

María José Montiel, mezzosoprano

National Music Prize for the year 2015 awarded by the Spanish Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, magazines such as Opera News (USA), Ópera Actual (Spain), Opéra Magazine (France) and L'Opera (Italy) regard María José Montiel as one of the great mezzo-sopranos of the day. In 2014 and 2015 she has performed *Carmen* in Israel and Italy conducted by Zubin Mehta, a character which she has sung in the most important opera houses in Switzerland, Italy, Germany, France, Spain, Japan, China and the United States. It was Bizet's gipsy that transformed her into an international sensation and her habitual collaborations with Riccardo Chailly on music such as Verdi's *Requiem* (Vienna, Frankfurt, Milan, Budapest, Tokyo and Leipzig) have consolidated her reputation.

In July 2015 she has debuted the role of Ulrica in Verdi's *Un ballo in maschera*, again alongside maestro Mehta, and the role of Dalila in Saint-Saëns' *Samson et Dalila* in Mexico (September 2015). She has sung Verdi's *Requiem* with La VERDI in Milan as part of the events celebrating the end of the Milan Expo Milano 2015, has debuted at the Teatro San Carlo in Naples with *Carmen*, also conducted by the Indian conductor. In 2016 she has given a recital in Zaragoza for Ópera Aragón, has performed in the world première of *María Moliner*, by Antoni Parera, at Teatro de La Zarzuela in Madrid, has given two concerts with the Orquesta de Valencia performing Ravel's *Shéhérazade* and a selection of French Opera Arias and has given recitals in Asturias, at Festival Lírico Ópera in Benicàssim, at Festival de Segovia, at Festival Chopin de Valldemossa (Majorca) and at Festival de Santander. Future engagements include a concert with the Orquesta de la Comunidad de Madrid, *Edgar*, by Puccini, in Madrid, Mahler's *Symphony N. 3* with the Sinfónica de Baleares and *Carmen* at the Florida Opera in Miami.

She was born in Madrid, where she graduated in vocal performance at the Royal Conservatoire, specializing with Pedro Lavirgen and Ana María Iriarte, before moving to Vienna to further her training with Sena Jurinac and O. Miljakovic. She studied Law at the Autonomous University of Madrid, where she also gained a postgraduate diploma in the History and Science of Music.

María José Montiel has had a prolific and long-lasting career, having sung in the most prestigious concert halls and theatres in the world, such as Carnegie Hall in New York, La Scala in Milan, the Kennedy Center in Washington, Salle Pleyel in Paris, Finlandia Hall in Helsinki, the Musikverein, Konzerthaus and Staatsoper in Vienna, the NAC Ottawa, Music Hall Cincinnati, the Doelen in Rotterdam, Budapest Opera House, Sydney Town Hall, Teatro Regio di Parma, Teatro Malibran in Venice, Pisa Opera House, the Teatro Comunale in Bologna, Bregenz Festival, La Fenice in Venice, the Trieste Teatro Verdi, NHK Hall in Tokyo, Staatsoper Bern, Warsaw Philharmonic Concert Hall and Opera House, La Monnaie in Brussels, the New National Theatre in Tokyo, Paris Opéra National, Teatro Real and the National Auditorium in Madrid, Gran Teatre del Liceu and Palau de la Música Catalana in Barcelona, Palau de la Música y Palau de les Arts Reina Sofía in Valencia and practically all the opera houses and concert halls in Spain.

As well as being considered one of the greatest singers of *Carmen* of the current time, her repertoire also includes the operas *Aida* (Amneris), *Les contes d'Hoffmann* (Giulietta) *La Favorita* (Leonora), *La clemenza di Tito* (Sesto), *Le nozze di Figaro*, *Così fan tutte* (Dorabella), *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* (Rosina) and *Luisa Miller* (Federica), which she has performed in Bologna, Venice, Pisa, Livorno, Lucca, Trieste, Parma, Strasburg, Cologne, Paris, Vienna, Tokyo, Barcelona and Madrid.

As well as collaborating repeatedly with Zubin Mehta, Riccardo Chailly and Plácido Domingo, she has worked with other top conductors such as Lorin Maazel, Pinchas Steinberg, Miguel Angel Gomez Martinez, Daniel Oren, Garcia Navarro, Xian Zhang, Wayne Marshall, Adam Fisher, Horst Stein, John Axelrod, Charles Dutoit, Vladimir Spivakov, José Luis Lopez Cobos, John Paul Decker, Garcia Asensio, José Collado, Lawrence Foster, Odon Alonso, Janos Kovacs, Neville Marriner,

Jeffrey Tate, Maurizio Benini and Jacques Delacôte, among many others.

A lover of the concert repertoire, she has been invited to give concerts by the Philharmonic Orchestras of Vienna, Buenos Aires, Helsinki and Tokyo, the Symphony Orchestras of Montreal and Cincinnati, the "Moscow Virtuosos", the National Orchestra of France, the N.A.C. of Ottawa, the Lausanne Chamber Orchestra, the Arturo Toscanini Foundation, the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic and the Milan Giuseppe Verdi Orchestra, while in Spain she habitually collaborates with the National Orchestra of Spain, the RTVE Symphonic, the Murcia Symphonic, the Orchestra of Valencia and almost all the orchestras in Spain, embracing a wide repertoire.

Her outstanding pieces, fundamental to the mezzo range are *Les nuits d'été* (Berlioz), Mahler's *Second, Third and Eighth Symphonies*, *Scenes from Faust* (Berlioz), *Requiem* (Verdi), *Gloria* (Vivaldi), Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony*, *Stabat Mater* and *Misa Solemne* (Rossini), *Schééhérazade* (Ravel), *Alto Rhapsody* by Brahms, *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* (Mahler), etc. She gives special consideration to Spanish composers, having participated in the revival of the opera *Pepita Jiménez* (Albeniz), in the absolute premiere of *Merlin* (Albeniz) and in first performances of works by contemporary composers such as *Ojos Verdes de Luna*, by Tomas Marco and *Eufonía*, by Xavier Montsalvatge, as well as pieces by Cruz de Castro, Peris, Bernaola, Barce and a large portion of the Anton Garcia Abril vocal repertoire.

At the re-opening of the Teatro Real in Madrid, she sang the lead role in Manuel de Falla's opera *La Vida Breve*, alongside the tenor Jaime Aragall and directed by Francisco Nieva. She also performed in Usandizaga's *Las Golondrinas* alongside Vicente Sardinero and directed by José Carlos Plaza at the same theatre, where she also participated in the SGAE Centenary Gala with Montserrat Caballé and Alfredo Kraus and in the Gala to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of the Spanish Constitution. She has given recitals all over the world with Plácido Domingo, also at the re-opening of the Teatro Avenida in Buenos Aires, and she performed alongside him in the zarzuela *Luisa Fernanda* in the premiere of the Spanish genre at La Scala in Milan, before then going on tour with this master work by Moreno Torroba to the Washington National Opera, Teatro Real de Madrid, Los Angeles Opera and the Theatre an der Wien (Vienna).

A great specialist in the *Lied* repertoire, and Spanish and French song, she has given over a hundred recitals, mostly alongside Miguel Zanetti, and many of which have been recorded on CD. Her recordings number a total of 17 discs, for labels such as Dial, BIS, RTVE, Ensayo, Fundación Autor, Deutsche Gramophon and Stradivarius. Her CD of lieder from Brazil, *Modinha*, with Luiz de Moura was a finalist in the Grammy Awards and her DVD *Madrileña Bonita* went gold. She has been finalist in the Grammy prizes for her recently re-released CD *Modinha*. In 2015 she has released *El día que me quieras*, which is a collection of Latin American song, including some of the most popular tangos, boleros and Brazilian classics.

Mezzosoprano María José Montiel has won the prize for best female singer in the 2012 Teatro Campoamor Opera Award Ceremony, where the most important awards of this kind in Spain are handed over every year in Oviedo. The singer has been awarded the prize for her *Carmen* in the Gran Teatre del Liceu, Barcelona, in October 2010, being the first Spanish singer to have been given a prize in this category in the history of the awards.

She has also been awarded the Lucrecia Arana award, the SGAE Federico Romero prize, the RNE Ojo Crítico award, the CEOE prize and the Spanish Coca-Cola Foundation award for best singer for "the quality of her voice, her expressive temperament and versatility of repertoire". In 2007 the Community of Madrid awarded her with the Culture Prize in the Music section.