

Cellists' Corner

Brief Career Details of Important Cellists

prepared by David Johnstone from public information

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SPECIAL FEATURE on ŽANA MINIOTAITĖ

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The cellist Žana Miniotaitė is a solo and chamber music performer, and laureate at international music competitions. The vast diversity of her repertoire, encompassing many different eras, her professional involvement ranging from Baroque to Contemporary music and the search for individual ways of expression account for the wideness of her artistic horizons and the remarkable uniqueness of her performance experience, while her music has resounded across cities of the European Union, Russia, Ukraine and Belarus.

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Žana Miniotaitė was born in 1987 in Russia, from where her grandfather had been exiled a few decades before and where her father, the composer Viktoras Miniotas, was also born. She began to learn music at the age of two and after a few years she was already playing in concerts. At first she was studied the violin (with her mother, the violinist Svetlana Miniotas), and piano at the regional music school. Her father (formerly a laureate of several important composition competitions) has created a lot of different music (orchestral works, chamber music, religious music, soundtracks for plays and animation movies), though at the moment, he is more into electronic music, and interestingly he has also written a specific electronic soundtrack for some of the paintings of Zana!

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In 1996 Žana and her family moved to Lithuania, where she entered the cello class of T. Kuc, at the age of ten. Then in 2001, she was admitted to the National 'M. K. Čiurlionis' School of Arts, where she studied in A. Palšauskas' class. In 2005, she entered the Academic Music College in Moscow in the class of Ass. Prof. O. B. Galočkina, daughter of the illustrious cellist N. N. Shahovskaja. Finally, in 2012 she was admitted to Moscow State Conservatory, where she successfully concluded her studies in the class of Boris Andrianov in 2017. She also specialized in chamber music under the guidance of world-wide renowned musicians such as A. Rudin, A. Korciagin and O. Bugaev.

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While still a student, Žana was playing as a soloist in music festivals and other concerts across a number of different countries, performing over 70 times, including a few of these as concerto soloist with orchestra. Žana also participated in music competitions, where she was awarded the title of laureates, diploma holder and winner of special prizes. While living in Moscow, she would be regularly invited to perform at the events organized by the Embassy of Lithuania.

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In 2018, after finishing her studies in Moscow, Žana returned to Lithuania, where she continues pursuing her artistic life. During the past few years, she has performed several recitals in Anykščiai and Vilnius and has taken part in several further masterclasses, such as Birštonas Summer Academy courses, David Geringas' courses in Vilnius, N. Joens' courses in Kuldīga, ECMA courses in Vilnius, while also performing at the International Organ Music Festival in Rokiškis (2019 and 2020) and at the International Aukštaitija Organ Music Festival in Utena. Also in 2019, as a Lithuanian cellist, she was invited to the 11th Gabalos Festival and she won a special prize at Paris Music Competition. In addition, from 2018 she has been collaborating with the Small Theatre of Vilnius for the show "Manno laimė" (directed by Gulnaz Balpeisova), where she starred in the role of a cellist.

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Some previous highlights include appearances at the Taneev Festival in Vladimir (2017), "Musical Spring" in Kaliningrad (2015), "Sugrįžimai" Festival in Vilnius (2015 and 2018); performances of the Schumann and Elgar Cello concertos with the Vladimir Symphonic Orchestra, and concerto works by Vivaldi, Bruch's "Kol Nidrei" and Giovanni Sollima's "Violoncelles vibrez" with the Kaliningrad Chamber Orchestra. Also mention could be made of the Vivacello Festival in 2016 (G. Sollima, J. P. Maintz) and 2017 (Xavier Philips, Laczlo Fenyo), Klaipėda International Cello Festival (Monika Leskovar).

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Her unique talent has also showed itself by her winning prizes at the Technical Writing Competition in Moscow (2005), the International String Instruments Competition “Symphonic Holidays” in Moscow (2006), the International Music Competition “Music without Limits” in Druskininkai (2011), the Maria Yudina International Competition for Chamber Music Ensembles in St. Petersburg (2012).

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HEAR HER:

B.Britten - Suite No.1 for cello solo - extract

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=228502678612695>

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Ernst Bloch - Meditation, for Cello and Organ

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=387292615822058>

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J.S.Bach - Cello Suite No. 3, Sarabanda

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=3039710902795491>

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AS A FINE ARTIST / PAINTER

She began to paint at the age of three in the art studio of Marina and Gennady Nikitin. From the very beginning, she was taught to search for her own vision and think outside the box, in regard to both her ideological view and means of expression. At a later age, Zana abandoned the visual arts in order to study music.

“Back when I was studying cello in college, one night I had a dream. I dreamt that I was just desperate to paint: I was running around the house looking for some paints, but I couldn’t find any. When I woke up, on the same day my Dad and I went to the art store and bought everything I needed. That was when I first returned to the world of painting. At that time, my first oil painting graphic portraits came to light”.

Zana’s works are extremely diverse and non-standard: from realistic graphic portraits to naive childish gouache paintings, from thick, dense layers of oil paint to subtle, blurred abstractions.

DO SEE:

<https://www.saatchiart.com/art/Painting-Love-is/1734551/8349268/view>

Some of the paintings on her own website are matched with texts too: when she wrote them, she tried to do it creatively as well, so that they are not just descriptions of what is being represented, nor what she meant to convey with one or another painting; it feels like they came out spontaneously, as she weren’t herself writing them.

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Zana currently lives and works in Vilnius (Lithuania).

Talking about next year's musical plans, at the moment she has scheduled a few concerts in Lithuania, which she hopes will not be cancelled in these times of Covid.... She is also preparing to play in Dubai in May, 2022, choosing a particularly hard repertoire.

She is now working at the 'National M. K. Čiurlionis School of Arts' as a cello professor, where she prepares pupils for concerts and competitions as well.

She is surely one of the most creatively individual cellists in Europe today, and probably also one of the most beautifully photogenic ones too!

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To sum up, here I reproduce a few words that my friend Zana told me a few days ago:

"Dreams and goals are, in my opinion, two very different things. Dreams are more like something that you really want, but you don't know if you're going to make it, or even if that is possible at all. We all have dreams. Diversely, goals are something more realistic, those that we can achieve. I could say that my goals in the following ten years are to further improve in the fields that I have chosen in my life, in which I would like to attain really high results. At the same time, I would like to learn how to give myself more time for resting and in general for every day's life, which I find hard when a lot of goals are involved. That's why that is also maybe a dream for me!"

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Zana Miniotaite



Zana Miniotaite



Žana is certainly a name to look out for!

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