

The Teatro Real plays host to the 9th BBVA Foundation Frontiers of Knowledge Awards Concert

- The Orquesta Sinfónica de Euskadi will perform works by Richard Wagner, Sofia Gubaidulina and Richard Strauss, in what will be Robert Treviño's first appearance as principal conductor
- The concert in honor of Frontiers Awards laureates precedes the formal presentation ceremony to be held tomorrow in the BBVA Foundation's Madrid headquarters
- Tonight's audience will hear the Spanish premiere of *The Light of the End* by Sofia Gubaidulina, winner of the BBVA Foundation Frontiers of Knowledge Award in Contemporary Music

Madrid, June 14, 2017.- This evening, at 19:30, Madrid's Teatro Real will play host to the 9th BBVA Foundation Frontiers of Knowledge Awards Concert, a prelude to the formal ceremony that will take place tomorrow at 19:00 in the Marqués de Salamanca Palace, Madrid headquarters of the BBVA Foundation.

The concert is a tribute to the laureates in this 9th edition of the awards: David Cox and Bradley Efron in Basic Sciences; Emmanuelle Charpentier, Jennifer Doudna and Francisco J. Martínez Mojica in Biomedicine; Syukuro Manabe and James E. Hansen in Climate Change; Gene E. Likens and Marten Scheffer in Ecology and Conservation Biology; Geoffrey Hinton in Information and Communication Technologies; Daron Acemoglu in Economics, Finance and Management; Pedro L. Alonso and Peter J. Myler in Development Cooperation; and Sofia Gubaidulina in Contemporary Music. The music will be performed by the Orquesta Sinfónica de Euskadi in the debut appearance as conductor of their new Music Director, Robert Treviño.

The program will open with the Prelude to the first act of *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, an opera in which Richard Wagner addresses a confrontation as old as time, familiar to every practitioner of science and the arts, between conservatives and modernists, between the old art and the new. Next will come the premiere performance in Spain of *The Light of the End*, in which Sofia Gubaidulina recreates the conflict between instruments' natural harmonics and the tempered sounds that have dominated European art music since the days

of Bach, to symbolize the bridges art can build between the material and the spiritual worlds. Finally, the concert will conclude with *Ein Heldenleben*, a tone poem by that great weaver of tales through opera and symphonic monodrama, the German composer Richard Strauss.

Sofia Gubaidulina: the quest for total understanding

"Since childhood, my goal has been to add to the sum of knowledge, to become universal, to understand the world in its entirety." The life and work of Sofia Gubaidulina are ruled by this drive to understand and reunite the universe, which she sees as divided between heaven and earth. Although instead of "reunite", she might prefer "bind fast," as in the Latin verb *religare* that grew into the word religion. Gubaidulina conceives music (and art in general) as a Jacob's ladder with one end resting on the earth and the other in heaven. Her aesthetic is neutral: compositional procedures are only important to her insofar as they are effective as a mystical vehicle. She cites this as the reason she has held off from writing opera: "Opera would keep me tied to the ground, because it involves too many things. The symphony, however, which doesn't have this clutter, allows me to ascend to heaven."

Sofia Asgatovna Gubaidulina was born on October 24, 1931 in Chistopol, in what is now Tatarstan, one of the Central Asian republics of the Russian Federation. Her father was a Tatar topographer and atheist; her paternal grandfather, a Muslim cleric dressed habitually in tunic and turban; her mother, a Russian schoolteacher of Polish and Jewish extraction. Sofia was fascinated by this mix of traditions.

At the age of 23, she graduated in piano and composition from Kazan Conservatory. Near this time, she was encouraged by the great Shostakovich to "continue on your own incorrect path," alluding to the anti-Soviet nature of her music: avant-garde leanings, microtonal sonorities and, above all, spirituality when not out-and-out religiosity. For Gubaidulina, and her colleagues in the triumvirate of the Moscow avant-garde, Edison Denisov and Alfred Schnittke, continuing on the incorrect path meant giving up on a career. She took refuge in composing for herself, writing film scores and practicing improvisation with folk instruments – for which she still feels devotion – as part of the *Astreja* Ensemble that she founded in 1975. In 1979, she was banned from releasing her music. Yet just one year later, her life and career were set on an entirely different course. She dedicated her *Offertorium* violin concerto (1980) to Gidon Kremer, who, enthused by the piece, performed it to a clamorous reception all around the world.

Commissions quickly poured in from the likes of the New York Philharmonic, the Chicago and Boston symphony orchestras and the Kronos Quartet, and, in Europe, from Berlin, Helsinki, Rotterdam, Stuttgart, Hamburg and London, as well as soloists like Anne-Sophie Mutter, for whom she wrote the concerto *In tempus praesens...* Her most representative works include a *Johannes-Passion* and *Johannes-Ostern*, a diptych on Christ's death and resurrection according to St. John, along with *De Profundis*, *In Croce* and *Silenzio* for the Russian accordion

or bayan. Other major pieces are *Introitus* or tonight's *The Light of the End*, which receives its Spanish premiere in this concert in honor of laureates in the 9th edition of the BBVA Foundation Frontiers of Knowledge Awards.

The jury deciding the award referred in its citation to "the exceptional range and quality of Gubaidulina's music, imbued with a spiritual quality that is always personal and searching," adding that "the transformative dimension of her work has ensured its broad dissemination beyond conventional audiences for contemporary music."

An old acquaintance, a reunion and a new conductor

The Orquesta Sinfónica de Euskadi, with which the BBVA Foundation maintains a recurrent collaboration, first performed Sofia Gubaidulina's music in 1996. The relationship became close, to the extent that in 2010 Gubaidulina visited the Basque Country to personally oversee the recording of *Kadenza* with the orchestra's musicians, a disc of her works *Kadenza*, *Seven Words*, *Et exspecto* and *In Croce*, conducted by José Ramón Encinar and featuring accordionist Iñaki Alberdi and cellist Asier Polo. Tomorrow's concert in honor of laureates, with the Spanish premiere of *The Light of the End*, will accordingly mark a reunion between the composer and the Basque ensemble on the occasion of her reception of the BBVA Foundation Frontiers of Knowledge Award in Contemporary Music.

The Frontiers of Knowledge Concert will also see the debut of Robert Treviño at the helm of the Orquesta Sinfónica de Euskadi, where he will remain as Music Director until 2020. The U.S. conductor's international career had its turning point in 2013, when he led an acclaimed new production of Verdi's *Don Carlo* at the Bolshoi Theater in Moscow. Invitations quickly followed throughout Europe and Asia, making him one of the most in-demand American conductors of the younger generation. He has since appeared as guest conductor with the Munich Philharmonic Orchestra, London Philharmonic, the Bamberg Symphony Orchestra, Deutsches Sinfonie-Orchester Berlin and Orchestre Nationale de France, among others, and, in the United States, with the symphony orchestras of Detroit, San Francisco, Cleveland and Cincinnati.

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