

BEHIND THE SCENES WITH

ALEXANDER CHAUSHIAN

Talking with Yvonne Georgiadou



How does it feel to return to Cyprus year after year for the Festival?

Well Cyprus is a special place, close to my heart, so of course every single time I look forward to returning there.

You have been part of it since almost its very beginning, and you have both matured, developed, blossomed simultaneously. How do you experience this mutual progress?

The festival is very popular now, judging by the number of emails I receive from different agents and musicians who would like to perform there, musicians do develop so much from playing chamber music, we all learn from each other.

What is it that makes this Festival so special, compared to other, and perhaps bigger European festivals?

The warm but discerning audience, the air and landscape of Cyprus, the food, as well as the enthusiasm of everybody involved.

You and other musicians also give educational concerts for the students of the Palaipafos area and you are always quite cool with them, they know you on a first name basis. How important do you think are these initiatives of the Foundation?

Very important! I am always so happy to see those kids. I think children do love music more than we think, so it's so important to educate the ear from an early age. I am always amazed by how carefully they listen... it's true that their concentration doesn't last for more than 10 - 15 minutes but that's enough sometimes.

What were your influences when you were young?

My most important influence has been my grandfather who was my first teacher. I doubt I would have become a musician if it were not for him and his patience. He was a fantastic cello teacher.

And what are your ambitions now?

My ambitions have always been the same always: Search for the better and never stop learning.

Levon Chilingirian told us once that as long as he remembers you, as a youngster, the first thing you would do in the morning was start practising the cello with a cigarette on the mouth. Do you still do that?

Well, yes I do smoke and it's not a good habit but I never practice with a cigarette.

You always seem so laid back, don't you ever get stressed?

I do, a lot, but if I show it, it won't make things better.

Saying this, do you remember an incident that upset you?

Well I remember long time ago, when I was touring in Austria with the Armenian Philharmonic, we went to this city and the mayor came to greet us just before the concert. As he was leaving the room, he had a heart attack and died unfortunately, there you go!

Chamber music is a family / friend affair. Most composers have revealed their true selves through it, and musicians every where in the world seek to take time off to perform in chamber concerts, perhaps because it more liberating, creative and rewarding as each instrumentalist become a member of a bigger or smaller discourse. What do you think of the fact that nowadays chamber music is performed in huge venues?

It all depends on the acoustics, but surely chamber music is more intimate and original when performed in smaller venues. I think our beautiful hall (the Royal Manor House) in Paphos is just perfect for chamber music, as well as The Shoe Factory, which is a very unique place to perform with excellent acoustics.

Yes, The Shoe Factory was created with that kind of intimacy in mind. How do you feel that you will return there to perform, for the first time in this venue, with your regular chamber partner Yevgeny Sudbin?

I haven't played there for some time now, and I am looking forward to the recital with Sudbin.