



BEETHOVENFEST BONN

Bonn, 31 August 2010

## **Dr José Antonio Abreu assumes the patronage of the Beethovenfest Bonn 2010**

**Teresa Carreño Youth Orchestra of Venezuela is coming to Europe for  
the first time**

“Originally art was made by a minority for a minority. Then it became art by a minority for the majority and now we are at the beginning of a new era, in which art is the undertaking of a majority for the majority.” Dr José Antonio Abreu

José Antonio Abreu developed a utopian scenario 35 years ago: he wanted to combine the services of a social network and classical musical training in order to give children from the slums an alternative to life on the streets. His vision has become reality, classical music has become a fixed component of Venezuela’s social system in the “Sistema de las Orquestas Juveniles e Infantiles de Venezuela”. More than 350,000 children and young people are currently playing an instrument within “El Sistema”.

The Beethovenfest Bonn 2010 asked Dr José Antonio Abreu to become its patron because he, as a visionary, impressively embodies this year’s motto “Into the Open. Utopia and Freedom in Music”. Through their musical training the children and young people who are members of the “Sistema” are given an opportunity to freely shape their future, an opportunity they would not have had as street children. Right from the start the children are integrated into ensembles, making them part of a special community. Attending a regular school is a requirement for participating in the musical training programme. Older students can acquire a training place in the system’s own nationwide network of instrument workshops and small businesses. Abreu’s pedagogic concept promotes not just the musicality of the children and young people, but also social competencies such as respect, the ability to take on responsibility and the ability to make music together.

Since 2004 the Beethovenfest has been nurturing a special relationship with the Venezuelans and the “Sistema”. Ilona Schmiel spontaneously enlisted the conductor Gustavo Dudamel to work with the Philharmonia Orchestra from London at the final concert of the Beethovenfest 2004 to replace Frans Brüggen, who had fallen ill. The Venezuelan, who was 23 at the time, celebrated an overwhelming success. At the

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subsequent Beethovenfest Dudamel returned to Bonn with the Simón Bolívar Youth Orchestra of Venezuela, the flagship orchestra of “El Sistema”. As an extra to the concert the Beethovenfest offered a symposium in which Abreu among other things explained his “Sistema”. A direct encounter with the young Venezuelans was made possible by Bonn’s schools who held a meeting event, during which Bonn’s students played music together with the orchestra’s members. The relationship that has grown up between the Beethovenfest Bonn and Abreu and the “Sistema” was documented in 2007: Gustavo Dudamel’s concert with the Simón Bolívar Youth Orchestra and the preparations for it in Caracas and immediately prior to the performance in Bonn have been captured in the film “The Promise of Music”. The concert was also transmitted live from the Beethovenhalle on to Bonn’s Marktplatz; this first public screening at the Beethovenfest Bonn was a resounding success. The relationship to the Beethovenfest is matched in the organization in Venezuela: Beethoven’s works are a central aspect of the “Sistema’s” basic training.

The Simón Bolívar Youth Orchestra of Venezuela and Gustavo Dudamel are now celebrating global successes. That the work in “El Sistema” is reflected in lasting success stories is also demonstrated by the Teresa Carreño Youth Orchestra of Venezuela. The Beethovenfest Bonn 2010 is presenting this orchestra, in which young people aged between 12 and 21 perform, for the first time outside of Latin America. On the initiative of Beethovenfest Intendant Ilona Schmiel the Teresa Carreño Youth Orchestra of Venezuela is embarking on its first European tour. During a performance in Caracas Gustavo Dudamel and José Antonio Abreu chose the conductor, who will conduct the orchestra on tour, 26-year-old Christian Vásquez. Abreu took an interest in Vásquez’s training from very early on and laid the foundation for his international career in the “Sistema”. At first he played the violin in the Simón Bolívar Youth Orchestra and in 2001 he started studying conducting under Abreu. In 2008 he conducted the Simón Bolívar Youth Orchestra for the first time and debuted as a conductor with the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France. In January of this year he pitched in very successfully as a visiting conductor with the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra.

On the programme of the concert at the Beethovenfest Bonn are Leonard Bernstein’s overture to “Candide”, Beethoven’s Symphony no. 5 and Peter Tchaikovski’s Symphony no. 5. Because of the years of close collaboration between “El Sistema” and the Beethovenfest Bonn, the Teresa Carreño Youth Orchestra of Venezuela is starting its European tour in Bonn. Further concerts are scheduled for Vienna, Berlin, Amsterdam, Madrid and London.

The Beethovenfest Bonn will offer an extensive framework programme for the young Venezuelans during their stay in Bonn, which will last several days, including a meeting with Bonn’s students as well as a visit to Beethoven’s birthplace.

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