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Juana Zayas

PAINIST



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BIOGRAPHY

The lilting lyricism and impassioned power of pianist Juana Zayas's playing is born of life experience.

Ms. Zayas has performed throughout Europe, South America and the United States. Known in particular for her exquisite and moving performances of Chopin, she opened the 1999 and 2000 Newport Music Festivals in Rhode Island, and played all of Chopin's Etudes at Lincoln Center's Alice Tully Hall, at the 2000 World Piano Pedagogy Conference in Las Vegas, Nevada, and at Piano Festival Northwest 2003 in Portland, Oregon. Ms. Zayas is regularly invited by the prestigious Serate Musicali to give recitals at Verdi Hall in Milan and has performed with the Radio Philharmonic Orchestra and the Zeeuws Orchestra in the Netherlands, the Orquesta Sinfónica de Radio Televisión Española in Madrid, the Venezuela Symphony Orchestra, and with orchestras such as the San Diego Symphony and Rochester Philharmonic. Additional performances have taken place at Portland Festival Northwest; Verdi Hall, Milan; Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall; National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; the French Embassy, Washington, DC; Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall, Sarasota, Florida; and other venues and series. Her performances have been broadcast by National Public Radio and New York's WQXR. Ms. Zayas's recordings have been released on Music & Arts Programs of America, Albany Records and ZMI, the most recent being an all-Schumann CD (including the Sonata Op. 22; Romance, Op 28, No. 2; Widmung by Liszt/Schumann; and Fantasie, Op 17); an all-Schubert CD (Sonata, D. 960, and Four Impromptus, D. 899), both on the Music & Arts label; and two CDs on the Zayas Masterworks, Inc., label (works by Bach-Busoni, Mozart, Beethoven, Liszt, Debussy, and Chopin).

Juana Zayas's pull to music, specifically to the piano, was a strong and basic part of her nature. She began to pick out folk tunes on the keyboard by ear when only two years old. By age four, she was reading music and playing four-hand duets with her mother. At age seven, she entered the Peyrellade Conservatory of Music in Havana and gave her first solo recital, performing works by Beethoven, Handel, and Chopin. By age eleven, she had earned a Gold Medal at the Peyrellade Conservatory, performing the Schumann Concerto. During her childhood, the performances of Jorge Bolet, Claudio Arrau, Friedrich Gulda and Arthur Rubinstein (who played every year in Zayas's native Havana) were among her earliest and most vivid musical experiences; their styles and musical personalities have been an inspiration to her ever since.

Ms. Zayas was able to leave Cuba with the intervention of her last teacher there, who was a friend of Joseph Benvenuti, Professor of Piano at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique in Paris. He urged Zayas to audition, which she did successfully. Zayas returned briefly to Cuba during the following summer, then resumed her studies in Paris, never to return to her native land.

At the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique, Juana Zayas studied piano with Joseph Benvenuti and chamber music with René Le Roy, taking First Prize in both. Following her graduation, she won a Medal with Distinction at the International Music Competition in Geneva, Switzerland.

Being married in Versailles, Ms. Zayas moved first to England then to New York, where she studied with Adele Marcus, David Bar-Illan and Josef Raieff.

The arrival of three sons in quick succession necessitated a decrease in the number of her professional performances. During this time, however, she increased her repertoire, played a great deal of chamber music, and presented recitals locally, some of which were broadcast nationally by

NPR. Fifteen years later, she re-emerged to glowing reviews and welcoming audiences all over the world. In October, 1977, Ms. Zayas gave her debut recital at Lincoln Center's Alice Tully Hall, performing the Mozart Sonata in F major, K. 332; Gaspard de la nuit by Ravel; and all of the 24 Chopin Etudes, Op. 10 and Op. 25, earning her a rave review in the New York Times by Harold C. Schonberg. Ten years later, she again played all the Chopin Etudes at Alice Tully Hall under the auspices of the Chopin Foundation Council of Greater New York.

The critical acclaim that Juana Zayas has consistently received over the years has touched on virtually every facet of music-making. In the International Piano Quarterly of Summer 1999, Donald Manildi discussed a Zayas recording as part of a survey of all the recordings of the Chopin Etudes: "A quite fabulous amalgam of lyricism, wit, drama, and sheer pianist craft, full of subtle and imaginative detail, lustrous tone, and impeccable technique." He suggested that it made "a compelling first choice" among the hundred or so competing versions.

Harold C. Schonberg, in the July/August 1998 issue of American Record Guide, wrote, in part: "Zayas, Cuban-born, made her New York debut in 1977. I reviewed the concert. In our incestuous musical world, there is immediate international gossip when a major musician emerges. Word of mouth immediately penetrates all barriers. But this woman had no reputation, and I walked into Tully Hall not expecting very much. I went because I was curious to hear how an unknown could handle both books of Chopin Etudes. After ten measures of the first Etude I was bowled over, and Zayas went from strength to strength in one of the finest performances I have ever heard. Then she disappeared, though a recording of her concert was released by Music & Arts in 1983 — a recording that drove Chopinophiles mad with ecstasy. And so you can check for yourselves, and also from this new M&A release, whether or not my rave review was justified. Now, after all these years (it seems that she was busy raising a family) she is starting to resume her career, and her playing is just as colorful and exciting. She filters Chopin's notes through a fertile mind, with a very personal but never overdone kind of romanticism that looks back to the great pianists of a previous age. Like Lortie, she appends the enigmatic but wonderful C-sharp minor Prelude that Chopin published as a separate piece some years after the 24. Zayas is an extraordinary pianist."

And David Mulbury, in the March/April 2005 issue of American Record Guide, wrote: "On the heels of her superb discs of Chopin and Schubert, Zayas here turns her attention to Schumann with impressive results. Her playing of the turbulent G minor Sonata brims with ardor, fire, and sparkling virtuosity... her admirable balance — there is never an excess of anything and she habitually avoids overstating the expressive, dramatic, and brilliant aspect of the music. And her technical equipment certainly ranks among the most formidable of today's leading pianists."

Critical Acclaim

12/7/2008

“ Deft touch: pianist Juana Zayas. A Keen Sense of Architecture By B.A. Nilsson Juana Zayas First Presbyterian Church, Johnstown, Dec. 7 A recital of piano music by Brahms and Chopin in a fine old midcity church has an Edith Wharton-ish aspect to it, and this program could—and, for all we know, might—have taken place here a hundred years ago. But nothing like this has occurred here in recent memory. Johnstown has no major concert hall—the Glove, in neighboring Gloversville, is closest—but the First Presbyterian Church offered an acoustically pleasing sanctuary. and a small but well-appointed Steinway was brought in for the occasion. Cuban-born pianist Juana Zayas forged a career in America that has put her in the classical music world’s small spotlight only intermittently, but when she performs (and records), it’s an event worth celebrating. She chose a demanding program that celebrated the instrument’s Romantic-era heyday, with Brahms and Chopin providing the bulk of the works she chose. And I can’t imagine a piece announcing itself more Brahmsianly than that composer’s Rhapsody No. 1 in B-minor. It opens with a characteristic theme that wanders for a bit before settling into a passage with a unique sense of majesty and introspection, and just when you think you’re about to stride off in autumnal triumph, it eases into a soft, haunting section with just as much motion as the beginning but in a far more cantabile manner. The piece shimmers between those modalities even as it plays with harmonic modes, with a major key often threatening to break through its minor-ness. There’s a lot of work for the pianist for ten busy minutes, and Zayas demonstrated a special skill that goes beyond the merely technical: an understanding of the architecture of a work like this, and the ability to use that understanding to sculpt the components into an effective whole. We didn’t just shift from loud to soft, introspective to triumphant—we were taken on a journey that left us more fulfilled at its end. The roadmap of that journey is easier to follow in Brahms’ Variations and Fugue on a Theme by Handel. This nearly half-hour piece starts with a merry theme from Handel’s first harpsichord suite and winds through 25 variations in all shapes and sizes before launching the monumental fugue. Always obsessed with keeping up with Beethoven’s high standards, Brahms outdid himself here, and Zayas brought the first half of the program to an impressive close. My only quarrel with her interpretation—and it was a trait I noted in a couple of the works that followed—was a tendency to pull back on the big endings, unexpectedly softening them. Chopin’s four impromptus opened the second half, works that, despite the improvisatory suggestion of the titles, are deftly structured three-part works, typically with a sparkling fountain of virtuosity framing a mellow middle. Piano music doesn’t get much more romantic, in the free-flowing sense, than this, but Zayas resisted the common temptation to over-interpret, keeping her use of rubato all the more effective. Again, it’s her keen sense of architecture that made the pieces so compelling. The Fantasie-Impromptu in C-sharp Minor (incorrectly identified on the program) is the piece that gave us the song “I’m Always Chasing Rainbows,” and I’m sure I had the assistance of everyone in the audience in mentally singing along to the piece. And the Polonaise-Fantasie in A-flat Major closed the Chopin set with a more ambitious set of contrasts, almost a miniature sonata in its breadth. Zayas closed the concert with Liszt’s breathtaking arrangement of the waltz from Gounod’s Faust, a familiar tune that probably would like the pianist to bring four hands to the keyboard but settles for two extremely deft ones. The audience was on its feet before the last chord died out, and Zayas obliged by encoring with a Schumann song, the gentle “Widmung,” its flavor preserved in another Liszt arrangement. More such concerts ”

B.A. Nilsson, Metroland, Albany, NY

1/13/2008

“Mozart: Piano Sonatas 9, 11,12; Rondo, K 511 Juana Zayas—ZMI 103—72 minutes Zayas has been much praised in these pages for her fine technique and interpretive abilities. Turning her attention to Mozart, she proves to be an interesting player but not always in sympathy with the Mozart style. Sonata 11 is a fairly straightforward presentation and avoids all the pitfalls besetting pianists who subscribe to the dainty as you go approach. There is much expressivity and textured subtlety, along with several little rubatos that break up any hint of the metronomic. The ‘Alla Turca’ finale avoids the whiff of preciosity that taints most amateur performances, but Zayas is clearly no amateur, and her studied, yet free-sounding playing can be enjoyed fully in the context of her direct style. In Sonata 12 Zayas has several little speedy interjections in the opening movement that some may perceive to be strikes of genius where others may find rhythmic inconsistencies. All goes well in the final Allegro assai, and her evenness of execution is very impressive. Sonata 9 is nicely nuanced in the first movement but still has its share of flexible tempos. The Andante is most beautifully sustained and has great refinement. With the final Presto the spirit of Mozart takes full wing and the listener’s attention is held. The well-known Rondo is all one could ask for. The artist wins by her gentle grace and delicate shading. It is certainly one of the high points of a release that must face huge competition for any collector’s attention. ”

Alan Becker, American Record Guide, J/F 2008

2/22/2007

"It was in a group of Chopin pieces that Zayas reached a pinnacle of artistry. Here was playing in the grand romantic tradition of long, sweeping lines of power and color. The Grand Valse Brillante in A-Flat Major had an intoxicating swing. In the Barcarolle in F-sharp Major, Zayas' skillful handling of embellishments typical of Chopin produced an elegant rippling effect. After the lovely Berceuse in D-flat Major, Zayas launched into the heroic Ballade in G Minor. With sensitivity and passion, she led the audience through the Ballade's world of ever changing color and emotion. "

George H. Pro, Special to The Seattle Times

6/26/2006

"Schumann - Carnaval; Arabesque; Toccata; Fantasiestücke Juana Zayas, Hamburg Steinway 001 Music and Arts CD 1181 What a superlative musician Juana Zayas is. Not only does she possess a technique beyond fault but in those compositions she has recorded she displays an intuitive understanding of and simpatico with the composer's temperament. This can place her interpretations somewhat at variance with the usually accepted readings. . . Many famous pianists have recorded Toccata; Simon Barere, Horowitz, Cziffra and others, but Zayas has her own insight into this virtuoso's outing. To parody an old cigarette ad: It's not how fast you play but how you play it fast. "

Bruce Surtees, Classical and Beyond

10/15/2005

"Ms. Zayas offered a varied and musicologically important program that lasted two solid hours. Beginning with Mozart's Sonata in A Major, K. 331 (alla turca), she showed her brilliance from the first phrase she played. I have not seen many performances where everything just seems perfect: her dynamics, articulation, interpretation, control, technique -- you name it, she did it with ease. Her Chopin was just magnificent as well, with the highlights of that section being her interpretations of the Barcarolle, op. 60, and the Ballade in G Minor, op. 23. I do not even know if there is a word in any language that could accurately describe the beauty Ms. Zayas created on the piano."

Charles T. Downey, Ionarts

5/1/2005

"On the heels of her superb discs of Chopin and Schubert, Zayas here turns her attention to Schumann with impressive results. Her playing of the turbulent G minor Sonata brims with ardor, fire, and sparkling virtuosity. One of the many elements I find so attractive in her recordings is her consistently pleasing, musical tone- -she never pounds on the piano. Another is her admirable balance- -there is never an excess of anything and she habitually avoids overstating the expressive, dramatic, and brilliant aspects of the music. And her technical equipment certainly ranks among the most formidable of today's leading pianists. . ."

Mulbury, American Record Guide, March/April 2005

12/1/2004

"Schubert's "great" B-flat Sonata, with its "heavenly lengths" (to paraphrase Schumann's description of the "great" C-major Symphony) generally elicits the very best that pianists who perform it can call forth. Recently I have reviewed a spate of recordings of it, by Brendel, Perahia, Kissin, and Paul Lewis. Zayas's performance is more than secure in the company of the best of these uniformly stellar accounts, along with Rubinstein's, which I still regard as the benchmark for this masterwork. "

Mulbury, American Record Guide November/December 2004

11/30/2004

"Zayas has total command of the instrument. She recognizes all the subtleties of Schubert's score without exaggeration or affectation. Yet it's all here, fresh and abundantly animated from within the music. She does not "point out" any passages of special interest but they are there to hear. In any hands, the 20 minute first movement may be too long for impatient listeners but Zayas' fluid playing keeps it moving. The rest of the sonata sounds equally spontaneous but was surely well considered. If you enjoy a pianist wrestling Schubert to the ground, look elsewhere. Zayas plays Schubert and Schubert wins. "

Bruce Surtees, Classical and Beyond

12/2/2002

"Chopin Piano Sonatas in B flat minor, Op. 35 & B Minor, Op. 58, etc (Zayas Masterworks ZMICD102) Collection: Juana Zayas in recital; works by Bach-Busoni, Mozart, Beethoven, Liszt, & Debussy (Zayas Masterworks ZMI101) ". . . This is truly organic playing, in which everything is interrelated and a powerful sense of structure is conveyed without any sacrifice of expressive detail. Witness her artful variation of phrasing and emphasis in the two Chopin sonatas, where repetition is such a vital part of the drama. . . meticulously plotted articulation and dynamic contrasts as an agent of movement in Mozart's K330 Sonata . . . a musician deserving the highest respect.""

3/30/2001

“Zayas, Channeling Chopin. . . . Zayas is a pianist who has much to teach the world. She trusts Chopin implicitly and never roughs him up or slathers on rouge; she lets his repetitions play out naturally and hypnotically. Her sense of the right way to do things is so close to what Chopin writes on the page that it can seem as if she isn't interpreting the music at all. But that is a kind of interpretation in itself: or rather, a kind of faith. Zayas's devotion and modesty are her greatest strengths, and both came through with perfect clarity.”

Philip Kennicott, The Washington Post - Washington, DC

3/13/2001

“Master pianist Juana Zayas makes triumphant return to Schenectady. On Sunday at Proctor's Theater, she gave a deeply charismatic performance of the Chopin F minor Piano Concerto, and an equally riveting interpretation of the Rachmaninoff Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini. . . . [In the Chopin] Zayas's tonal beauty and sincerity of approach imbued every note with life and love. In the slow movement (Larghetto), she conveyed the rapture and longing of the 17-year old Chopin's unrequited passion for a fellow student. The delicious trills and exquisitely molded ornamentation sent shivers down the spine. . . . The second tour de force of the evening was the Rachmaninoff Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini. . . . Zayas brought out the aesthetic core of each and every variation with strength, decision and warmth. At the same time, she was able to negotiate the pyrotechnical difficulties with disarming ease and grace. . . .”

Feroza LaBonne, Special to the Times Union - Albany, NY

5/3/2000

“. . . This was one of the most musically mature, technically powerful, and thoughtfully structured programs to have been heard in the Lehigh Valley in quite some time.”

Philip A. Metzger, The Morning Call - Allentown, PA

12/31/1999

“. . . This recording of Chopin's piano music is one of the finest available, and Juana Zayas's talent makes her eligible to be mentioned in the same breath as Martha Argerich, as well as Jorge Bolet. . . . In short, even if you have other recordings of Chopin's Preludes, you need to make room for this one. Juana Zayas is phenomenal.”

Raymond Tuttle, Classical Net Review

10/15/1999

“. . . pianist Juana Zayas challenged the audience to rethink the way Chopin is heard and experienced in our generation. . . . In her unassuming way, Zayas's mastery attained the technical feats the recital demanded, and let the music take center stage. . . . After three standing ovations and clamoring for more, she finished the program with a simple and beautiful rendition of the Waltz Opus 69 No. 1.”

Vincent Schommer, The Times Herald-Record - Middletown, NY

9/30/1997

“. . . The concert at Macalester College's Janet Wallace Fine Arts Center, was not flashy and overdone, but truly an affair of virtuosity and joy.”

Minneapolis Star Tribune - Minneapolis, MN

4/17/1997

“. . . it was a great night of music-making. . . . Zayas is a fine example of what is called a natural virtuoso... She merely buries her head in the music and, aided by deft fingers, reveals its richness.”

Los Angeles Times - Santa Paula, Ventura County, CA

9/30/1996

“. . . Zayas plays Chopin with much the same commanding sweep that Petri invested in the music of Liszt. Higher praise is hard to imagine.”

Piano & Keyboard review of the Chopin Etudes

1/26/1996

“... Zayas, however, simply must be heard by all who appreciate piano playing - and Chopin playing - on the highest

level.”

Donald Manildi, American Record Guide

3/16/1995

“. . . from the first phrases a distinctive clarity coupled with a personal tonal beauty caught the listener's attention. From thjen on, one could only note in passing the pianist's technical brilliance of articulation and ease of execution, as the sheer pleasure of the music's content overwhelmed all else.”

Sarasota Herald-Tribune - Sarasota, FL

5/11/1992

“. . . a return appearance by Juana Zayas was a real musical feast. . . Zayas is a musician's musician - a pianist with both heart and technique, which means she plays the dazzling romanticists like Liszt with unstoppable virtuosity and Mozart with a classical kind of lyricism.”

The Dayton Daily News - Dayton, OH

1/14/1991

“Not since Gina Bachauer was around to dazzle concert audiences has a woman pianist brought such virtuosity to a program for the keyboard. Not, that is, until Cuban-born Juana Zayas emerged on the scene. . . [Zayas] was a vivid reminder of Bachauer, a musician with enormous strength, very much a no-nonsense pianist. . . clean, brilliant keyboard work, beautifully polished.”

The Dayton Daily News - Dayton, OH

10/24/1990

“Humble and unaffected in persona, she is a magic dynamo at her keyboard. The familiar came through as something almost new.”

The Hour - Norwalk, CT

5/21/1990

“Hearing pianist Juana Zayas play music from South America is like hearing Count Basie's band play the blues. . . Nobody does it better. . . dazzling display. . . Zayas played the entirety of both works [by Ginastera] like they were hers and hers alone.”

The Daily Gazette - Schenectady, NY

12/31/1989

“Her playing is crisp, and she has enormous verve. Her disc of the Chopin Etudes exhibits high craft.”

David Dubal in The Art of the Piano, Summit Books, New York

11/2/1989

“Zayas has the hands and temperament for fiery, dramatic works and her fast, clean fingerwork was particularly incisive in the sometimes agitated, sometimes bantering first movement [of Shostakovich's Concerto No. 1]. . . Zayas's cadenza playing later in the work was spectacular, to say the least.”

The Schenectady Gazette - Schenectady, NY

10/24/1989

“Young, Cuban-born pianist Juana Zayas joined Bonavera, the St. Cecilia [Chamber Orchestra] and trumpet soloist John Hudak for a fresh, satisfying performance of Dmitri Shostakovich's Piano Concerto No. 1. . . Zayas was entirely at home in the bravura piano writing, playing with crisp accuracy and a tonal beauty even in some of the pounding chordal sections.”

The Times Union - Albany, NY

10/11/1989

“. . . one of the highlights of this incredible, crowede period was pianist Juana Zayas's debut appearance in Dayton Saturday. . . Zayas played the sort of musically satisfying, intelligently planned recital program. . . impeccably played. . . wonderfully romantic. . . with sensitivity as well as virtuosity.”

The Dayton Daily News - Dayton, OH

5/13/1989

“. . . Her brilliant grasp of the [Chopin First Piano] concerto and refined sense of style. . . Her execution of a true Chopin rubato was exemplary, as were her phrasing and articulation.”

The Los Angeles Times - Los Angeles, CA

2/8/1989

“Miss Zayas's interpretation [of Chopin's First Piano Concerto] remained steady and solid. There was never a sense of conflict or difficulty in her facile execution of the concerto's intricate themes and subtle rhythms. . . Ms. Zayas's fingers were flying in the final "Rondo" movement but remained invisibly tied to a steady, regular pulse. But the constraints of a mechanical beat did not restrain Ms. Zayas from infusing her interpretation with tender nuance.”

The Journal News - Nyack, NY

1/21/1988

“Ms. Zayas is a very talented artist. Her playing is a consummate blend of superb technique and sensitive expression. . . She has a firm sense of the architecture of a piece.”

New Canaan Advertiser - New Canaan, CT

11/23/1987

“. . . it seems as if she [Ms. Zayas] is better than ever. If anything, there is, it seems to me, poetry and lyricism - even a little restraint - in her playing [of Saint-Saëns' Concerto No. 4]. . . Zayas plays with power without ever assaulting the instrument and she can deliver soft, muted passages with feathery gentleness.”

The Schenectady Gazette - Schenectady, NY

11/10/1987

“[In Chopin's two sets of Etudes, Op. 10 and Op. 25] Her style is primarily virtuosic, but with a restraint that is well suited to the music of Chopin. . . a thinking person's Chopin. . . an unhesitating "A," as befits this abundant Chopin evening.”

The Journal-News - Nyack, NY

11/5/1985

“Juana Zayas is a musician of decidedly special communicative power. . . Ms. Zayas made of the set [of Chopin's Preludes] a totally and uniformly absorbing half-hour, setting every one of these miniatures out in immensely poetic style, with abundant warmth, strength and security. . . an artist worth traveling many miles to experience.”

The Times Herald Record - Middletown, NY

12/25/1977

“Miss Zayas played with style, sensitivity, a big technique, and an aristocratic flair for the mixture of romanticism and classicism embedded in the music.”

Harold C. Schonberg, The New York Times

10/19/1977

“Miss Zayas gave an exceedingly impressive performance of the complete etudes. . . She played with color, with technique to burn, with a good deal of individuality. . . like Joseph Lehar or Ignaz Friedman, she never broke the line by over-interpretation. . . It was altogether an imposing feat, and it may be that we have with us a Chopin pianist to the manner born.”

Harold C. Schonberg, The New York Times

Concerto Repertoire

For works with orchestra, Ms. Zayas plays selections from the list below. Additional concerti are available upon request.

Composer	Work
Beethoven	Concerto No. 1, in C major, Op. 15 Concerto No. 2, in B-flat major, Op. 19 Concerto No. 3, in C minor, Op. 37 Concerto No. 4, in G major, Op. 58 Concerto No. 5, in E-flat major, Op. 73
Brahms	Concerto No. 2, in B-flat major, Op. 83
Chopin	Concerto No. 1, in E minor, Op. 11 Concerto No. 2, in F minor, Op. 21
Falla	Nights in the Gardens of Spain
Gershwin	Rhapsody in blue
Grieg	Concerto in A minor, Op. 16
Haydn	Concerto in D major
Liszt	Concerto No. 2, in A major
Mendelssohn	Concerto in G minor, Op. 25
Mozart	Concerto No. 9, in E-flat major, K. 271 Concerto No. 20, in D minor, K. 466
Rachmaninoff	Concerto No. 2, in C minor, Op. 18 Rhapsody on a theme by Paganini, Op. 43
Ravel	Concerto in G major Concerto for the left hand
Saint-Saëns	Concerto No. 2, in G minor, Op. 22 Concerto No. 4, in C minor, Op. 44
Schumann	Concerto in A minor, Op. 54
Shostakovich	Concerto No. 1, in C minor, Op. 35 [Live cassette recording available upon request]
Tschaikowsky	Concerto No. 1 in B-flat minor, Op. 23
Tschaikowsky-Fennimore	Concerto No. 2, in G major

Recital Repertoire

For recitals, Ms. Zayas plays selections from the list below.

Composer	Work
Bach, J.S.	Italian concerto, Preludes & Fugues, Partita No. 1 in B-flat major, Two-part Inventions
Balakirev	Islamey
Barber	Sonata, Excursions
Beethoven	Bagatelles, Op. 33, Nos. 5 & 7; Rondo, Op. 51, No. 1; Sonatas: F minor, Op. 2 No. 1; C major, Op.2 No. 3; C minor, Op. 13 ('Pathétique'); C-sharp minor, Op. 27 No. 2; G major, Op. 49 No. 2; F minor, Op. 57 ('Appassionata'); E-flat major, Op. 81a ('Les Adieux'); C minor, Op. 111
Blood (Esta)	Balkan Suite, Seven Dances in Aksak Rhythms
Brahms	Ballades, Op. 10; Intermezzi, Op. 117; Rhapsodies, Op. 79, Nos. 1 & 2; Sonata in F-sharp minor, Op. 2; Variations & Fugue on a theme by Haendel, Op. 24; Variations on a theme by Paganini (two books), Op. 35
Caturla	Berceuse
Cervantes	Cuban Dances
Chopin	Andante spianato et Grande Polonaise Brillante, Op. 22; Ballades: G minor, Op. 23; F major, Op. 38; A-flat major, Op. 47; Barcarolle, Op. 60; Berceuse in D-flat major, Op. 57; Twelve Etudes, Op. 10; Twelve Etudes, Op. 25; Mazurkas: B-flat major, Op. 7 No. 1; A minor, Op. 7 No. 2; C-sharp minor, Op. 63 No. 3; Nocturnes: F major, Op. 15 No. 1; F-sharp major, Op. 15 No. 2; G minor, Op. 37 No. 1; C minor, Op. 48 No. 1; B major, Op. 62 No. 1; E minor, Op. 72 No. 1; Polonaises: A major, Op. 40 No. 1; A-flat major, Op. 53; Twenty-four Preludes, Op. 28; Prelude Op. 45; Prelude in A-flat major; Scherzos: B minor, Op. 20; B-flat minor, Op. 31; C-sharp minor, Op. 39; E major, Op. 54; Sonatas: B-flat minor, Op. 35; B minor, Op. 58; Fourteen Waltzes
Copland	Piano Variations
Debussy	Arabesques Nos. 1 & 2; Children's Corner; Clair de lune; Estampes; Twelve Etudes; L' Isle joyeuse; Pour le Piano; Preludes Books I & II
Fauré	Piano Variations
Fennimore (Joseph)	Armistice, Calentura de Teresa, Foxtrot, The Hen's Snuffbox, The Woolworth Man, Variations on a theme by Beethoven
Gershwin	Preludes
Ginastera	Sonata, Three Argentinian Dances
Gottschalk	The Banjo
Granados	Laments, or the Lady and the Nightingale
Griffes	Sonata
Haydn	Variations in F minor
Hernández (Gisela)	Cubanas para piano; Zapateo Cubano

Liszt	En rêve - Nocturne; Fantasia and Fugue on the Name B-A-C-H; Funérailles; La Lugubre Gondola (version 1); Mephisto-Waltz; Paganini Etudes; Polonaise in E major; Rhapsody No. 6; Transcendental Etudes Nos. 1, 2, 4 & 5; Two Concert Etudes; Two Legends; Valse oubliée; Widmung (Schumann-Liszt)
Mendelssohn	Andante & Rondo capriccioso, Op. 14; Variations sérieuses
Mozart	Fantasia in C minor, K. 396; Rondo in A minor, K. 511; Sonatas: C major, K. 330; A major, K. 331; F major, K. 332; Variations on 'Ah, vous dirais- je Maman,' K. 256
Plaza (Juan B.)	Sonatina Venezolana
Prokofieff	Sonata No. 3, Op. 38; Toccata, Op. 11; Visions fugitives, Op. 22
Rachmaninoff	Etude-Tableau, Op. 39, No. 5; Preludes: Op. 3 No. 2; Op. 23 Nos. 2, 5 & 6; Op. 32 No. 5
Ravel	Alborada del gracioso, Gaspard de la nuit, Jeux d'Eau, Pavane pour une infante défunte, Sonatine
Scarlatti, D.	Sonatas from the 'Essercizi per Gravicembalo': Nos. 1, 2, 3, 6, 9, 17, 19, 20, 23, 24, 27, 29
Schubert	Impromptus: Op. 90 Nos. 2, 3, 4; Op. 142; Moments musicaux: Op. 94 Nos. 2, 3, 6; Sonatas: A major, Op. 120; B-flat major, DV 960
Schulz-Evler	Concert Arabesques on Motifs by Johann Strauss "By the Beautiful Blue Danube"
Schumann	Arabesque, Op. 18; Carnival, Op. 9; Carnival Jest of Vienna, Op. 26; Fantasia, Op. 17; Fantastic Pieces, Op. 12; Forest Scenes, Op. 82; Papillons, Op. 2; Scenes of Childhood, Op. 15; Sonata No. 2 in G minor, Op. 22; Symphonic Etudes, Op. 13; Toccata Op. 7; Variations on the name Abegg, Op. 3 No. 5
Stravinski	Trois mouvements de Petrouchka
Thomson (Virgil)	Portraits: Bugles and Birds (Picasso), An Old Song (Carrie Stettheimer), Alternations (Maurice Grosser), Canons with Cadenza (André Ostier), Poltergeist (Hans Arp), The Hunt (A.E. Austin, Jr.), Catalan Waltz (Ramon Senabre); Etude: Ragtime bass

Recordings

These recordings are available on compact disc and can be purchased at www.amazon.com and www.arkivmusic.com.

[Juana Zayas Plays Mozart](#)

Zayas Masterworks, Inc. - CD 103, Total Time = 72:25

[Robert Schumann, Juana Zayas piano](#)

Music & Arts Programs of America - CD 1181, Total Time = 79:35

[A Treasury of Piano Works by Robert Schumann](#)

Music & Arts Programs of America - CD 1148, Total Time = 62:24

[Schubert Sonata & Impromptus](#)

Music & Arts Programs of America - CD 1139, Total Time = 71:33

[Juana Zayas Plays Chopin](#)

Zayas Masterworks, Inc. - CD 102, Total Time = 69:39

[Juana Zayas In Recital](#)

Zayas Masterworks, Inc. - CD 101, Total Time = 69:16

[A Treasury of Cuban Piano Classics](#)

Music & Arts Programs of America - CD 1069, Total Time = 65:39

[Chopin Preludes](#)

Music & Arts Programs of America - CD 1006, Total Time = 67:06

[Chopin Etudes](#)

Music & Arts Programs of America - CD 891, Total Time = 58:02

[Chamber Music of Joseph Fennimore](#)

Albany Records - TROY065, Total Time = 71:27

[Piano Music of Joseph Fennimore](#)

Albany Records - TROY113, Total Time = 71:58

Chopin Etudes (all) 1983 recordings and 2005 recordings released by Music & Arts Programs of America (CD1229 [2 CD])

Chopin & Liszt 2007 recordings of the four Ballades and the four Scherzos and several Transcriptions by Liszt, released by ZMI (CD 104 [2 CD])

CD Reviews

Chopin: *Ballades & Scherzos;*

Liszt: *Mephisto Waltz; Consolation 3;*

6 Song Transcriptions; Faust Waltz

Juana Zayas, p

ZMI 104 [2CD] 133 minutes

Here is one of the best sounding piano recording I've heard in a long time. Her Hamburg Steinway was spectacularly recorded in late 2007 by Phoenix Audio, and this release is on her own label (ZMI = Zayas Masterworks, Inc.). The performances are on the same high level as the Etudes (below), and this is another recording all Chopinophiles should seek out. While there is no lack of virtuosic playing, the overriding adjective to be used here is “musical”. I can find you plenty of performances of these works at faster tempos or more overtly showy, but none with better phrasing, voicing, or legato lines. Zayas's musicality and insights are always in control.

Another benefit of this release is the nine-page essay by Benjamin Folkman. While Folkman (whose name I recognize from long ago when he played a significant role in getting ‘Switched On Bach’ before the public) may use too many adjectives, his keen insights make it well worth wading through phrases like “turbulent nocturnal forest susurrations heightens the poet’s joy at winning his beloved”.

I do have one single disc with both the four *Ballades* and the four *Scherzos* squeezed in, but most common is a single CD with one or the other set, filled in with miscellaneous Chopin pieces. Zayas adds a substantial amount of Liszt in addition to the eight big Chopin works. The first disc has three pairs of Liszt song transcriptions: ‘Maiden's Wish’ and ‘My Joys’ by Chopin; ‘Erlkönig’ and ‘Gretchen am Spinnrade’ by Schubert; ‘Frühlingsnacht’ and ‘Widmung’ by Schumann. Liszt would be quite proud to hear these performances, with just the right balance of clear and shaped melody floating above devilishly difficult accompaniment figurations. Zayas eschews the more commonly heard super-virtuoso approach in favor of a beautiful rendition of each song, with appropriately exciting climaxes. One is never bowled over by the number of notes she manages to control so effectively, but rather by how well these great songs can work as solo piano pieces. The Waltz from *Faust* is played in a manner much closer to the original in the opera rather than in a big piano showpiece. Possibly the one weakness for me in this release is the lack of blatant virtuosity for the sake of virtuosity, which I often enjoy, and which Liszt is the supreme master of. Nevertheless, I am very pleased to have these performances and will return to them often.

HARRINGTON

American Record Guide, November/December 2009

Chopin: Etudes, all (twice)

Juana Zayas, p

Music & Arts 1229 [2CD] 133 minutes

A unique presentation here, Music & Arts gives us Zayas's 1983 recording (M&A 891, Jan/Feb 1996) coupled with a new (2005) one—both for the price of one disc. The two sets, Op. 10 and Op. 25, 12 etudes each, are accompanied by the later *Trois Nouvelles Etudes* on both discs, and the timings are listed side-by-side in the booklet. In all but one case (Op. 25:2), her second readings are longer than the first one (usually by less than 10 seconds). The second set total timing is a shade more than five minutes longer. While it is not uncommon for an artist to record the same work a second time, I know of only Ashkenazy who has recorded all these etudes twice (I'm sure our readers could probably enlighten me about others).

Zayas's 1983 recording was originally a Spectrum LP, reissued on CD by M&A. Don Manildi very favorably compared her with Ashkenazy's first recording, Earl Wild, David Saperton, and Alfred Cortot—luminary figures all. It only took the first few bars of Op 10:1 to perk up my ears. By the end of the disc, positive adjectives had piled up: imaginative, alive and always engaging; fearless virtuosity (Op 10:4, Op.25:10-11-12); dreamy lyricism along with humor (Op. 25:5). Suffice to say that I believe this single disc (at full price) is still worthy of consideration as the best available—and there has been a lot more competition over 26 years.

The 2005 recording shows that Zayas has not lost an iota of imagination or pianistic skills, but she has lived with these works, and her interpretations have changed enough for a new recording. On its own, this second one would also be worthy of consideration as the best available. Sonically, it is a touch superior to the 1983 recording, but only by a shade—the first is exceptionally good. The best analogy I can offer is a spectacular young wine, with a wide range of clearly defined taste points. Now after many years in the bottle, it is still the same wine fundamentally, but the sharp edges on the tastes have softened and combined, new ones emphasized, others less prominent. Generalities aside, some etudes, like the famous 'Black-Key' are more aggressive the second time around. I predict simply endless pleasure for listeners who compare the two discs etude by etude. Rarely does a new release of very well-known music jump to the top of my list over established favorites. This is an exception.

HARRINGTON

American Record Guide, November/December 2009