



Interview with Gabriela Martinez

Q. What about the Grieg inspires or excites you?

A. I am really looking forward to performing the Grieg piano concerto with the Pasadena Symphony. An extremely vivid piece, it is majestic, dramatic, tender and hopeful- full of joy, elegant melodies and also energetic rhythmic elements. It is a quintessentially beautiful work that has stormy, symphonic, extroverted, and virtuosic qualities as well as great contrasts of simplicity and humor; I always find something new in it and I love performing it!

Q. With a new addition to your family, what's the best part about being both a mom and a musician?

A. Although I officially became a mom a few weeks ago, our daughter has been a part of my musical life for much longer– she’s been attending my concerts and hearing me practice since last summer from inside the womb. I’m so excited for her to be here, and to be able to share the beautiful world of music with her. The best part about being a musician mom is that, most of the time, I can practice at home near my daughter, which means I get to spend lots of time with her and she is listening to music while I’m working.

Q. What pianist inspires you?

A. I take inspiration from several musicians - I don’t have just one favorite. Lately, I’ve been listening to a lot of recordings by some of my favorite pianists from previous generations – Gieseking, Kempff, Gilels; I love the beautiful pure quality that their music expresses. I also draw inspiration from symphonic repertoire, and listen to a lot of it on a regular basis. I love listening to orchestral works because I find that the colors and textures are such a special world. I also always try to look for inspiration in my surroundings... Whether it’s at a live concert (classical or nonclassical), at a museum, or when going for a run in a beautiful landscape.

Q. What is your favorite piece to play, and conversely what is your favorite classical music piece that you love listening to?

A. My favorite piece to play is usually whatever I'm currently working on. I love immersing myself in the particular world of music and style. My desert island pieces to listen to are the Brahms Symphonies. Also, I love Beethoven. I love the way that his music conveys inventiveness, it almost has a certain admiration for the beauty of nature, and also a (at times haunting) submission to higher powers. It is timeless and beautiful.

Q. What's something that we don't already know about you?

A. I've been to the Rose Bowl twice! Also, I am obsessed with Cowgirl Creamery...

Q. With a work that is very well known, like the Grieg, how do you keep it fresh, and add something unique to your performance?

A. The Grieg concerto is an incredible masterpiece, and one of my favorites to perform! When getting ready to perform a piece, in addition to physical and mental practicing, I always take time to analyze the text (the score). And no matter how many times I have performed a piece, I always go back and immerse myself in the details that the composers intended. This guides the unique interpretation and story that I want to convey. For concertos, I also spend a large amount of time studying the orchestral parts and understanding what every instrument is doing at every moment, and how everything forms larger lines and stories. To me, concertos are large-scale chamber music, and the relationship and communication between the instruments is truly magical!

Q. What advice would you give to young musicians, like those in our Youth Symphony Orchestra program?

A. Never stop learning, exploring, practicing, and having fun. We're so blessed and lucky to be surrounded by music on a daily basis!

Q. How do you strive to connect with audiences through your music?

A. I want every note that I play at a performance to be full of life and tell a story – the composer's story, the piece's story. I love being able to live with and share music of so many generations and voices, and at every performance I do my best to share my unique view and connect with the audience by taking them along with me for the journey.