

SASKIA GIORGINI

VIRTUOSO

Sergio Burns

The Manic Street Preachers' 'Motorcycle Emptiness' plays on the radio as I drive to Cumnock. Ironic, I think, because I am on my way to interview a professional, classical pianist. Later, I find her standing at the top of the stairs as I walk across the lobby of the Dumfries Arms Hotel (where she is staying). She smiles and points at me, I nod, signalling that I am there to interview her for Ayrshire Magazine.

"Every day," Saskia Giorgini tells me when I ask her how often she practices. "As much as is needed, which is not always too much. I find one of the things you have to learn is how to manage...how much, otherwise you lose inspiration. So I try to stop a little bit before the moment, but you feel it coming when...you don't have any ideas anymore or you start to do the same things over and over again, and that is very bad. I try to stop before that point."

Giorgini is in Ayrshire to perform a solo piano recital as part of the 2018 Cumnock Tryst. The day after I interview her - almost 24 hours to the minute - focus is written all over the attractive, young face of this stunning pianist, as she sits at the black, shiny Steinway and riffs through the works of Haydn, Enescu, Schubert and Liszt. Giorgini wows the packed audience at New Cumnock Town Hall with a brilliant set played with stylised panache, effortless expertise and passion.

The audience, mesmerised by her ability, look on as she digs deep into her soul and navigates the difficult sections flawlessly. A recital from Heaven she plays like an angel and enjoys a seven minute plus ovation, as well as three encores. The applause at the end is loud, people to my right, behind and in front of me whoop with delight, call out Bravo! Wonderful!

"I do normally distinguish between the ones I need to learn and or memorise and the ones that I know already," She says of her practice technique when rehearsing for a concert. "For the ones I am learning I need space. I can normally work on four new pieces a day, but then I need space in between, so it takes a long time. I normally close the door and I stay in my place and for a week or so, (and) unless my brain stops working, there is time."

Saskia Giorgini, of course, is now an internationally renowned pianist, but I am curious to learn where her involvement with music started?

"I can't even remember," She laughs warmly. "I know my mama told me she played Mozart when she was pregnant with me. It is good for the fetus, makes the children... smarter. So she used to put Mozart music on all the time. She also brought it to the hospital when she gave birth, and when I was born it was playing, and before I was born it was playing so this was my first contact."

Half Italian, half Dutch, Saskia Giorgini was born in Turin. She started playing piano around the age of four and was taught the Suzuki method (the idea of the student being totally immersed in music in a similar fashion to being totally immersed in language, starting, if possible, from before birth).

At the age of 15 Saskia studied at the Accademia Pianistica 'Incontri Col Maestro' in Imola. She then graduated from the Conservatorio di Torino with top grades and honours, before progressing to the Accademia di Musica di Pinerolo, then the KUG (Kunsthochschule) in Graz before completing her studies at the Mozarteum, Salzburg. She is also a Bösendorfer Artist (people who play or have played the famous Austrian piano).

But while music is now her career, she did have other ideas while growing up.

"I had this improbable idea of being a doctor and playing the piano," she admits and laughs again. "I... had quite weird ideas when I was a child."

She shakes her head, and looks down, thinking, her mind turning over.

"It is beautiful because I can live with music," She looks up again and her eyes widen as she returns to thinking about her career. "It is very special, it is a bit tiring sometimes, firstly because I am always super sensitive. When you have to play a concert you have to be especially flexible and receptive, because.. all the things have to come from you. I always like to think that I warm up for a concert, my hands and muscles, and then I concentrate, and then I have to warm up emotionally too. It makes sense psyching yourself up for a performance."

We are given a glimpse into the mind of a top flight classical pianist, at the time of the interview one day from an important recital. Her life, her whole being, revolves around music, practice, preparation and the next performance. Like a Scottish Premier League football player, her actions dictated by the next big event on the calendar - home game against Motherwell, away to Heart of Midlothian, recital at New Cumnock Town Hall, then on to recital with Ian Bostridge at the Konzerthaus, Vienna - there are definite parallels.