

# The Escuela de Práctica Orquestal and the Orquesta Joven de la Sinfónica de Galicia: history and impact

Aránzazu García Escuredo

Universitat Politècnica de València (UPV), España

[arantxaescuredo@gmail.com](mailto:arantxaescuredo@gmail.com)

**Abstract:** Around the 1990s, there was a remarkable emergence of symphony orchestras in the autonomous communities in Spain, and thus a change in the cultural physiognomy of its environment.

In 1994, the Orquesta Sinfónica de Galicia (OSG) created, for educational purposes, the Escuela de Práctica Orquestal (EPO); that became known as the Orquesta Joven de la Sinfónica de Galicia (OJSG) in 2002. In recent years we have witnessed a remarkable proliferation of such groups of young musicians throughout the Iberian Peninsula.

The objective of this research is to study the degree of impact on the formation of professional musicians and the evolution of the educational work of the OJSG in its area of influence.

Thus, the researcher manages data extracted from various documentary sources and statistical data. Former students' interviews are also taken in consideration to verify the influence of this Youth Orchestra in their musical training and its overall role in improving the educational opportunities of its environment.

The study tries to verify the establishment of a stable pool of professional musicians in Galicia under the influence of OJSG.

**Keywords:** Orchestral training, Youth Orchestra, Symphony Orchestra, Galicia.

## **Introduction**

During the 1990s, the number of symphonic orchestras increased dramatically. From 1987 to 2000 more than fifteen new orchestras were created. The Orquesta Sinfónica de Galicia (OSG), which was established in 1992, was the first orchestra in Galicia.

Recently, ensembles for young musicians have been spreading. The Spanish Association of Youth Orchestras was created in 2003 and many of these orchestras belong to it.

The OSG created the Escuela de Práctica Orquestal (EPO) in 1994, which had an educational aim. In 2002, it was called the Orquesta Joven de la Sinfónica de Galicia (OJSG). In 2010, the Orquesta de Niños (ON) of the OSG was established. It was oriented for children between six and fifteen years of age, so they could begin their orchestral learning before reaching the minimum age to join the official music training.

There is no previous research about the OSG, probably due to its short period of existence. The existing research on youth orchestras, especially in Latin America (Aharonián 2006), relates to the National Network of Youth and Children's Orchestras of Venezuela (Quijada 2014; Burgos García 2009). Most of this research is focused on the social function of these groups (Perfetti 2002), their educational (Ferrer 2009, Muíños de Britos 2010) and, even their therapeutic role (Lucchini, Cuadrado y Quiroga 2011; Wald 2011). In Spain there are some articles about management (Garre 2008) and the professional music training of this kind of group (Turina 2008; Sanchís López 2013; López and Castro 2015).

My objective is to research the impact of the training of music professionals and the evolution of the educational work of the OJSG in its area of influence. This project is part of my Ph.D. thesis. It will comprise all the relevant aspects in which the OSG could have a meaningful influence.<sup>1</sup>

## **Orchestral training in the Educational System.**

---

<sup>1</sup> All data for this research concerning the EPO, the OJSG and the OSG has been provided by the orchestra itself.

Training and professional careers are changing processes, so this study only provides a partial view of the situation.

Without prejudice to the fact that education centres have orchestras and wind bands as an extracurricular activity, the education laws related to the organisation of art studies in public centres have ignored orchestral training for the students. It has been an inexistent subject on many educational levels and only appeared in some curricula such as “instrumental practice” or “instrumental ensemble”. Only after the implementation of the organic law in 1990 and its related curricula, a subject called “orchestra” is found. In this case, it is clearly defined and presents a significant number of real working hours:

During the 90s, the Galician conservatories begin to depend on the Galician Autonomous Government, matching up with the implementation of the education organic law (LOGSE). It began in the high level of music studies in the academic year 2001-2002. The new organization was a breakthrough in the music world. [...] Maybe the most important step was the establishment of the subject of orchestra and the organization of pupils according to the chamber orchestra in the middle level and to a symphony orchestra in the high level. (Cid, 2012: 3).

<i>Extinguishment</i>	1987	2003	2010	In force	
<i>curriculum</i>	1942	1966	LOGSE (1990) Organic Law on General Education System	LOE (2006) Education Law.	LOMCE (2013) Organic Law for the Improvement of Educational Quality.
<i>Decree</i>	Decree of June 15, 1942.  On the organization of the Conservatory of Music and Declamation.	<a href="#">Decree 2618/1966, september 10, 1966.</a>	<a href="#">Royal Decree 756/1992, June 26, 1992.</a> (Elemental and Professional Degree)  Royal Decree 617/1995, april 21, 1995 ( Superior Degree)	Royal Decree 1577/2006, december 22, 2006. (Elemental and Professional Degree).  Royal Decree 631/2010, may 14, 2010 (Superior Degree).	Royal Decree 1027/2011, july 15, 2011. That establishes the Spanish Qualifications Framework for Higher Education (MECES). <i>Decree 163/2015, october 29, 2015 (Superior Degree in Galicia)</i>
<i>Orchestral Practice or Ensemble.</i>	Superior Degree: <b>Choral and instrumental ensemble.</b> (Hours	Superior Degree: <b>Non-existent.</b>	Superior Degree: <b>Orchestra / chamber music:</b> (Workload equal to the instrument: 180	Superior Degree: <b>Ensemble:</b> (12 ECTS credits versus	Superior Degree: <b>Orchestra:</b> (3 hours per week).

	unspecified).		hours).	66 of instrument).	
	Professional degree: <b>Non-existent.</b>	Medium degree: <b>Two courses of ensemble.</b> (Hours unspecified).	Professional degree: <b>Orchestra.</b>	Professional degree: <b>Orchestra.</b>	
	Elementary degree: <b>Non-existent.</b>	Elementary degree: <b>Non-existent.</b>	Elementary degree: <b>Non-existent.</b>	Elementary degree: <b>Non-existent.</b>	
<b>Extinguishment</b>	<b>1987</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>In force</b>	
<b>curriculum</b>	1942	1966	LOGSE (1990) Organic Law on General Education System	LOE (2006) Education Law.	LOMCE (2013) Organic Law for the Improvement of Educational Quality.
<b>Decree</b>	Decree of June 15, 1942.  On the organization of the Conservatory of Music and Declamation.	<a href="#">Decree 2618/1966, september 10, 1966.</a>	<a href="#">Royal Decree 756/1992, June 26, 1992.</a> (Elemental and Professional Degree)  Royal Decree 617/1995, april 21, 1995 ( Superior Degree)	Royal Decree 1577/2006, december 22, 2006. (Elemental and Professional Degree).  Royal Decree 631/2010, may 14, 2010 (Superior Degree).	Royal Decree 1027/2011, july 15, 2011. That establishes the Spanish Qualifications Framework for Higher Education (MECES). <i>Decree 163/2015, october 29, 2015 (Superior Degree in Galicia)</i>

**Figure I.** Orchestral practice in the Spanish educational legislation.

Some sectors are demanding a change in the education approach, which could contribute to bringing students into closer contact with professional orchestras. Some collaboration models between professional orchestras and conservatories exist in countries such as Germany, such as the case of the Gewandhaus Orchestra and the Conservatory of Leipzig (López and Castro, 2015).

However, it is not possible to ignore the important tradition of wind ensembles in Galicia, especially in the provinces of A Coruña (twenty-seven registered wind bands) and Pontevedra (forty-eight registered wind bands). This situation has

provided an extra real instrumental practice to wind musicians, while string musicians have not had a similar option until quite recently.

### Youth Orchestras in Spain.

There seems to be agreement among the sources regarding the remarkable improvement in the situation of orchestras in Spain in recent years. It is due to the creation of a network of theatres, which has provided the autonomous communities with proper spaces to develop orchestral activities. Moreover, it has also resulted in the foundation of new symphony orchestras, which have reached the number of twenty-eight at the moment<sup>2</sup>.

Simultaneously, the number of youth orchestras, schools, etc., has increased. Many of them depend on local, autonomous or national public administrations and others, such as the OJSG, are linked to professional symphony orchestras (Garre, 2008).

year	1981	1983	1988	1989	1991	1993	1994	1997	1998	2003	2004	2015
orchestra	OJRM	JONDE	OS luventas	JOGC	JOCM JOVG JOPM	JONC	OJSG	AEOOST EGO	JOSPA JOSSV	JOSV	JOSS JOSCyL OJE	OJA

**Figure II.** Foundation year of the Youth Orchestras associated to SAYO (Spanish Association of Youth Orchestras).

The workings and the objectives of these youth orchestras tend to be similar:

In order to get the professionalizing objective for their members, almost all the youth orchestras follow an operation scheme [...]: rigorous selection of the candidates, concentrated activity in periodical meetings, concert tour at the end of each encounter, recordings (Turina, 2008: 77).

### The EPO (1994-2001):

The Escuela de Práctica Orquestal was the first name for the educational project of the OSG. It was organised in annual meetings (normally four) of different duration (around two weeks). The educational program was based on individual lessons with teachers from the orchestra, analysis, chamber music and Alexander technique lessons, master classes and, finally, a concert. This scheme has been kept until this

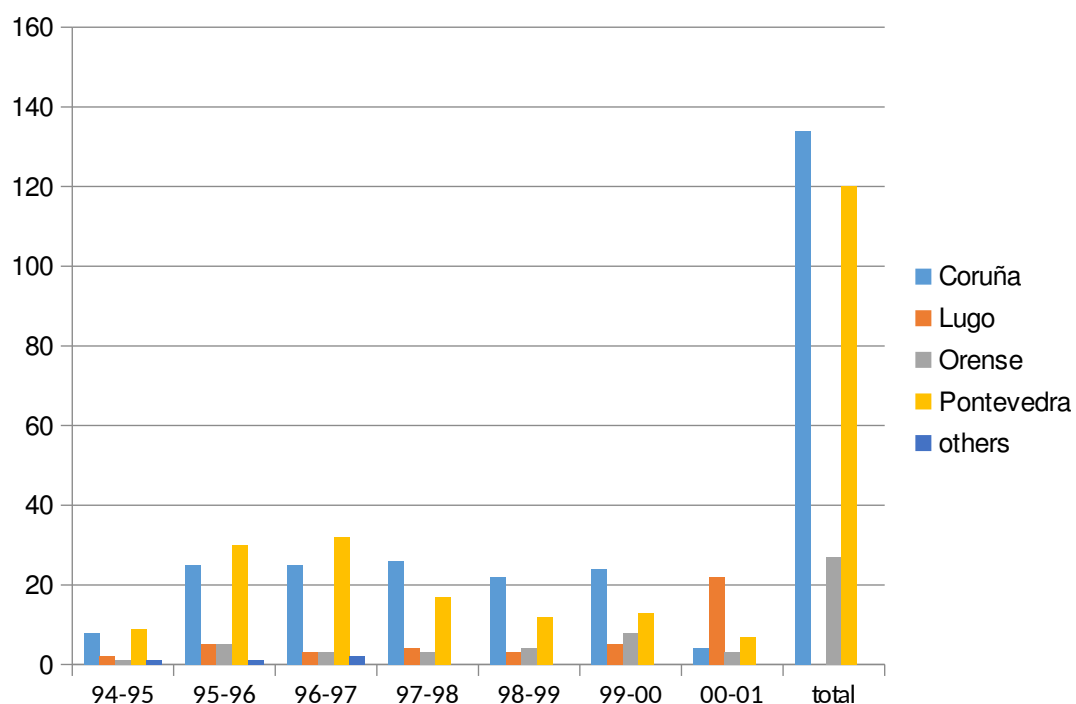
<sup>2</sup> Only the orchestras which are members of the Spanish Association of Symphony Orchestras are taken into account, apart from the existence of other groups which are not part of it.

moment.

Taking into account the existing curricula of that period of time, the students who took part in the meetings since the beginning until the change into the Youth Orchestra had studied under the study plan of 66. They had little or no official orchestral training. We have to keep in mind that the aforementioned plan disappeared in 2003 and the following plan began to be implemented in the lowest courses. Thus, the students of the new plan would take a few years to study the subject called orchestra.

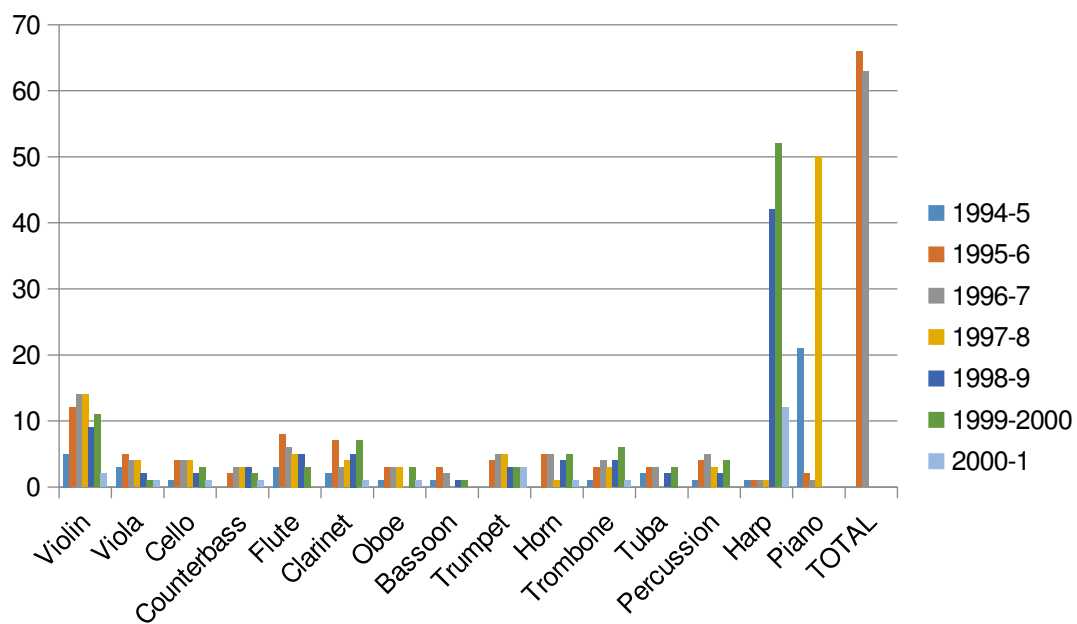
The age of the pupils during this time was between thirteen and twenty-seven years of age and they mainly came from the autonomous community. The participation of students from other communities was very low and there were no foreign pupils.

The province analysis reveals that most pupils came from La Coruña and Pontevedra, probably because the two high conservatories in Galicia are located in these provinces.



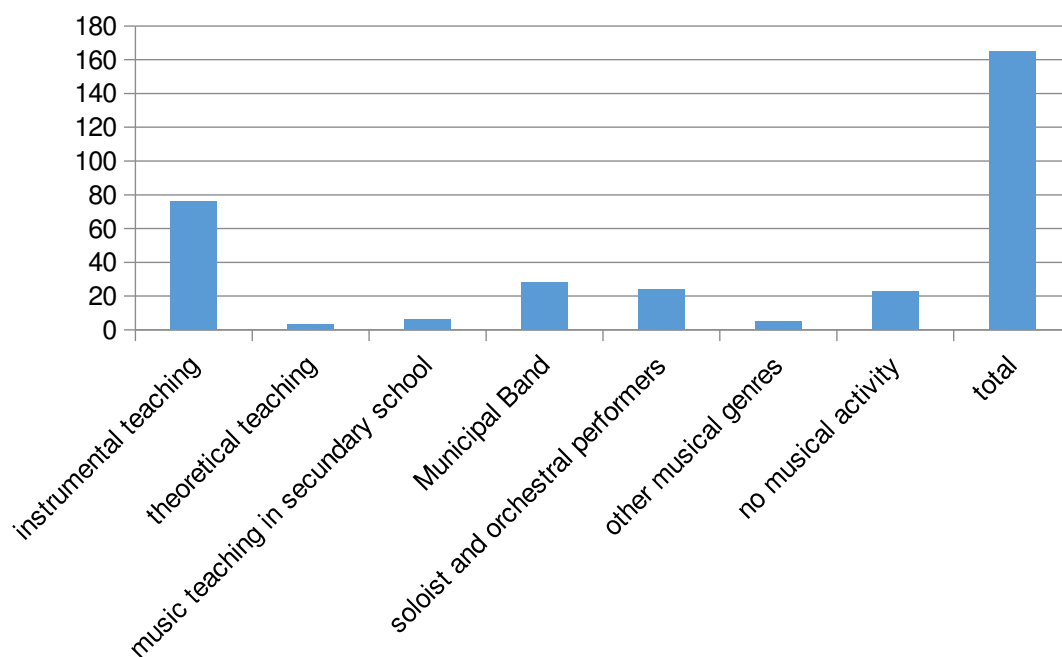
**Figure III.** EPO by origin 1994-2001

The offered instruments cover the usual orchestral ones. However, piano and other instrument students were invited as “guest participants” to complete the necessary instruments for a specific work. In these cases, the selection was not through an open call process.



**Figure IV.** EPO by instrument

The history of the EPO enables us to assess the professional situation of its students. Of the remaining cases, five are working in other music genres such as jazz, folk or popular musical. The rest are working in activities which are not related to music.



**Figure V.** career of EPO students

**The OJSG (2002- ):**

Currently, the process of selection is performed once a year by open call. It is targeted at the candidates who fulfil the following requirements: being registered in an intermediate or high level conservatory (or school) or having finished the high level studies in the last four years; being a Norwegian, Icelandic or EU citizen; being between sixteen and twenty-two years old (since 2013).

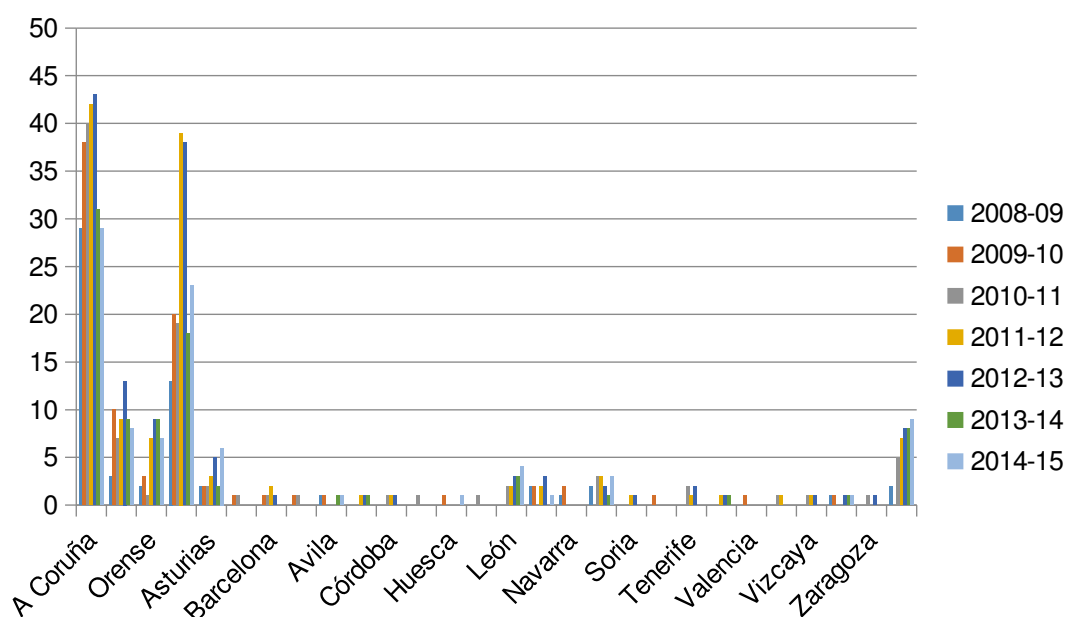
Regarding the working system:

The OJSG plans a minimum amount of four meetings in each academic year. The extension goes from 9 to 14 days [...]. It is focused on the orchestral training trying to balance the little opportunities offered in the conservatories, but there is normally a meeting for chamber music. [...] Pupils have the possibility to receive a number of free individual lessons [...] with any of the instrument professors from the OSG. (OSG report 2001-2008).

The age range has been applied to the calls since 2010. Since 2013, the maximum age has been reduced from twenty-four to twenty-two years old. This fact adjusts the orchestral offer to the official studies (after the implementation of the 1990 educational law, the high level is supposed to be attended between the ages of eighteen and twenty-two).

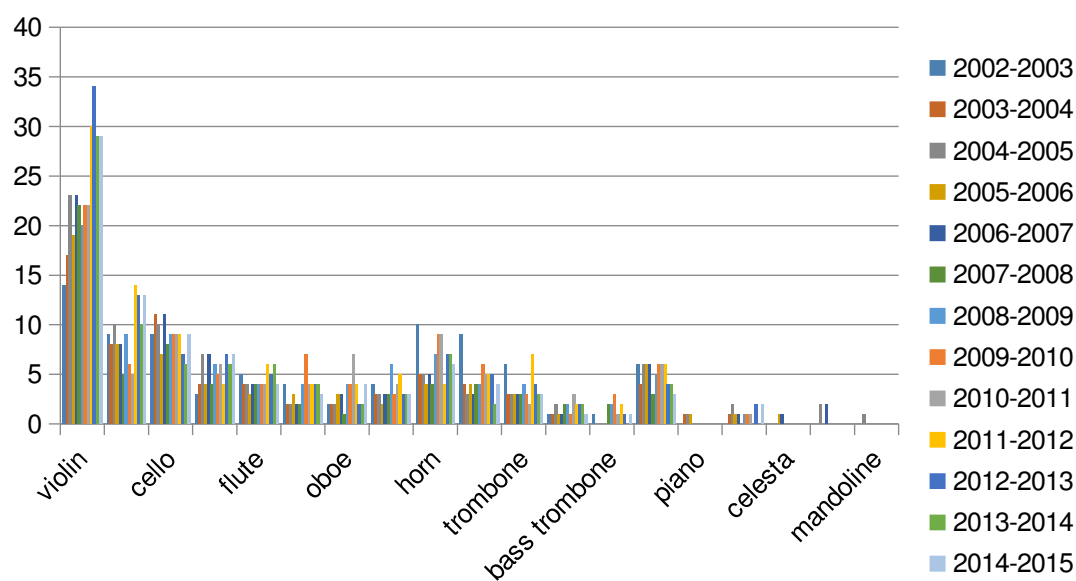
The origin of the students of the OJSG since 2008 not only has become very diverse (with pupils from all over Spain) but also has been more international with an increasing number of students from Portugal.





**Figure VI.** OJSG by origin since 2008.

The diverse instrumental offer is also remarkable, as is the progressive increase of the pupils from the school, numbering around eighty people for the last calls.



**Figure VII.** OJSG by instruments.

The development and progress of the pupils from this period reveals a major increase of those who follow their training in European institutions, particularly in Holland, and in some orchestral groups similar to the Joven Orquesta Nacional de

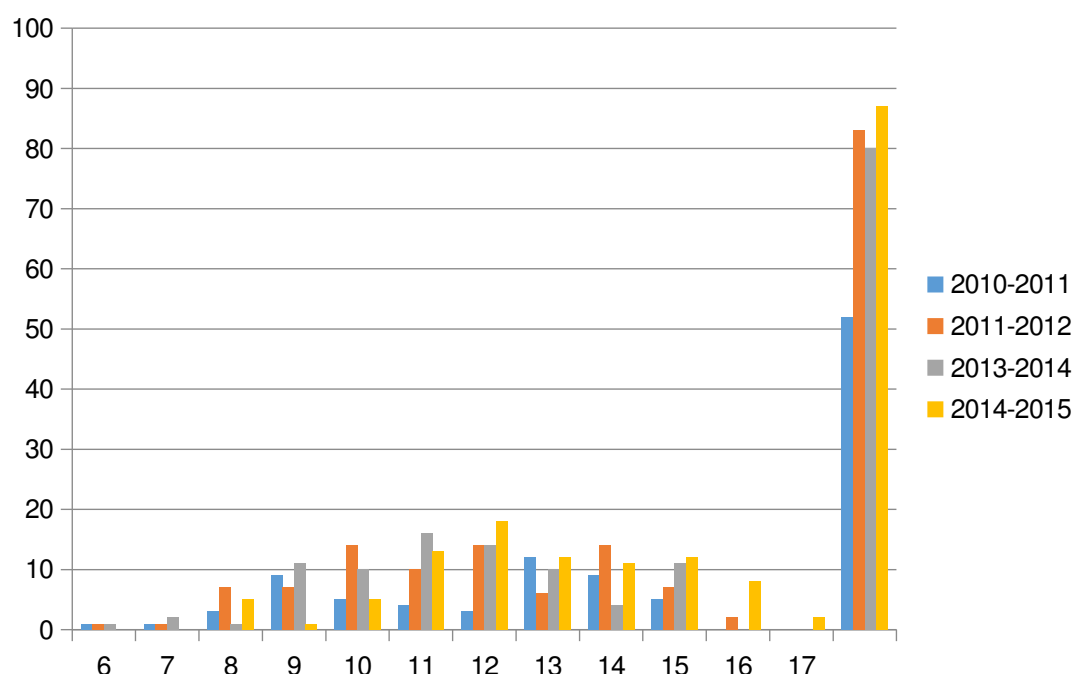
España (JONDE), such as the European Union Youth Orchestra or the Gustav Mahler Orchestra. We should stress the new measures adopted in the European policies regarding mobility programs and grants, which contribute to improving the students' possibilities in recent years.

### **The Orquesta de Niños. Educational Project: *Son Futuro* (2010- )**

The Orquesta de Niños (ON) of the OSG began its path in 2010 and it is part of a broader and ambitious program called *Son Futuro*. There are four ensembles divided into age groups under that designation (two vocal ensembles and two orchestral groups): the ON, the OJSG, the Youth Choir and the Child Singers.

The admission criteria for the ON are identical to those of the OJSG but only for string players who are registered in an elementary or intermediate conservatory or in a music school.

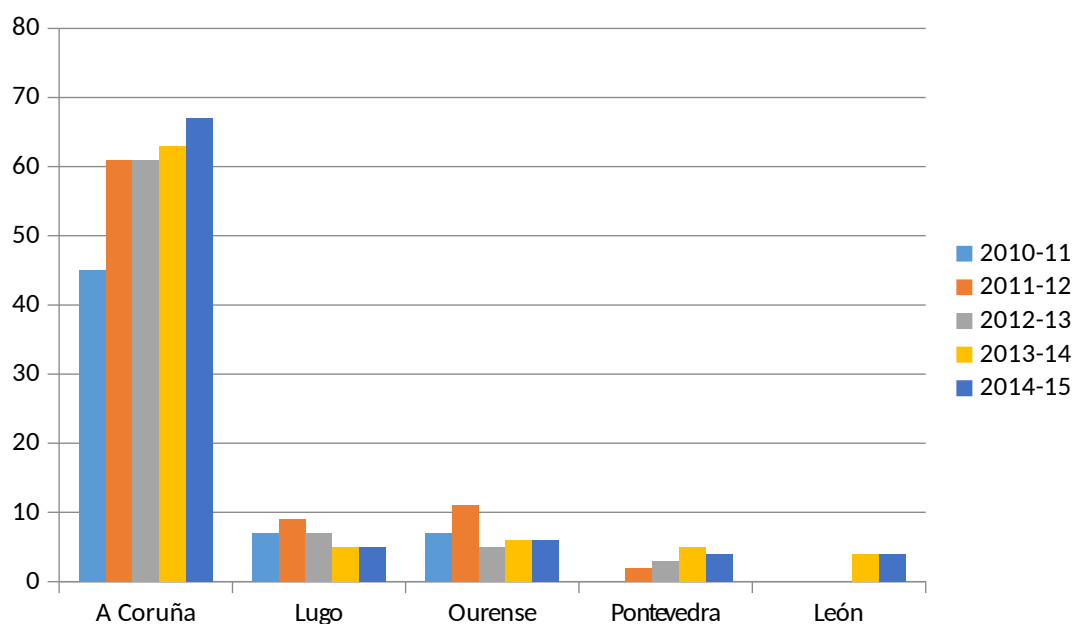
Regarding the age, the orchestra began receiving pupils between six and fifteen years old, although different cases could be exceptionally considered by the selection board. These criteria were changed and, thus, established as follow: violins and violas, between seven and fifteen years old; cello: between seven and sixteen years old; double bass: between seven and seventeen years old.



**Figure VIII.** ON by ages

The members are divided into two groups: junior (from six to eleven years old) and senior (twelve years and over) but it is not a fixed classification and, depending on their instrument level, younger students could belong to the senior group and vice-versa.

The origin of the young musicians is restricted to Galicia. There is a significant difference among A Coruña and the rest of provinces (including a number of pupils who come from the nearby province of León). The early age of children is a very important and decisive aspect related to this trend.



**Figure IX:** ON by origin

Twenty-one of the one hundred and forty-six pupils who had belonged to the Orquesta de Niños through its short existence, are or have been students in the OJSG and now are studying in other institutions. It means that there is continuity in this process. It is an important number because most of ON members are part of it from an early age and these are their first academic steps.

## Conclusions:

The EPO began its work in Galicia when nobody had launched a similar organization. Its function has been relevant because many of pupils, who were part of the EPO during its first years, are now a representative proportion of the teachers working at

the Galician official centres of intermediate and high level and at other centres of music studies.

The establishment of the ON supposes a step further in the creation of a regular orchestral school and it means the expansion of opportunities in the first levels of music education.

There is a feedback relationship between the training function of the orchestra because pupils from the EPO and the first years of the OJSG become teachers in the ON project.

Both EPO and OJSG have improved the educational programs for music students in their environment and they have established a solid group of professional musicians with a national and international scope.

## References

Aharonián, Coriún (2006). Música, educación, sociedad in *Clang, revista de música*, 1(1): 28-37.

Alén, María Pilar (1997). "Panorama y reflexiones sobre un cuarto de siglo de historiografía y actividades musicales en Galicia (Ca. 1972-1997)". *Boletín AEDOM* 4 (2).

\_\_\_\_\_ (2000). "Reflexiones sobre el ambiente musical en La Coruña (1920-1980) a través del 'Fondo Bugallal'". *Campos interdisciplinarios de la musicología: V Congreso de la Sociedad Española de Musicología (Barcelona, 25-28 de octubre de 2000)*, 1: 213-234.

Asociación Española de Jóvenes Orquestas <http://www.aejo.org/miembros.asp> [accessed 15/11/2015].

Asociación Española de Orquestas Sinfónicas <http://www.aeos.es/> [accessed 15/11/2015].

Burgos García, Osvaldo (2009). *El eco de la orquesta: análisis de los valores humanos reflejados en las crónicas sobre las presentaciones de la Orquesta Sinfónica de la Juventud Venezolana Simón Bolívar*. Ph.D. Thesis, University of Malaga.

Cid Castro, María José (2012). "Los conservatorios superiores de Galicia durante la LOGSE". *Revista Electrónica de LEEME (Lista Europea Electrónica de Música en la Educación)* 29: 1-22 <http://musica.rediris.es/leeme> [accessed 15/11/2015].

European Federation of National Youth Orchestras <http://www.efnyo.org/index.php?>

[page=welcome](#) [accessed 30/11/2015].

Federación Gallega de Bandas de Música Popular [http://www.fgbmp.net/index.php?id=257&no\\_cache=1](http://www.fgbmp.net/index.php?id=257&no_cache=1) [accessed 25/11/2015].

Ferrer i Miquel, Rita (2009). "El canto coral y las orquestas infantiles, una educación en valores". *Eufonía Didáctica de la Música* (45): 30-38.

Garre Martínez, Alberto (2008). *Modelos de gestión de las orquestas de jóvenes en España. Estudio de casos*. Master Dissertation, Complutense Institute of Musical.

Gaviña, Susana (2002) "Dossier jóvenes orquestas: el reto de la práctica orquestal". *Doce notas*, 31: 9-23.

López López, Iván and Lago Castro, Pilar (2015). "La academia de orquesta como modelo formativo: una propuesta de aplicación en España". *Foro de educación*, 13(18): 111-122.

Lucchini, Graciela, Cuadrado, Blanca and Quiroga, Pedro (2011). Aspectos afectivos y sociales atribuibles a la participación en la orquesta de Curanilahue in *Fundación educacional Arauco*. Santiago de Chile: Arauco Fundación Educacional

Martínez Berriel, Soledad (1992). "Los músicos de orquesta: un análisis sociológico de la profesión a través de los músicos". *Revista de Musicología*, (15) 1: 303-311.

\_\_\_\_\_ (2008). "Élites migratorias transnacionales: los músicos de orquestas clásicas en España". *TRANS 12 - Revista Transcultural de Música* [accessed 24/10/2015].

Muñíos de Britos, Stella Maris (2010). "La práctica musical colectiva. Aprendizaje artístico y social". *Revista iberoamericana de educación* (52) 2: 1-9.

Orquesta Sinfónica de Galicia. <http://www.sinfonicadegalicia.com/> [accessed 22/11/2015]

Orquesta Sinfónica de Galicia. "Son Futuro: Programa Educativo de la Orquesta Sinfónica de Galicia" in <https://sonfuturo.wordpress.com/> [accessed 22/11/2015].

Perfetti Holzhäuser, Ana María (2002). *Actitud y Participación Ciudadana a través de la Educación Musical: ¿Qué pasa en Venezuela?* Ph.D. Thesis, Simon Bolivar University

Peter Etzkorn, K. (1982). "Sociología de la práctica musical y de los grupos sociales". *Revista internacional de ciencias sociales: los componentes de la música*, 34 (4): 619-635.

Quijada Medina, Aurea (2014). "Comparación en materia de políticas culturales y programas de desarrollo social enfatizados en 'El Sistema' entre Europa y

Latinoamérica con ejemplificación en países como Austria, México y Venezuela”. *Saskab. Revista de discusiones filosóficas desde acá*, 8.

Sanchís López, Marina (2013). “Itinerarios profesionales de violonchelistas: un estudio biográfico narrativo”. *Revista Electrónica Complutense de Investigación en Educación Musical*, 10. [http://dx.doi.org/10.5209/rev\\_RECI.2013.v10.44048](http://dx.doi.org/10.5209/rev_RECI.2013.v10.44048) [accessed 24/10/2015].

Spain. Decree of 15 June on the organization of the conservatories of Music and Declamation. BOE of July 4, 1942, 185: 4838-4840.

Spain. Decree 2618/1966 of 10 September on General Rules of the conservatories of music. BOE of October 24, 1966, 254: 13381-13387.

Spain. Royal Decree 617/1995 of 21 April, the basic aspects of the curriculum of the higher degree of Music education is established and proof of access to these studies is regulated. BOE of June 6, 1995, 134: 16607-16631.

Spain. Royal Decree 631/2010 of 14 May, establishing the basic content of the upper artistic educations of Degree in Music established in the Organic Law 2/2006 of 3 May, of Education is regulated. BOE of 5 June 2010, 137: 48480-48500.

Turina, José Luis (2008). “Las jóvenes orquestas y la formación musical de carácter profesional”. *Revista Neuma*, I: 74-80.

Wald, Gabriela (2011). “Promoción de la salud integral: el caso de dos programas de orquestas juveniles de la ciudad de Buenos Aires”. *Rev. Argent. Salud Pública*, 2(7): 6-11.