

LOOK AT ME

CAP

74024



HEROINES AND HEROES

JOEY KING

by Davis Bates
wearing **POMELLATO**

Esther Abrami

A Tale of Strings and Screens

#CAPeople Photography Stéphanie Volpato Fashion Kerry Dorney



Dress VALENTINO
Earring CHLOÉ
Shoes MM6 MARGIELA
Socks FALKE

Words by
Carolina Benjumea

Muse:
Esther Abrami @VIP-Consulting

One day, you can find her on Instagram, and the next, at the Royal Albert Hall in London, dressed in Dior. On some days, she's surrounded by women in her podcast, while on others, she's performing with The City of Prague Philharmonic Orchestra. Today, it's the stirring "Naruto: Alone Theme" by Toshio Masuda, and tomorrow, it's the enchanting "Valse Sentimentale" by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky. This is the contrasting world of Esther Abrami – flitting between the classical and the modern, she manages to create a presence that thrives both online and offline. The former comes alive through her words and images, while the latter through her soulful melodies. Esther Abrami is 26 years old, her followers on Instagram don't exceed their thirties, yet her live audiences often surpass their fifties.

Her paradoxical, but somehow harmonious lifestyle, proves that the timeless melodies of the past can find a vibrant place in today's world.

While on her tour bus from Budapest to Prague, we had a conversation about her passion for the violin, a growing love that started at the age of 3 with her grandmother. We also explored the sense of community she has discovered on social media and her ongoing quest to harmonize the timeless beauty of classical music with the dynamic essence of the modern world.

Throughout her work she proves that her ever-growing presence on social media is intrinsically tied to the enchanting melodies she creates on her violin, two worlds that have, for her, seamlessly merged into one.

#CAPeople

How did your passion for the violin and classical music first start?

It started with my grandmother. She was a violinist herself back in the day. She stopped playing when she got married, so I never saw her play when I was a kid, but she always kept her violin, and, of course, she kept a love for music and classical music in general. When I was three years old, she showed me her violin, which was a very tiny one, and that was my very first introduction to it. It’s something that stayed with me. I didn’t start having lessons until I was 10 years old, because my parents weren’t musicians, and they wanted it to come from me. They wanted me to say, ‘I want violin lessons,’ and I think at three years old, of course, I was very young. And even though I loved seeing my grandmother showing me the violin and it stayed with me, it was a few years later when I think I really wanted to know it, and I decided that I wanted. So, I had my first violin lesson, and I fell in love with the instrument. I really did, which is surprising to me when I think back at it now because it is a very difficult instrument to start; it is quite difficult to make even a sound! But somehow, I did manage to make a sound in the first lesson, and I remember the moment of making the sound and feeling something special, like a vibration in my body, coming from my voice to the violin. There was something really special that happened in the vibration of the instrument. And at that moment, I realized that this was what I wanted to do. I wanted to be a violinist. That’s how it happened. The love for the violin and the love for music came naturally. I’m sure my grandmother has a lot to do with it, but also my parents because I think too many times parents try to guide a bit too much what the kid wants to do, and I think that was really nice of my parents to just let me choose by myself.

Is your grandmother still alive?
She passed away just last year.

Did she get to see you perform?
She’s seen everything I’ve been doing. She listened to my albums, and she used to see me on TV sometimes, on the radio. I don’t think she ever believed that she would have a granddaughter who would take up the violin. And I think also the fact that she stopped when she got married, as it was the way to do it back then, meant that she always had an unfinished feeling. So, I think it meant a lot as well, to kind of go back to it.

At just 26 years old, you’ve achieved remarkable milestones, such as being featured in Classic FM’s ‘30 under 30 Classical Artists to Watch’ series and earning the title of “Rising Star” by BBC Music Magazine. Did you ever imagine you’d attain so much recognition and success in your career?

When I was little and had just started, yes, it wasn’t something clear in my head, but it was like a little girl’s dream, in a way; you don’t put

«I’d like to reimagine the way classical music concerts are and aim to have an audience as big as any other genre of music. For instance, young people could go to a pop concert one week, and the next week, they could go to a classical concert.»



Smoking and sling back heels SAINT LAURENT by ANTHONY VACCARELLO
Earring CHLOË

any barriers to yourself. When you’re a kid and you have a dream, you think of it without limitations; nothing is stopping you from imagining that you will do amazing things. I did imagine myself touring the world, and I’ve always loved fashion since I was very young, so I had a dream of wearing pretty dresses, trying on different outfits, and going to fashion shows. So I never limited myself. But then when I was a teenager, that changed because I started doubting myself, so it was a process. At first, I felt like everything was possible and I wanted to achieve this, and I felt like I could. That’s the great thing about children. But then sometimes, I had teachers that weren’t supportive. So I had to really believe in myself, which isn’t always the case, when you are a teenager it can be hard. Thankfully, I also had my very supportive parents, despite sometimes being hard; becoming a classical musician is an extremely competitive field, like any artistic job, and I came from a little town in France. I didn’t have the right teaching, and it was later, as a teenager, that I went to England to study in school. But until then, I was quite behind, and a lot of people, including me, thought that maybe it was too late, and that I was not going to be able to make it, and that some people are much better than me, much more advanced than me, and then I started

doubting myself. But somehow, I never had a plan B in my head, so I kept going.

You play classical music, yet you’re also very active on social media platforms, where you engage in a lot of conversations with your followers, which reflects a modern mindset in you. How do these two worlds, the classical and the modern, influence and inspire each other in your work?

To be honest, at first, you think they are opposite things, right? Because classical music can be seen, and is quite often, a little bit old-fashioned in a lot of ways. It is an old art, so there are a lot of traditions. We play composers who are dead, so it can be a bit old-fashioned. But that also means that there’s a lot of judgment around it and that a lot of people don’t know how beautiful, fun, and cool it can be. Social media is a very modern world. For me, it’s actually the perfect combination because it has allowed me to bring something that people think is old-fashioned and completely show a different image of it. I love mixing modern and old. I’ve done it with social media, but I also love doing that in music. So I play classical music, but I also tour with Worakls, who is an electronic musician, and in concerts, we mix classical music and electronic music. And I think that’s a great tool for classical music to get to new audiences. Because if you don’t do that, sadly, I think we are stuck with a very limited audience. Actually, by doing that, I’ve realized how much you can reach people who would be listening to electronic music. They will actually come and start listening to classical music if you introduce them to it in the right way. The same goes for social media. You can have people who have nothing to do with classical music and have never heard it, they find a video they like, and they will start listening to it or maybe even come to your concert. So I think in both ways, mixing modern and old does good for both sides. And I think too many times I was



Top CHLOÉ
Denim MAISON MARTIN MARGIELA
Boots JIMMY CHOO x JEAN PAUL GAULTIER

Knit LOUIS VUITTON
Tights FALKE
Shoes JIMMY CHOO x JEAN PAUL GAULTIER



judged or criticized for doing that because, of course, when you take something that has traditions and that has been done for hundreds of years like this and you kind of twist it all around, there will be people who don't like it. But I think that's the only chance of survival, to be honest.

Have you observed a growing interest in classical music among people of your generation or younger? How do you connect with them and grow their interest in classical music?

Yeah, I have! Actually, for my master's thesis, I did a study on the interest of young people in classical music. Studies are showing that during Covid, there was a huge surge of young people listening to classical music because it calmed them down and kept them focused, and this was further improved with TikTok, which made classical music fashionable and turned classical them into hits. Young people today are listening to classical music much more than our parents did. I think there is a huge change. We still have a long way to go, and I see it also when I play. Sometimes there's a mixed audience,

with people who are older and younger, even little girls. It's really nice to see. I just played my concerts for my album launch in England two days ago, and during the tour, there were little girls, as young as five years old, coming and saying, 'You've inspired me to play the violin.' That's the best thing.

As the first classical musician ever to win the 'Social Media Superstar' category at the Global Awards, when did you realize that social media was a powerful platform for connecting with people and conveying meaningful messages?

I started being on social media and sharing classical music on social media when I was 19 years old, and I started it because I felt extremely lonely in my musical creative process. I was at one of the best universities of music in the world, but the whole atmosphere, I found it very difficult. It was very competitive. You spend all day practicing by yourself in a room, and there is no social life. All of this was to perform for a jury of three people at the end of the year. I started thinking, «Wow, I just spent over a year, practicing every day, all day, to perform for three people». I know it's an exam, but I wasn't even satisfied. Of course, you need to practice hard to be as good as you can be, but you have to be very careful because very quickly you switch and start thinking that you want to be perfect, so you forget about the main reason you're doing music. You start forgetting the audience, forgetting the people who would come and listen to you, and focusing on the fact that you want to be as perfect as possible and you want to be the best in the field.

When I was there, it made me really unhappy. It didn't fulfill what I was wanting. It's not the reason why I went into music. With music, I wanted to share and connect with people, and that's what I love about my job. That is the thing I love about my job, and I wasn't getting that. Even the concerts I was playing at the university were for a small audience and a very specific type of audience. Also, I was finding that I couldn't really express and do what I wanted to in my concerts. For example, in concerts, I love to speak. I love explaining to the audience what I'm doing,

and it's not something that was accepted here. So I was quite unsatisfied.

So I got on social media and uploaded a video of me practicing an exam piece. The response was incredible. I think because I was one of the very first classical musicians to be on social media, a lot of people had never really seen that kind of thing. Their reaction was great. When I saw that, I thought, 'Wow! I'm good at something that I'm practicing here by myself.' In the beginning, I guess hundreds of people saw it and commented from around the world. It opened the door. I was like, «Wow, this is incredible». You know, this can change things, and so I kept doing it, and I'm so glad I did because it has allowed me to present classical music in the way I want to, without having to ask people's permission on how to do it.

I think it's really interesting what you say because usually, most people find social media very overwhelming and hard, so they feel the need to disconnect and close all social media platforms for their mental health. But for you, it was different, you found a way to feel better through social media. Do you ever feel overwhelmed and feel the need to close your social media platforms?

Of course, I sometimes feel overwhelmed, and I think we have to be careful with social media. It can be dangerous for our mental health. I never open my social media in the morning. The first part of the day I focus only on music, unless I'm traveling or something, but otherwise, it's just really focused on music. Then, the second part of the day is when I start opening my social media. I think it's important sometimes to disconnect, but I would miss it if I just stopped. I enjoy having this community, and I know a lot of artists today have been told by the labels to be on social media, and they do it because they are forced to. But I like it. I like doing it. I like the community, and I enjoy creating content. I find it fun and I enjoy it. Of course, sometimes it's a lot. Sometimes it feels like I have two jobs together because I deal with all my social media myself, and I'm on different channels: YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram. On top of that, I'm a musician, practicing



Jacket and boots GIVENCHY

all day, and traveling. It's hard and overwhelming, and sometimes, getting bad comments can be hard. You just have to learn how to deal with it. But compared to what it brings me and how many wonderful people I've met through this... in a way, it helped me to start my career. I got signed by Sony because they spotted me there and saw my audience there. So, I would never close social media. That being said, yes, it is overwhelming, and yes, I find it hard when you read a bad comment, and it makes you feel low. You have to be careful and protect your mental health. I think it's just about developing a way to use it as a tool to connect while also protecting yourself.

The violin is often described as one of the most expressive instruments, and your music is deeply emotional and evocative. How do you convey complex emotions and narratives solely through your melodies, without the need for lyrics?

I think that's something I could explain technically. For me, the violin is an extremely expressive instrument that connects with me. I believe every person probably has one instrument to which they connect, a certain sound. Some people connect with the sound of bass instruments, others with string instruments. I find that connection with string instruments, especially the violin.

The violin has something we call ‘vibrato’, which makes vibrate and shake every note and reproduce the sound of the voice and the different qualities of sound that you can create, this is powerful and can make you feel something.

But I think, generally with classical music, because there are no lyrics, it can be so much more powerful. When you listen to a song, you know what it’s about, right? So you’re going to be kind of thinking about the story, and maybe you’ll relate to it, but it’s not your own story. It’s not your feeling at first. With classical music and music without lyrics, you can be so much more personal in whatever is going to make you feel. I think when you are inclined to listen to classical music and when you allow it to affect you [Which is not easy because of its complexity, Ed], it can do a lot for you. It can search for emotions that you will not reach by listening to other kinds of music because it is complex music, which means that yes, you’ve got to work a little bit harder, but it can stir emotions inside you.

From the audience’s perspective, orchestras and chamber music offer distinct experiences; the first creates an immersive experience, while the latter is more intimate, as Goethe once said ‘It is like listening to a conversation between people’. From your perspective as a performer, do you experience different emotions or sensations when playing with orchestras versus playing chamber music?

Yeah, I think it’s very different. When you have a full orchestra behind you it’s very impressive. But I guess it’s more like a huge entity of people, and it’s very different than when you play in a chamber. For the release of my album I played with a trio of strings and a piano, and of course, it’s quite different because you are kind of playing with each musician. You have a little connection with each musician, and you have a different dynamic with each of them. So, it’s quite different, of course, and you feel how different it is on stage. But, to be honest, I love both. I think there’s something about having a real connection with every member of the quartet or the trio. And then there’s something about going on stage and feeling a full orchestra breathing together, playing together like a single entity. It’s an incredible feeling.

Apart from classical music, which is your passion, do you listen to other kinds of music, especially from pop culture? What other interests in music do you have?

I’m very open to listening to all kinds of genres. I think I’m always open, there might be styles that I relate to a bit less. But someone can tell me, «This is really good music», and I won’t care what genre it is. I love listening to music when I travel, and I enjoy asking locals, «What do you listen to? What’s your music?». I love classical music, and I grew up in a Jewish family, so Itzhak was there, and I love his music. I find it liberating and alive, and I love that. I also love jazz music. It’d be hard for me to pick just one. I enjoy rock music too! It depends on what mood I’m in. I could listen to anything, and I love discovering new music, I also love the idea of mixing it with some classical sounds.



Shirt, tie, jeans and shoes DIOR



Top CHLOÉ
Trousers RACE IMBODEN
Shoes GIVENCHY
Watch ZENITH

«Social media is a very modern world. For me, it’s actually the perfect combination because it has allowed me to bring something that people think is old-fashioned, like classical music together with the violin, and completely show a different image of it.»

Your latest album, “Cinéma”, has just been released. Could you share the inspiration behind this album and describe the creative process that went into its production?

The point of “Cinéma” was to find a way to break down any barriers with people listening to classical music. I found that when somebody goes to the cinema to watch a film, they don’t go with any preconceived ideas about the music. You will listen to the soundtrack with a completely open mind. Most of the soundtracks of the movies written and proposed are done in a classical way, with an orchestra and sounds from classical instruments. So, I found that it’s a great way to make classical music accessible and to use the concept of the movie as a bridge. This is what I wanted to do with my album “Cinéma”. You can find soundtracks from very famous movies, classical music that is used in movies, including anime and films like “Hunger Games”, as well as films that have touched me and that I love. So, it’s going to be a mix, but with the goal of breaking down any barriers, so hopefully, anyone can listen to the album. Sometimes when people see a classical music album, they might think it is not for them. But everybody watches movies, so hopefully, we can break down that barrier, and everyone can listen to it.

Could you share an unforgettable concert or performance experience that deeply impacted you, and explain what made it so memorable?

There are several, but I guess when I got my first solo performance at the Royal Albert Hall in London. It’s one of the most iconic halls in classical music, and it is just in front of the Royal College of Music, which is the school I went to. So every morning when I was a student, I would wake up early to practice, I would see it, and I would think in my head, maybe one day, and I didn’t even really think that it would happen. I think I dreamed of it, but I knew it couldn’t happen. When it did, the night I played, there were like 5,000 people, and I was in front of the full orchestra. It’s funny because I thought I was going to be extremely nervous, and then I came on stage, I saw that, and I thought, «Wow, okay. I worked so hard, and this is happening. This dream of mine is happening. I need to enjoy it». And I did. The nerves went away, and I enjoyed the moment because it honestly felt like a dream. I never even really thought it would ever happen. So this was very special.

What are your aspirations for the future of your music and career?

What is your ultimate dream or goal?

I think my ultimate dream goal would be to keep doing what I’m doing now, but doing it on a larger scale. I’d like to reimagine the way classical music concerts are and aim to have an audience as big as any other genre of music. For instance, young people could go to a pop concert one week, and the next week, they could go to a classical concert. It’s quite a challenge because it’s not that easy, but I think we’re on the right way. I’m excited about the project of rethinking what can be different, and what can I do to make people see the real experience on stage. Maybe there are a lot of things that need to be rethought, many classical music concepts where nothing much is happening on stage apart from the musician playing. It can be seen as a little bit boring in a way. So, why not include some visuals like lights and make it shorter? I have a lot of ideas that I’d like to develop. The first step is getting people to listen to it online on distributed platforms and then coming to the concerts. I would like to present something really exciting for young people, but with classical music. It’s quite a big project because many people still have judgments around classical music, thinking it’s not for them, that it’s only for older people. I would like to change that.