

MELIKA SALIHBEĞ BOSNAWI

CLOSE TO ABSOLUTE

was exactly what I felt while listening to this performance: J.S. Bach, Concerto no.5 In f-minor for harpsichord and strings (WV 1056) – Largo Maria João Pires, Piano Orchestre De Paris, conducted by Riccardo Chailly

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EfbCQP0JaPs>

I felt so. You listen to and feel for yourself! And here I am now, almost speechless! Not many times it happened to me in my life so far. Maria's performance of Bach brought me close to Absolute. Not many things can bring me so close to. . . , but she's great, she's been one of these "things". Her instrument plus complete her! Just listen to. . .

Still lost for words I am going to stretch for an indefinite while my silence about this woman. For she is an epitome of Woman. Not mistakenly with a capital W. For most of our gender fellows cry&sob&bawl&howl. . . as doing little of anything, as being chronically on the outs with all and everything, as. . .

Maria is a mom of the six; Maria is a wife, and she loves, and cares for, and she is a great artist, and she teaches. . .

Let me borrow from an amazing David Patrick Stearns' interview with her

<http://www.artsjournal.com/condemned/?s=Maria+Joao+Pires>

where one may read:

DPS: But certainly you've spent a lot of time alone as a student practicing.

MJP: I never did it because I had no time. I was always very busy with other things. . . I had children very early and I had to take care of everything. I never had much time for the piano. I was always an amateur somehow. I did the career. . . it was not on purpose. It was not wanted and it was not very natural.

DPS: But you have such a natural facility for piano.

MJP: I don't think so. I have small hands. Many technical problems – not many but some. Of course I found my own body language with the piano and my own way of getting out of my problems but they're still problems. The other thing is I don't really like to play concerts. I don't like to be onstage. That's not a comfortable thing for me.

DPS: And recordings?

MJP: I love that!

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DPS: I know the past ten years of your life haven't been easy. . .

MJP: The others also haven't been easy! [laughs] I don't believe that life can be easy. I had some difficult and violent experiences in life and I feel that came to teach me something that I had to learn that was very urgent. One of them was my project in Portugal. I learned a lot and I learned a good lesson that everybody has to learn in life. Struggling and fighting is not the solution. The solution is the step back, observe, know why and understand why and then see the reasons it happened. And I was a fighter all my life. I think now I'm much less.

DPS: Your father was a Buddhist. . .

MJP: No, my grandfather. My father died before I was born, just two weeks before I was born.

DPS: Your life has been hard.

MJP: I grew up in a family with my brother and sisters and my mother. And with our grandfather, who was Buddhist and that was very strange in that moment. But my father lived until he was 30 or 32 years old in China and Japan. He studied the philosophy. Much later I studied Buddhism; I was over 40 years old. I have a very strong relationship to that philosophy. But I don't like to say I'm a Buddhist. When you say what you are, you're already setting certain limitations. Even just saying that you're American gives yourself a limit, no? But what you are is a human being. Before anything I'm a human being.

DPS: Sometimes I'm not sure what I am.

MJP: That's nice! Very nice not to be sure. The best thing in life is not to be sure and to accept it.

DPS: How did these experiences in recent years change your playing?

MJP: I don't know. I'm changing all the time and I'm happy to change. For sure my playing changed, but I don't know in what way. Of course I'm always searching through the music. Searching about everything.

DPS: You now live in Brazil, I'm told, and you're conceiving more humanitarian projects.

MJP: Right now this project is very limited because I am doing many things in Europe and my children live in Europe. You know I have six children. I had four girls. Then I adopted a boy. And then I took another boy. And they are still very young and they want to study in Europe. So I'm very much related to Europe right now. I have a project that's very important to me right now where I could work in Brazil and other places, like Africa. A project that uses musicians to participate in a certain change.

DPS: Tell me more.

MJP: You're very mean! It's so difficult for me to express that. It's right at the beginning. People care about careers and themselves and all the business that is around music. And that is, for me, somehow, nonsense. Art has nothing to do with that. Competitions take the soul out of the musicians. And the first moments you want to make music in your life it's for reasons other than business. And in competition you feel like you have to kill someone to have his place. This is horrible. This is not art.

So I would like to give young people the possibility of taking the mission of the society in the world. Not fighting against that but finding new ways. I'm not saying to change the world. This is very pretentious. What better than to have artists in projects in many places in the world where problems are big. It's not decent that we're eating a lot and having a lot of luxury and people are dying because they have no food or no water. Our mission should be to try to change things. And art is something that can give people their dignity back.

DPS: Your school in Portugal: When did that end? Did the government withdraw financial support?

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MJP: Oh yes. My life totally changed. I'm very lucky that I've always been very relaxed about material things. So I don't really suffer inside. But it was a violent thing. And I can cope with it much better than many people would.

DPS: At least it keeps you from retiring. I've heard that you planned to. Or want to.

MJP: Let's say, "No plans." I did retire once. I tried. For those reasons I could not stop yet. I still hope that it will happen very soon.

DPS: People wouldn't love you so much if you didn't have something to offer that they weren't getting elsewhere.

MJP: I don't believe that. There are so many great musicians.

DPS: I love your playing very much. But I don't know why.

MJP: That's nice!

DPS: Why?

MJP: Because you don't know. You like it but you don't know why. I like that.

DPS: During 2006 you also had health problems. I've heard heart; I've heard cancer. . .

MJP: I had a heart operation. And never anything else. It was an emergency so I was very scared about that for a while.

DPS: You subsequently dedicated one of your recordings to your doctor.

MJP: To the team. Because they really saved my life. I was in Spain. I

was playing concerts and I had to go to a small city, Salamanca. And when I arrived there I knew something was wrong and wanted to go to the doctor. The person who was working with me said, 'Don't wait. Go now.' I would've had a heart attack. I would've died. But I never had it.

DPS: We wouldn't want you to end up like Tatiana Nikolayeva, having a heart attack in the middle of her own concert.

MJP: It's not a bad way to die. She was a nice lady. If you have to die, it doesn't matter how. But sometimes you also have to survive. That's what happened to me.

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DPS: You've always lived outside of cities, first in Portugal and now in Brazil.

MJP: I'm not crazy about cities. I have a strong relationship to nature, the air, the wind, the sun – everything. In the city I feel thirsty.