

MUSIC
2001 (II)

In June, coinciding with the fifteenth celebration of the Festival de Peralada, Spain premiered the then recent opera by Aribert Reimann, *Bernarda Alba Haus*. Based on the play by Lorca, it had been presented with unexpected success in Munich. The musical director was Windfried Müller, and scenery by Harry Kupfer. Still with the same music festival, in August there was the performance of the musical score by the acclaimed Sofia Gubaidulina, *Cántico del sol*, based on the texts of St. Francis of Assis, with Rostropovich conducting the Ohrenburg Choir and the Lithuanian Philharmonic Orchestra Percussion Group. I would also like to mention two other concerts. The first opera fragments with the veteran Montserrat Caballé heading the cast in commemoration of the 15 years of the festival (July 14). The other (August 15) celebrated the ten years of collaboration with the Orquesta de Cadaqués, where the entire assembly was conducted by the regular guest conductor, Sir Neville Marriner, with works by Montsalvatge, Rachmaninov, and Dvorák on the music stands. As regards symphony-choir, there was the almost obligatory *Requiem* by Verdi under the baton of Ernest Martínez Izquierdo leading the Orquesta de la Ópera de Sofía and the Orfeón Donostiarra choir (July 27). Opera was another item with performances of two works from the *Triptych* by Puccini: *Il tabarro* and *Gianni Schicchi*, with the Menorcan baritone Joan Pons (August 14 and 16). Meanwhile William Christie and his fabulous ensemble, Les Arts Florissants, interpreted Haendel's oratory, *L'Allegra, il penseroso ed il moderato* (July 22). Individual singing performances were another item with the recital by Eva Marton (August 6), and the recital by Ainhoa Arteta and her husband, the baritone Dwayne Croft (August 3).

From September 22 to 30, the protagonist at the Mozart Festival at the Auditori in Barcelona was the Dutch Ton Koopman, one of the major references when it comes to performances using original instruments. The beginning of October saw the beginning of the opera season in Barcelona, this time at the Liceu theater, with a version of *Bohème* with Maria Bayo in the leading role, while a little later on the same stage, the mezzo soprano Marjana Lipovsek performed a recital based around three of the most theater-oriented composers of all time: Monteverdi, Wagner, and Mussorgsky. Around the same time, in the Palau de la Música in Valencia, there was a homage to the maestro Joaquín Rodrigo, in celebration of one hundred years since his birth. This was the beginning of a music season that again places the city of Valencia on the river Turia as one of the main Spanish centres for music. The program offered an impressive cycle of pieces by Mozart and other composers such as Maazel, Previn, Salonen, and Varady. Then, almost at the end of October, the Liceu theater once again offered what is one of the most distinguished creations from the heritage of Spanish music, *La Fattucchiera*, by Vicenç Cuyàs i Borès conducted by Josep Pons.

The Teatro alla Scala choir and orchestra arrived at the Liceu (Barcelona) in November with Verdi's *Macbeth* in a concert version conducted by Riccardo Muti, who during these dates celebrated his 15 years at the head of

this choir from Lombardy. Also, around these dates, Verdi's *Luisa Miller* came to the Palau de la Música in Valencia, conducted from the orchestra pit by Lorin Maazel and the Bavarian Radio Orchestra and Choir. The individual singers were the soprano Barbara Frittoli, the tenor Vincenzo La Scala, Laszlo Polgar, and Paolo Gavanelli. This was followed by *La forza del destino*, although only a fragment of it, with Inés Salazar and Paata Burchuladze under the baton of the Italian maestro Pier Giorgio Morandi conducting the Coro y la Sinfónica de Valencia. Shortly afterwards, at the Liceu in Barcelona, the German Waltraud Meier offered a recital, as did Jessye Norman who was the protagonist of a soirée on the same stage with Franz Schubert on the music stands and sponsored by Ibercámara. In December the French pianist Jean-Yves Thibauder became one of the musical protagonists of the month with his recital in the Palau de la Música in Valencia which he shortly afterwards presented in Barcelona with his interpretation of Grieg's *Concerto*.

2002 (I)

One of the main lyrical events of 2002 was in January in Barcelona, part of the Palau 100 cycle, with the American soprano Renée Fleming accompanied by the aforementioned pianist, Jean-Yves Thibauder, and with a program that offered a selection of *lieder* by Liszt, Rachmaninov, Debussy, Strauss and the little known Joseph Max (a post-romantic artist - Fleming is one of his major advocates today). Zoltan Kocsis, considered one of the most brilliant Hungarian pianists of his generation, along with Dezsó Ranki and András Schiff, presented himself in this guise and that of orchestra director in an extensive tour with the Budapest Mozart Orchestra (traveling to Barcelona, Saragossa, Oviedo, Valencia, and Alicante) with a repertoire dedicated entirely to this Salzburg composer. In the parallel opera program, the Liceu theater, at the end of the month, performed a concert with works by Wagner, Beethoven, and Pfitzner, conducted by Bertrand de Billy.

Three contra tenors was the billing for the concert announced at the Palau de la Música in Valencia at the beginning of February, presenting James Bowman, Charles Brett, and Michael Chance, with works by Dufay, Schütz, Purcell, and Bach, and the collaboration of Álvaro Mariás heading the group Zarabanda. Around the same dates, Mstislav Rostropóvich conducted the Orquesta de Valencia and the Generalitat Choir with a performance of Verdi's *Réquiem* in the three capital cities of the Autonomous Community of Valencia. Among the noteworthy soloists were Ana María Sánchez and Josep Bros. Valencia was also the scene for performances by the London Philharmonic Orchestra and the Finnish maestro Esa-Pekka Salonen, one of the leading figures in the field of conducting, who offered a top rate concert: *El mandarín maravilloso* by Bartó; *Parada* by the Swede Lindberg; and *Symphony No. 4* by Sibelius. Around these dates, The London Symphony Orchestra performed in the cities of Barcelona, Valencia, and Madrid with André Previn conducting and Kyung-Wa Chung from Korea as violin soloist.