



BILBAO ORKESTRA SINFONIKOA

The Bilbao Symphony Orchestra [Bilbao Orkestra Sinfonikoa or BOS] gave its first concert on 8 March 1922 at the Teatro Arriaga theatre in Bilbao, conducted by Armand Marsick. The orchestra grew out of the will of the people of Bizkaia, a territory with which it continues to maintain close links today, as evidenced by the fact that its symphony concert season attracts over 2400 season ticket holders.

Since its founding it has had the following resident conductors: Armand Marsick, Vladimir Golschmann, Jesús Arámbarri, José Limantour, Antoine de Babier, Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos, Alberto Bolet, Pedro Pirfano, Urbano Ruiz Laorden, Theo Alcántara, Juanjo Mena, Günter Neuhold and, since 2015, Erik Nielsen.

Over the more than 90 years since it was first established, the BOS has done great work in Bilbao and Bizkaia, and indeed further afield. In July 2003, under the baton of Juanjo Mena, it was invited by Valery Gergiev to perform at the Mariinski Theatre in Stl Petersburg as part of the celebrations to mark the 300th anniversary of the city. That concert took the orchestra's international profile to a new level, and it has since been invited regularly to the La folle journée festival in Nantes and La Roque D'Antheron in Marseilles. It has also been invited to Japan on two occasions: in 2007 it gave 10 concerts in Tokyo to audiences totalling around 40,000; and in 2009 it toured Osaka, Fukui, Tokyo, Fukuoka, Yokohama and Gifu. In January 2019 it took part in two performances of Madame Butterfly at the Royal Opera House in Muscat, the capital of Oman.

Apart from its appearances at events abroad, the BOS has also toured widely within Spain, and for decades was the de facto "orchestra of the north". It has also performed often at the National

Auditorium in Madrid, at the Music Fortnight in Donostia-San Sebastián, at the Santander International Festival, at the Paris Festival and as part of the Ibermúsica "World Orchestras" cycle. In March 1998 it was invited to the concert marking the awarding of honorary doctorates to composers Carmelo Bernaola, Cristóbal Halffter and Luis de Pablo at the Complutense University in Madrid. In 1998 it represented the Basque Country at the Expo '98 World Exposition in Lisbon, and in 1999 it took part in the opening of the Palacio Euskalduna hall in Bilbao, which is now its home base.

The list of guest conductors who have directed the BOS includes such historically significant names as Enrique Fernández Arbós, Bartolomé Pérez Casas, Ataulfo Argenta, Eduardo Toldrá, Sir Malcolm Sargent, Igor Markevitch, Charles Dutoit, Ros Marbá, García Asensio, Jerzy Semkow and Josep Pons. It has also been conducted by Maurice Ravel, Jesús Guridi, Pablo Sorozábal, Jesús Arambarri, Krzysztof Penderecki, Carmelo Bernaola, Luis de Pablo, Ernesto and Cristóbal Halffter and other composers in interpretations of their own works.

Over the course of its long history, the BOS has shared the stage with some of the greatest ever soloists, including José Iturbi, Arturo Rubinstein, Jacque Thibaud, Vladimir Horowitz, Fritz Kreisler, Joseph Szigeti, Henryk Szeryng, Vlado Perlemuter, Mstislav Rostropovich, Salvatore Accardo, Joaquín Achúcarro, Felix Ayo, Nicanor Zabaleta, Maurice André, Mischa Maisky, Narciso Yepes, Alicia de Larrocha, Boris Belkin, Ivo Pogorelich, Jean Pierre Rampal, Asier Polo, Truls Mork, Sabine Meyer and Frank Peter Zimmermann, among many others. The list of singers who have performed with the orchestra includes Victoria de los Angeles, Montserrat Caballé, Alfredo Kraus, Plácido Domingo, Luciano Pavarotti, Ainhoa Arteta, Waltraud Meier plus the Bilbao Choral Society, the Orfeón Donostiarra choir and the choir of the University of the Basque Country.

Recordings by the BOS include an interesting collection of Basque music performed under the direction of Juanjo Mena for Naxos (Arambarri, Guridi, Arriaga, Isasi, Usandizaga, Sarasate and Escudero) and works by Rodrigo and Takemitsu (with Japanese guitarist Kiyoshi Shomura) for EMI JAPAN. In 1985 it recorded works by Arriaga with Jesús López Cobos. Thorofon has also released on CD its recording of Gurrelieder by Schönberg, which was recorded live at the concerts to mark its 90th anniversary, with Günter Neuhold conducting.

Along with its regular season of concerts and chamber music at the Palacio Euskalduna hall, its performances at other towns in Bizkaia, its cooperation in operas staged by the ABAO (Bilbao Association of Friends of Opera) and its tours and trips, the BOS also performs an important educational role: since 1985 it has staged "educational concerts". This pioneering scheme involves "family concerts" and activities aimed at promoting social inclusion through music. It also maintains close ties with other cultural organisations such as the Teatro Arriaga theatre, the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao and the Bilbao Fine Arts Museum.

The activities of the BOS are made possible by the support of its many followers and the contributions made by its patrons: the Provincial Council of Bizkaia and the Municipal Council of Bilbao.

BOS, key piece since 1922.