



Interview

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CARLOS CHECA

Principal and Artistic Director of the Youth Symphony Orchestra of Barcelona (JOSB)

«The music transforms us»

IRINA RYBALCHENKO
ESCALDES-ENGORDANY

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Carlos Checa leapt to the international scene in China in 2005 conducting the City Chamber Orchestra of Hong Kong. In 2009 he performed in London with excellent reviews conducting the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra in the Cadogan Hall, and by personal invitation of maestro Gustavo Dudamel, in May 2014, he made his debut in Venezuela, in "El Sistema". Since 2015 he is artistic and music director of the Jove Orquestra Simfònica de Barcelona (JOSB). In October 2016, he signed as a music director of the symphony orchestra with the record label Universal Music.

Carlos Checa has also conducted the Wrocław Philharmonic, the Pomeranian Philharmonic in Bydgoszcz (Poland), the Orquestra Sinfónica Nacional de Costa Rica,

the Orquesta Nacional del Perú, the Orquesta Sinfónica de Xalapa (México), the Orquesta Sinfónica de Mendoza (Argentina), in Spain, he has conducted orchestras such as the Orquesta Sinfónica de Radio Televisión Española, the Orquesta Sinfónica de Baleares, the Real Filharmonía de Galicia, the Orquesta Sinfónica de Extremadura, the Orquesta de Córdoba, the Orquesta Sinfónica Provincial de Málaga, the Orquesta Sinfónica de la Región de Murcia, the Orquesta Sinfónica de Ciudad Real, the Orquesta Clásica de Santa Cecilia, the Orquesta Manuel de Falla and the Orquesta Sinfónica de Tenerife.

Since season 12/13, he has been conducting regularly at the Cuenca ciudad de música concerts, such as the tribute to Teresa Berganza at the Auditorio de Cuenca, the tour of the main auditoriums

of the Community of Castilla La Mancha with the "The Little Sweep" Opera by Britten, and the celebration of the 20th Anniversary of the Auditorio de Cuenca, with the opera production "The Magic Flute" by Mozart.

In the field of contemporary music he conducted premieres of Spanish composers such as Andrés Valero Castells, José Luis López de Aranda, Albert Carbonell and Paco Toledo, whom the EMEC company recently published his "Hipodámica" Symphony, a work that was recorded under the baton of Carlos Checa with the Manuel de Falla Orchestra.

Carlos Checa began his conducting studies in Barcelona, his native city, under maestro Francesc Llongueres. He later studied with maestro Albert Argudo in the Conservatorio Superior de Música, and graduated

in orchestral conducting with distinction. He specializes in composition, instrumentation and music pedagogy. In 2005 Carlos founded the festival FIMUC Serranía de Cuenca and in 2006 he was awarded a scholarship by the Joven Orquesta Nacional de España.

Carlos has taken conducting lessons with Kurt Masur, Antoni Ros Marbà and George Pehlivanian.

We talked to Carlos about his orchestra, his vision of music and the peculiarities of managing an orchestra consisting of young musicians.

-Tell us please about the story of the JOSB. How many musicians does it have, and what are their ages? Are there many foreign musicians in the orchestra?

-Well, the orchestra was born in 2015, and now we are celebrating the eighth season in a row. The

orchestra has always been open to young people of all nationalities. Currently, it has 70 musicians, whose average age is about 19 years.

From the beginning, I ran away from the idea of organizing summer or Christmas «meetings» because the experience of «El Sistema» in Venezuela influenced me greatly. There I understood that a great musical family cannot be created if you see each other twice a year. Young people need a stable framework in which to expand their talent and an opportunity to witness themselves evolve within the same orchestra. This requires at least two years of intense joint activity.

-Are there many youth orchestras playing classical music in Spain?

-The number is increasing, and that's great news. A few years ago, musical references were, for exam-

ple, Music Bands in Valencia or Choirs in Catalonia. And now both the quality and quantity of young orchestras are becoming increasingly noticeable.

-What are the specifics of the interaction with the young musicians?

-It is an interaction based on respect, honesty and trust. We share many hours of rehearsals and although I am not a teacher who evaluates them with a grade, they know that I speak to them frankly. My target is to transmit to them a love for music, teach them to enjoy learning and generate the right framework so that they can take all opportunities presented to them.

-Does your repertoire mainly consist of classical pieces, or do you also play contemporary music?

-Every season we play a premiere piece, but the repertoire is formative, and we focus on the great works of classical and romantic symphonic music.

-Each director has his own rhythm of musical life. What is your rhythm?

-The commitments you acquire give rhythm to you. In particular, I have always taken steps forward. At this vital moment, on the one hand, I have completed twenty years since my professional debut and at the same time I have married and built a wonderful family with my wife in Barcelona, we have three children already in their teens. I consider that my personal and professional achievement list has been fabulous until today, conducting the JOSB, the the Symphony Orchestra of the Universal Music label and the FIMUC Festival is a great privilege. Apart from my family, music allows me to live life intensely. I am in an excellent moment, with more experience and enthusiasm to face new challenges.

-You have conducted symphony orchestras in Spain, England, Poland, Costa Rica, Peru, Mexico, Argentina, the National Orchestras of Honduras, also in Venezuela and China in Hong Kong ... Do you plan to change your place of residence shortly, or do you prefer to stay in Barcelona?

-Well, Barcelona is my city, and it is

a privilege to create music here and to develop the JOSB with a stable repertoire at the Palau de la Música Catalana. I would say that it is almost a dream come true. But to answer your question, I would say that although I don't plan to change places, I don't close the door to musical projects that may come from outside either.

-Who are your favorite composers and why?

-I don't particularly have favorite composers. I have a great love for music and enjoy the interpretive journey that takes me from the score to the composer's experience. This is my métier and I am looking forward to expanding these possibilities with new works in my repertoire. For example, last October I conducted Rachmaninoff's second symphony for the first time, and the experience of doing this work

was unforgettable. As I told you at the beginning, music transforms us.

-What inspires you?

-People and the beauty of art inspire me. I also love to read biographies. New ideas come to me easily when I am in silence or walking.

-Please tell us how you program the orchestra's repertoire?

-At the JOSB I generally program the great works of the symphonic repertoire. For example, if a young musician is part of the JOSB for four years, they will play about 24 different programs with the main works of Beethoven, Brahms, Tchaikovsky, Dvorak, Mendelssohn, Schubert or Rimsky Korsakov, among others. This year we are also expanding the repertoire with a lyrical Gala with a tenor Josep Bros and a soprano Alexia Voulgaridou.

-Are you planning to perform in Andorra or France?

-Circumstances don't allow us to return to Andorra, but we would love to ... I have great memories of our concert at the National Auditorium.

This year we have already had a first tour through Tarragona and now we will have another one in March in Aragon. We will make our debut at the Zaragoza Auditorium on March 5.

-Earlier you told me that you planned to invite famous directors such as Josep Caballé, Íñigo Pirfano and Tomàs Grau. How did their presence affect the repertoire and the quality of the performance?

-The presence of other conductors has a very positive effect on the orchestra. I founded JOSB as a learning platform for young musicians. And in this sense having an expert artistic team is essential. This season

22/23 the guest directors are Joshua Dos Santos, José María Moreno and Xavier Puig.

-The most difficult thing is to gain the trust of the musicians. Do you agree?

-Musically speaking, the most difficult thing is to get the whole orchestra to play the work with the intensity that the composer asks of us and not only in the concert but also in the rehearsals.

You must think that geniuses of history made our material, which is a luxury. But to deal with them in depth is a challenge and a great difficulty.

Being a conductor is a complex job, and you need the trust of the musicians to obtain a good artistic result. I think that trust must be earned every day. Knowledge, a conviction of what I do in front of the orchestra and modesty are the most valuable tools for me. ≡

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