it serves as an ideal partner. Studio recordings by the ensemble include works by Alban Berg, Karol Szymanowski and Joseph Schwantner. The Band of the Holst-Sinfonietta is the most recent offspring of the original ensemble.

## Band of the Holst-Sinfonietta

Clarinet/Bass Clarinet: Tim Ohlsson • Alto/Tenor Saxophone: Veronica Reiff  
Keyboard I and Piano: Jörg Schweinbenz • Keyboard II: Maria Bachmann (also piano in Nos. 9 and 16)  
Keyboard III: Andreas Binder (also piano in Nos. 6 and 10) • Guitar/Electric Guitar: Thomas Arnold  
Percussion and Midi-Drums: Daniel Mudrack • Double Bass and Electronic Bass: Lutz Gertler  
Additional Keyboard and Piano: Klaus Simon (in Nos. 14, 20 and 22)

## Young Opera Company Freiburg

The Young Opera Company Freiburg was founded in 1993 by Klaus Simon for the performance of music-theatre and chamber opera, its first production being Gustav Holst's *Savitri*. Other productions have included William Walton's *The Bear*, Wolfgang Rihm's chamber opera *Jakob Lenz* and a dramatic interpretation of *Schubert's Winterreise* by Hans Zender. The company works with outstanding young singers, directors and scene designers, providing a forum for gifted artists from Germany and neighbouring countries. In 2004 the company was nominated for the Baden-Württemberg Culture Prize.

## Klaus Simon

Klaus Simon was born in Überlingen am Bodensee, and read music, German studies and geography at Freiburg. He combined the activities of pianist and conductor early in his career, participating in piano master-classes with Aloys Kontarsky and conducting courses with Johannes Kalitzke and Hans Zender and in 1993 founding the Young Opera Company. Since 1996 he has directed the Holst-Sinfonietta, a chamber ensemble, with the aim of bridging the gap between new music and traditional repertoire. With both ensembles he has dedicated himself in particular to contemporary music, while avoiding characterization as a new music specialist. Since 2001 he has engaged in activity as a pianist and in the promotion of song recitals of twentieth-century vocal repertoire. His other recordings for Naxos include a release devoted to the work of Joseph Schwantner.

*Thanks to all institutions and individuals who have made the present production possible: The Cultural Office of the City of Freiburg (especially Johannes Rühl), the Jury for Project Contributions for Free Dance and Theatre Groups, the Land Union of Free Theatre Baden-Württemberg, the Carl-Schurz-Haus Freiburg, the AAK im E-Werk (especially Laila Koller and Wolfgang Herbert and all technicians), our collaborators, the Elisabeth Schneider Institute Freiburg, Joachim Rathke, Philipp Kiefer, Maren Stümke, Sabine Lübke, Christine Eyssel, Götz Fabry, the extras of the YOC, Mayor for cultural affairs Ulrich von Kirchbach, Atai Keller, Frank Harders-Wuthenow (Boosey & Hawkes Berlin), Holly Mentzer (Boosey & Hawkes New York), John Adams (for his information and consent for this recording), Mark Grey (for technical assistance in questions of keyboard programming), Theater Freiburg, Andi Veit, the Freiburg Secondary School Office, the organ-builder Jens Steinhoff, Eberhard Pfister, Jens Giebel, the studio Oase in Freiburg-Wolfenweiler, Uwe Nieratschker and all those that we may have overlooked.*



AMERICAN OPERA CLASSICS

Scored for a "rock band" of voices, clarinet, saxophone, keyboards, guitar, bass and percussion, John Adams' *I was looking at the ceiling and then I saw the sky*, ranges in style from gospel and jazz to rock and pop. A combination of social criticism and love story, it chronicles the life of seven young Los Angelesans of different social and ethnic backgrounds, whose everyday speech patterns have been skilfully woven into a lyrical libretto by the late writer and civil rights champion June Jordan. John Adams' post-minimalist musical language shines through the popular music disguise.

[www.naxos.com](http://www.naxos.com)


# I was looking at the ceiling and then I saw the sky (1995)

Song Play in Two Acts

Music by **John Adams (b. 1947)**

Libretto by **June Jordan (1936-2002)**

Consuelo ..... Martina Mühlpointner  
 Dewain ..... Kimako Xavier Trotman  
 Rick ..... Markus Alexander Neisser  
 Leila ..... Jeannette Friedrich  
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 Tiffany ..... Lilith Gardell  
 Mike ..... Jonas Holst

Young Opera Company Freiburg  
 The Band of Holst-Sinfonietta  
 Klaus Simon

CD 1

CD 2

1-15 **Act One** 72:37    1-9 **Act Two** 43:22

Recorded at Tonstudio Oase, Freiburg-Wolfenweiler, Germany, from 28th January to 1st February, and at Tonstudio R, Vienna, Austria, on 21st April 2004.  
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Cover picture: *Sky with Green Frame*  
 by Bonnie Rieser  
 (Photodisc Green / Getty Images)  
 American flag, folk artist, 1880s.

Playing  
 Time:  
**1:55:59**

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