



Dr. Washington Garcia Eljuri *the pianist*

This Ecuadorian born pianist started playing at the age of 4 and has travelled around the world to impart his talent. In a recent Jakarta visit, he meet's up with Gilar Di Aria and tells us how the ivory keys have shaped his life.

Child Prodigy

His grandfather moved to Ecuador from his native homeland in Lebanon and brought with him a family of strong musical roots and deep appreciation of the arts. With Lebanese arts and music flowing in their blood and their love of the new homeland, they integrated their traditional roots with the western arts.

It's a very musical family where they often played the piano, violins, danced to flamenco and performed classical ballet, and what unique was that they all played by ear. Little Washington was exposed to music from both worlds, resulting in a diverse knowledge of the arts from an early age.

He started playing the piano when he was just 4 years old and it was his grandmother who taught him the very first notes. At the age of 6 he was accepted at the National Conservatory of Music in Ecuador and progressed rapidly that he was enrolled in a special accelerated program. He finished his Undergraduate Studies at the age of 18, accepted his Master's degree when he was just 20 years old and received his Doctoral degree in music from the Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University in the States at the young age of 25.

The Piano

His grandmother used to play the piano regularly and that's how his attraction to the instrument started. When he was only 3 years old, every time he heard his grandmother playing the piano he used to run from wherever he was, even if he was playing with his friends, and sat down next to her to listen to her playing.

It's an instrument that allows him to speak to many different people from different cultures without words. A relationship he sees as being married to somebody, one that needs devotion and love. And the chemistry was already there since the very beginning.

The Pianist

His first concert was when he was 7 years old at the benefit concert for handicapped children in Ecuador. Back then he didn't realize the scope of the career as a pianist. At the age of 10 he won the national competition and received his first check, and that was the first time it came to him that he could make a living by doing what he loves the most. At the age of 14 he was invited by the President of Chile to go there and play the piano for him, and by the time he's 15 he performed with the National Symphony Orchestra of Ecuador where he played a concerto by Mozart. Then and there it was clear that he's going to be a pianist.

Breaking the Rules

Brought up and taught in the traditional of playing the piano, every aspects of it were strictly taught by the rules. This includes the correct body posture and finger positions. One of the things that require extra attention is playing legato (notes played smoothly and connected), a difficult technique to achieve. He used to think that to able to play it he needed to do it conventionally, but later on, one of his teachers at Peabody Institute told him that it happens in the sound not in the technique. He was shown and discovered a way that broke all the rules and tradition, using his own creativity and all the resources available in order to produce the complex sound.

“Played for the President of Chile at the age of 14 and was playing a Mozart concerto with the National Symphony of Ecuador by age 15”

Long Distance Relationship

After being attached to a specific piano, he would have to readjust and start it all over again with the one provided by the venue – an exercise he describe as dating. A lot of adjustment needed to be done, up to the smallest things like fixing the seating level in order for him and the instrument to be as one. Being an active recitalist and soloist in acclaimed venues in Switzerland, Austria, France, Spain, Hungary, Canada, Chile, Mexico, Japan, Hong Kong and the States made him aware that each instrument has it's own soul, individuality and characters. Not all of them are necessarily in tune with him; making it one of the disadvantages of being a pianist; to not having the ability of playing his favourite pianos.

His is a Yamaha C5 Grand Piano, where he has it in his Ecuador home, while his latest obsession is his Grand Bosendorfer which he bought in Vienna, a unique Austrian grand piano that he kept in his new home in Texas.

