



**BEETHOVEN'S NINTH SYMPHONY:
GARDEN CENTER EUROPE
WITH KAZUSHI ONO AND
AGRUPACIÓN SEÑOR SERRANO**

L'AUDITORI

2018_2019

In recent years, L'Auditori's programming has been staked on enhancing the dialogue between the various musical styles that we accommodate in our series and seasons, as well as the dialogue of music, which is our centrepiece, with other artistic disciplines such as plastic arts, theatre, dance, etc. L'Auditori's strategic positioning in this field is clear and is reflected, for example, in its paradigmatic Escenes series or in the different performances by its Servei Educatiu (Educational & Social), and increasingly, this dialogue is also coming to the Barcelona Symphony and Catalonia National Orchestra this season.

The project presented in this dossier has been promoted by the OBC as an interesting new concept for its audience and also for the institution to reach out to new audiences, in that it goes beyond the classical format of a symphonic concert. The talent of the Agrupación Señor Serrano company, based in Barcelona, but whose performances have an international scope, together with our training, maestro Ono, soloists and, evidently, the brilliant Ludwig van Beethoven, invite us to take a journey in images. It's a journey that speaks about us, our society, our past and our future, and of a project that manages to transcend the problems we faced in the past and those we confront in the present.

It is difficult for us to manage for this transcendence to have a practical rendering and a happy ending. It is possible that the situations it poses may be, at some point, controversial. But the spectators who enjoy this proposal will know how to appreciate the diverse layers of reading, the musical one evidently, of great quality, and also a reflection on Western society and its myths as well as on its problems. We hope that this challenge, launched in an avant-garde plastic and dramaturgical language, moves us, stirs our emotions and gives even greater value than usual to the touchstone of symphonic literature that Beethoven's Ninth Symphony is.

Beethoven's 9th by Agrupación Señor Serrano

A seed. Everything the seed needs to flourish: earth, water, light, music, love, democracy, listening, sex, culture. A flower. A yellow peony. Some ideals, a project, a plan. The hope of creating a better community. The implementation of the plan. And its failure. Humanity, its imperfection, its weakness. The impossibility of transcending. The violence, the fire, the ashes. The rage, the despair. And then, the acceptance of failure. The sadness, a melancholic lament. A break. A moment of reflection. And finally, looking at each other, caressing each other, kissing, french-kissing each other. Trusting that everything can re-emerge. A seed.

Dramaturgy

What does the 9th Symphony mean? It is impossible to know what intentions Beethoven had when he composed it. All we can do is take out conjectures, and to do so we need to keep in mind the context in which the composer lived. In the last years of his life, Beethoven was already deep in deafness and this fact had led him to move away from the world more and more, pushing him towards self-absorption. In addition, Beethoven had been a passionate defender of the enlightened project and the promises of Napoleon. However, the self-coronation as Emperor of the General, his defeat and the subsequent reordering of Europe emerged after the Congress of Vienna had led him to distrust any great political project. And to close the circle, on a more intimate level, his continuous love disappointments had increasingly turned him into an emotionally isolated person. And yet, that apparently sullen man, disillusioned, bad looking, unhealthy and with an attitude that some called misanthropic, at the end of his life returns from his isolation not with a song of hatred, distrust or skepticism, but with the opposite. With his last great work, Beethoven proposes a song of joy, of love, of universalism, of equality and brotherhood.

The reading we propose of Beethoven's 9th Symphony follows the logic of its four movements. We see in the symphony a journey that begins with a political and vital transformation project full of hope; that becomes disappointment and rage because of the impossibility of carrying the project out; that follows with the acceptance of the failure; and that culminates with a proposal of exit, with a twist to the initial hope, but modified from what the whole process taught us.

The first movement, we understand it as a constructive dialogue in which different elements assemble an ideal, the ideal of the enlightened project, of progress, of humanism, of Europe, of confidence in the possibility of building together a fairer world based on reason. A movement full of energy, excitement and enthusiasm for that project, for that ideal of community that necessarily has to focus on a better society. That's the setting up of a plan.

The second movement is presented as a contrast to the first: the attempt to implement that plan is more bloody than expected, the ideals are left and the confrontation with the old world ends up provoking violence. The plan, the ideals, are perverted, they fail. Humanity proves not to be up to its own emancipatory and community project. And that leads to anger, depression, detachment.

But that anger, with time, gives way to another emotion, gives way to acceptance. And that is the third movement. Okay, the plan has not worked, everything went wrong, but the original ideals were valid, it was worth fighting for them. And so, in that process of acceptance, we review all the elements that had fascinated us about the initial project, we review and re-evaluate them, we say goodbye to the initial plan, but we do not abandon the values that were behind that plan or the desire to try it again.

And so we come to the end. With renewed energy, the fourth movement offers us a way out, gives us a new opportunity, opens a window. Maybe we have mistaken the way, but the ideals that inspired it are inalienable and we have to cling to them, because we have to embrace joy, brotherhood, the sense of community, the affection between people, the confidence that we can all take forward a more human project.

In the end, the interesting thing about the reading that we propose of the 9th (creation of a plan; implementation and failure; anger and acceptance; projection towards the future) is that these are phases of a process applicable not only to the enlightened project, but inherent in any human project of collective improvement, of building a utopia. From the civilizing empire of Alexander the Great to the hippie communes or, of course, to the European Union.

This is the cyclical idea that constantly travels across Europe through its history. The dream of a community based on reason and brotherhood; the struggle to overcome the differences between the peoples of Europe and the mistrust with its neighbors; the resistance to this proposal; and finally the failure of the project. To then start again. And again. And suddenly the question arises spontaneously, where is Europe today? In what movement of the 9th is it? Is there still an exciting European project? Are we at the moment when the reactionary forces revolt against the European dream? Do we have to start saying goodbye to our values and ideals? Or are we facing a new awakening? These are the ideas that guide Señor Serrano's proposal. The birth, tremor, destruction and resurgence of the idea of Europe.

Staging

Agrupación Señor Serrano proposes a visual staging of Beethoven's 9th Symphony through a cinema-in-real-time device. Our proposal is about creating a poetic and visual discourse on the 9th notes, suggesting a contemporary and singular reading of the symphony through a dramaturgy that is deployed by the use of video cameras, flowers, scale models, objects and video projections in real-time.

A working table. On that table, a book, objects, tools and instruments. Everything needed to grow a political project, a symphony, a flower. Agrupación Señor Serrano poses objects' manipulation, video cameras, love and french-kisses, to show how a seed is planted, how it grows, how its fruit is destroyed, how a seed is saved and how it grows again. The idea of Europe through an infinity of objects, flowers, computers, video cameras and a huge screen where the manipulations that happen on the stage are projected.

The company

Agrupación Señor Serrano is one of the most stimulating and original companies of the current scene. This is supported by awards such as the Silver Lion of the Venice Biennale 2015 or the City of Barcelona 2016 Award. In their scenic language they make use of technology, both in its most sophisticated and traditional versions. They combine video, performance, scale models and live music, elements with which they create micro-universes in each new show, always filtering a non-conformist message. All this through metaphors, taking a step back to find meanings in abstraction, stripping the facts to find an essence, suggesting connections between real events, history and classic fictions to generate a new approach, a fresh and personal point of view.

The team

On behalf of Agrupación Señor Serrano

Creation: Àlex Serrano, Pau Palacios and Ferran Dordal

Performance: Àlex Serrano, Jordi Soler, Vicenç Viaplana, Núria Guiu, Pablo Rosal, Agnès Jabbour, Marc Cartanyà, Arantza López, Malcolm McCarthy, Anna Serrano, Tamara Ndong, Raphaël Pérez.

Light design: Cube.bz

Video creation: Jordi Soler

Videoprogramming: Vicenç Viaplana

Set design: Àlex Serrano and Lola Belles

Costumes: Lola Belles

Graphic creation: Gemma Peña

Music consultancy: Roger Costa Vendrell

Technical direction: David Muñiz

Production manager: Barbara Bloin

Executive production: Paula S. de Viteri

Project advisor: Víctor Molina

Legal advisor: Cristina Soler

On behalf of L'Auditori

Music director: Kazushi Ono

Soloists:

Marta Mathéu, soprano

Lidia Vinyes Curtis, mezzo-soprano

David Alegret, tenor

Simon Neal, baritone

Cor de Cambra del Palau de la Música

Orfeó Català

Barcelona Symphony Orchestra - The National Orchestra of Catalonia (obc)

A production by L'Auditori de Barcelona for the Obertura Spring Festival 2019

Kazushi Ono

Conductor of the Barcelona Symphony Orchestra (OBC)

Musical Director of the Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra

Artistic Counsellor of the New National Theatre Tokyo

Considered as one of the brightest directors of its generation, Kazushi Ono has been described by the prestigious French newspaper Le Figaro as “one of the most fascinating musical minds of our era”. His extraordinary capacity as a director has led him to be invited by famous groups from around the world: the BBC, the Birmingham, Boston, Montreal and London orchestras, the Vienna Radio, Leipzig Gewandhaus, La Monnaie and the philharmonics of Israel, Oslo and Radio France, among others. He has also directed operas in major theatres such as the Metropolitan Opera in New York, La Scala in Milan, the Bayerische Staatsoper, the Deutsche Staatsoper in Berlin or the Paris Opera.

From 2008 to 2017 he was the principal conductor of the Lyon National Opera and was recently awarded by the French Ministry of Culture as an Officer of Fine Arts and Letters, a title that joins the prestigious Asahi Prize he received in January 2015.

His way of doing the essays conveys sincerity, receptiveness and calmness. In the concerts, he is totally given to a mystical search of the musical fact that goes beyond mere rational readings.

Barcelona Symphony Orchestra -The National Orchestra of Catalonia

The Barcelona Symphony and National Orchestra of Catalonia (OBC) was founded by Barcelona City Council in 1944, building on the Orquestra Pau Casals (1920-1937) project that had come to an end as a result of the Spanish Civil War. Today, maintaining Pau Casals' original spirit - open to the world and committed to society - it is mindful of Catalan artists and heritage, and its mission is to popularise symphonic music, primarily from the 19th century to the present day.

Since 1999 it has been based at L'Auditori, designed by Navarrese architect Rafael Moneo. There the Orchestra performs more than twenty season programmes, as well as other concerts aimed at bringing orchestral music to the people: original version cinema, concerts for families and school children, experimental music, operas and chamber music. It also performs at emblematic locations such as the Plaça de la Catedral, Barceloneta beach and the Sagrada Família.

The OBC's very first music director was Eduard Toldrà, and this position has been held since September 2015 by Kazushi Ono, who is also music director of the Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra. Jan Willem de Vriend is the current main guest conductor. Other music directors have included Rafael Ferrer, Antoni Ros Marbà, Salvador Mas, Franz-Paul Decker, Luis Antonio García Navarro, Lawrence Foster, Ernest Martínez Izquierdo, Eiji Oue and Pablo González. It has also been conducted by Ataulfo Argenta, Herbert Blomstedt, Sergiu Celibidache, Sergiu Comissiona, Christoph von Dohnányi, Rafael Frübeck de Burgos, Valeri Gergiev, Christopher Hogwood, Eliahu Inbal, Maris Jansons, Clemens Krauss, Emmanuel Krivine, Jesús López Cobos, Witold Lutoslawski, Peter Maag, Bruno Maderna, Yehudi Menuhin, Marc Minkowski, Michel Plasson, Georges Prêtre, Mstislav Rostropóvitx, Leonard Slatkin and Heitor Villa-Lobos. Guest soloists who have performed with the OBC include noteworthy names such as Lang Lang, Janine Jansen, Daniel Barenboim, Anne-Sophie Mutter, Isaac Stern, Radu Lupu, Frank Peter Zimmermann, Arcadi Volodos, Plácido Domingo, Montserrat Caballé, Teresa Berganza, Alicia de Larrocha, Pinchas Zukerman, Martha Argerich, Joshua Bell, Gidon Kremer, Truls Mørk, Viktoria Mullova, Piotr Anderzewski, Gil Shaham, Rudolf Buchbinder, Joaquín Achúcarro, Claudio Arrau, and Arthur Rubinstein, amongst others.

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KAZUSHI ONO DIRECTOR TITULAR

NUMBER **16**

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DE BEETHOVEN:
GARDEN CENTER
EUROPE**
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AND AGRUPACIÓ
SEÑOR SERRANO

15th, 16th and 17th
MARCH 2019

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