

The opera season starts in October with a programme full of new productions

ABAO BILBAO OPERA PRESENTS ITS 72ND SEASON UNDER THE SIGN OF LOVE

- Five titles that cover more than one hundred years of musical creation, from the late 18th century to the dawn of the 20th century.
- Three new productions, leading figures and renowned conductors are the highlights in an exciting and lively season with many new features.
- The 19th edition of the ABAO Txiki, based on traditional fairy tales, brings three premieres to the Arriaga Theatre.
- The BBVA Foundation collaborates with ABAO's cultural activity as the season's main sponsor.

Bilbao, 29 March 2023. **ABAO Bilbao Opera's 2023-2024 season** starts on Saturday, **14 October**, under the sign of the eternal love of *Roméo et Juliette*, by Gounod, and its influence will be present throughout the entire season through idyllic love, courtly love, filial love and youthful love. The new season grows with more cultural and educational activities, social programmes and an artistic programme that includes **five titles** at the **Euskalduna Bilbao** and **four shows** at the **Arriaga Theatre**.

Under the title "**Opera in its purest form**", leading figures, renowned conductors, new productions and an invariable quest for the highest quality at all levels underpin Bilbao's new opera season, which intends to **make a lasting impression** on members as well as aficionados.

MAIN MAGNITUDES OF THE NEW SEASON

- ABAO Bilbao Opera and **BBVA Foundation, the season's main sponsor**, contribute to promoting excellence and operatic culture and bringing top-quality shows to the public.
- Well-known titles of the **Italian repertoire**, such as *L'elisir d'amore*, *Rigoletto* and *La Bohème*, combine with other less frequent titles of the French repertoire, *Roméo et Juliette* and the German repertoire, *Die Entführung aus dem Serail (The Abduction from the Seraglio)*.
- Amongst the scheduled operas and shows there is the premiere of **a new production of our own: *Die Entführung aus dem Serail (The Abduction from the Seraglio)* and two new co-productions, *Roméo et Juliette* and *Rigoletto*.**
- A total of **44 performances** will be staged: 27 in the general season at the Euskalduna Bilbao, and 17 for children and young people in the ABAO Txiki season at the Arriaga Theatre.
- The conductors who visit the new season, **Lorenzo Passerini, Iván López Reynoso, Lucía Marín and Daniel Oren**, lead the **Bilbao Orkestra Sinfonikoa** and the **Euskadiko Orkestra**, which, together with the **Opera Choir of Bilbao**, expand their repertoire and consolidate the artistic prestige of ABAO's regular collaborators.
- **12 singers make their debut** together with renowned artists who have successfully performed in the major opera houses of the world.

- **ABAO Txiki** offers **4 shows** for different ages, three of which have school sessions that reinstate **ABAO's commitment to music education and to children and young people**.
- **Three premieres in the ABAO Txiki season:** *Puss in Boots, Andersen, the Ugly Duckling and Hirira*.
- The **didactic and educational programme** offers numerous free activities in various action programmes for groups of different ages and origins.
- The successful **Gazteam programme** continues with activities and financial incentives for people **under 25 and under 30**.
- The social solidarity programme "**Ópera y +**" at **Cruces University Hospital** consolidates its activities both inside as well as outside the Hospital and is carried out with the collaboration of **EDP Foundation, "La Caixa" Foundation and Zabalgardi**.

72ND OPERA SEASON

The 72nd ABAO Bilbao Opera season, with a wide variety of styles and compositions, covers over one hundred years of musical creation, from a refined Mozart in the late 18th Century to a moving Puccini at the dawn of the 20th Century, and **is inspired by the influence of love** and the explosion of feelings of moving stories and dramas.

Five composers: **Gounod, Donizetti, Mozart, Verdi and Puccini** bring to ABAO's stage renowned titles of the Italian repertoire, such as *L'elisir d'amore, Rigoletto and La Bohème*, combined with other less frequent titles of the French repertoire, *Roméo et Juliette*, and the German repertoire, *Die Entführung aus dem Serail (The Abduction from the Seraglio)*.

A new season in which **12 singers, two music directors and four stage directors** make their debut. The **Opera Choir of Bilbao**, led by Boris Dujin, is in charge of the choral part of the season and, together with the **Bilbao Orkestra Sinfonikoa** and the **Euskadiko Orkestra**, of increasing national and international prestige, participate in the programme hence consolidating their ties as regular collaborators of ABAO Bilbao Opera.

Worthy of note is the presence of four women on the stage: **Nadine Sierra**, who makes her debut, **Jessica Prat, Sabina Puértolas** and **Miren Urbieta**. Next to them, great voices such as **Javier Camarena, Ismael Jordi** and the newcomers **Joel Prieto** and **Amartuvshin Enkhbat**, amongst others.

Coinciding with the performances, ABAO Bilbao Opera will continue with their **intense parallel activity** which includes cycles of conferences, workshops, guided visits, loyalty building and new audience acquisition as well as other social and cultural activities in collaboration with different institutions and companies.

BBVA Foundation, whose distinguishing feature is the promotion of scientific knowledge and cultural creation, collaborates with ABAO Bilbao Opera as the **season's main sponsor**.

Charles Gounod

ROMÉO ET JULIETTE

21, 24, 27 and 30 October 2023

- **Two exceptional protagonists: Javier Camarena and Nadine Sierra.**
- **On stage the premiere of an elegant production by Giorgia Guerra, symbolic, clean and stylish.**
- **In the pit, Maestro Lorenzo Passerini leads the Euskadiko Orkestra in a demanding musical score full of strength.**

ABAO Bilbao Opera schedules, for the fourth time in its history, **Roméo et Juliette**, one of the favourite titles of the French repertoire, whose libretto is based on the drama of the same name by William Shakespeare.

This opera with prologue and five acts tells the quintessential story of young love, where passion and hate, offence and forgiveness, love and death go hand in hand.

On this occasion ABAO Bilbao Opera has brought together a sublime duo to play the world's most famous lovers with **Javier Camarena** and **Nadine Sierra**. The Mexican tenor is known to be one of the greatest exponents of the Romantic bel canto repertoire and one of the most admired all over the world. Next to him, the American soprano Nadine Sierra, who makes her debut in Bilbao as Juliette. They both have some of the most popular pages of the opera repertoire, such as Juliette's waltz "*Je veux vivre*", Romeo's demanding aria "*Ah! Lève-toi soleil!*" or Romeo and Juliette's duet "*O nuit divine*".

As for the music, **Maestro Lorenzo Passerini** makes his debut with the **Euskadiko Orkestra** on a score full of lyricism, poetry, refinement and elegance, which are all features that characterise French opera.

On the stage, a **co-production by ABAO Bilbao Opera** and **Oviedo Opera** signed by the Italian director **Giorgia Guerra**, in her debut in ABAO, presenting a youthful, stylish and visually striking proposal. The lovers live in a versatile space that ranges from a palace to the classical mortuary, in a scenography that stands out due to the thorough video projection work.

Gaetano Donizetti

L'ELISIR D'AMORE

18, 21, 24, 25 (Opera Berri) and 27 November 2023

- **One of the most popular works by Donizetti as well as one of the most loved by the public.**
- **A young cast headed by Elena Sancho Pereg and Joel Prieto.**
- **As for the music, the remarkable Maestro Iván López-Reynoso leading the Bilbao Orkestra Sinfonikoa.**
- **A production by Marina Bianchi, fresh, agile and quite delightful, a national premiere.**
- **28th edition of the Opera Berri programme with a second cast in the leading roles and tickets at 50% of their usual price.**

November brings back **one of the operas most loved** by the public and one of the **most charming jewels** of the comic opera of the 19th century: *L'elisir d'amore* by Donizetti. This sentimental comedy set in the Basque Country is one of the production peaks of the Italian Maestro and has a balanced mixture of comedy and drama, depth and simplicity, romanticism and melancholy, with archetypal characters inspired by the *commedia dell'arte*.

The cast is headed by the young soprano from Donostia **Elena Sancho Pereg** and the tenor from Madrid **Joel Prieto**, who makes his debut in ABAO after a very successful career in the United States and will sing the famous aria "*Una furtiva lagrima*". The baritone **Pablo Ruiz** and the bass **Paolo Bordogna** complete the quartet.

On the podium, conducting a score with great freshness and inspiration, Maestro **Iván López-Reynoso**, leading the **Bilbao Orkestra Sinfonikoa**.

On the stage **a funny, fresh and agile production premiered in Spain** and signed by **Marina Bianchi**, which highlights youth and romance recreating a **delicate outdoor scenography**.

On 25 November this title will have an **Opera Berri** performance. This social and cultural initiative of ABAO Bilbao Opera reaches its 18th edition and aims at bringing opera closer to society, with well-known titles and tickets at half their usual price. The leading duo features **Helena Orcoyen** and **David Alegret**.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

DIE ENTFÜHRUNG AUS DEM SERAIL (The Abduction from the Seraglio)

20, 23, 26 and 29 January 2024

- **A cast made up of the flawless voices of Jessica Pratt, Moisés Marín, Leonor Bonilla and Mikeldi Atxalandabaso in the leading quartet.**
- **Music direction by Lucía Marín leading the Euskadiko Orkestra.**
- **A new ABAO Bilbao Opera production by Mariano Baudin, full of exoticism and emotions.**

2024 starts with ***Die Entführung aus dem Serail (The Abduction from the Seraglio)***, the first German opera completed by Mozart, which returns to the ABAO Bilbao Opera season after 29 years of absence.

An opera composed in his youth and inspired in his own personal circumstances, his beliefs as well as his fears, *The Abduction from the Seraglio* expresses Mozart's spiritual romanticism and his high regard for courtly love and the beloved woman.

The opera belongs to the "Turkish" genre, full of mystery, sensuality and seduction, with the recurrent theme of the maiden's unbreakable fidelity towards her absent loved one. It is a deeply moving work, not only due to the fact that it is Mozart's first complete *Singspiel*, but also due to the joy, courage and spirit that it exudes from the very first note.

It is an opera of intrigue with all the required exotic elements: a seraglio, captive maidens waiting to be rescued by a distant lover, a sultan, servants and many ambiguous situations.

Amongst the protagonists, the much awaited return of **Jessica Pratt** in the role of Konstanze, which requires a soprano of exceptional characteristics, and **Moisés Marín**, as the troubled lover Belmonte. **Leonor Bonilla** and **Mikeldi Atxalandabaso** as Blonde, the maid, and the loyal servant Pedrillo, complete the leading quartet.

Lucía Marín makes her debut on the podium of ABAO leading the **Euskadiko Orkestra** in a score that is stunning, colourful and full of emotion, dynamism and Mozartian poetic intensity.

A new production by ABAO Bilbao Opera, devised by **Mariano Baudin**, who also makes his debut, with a proposal inspired by the spaces and atmospheres of the **Ottoman Empire** and which offers a cascade of sensations and emotions with a rhythm that is addressed in detail as well as an elegant wardrobe full of exoticism.

Giuseppe Verdi

RIGOLETTO

17, 20, 23 and 26 February 2024

- **Trio of great leading voices: Amartuvshin Enkhbat, Sabina Puértolas and Ismael Jordi.**
- **New ABAO Bilbao Opera co-production, signed by Miguel del Arco, showing a bold and original vision of the story.**
- **Daniel Oren, one of the great international maestros, leading the Bilbao Orkestra Sinfonikoa.**
- **Sponsored by BBVA Foundation**

One of the **most universal** operas by the Italian genius and the composer's favourite work, which gained him international recognition and which has been always present in theatres since it was premiered in 1851. This dramatic journey of undeniable power in three acts, brimming over with passion, deceit, parent-child love and revenge, is based on the play '*Le Roi s'amuse*' by Victor Hugo. The story is about a jester who struggles to find a balance between the conflicting elements of beauty and perversity in his life. It is a universal work, tremendously popular, which remains a favourite of all audiences.

The role of the unfortunate jester who lives in fear of something bad happening to his daughter is played by **Amartuvshin Enkhat**, a baritone who makes his debut in the Bilbao season. **Sabina Puértolas** plays the stubborn Gilda, torn between her love for the Duca and her love for her father. A genuine soprano with moments and scenes of great dramatic intensity. The leading trio is completed with the tenor from Jerez **Ismael Jordi**, who plays the promiscuous Duca di Mantua and sings one of the best-known melodies in the opera world: '*La donna è mobile*'.

The prestigious maestro **Daniel Oren**, who already demonstrated his skill in previous seasons, is in charge of conducting the **Bilbao Orkestra Sinfonikoa** in a score full of beautiful melodies.

The stage direction is by the multifaceted **Miguel del Arco**, a theatre and film director, actor and playwright, who has received several Max awards and is known for his **audacity** when portraying the characters and the atmospheres of the various scenes in a **modern style**. Miguel del Arco proposes an effective staging of **contemporary aesthetics** to explain the plot, in which wolves and *escorts* represent the expressions of human nature, sex, violence, love or hate. The most intense moments are highlighted with expressionist projections.

Giacomo Puccini

LA BOHÈME

18, 21, 24 and 27 May 2024

- **Miren Urbieta, Marina Monzó and Manel Esteve in a cast made up of great voices.**
- **Classical production that recreates the Paris of the 19th Century, devised by Leo Nucci, who makes his debut in ABAO as stage director.**
- **The Bilbao Orkestra Sinfonikoa addresses a score of great musical beauty and dramatic efficacy.**
- **Sponsored by BBVA Foundation**

The season ends in May with the **passionate, timeless and indelible love story** of young artists in Paris, *La Bohème* by Puccini. It is one of the most beautiful, tragic, moving and complex operas of the Italian opera repertoire, and an **essential title** that has been performed on 28 occasions in the Bilbao season.

This tragic and immortal story has the ability to be powerfully attractive from the very beginning, which makes it one of the most appreciated and admired operas at the international level and one of the favourite operas of the public, the record companies and the theatres. The relevance of this title and its eternal appeal are reflected in its widespread popularity.

This work, defined by Puccini as the opera of "*piccole cose*", is set in the Latin Quarter of Paris and the common thread of the plot is the love story of two young bohemian artists, Mimi and Rodolfo. The soprano from Gipuzkoa **Miren Urbieta** plays the role of the heartbreaking seamstress attentive to the afflictions of her enamoured poet. The soprano **Marina Monzó** and the baritone **Manel Esteve** are the impetuous lovers Musetta and Marcello

One of the keys to the success of this opera is the enormous musical beauty and dramatic efficacy of its orchestral palette, where feelings and instincts are reflected in the musical motifs as well as in the objects and settings. The **Bilbao Orkestra Sinfonikoa** accompanies this sentimental narration.

On the stage, a production devised by the legendary baritone, and now also stage director, **Leo Nucci**. Of a **traditional, classic and realistic style**, with period scenes and costumes and brave and effective lighting, it depicts the typical Paris of the 19th Century with a reconstruction of the Latin Quarter full of charm and subtle details.

XIX ABAO TXIKI SEASON

- **Four shows: *The Piper of Hamelin, Puss in Boots, Andersen, the Ugly Duckling and Hirira.***
- **17 performances for audiences of different ages.**
- **Three premieres in the ABAO Txiki season.**

ABAO Bilbao Opera maintains its **commitment to the education** and development of the younger ones through innovation and quality shows. The **19th edition of ABAO Txiki in the Arriaga Theatre** is taking hold with regard to both the artistic as well as the pedagogical aspects, with **four shows, three of which are premiered in ABAO**, with the productions most awaited by family audiences and **17 performances**, three of which are school performances aimed at education centres.

A renewed version of *The Piper of Hamelin* opens the season in October with an opera, with music by **Iñigo Casali**, based on the popular fairy tale by the Grimm Brothers, for six singers, two choirs and orchestra. Using the techniques of a musical, the action is really fast paced, showing different scenes through which the characters pass. Full of humour, Navarre Chamber Opera's proposal moves from the tale to the story, to discuss topics such as treason, lies, kindness and nobility through songs, music, lighting and stage design.

To celebrate the New Year, January brings the premiere of *Puss in Boots* by **Xavier Montsalvatge**, an opera based on the traditional fairy tale by Perrault. This stage version for piano, five singers and a dancer has an amusing wardrobe and recovers the essence of the tale that makes children as well as adults laugh and dream. Scenes full of colour and humour without abandoning the refinement of a delightful score in which ballet also takes on major importance.

The third fairy tale of the season comes in March with a new premiere: *Andersen, the Ugly Duckling*, by **Jordi Cornudella**. A musical narration for chamber orchestra, puppets and video projections based on Hans Christian Andersen's popular tale, which stresses the importance of authenticity, affection and kindness as spaces to understand the world. A show by the company Etcétera with Enrique Lanz as stage director.

Rounding off the season in May, the premiere in Bilbao of *Hirira* from the Musical Fortnight of Donostia. With the work by **Paul Hindemith** *Wir bauen eine Stadt* as a guide, *Hirira* is a show based on the point of view of children who observe the city in an active and creative manner. An opera created by the children of the **Easo Choir** showing the intricacies of an imaginary city that is being built freely. *Hirira* is an invitation to think of the places where we live, to shape other realities and draw our own maps.

ACCESSIBLE ABAO. CULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND SOCIAL PROGRAMME

- **“The ABC of Opera” cycle offers five new lectures on the season's titles.**
- **Over three decades of didactic programme regarding opera with more targeted groups.**
- **The “Opera y +” programme at Cruces University Hospital starts its 9th edition and continues its emotional accompaniment work with more activities.**
- **Gazteam ABAO becomes consolidated amongst young aficionados.**
- **ABAO Bilbao Opera participates in the LABORLAN performing arts training programme to promote employment.**

ABAO Bilbao Opera organises an **extensive cultural and social programme with free and accessible activities**, open to society as a whole and aimed at bringing opera to all audiences as well as creating spaces for culture and art.

“The ABC of Opera” cycle with free lectures and renowned lecturers in the sector holds a new edition at the **University of Deusto** in collaboration with **DeustoBide**. The participants in this edition are: the music critic, editor and writer **Luis Gago**, the renowned journalist and writer **Rubén Amón**, the musicologist and music populariser **Eva Sandoval**, the musicologist, professor and music populariser **Pablo Lorenzo Rodríguez**, and the journalists **Rafael Bernardo and Mariela Rubio**.

ABAO's didactic programme, a pioneering programme in the state, starts the academic year in September in **more than one hundred education centres** with informative talks and workshops. The Programme is mainly aimed at preschool, primary and secondary education and includes pedagogical guides for teachers and the **school sessions** of the ABAO Txiki season.

This activity extends to other **groups of adults** such as the *Aulas de la Experiencia* (classes for seniors) and cultural centres for the elderly at both universities as well as councils of various towns and cities of Bizkaia, Gasteiz, Burgos or Santander. The **Senior programme** includes didactic talks, visits to the theatre and attendance to the operas.

The **"Opera y +"** programme, which seeks to contribute, through opera and side events both inside as well as outside the hospital, to the emotional wellbeing of patients, relatives and healthcare personnel of **Cruces University Hospital**, started in the areas of Nephrology, Paediatrics and Neonatology and has extended in the latest editions to other services such as Digestive, Internal Medicine, Pneumology, Oncology, Radiotherapeutic Oncology, Palliative Care Route and Day Hospital. The innovative solidarity project starts its 9th edition in September with the collaboration of **EDP Foundation**, **"La Caixa" foundation** and **Zabalgarbi**.

Likewise, ABAO Bilbao Opera continues to work towards attracting and engaging a young audience, with benefits and appeals of different types such as the programme for young people under 30 **Gazteam ABAO**, with **flat rates of 25 and 30 Euros** to go to any opera title or performance in the best seats available.

The **inclusion and social collaboration** programmes and activities aimed at bringing opera and culture to people with diverse capacities or in risk of exclusion continue their development in collaboration with various third sector organisations and collaborating companies and institutions.

This year ABAO Bilbao Opera strengthens its public service vocation and participates in the fourth edition of **LABORLAN**, a **mixed employment and training programme** promoted by DEMA, the Provincial Employment and Entrepreneurship Agency of the Provincial Council of Bizkaia. The programme offers for the first time specialised training in **Stage and Rigging Techniques** applied to the cultural and creative industries, as well as job placement with an internship contract. ABAO Bilbao Opera accompanies and coaches participants, during both the training stage as well as the employment contract.

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