

# tanya gabrielian

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## Press Acclaim

“Gabrielian makes the piano appear obdurate – we imagine the enormous power and potential of the instrument which it feigns not to offer readily to any mere pianist, but she has total command and we are convinced that it would only make those sounds for her.”

—**Glasgow Herald**

“The straightforwardness of her approach seemed to come from a sense of trust in and identity with the music. There was a raptness in her performance which made it stand out from everything else – heavy music that had been fully absorbed and which she recreated with subtlety.”

—**Irish Times**

“The Herculean keyboard demands were met with a strikingly poised nobility and a commanding presence.”

—**Washington Post**

“In Tanya Gabrielian I find someone that reminds me of Argerich. She has the sensitivity to caress the beautiful melodic phrases and the power to bring off mammoth climaxes...Tanya Gabrielian is someone to watch.”

—**American Record Guide**

“A pianist of powerful physical and imaginative strength.”

—**London Times**

“Anyone who says that emerging young pianists all sound alike obviously hasn’t heard Tanya Gabrielian.”

“On stage, [Gabrielian] is a presence, a force to be reckoned with, and this was plainly obvious before she even played a note, and when she started to play, the impression of total control and mastery was even more apparent...This was a performance I never wanted to end.”

—**Peninsula Reviews**

“Gabrielian’s lively intelligence and facility of playing delighted and proved provoking in equal measure...An astounding achievement by any standards, and one I cannot imagine being bettered. Remember the name – Tanya Gabrielian – you will be hearing a lot more from her I feel sure.”

—**Seen and Heard International**

“There was nothing unremarkable about the next work on the program, and especially the soloist. Tanya Gabrielian’s performance of Mozart’s Piano Concerto No. 21 [with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra] was worth the admission money alone.”

—**Dundee Courier**

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# THE BUFFALO NEWS

review excerpt

## The BPO's Czech mates and a piano concerto

**By Garaud MacTaggart** | *Published April 26, 2019*

“Tanya Gabrielian is a talented pianist whose technical chops and energetic performances bode well for the future. Those qualities were showcased in Friday morning’s concert with the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra when she was booked as the soloist for Aram Khachaturian’s lone piano concerto.

Grigory Shneerson, one of Khachaturian’s biographers, noted that the composer’s mastery of the piano “was based not on schooling but on the practice of spontaneous music-making. At the same time he possessed a good, if somewhat unorthodox, technique, and what is more, an inborn sense of the piano, of its potentialities.”

The writer was saying that this composer’s infatuation with improvisation was based on Khachaturian’s fascination with Armenian and Zaerbaijan folk traditions, a quality illustrated by his better known works like the violin concerto and the “Sabre Dance.”

Gabrielian’s vivid treatment of the work’s second movement (Andante con anima) was wonderful and was the solo passage in the opening Allegro where the improvisatory elements were fluid and effective.”

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# musicologie.org

18 avril 2019 — JEAN-MARC WARSZAWSKI.

## Tanya Gabrielian au Goethe- Institut de Paris : l'énergie pianistique en direct

Tanya Gabrielian donnait un récital, mardi 16 avril 2018, au Goethe-Institut de Paris, dans le cadre de la saison Blüthner, « piano mon amour », dans un auditorium comble.

Tanya Gabrielian a commencé fort jeune, en Californie, à jouer le piano, qui la passionne autant que les études générales. Sortie major du secondaire, elle intègre l'Université de Harvard, en ingénierie biomédicale, puis délaisse l'université du Massachusetts pour la Royal Academy of music de Londres. Elle ne s'y plaît pas tant qu'elle l'avait espéré. Elle sèche les cours de musique pour ceux d'arts martiaux, se blesse sérieusement en tombant au cours d'un entraînement. L'hôpital la ramène à la musique par la découverte de ses vertus apaisantes. Elle a dix-huit ans, deux ans plus tard, quelques concours lui ouvrent la carrière et les bonnes scènes : Carnegie Hall de New York, Kennedy Center de Washington, L'Opera de Sydney, le Queen Elizabeth Hall et le Wigmore Hall de Londres, etc.

Elle a enregistré un premier album de transcriptions pour piano d'œuvres de Johann Sebastian Bach (MSR Music), par l'incontournable Alexandre Siloti, mais aussi Camille Saint-Saëns, Arturo Cardelús, Leopold Godowsky.

De Londres à Washington, elle se déplace beaucoup, La presse est américaine élogieuse.

Nous apprécions ce parcours un peu romanesque et ses ombres dont elle s'entoure, son côté rebelle-rockeuse.

Elle commence d'ailleurs fort avec en plein air de Belà Bartók, une suite de cinq pièces, créée à Budapest en 1926, d'une belle sauvagerie, une franche attaque du piano sans aucun maniérisme, cette sauvagerie qui surprit l'Amérique quand Bartók y débarqua.

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Tanya Gabrielian y va franco de port, dans des fracas et déflagrations sans aucun ménagement pour le piano.

Pour la suite on attendrait des œuvres de John Cage ou de Charles Ives, mais ce sont les nocturnes 1 et 2 de *l'opus 27* de Chopin. Si le calme revient c'est toutefois un chopin dans maniérisme, aux angles non arrondis, qui sonne fort toutes griffes dehors.

Enfin, sans pause, la sonate en *la* mineur, D. 845 Franz Schubert, sans aucune pleurnicherie. Le répertoire romantique joué sans le sirupeux, sans larme à l'œil, mais de la force, de la colère peut-être, de l'interpellation.

Le public a suivi cette franchise et ce parlé droit, l'humanité, nous avons également suivi avec plaisir. En bis Tanya Gabrielian à offert *L'Alouette* de Mikhaïl Glinka, un compositeur peu joué, pourtant très important, et *l'Adagio* du concerto pour hautbois d'Alessandro Marcello mis au clavier par Johann Sebastian Bach.

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South Bend  
**TRIBUNE**

review excerpt

## Review: Pianist Gabrielian, South Bend symphony delightful at Morris concert

By Jack Walton Tribune Correspondent

“SOUTH BEND — For many years, Alexander Toradze and Tsung Yeh enjoyed teaming up for collaborative performances of works for piano and orchestra. Whenever Toradze or one of his students from the piano studio at Indiana University South Bend would sit in with the South Bend Symphony Orchestra under Yeh’s direction, fireworks would inevitably ensue.

Toradze’s successor, Tanya Gabrielian, and Yeh’s successor, Maestro Alastair Willis, renewed the tradition Saturday at the Morris Performing Arts Center, and the results were delightful...

...Gabrielian joined Willis and the SBSO as the soloist for Rachmaninoff’s Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini, Opus 43. Together, they delivered one of the highlights of the 2018-2019 season.

In the pre-concert conversation, Gabrielian said that Rachmaninoff is her favorite pianist, one of her favorite composers and the subject of her doctoral dissertation. She even played the Paganini Variations with the Los Angeles Philharmonic when she was still just 17. (“Not a bad band to work with,” she said.) Although the piece has punishing technical requirements, Gabrielian has long since conquered those challenges. At this point, she can focus instead on considering myriad nuances of her aesthetic interpretation, making the piece an ideal fit for her SBSO debut.

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Rachmaninoff transformed the theme from Paganini's 24th caprice into a sprawling series of events that range from ecstatic to diabolical, giving soloists a lot of room for personal expressiveness. Gabrielian wisely refrained from delivering the flowery and famous 18th variation with any gratuitous filigree, making way for Willis to show off the lushness of his string section instead.

In delicate passages, she demonstrated a feather-light touch, but she also excelled at the more blasting occurrences, thundering out the Dies Irae ("Day of Wrath") theme in the 10th variation in a way that evoked enormous Russian bells. The 19th variation is an imitation of a devilish violinist playing pizzicato, and Gabrielian dispatched the quick staccato runs with such elegant precision that it's not surprising that one of her other specialties is Bach.

Gabrielian maintains a busy touring schedule, but let's hope she can make SBSO appearances an ongoing arrangement..."

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# ARTSKNOXVILLE

review excerpt

## Review: Pianist Tanya Gabrielian and KSO Uncover Russian Passion

ALAN SHERROD    FEBRUARY 17, 2018

“**Pianist Tanya Gabrielian** joined Aram Demirjian and the orchestra for Rachmaninoff’s *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*, arguably the most compelling and entertaining of the dozens of works and stylistic treatments drawn from Paganini’s 24th Caprice for Violin. Compelling, too, was Gabrielian’s interpretation: bold and assertive without being ostentatious or heavy, yet with a strategic mastery of the contrast between intriguing little subtleties and serious pronouncements. There was no hesitation in taking on the work’s difficult runs and giving them a fluidity and sparkle—again, confident ownership of the virtuosic technique that Rachmaninoff built into his works for piano.

Although the delineation of the rhapsody’s groupings of variations was still noticeable, I admired the collaboration between Gabrielian and Demirjian in allowing the work to find a continuous arc. Admirable, too, was the gorgeous orchestral balance that did not sacrifice crispness for solidity. Of course, the 18th variation—the oh-so popular romance of the piece—comes upon the listener like a suddenly opened door revealing another time and place. In this case, one gives in to the schmaltzy melody—and luscious playing from the strings—without hesitation.

Gabrielian offered a lovely rendered encore in the Russian vein, “The Lark,” a transcription by Mili Balakirev of a song from the collection *A Farewell to Saint Petersburg* by Mikhail Glinka.”

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**AUDIOPHILE AUDITION**

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## **“Remix” BACH: Chaconne, Selected Works for Solo Violin, arranged for Piano – Tanya Gabrielian, piano – MSR Classics**

by Audiophile Audition/ October 28, 2017/ Classical CD Reviews

Remix BACH: Chaconne from Violin Partita No. 2 in d, BWV 1004 (arr. Alexander Siloti); Violin Sonata No.3 in C, BWV 1005 (four movements in sequence, arr. Bach, Saint-Saens, Saint-Saens, Arturo Cardelus); Andante from Violin Sonata No. 2 in a, BWV 1003 (arr. Alexander Siloti); Cello Suite No. 2 in d, BWV 1008 (arr. Leopold Goldowsky) - Tanya Gabrielian, piano - MSR Classics MS 1594, 60:54 [Distr. by Albany]

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*Sit back, relax, and let your spirit soar.*

I've been waiting for an album like this; though I much prefer the Busoni arrangement of the Chaconne to that of Siloti—who is still excellent—there are some marvelous moments to be had from this release. Bach, of course, was no stranger to the idea of performing his music for solo strings on keyboard, and multiple sources indicate that he did just this, and often, having no reserve, and even seeing it as a necessity that additional harmony be added. Many composers, including Brahms and Schumann, have done just that in different circumstances and for different reasons. The transcribers here were all Bach lovers, and there is not a dud in the bunch. The performances are transcendent, idiomatic, and, simply, gorgeous.

Pianist Tanya Gabrielian, a heralded artist of depth and intellectual achievement, came to love the solo string work of Bach during a month-long hospital recuperation from an accident incurred while engaging in a martial arts sparring session. She states that it was this music that elevated her sufferings and exalted her spirit, without which she might not have made it through the experience. If you believe, as she obviously does, that things work out for the best, this album is surely a testament to that fact. Great sound, great performances, and I hope to hear more from her.

– Steven Ritter

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# AMERICAN RECORD GUIDE

INDEPENDENT CRITICS REVIEWING CLASSICAL RECORDINGS AND MUSIC IN CONCERT

BACH: Transcriptions of Solo Violin & Cello Pieces Tanya Gabrielian, p—MSR 1594—61 minutes

I regularly enjoy a wide variety of Bach's music arranged for the piano. Bach himself made keyboard arrangements of his own and other's works. Many composers have followed suit. This release is limited to works originally for solo violin (Partita 2, Sonatas 2 and 3) and solo cello (Suite 2). The arrangers are a fascinating group whose lives span 300 years and 5 countries of birth: Bach, Saint-Saens, Siloti, Godowsky, and Cardelus (b.1981).

I have been fortunate to see American pianist Gabrielian in recital a couple of times (she played a wonderful Bach-Liszt Organ Prelude and Fugue in A minor) and enjoyed her self-produced debut CD (M/J 2012: 206). I had high expectations for this and was not disappointed.

Siloti's arrangement of the Andante from Violin Sonata 3 in A minor is a particular favorite of mine and something I regularly play. Gabrielian's melodic line truly sings, with exquisite dynamic shaping. The famous Chaconne from Partita 2 is regularly heard in Busoni's arrangement or the Brahms left hand version. Siloti's efforts here are admirable and equal to the others. He was a gold medal winner in piano at the Moscow conservatory and went on to teach there (first cousin Rachmaninoff was his most famous student).

Gabrielian plays the complete Violin Sonata 3, but has to pull together arrangements by three composers: Bach himself arranged the opening Adagio; Saint-Saens did the Fugue and Largo movements, and young Arturo Cardelus ends

with the finale in a balanced, but quite virtuosic fashion. The finished product does not seem like the work of different composers who lived hundreds of years apart, but is a cohesive, satisfying work. Much of the credit is to Bach's original here, and also to a sensitive, skillful pianist.

The program ends with Godowsky's huge treatment of Cello Suite 2, in seven movements. The published score is headed "very freely transcribed and adapted for the piano" and was done in 1923. This composer's oeuvre is full of extremely difficult piano music, much of it based on other composer's music. This is one of three Bach Cello Suites Godowsky transcribed, and I enjoy the result in the same way I enjoy and admire his Chopin Studies. The originals are towering works of art, but the arrangements are done with taste, class, and much creativity. They were very much in vogue in the early 20th Century, but fell out of favor toward the middle and end of the century, when urtext editions and period performance practices were widely studied.

Today, with pianists like Gabrielian, who are fully in tune with the harmonies and counterpoint added to Bach's original by Godowsky (and the others), we can enjoy recordings that are actually quite a revelation. She has all of the technique to make the difficulties vanish as she brings the musical lines to the fore. She captures the essence of each dance movement. There is also plenty of power and excitement here, in the final movements especially. I cannot remember enjoying a disc more, and this will remain on my active listening stack for quite some time.

HARRINGTON

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## AUDIO CLUB OF ATLANTA

OCTOBER 2017

### “REMIX” BACH TRANSCRIPTIONS

Tanya Gabrielian, piano

MS1594

Tanya Gabrielian is phenomenal. Not only are her Bach performances on the present CD supremely beautiful and inspired, getting to the inner truth of these transcriptions by famous keyboard masters, she is also a photogenic beauty herself. With her dark almond eyes and slender features, you might try for a long time and never guess her country of origin. And the tonal beauty she derives from her instrument, a Shigeru Kawai EX #94 will cause pianists everywhere to flock to their nearest Kawai dealer for a test drive.

It's noteworthy that Bach never seems to have performed his Sonatas and Partitas for solo violin as such in public but always played them in harpsichord arrangements, even though he was one of the few great composers who excelled equally on both keyboard and violin. As Gabrielian's performances of transcriptions by such eminent figures such as Alexander Siloti, Camille Saint-Saëns and Leopold Godowsky reveal, there is much to be said for the practice.

It often seems to me that violinists struggle to make these works palatable to audiences as “real” music, as opposed to strictly theoretical works. The very striking drop in tone and intensity midway through the Chaconne from Partita No. 2 (trans. Alexander Siloti), the shift in tempo at the 8:53 mark and the change to the minor at 11:07 in the present recording are all easier to realize on the piano than the violin, allowing the artist greater freedom to concentrate on expression. And the sensational bariolage between the pianist's hands at 12:50 (which is realized on the violin by rapid alternations between static and changing notes) comes across as smooth as quicksilver in Tanya Gabrielian's performance, though without the shimmering effect that is only possible in the string version.

Sonata No. 3, BWV 1005, is heard in arrangements by three different composers. First, the Adagio, in Bach's own version, is rendered by Gabrielian in an account emphasizing all its glorious harmonic intricacies, its dotted rhythms and unhurried flow. Both of the middle movements are transcriptions by Saint-Saëns: a robust fugue and a Largo that serves to provide refreshment by its sheer beauty and simplicity. The Allegro assai, in a transcription by Arturo Cardelus, plays up its crackling passagework and dancelike nature.

Tanya is temperamentally disposed to make the most of the Andante from Violin Sonata No. 2, in another Siloti transcription that emphasizes its serene progress and steady rhythmic pulse, plus an aria-like melody that soars peacefully over the harmonic accompaniment. Cello Suite No. 2 in D minor is heard in a masterful transcription by Leopold Godowsky that underscores the darker implications that lie in wait for the unsuspecting performer in its Prelude and Sarabande, and even casting its shadow on the usually genial Allemande. Tanya's serene, unhurried approach really brings out the lustre in these dark pearls. Her Minuets I & II are measured and gracious with a steady pulse, and her rippling account of the Gigue is lusty and life-affirming, bringing this suite to a resounding close.

PHIL MUSE

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# THE Durango HERALD

review excerpt

By Judith Reynolds

Special to the Herald

Article Last Updated: Monday, February 23, 2015 5:09pm

## **San Juan Symphony embraces the familiar**

Tanya Gabrielian performs with the San Juan Symphony, conducted by Arthur Post, on Saturday evening at the Fort Lewis College Community Concert Hall.

“Post’s favorite Mozart piano concerto also got a beautiful, clear-as-glass reading from the evening’s soloist, Tanya Gabrielian. With a deep performance history, especially in England where she earned bachelor’s and master’s degrees from the Royal Academy of Music, Gabrielian has concertized around the world. She completed her advanced studies at The Juilliard School and now lives in New York City.

Her particularly sensitive rendering of the adagio underscored Post’s notion that things are all right in the world. Gabrielian established a quiet, reflective tone that had a bittersweet quality throughout. When Post moved directly into the final movement with a quick orchestral attack, the mood changed. The final movement’s joyful exuberance registered on musicians’ faces, including Gabrielian’s.”

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# THE ROANOKE TIMES

roanoke.com

review excerpt

## **Concert review: Pianist Tanya Gabrielian sparkles with Roanoke Symphony Orchestra performance**

Posted: Sunday, February 15, 2015 6:30 pm

**By Timothy Gaylard Special to The Roanoke Times**

After the intermission, the much anticipated appearance of Gabrielian in Tchaikovsky's beloved First Piano Concerto proved to be a winning performance.

With the strong pounding chords accompanying the main theme, she established an authority and passion in keeping with the composer's romantic style.

As the first movement continued into its allegro section, the soloist turned to a various range of colors on her instrument, sometimes warm and lyrical, sometimes brilliant and steely, especially in the virtuosic cadenza.

At the end of that movement, the high-octane level of the performance sparked an enthusiastic and spontaneous ovation from the audience.

In the slow movement, Wiley evinced a tranquil and nostalgic mood, and some solo instruments in the orchestra were featured, especially the ravishing tone of Kelley Mikkelsen's cello and the gorgeous melancholy of Bill Parrish's oboe.

Gabrielian applied a musical and expressive arsenal of techniques to the last movement.

Wiley was ably supportive all the way to a triumphant and exhilarating close, which brought the audience to its feet immediately.

Gabrielian then played as an encore a sparkling and dazzling piano transcription of Glinka's song "The Lark."

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# Mail Tribune

review excerpt

## Focus on Tanya Gabrielian as Rogue Valley Symphony evokes the Baroque

**Rogue Valley Symphony brings a world-renowned piano virtuoso to its stage**

**By Bill Varble  
for the Mail Tribune**

Posted Nov. 9, 2014 @ 12:01 am

“Shades of Johann Sebastian Bach seemed to be in the air at the Rogue Valley Symphony's concert Saturday night at the Craterian Theater at the Collier Center in Medford. Even though the music — Hector Berlioz's "Love Scene" from "Romeo and Juliet," Camille Saint-Saëns' Piano Concerto No. 2, Arthur Honegger's Symphony No. 4, — was far removed from the Baroque.

But the music of the French/Swiss composer Honegger has been described as "Debussy Meets Bach," while the stylistic innovations of Saint-Saëns' concerto caused a contemporary critic to quip of it that it "begins with Bach and ends with Offenbach."

Bach vibe or not, the highlight of the evening was the riveting performance of young guest artist Tanya Gabrielian, a Juilliard-trained, New York City-based pianist whose commanding presence and mastery of the capriciousness of the Saint-Saëns concerto bely her youth.

From the long (and Bach-esque) piano solo of the Andante sostenuto to the Presto's fiery, whirling climax, Gabrielian handled the demands of the famed concerto with grace and power, combining sheer virtuosity with poised elegance.

Conductor Martin Majkut and the orchestra began the evening with Hector Berlioz's "Love Scene" from his 1839 symphony "Romeo and Juliet." The piece began with a sweet introduction centered on a plaintive theme played by the oboe. It was easy to picture Romeo lurking about,

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conscious of his status as an outsider at the Capulets' ball. As the cellos came in, so, evidently, did Juliet, because the movement became quite rapturous.

The piece was dismissed by an important critic of the day as not even a true symphony, but a "queer hybrid." Berlioz later said it was his favorite among his works. It certainly occupied a special place in his life. He was inspired to write it after seeing the Irish actress Harriet Smithson as David Garrick's version of "Romeo and Juliet" in 1827 in Paris. He courted and married her several years later (and more years later left her).

Gabrielian burst onto the international stage at 20 with back-to-back victories in the Aram Khachaturyan International Piano Competition and the Scottish International Piano Competition. She has since toured the world from New York's Carnegie Hall to Queen Elizabeth Hall in London.

Saint-Saëns' Piano Concerto No. 2 in G minor was composed in 1868 and is almost undoubtedly the composer's most popular concerto, even though it was written, famously, in a mere three weeks. When you hear Gabrielian's performance, the reasons for the piece's enduring popularity become clear.

It began with a sequence of solo passages on the piano during which the pianist handled long series of arpeggios with the fluidity of notes being poured out of a bucket like water. The movement wound through a lovely cadenza before circling back to the toccata.

The allegro in E-flat major began with percussive and found Gabrielian ranging up and down the keyboard throughout the sunny, energetic movement. The fiery final movement was fast indeed, with Gabrielian ripping off triplet figures and shaking her long, dark hair as she and the orchestra together flung themselves into a vortex of climactic arpeggios. The audience wouldn't let her get off the stage without a brief, rather tranquil encore."

*Reach freelance writer Bill Varble at [varble.bill@gmail.com](mailto:varble.bill@gmail.com).*

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## Jacksonville *REVIEW*

review excerpt

### Maestro Majkut Conjures Up a Kick-Ass Symphony Concert

One would not ordinarily associate the term, “kick-ass” with a symphony concert. So how does it come to be applied to the second concert of the 2014-2015 season by the Rogue Valley Symphony? Well, the term was originally tendered to describe piano soloist, Tanya Gabrielian’s performance of Saint-Saëns’ Piano Concerto No. 2 in this concert by a mutual friend of Ms. Gabrielian’s and myself, a professional symphony cellist who is well qualified to critique concert performances, and usually quite accurate in her assessments. Being a thorough, as well as curious, reviewer, I decided to look the term up and find out what it actually means. According to Dictionary.com, the definition of *kick-ass* is “*strikingly or overwhelmingly tough, aggressive, powerful, or effective*”.

Hmm. No question about it, Ms. Gabrielian’s performance of Saint-Saëns’ Piano Concerto No. 2 in this concert was definitely *kick-ass*. Strikingly tough, powerful and effective is an accurate description of Ms. Gabrielian’s delivery of the most popular French Piano concerto of all time. It also happens to be an incredibly difficult piece for the pianist and the orchestra as well: lots of notes, played fast, and even faster as the piece progresses. Saint-Saëns mixed a wide variety of styles in the piece, a veritable musical potpourri. Portions of the piece have variously been described as “a Bach fantasia”, “a long ad libitum cadenza”, “a mercurial piano part”, “clever and light hearted themes”, “an extremely fast, fiery tarantella in sonata form”. And the conclusion has been described thusly: “At presto speed, the orchestra and soloist rush tumultuously along, gaining volume and momentum and finishing in a whirlwind of G minor arpeggios.”

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When the piece is well done, it's wonderful, a musical showpiece, which is how it comes to be the most popular French piano concerto. But when it's not well done – Stojowski famously quipped that it “begins with Bach and ends with Offenbach.” Saint-Saëns himself was the soloist at the premiere of Piano Concerto No. 2, and famously had little time to prepare to perform the piece, with the consequence that the premiere did not go very well, and the piece was not well received at the premiere. By contrast, Ms. Gabrielian made Piano Concerto No. 2 look easy and sound magnificent. Somehow she provided a truly muscular performance of this difficult piece, while making it look graceful. Previous reviewers assessing other performances of other works by Ms. Gabrielian have variously commented that she “is a presence, a force to be reckoned with. . . .” [*Peninsula Reviews*], “a pianist of powerful physical and imaginative muscle.” [*London Times*], “Herculean keyboard demands were met with a strikingly poised nobility and a commanding presence.” [*Washington Post*], and “She has the sensitivity to caress the beautiful melodic phrases and the power to bring off mammoth climaxes. . . .” [*American Record Guide*]. She was all that and more in providing a masterful performance of Piano Concerto No. 2 that would have made Saint-Saëns himself proud; if only she had been around for the premiere, how much better things would have gone. So *kick-ass* turns out to be an apt description of Ms. Gabrielian's performance of Saint-Saëns' Piano Concerto No. 2. But her *kick-ass* piano performing did not end there. When the audience made her return for a third bow to continuous applause, she sat down for an encore which was just as strikingly and overwhelmingly effective. She thrilled the audience with an extraordinary, incomparable performance of Glinka's piano song, *The Lark*, which she confessed was her favorite piano piece – and just like that it became the favorite piano piece of a broad swath of the audience too.

To borrow a much used pitchman phrase, “But wait there's more!” When asked at the pre-concert lecture, how she came to be performing Saint-Saëns' Piano Concerto No. 2 at this concert (she hasn't played the piece in concert very often since first tackling it at the age of 13), she pointed at Maestro Majkut and explained “HE hired me to play it.” In reviewing the first concert of the Rogue Valley Symphony season last month, I noted

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that Maestro Majkut had transformed this orchestra, “bringing high energy to the task of running the orchestra and it’s musicians, offering new pieces of music as well as a fresh outlook and insight into the standard classical repertoire, drawing quality musicians into the orchestra and “A” list soloists to join in its performances, and demonstrating an uncanny knack for assembling compelling and exciting concert programs.” The question then was could he continue to keep it up. Well, he’s done it once again for this concert – it’s ALL here: the A list soloist, a new piece of music, and a compelling and exciting concert program. That unforgettable performance of Saint-Saëns’ Piano Concerto No. 2 by a remarkable piano soloist came out of Maestro Majkut’s vision and was his doing – he conjured it and made it happen.

By Lee Greene | November 8th, 2014 | Featured Stories, Performing Arts

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**PENINSULA REVIEWS**

## **The Distinguished Artists and Lecture Series opens its 2013–2014 Season with Pianist Tanya Gabrielian**

by Joe Sekon  
September 22, 2013

On Saturday, September 21 the Distinguished Artists Series opened with pianist Tanya Gabrielian performing a theme program entitled, “Committed,” a fascinating collection of music by composers known to have experienced mental health problems. Tanya Gabrielian is a powerful advocate in this field stating: “Art is a celebration of life and a way to acknowledge that every person, regardless of their personal circumstances can contribute beauty to the world!” During her performance at the First Congregational Church in Santa Cruz, the magnificent Yamaha CFX concert grand obeyed her every command and filled the space with a full spectrum of dynamic sound from the most delicate nuances to overwhelming fortissimo passages.

Tanya Gabrielian belongs in the company of elite young women pianists who have recently made an indelible mark on the concert stage worldwide with highly artistic performances. Described by the *Times of London* as a “pianist of powerful physical and imaginative muscle,” Gabrielian gave us an intelligent, sensitive and technically challenging program of five works: *Sarabande* and *Chaconne* from *Almira* by George Frideric Handel (arranged by Liszt); Two Mazurkas by Alexei Stanchinsky; *Morceaux de Fantaisie* by Sergei Rachmaninoff; the “Demian” Sonata by Arturo Cardelus (b. 1981) and perhaps the most anticipated work on the program, Beethoven’s last Sonata, Opus 111.

Handel’s works, in the typical Baroque style (but gussied up by Liszt) received a stately and elegant performance. Ms. Gabrielian exploited all the beautiful sounds of which the Yamaha CFX grand piano was capable. We also learned that Handel suffered from bipolar disorder, even during the seventeen days and a manic phase, it took him to compose the “Messiah”.

The two Mazurkas by Stanchinsky were beautifully and powerfully performed, somewhat alluding to the style one finds in the works of Scriabin and perhaps to a lesser degree in Chopin. Again, in a revelation of a composer’s unbalance, we learned

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that, even though Stanchinsky was hailed as a genius by Prokofiev and Medtner, he died at age 26 in mysterious circumstances – possibly a suicide.

Rachmaninov's five works *Elégie*, the ever popular *Prélude in C-sharp Minor*, *Mélodie*, *Polichinelle* and *Serenade* were impressive and well received by the audience. Relevant to the "Committed" theme of this program, Rachmaninov allegedly spent a brief period in a New York Mental Institution for depression while in the USA.

The "Demian Sonata," composed in a three-movement arch form with movements titled *Furioso*, *Sospeso and Furioso*, was the welcome surprise of the evening. The title "Demian," stems from Hermann Hesse's story of a boy, Emil Sinclair, and his search for himself. At the young age of ten he feels a constant inner conflict between this world, which he refers to as the "world of light" and the outside world referred to as the "forbidden realm," which represents sin, loneliness, deceit and insecurity. He ends up vacillating between both worlds, while belonging to neither. Cardelus was effective in capturing both ideas in his work — the furious and the suspended. The explosive opening, with its carefully constructed textures that showcased Ms. Gabrielian's virtuosity, began the work. Beautifully controlled dynamics and pedaling were important features that enhanced the first movement and merged into the second section to create an effective, eerie musical atmosphere. Impressive counterpoint and contrast between the high and low registers were successful in this composition. This is a very interesting work.

It seems that 2013 continues to be the year for Beethoven's final Piano Sonata No. 32, Opus 111. This masterpiece has been one of the most performed works in the 2013 Queen Elisabeth (Belgium) International Piano Competition as well as the 14<sup>th</sup> Van Cliburn International Piano Competition, also during 2013 — at least ten finalists performed Opus 111. While it is perhaps somewhat less famous than a few other named Beethoven Sonatas, it remains one his greatest, most profound and controversial culminating statements in that genre. It was completed in January, 1822 and dedicated to his pupil Archduke Rudolph of Austria, allegedly a fine musician. The suspenseful introduction to the first movement, designated *Maestoso*, was truly rendered by Gabrielian in a majestic manner! A slight pause at the end of the first movement allowed for what had just been performed to settle in and prepare us for the monumental second movement designated *Arietta: Adagio – molto semplice e cantabile* (in a very smooth, lyrical, flowing style). The second half of the second movement was played respecting the *L'istesso tempo*, an indication that the metric pulse remains constant when the meter changes. The performance was an impressive success as acknowledged by the standing ovation by the large audience.

Gabrielian performed two encores for the highly enthusiastic audience: J S Bach's transcription of the slow movement of Marcello's Oboe Concerto and "The Lark," by Glinka arranged by Balakirev. Both were beautifully played.

*tanya gabrielian*

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**PENINSULA REVIEWS**

review excerpt

## **Pianist Tanya Gabrielian Performs Khachaturian Concerto with Monterey Symphony**

By Lyn Bronson  
November 18, 2012

Conventional wisdom often proclaims William Kapell's performance with the Boston Symphony, recorded in 1945, as the gold standard for the Khachaturian Piano Concerto, but last night at Sunset Center, Gabrielian knocked one out of the ballpark. This was magnificent playing. It was full of violent and strident passion, but balanced with tender pathos in the tender slow movement. One of the interesting features of the Khachaturian Concerto is the presence of several extended passages of solo piano with the orchestra tacit. These are not actually cadenzas since they do not perform the function of winding up the end of movement to its final cadence, but rather are soliloquies interjected into the orchestral fabric and are unique to this concerto. These soliloquies were fascinating in the way they permitted us to hear Gabrielian's artistry unfettered and uninhibited by the orchestral fabric. Power and virtuosity of a high order were evident in all three movements, and her absolute mastery of every technical difficulty seemed effortless. This concerto presents opportunities for relentless, merciless banging by lesser artists, but there was none of it on this occasion. It was amazing how much volume and clarity she achieved without straining the resources of the Monterey Symphony's fine new Hamburg Steinway concert grand.

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## Opinion: An Elegant Piano Recital

*Ms. Gabrielian has performed on four continents and in many top-name venues*

By Thomas Bohlert | October 2, 2012 - 12:32pm

A piano recital by Tanya Gabrielian on Saturday marked the beginning of the 10th anniversary season of the Rising Stars Piano Series at the Southampton Cultural Center. Ms. Gabrielian has performed on four continents and in many top-name venues, has won a number of highly respected competitions, and recently completed studies at the Juilliard School as the only candidate accepted for the Artist Diploma program, which is a very selective postgraduate residency program.

But perhaps even more interesting is her Art for Activism initiative, which, among other things, attempts to combat the stigma of mental illness. Projects have included an installation with the artist Fran Bull for the exhibit "In Flanders Field: A Meditation on War," and Ms. Gabrielian has founded a biweekly interactive performance series for patients at the New York State Psychiatric Institute in New York City. For this work she was awarded the 2011 McGraw-Hill Robert Sherman Award for music education and community outreach.

She says on her website that although many artists have dealt with mental health issues, she is troubled by the misconception that great art can be created only from suffering and pain. Making reference to this in her opening comments on Saturday, she said she was there to entertain, and indeed the evening was filled with pleasure of the highest order.

Each performer has a different personality, of course, that comes across in the playing, interpretation, and choice of repertory. One pianist may be strong and fiery, another passionate, another turbulent and unsettled, or another virtuosic. While Ms. Gabrielian's concert had these qualities in some measure, it was characterized above all

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by elegance and poise.

The opening of the recital was J.S. Bach's "French Suite No. 2," which consists of six short movements mostly based on dance forms. Ms. Gabrielian's tone was beautifully and evenly voiced, making each line clear and bringing out the inner voices with fine coloring.

I will admit to the heresy that Haydn is not on my top-10 list of composers, but some of his piano sonatas could convince me otherwise. His "Sonata in E flat," next on the program, was played with beautiful transparency and refinement. The second movement, Adagio e Cantabile (in a singing style), was a standout for its sensitivity. Ms. Gabrielian took the many disparate melodic and rhythmic elements and molded them into one in a way that was more graceful than is sometimes heard.

The closing movements of both the Bach and the Haydn — a gigue and a minuet, each rendered in a highly stylistic manner by the composers — are not big or dramatic by design, and these choices perhaps gave an insight into the performer's temperament. But it was clear from the enthusiastic response that the audience was fully captivated and transported.

Moving to a very different kind of music, Ms. Gabrielian next chose three of Sergei Rachmaninoff's "Etude-Tableaux" (Study Pictures). Rachmaninoff wrote two sets of these, and we heard Nos. 2, 3, and 7, Op. 33. It is believed that each etude was inspired by some visual stimulus, but in most cases the composer intentionally chose not to reveal the source.

I think it doesn't really matter, because the visual aspect was not the ultimate goal of the music. Perhaps it's even better that we don't know, because in Rachmaninoff's unique harmonic and textural style the aural images can involve the listener fully without needing a visual reference.

Ms. Gabrielian handled the high technical demands of these etudes with ease, but, more important, the incredible multilayered translucent textures had a sublime shimmer to them. The dictionary defines translucent as allowing light, but not detailed images, to pass through, and this is a fitting description of this music, given its aforementioned visual-aural nature.

For me, Etude No. 3 was a favorite, with its tranquil, sustained, yet ever-changing

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character. No. 7, which the composer did say was inspired by a country fair, was a delight. Here we heard some of the more vigorous and buoyant fortissimo sounds of the piano. Against the more restrained parts of the program, these qualities stood out in great contrast, and at the end it brought some hearty bravos from the listeners.

For a closing, Ms. Gabrielian chose Franz Liszt's setting of the Waltz from "Faust" — from the happy parts of "Faust," she emphasized. Again she showed fabulous technique along with insightful playfulness. In a couple of spots the music nearly thundered with the compelling waltz rhythm, showing that for her the technique can be held in reserve, and used at the command of the music.

After this, the calls from the audience for an encore couldn't be denied. We were treated to a song by Mikhail Glinka, "The Lark," as transcribed for piano by Mily Balakirev.

More about Ms. Gabrielian and her Art for Activism initiative can be found at [www.tanyagabrielian.com](http://www.tanyagabrielian.com).

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## American Record Guide

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Editor: Donald R Vroon

### *Kaleidoscope*

**RACHMANINOFF:** Piano Sonata 1; **BARTOK:** Out of Doors; **HANDEL:** Chaconne in G;  
**GLINKA:** The Lark

Tanya Gabrielian, p  
Gabrielian 1—64 minutes  
(CD Baby 800-BUYMYCD or [www.tanyagabrielian.com](http://www.tanyagabrielian.com))

40 years ago, in a less politically correct time, I lent an early recording of Martha Argerich to my piano teacher. After listening to her Prokofieff Toccata, his first very enthusiastic comment was “She plays like a man!” In the intervening decades we have fortunately learned that it has nothing to do with the way a man or woman plays - she plays like only Argerich can.

In Tanya Gabrielian I find someone who reminds me of Argerich. She is powerful, even muscular in the Rachmaninoff, one of the most harrowing piano sonatas of the early 20th Century. The Handel is clean, crisp, and clear, but takes full advantage of all the capabilities of a modern piano. Her Bartok is a perfect mixture of dynamic, driving rhythms and beautifully shaped quiet melodic phrases. The highly ornamented Balakirev transcription of a Glinka song tells me that this is a pianist who should do wonders with Chopin and Liszt. My assumption was recently confirmed when I heard Gabrielian in recital playing superb Liszt, Beethoven, Schumann, and Debussy— with an encore of the Balakirev.

I have to commend Ms Gabrielian for selecting the Rachmaninoff Piano Sonata 1 as her big piece on her first CD. It is a huge work, and, according to Santiago Rodriguez, as demanding as the composer’s Piano Concerto 3. Both were written for Rachmaninoff’s first trip to the United States in 1909. Gabrielian is only a few years younger (27) than Rachmaninoff when he composed this work. The performance here doesn’t knock John Ogdon’s 1968 RCA recording out of first place, but easily jumps into my top five, and Ogdon’s has never made it to CD. Gabrielian has the full measure of this very complex work—the sensitivity to caress the beautiful melodic phrases and the power to bring off mammoth climaxes.

This is a very special debut disc, with excellent recorded sound; and Tanya Gabrielian is someone to watch. I eagerly await her next recording.

JAMES HARRINGTON

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# yerevan

MAGAZINE WITH AN ACCENT

nov/dec 2011 issue

**Genatz: Tanya Gabrielian**

text by TANYA OHANIAN

Although classical music seems like a genre that is under-appreciated by newer generations these days, pianist Tanya Gabrielian has broken through silly biases and has devoted her passion towards orchestrating a musical identity that is uniquely hers. She demands the audience's attention by offering her own interpretation of pieces composed hundreds of years ago.

It was a lovely Sunday afternoon and I was on my way to see a pianist. Poised for triumph, I saw Tanya Gabrielian embrace the stage at the Dilijan Concert Series at the Zipper Hall in downtown Los Angeles on an autumn afternoon. She's a tall, breathtaking beauty that possesses a rare elegance that I've only come to experience while reading 19th century literature.

An aura of confidence floated above her as she made her graceful entrance. For the first piece she and violinist Armen Anassian gave Dmitri Shostakovich's "Four Preludes, Op. 34" the opportunity of life as the audience basked in the romantic play off between the quick paced piano and the brightness of the violin. I can almost picture two lovers in a battle of wits each trying to outplay the next.

Apart from their dynamic, it would be impossible to overlook Gabrielian's animated facial expressions which display a release of uncontrollable emotions driven by her relationship with the ivory keys.

After a lively string performance, Gabrielian returned for her solo performance. A combination of selected works from the cycle "Feux Follets" by Artur Avensov illustrated a fairy tale free from the constraints of words that sometimes hinder the rumination of an alternate meaning. Among the works was a classical twist on Icelandic musician Bjork's "He is the Beautifullest."

When given a piece to perform she first learns about the composer and the motivation behind their music. She says, "once you see where the composer was coming from, and what the influences were in their life, then I think you get a greater understanding of why the piece was composed. Then you can interpret the same emotions in the way that are

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unique to yourself." Her interpretation of Avanesov's composition enjoyed a delicate touch while still retaining the spirit intended by the composer.

Following the intermission, Gabrielian played Dvorak's powerful piano trio in F minor alongside violinist Movses Pogossian and cellist Timothy Landauer. Her goal of playing music for more than mere aesthetics was felt as each note experienced a spot on precision. To understand her musicianship is to imagine slithering into a bed of the most luxurious silk as a pillow of clouds lulls you, transporting you to a sense of comfort rarely felt.

My heart agreed with all the pieces performed, portraying an overall theme of merriness and joviality. Each piece may have adopted dark complexities, but what remained was an ending that oozed with good feeling and instilled positive hopeful emotions. Dark moments appeared and then quickly transformed back into a carefree happiness that encapsulates the joys of waking life.

Dilijan offered an avenue for Gabrielian's expression, but before anything else she was force-fed her cultural vegetables by her optimistic parents who placed her in lessons at the age of three. Since then she has performed worldwide at Carnegie Hall in New York, Queen Elizabeth Hall in London, Salle Cortot in Paris and has played alongside the Los Angeles and Armenian Philharmonic Orchestra.

She has earned a Bachelor's and Master's Degree from the Royal Academy of Music in London, England and was later accepted to Juilliard's Artist Diploma program. Her big break came about after winning first prizes in the Scottish International Piano Competition, Aram Khachaturyan International Piano Competition, and the Pro Musicis International Award.

Aside from her indebted approach to classical music, Gabrielian is the founder of "Art for Activism," which promotes varying humanistic issues in hopes of achieving a grander purpose. She has contributed to an installation with artist Fran Bull for the exhibit In Flanders Field: A Meditation on War as well as participating in an ongoing recital series that features composers with mental illness. In 2011, Gabrielian was awarded the McGraw-Hill Robert Sherman award for music education and community outreach.

To hear the young virtuoso check out her CD, Kaleidoscope, which includes pieces by Handel and Rachmaninoff.

The theme as I have said is merriness and thanks to Tanya Gabrielian I left Zipper Hall with a look of supreme contentment. You have enriched my soul in ways you can surely understand as a musician with such a hunger for expression.

At the close of a performance you bow to us, but it is the audience that should bow to you. Genatz.

tanya gabrielian

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**PENINSULA REVIEWS**

**Pianist Tanya Gabrielian in Recital  
by Lyn Bronson  
April 30, 2011**

Anyone who says that emerging young pianists all sound alike obviously hasn't heard Tanya Gabrielian. Appearing in recital last night at All Saints' Church in Carmel as the grand prize winner of the Carmel Music Society's 2010 Piano Competition, she came across as a mature, powerful young artist with bold original ideas.

It was purely an accident that she was playing at All Saints' Church, for she had originally been scheduled to perform at Sunset Center on Friday, May 20, as a part of the Carmel Music Society's "Competition" weekend, in which its instrumental competition occurred the following day. Because of a scheduling conflict her recital was rescheduled for the earlier date and moved to the Church. It is interesting to ponder the consequences of the change of venue. Heard in the intimate and resonant acoustics of All Saints' Church there was something larger than life about Gabrielian's approach both to the piano and to the music she played.

Her opening work, Bach's Partita No. 4 in D Major, seemed emoted, spikey and jagged, yet it was, in its own way, powerful and convincing as another way to play Bach. This isn't to say that there weren't some tender and subtle moments, for in the *Sarabande*, Gabrielian proved to us that she could create moments of beauty and serenity.

Gabrielian's performance of four Preludes by Debussy was again highly original, and again bold and jagged. Most striking was the remarkable performance of her final

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selection, *Feux d'artifice* (Fireworks); it was extraordinary the way she controlled her dynamics and pedaling to create a lovely array of beautifully controlled effects that appropriately enhanced the music.

After intermission we heard a fleet performance of Haydn's Sonata in C Major, Hob XVI/50. Fast and fleet in its outer movements, it was the *Adagio* slow movement that made the greatest impression with its lovely control of phrasing and shaping the lines.

The best was yet to come as we heard some truly astonishing playing in Gabrielian's performance of the Eight Etudes-Tableaux, Op. 33. It is rare to hear the set in its entirety, and Gabrielian's brilliant and probing performances of these pieces glorified this set. The critical judgment of the Third Edition of Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians was that "Rachmaninoff's music finds little favor among musicians and is unlikely to outlast his lifetime." How wrong that is was clearly demonstrated by Gabrielian during the last half hour of her recital.

From beginning to end, Gabrielian, with her totally masterful playing wove a magic spell and convinced us that these Etudes-Tableaux are unjustly neglected. Especially powerful was the lovely intense *Grave* No. 3 in C Minor that gave us hints of the internal turmoil and pessimism that seemed to have been so much a part of Rachmaninoff persona — although Rachmaninoff had a surprise for us at the end as the clouds parted and the piece ended in C Major tranquility with a poignant melody that tore at the heartstrings.

Responding to a standing ovation, Gabrielian addressed the audience to say that she wanted to end the recital, as she had begun it, with something by Bach. She sat down and played the *Sarabande* from the Second French Suite. It was beautifully understated and thoughtful. What a very nice way to end a recital.

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**PENINSULA REVIEWS**

review excerpt

## **CARMEL MUSIC SOCIETY'S PIANO COMPETITION HITS ALL THE RIGHT NOTES**

Posted: May 16, 2010    Category: Reviews

**By Lyn Bronson**

"...Ending the evening, we heard the grand prize winner **Tanya Gabrielian**, who, it turns out from her CV, is already a seasoned artist at the age of 26 with an impressive series of awards and performances in Europe and the USA. Her appearance on stage, both during the afternoon session and during the awards concert displayed a totally confident mastery and command. On stage, she is a presence, a force to be reckoned with, and this was plainly obvious before she even played a note, and when she started to play, the impression of total control and mastery was even more apparent.

...She played an encore after her fabulous performances of her chosen works by Bach-Liszt, Janacek, and Bartok. She played "The Lark," a song by Glinka in a concert paraphrase by Balakirev. This was partially a barnstorming Lisztian-like concert paraphrase, but also a stylishly lovely transcription that preserved the haunting essence of the original song. The principal melody is often lightly interwoven between wispy gossamer-like ornamental passages that are as delicious as they are moving. This was a performance I never wanted to end."

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March-April 2010

## Tanya Gabrielian At the Wigmore Hall

Weber was rightly credited by history chiefly for his operas yet he was also a brilliant pianist and it is regrettable that so few recitalists programme his music. On January 21, however, Tanya Gabrielian played Sonata No. 3, in which operatic melodrama is inventively transferred to the keyboard. Throughout she produced a full, rounded tone despite the textures' busyness and this was a refreshing performance.

Another recital rarity is Bach's *Aria variata alla maniera italiano* and this too was delivered with lucidity and growing emphasis. The piece is no gigantic Goldberg sequence yet the bracing actuality of this interpretation still demonstrated that sometimes Johann Sebastian can seem the only composer who combines miraculously enormous facility with consistently profound insight, copious production with unflagging originality and spontaneity.

After the interval came Janacek's Sonata subtitled *1.X.1905*, its two movements headed 'Presentiment' and 'Death.' This commemorates what the composer would have called a 'moment of reality,' a young worker stabbed to death with a bayonet during a demonstration. Tradition counts for little here and the extension and compression of short, pregnant motifs shaped by speech-inflected peasant phrases and the sounds of nature create a vivid impression of events. The emotional immediacy was powerfully conveyed by Gabrielian's passionate response.

Indeed this whole evening, which also included masterly accounts of pieces by Rachmaninov and Bartok, ranged widely in terms of musical content and the kinds of pianism the works demanded.

**Max Harrison**

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# The Herald

## Tanya Gabrielian, RSAMD, Glasgow

AMY PARKER

Published on 10 Sep 2007

**Of all her remarkable qualities, the one that remains most prominent in the mind is Tanya Gabrielian's sheer concentration - not least because she appears to sustain herself throughout the duration of the performance in a singular state of determined expressiveness.**

If Gabrielian, winner of the 2004 Scottish International Piano Competition, was brought in to set the standard for the cohort of this year's competitors, then they must surely be quaking in their practice rooms.

Beginning with Schumann's Papillons - a set of whimsical character pieces - Gabrielian draws the audience out of themselves and into a collective, consenting silence. Gabrielian's style might not be to everyone's taste (being perhaps a little indulgent at times), but there is no denying that this was an impressive performance.

Her steady focus and penetrative concentration makes it seem as if we are not simply listening to the notes she so deftly fingers, but actually watching the phrases take shape in her head. Her range of expression is extensive and she can convey with equal aptitude comedy, pathos and severity.

Peculiarly, Gabrielian makes the piano appear obdurate - we imagine the enormous power and potential of the instrument which it feigns not to offer readily to any mere pianist, but she has total command and we are convinced that it would only make those sounds for her. Her performance of Alfred Schnittke's Piano Sonata No 2 was striking, displaying Gabrielian's internalisation of the modern idiom. This opening recital augurs well for the 2007 competition.

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## SEEN AND HEARD INTERNATIONAL

MusicWeb International's Worldwide Concert and Opera Reviews

### Seen and Heard Concert Review

**Schumann, Schubert and Rachmaninov:** Tanya Gabrielian (piano).  
Wigmore Hall, London. 11.05.07. (ED)

Tanya Gabrielian first came to my attention in a recital given at London's Purcell Room in February 2006. The review of that recital made it clear that I found her a pianist of some promise. The current recital, given to mark Gabrielian's acceptance of the Friend of the Royal Academy of Music Wigmore Award for 2007, showed her versatility across very different repertoire, as well as her willingness to stray beyond the standard recital fare.

*Papillons*, Schumann's popular and notable but not entirely representative opus 2 piano work, is often given with light-hearted affection or in the spirit of whimsy. This, however, was not Tanya Gabrielian's way with the music. She invested its melodies with broad sweep and authoritative tone, which at once caught a certain majesty in the writing whilst making much of the inner lyrical relationships. The work, after all, is a set of variations that utilizes polonaises and waltzes and Gabrielian's interpretation bore this fully in mind. Each danced with vivacity from her fingers as rhythmic exactness helped to create subtle differences of character from one to the next.

Tanya Gabrielian had a very particular point of view Schubert's Sonata in A minor, D.845 also, which was to emphasize the composer as a modernist. By imposing unity upon the different aspects of the opening Moderato, Gabrielian set about expounding her view with efficiency and clarity of tone. Later, particularly in the Scherzo-Trio or concluding Rondo, specific tempos were often pushed, but not at the expense of the work's overall structure or shape. Observing her playing from a distance, as I did on this occasion, I was struck by the relative lack of body movement as she played. Indeed, on the surface one might have thought that expression of emotion was a little too absent. Whatever feeling of distance her stage manner may have lent proceedings, her playing negated in spades as surging bass passages, full and unforced, played off well against the crystalline quality of the upper register. At once this was a reading of a lesser-known Schubert work that made one aware of its originality and question why it is not better known. Gabrielian's lively intelligence and facility of playing delighted and proved provoking in equal measure.

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Rachmaninov's first piano sonata is a rarely performed beast of the solo repertoire. Its three lengthy movements straddle a duration of over forty minutes and, being based loosely on Goethe's *Faust*, each movement takes as its subject a character or scene from the story. It goes without saying that the work contains many obstacles for any player to overcome, including structure, internal relationships and contrasts of material – quite aside from requiring the player to possess a technique equal to the composer's own.

The first movement was one of brooding flamboyance and authority with Gabrielian's iron strong tone and technique perfectly pitched to do the composer full justice. Long lines held over a gradual yet naturally controlled crescendo showed her ability to play with elegance alongside more tempest-like passions the work contains. The middle Largo movement was more obviously Romantic in character, sun-dappled in its shifting gentle harmonies that betrayed the more lyrical aspect of Rachmaninov's personality. The closing movement, though, for me brought out all of Gabrielian's manifest skills. These include total identification with the composer's idiom, the ability to find just the right grand – but never over-loud – scale in projecting her playing, Gabrielian's acute ear for the slightest nuance and balance within her phrasing, as well as maintaining an awareness of the architectural structure that supports the music whilst placing Rachmaninov's details of pianistic excess unobtrusively within the whole. In short, an astounding achievement by any standards, and one I cannot imagine being bettered.

Having an already prodigious list of international prizes and engagements to her name, and having brought glory to the Wigmore Hall stage in this concert, Tanya Gabrielian is already a wonderful artist. Yet, I have to consciously remind myself that she is still only twenty-four and still a student at the Royal Academy of Music, such is the level of playing achieved and depth of musicality exhibited. Remember the name – Tanya Gabrielian – you will be hearing a lot more from her I feel sure.

**Evan Dickerson**

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The logo for 'Musical Pointers' features the words in a bold, rounded, black-outlined font. The letters are thick and have a slightly irregular, hand-drawn appearance. The text is contained within a thin blue rectangular border.

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## Tanya Gabrielian in recital and master classes

Wigmore Hall, Friday 11th May 2007 at 7.30pm

ROBERT SCHUMANN *Papillons*, Op. 2: 1829-1831

FRANZ SCHUBERT Sonata in A minor, D 845: 1827

SERGEI RACHMANINOV Sonata No.1 in D minor, Op. 28: 1907

Encores: Shchedrin *Humoresque* ; Bartok *from Csik District*

This is the tenth time that the RAM Friends have sponsored this award to assist "the most talented young musicians of their generation". Tonight they have struck gold!

I have had previous opportunities to see **Tanya Gabrielian** at work in master classes with Prof Satz and Pierre-Laurent Aimard; on both occasions her receptivity to suggestions made her stand out.

At first I was a little confused; was this the same pianist I was expecting to see, whom I'd recalled being associated with romantic Spanish repertoire?

Once she'd adjusted the piano stool, checking exactly how far from the keyboard to sit, Gabrielian played without any distracting gestures, her back tall and straight. No matter, *Papillons* was idiomatic and lightly textured, with flair in her phasing going well beyond accuracy and assurance. The other choices were unusual; how often do you hear in recital this lengthy A minor Schubert sonata, never amongst the more popular? It has a certain austerity, which can be a positive feature, especially in the first movement. For me, Gabrielian was a little over expressive as it began, but soon settled down to a steady tempo, the melody punctuated with stabs in the bass. For the rest, her decisions were just and the pianism assured and the whole account fully integrated.

A fine first half, but nothing prepared us for Rachmaninoff's 1st piano sonata, with a scenario from Goethe's Faust, after the interval. This is not a piano recital regular and I do not remember having encountered it before. The composer thought it "wild and interminably long" and that no one would ever play it... Well, it has certainly not achieved a place in the repertoire, as has the 2nd in both original and revised versions.

Trawling *Gramofile* is an interesting exercise. There are many CDs of Rachmaninov No 2, but few of No 1 - and most of those reviewed negatively &/or deleted.

So the field is relatively clear. Gabrielian's performance was revelatory, a feast of romantic pianism which held us enthralled. Rich full tone, but never straining or too loud for Wigmore Hall; a profusion of melodies supported by elaborate swirling arpeggiated accompaniments, creating an orchestral feel. Pedaling immaculate to

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support her articulation; as good a sound in Wigmore Hall as we have heard for many a month. This should be followed up with a recording, hopefully in as sympathetic acoustic as Wigmore Hall, and with the microphone not too close.

The only incongruity was that this powerhouse was unleashed without any visible means by a slender young woman who sat still at the piano, with a tall, straight back; for some of us, that at odds with the emotionality of the music. The explanation of my confusion is revealed below. It would seem that Tanya Gabrielian had taken to heart Aimard's advice to sit with a 'centred' posture, relaxing to enable production of tone that must not be 'blocked', and checking with a mirror. I questioned whether practising with a mirror might risk undermining her spontaneity?

On this showing, no harm had been done by her drastic alteration of platform manner; it was however noticeable that Tanya Gabrielian began to move a little more freely only in her encores. Those were typically adventurous; a small piece by Bartok (not fully identified) preceded by a witty Schedrin *Humoresque* - Tanya played that with far more point than does Krassimira Jordan on an Albany CD I've tracked down (sample on Amazon!); just right to bring us back to earth after Rachmaninov.

Peter Grahame Woolf

Prof Alexander Satz Master Class **Tanya Gabrielian** Granados *El amor y la muerte*

- - At the Ricci Foundation's evening Piano Masterclass at the Royal College of Music, Prof Satz had a second Steinway alongside his pupil's piano, and illustrated his thoughts copiously, sometimes playing along with his 'victim' - - he subjected them to what often seemed impossible demands for immediate response, usually of a subtle musical nature, often described in metaphor and not unkind caricature, especially seeking to combat too rigid and mechanical rhythm - - Of those I heard, **Tanya Gabrielian** was able to reach deeply into the essential Spanish romantic character of Granados (*El amor y la muerte*) and one felt her interpretation grow by the minute.

Piano Masterclass Pierre-Laurent Aimard **Tanya Gabrielian** Bartok *Out of Doors Suite*

None of the three pianists had any problems with Aimard's demands to take particular passages without the scores, and to try to modify their approaches in subtlest ways and before an audience - - Aimard emphasised the importance of 'centred' posture, 'opening' the chest and relaxing to enable production of tone that must not be 'blocked'. - - **Tanya Gabrielian** was the most interesting, her body mobile and her face expressive in responding to the changing moods of the music in a way that I felt was natural and not added for effect; I think we were all captivated watching and listening to her. Might not Aimard's advice that she should practise with a mirror be inhibiting and undermine her spontaneity? I look forward to hearing Tanya in recital.

## SEEN AND HEARD INTERNATIONAL

### MusicWeb International's Worldwide Concert and Opera Reviews

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# tanya gabrielian

P I A N I S T

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## Seen and Heard Concert Review

review excerpt

**Schnittke and Granados** : Tanya Gabrielian (piano). Purcell Room, London. 28.2.2006

Tanya Gabrielian:

Schnittke: Piano Sonata No. 2

Granados: Goyescas 'Los Majos Enamorados': Quejas ó la maja y el rusieñor, El amor y la muerte, Epilogo (Serenata del Espectro)

"As has become common practice now, the Philharmonia prefaced their orchestral concert with a free instrumental recital by a recipient of the orchestra's Martin Musical Scholarship Fund in the adjoining Purcell Room. The recital programme (though presenting two works by composers inhabiting vastly different sound worlds to those in the orchestral concert) nonetheless established a coherent theme for the evening: presentiment, meditations on imminent peril or death, and ultimately, life affirmation.

The willowy figure of 23 year old Tanya Gabrielian walking gracefully on stage in a full length flowing dress could not have left one more unprepared for the prolonged outpouring of dark and anguished emotion that followed her entrance. Schnittke's *Piano Sonata No. 2* was written shortly after his first near-fatal heart attack, and the work addresses his feelings about the experience, revisited within each of three movements. The opening *Moderato* begins with the feeling of tears, or perhaps, to read Gabrielian's expressive facial gestures, that indefinable point at which laughter becomes crying. The music unfolded within a sense of self-contained form represented by fluid writing, and led to a point of self crisis, expressed by extreme angularity of writing and strength of playing. The pianistic challenges presented in making the whole thing hang together, along with the physical playing of it, are considerable: in bringing it off so confidently across the entire technical spectrum Gabrielian really showed her mettle.

The *Lento* was delicate at first, but falsely so, and showed both a certain foreboding and the possibility of happiness left unfulfilled. The futility of hopefulness is given sparse peckings of notes with which to express itself, yet even this was angst-ridden in Gabrielian's interpretation. The closing *Allegro moderato* brought a return to angular discord once more amid fleeting moments of jazziness. Here, Gabrielian made the unmusical become musical by her attentive phrasing and responsive touch. And therein lay an irony. The music pursued an ever more mechanistic path, as if to display the dehumanising of the composer or player; who seemed to become one with the music's dissolving in on itself before a pounding repeated bass note imposed itself on the movement. A short pastel-shot chorale then served as a contrast – a view of the afterlife perhaps– and this towering work (given a performance of alarmingly assured stature) came to a close.

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The selections from Granados' *Goyescas* affirmed Gabrielian's great gift for producing sustained melodic lines inflected with passion. '*Quejas ó la maja y el rusieñor*' showed a wistful lyricism, somewhat sad and delicate, particularly towards the ending. The music represents a woman who opens her heart to a nightingale, and generates emotions akin to those in Schnittke's *Lento*, even though the means of presentation could hardly be more different. Granados '*Love and Death*' became a vision of stillness to Gabrielian, before giving way to emotions of unrest and longing, that turn fully to passion before sinking finally to nothingness. Once again, the parallels with Schnittke's thoughts were made only too clearly through playing of faultless control and telling expressiveness.

The *Epilogue* (Serenade of Death) was characterised by vivid clarity, the skeletal feeling of the music and its subject captured by 'bare-boned' syncopation, within which an uneasy melody of glowering menace flashed periodically. Sarcasm and death, eternal nothingness after the memory of tempting melody, were all that was left to us. After such a high quality and emotional journey at the recital, the prospect of an orchestral concert that I had looked forward to since the last time Dutoit conducted the Philharmonia in October 2005 was very welcome. I was extremely impressed in October and had even suggested that the Philharmonia might consider Dutoit as a potential chief conductor in waiting. How different things can be from one concert to the next however, for this one was largely disappointing...

...The evening as a whole remains notable for Tanya Gabrielian's contribution: she is a pianist with the promise of a formidable future. A masterclass with Pierre-Laurent Aimard awaits her in the next few days in which the subject is Bartók's *Out of Doors* suite. With her standards set extremely high already and with the drive to extend her capabilities still further, Tanya Gabrielian is surely an artist to look out for."

**Evan Dickerson**