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JUANJO MENA

Director de orquesta

Juanjo Mena began his conducting career in his native Spain as Artistic Director of the Bilbao Symphony Orchestra in 1999. His uncommon talent was soon recognized internationally with the Bergen Philharmonic appointing him Principal Guest Conductor and the Orchestra del Teatro Carlo Felice in Genoa Chief Guest Conductor. In 2011 he was named Chief Conductor of the BBC Philharmonic which he had led for seven seasons, taking the orchestra on tours of Europe and Asia and conducting annual televised concerts at the Royal Albert Hall as part of the BBC Proms. His BBC tenure featured, notably, “thrilling” (The Guardian) performances of Bruckner Symphonies, a cycle of Schubert Symphonies, and set new standards for the interpretation of both well-known and less-performed Spanish and South American repertoire. He currently serves as Principal Conductor of the Cincinnati May Festival, the longest running choral festival in North America, where he has been expanding the scope of the legendary organization with new commissions and community engagement.

A sought-after guest conductor, Juanjo Mena has led Europe’s top ensembles including the Berlin Philharmonic, Bavarian Radio Orchestra, Gewandhaus Orchestra Leipzig, London Philharmonic, Oslo Philharmonic, Rotterdam Philharmonic, Danish National Symphony Orchestra, Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre National de France, Orchestra Filarmonica della Scala, Tonhalle Orchester Zürich, Bamberg Symphony Orchestra and the Dresden Philharmonic among others. He appears regularly with all the major orchestras in his native Spain.

Following his North American debut with the Baltimore Symphony in 2004, he has conducted most of the continent’s leading orchestras. They include the Chicago Symphony, Boston Symphony, The Cleveland Orchestra, Philadelphia Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Pittsburgh Symphony, Minnesota Orchestra, National Symphony, Cincinnati Symphony, Detroit Symphony, Montreal Symphony and Toronto Symphony Orchestras. In Asia, he is a regular guest conductor of the NHK Symphony Orchestra in Tokyo.

In the 21/22 season, Juanjo Mena returns to conduct the Pittsburgh Symphony, National Symphony Orchestra in Washington DC, Montreal Symphony, Oslo Philharmonic and the Bergen Philharmonic, and debuts with the Atlanta Symphony, Gürzenich Orchestra in Cologne and the Japan Philharmonic. In the 20/21 season, heavily affected by the pandemic, he returned to conduct the Gewandhaus Orchestra Leipzig and the NHK Symphony, among others. In June 2022 at Madrid’s Teatro Real, Mena will lead performances of the new production of Arthur Honegger’s Joan of Arc at the Stake paired with Debussy’s La damoiselle élue.

His operatic work includes Wagner’s The Flying Dutchman, Richard Strauss’ Salome, Elektra, Ariadne auf Naxos, Bartók’s Duke Bluebeard’s Castle and Schoenberg’s Erwartung as well as productions of Tchaikovsky’s Eugene Onegin in Genoa, Mozart’s The Marriage of Figaro in Lausanne, and Beethoven’s Fidelio and Britten’s Billy Budd in Bilbao.



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Juanjo Mena's latest recording is Bruckner's Symphony No. 6 with the BBC Philharmonic released by Chandos. The Classical Review praised it as "intensely musical," "impressive" and with a spectacular sound. Mena's rich discography with the BBC Philharmonic on Chandos also includes an acclaimed Gabriel Pierné release selected as a Gramophone Editor's Choice, Weber Symphonies, Ginastera's orchestral works to mark the composer's centenary, and new reference recordings of largely overlooked Spanish repertoire including Arriaga's orchestral pieces, works by Albéniz, Montsalvatge and Turina, as well as three discs of works by Manuel de Falla featuring his opera *La Vida Breve*. In 2012 Juanjo Mena recorded Messiaen's *Turangalîla* Symphony with the Bergen Philharmonic for the Hyperion label, a disc said to "utterly redefine the terms under which past/current/future *Turangalîlas* need to be judged" (Gramophone).

Juanjo Mena studied conducting with Sergiu Celibidache following his musical education at the Madrid Royal Conservatory where he was mentored by Carmelo Bernaola and Enrique García Asensio. In 2016, he was awarded the Spanish National Music Award. He lives with his family in his native Basque Country.

www.juanjomena.com