

# Diana Cooper, Youth and Maturity

## The French artist performs at Oviedo's centenary Philharmonic Society

The recital opened with three sonatas by **Domenico Scarlatti** (K. 9, K. 96 and K. 141), a repertoire in which Cooper immediately displayed a poised and thoughtful approach, together with agile pedalling and refined touch. Her reading of the Baroque language was perhaps somewhat freer in the first two pieces, while her playing stood out for its bold phrasing and remarkable clarity. In K.141, one of Martha Argerich's signature works, she demonstrated why she won the **Ciudad de Vigo Piano Competition** in 2022, displaying tremendous energy and dynamism without ever losing control or musical purpose.

In **Mendelssohn's Serious Variations, Op. 54**, a multifaceted and highly demanding work, Cooper showed deep understanding. The French pianist revealed a remarkable ability to sustain the musical narrative, avoiding any sense of excessive rigidity and bringing out the most poetic elements of the score. She also exercised restraint in the most intimate and emotionally charged moments, never succumbing to overstatement, and displayed a musicality that avoided academic stiffness.

The first half concluded with the **Allegro de concierto, op. 46** by **Granados**, a work less frequently heard in concert halls but rich in pianistic substance. The performer created a suggestive and evocative atmosphere, shaping a carefully crafted sound world with colourful nuances, balancing contrasts and highlighting expressive motifs that added greater vitality to the performance.

The second half was devoted to two works by **Chopin**, a composer with whom the French pianist feels especially at home. The **Four Scherzos, Op. 20, Op. 31, Op. 39 and Op. 54**, confirmed her affinity for this repertoire: a broad sonority, excellent control of dynamics, and a remarkable ability to sustain the duality between melodic nostalgia and rhythmic drive that characterises these pieces. The **Fourth Scherzo** was built with notable patience, gradually progressing toward a climax of expressive intensity through meticulous phrasing and a crystal-clear pulse that naturally sustained the complexity of the musical texture.

The recital reached its culmination with the **Polonaise-Fantaisie, Op. 61**, approached with subtlety and insight. Cooper allowed the melodies to sing with exceptional delicacy, recreating the mixture of dreamlike atmosphere and suspended time that defines the work, before arriving at an interpretation of great intensity, emotional commitment and conviction.

As an encore, the **Grande Valse Brillante (Chopin)** brought the evening to a brilliant close, leaving the impression of a coherent artistic vision and a surprisingly mature musicianship for such a young performer. One can only hope that Cooper will return soon to Oviedo's Philharmonic Society.