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Review

Mónica Cárdenas, piano and composer, and Johann Aparicio, cello. *Chaos*. CD, 2023.

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Diagonal has been apprised by renowned composer and pianist Mónica Cárdenas of her new album, *Chaos*, which is available to listeners on multiple digital platforms. This album won a Silver Medal at the 2023 Global Music Awards. In the composer's own words:

I gave the name *Chaos* to this production because chaos is everywhere, getting worse and worse, and it is my way of approaching and showing solidarity with world problems. When I was planning and thinking about recording a new CD, it occurred to me to create a grouping of works mirroring the chaotic state dominating people's moods nowadays. For this production I have thought that everything I composed would have to form a whole, gathering and relating parts of chaos such as the courage, the hopelessness, the sadness, the memories, the deceit, thinking of "someday," at times joy, the hope, the struggle and the patience that must have on a day-to-day to bear the irresponsibility of Others. I'm sure the music will say it all.

The *Chaos* album features five pieces, all for cello and piano: *Chaos* (7:52), *Le Triste* (6:46), *Suite of Three Pieces (Someday–Zamba–The Hope)* (16:30), *El Engaño* (2:48), and *Mis Recuerdos (Tribute to March 11th, 2004, Day to Day)*. "Chaos" alternates reflectively lyrical passages in either the piano or cello with rhythmically agitated sections featuring greater textural complexity. As the title leads one to expect, "Le Triste" offers moments of introspective melancholy, but these contrast with dancelike sections utilizing Latin-style rhythms. The arpeggiated tonic chord at the end is a reminder that as progressive as her musical language is, she never abandons metricality and tonality, thus making her musical language accessible to wider variety of listeners than is often the case with "modern" music. The "Suite of Pieces" commences with "Someday," a refreshingly tuneful excursion to somewhere better, someday. "Zamba" owes its title and musical character to the Argentine dance of the same name, though it is not to be confused with the Afro-Brazilian samba. "The Hope" is in a cheerful major key and carries us along with its confidently swaggering rhythms, which convey the essence of hope itself. "El Engaño" (The Deception) takes us within to a quiet, peaceful place, one in which we may reflect on the dreamlike nature of reality. The album closes with "Mis Recuerdos" (My Memories), a stirring conclusion in which lively passages alternate with songlike sections suggestive in their free rhythm and Phrygian modality of Spanish music. The subtitle, "Tribute to March 11th, 2004, Day to Day," is a reference to the coordinated terrorist bombings of commuter trains in Madrid on that date. Man's inhumanity to man continues unabated in our world, and we get by day to day, enduring the consequent chaos with as much courage, grace, and inspiration as we can muster. Certainly, this music will make that journey more pleasant.

Johann Aparicio Bohórquez is the Principal Cellist of the Heidelberg Philharmonic Orchestra, and both his technical acumen and interpretative savoir faire are on impressive display here. Mónica Cárdenas is Peruvian–Spanish and began her piano studies at the National Conservatory of Music in

Lima. She then studied at the Tchaikovsky Conservatories in Kiev and Moscow. In 2019 she obtained the Fellowship Diploma equivalent to Master's degree in composition from West London University. She is now based in Schleswig-Holstein (northern Germany). Her album of *10 Preludes and Fugues of Latin America* for solo piano, composed in 2020, won a Gold Medal at the Global Music Awards in 2021, and it was favorably reviewed by this author in *Diagonal*, vol. 6, no. 2 (2021). *Chaos* presents a bouquet of works as ingeniously designed as they are evocative and engaging. I recommend them with the same enthusiasm as I did her *Preludes and Fugues*.

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