

VIII edición

Premios Fundación BBVA Fronteras del Conocimiento

BBVA Foundation Frontiers of Knowledge Awards

8th edition

Frontiers of Knowledge Award in Contemporary Music

## The BBVA Foundation honors Georges Aperghis for his reinvention of music theater using sounds, gestures, space and technology, and involving performers in the compositional process

- The Greek composer, resident in France, creates, directs and composes stage works that dissolve the boundaries between theater and music, with actors and instrumentalists playing interchangeable roles
- Aperghis, in the jury's view, has successfully reached out to new audiences, while making contemporary music part and parcel of the theatrical experience. In 1976, he set up a theater workshop on the outskirts of Paris, encouraging local residents to take part in collective improvisation
- In his quest for a universal language, he replaces words with phonemes and onomatopoeic expressions, at times creating imaginary languages on the borders of sound poetry

**Madrid, February 9, 2016.-** The BBVA Foundation Frontiers of Knowledge Award in the Contemporary Music category goes in this eighth edition to Georges Aperghis for reinventing musical theater and taking it in entirely new directions. "He has opened up a unique path in the territory of musical theater employing new scenic devices whereby everything becomes music, starting from the performer's gestures and including sounds made by scenic elements or objects used as percussion instruments," in the words of the jury's citation.

Aperghis' musical theater, the jury remarks, has drawn in new audiences and made contemporary music "part and parcel of the broader theatrical experience." To do so, he has played with multiple elements – voice, sound, gesture, language, video, space and lighting – translated into music. The jury also makes a parallel between the spirit of these awards and the power of the new laureate's works to dissolve the frontiers between theater and music. As he himself says: "For me there are no boundaries between music and theater, but a continuum in which the dramatic action is a prolongation of the music and the music contains the action."

Aperghis was self-taught. Born into an artistic family in Athens, Greece, in 1945, he came to music through the radio, and the piano lessons he took at school and with a friend of his parents, without setting foot inside a musical conservatory. At the age of 17, he moved to Paris to continue his music studies. "I was naturally curious and was soon listening to music from all over the world. I went to a concert almost every day, at Unesco or the Musée de l'Homme, which would put on performances of Asian music. I also loved rock music. I saw the Beatles at the Olympia, the Rolling Stones in the Palais des Sports, Pink Floyd in the Champs Elysées... I visited composers with my work tucked under my arm. And that's how I met Iannis Xenakis."

It was during these first years in Paris that he discovered the world of the stage. He also encountered serialism at the Domaine Musical concerts, the *musique concrète* of Pierre Schaeffer and Pierre Henry, and the work of Iannis Xenakis, which inspired his early compositions.

### **A laboratory to experiment with music theater**

By 1970, he was seeking a freer kind of language and began his explorations of vocal sounds. His growing interest in musical theater led to the 1971 work *La tragique histoire du nécromancien Hiéronimo et de son miroir*. Wedding text, music and stagecraft, it marked out an innovative course that he would later summarize as follows: "If there is one idea I'm attached to it is this: never go back to the past and to what has been done during the years since the Second World War."

In 1976, he and his wife, the actress Edith Scob, founded the Atelier Théâtre et Musique (ATEM), based in the outlying Parisian district of Bagnoleuil until 1991 and then in the Théâtre Nanterre-Amandiers. The experience would radically transform his approach as a composer. In his shows with ATEM, musicians became actors and vocal, instrumental, gestural and scenic ingredients were mixed together in equal measure. For their dramatic content, they drew on everyday events transposed to a poetic setting, usually with an absurd or satirical edge. Aperghis's two decades with ATEM produced around twenty compositions including *Jojo* (1990), *Sextuor* (1993) and *Commentaires* (1996).

Despite being author, director and composer of his shows, Aperghis makes sure that every performer, instrumentalist, actor, singer or dancer, is part of the creative process. "He is not a conventional musician who presents the performers with a closed score," explains a member of the jury. "Instead he works alongside them in a process of inquiry that gives rise to a kind of 'hybridization', with actors becoming musicians and vice versa."

Aperghis pursues a universal language where text is unimportant and words make way for onomatopoeia, phonemes and noise. This fragmentation is echoed in surreal stage productions in which the author at times creates imaginary languages on the borders of sound poetry.

The key, he believes, is to work with the audience's memory. "The public has to spot where the color is, where the space is, where certain accents lie; if I achieve that, I can convey a message that differs from the context, and feel that the public too is playing, interacting with the music."

His instrumental music resembles his voice recitations, in that rather than pursuing meaning it finds its purpose in confrontation with the public, teasing them with paradoxes and playful elements that induce a reaction or reflection.

For the jury, Aperghis's work represents a break with the more conventional strands of contemporary music: "There is no metaphysics or intellectual pretension. He creates direct, concrete music based on gesture, corporeal movement and the fruits of the latest research on sound, language and their interaction."

He began to work with new technologies in the 1990s, using the video, electronic and real-time sound processing resources of the Institut de Recherche et Coordination Acoustique/Musique (IRCAM): "I can do things with electronics that the voice cannot do. I can extend a spoken sound over a long time, I can have a long chain of words from the voice, I can manipulate registers, I can superimpose voices, etc., but also arrange syllables in a sort of a haphazard treatment. There is a musical poetic peculiar to electronics. It is the same kind of emotion we feel when seeing a robot crying or dying."

Much of his catalogue of over one hundred works is devoted to music theater, the genre he revolutionized and also where he feels most at home. "I take time to rehearse the works of music theater. I can get lost and find again myself with the performers. I take the risk of arriving with fragments of texts and music, and finishing the work in the theater." His repertoire also takes in opera, chamber music, choral music and works for solo instrument and orchestra.

### **About the BBVA Foundation Frontiers of Knowledge Awards**

The BBVA Foundation promotes, funds and disseminates world-class scientific research and artistic creation, in the conviction that science, culture and knowledge hold the key to better opportunities for all world citizens. The Foundation designs and implements its programs in partnership with some of the leading scientific and cultural organizations in Spain and abroad, striving to identify and prioritize those projects with the power to significantly advance the frontiers of the known world.

The BBVA Foundation established its Frontiers of Knowledge Awards in 2008 to recognize the authors of outstanding contributions and radical advances in a broad range of scientific, technological and artistic areas congruent with the knowledge map of the late 20th and the 21st centuries, and others that address central challenges, such as climate change and development cooperation.

Their **eight categories** include classical areas like *Basic Sciences*, and other, more recent areas characteristic of our time, ranging from *Biomedicine*, *Information*

*and Communication Technologies, Ecology and Conservation Biology, Climate Change and Economics, Finance and Management to Development Cooperation and the innovative realm of artistic creation that is Contemporary Music.*

The **juries** in each category are made up of leading international experts in their respective fields, who arrive at their decisions in a wholly independent manner, applying internationally recognized metrics of excellence. The BBVA Foundation is aided in the organization of the awards by the **Spanish National Research Council (CSIC)**. As well as designating each jury chair, the CSIC is responsible for appointing the technical evaluation committees that undertake an initial assessment of candidates and draw up a reasoned shortlist for the consideration of the juries.

CSIC technical committee members in the Contemporary Music category were **José Antonio Berenguer Sánchez**, Coordinator of the CSIC Humanities and Social Sciences Area and Research Scientist at the Institute of Languages and Cultures of the Mediterranean and the Middle East (ILC-CSIC); **Antonio Ezquerro Esteban**, Research Scientist at the Mila I Fontanals Institution (IMF-CSIC); **Josep Martí Pérez**, Research Scientist at the Mila I Fontanals Institution (IMF-CSIC); and **Emilio Ros Fábregas**, Research Scientist at the Mila I Fontanals Institution (IMF-CSIC).

### Contemporary Music jury

The jury in this category was chaired by **Philippe Albèra**, Director of Éditions Contrechamps (France), with **Ranko Markovic**, Professor and Head of the BA in Music Program at Zurich University of the Arts (Switzerland) acting as secretary. Remaining members were **Winrich Hopp**, Artistic Director of Musikfest Berlin (Berliner Festspiele) and of the Musica Viva concert series (Germany); **Martin Kaltenecker**, Associate Professor of Musicology at Université Paris Diderot (France); **Tilman Kutteneuler**, General Manager with the Radio Symphony Orchestra Berlin (Germany); **Paolo Pinamonti**, Director of the Teatro di San Carlo (Italy); **Gianni Possio**, Professor at Milan Conservatory (Italy); **Massimo Acanfora Torrefranca**, a professor in The Interdisciplinary Center (IDC) Herzliya (Israel); and **Dimitri Vassilakis**, pianist with Ensemble Intercontemporain (France).

### Previous laureates

A list of laureates in previous editions is available on the following link:

<http://www.fbbva.es/TLFU/tlfu/ing/microsites/premios/fronteras/index.jsp>

## UPCOMING AWARD ANNOUNCEMENTS

CATEGORY	DATE
<b>Economics, Finance and Management</b>	Tuesday, February 16, 2016
<b>Development Cooperation</b>	Tuesday, February 23, 2016

### LAUREATE'S FIRST DECLARATIONS AND IMAGES

A video recording of the new laureate's first interview on receiving news of the award is available from the Atlas FTP with the following name and coordinates:

Server: **213.0.38.61**

Username: **AgenciaAtlas5**

Password: **premios**

The name of the video is:

"PREMIOS FRONTERAS DEL CONOCIMIENTO CATEGORÍA MÚSICA  
CONTEMPORÁNEA GEORGES APERGHIS"

In the event of connection difficulties, please contact Alejandro Martín at  
ATLAS:

**Mobile:** +34 639 16 58 61

**E-Mail:** [amartin@atlas-news.com](mailto:amartin@atlas-news.com)

Fundación **BBVA**

---

For more information, contact the BBVA Foundation Department of Communication and Institutional Relations (+34 91 374 5210, 91 537 3769, 91 374 8173 / [comunicacion@bbva.es](mailto:comunicacion@bbva.es)) or visit [www.bbva.es](http://www.bbva.es)