
BILBAO, THE PERFORMING CITY – PERFORMING ARTS POLICIES IN BILBAO



ARTS NETWORK
EMPLOYMENT
LEADERSHIP
PUBLIC SPACE SUPPORT
COOPERATION ACCESS
PLANNING CREATIVITY

1. Context

Bilbao's process is well-known and has been frequently used as a benchmark in international studies on urban policies. The city is the capital of the province of Bizkaia with a population of some 350,000 people, and about one million people living within the metropolitan area of "Greater Bilbao". Since the 1980s, it has led an "urban revolution". Thanks to this movement, the city has transformed from being based on the steel and shipbuilding industries into a city of services where culture is fundamental in the strategy to drive innovation, and promote sustainable economic and social development.

Under Bilbao's institutional leadership of the Regional Government of Bizkaia and the Basque Government, the transformation of the city not only helped to revive its competitiveness, but also emphasised the value and the refocusing of its productive and intellectual capital. As a result, cultural policy was identified as a fundamental instrument for the city's global development, alongside urban planning and sustainability. Today, thirty years after that first initiative, the city's cultural life is maintained by new activities, services, leisure, culture, and tourism.

The balance between a city and its culture requires a reorientation of policies in order to make culture one of the indispensable elements for a society, and thereby effectively implement processes of change. This means understanding institutional leadership as a mediation exercise for transformation that is only possible with the involvement and active participation of diverse citizens' groups. This subsequently requires a style of governance based on a society's own drive for development. However, the primary challenge is creating

context and fertile environments where citizens can employ their creative forces to legitimise and build new cultural realities.

This has been the framework for steering cultural policies for the new Bilbao. Culture makes a city more cohesive by creating communities, enabling exchange, and establishing a viable way of life. Similarly, it improves urban planning, public space used for coexistence, mobility, the hospitality industry, urban ecology, and physical infrastructure as facilitators of creativity, symbolisms, new expressive forms, a productive framework, and cultural professions. Culture around the city; the city around culture. These are common themes that have defined the city's cultural policies for three decades.

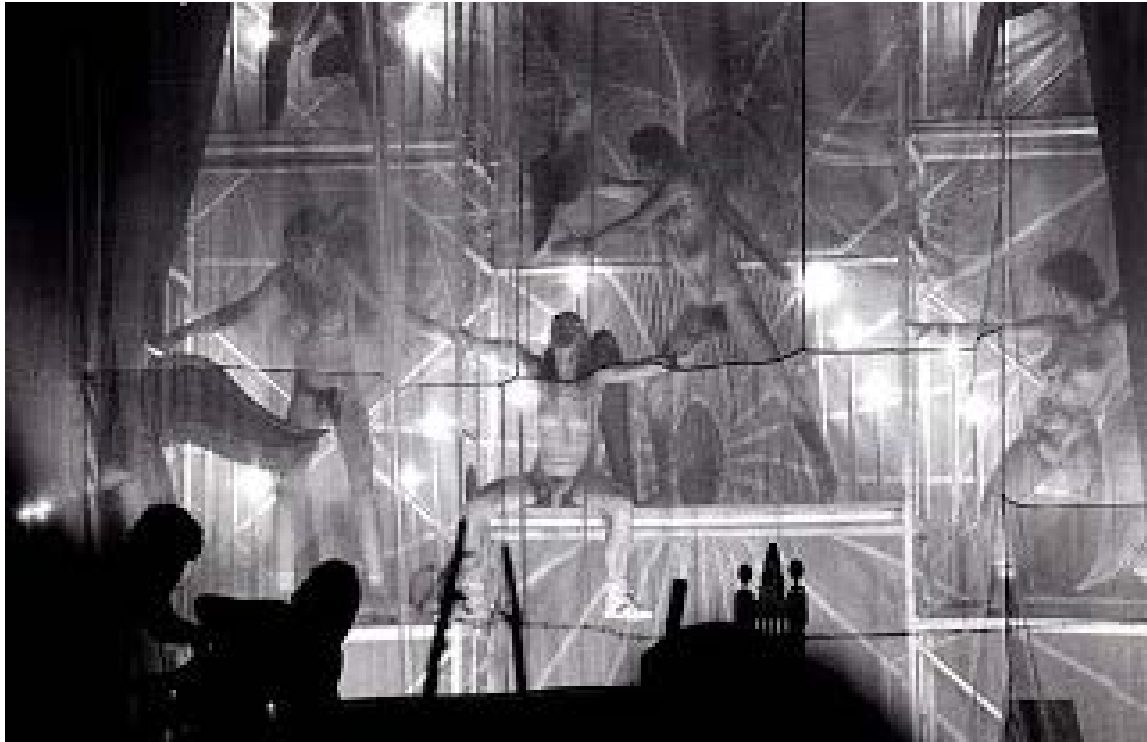
THE BALANCE BETWEEN A CITY AND ITS CULTURE REQUIRES A REORIENTATION OF POLICIES IN ORDER TO MAKE CULTURE ONE OF THE INDISPENSABLE ELEMENTS FOR A SOCIETY, AND THEREBY EFFECTIVELY IMPLEMENT PROCESSES OF CHANGE.

2. A Story of Triumph

The history of performing arts in Bilbao throughout the twentieth century is made up of a continuous succession of corporate or business initiatives that led to the appearance or disappearance of different venues. At the height of its success in the 1980s, the city had 15 commercial spaces, many of which were theatres as well as screening rooms. During this time, Bilbao was a popular destination for touring companies, particularly in the summertime during the Aste Nagusia city festival which has become a democratic phenomenon of citizen participation since 1978. With the decline of the industrial and economic model combined with the gradual decline of film as a significant cultural cornerstone and source of mass entertainment, the end of the decade was marked by the very minimal use, or even closure, of most of the aforementioned facilities.

Furthermore, in 1983 tragic floods devastated Bilbao, claiming lives and destroying emblematic parts of the city including the medieval quarter and its Arriaga Theater.





However, this disaster sowed the seeds for regeneration. As a response, all of Bilbao subsequently began a movement of building towards the future, which continues today. Today, it is difficult to analyse the history of the last thirty years and any activity in Bilbao outside of the context of its innovative beginnings in 1983. This is true for the commercial, industrial, hospitality, urban, citizen, or even cultural spheres.

The successes in each sector have mirrored that of the whole city. In designing the new Bilbao, culture was the driving force. Furthermore, the international impact of the Guggenheim Museum, and its cultural position in the city, have turned it into a symbol of renewal.

This was also reflected in the city's theatre community. Here, a new era began. Private initiatives which fuelled the performing arts industry throughout the twentieth century, were succeeded by public institutions and policies. These acted as initiators and drivers of innovative processes and environments, establishing contact with citizens' creative agents. Since then, the performing arts have been a primary sector for participation in the city.

It is impossible to mention public determination to promote the performing arts without the specific participation of the local creative agents themselves.

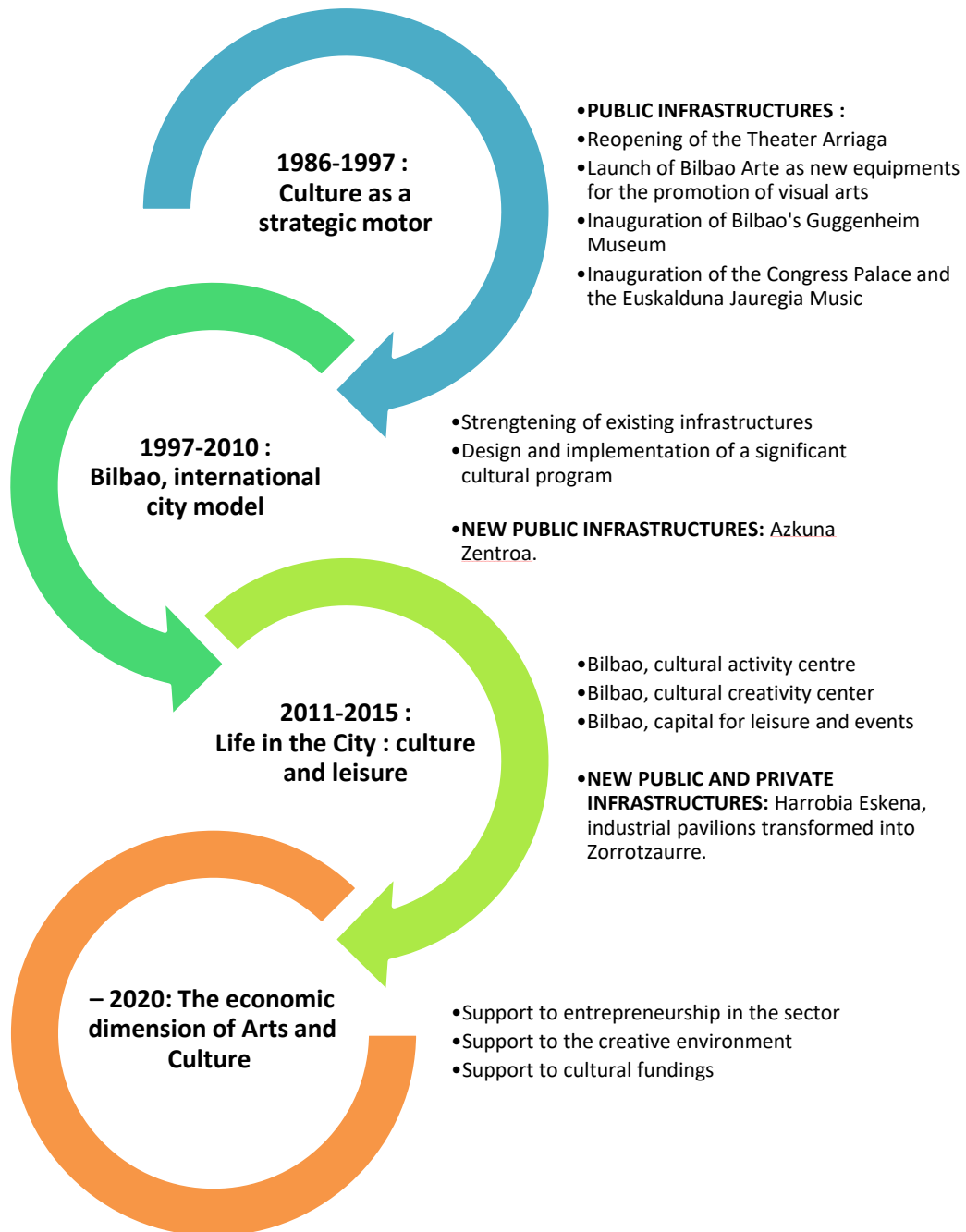
The theatre youth groups that evaded cultural persecution under the Franco dictatorship in the 1970s, such as Akelarre and Cómicos de la Legua, paved the way for a new generation rooted in social activism. This generation began to explore new artistic avenues and modes of production that the country's transition to democracy finally made possible.

Following this, a number of companies emerged that were dedicated to shaping the city's contemporary theatre scene. Karraka, Maskarada, Cobaya, Geroa, Markeline, Hortzmuga, and Gaitzerdi are just some of the groups committed to this goal. In turn new aesthetics, new dramaturgy, new brands, genres, and modes of production have been created to showcase Bilbao's brilliant theatre community. Today, the scene boasts interesting production potential from theatre to street arts, or from research to reinterpretation of the classics. This includes productions for adults or families, both in Basque and Spanish, as well as with professional or amateur groups, utilising all the prospective diversity available in the performing arts community.

NEW DRAMATURGY, NEW BRANDS, GENRES, AND MODES OF PRODUCTION HAVE BEEN CREATED TO SHOWCASE BILBAO'S BRILLANT THEATRE COMMUNITY.

3. Thirty years of building the City and Performing Arts

Thirty years of gradual development in municipal policies have brought together the city and culture, with the performing arts at the centre. It is a mutually beneficial relationship that can be summed up in four stages:



With culture as a notable pillar of the city's development, the recent 2015-2019 government plan considers, among others, these strategic lines of action:

- Promote a cultural programme that both empowers people to practice active citizenship, and facilitates all citizens' access to culture.
- Support for cultural creation and production, as well as for the Arriaga Theatre as a centre for events and performing arts productions.
- Exchange of experiences and cultural expressions and the promotion of Azkuna Zentroa as a benchmark multidisciplinary space.

These strategic lines are activated in turn by four cross-cutting elements that define their action strategy:

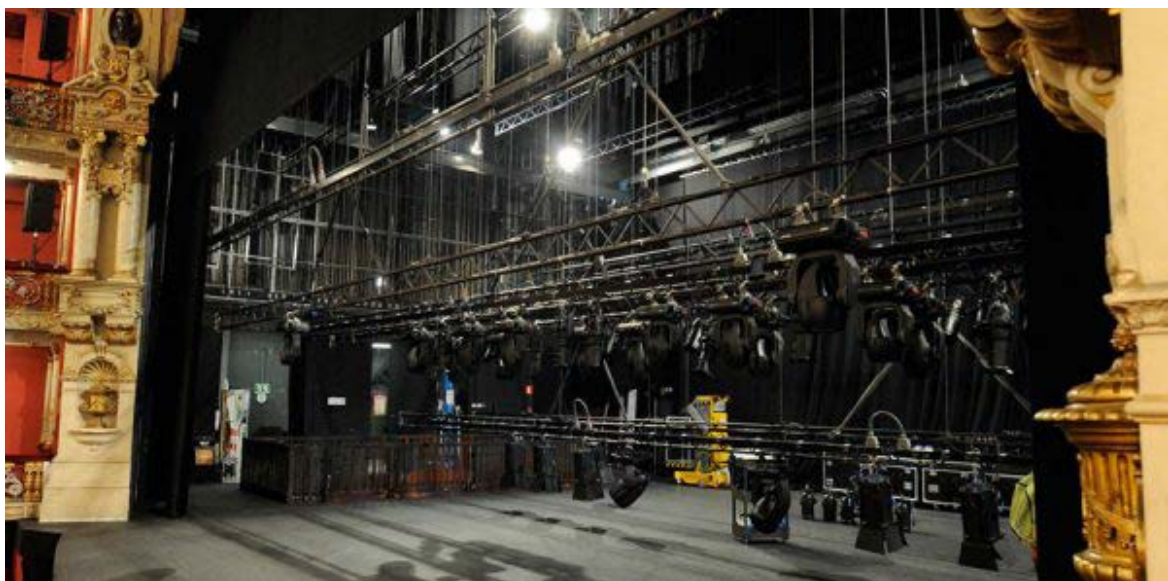
- **COMPREHENSIVE INTERVENTION ACROSS THE VALUE CHAIN**, from training through to demonstrating international excellence.
- **INTER-INSTITUTIONAL COLLABORATION** between different levels of public administration.
- **COLLABORATION BETWEEN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE**. Understanding that both private and public economic areas of businesses can facilitate citizen participation through community mediation.
- **BUDGETARY COMMITMENTS** that enable the stability of processes.

THIRTY YEARS OF GRADUAL DEVELOPMENT IN MUNICIPAL POLICIES HAVE BROUGHT TOGETHER THE CITY AND CULTURE, WITH THE PERFORMING ARTS AT THE CENTRE.

4. The Current Climate for Performing Arts in Bilbao

As a result of this support for constructing favourable environments, today there is a rich tradition of the performing arts throughout the city. This is due to initiatives carried out by both public and private groups that work together at different levels. Despite varying degrees of interaction among these bodies, they have occasionally functioned as a network, participating in cultural events such as the performing arts at city festivals or other occasions.

As a whole, they cover the four main areas of stage production: training, creation, production, and performance. With regard to the first element, training, in 2015 the Dantzerti Basque Graduate School of Dance and the Dramatic Arts opened. The performing arts sector of Bilbao has invested heavily on this centre, which will undoubtedly begin a hopeful, innovative era for the theatre scene.



Training Centres

Publicly Owned and Managed

Dantzerti	Basque Graduate School of Dance and the Dramatic Arts Offers taught degrees. http://www.dantzerti.eus/home
School of Theatre and Performing Arts Faculty of Fine Arts University of the Basque Country (UPV-EHU)	Offers supplementary courses. http://www.escuelateatrobilbao.com

Private Initiatives

Artebi	School of Music, the Performing Arts, and Visual Arts. http://www.artebi.es/
Ánima	Theatre and Film School. http://www.animaeskola.com/
Sala Kontainer	School of Theatre and Dance. Resources for creation and performance. http://www.kontaineraretoa.com/
Muzzik	School of Music and Theatre http://muzzik.es/

Production Resource Centres

Publicly Owned and Managed

Bilbao Eszena	Municipal resource centre for performing arts which supports and spreads awareness of amateur and semiprofessional theatre. 2004. Teaching and meeting spaces for people, groups, and associations involved in the creation and training of performing arts. Artists-in-residence programmes. Theatre courses. https://www.bilbao.eus
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Publicly Owned and Privately Managed

Harrobia Eskena	Municipal property managed by ESKENA, the Basque Association of Scenic Producers, with funding from the Basque Government. 2011. 1000 m2 dedicated to innovation in professional production processes, providing the necessary methodology, knowledge, and resources. http://harrobia.org/
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Events Spaces

Publicly Owned and Managed

Arriaga Antzokia Theatre	Municipally owned and managed. Historic building from 1890. Regular scheduling of various professional events. Main centre for Basque events and stage productions. Past directors: Luis Iturri, Lluís Pasqual, and Emilio Sagi. Current director: Calixto Bieito. http://www.teatroarriaga.eus/
Euskalduna Jauregia Palace	Owned and managed by the Regional Government of Bizkaia. Different spaces for regularly scheduled performances. National leader in number of performances, spectators, and revenue for public halls. http://www.euskalduna.eus/

Azkuna Zentroa	Municipally owned and managed. Multidisciplinary centre for contemporary art and culture. Regular scheduling of special events and complementary activities for live arts. AMPHITRYON: Artistic residences including performing arts. ART AND CULTURE: Regular scheduling of multidisciplinary events. http://www.azkunazentroa.eus/az/cast/inicio
Bilborock	Municipally owned and managed. Benchmark social and cultural meeting space for youth: music, theatre, film, and dance, including scheduled events, labs, and general activities. https://www.bilbao.eus
Network of District Municipal Centres	Municipally owned and managed. Has small and medium size spaces for teaching and performances, located in local facilities. https://www.bilbao.eus
Guggenheim Museum Bilbao	Limited scheduling. Events. https://www.guggenheim-bilbao.eus/

Publicly Owned and Privately Managed.

Campos Elíseos Antzokia Theatre	Municipal facility. Management agreement between the City Council and the Spanish Society of Authors. Two spaces for stage performances and multimedia arts. Regular scheduling of theatre, dance, and music. http://www.teatrocampos.com/
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Privately Owned and Managed.

La Fundición	Regularly scheduled events, creative processes, and other activities related to contemporary theatre and dance. Residency Programme Audience workshop. 2007 Max Prize for New Trends. Receives support and help from the municipality as well as other public institutions. http://www.lafundicion.org/
Kafe Antzokia	Basque multidisciplinary culture and leisure centre. Regular scheduling of music events. Occasional theatre events. Relies on municipal support. http://www.kafeantzokia.eus/es/
La Hacería	Limited scheduling and processes theatre (Hacería Eszeniko Club) and music creation, and community events under the ZAWP programme. Receives municipal collaboration. http://www.haceria.com/ http://www.zawp.org/ecosistema-zawp-2016/
Sala BBK	Urban culture and all types of social or charitable events. Regularly scheduled film, music, and theatre events. http://www.salabbk.es/
Pabellón 6	Performance association. Regularly scheduled events, creative processes and other activities related to contemporary theatre and dance. Ramón Barea, director, winner of the National Theatre Prize 2013. Includes a youth company. Receives municipal collaboration. http://pabellon6.org/

Festivals and Special Events

Public Initiative.

BAD	<p>Theatre and Contemporary Dance Festival 19 years Municipally managed and scheduled. Various stages around the city. Professional workshops. Networking with other cross-border groups for the co-production and mobility of shows.</p> <p>http://badbilbao.eus/web/</p>
Bilboko Kalealdia	<p>Street Arts Festival 18 years Municipally managed and scheduled. Various spaces around the city. Networking with other cross-border groups for the management of European aid programmes such as research and creation residencies, production processes, and professional workshops.</p> <p>http://bilbokokalealdia.eus/web/</p>
Prototipoak	<p>International Meeting on New Artistic Forms, which replaces "3,2,1 International Meeting on New Theatrical Forms". Municipally managed and scheduled.</p> <p>http://www.azkunazentroa.eus/az/cast/inicio</p>
Local municipal programmes and festivals.	<p>Bilboko Zirkuitua - Small and medium size theatre for companies throughout the Bizkaia capital. 16 years Zirkualde - Street circus festival in the Rekalde neighbourhood. 8 years Clown Zorrotza - Showcase of clown street shows in the Zorroza neighbourhood. 8 years Encuentros de Magia (Magical Encounters) in halls and on the street. In the Otxarkoaga-Txurdinaga district. 13 years Muestra de Teatro de Humor (Showcase of Comedic Theatre) in halls, in the Rekalde neighbourhood. 5 years Theatre for Seniors Week in Otxarkoaga 16 years Aste Nagusia Theatre - Street theatre and children's theatre under the official programme.</p>
Municipal programmes for children's/school theatre	<p>Bilbon eskolatik antzerkira - Campaign for theatre and dance performances for students of education centres. In collaboration with Mitusu. School Theatre Competition - Theatre contest created in schools across Bilbao. Ikusi eta ikasi - Multidisciplinary programme with a strong performance component to reinforce the use of the Basque language among children between 2 and 8 years old. In collaboration with Topagunea.</p>
Private Initiatives	
Txotxongilo Jaialdia - Puppet Festival	<p>36 years International events for different audiences. Relies on municipal funding.</p> <p>http://bilbaotxfest.org</p>
Dantzaldia	<p>International Dance Festival. A programme of La Fundación under the sponsorship of the Regional Government of Bizkaia and other public institutions. 18 years International explorations on contemporary dance. Events, workshops, teaching, film, and professional meetings in various spaces.</p> <p>http://dantzaldia.org/</p>
Lekuz leku	<p>The languages of contemporary dance in urban spaces. Festival with a programme of short dance pieces in open, strange, and unusual spaces. A programme of La Fundación under the sponsorship various public institutions. 12 years</p>

	http://www.lekuzleku.com/
ACT Festival	International Short Film Festival Aimed at new creators in the training process. Organised and managed by the BAI training centre, with municipal grants. http://bai-bai.net/bai/
FETABI	Festival of Theatre Schools, for students around the country, promoted by the SGAE Foundation. Held in the Campos Elíseos Theatre. 6 years
Private programmes for children's/school theatre	Haur Antzerki Topaketak Promoted by the Kurkuluxetan association at Kafe Antzokia. Graeco-Latin Theatre Festival To create interest in Classical antiquity among high school and baccalaureate students. Promoted by Skené. Puppet Sundays Programme for children and families in the Campos Elíseos Theatre.

Other Performing Arts Centres

Private Initiatives

Zirkozaurre	Association dedicated to spreading interest in the circus and performing arts in Bilbao. Training, spaces for teaching, practice, and performance, equipped for circus practices. Lead by artists in the circus and other performing arts. Municipal collaboration. http://zirkozaurre.com/es/
Karola Zirko Espazioa	Space for diffusion and work on circus and street theatre companies designed based on their needs in creation and training processes: rehearsal and training spaces, warehouses, offices, workshops, and showcases, among others. Municipal collaboration. https://www.facebook.com/karola.zirkoespazio
Mama Crea	Creative space for performing arts training and practice. http://mamacrea.com/
Dantzaka Zirko Espazioa	Training and creation project that combines elements of the circus with flamenco. https://www.facebook.com/dantzakazirkoespazioa/
Mano de Santa	Multipurpose space for creation and training in both the performing arts and cultural events. http://www.manodesanta.com/
Punto de Fuga	Space for the creative processes of dance groups and artists, that also offers training. http://www.espaciopuntodefuga.com

This group represents an increasing balance across different areas: the worldwide community, daily practice, the diversity of dramatic art forms, creation, proximity and community, and training. It is therefore capable of establishing connections between institutions, organisations, and the city's creative fabric to foster the development of productions.

Furthermore, in addition to the creative co-leading of this process, the Bilbao City Council has promoted the accessibility and enjoyment of the performing arts, the city's first administrative action which was done in line with the concept of a plural citizenship. This resulted in a number of programmes that promote amateur theatre, public promotion strategies such as "The Neighbourhood Box Office" or the successful "Arriaga

Friends" club. All this took place in an ongoing effort to establish the best possible communication and expand the loyalty network.

Creating new infrastructure, renovating unused buildings now destined for socio-cultural and performance events, and expanding the Network of District Municipal Centres have been decisive actions taken to improve access to the performing arts, which continue to spread throughout the city.

All of this has allowed Bilbao to offer the diverse, vibrant performing arts scene it has today. It is possible to look back and see the path that has led the city to this point.

Due to its dynamic performing arts industry, with amateurs and professionals in both stage and street theatre, the city accounts for over **825 DIFFERENT SHOWS** at around **1700 EVENTS** enjoyed by some **647,000 AUDIENCE MEMBERS**. These events star over **4200 ACTORS** with varying professional skills and experience. This does not include technical experts or the subsequent economic activity.

In addition, there are an estimated **600 STUDENTS** who participate in a wide range of performing arts training activities, both public and private, from universities to occupational workshops.

TODAY THERE IS A RICH TRADITION OF THE PERFORMING ARTS THROUGHOUT THE CITY. THIS IS DUE TO INITIATIVES CARRIED OUT BY BOTH PUBLIC AND PRIVATE GROUPS THAT WORK TOGETHER AT DIFFERENT LEVELS.

Today, the city is a cohesive environment which welcomes the diversity of a pluralistic society and an arts scene full of expressive forms and meanings. Its potential will continue to write new narratives of social development and cohesion.

It is time to establish new horizons. It is time to face new challenges for the performing arts community in Bilbao, within the overall context of major cultural changes. Undoubtedly, this will alter the current balance in the Bilbao scene and present new challenges, but it will also offer new and unexpected opportunities.

Thanks to the shared actions of all its stakeholders, Bilbao is in a great place to successfully take on new challenges and make the most of them. Together, the City Council and public institutions will help achieve this.

5. Other information

This fact sheet has been redacted by the Area of Culture of Bilbao City Council in January 2018.

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