

## Musical Renaissance in two UNESCO World Heritage towns: the Early Music Festival of Úbeda and Baeza (FeMAUB 2022, 26th edition)

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The past months of November and December 2022 hosted, like every year for the last quarter of a century, the Early Music Festival of Úbeda and Baeza (FeMAUB). Between November 12th and December 11th, FeMAUB held a total of 28 concerts in an exciting and packed program that occupied and brought to life architectural spaces that are part of the Renaissance Monumental Ensemble of Úbeda and Baeza, declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2003. The Holy Cathedral and the Church of Santa María del Alcázar y San Andrés in Baeza, as well as the Old Hospital of Santiago and the Holy Chapel of El Salvador in Úbeda, were some of the privileged spaces that saw their corners filled with music during the duration of the festival. FeMAUB 2022 served, once again, as a “meeting point for specialists, music lovers, and the general public, combining the transmission of Hispanic musical heritage with research” (Marín-López, 2021, p. 79)<sup>2</sup>.

Under the title “Crossover: Crossings in Early Music”, the 26th edition of the Jaén province-based festival delved into the intersections of early music –in that liminal space where experimentations and innovations occur. The festival organizers, led by University of Jaén Professor Javier Marín-López, successfully dismantled stereotypes and proved that early music is more alive than ever and that it is nourished from exchanges and dialogs with a variety of styles, disciplines, and genres such as jazz and popular musics. Demonstrating its open and multidisciplinary nature, the festival program was organized around six distinct cycles: crossover, heritage, educational, street, academic, and social. In line with previous editions, the festival incorporated significant commemorations into its programming. The 350th anniversary of the birth of Neapolitan genius Francesco Mancini thus served as the guiding theme for the opening concert, which was performed by the 2022 winner of the Festclásica Seal, La Ritirata. Additionally, the centenary of the passing of Enrico Caruso (1921-2021) was commemorated in the program by Ensemble La Chimera at the San Francisco Auditorium in Baeza.

With a focus on one of its guiding principles –the research and recovery of Ibero-American musical heritage– FeMAUB 2022 programmed not only works by renowned Spanish and European early music composers, but also world premieres of unpublished pieces by lesser-known musicians. As an example, La Real Capilla del Pópulo, conducted by Jorge Enrique García Ortega, performed a program entitled “17th-Century *Maestros* from Úbeda”, which included works by Francisco de Losada (ca. 1612-1667), Francisco Redondo (fl. 1628-1650), and Bartolomé de Alaminos (fl. 1659-1707). Among the notable pieces were the *villancico* for the Corpus Christi *A mi enamorado, señores* (Losada), and the mass *Super flumina*, for 8 voices (Alaminos).

Beyond its artistic, cultural, and touristic value, the 26th edition of the festival reached new heights in its already notable academic dimension. On this occasion, FeMAUB was a key collaborator in the organization of conferences and talks and in the publication of academic works. Particularly noteworthy is the international conference “Musicology and festivals: Latin-American and Iberian perspectives”, hosted by the International University of Andalusia (UNIA) in Baeza on December 2nd and 3rd. This conference served as a platform for the exchange of dialogs and musicological debates among researchers from Europe and the Americas on the growing field of festival studies.

Regarding publications, this past edition of the festival stood out for the release of a triple CD featuring a carefully curated compilation of concert recordings, many of which were made by Radio Nacional de España during the festival (<https://open.spotify.com/playlist/51NGCbsC0f6Cy5ILfdsQFk?si=7e57b6b1105c48c8>). The album includes four hours of music across 67 tracks selected by María del Ser Guillén, a presenter at Radio Clásica-RNE. The CD features notable works by Francisco Guerrero, Claudio Monteverdi, Tomás Luis de Victoria, Ignacio Jerusalem, Johannes Ciconia, and Joaquim Antônio da Silva performed by international renowned musicians such as Accademia del Piacere, La Danserye, the Seville Baroque Orchestra, Èlia Casanova, and Andrés Cea Galán, among others.

Moreover, this edition hosted the publication of the book *Me enamoran en Jaén*, a double volume spanning over 1000 pages that pays tribute to the festival’s 25 years of existence. Edited by Javier Marín-López (the festival’s general and artistic director) and Ascensión Mazuela-Anguita (deputy director), the book dedicates its first volume to a

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collection of essays written by experts and researchers who assess the current state of early music and the artistic, cultural, economic, academic, and educational impact that FeMAUB has had over the years. The second volume is a compilation of reviews, indexes, programs, and more, featuring over 200 photographs that complete a splendid edition befitting the festival itself.

Last but not least, FeMAUB remains faithful to its remarkable pedagogic work, which has long been evident through the educational concerts enjoyed by hundreds of children every year. In this edition, luthier, researcher, and multi-instrumentalist Abraham Cupeiro led these concerts. Through his project “The Forgotten Sounds”, Cupeiro transported listeners to bygone times by performing original works based on long-lost sounds of instruments that he himself rediscovered and built through meticulous historical research.

To sum up, FeMAUB 2022 maintains, if not surpasses, the level of previous editions. Its interdisciplinary, innovative, and international nature, which combines cultural and touristic promotion with musicological research, caters not only to experts in the field but also to a wide range of audiences across different generations. The festival’s constant efforts to establish new transnational networks solidify its position at the top of the ranks among Spain’s best music festivals.

## References

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