

Diana Cooper, Youth and Maturity

The French pianist performs for Oviedo's centenary Philharmonic Society

Performer: Diana Cooper (piano)

Program: Works by Domenico Scarlatti, Felix Mendelssohn, Enrique Granados, and Frédéric Chopin

Venue: Teatro Filarmónica

Young French pianist Diana Cooper returned to the Oviedo Philharmonic Society for a compelling recital exploring a variety of pianistic styles—an exacting challenge for any performer. As in her previous appearance two years ago, Cooper demonstrated remarkable artistic maturity throughout the programme, leaving a lasting impression on the audience, particularly in the Romantic repertoire.

The recital opened with three sonatas by Domenico Scarlatti—K. 9, K. 96, and K. 141—a repertoire in which Cooper displayed, from the very first measure, clean articulation and a particularly agile right hand in the upper register. Her approach to the Baroque style, perhaps somewhat restrained in the first two sonatas, was characterized by well-shaped phrasing and a clear, refined interpretation. It was, however, in K. 141—one of Martha Argerich's favourite works—that she displayed especially strong energy and dramatic flair, without ever sacrificing control or the clarity of articulation. The connection is noteworthy, as Argerich served on the jury of the "Ciudad de Vigo" Piano Competition, which Cooper won in 2022.

In Mendelssohn's *Variations sérieuses*, Op. 54, a multifaceted work of considerable technical demands, Cooper appeared particularly at ease. The French pianist brought out the full depth of the musical narrative, demonstrating judicious pedal usage and, above all, an exceptionally clean attack that enabled her to sustain the score's dense polyphony with complete naturalness. She also showed admirable restraint in the most intimate passages while concentrating her full sonorous power in the work's more substantial episodes, always placing technique at the service of expression and preserving a musicality free from any academic rigidity.

The first half of the recital concluded with Granados's *Allegro de concierto*, Op. 46, a work that is heard less frequently in concert halls but is exceptionally rich in pianistic substance. In this piece, the performer created a compelling and evocative atmosphere. Cooper fashioned a carefully crafted world of color, with finely judged tonal balances and a well-maintained equilibrium between the two hands. She gave particular attention to expressive nuances, which added an extra dimension of interest and refinement to her interpretation.

The second half was devoted to works by Chopin, a repertoire in which the French pianist particularly excels. The *Three Mazurkas*, Op. 59, revealed her deep affinity for this music: a velvety tone, careful control of dynamics, and a remarkable ability to sustain the balance between the melodic nostalgia and rhythmic vitality that characterize these pieces. The *Barcarolle*, Op. 60, was shaped with admirable patience, gradually building toward a climax of great expressive intensity. Cooper's meticulous phrasing and crystal-clear touch naturally sustained the score's intricate musical texture, resulting in a performance of both elegance and emotional depth.

The culmination of the recital came with Chopin's *Polonaise-Fantaisie*, Op. 61,

approached with subtlety and insight. Cooper wove together melodies and chords with exquisite delicacy, relishing the work's colors and its inner sense of time, before leading the music towards an interpretation that was intense, exhilarating, and deeply committed on an emotional level. As an encore, she offered Chopin's *Grande Valse* to the audience, further emphasizing the expressive character that had defined the second half of the recital. Built around an evocative programme and marked by Diana Cooper's remarkable artistic maturity, the performance left a strong impression and inspired the hope that she will soon return to Oviedo's Philharmonic Society.