

«Opera with Art»: a season with acclaimed titles from the operatic repertoire and new productions.

ABAO BILBAO OPERA PRESENTS ITS 74TH SEASON FEATURING TITLES WITH A HISTORICAL FICTION TONE

- Five operas bridge the gap between the reality of historic events and the narrative emotion of literary recreation.
- Nadine Sierra and Xabier Anduaga star in the ABAO Concert in December, with orchestra.
- New productions, leading voices and renowned maestros in a season that reflects the universal language of the human condition.
- ABAO Txiki brings four titles to the Arriaga Theatre, with appealing tales, stories and characters for children.
- The BBVA Foundation collaborates with ABAO Bilbao Opera's cultural activity as the season's main sponsor.

Bilbao, 3 June 2025. **ABAO Bilbao Opera's 74th Season 2025-2026** starts on Saturday, **October 25th**, with *La forza del destino* by Giuseppe Verdi. A season that **provides an emotional connection with history**, with a **journey through time** that poses the **creative challenge** of recreating the **authenticity of real events** with the emotion of the **fictional setting** and the alternative characters. On stage, **titles inspired** by the Post-War of the Spanish Succession, the 17th Century Parisian Baroque, the Germany of the Romantic Era, the dynastic struggles of the Stuart Houses and England and the French Revolution.

The new season maintains all the cultural and educational activities and social programmes and offers an artistic proposal that includes **five operas and one concert** at **Euskalduna Bilbao** as well as **four titles in the ABAO Txiki Season** at the **Arriaga Theatre**.

Under the slogan: **«Opera with Art»**, the **artistic avant-garde** takes the stage with great performers, renowned conductors, **national and international premieres**, as well as a permanent commitment to **top quality** in order to seduce association members and aficionados.

DETAILS OF THE NEW SEASON

- ABAO Bilbao Opera and the **BBVA Foundation, the season's main sponsor**, contribute to promoting operatic excellence and culture and bringing top-quality shows to the public. The BBVA Foundation sponsors *La forza del destino*, *Werther* and the ABAO Concert on an exclusive basis.
- The season features five titles from the operatic repertoire: *La forza del destino*, *Adriana Lecouvreur*, *Werther*, *Maria Stuarda* and *Andrea Chénier*.
- Four ABAO Bilbao Opera productions, with two new **co-productions, the national premiere of *Adriana Lecouvreur* and the international premiere of *Maria Stuarda***.
- A total of **9 titles, one concert and 36 performances will be offered**, 21 within the general season at Euskalduna Bilbao, as well as five dress rehearsals, and 15 for children and young people within the ABAO Txiki season at the Arriaga Theatre, reaching an expected audience of **64,940 people**.

- **Maestros** who visit the new season: **Lorenzo Passerini, Marco Armiliato, Carlo Montanaro, Iván López-Reynoso, Guillermo García Calvo and Marc Leroy-Calatayud**, conducting the **Bilbao Orkestra Sinfonikoa**, the **Euskadiko Orkestra** and the **Navarra Symphony Orchestra**, which, together with the **Opera Choir of Bilbao**, consolidate the artistic reputation of ABAO's regular collaborators.
- Stage directors who make their debut in ABAO Bilbao Opera: **Emilio López** and **Rosetta Cucchi**, joining the stage design proposals by **Ignacio García, Mario Pontiggia** and **Alfonso Romero Mora**.
- On stage, **great voices** that triumph in the major opera houses in the world, such as **Carmen Solís, Angelo Villari, Maria Agresta, Jorge de León, Stephen Costello, Annalisa Stroppa, Yolanda Auyanet, Maria Barakova, Michel Fabiano** and **Saioa Hernández**.
- After their international success, **Nadine Sierra and Xabier Anduaga** will star in an **exclusive ABAO Concert** in December, with orchestra and an attractive programme.
- **The ABAO Txiki season**, which **will have completed two decades on stage in 2025**, offers **4 shows** for different ages. Three titles have school sessions that restate **ABAO's commitment to learning, musical education as well as children and family audiences**.
- Just like every season, ABAO Bilbao Opera will also carry out an **intense complementary cultural activity** with conference cycles, didactic lectures, guided visits and other social and cultural activities in collaboration with various institutions and companies in the Basque Country as well as neighbouring Autonomous Communities.
- **The Gazteam youth programme** keeps growing with activities and economic incentives for **people under 25 and under 30**.
- The «**Opera y +»** social and solidarity programme at **Cruces University Hospital** undertakes its **eleventh edition** and is now fully established with activities both inside as well as outside the Hospital in collaboration with **“La Caixa” Foundation, Zabalgarbi** and the **Gondra Barandiaran Foundation**.

74TH OPERA SEASON

The 74th ABAO Bilbao Opera Season **connects historical reality and literary recreation** through five composers: **Verdi, Cilea, Massenet, Donizetti and Giordano**, who bring to **Euskalduna Bilbao**'s stage acclaimed titles of the **classical repertoire** such as ***La forza del destino, Adriana Lecouvreur, Werther, Maria Stuarda*** and ***Andrea Chénier***.

A new season with four ABAO Bilbao Opera productions, **two of which are being premiered**, the debut of **two stage directors, two musical directors and twelve singers**, who join the artistic catalogue of the Association. The **Opera Choir of Bilbao**, conducted by Boris Dujin, is in charge of the choral part of the season and, together with the **Bilbao Orkestra Sinfonikoa**, the **Euskadiko Orkestra** and the **Navarra Symphony Orchestra**, of growing national and international renown, participate in the programme as regular collaborators of ABAO Bilbao Opera.

Worthy of note is the presence on stage of great female performers: **Carmen Solís, María Agresta, Silvia Tro Santafé, Annalisa Stroppa, Yolanda Auyanet, Maria Barakova** and **Saioa Hernández**. With them, remarkable male voices such as **Angelo Villari, Juan Jesús Rodríguez, Jorge de León, Carlos Álvarez, Stephen Costello** and **Michael Fabiano**.

Giuseppe Verdi

LA FORZA DEL DESTINO

25, 28, 21 October and 3 November 2025

- Carmen Solís, Angelo Villari and Juan Jesús Rodríguez lead the cast.
- On stage, an ABAO Bilbao Opera production, dynamic, theatrical and full of expressive force, devised by Ignacio García.
- Maestro Lorenzo Passerini returns to conduct the Euskadiko Orkestra.
- Sponsored by the BBVA Foundation.

ABAO Bilbao Opera starts the season in October with ***La forza del destino*** by Giuseppe Verdi, a romantic drama with a Spanish flair, full of scenes with moving lyricism and elegance, alternating with comic and satirical passages, where Verdi's creative passion turns a complex story into a masterpiece. **The BBVA Foundation sponsors this title.**

This opera in four acts is one of the most extraordinary works of Verdi's repertoire and tells about the star-crossed love of Leonora, the Marquis of Calatrava's daughter, and Don Alvaro, a descendant of the Incan royal family. The cast is led by the soprano **Carmen Solís**, accompanied by **Angelo Villari** and **Ketevan Kemmozilde**, who make their debut at ABAO, together with the Verdian baritone of reference, **Juan Jesús Rodríguez**.

As for the music, Maestro **Lorenzo Passerini** returns to conduct the **Euskadiko Orkestra** in this extensive and beautiful score with a famous overture.

On stage, an **ABAO Bilbao Opera production** devised by **Ignacio García**, who takes the action to the Spanish Civil War and creates a dynamic and theatrical stage design full of expressive force. The wardrobe, created by Ignacio García and Cesidio Niño using recycled materials, pursues a sustainability and innovation strategy.

Francesco Cilea

ADRIANA LECOUVREUR

22, 25, 28 November and 1 December 2025

- Maria Agresta, Jorge de León, Silvia Tro Santafé and Carlos Álvarez as the leading quartet.
- The musical direction is by the acclaimed Maestro Marco Armiliato conducting the Bilbao Orkestra Sinfonikoa.
- Premiere of the ABAO Bilbao Opera co-production with Teatro Lirico di Cagliari, with Mario Pontiggia as stage director.

The most famous opera by Cilea, ***Adriana Lecouvreur***, arrives in November with the **premiere** of a **new ABAO Bilbao Opera co-production**, displaying the magnificence that characterises the stage director, **Mario Pontiggia**, who presents a striking stage design, classical and traditional, and a luxurious wardrobe.

With veristic overtones, the story was inspired by the real life of the legendary actress Adrienne Lecouvreur, and confronts the protagonist's passion with the Princess of Bouillon's jealousy, as they are both in love with the young Maurizio. An opera for voices to shine, where **Maria Agresta** plays the leading role, a role of diva par excellence, together with **Silvia Tro Santafé** and **Jorge de León**, who complete the love triangle, and **Carlos Álvarez** in the role of Machonnet. A story of ardent passions, political intrigues, jealousy and crossed loves that end in tragedy.

Marco Armiliato, one of the current great music directors and a guest of the major theatres of the world, conducts the **Bilbao Orkestra Sinfonikoa** to bring out the dramatic intensity, the melodic beauty and the extraordinary orchestration of this score.

Jules Massenet

WERTHER

17, 20, 23 and 26 January 2026

- **Stephen Costello, Annalisa Stroppa and Sabrina Gárdez star in the most emblematic story of classical romanticism.**
- **The renowned maestro Carlo Montanaro conducts the Bilbao Orkestra Sinfonikoa.**
- **Production of the Comunale di Bologna signed by Rosetta Cucchi, who makes her debut in ABAO.**
- **Sponsored by the BBVA Foundation.**

2026 starts with the pinnacle of French Romanticism: **Werther** by Jules Massenet, based on the epistolary classic of universal literature «*The Sorrows of Young Werther*» by Goethe, which deals with the deep experience of love that can't find happiness. The **BBVA Foundation** **sponsors this title.**

This lyrical drama in four acts and five tableaux with an extremely romantic plot tells the impossible love story between Werther and Charlotte and stands out for its delicate melodic line and elegant orchestral backdrop. To bring the characters of this story to life and address its musical complexity, ABAO has gathered a cast led by **Stephen Costello**, who makes his debut in the association; with him, one of the most important mezzo-sopranos of the present time: **Annalisa Stroppa**.

The music director is a French repertoire specialist, **Carlo Montanaro**, conducting the **Bilbao Orkestra Sinfonikoa** in a score with a careful, powerful, beautiful and forceful orchestration, whose emblematic moments continue to have a profound effect on the public even today.

On stage, a show of rare beauty by **Rosetta Cucchi** for Teatro Comunale di Bologna. With a cinematographic style, it stands out for its **dramatic and poetic intensity**, its involvement capacity, the refinement of the scenes and the appeal of the wardrobe.

Gaetano Donizetti

MARIA STUARDA

14, 17, 20 and 23 February 2026

- **Trio of exceptional leading voices: Yolanda Auyanet, National Music Award 2024 for Best Performer, Maria Barakova and Filip Filipović.**
- **International premiere of Emilio López's proposal for the co-production of ABAO Bilbao Opera and Opera de Oviedo.**
- **The Mexican conductor Iván López-Reynoso returns to Bilbao to conduct the Euskadiko Orkestra.**

Donizetti's historic duel of queens, **Maria Stuarda**, returns in February for the third time at ABAO Bilbao Opera. This vibrant work of the Queen Trilogy by the composer from Bergamo, whose pages include magnificent musical and theatrical moments, provides an extraordinary opportunity to enjoy an exceptional title.

A lyrical tragedy that delves in the dramatic historic rivalry between two queens: Mary Stuart, catholic and Queen of Scotland, and Elisabeth I, protestant and Queen of England. One is in prison by order of the other. A man between them balances loyalty and love. A cry of

"Wretched bastard!" is the passionate insult that takes Mary to the gallows, accused of treason.

As it is an ideal opera for great voices to shine, it attracts singers of renown in this type of repertoire, such as the soprano **Yolanda Auyanet**, **National Music Award 2024 for Best Performer**, who plays the long-suffering Maria Stuarda, one of the most complex characters of Donizetti's universe, with vocal demands that only a few singers can meet. The mezzo **Maria Barakova** brings the relentless Elisabetta to life, and the tenor **Filip Filipović** plays the infatuated Leicester. The three of them make their debut in the ABAO seasons.

The Mexican conductor **Iván López-Reynoso** is in charge of the music direction, conducting the **Euskadiko Orkestra** in a score with a really colourful and complex orchestration.

The **co-production of ABAO Bilbao Opera** and Opera de Oviedo, by **Emilio López**, who makes his debut in Bilbao, is an **international premiere**. The director surprises with a beautifully-made proposal where classical and modern elements are skilfully combined, accompanied by an elegant wardrobe and stunning light effects.

Umberto Giordano

ANDREA CHÉNIER

23, 26, 29 May and 1 June 2026

- **An impressive cast with Michael Fabiano, Saioa Hernández and Juan Jesús Rodríguez.**
- **Classical co-production of ABAO Bilbao Opera and the Peralada Festival by the director Alfonso Romero.**
- **The Bilbao Orkestra Sinfonikoa faces a score full of melodies of great dramatic effectiveness conducted by Guillermo García Calvo**
- **Kutxabank sponsors this opera**

The season ends in May with Giordano's veristic tragedy, **Andrea Chénier**, sponsored by Kutxabank. This is an **essential title**, an intense and dramatic opera full of touching and moving melodies, with well-known arias such as the famous «La mamma morta». 2026 will mark the 130th anniversary of the premiere of this opera in Teatro alla Scala, in Milan, as well as the 73rd anniversary of its premiere in ABAO at Coliseo Albia.

This drama with a historical setting delves into social issues and covers topics such as hatred, violence, the civil war, resentment, class struggle, love and romance within the framework of the French Revolution, with the creative interpretation of life and death of the poet André Chénier.

For this title, full of vibrant, touching and fluent melodies, ABAO has gathered a first-rate cast led by the American tenor **Michael Fabiano**, who returns to Bilbao to play the leading role. With him, the remarkable soprano **Saioa Hernández**, who makes her debut in ABAO as Maddalena di Coigny. The leading trio is completed by a dramatic baritone, **Juan Jesús Rodríguez**, who plays Carlo Gérard.

The music director is **Guillermo García Calvo**, who conducts the **Bilbao Orkestra Sinfonikoa** to make the most of this score, full of extensive melodies, declamatory fragments and really effective scenes.

On stage, a **co-production of ABAO Bilbao Opera** and the Peralada Festival, devised by **Alfonso Romero**. The neat and elegant stage design is set in the French Revolution, with all its

rawness. Palace rooms, prisons and courts give messages halfway between symbolism and gimmickry.

NADINE SIERRA AND XABIER ANDUAGA, TWO SUPERSTARS FOR THE MOST AWAITED CONCERT

- In December the ABAO Concert brings together the top diva Nadine Sierra and the tenor most in demand in all theatres, Xabier Anduaga, together with the Navarra Symphony Orchestra and Maestro Marc Leroy-Calatayud.
- Exclusively sponsored by BBVA Foundation.
- Concert not included in the subscription.

On **Saturday, 13 December**, ABAO Bilbao Opera will bring together on the stage of Euskalduna Bilbao, the American soprano **Nadine Sierra** and the tenor from Gipuzkoa **Xabier Anduaga**, in a **perfect combination of voices and stage presence**, with two of the **most relevant stars** of the international opera scene.

Directed by Maestro **Marc Leroy-Calatayud** and together with the **Navarra Symphony Orchestra**, Sierra and Anduaga, who have left unforgettable moments such as the soprano's encore in *Roméo et Juliette* in 2023 in her presentation in ABAO, or the tenor's brilliant performances in *La cenerentola*, *I puritani* and *Cossí fan tutte*, will perform **arias and iconic duets** from operas that are well known to the public. The sophisticated combination of their voices and the elegant complexity of their acting skills augur a **memorable concert of extreme passions and raw emotions**.

Nadine Sierra is considered to be one of the most talented performers, a vocal technique wonder, which has taken her to the **Hall of Fame of Bel Canto**. **Xabier Anduaga** is currently going through a sweet moment in his successful career, triumphing on stages all over the world and leaving people in awe with his **extraordinary voice**.

Maestro Leroy-Calatayud, who has conducted in the major theatres, contributes his special sensitiveness for the score and the orchestra to make the most of the musicality and the voices in this concert.

The **ABAO Concert will have a single performance** not included in the subscription and is sponsored by the **BBVA Foundation**.

ABAO TXIKI CELEBRATES 20 YEARS OF BRINGING OPERA TO THE YOUNGEST

- In 2025 the 21st ABAO Txiki season will celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Association's commitment to presenting top quality shows aimed at the new generations.
- Four shows have been scheduled: *La Caja de los Juguetes* (*The Toy Box*), *Cuento de Navidad* (*A Christmas Carol*), *El Guardián de los Cuentos* (*The Tale Keeper*) and *El Bosque de Grimm* (*Grimm's Forest*), two of which are ABAO Bilbao Opera's co-productions.
- 15 performances for audiences of different ages reaching approximately 15,000 people.

In **October 2025** ABAO Bilbao Opera will celebrate the 20th anniversary of their **commitment to education and the emotional development of the youngest** through cultural transformation and the scheduling of quality shows. The **twenty-first edition of ABAO Txiki** at the **Arriaga Theatre** is taking hold as far as the artistic as well as the

pedagogical aspects are concerned, with **four shows**, with the productions most awaited by family audiences, two of which are co-productions of ABAO Bilbao Opera, and **15 performances**, including three school performances aimed at education centres and pre-school and primary education students.

In these 20 years in operation, ABAO Txiki has staged **95 titles**, including those in this season, **54 of which are different**, with **11 premieres**, and **21 productions or co-productions of ABAO Bilbao Opera**. **There will have been 388 performances altogether, 78 of which are school performances**, with the participation of **60,300 students**. Two decades in which **more than 380,000 spectators** have enjoyed **shows and cultural programmes in various formats**, always aimed at educating, attracting and training children about the operatic culture. The ABAO Txiki season has always been linked to **ABAO Bilbao Opera's didactic programme**, an **inclusive music education** project developed in Bizkaia, in which pre-school, primary and secondary education students have taken part over several years, with the involvement of education centres and teachers. **21 years** of activity that was only interrupted during the Covid pandemic and in which almost **250,000 students** have participated, turning opera into a stimulating pedagogical asset.

La Boîte à joujoux (The Toy Box) opens the season in November with a musical tale by the company Etcétera and Enrique Lanz. It deals with a tender love story between a ballerina doll and a wooden soldier who find themselves in trouble due to Polichinelle's character. Marionettes, shadows and projections with music by Claude Debussy.

In January, to celebrate the New Year, **Cuento de Navidad (A Christmas Carol)**, an opera based on Dickens's classic tale, with music by Iñigo Casalí, a co-production of Ópera de Cámara de Navarra and Fundación Baluarte. The show is presented as an opera that blends with the musical.

In March the performance of **El guardián de los cuentos (The Tale Keeper)**, an opera for children with music by Miquel Ortega and stage direction by Pablo Ramo. A **co-production of ABAO Bilbao Opera** and Ópera de Cámara de Navarra that recreates a world of fantasy, humour, adventure and mystery through some of the best known children's stories such as Snow White, Pinocchio, Hansel and Gretel or Sleeping Beauty.

The season ends in May with **El bosque de Grimm (Grimm's Forest)**, a visual show with no text, told through the music of the great Basque-French composer, **Maurice Ravel**. This work has received the Teatro Rojas Award 2015 for Best Family Show, the Max Award 2014 for Best Children's Show and the Teatro Andaluz-SGAE Award 2013 for Best Children's Show.

CULTURAL AND SOCIAL ACTIVITIES IN THE ACCESSIBLE ABAO PROGRAMME

- «The ABC of Opera» cycle offers five new lectures on the titles of the season.
- More than three decades of didactic programme regarding opera with more activities carried out inside and outside the territory.
- The «Opera y +» programme at Cruces University Hospital starts its eleventh edition and continues its emotional accompaniment work with patients, relatives and healthcare workers at Cruces University Hospital.
- Gazteam ABAO is now well-established amongst young aficionados.
- ABAO Bilbao Opera and EITB continue to bring and spread opera to the whole of society.

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

«**The ABC of Opera**» cycle, with free lectures and lecturers of great renown in the sector, holds a new edition at the **University of Deusto** in collaboration with **DeustoBide**. The participants in this edition are the journalists **Rafael Bernardo** and **Mariela Rubio**, directors of the programme Play Opera at Cadena SER, the music critic, editor and writer **Luis Gago**, the musicologist and cultural disseminator **Irene de Juan**, Professor **Pablo L. Rodríguez** and the renowned journalist and writer **Rubén Amón**.

ABAO's **Didactic Programme** starts the academic year in September in **more than one hundred education centres** with informative talks and presentations. The Programme is mainly aimed at pre-school, primary and secondary education, and includes pedagogical guides for teachers as well as the **school sessions** of the ABAO Txiki season and attendance at performances of the general season in the case of older students. This activity extends to other **groups of adults** such as Aulas de la Experiencia (classes for seniors) and cultural centres for the elderly, both at universities and in collaboration with the councils of different town and cities of Bizkaia, Gasteiz, Pamplona, Burgos and Santander. The **Senior Programme** includes didactic talks, visits to the Euskalduna and attendance at operas.

The live podcast «**Concierto Desorden**» carried out with the collaboration of the **University of the Basque Country UPV-EHU**. Led by the journalist and cultural disseminator **Gonzalo Lahoz**, it brings some of the protagonists of the opera to share their experience with the public.

EITB and **ABAO Bilbao Opera** maintain their commitment to bringing and spreading opera to the whole of society with the recording of titles and concerts from the season. A catalogue with 13 shows has been recorded since 2022: **nine opera titles**, the last **Othello** whose first performance was broadcast live by **ETB2 and eitb.eus** for the first time; Amartuvshin Enkhbat's Concert; two shows in Basque language from the ABAO Txiki season for children: Bost Axola Bemola and Pedro eta Otsoa; and the Tutto Verdi International Awards Gala.

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 workers of **Cruces University Hospital**, operates in the areas of Nephrology, Paediatrics, Neonatology, Day Hospital, Inflammatory Bowel Disease Unit, Internal Medicine, Pneumology, Oncology and Radiotherapeutic Oncology. This inclusive cultural solidarity project is carried out the collaboration of **“La Caixa” Foundation, Zabalgarbi** and the **Gondra Barandiarán Foundation**.

Likewise, ABAO Bilbao Opera keeps working towards attracting new audiences, mainly amongst the young, through the **Gazteam ABAO** project, with benefits and appeals of different types, such as the **flat rates of €28 and €33** to go to any opera title or performance in the best seats available.

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

DOWNLOAD MATERIAL:

- Photographs and sketches of productions and main artists
- Promotional video 74th Season