

Orchestra of New Spain
Grover Wilkins, Music Director

A Brief History

The Orchestra of New Spain is a period-instrument baroque orchestra and chorus specializing in, but not limited to, the music of Spain and its sphere of New World influence. The fully professional Orchestra is based in Dallas, but appears regularly on tour. It is made up of professionals experienced in historically informed style.

The Orchestra's repertory features works from the court of the 18th-century Bourbon kings of Spain, from the cathedrals and monasteries of that epoch, and from the popular theaters of Madrid. Since 2009 it has added music of Latin Americas through relationships with leading musicians and musicologists in IberAmerica.

The Orchestra owes its existence to the curiosity of its founder and music director, Grover Wilkins. Intrigued by the location of the Guadalupe Cathedral on the edge of the Arts District and a need to secure a role for the Cathedral in the life of the District, he created a concert of his recently rediscovered works of Spanish baroque music which became *the* Hispanic event for the 1989 opening of the Meyerson Symphony Center.

The breadth of the Orchestra's repertory and outreach is surprising. While many expect somber and heavy works from Catholic Spain, and others nothing less than *flamenco*, the reality is a repertory with the best of European 18th-century musical practices: a mixture of Spanish, Italian and Moorish influences that offer a tantalizing variety of musical styles and virtually always great musical entertainment.

The Orchestra's educational outreach is exemplified by its annual in-school programs, in English and Spanish, for every age group. Its programs have included early Spanish polyphony, Mexican liturgical works, full-blown, courtly mass settings for full orchestra, *zarzuela*, and recent full productions of Calderón de la Barca and Lope de Vega plays coproduced with Dallas' Booker T Washington High School for the Performing & Visual Arts and Southern Methodist University. Its Dallas ISD Summer Strings program welcomes 200 children for an intense week of lessons, rehearsals and performances. Since 2010 it has conducted a similar program in Santa Cruz, Bolivia.

The Orchestra appears on tour thanks to its major international sponsors. It has appeared in the Festival Cervantino, Mexico; Festival of Early Music, Bolivia; Washington National Gallery; in Santa Fe, Albuquerque, Seattle, Houston, New Orleans and in cities throughout North Texas. In 1999 the Orchestra's music director created *Madrid Barroco*, a Spain-based partner which was immediately chosen to record on the prestigious Dorian (now Sono Luminus) label. That recording was followed in 2007 by *Francisco Courcelle: Masses of Celebration*.

The Orchestra creates programs to accompany and intensify museum exhibits. This has been particularly successful with the Meadows Museum and the Crow Collection. But its true *raison d'être* is to open to the population at large a new window of what Hispanicism offers. The beauty, the glory, the impact of the Orchestra's music is not expected by most first time listeners. It is our mission to help those listeners understand that what we are doing is only the tip of the Hispanic iceberg, a profound iceberg that is today a major force in our society.