

**2026-2028: Three years to commemorate a double 75 of history and passion for opera.**

## **ABAO BILBAO OPERA STARTS A HISTORIC TRIENNIUM TO CELEBRATE ITS DOUBLE ANNIVERSARY**

- Next October will mark the beginning of the tribute triennial and commemorative events with which ABAO Bilbao Opera is going to celebrate a double anniversary: the 75th Opera Season in Bilbao and the 75 years of the Association since its foundation in 1953.
- The celebration will span three seasons. It will start in 2026-2027, celebrating the 75th Season; continue in 2027-2028, hosting the pinnacle of the 75th anniversary in April; and run through the end of the year in 2028-2029.
- In the 75th Season, leading voices of the international scene and renowned music directors will come together in a programme dedicated to love that presents five essential titles under the slogan «Opera with character».
- Asmik Grigorian, an absolute diva, will make her debut in ABAO in April 2027 with a two-piano recital and a journey through eight great opera heroines.
- In a clear commitment to innovation, ABAO will premiere three new productions and co-productions, two of which are an absolute premiere.
- ABAO Txiki will celebrate 22 seasons and has scheduled four titles with tales, puppets, exotic characters and two spectacular new musical productions.
- BBVA Foundation collaborates with ABAO Bilbao Opera's cultural activity as the season's main sponsor.

Bilbao, 6 May 2026. **ABAO Bilbao Opera's 75th Season 2026-2027 will start on Saturday 17 October** with Giuseppe Verdi's *La Traviata*, one of the operas with which, in 1953, once the Bilbao Association of Friends of the Opera had been established, **the legendary opera festivals began**.

This will mark the start of the years of programmes and commemorative events with which ABAO is going to celebrate a double anniversary: **the celebration of the 75th Opera Season in Bilbao and the 75 years of the Association since it was founded in 1953**. These Anniversaries show what ABAO Bilbao Opera means for the cultural development of the Basque Country.

Under the slogan: «**Opera with character**», Season **2026-2027** will offer:

- **9 titles**, five essential operas and four top shows.
- **1 outstanding recital** with an exceptional protagonist.
- **41 performances**, 20 in the general season at Euskalduna Bilbao in addition to five dress rehearsals, 1 ABAO Concert at the Bilbao Philharmonic Society and 15 performances from the ABAO Txiki season at the Arriaga Theatre.
- **63,700 opera-goers** are called to enjoy this new season.

### **FIVE WOMEN STAR IN FIVE WAYS OF LOVING**

The new season explores, through five operas with totally different aesthetics, **five ways of loving**. A narrative arc that ranges from **comedy to myth**, proving that **opera is a modern genre that mirrors timeless human impulses**.

*La Traviata*, *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, *Die Walküre*, *Roberto Devereux* and *Manon Lescaut* dialogue with each other like **stations in a journey around love**.

- In *La Traviata*, authentic love clashes with social hypocrisy and the sacrifice of renunciation turns into a lesson in generosity;
- *Il barbiere di Siviglia* presents love as a youthful game where cunning triumphs over authority;
- *Die Walküre* sets love in a mythical universe that challenges laws, gods and destinies;
- *Roberto Devereux* portrays the drama of a queen that must choose between love and politics, between heart and mind;
- The journey ends with *Manon Lescaut*, where ambition displaces love, but has to pay the price of destruction.

The season will include the presentation of three new ABAO Bilbao Opera productions and co-productions, two of which are being premiered, the debut of a stage director, two pianists and fourteen performers who join the artist catalogue of the Association.

The **Bilbao Opera Choir**, conducted by **Esteban Urzelai**, will be in charge of the choral part of the season and, together with the **Bilbao Orkestra Sinfonikoa** (Principal Orchestra) and the **Euskadiko Orkestra**, will participate in the programme and consolidate their position as stable collaborators of ABAO Bilbao Opera.

Giuseppe Verdi

### **LA TRAVIATA**

17, 20, 23 and 26 October, 2026

#### **«SEMPRE LIBERA... MY LIFE WILL RUN ALONG THE PATHS OF PLEASURE»**

- *La Traviata*, by **Giuseppe Verdi**, one of the most popular and most performed operas worldwide, opens the season, sponsored by **BBVA Foundation**, and rises to the third place in the ranking of titles performed at ABAO throughout its history.
- It is one of those operas that **grab you from the very first moment**, full of *glamour*, **impossible love and emotions on edge**. Set in the most vibrant Paris, the opera combines elegance and drama, and is an emotional journey straight to the heart, which makes it a **timeless classic**.
- The cast is led by **two internationally acclaimed voices**: the soprano **Jessica Pratt** and the tenor **Javier Camarena**. Jessica Pratt has consolidated a close relationship with the Bilbao audience with her performances, from the first time in *La sonnambula* to the latest in *Die entführung aus den serrail*. Camarena's performances at ABAO have also left great memories in *Les pêcheurs de perles*, *Roméo et Juliette* and the Solo Concerto he offered in 2015.
- Maestro **Francesco Ivan Ciampa** conducts the **Euskadiko Orkestra** in this opera with **haunting melodies**, from the famous **brindisi** to the most intimate and heartrending moments.
- A production by Teatro Massimo di Palermo devised by **Mario Pontiggia** with the magnificence that characterises this stage director. He presents a **striking, classical and traditional stage design, set in the Belle Époque** with *Art Nouveau* and *Art Deco* references in a sumptuous set embellished by luxurious costumes.

Gioacchino Rossini

## ***IL BARBIERE DI SIVIGLIA***

21, 24, 27 and 30 November, 2026

### **«EATING, LOVING, SINGING ... LIFE ACCORDING TO ROSSINI»**

- ***Il barbiere di Siviglia***, one of **Rossini's most famous operas**, deploys a comedy full of rhythm and wit, where the cunning Figaro organises a thousand intrigues to help Count Almaviva win Rosina's heart. **A fresh and youthful opera**, where humour and cunning triumph. Sponsored by **Kutxabank**.
- **Andrzej Filończyk**, one of the world-renowned «barbieres», plays the leading role together with **Leonor Bonilla** and **Santiago Ballerini**.
- **Bright and full of energy**, this opera turns each scene into an irresistible **theatrical game**.
- **Pedro Bartolomé**, music and artistic director of the Youth Symphony Orchestra of Burgos, leads the **BOS** in this score that progresses to the rhythm of vibrant and catchy music.
- **Vincent Dujardin** makes his debut in ABAO with a production for the Ópera Royal Wallonie-Liége that transposes the action to **Seville in the 1950s**. The stage design consists of a square surrounded by buildings that unfold, scene by scene, with a set of elements that immerse the viewer in a magnificent show.

Richard Wagner

## ***DIE WALKÜRE***

23, 26, 29 January and 1 February 2027

### **«WHEN THE EPIC DEFIES THE GODS»**

- Halfway through the season comes ***Die Walküre***, pure Wagnerian drama.
- In the second instalment of *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, **incestuous loves and furious gods whose decisions change destinies** intertwine in a whirlwind of emotions that engages the audience from the very first chord.
- **Ángeles Blancas, Carla Filipic-Holm, Egils Silins, Daniela Barcellona and Marko Mimica** make up a top leading cast.
- The music direction is by the great specialist in the German repertoire **Pedro Halffter**, conducting the **BOS** to tackle this violent score that flows like an unstoppable and overwhelming wave full of emotion. The famous «*Ride of the Valkyries*» offers a dramatic and immersive experience that marks the heart of the Ring Cycle.
- **International premiere of a new ABAO Bilbao Opera** production by stage director **Guillermo Amaya**, who devises the stage as a society in ruins that exposes the fragility of the protagonists of the story. With his proposal, inspired by the works «*Germania*» by Haacke and the gigantic cube «*Die*» by Tony Smith, Amaya **confronts the audience with the Wagnerian discourse**, demonstrating extraordinary mastery.

Gaetano Donizetti

**ROBERTO DEVEREUX**

20, 23, 26 February and 1 March 2027

«THE PASSION THAT SHOOK A KINGDOM»

- **Donizetti's** «Queens Trilogy» continues in the ABAO seasons with **Roberto Devereux**. Donizetti combines politics, jealousy and passion in the Tudor Court with really beautiful music in one of the greatest and most acclaimed jewels of bel canto.
- **Yolanda Auyanet** returns after her magnificent *Maria Stuarda* last season to play the sorrowful Queen Elizabeth I this time. With her, the Cadiz-born tenor **Ismael Jordi** as Roberto Devereux, **Pablo Ruiz** in the role of the Duke of Nottingham and **Silvia Tro Santafé** as Sara.
- The Mexican conductor **Iván López Reynoso** conducts the **Euskadiko Orkestra** in an opera with vibrant and moving music, full of arias that are a true display of virtuosity.
- **International premiere of an ABAO Bilbao Opera** and Opera de Oviedo Foundation co-production by **Emilio Lopez**. The director presents a blend of traditional and modern aesthetics, with a theatrical and palatial setting as well as striking costumes and lighting effects.

Giacomo Puccini

**MANON LESCAUT**

22, 25, 28 and 31 May, 2027

«EROTICISM, DELIRIUM AND ATONEMENT»

- Closing the season is **Manon Lescaut**, by **Giacomo Puccini**, an **essential title for any aficionado**, sponsored by **BBVA Foundation**.
- Full of contrasts, between luxury and poverty, desire and guilt, freedom and loss, *Manon Lescaut* is a **vibrant and captivating opera**, where each scene beats with Puccini's unmistakable force.
- The cast is led by the superb soprano **Joyce El-Koury** and the fantastic American tenor **Michael Fabiano**. The leading quartet is completed with the baritone **Manel Esteve**, who plays Lescaut, and **Bruno de Simone**, as Geronte.
- The music will be handled by **Carlo Montanaro**, conducting the **Bilbao Orkestra Sinfonikoa** to make the most of an **intense and emotional score**, with highly effective scenes such as the famous «*Sola, perduta, abbandonata*»
- **Premiere of an ABAO Bilbao Opera** and Opera de Oviedo Foundation co-production, devised by **Emiliano Suárez**, which sets the opera in an imagery inspired by the **1920s American Mafia aesthetic**, in the height of the era of organized crime, prohibition and speakeasies. **Verism in a noir style, where** Puccini's emotional intensity is filtered through the code of **film noir**, dark comic and films such as *The Penguin, Casino, Cabaret, The Great Gatsby, Batman* or *Babylon*.

## ASMIK GRIGORIAN, THE DIVA WHO TRANSFORMS EACH NOTE INTO PURE EMOTION, MAKES HER DEBUT IN ABAO WITH THE RECITAL «EIGHT VEILS»

- **Asmik Grigorian** makes her debut in ABAO Bilbao Opera on **10 April 2027** with a recital at the Bilbao Philharmonic Society, where the artist will display her most intimate and expressive side, with a programme that comprises arias and scenes of the main opera characters she plays. She will be accompanied by two piano players: **Petras** and **Lukas Geniušas**, with whom she often collaborates in internationally renowned opera houses.
- Inspired by the «Dance of the Seven Veils» by Richard Strauss, «**Eight Veils**» proposes a journey through **eight opera heroines**. Each aria acts as a moment of stage revelation. From **Rusalka's** lyrical yearning to **Salome's deep expressiveness**, including figures such as **Butterfly, Elisabeth, Manon, Turandot, Lady Macbeth** or **Desdemona**. Eight scenes, eight voices, eight ways of facing one's destiny through music.
- Considered by the critics as «*one of the fiercest dramatic talents in the field*» (The New York Times) the Lithuanian soprano has become an **artist of reference**. In the coming months she will perform in Frankfurt, Baden-Baden, Metropolitan, Budapest, Vienna, Salzburg and Bayreuth, amongst others.
- In 2025 she received the prize to the **Best Female Singer** at the **Opera Awards** for her extraordinary season, the performance of the three heroines in *Il tritico* at the Paris Opera and an acclaimed *Salome* with the London Symphony Orchestra.
- This recital **has a single performance, outside the season ticket, and is sponsored by BBVA Foundation**.

## 22ND ABAO TXIKI SEASON

- The twenty-second edition of **ABAO Txiki** at the **Arriaga Theatre** presents **four shows, with two new productions and 15 performances**, including three school performances aimed at education centres and nursery and primary school students.
- **November 2026. *Dreaming the Carnival of the Animals***. A dramatized concert that combines Debussy's *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun* and Saint-Saëns's famous *Carnival of the Animals*. Enrique Lanz and the company Etcétera present puppets that invite to daydream while a baby faun sleeps at the foot of the piano.
- **January 2027. *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves***. An adaptation of the traditional tale from «**One Thousand and One Nights**» with music by Iñigo Casali and an impressive new musical production by the Chamber Opera of Navarre.
- **March 2027. *The Arabian Princess***. An opera with music by Bilbao-born composer **Juan Crisóstomo de Arriaga**. It tells the story of Jamil, a young fisherman with a beautiful voice, and Amirah, a whimsical princess. The Chamber Opera of Navarre offers an impressive show full of colour, mystery and magic in a fabulous production.
- **May 2027. *The Brave Little Tailor***. A musical tale by the company Etcétera and Enrique Lanz, inspired by the **traditional tale by the Grimm Brothers**. From a tailor's workshop in a theatre, puppets, shadows, projections, actors, actresses and chamber orchestra deliver the show with music by Tibor Harsányi.

- **ABAO Bilbao Opera** and **Bizkaibus** collaborate for another season to promote the use of public transport and the love for opera among the young people from Bizkaia, in a campaign under the slogan: «**Bizkaibus takes you to the opera**». The initiative seeks to foster values related to sustainable mobility and respect for the environment.

## **ACCESSIBLE ABAO: A NETWORK OF CULTURAL AND SOCIAL INITIATIVES TO BRING OPERA TO THE ENTIRE SOCIETY**

- **ABAO Bilbao Opera** will develop, throughout the season, the **ACCESSIBLE ABAO** programme, a cultural and social initiative that brings together a wide range of free activities open to the public, aimed at bringing opera to citizens, promoting cultural participation and generating shared spaces of knowledge, reflection and artistic enjoyment.
- One of the highlights of this programme is **The ABC of Opera** cycle, held at the University of Deusto, which offers conferences delivered by renowned professionals of the musical and cultural fields, such as the journalists **Rafael Bernardo** and **Mariela Rubio**, the music critic and editor **Luis Gago**, the musicologist **Irene de Juan**, Professor **Pablo L. Rodriguez** and the renowned journalist and writer **Rubén Amón**.
- ABAO's educational commitment also extends to schools through its **didactic programme**, which reaches almost a hundred education centres every year. Aimed at nursery, primary and secondary school students, the programme combines pedagogical materials, ABAO Txiki school performances and attendance at performances of the general season in the case of older students.
- This educational task also extends to adults through collaborations with the **Aulas de la Experiencia (classes for seniors), cultural centres, universities and city councils of Bizkaia**, as well as other cities such as Gasteiz, Pamplona, Burgos and Santander.
- As for outreach activities, ABAO promotes the live podcast **Concierto Desorden**, in collaboration with the University of the Basque Country (UPV/EHU), led by **Gonzalo Lahoz**. Each session brings together prominent figures in the world of opera, who share their career and experience at open meetings with the public.
- Likewise, the association maintains its collaboration with **EITB** for the recording and dissemination of season operas and concerts. An audiovisual catalogue has been created since 2022 comprising **fourteen productions**, including opera titles, concerts, ABAO Txiki proposals in Basque Language and the Tutto Verdi Prize Award Gala.
- The **Ópera y +** programme reinforces ABAO's social dimension through a cultural, solidarity and inclusive initiative aimed at improving the emotional wellbeing of patients and healthcare workers of **Cruces University Hospital**. The project is present in twelve medical areas and features the collaboration of **“la Caixa” Foundation, Zabalgardi, Gondra Barandiarán Foundation and Orona Foundation**.
- Likewise, ABAO keeps working towards attracting new audiences through **Gazteam ABAO**, a proposal aimed at young people that facilitates access to opera through flexible formulas and reduced rates to attend any title or performance in the season.



## FIRST EDITION OF THE ABAO BASQUE MUSIC FESTIVAL

**ABAO Bilbao Opera** presents the first edition of the **ABAO Basque Music Festival** this June, a series of recitals and chamber music concerts featuring internationally renowned performers: **Kyōhei Sorita** (piano), **Boris Borgolotto** (violin), **Steven Lin Solana** (piano), and the **Quatuor Arod** string quartet will perform in Vitoria-Gasteiz (June 3), San Sebastián (June 4), and Bilbao (June 5 and 9).

The **ABAO Basque Music Festival** aspires to become a leading event in classical music, showcasing international soloists and ensembles performing works by both illustrious composers and new pieces by emerging artists, introducing hundreds of music lovers to new musical worlds. This exciting and unique event, of the highest artistic quality and prestige, offers a fresh and thrilling perspective on live music.

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