

Judith Jaurégui

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Clara und Robert Schumann

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Spanish pianist Judith Jaurégui

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Creative intuition

Judith Jáuregui is a strikingly individual performer who has impressed European audiences with her maturity of expression. **Michael Johnson** spoke to this imaginative Spanish artist

The youthful and vibrant Spanish pianist Judith Jáuregui, 35, can't wait to grow old. The best interpretations are based on life experience, she believes, so I actually look forward to getting older. Critical reception in Europe for her new album *The Romantic Soul* – an exploration of Clara and Robert Schumann's symbiosis – has been extremely positive. Yet Covid-19 confinement has frustrated her more than ever before in her short career. She last performed publicly in March and misses opportunities to share her music. This is a critical gap, she adds, because 'music only comes to life when shared'.
The youngest of three daughters of a Spanish mother and Mexican father, Jáuregui began her piano studies aged five and knew intuitively the piano was 'my place to be'. None of her other family members is musical. By the age of 18, Cristina Novas, her teacher in San Sebastián, urged her to relocate to Munich and study with renowned Russian pedagogue Vadim Suchanov. She recalls what happened at her audition after listening to one page of her playing. Suchanov interrupted her and asked whether she wanted to study with him. 'Yes, of course', she responded. That began her first three-hour lesson with him at the Richard Strauss Konservatorium. Suchanov,

Judith Jáuregui: 'Music only comes to life when shared'

notoriously hard to get, assigned her an unprecedented regime of daily lessons. The relationship lasted for three years, culminating in her master's degree at age 22. Suchanov's teaching has remained with her as her technique and musicality have developed. She arrived in Munich an 'emotional volcano', she tells me, but Suchanov taught her how to focus and how to practice. He forced me to be aware of each note. They all have a meaning, you know. Once everything is integrated in the brain, you have the freedom to fly. With three decades of mixed cultural influences behind her, she denies favouring any 'schools' – German, Mexican, French or Spanish. 'I simply follow my nature,' she says, although German and French tend to dominate.
Now gaining recognition in mainland Europe for her broad repertoire and accomplished technique, she has impressed Vienna audiences with her Schumann and charmed her compatriots in Madrid with her Albeniz and other Spanish masters. In both extremes, she plunges physically into the music, virtually dancing to Albeniz and showing maturity and depth in Schumann. To her sensibilities, Robert and Clara are 'the definition of German Romanticism'. Jáuregui is unconcerned with public opinions of her dramatic stagecraft. Her graceful swooping and supple

gestures are innocent, not calculated in the manner of many young pianists seeking attention. She loses herself in the music, happy to 'escape from reality' so thoroughly that she does not hear the applause at the end. 'Music flows through my imagination,' she says. I ask if she is a risk-taker. 'I have the choice to experiment, to try new things, to act intuitively and spontaneously. I am. I might make mistakes, but I will learn something. I will carry an idea to its conclusion. I choose to play to create, not to avoid.' Her recitals and recordings are marked by this striking individualism.
Running through her favourites, Jáuregui tells me she returns to nature through Beethoven and Brahms, that she has seen 'magical sunsets' with Debussy play like a child in Mozart, and travels to Andalusia with Albeniz. Mompos and his miniatures are also part of her makeup, taking her back to her earliest memories. In her 2016 album titled *X*, she delved into the audacity of Scriabin's early modernism. Her accompanying liner notes quote Scriabin himself as he wrote in his *Poem of Ecstasy*, his music draws on the 'obscure depths of the creative spirit'.
Jáuregui is now established as a Bösendorfer Artist, an elite group that includes Andrés Schiff, Daniil Trifonov, Elena Buskirkova, Mitsuo Uchida, Louis Lortie and others. She prefers the Bösendorfer Vienna Concert

model for its tone and flexible personality; its harmonics fill the air, even in the loudest passages, with a singing temperament, she says. It never shouts or sounds strident. 'It is quite magical, very human, and can produce the full range of sound from delicate to powerful'.
Her recitals outside of Europe have extended to China and Japan, though her US debut is yet to come, no doubt delayed by the virtual shutdown of the international music world during the pandemic. Will promising young pianists emerge stronger from so many months of forced isolation? Perhaps. She sees a 'revolution of the soul' coming with new priorities and different ways of looking at life. She anticipates the rejection of a society of 'having' in favour of 'being'. 'Maybe we will all come out more human – there is some good possible from all this suffering.'

The Romantic Soul: Clara and Robert Schumann by Judith Jáuregui is now available from Ars Produktion (AESK300). judithj@jaregui.com



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MICHAŁ NOWAK

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