

1. YVONNE GEORGIADOU

Μέσο: GOLD

Ημ. Έκδοσης: . . . 15/11/2015 Ημ. Αποδελτίωσης: . . . 15/11/2015

Σελίδα: 30



COVER STORY

YVONNE GEORGIADOU

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

PHAROS ARTS FOUNDATION

classical music

Is the classical music business doing well these days?

It depends on what we really mean by the term 'business'. If we measure success by the increasing number of people – the audience – reached and the artistic legacy created, the answer is 'yes, most definitely'. If we measure success by financial profits, then it is a definite 'no'. In any case, I would not personally like to approach the endorsement of classical music as a business. There is no question that nowadays, the classical music industry attempts to imitate the methods and practices of pop culture, aiming at financial gains, ignoring what is artistically important and focusing on that which is more easily marketed. But art is art, and art is hard! One has to see it as a vocation. We should serve this art form with devotion and make it as accessible as possible to the general public. Business-wise, it might not generate huge financial profits for those directly involved but it can enhance numerous other sectors and hugely increase their profitability.

Was it badly affected by the financial crisis?

How couldn't it be? But only with regard to financing projects. In these difficult times, the general public is actually turning more towards the arts to seek refuge from everyday problems. But unfortunately, music and the arts in general are considered a luxury by the decision makers of this world... In Cyprus, in particular, there is no appreciation on a state level and this is partly due to a severe lack of knowledge and vision.



The development of culture calls for a holistic approach – serious strategies, expertise and vision. Financing cultural projects should not be about sensationalism. For years we have been striving to convince the authorities that what we offer is not a luxury; it is a necessity for society, it is a basic human right, and imperative for our country's infrastructure. It should have been a necessity for the tourist industry as well and, consequently, a tool to

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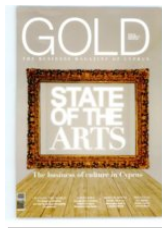
aid our country's economic rehabilitation. I have to admit that the private sector, which has suffered the most because of the crisis, is more appreciative and it is miles ahead. As a non-governmental, non-profit cultural organisation, the Pharos Arts Foundation is extremely grateful to quite a few corporates that recognize the importance of what it offers. In the last few years, it has

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been more difficult, perhaps, to attract more or to maintain certain sponsors from the private sector, but the majority of them recognize how essential these cultural events are for society, and they actively support them. This is what social responsibility is about.

You have persisted for many years in presenting internationally acclaimed performers of music, for which the audience is traditionally fairly small. How do you manage?

The Pharos Arts Foundation has a track record of organising hundreds of concerts with the most renowned soloists, ensembles and orchestras in the world. Through our Music Education Programme, which is offered for free to the youth of Cyprus, we have benefited over 65,000 students. The Foundation's repu-

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tation has reached Europe and beyond. As a result, numerous artists are interested in presenting themselves in our series and they are kind enough to comprehend that what we do is important and truthful in its purpose, but

unfortunately it cannot pay them the big cheque they would normally get in other western countries. They are still happy to come and perform for Pharos. Then it is the human element... our small team works endlessly, from dawn until dusk, to implement such a rich programme. For us, our work for the Foundation is our passion and subsequently an extension of our lives. I would like to stress that the audience for classical music is actually not that small anymore. It might be smaller compared to the audience for mainstream pop music but it is not trivial by any means. Most of our concerts are sold out and we are glad that the greatest majority of our audience are quite young in age. This is probably due to the fact that nowadays people have access to the Internet, therefore they have familiarised themselves with different genres of music.

Have you never considered becoming involved in more mainstream concert/event production for purely business considerations?

No, never, not even for a second! This is something many organisers do nowadays and I find it extremely short-sighted and stupidly suicidal on their behalf. They end up cannibalising their very own programme. That doesn't mean we are not in-

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terested in reaching more people and it doesn't mean that other kinds of music are not good. But as Plato put it, *"Pleasure is not an end in itself: it should be subordinated to another end, fostering virtue in the soul!"*

One really has to

be truthful to one's mission, work hard and be patient. Some events are naturally more popular than others but this is just coincidental. We never waste time thinking about what will be popular; instead, we spend time planning how to communicate an artistically important event to the general audience. This is where good artistic programming, and subsequently good marketing, enter the picture.

How would you describe the value of musical appreciation in today's world?

For those people who have their ears open and their souls and spirits liberated, the art of music is invaluable. It is invaluable also for nurturing our young people, for whom we are responsible. It should be instrumental in education – not in order to raise a society of musicians, but to foster the goodness in each person and cultivate his aesthetic experience, to reinforce his ability to think expansively, rhythmically, to comprehend various symbolisms and implement them in other areas of life. Music is commonly seen as a form of entertainment. It has the power to entertain, for sure, but not just that. Once we sort out this basic moral error, we will all instantly appreciate what good music is about and we will enjoy the fruit. After all, the greatest art is that of listening.