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# Interview: Isabel Esain

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15th October 2017

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***"Living in London is like a dream, coming to Classic FM is even better."***

Over a hot chocolate at a cosy cafe in South Kensington, Isabel Esain recalls how she had the opportunity to play her instrument, the viola da gamba, on Classic FM.

Isabel, 19, from Zaragoza, Spain, began her journey playing the viola back when she was just seven years old.

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Beginning in Rome around 1600, the Baroque period followed the Renaissance and the music style preceded the classical era.

Isabel, however, prefers baroque music to classical: *"When you go to classical music, you have more restrictions, so composers tell musicians how they want instruments to be played. But for baroque music, you have to interpret it yourself. So you have to read so many books, you have to read so much about the background and the composers and why they play this way and different techniques, if you play French music you have to play one way, if you're playing German music you have to play in a different way."*

*"It's much more time consuming but very rewarding when you play it."*

She puts down her mug and then with her hands explains the different playing styles. She plays the German way, holding the bow from below, whilst the French play holding the bow from above.

She later informs me how in the past, composers had to choose between quality and int

and how in classical music, it is a case of a musician being in front of an audience, who



simply listens. She describes this as "the main difference" between classic and her preferred baroque genre.

Whilst, Isabel speaks highly of the long list of baroque musicians, she's insistent that she wants to find her own unique style. I ask her who her inspiration is and she ponders for a moment before telling me, *"I can't choose one, I really can't choose one"*, before explaining, *"I don't want to be like someone, I don't want to play like someone."*

It was this dedication to her art form that led to her Classic FM appearance: *"So I have quite an active Facebook account."*

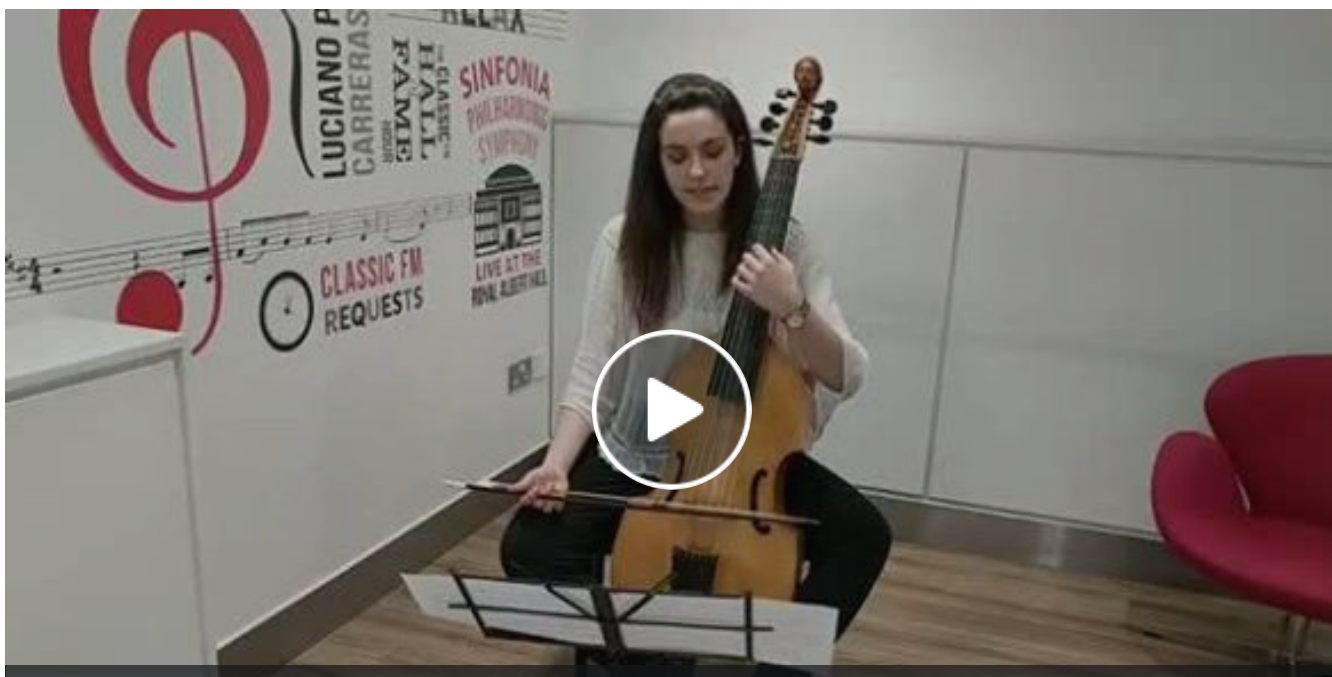
On this account, she shared a lot of her music: *"From my tours and all my music gigs and all the things I do, and I've always followed Classic FM, Classic is always one of my references in the music world, because they don't support just classical music, they also support baroque music."*

Classic FM contacted Isabel as a result of these posts on her website: *"They were really interested, so I sent them a video and they published it in their website, and it was a very successful post, so they invited me to the studio, and then I recorded some videos there."*

*"It was such an amazing experience, everyone in the studio was really nice, I had this tour through the studio, and with the live session, we did it, I was really happy because there was so many people interested in the instrument."*

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*"There were people commenting 'I really want to learn this instrument', These people know like Bach and Mozart, but they don't know baroque, so this is like new music, so that's cool. The chance to show this to people was really, really enjoyable."*



In addition to her life as a musician, Isabel is studying two degrees: Biochemistry and Music at Imperial College, London. She is clearly enjoying life in the capital: *"I'm meeting people all over the world, it's been such a great experience, also having the chance to play French."*



*music with French people! It's cool and I don't know, in all aspects it's amazing, I have nothing to complain about. It's really cool to live in this cultural background."*

Whilst doing one degree can seem daunting enough, Isabel has no regrets doing two and encourages others considering doing the same to just go for it.

*"Everyone in Spain was telling me not to do it.*

*"It doesn't matter what people tell you, because I remember only one person out of a hundred told me 'you can do it.'*

*"And here I am, I've done my first year, I'm really, really happy*

*"If you just want something, just go for it, no-one is going to stop you, you're the one who decides what to do with your life."*

In addition to all this, Isabel continues to tour with her baroque group. She began playing with them in 2014 and has just toured Switzerland having previously played in Spain and Germany.

Her group has in the past featured other international musicians and has played with several guests, including the lead trombone player from the Berliner Philharmoniker.

Isabel's eyes light up talking about touring with her group: *"It's a really good experience to play baroque music with international musicians from different countries with a different style, I really like it."*

The tours are successful with shows selling out, the baroque world may be small but as Isabel agrees, it's full of passionate people, noting that the classical world is far bigger: *"If you talk about Telemann (German baroque composer and multi-instrumentalist), people won't know who Telemann is but if you talk about Mozart, everyone knows who Mozart is."*

Though, at the same time anyone could potentially pick up baroque music, as long as they understand the music and have the confidence to play, so according to Isabel, it has the potential to grow.

Lastly, after an action packed first year in London, what does the future hold for Isabel?

*"I want to continue doing all my touring, and travelling all over the world with my music and everything and also at the same time work in a lab as a bio-chemist or neuro-scientist. Music is really crucial to the brain, the brain is something we don't really understand now, so in order to do it I think this could be the way, so I would really like to do music neuroscience, and to do this and tour all over the world. That's my plan."*

*"Of course, I don't know what's going to happen", she admits before laughing, "but hopefully".*

Throughout the course of our chat, Isabel's passion which has helped her succeed has been clear. Hot chocolate finished, interview over, me and Isabel walk back to the station, I ask her if she has any plans for the evening, the answer is predictably: "play music".

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