

Pharos shines on

Those attending the Ninth Pharos Chamber Music Festival can attest to having been privy to some of the finest chamber music-making over the past week in the spectacular setting of the Royal Manor House in Kouklia.

Music Directors Levon Chilingirian and Alex Chaushian invited some of the world's finest musicians who gave compelling and dramatic concerts. In this highest form of music-making, it is also about merging personalities, which this year was particularly noticeable.

The Haydn and Mendelssohn anniversaries naturally lent programming to focus on their chamber oeuvre and over the weekend we heard Haydn, Mozart, Schubert, Mendelssohn, Schnittke, Schumann, Isserlis, Rachmaninov and Pletnev.

French pianist Philippe Cassard gave an exciting reading of Schubert's impromptus which were full of colour, impeccable tonal control and dynamic variation which kept us riveted. His playing was full of fire, but had abundant calm and was full of highly-nuanced expressivity. An enthralling interpretation.

This was followed by Haydn's *Piano Trio in E Major* with Karen Gomyo and cellist Bernhard Hedenborg. This trio was published as a sonata for pianoforte with accompaniment for violin and cello. Canadian violinist Gomyo, playing on a Strad, has a crystal clear sound and is a sensitive chamber musician. Hedenborg didn't project as well, sometimes overshadowed

by the piano.

The festival was well attended with several evenings sold out as was the case on Saturday. The programme began with Mendelssohn's *Piano Quartet No. 2 in F Minor* with Georgios Demertzis, Heiichiro Ohyama, Timothy Park and Alessio Bax. Sitting very close to each other, the blend was excellent.

The opening movement had quite a few flautando moments from Demertzis, but the second movement was quite gorgeous. Bax's melancholic opening was followed by sublime moments of viola and violin duet with rich interjections from cellist Timothy Park. His playing is most expressive with a well-controlled vibrato and impeccable musical instincts.

Schnittke's *Piano Quintet* followed. The circumstances surrounding the composition of the work were eloquently elaborated on by violist Vladimir Mendelssohn who met the composer in Moscow in 1989. Mendelssohn detailed the unique moment when Schnittke explained the personal secrets surrounding the death of his mother, and how he had inserted and depicted them in the music. Although the official version was that his mother died of a stroke in September 1972, the reality was that she froze to death in a perishing cold Moscow street. She had slipped and people passed her by, mistaking her for a drunk. The pain and trauma for Schnittke was transmitted through the piano quintet

CYPRUS MAIL

Τετάρτη, 3 Ιουνίου 2009, π. 35





which had the audience spellbound. The highlight of that particular evening for me was Schumann's *Piano Quartet in E Flat Major*. Violinist Daishin Kashimoto, Diemut Poppen, Alex Chaushian and Ashley Wass made a superb combination eliciting some of the finest ensemble playing. This performance transcended individual technical capabilities reaching a metaphysical connection. Wass was in fine form and has added depth to his playing since previous years. His artistic pendulum swung smoothly throughout the concert, from making the piano an accompanying instrument to an equal partner with the strings.

Kashimoto is a very exhilarating and emotional player combining technical brilliance with a pristine sound. The lyrical third movement was most profound – Chaushian and Poppen wearing their hearts on their sleeves.

An assured rapport with flawless balance and unity of style.

An eager air of anticipation surrounded the Sunday evening performance which began with British cellist Stephen Isserlis accompanied by the strikingly beautiful Keren Hanan.

Isserlis is visually as well as aurally exciting to watch. Totally transfixed by the music, he enters a world of sound where he is oblivious to all. One has to attend his concerts to fully appreciate what a moving, fulfilling and powerful experience it is, and one which will surely touch you.

Hanan is a most sensitive accompanist and yet transmitted a sense of individuality.

The concert ended with Isserlis joined by Levon Chilingirian and Ashley Wass for

Mendelssohn's lesser known *Piano Trio No. 2 in C Minor* – the last chamber work the composer saw in print.

The first movement had moments where the piano overpowered the strings, but nonetheless it was a stirring performance. The piano opening *andante espressivo* was stylistically phrased with a flow and warmth with the *Scherzo* displaying Wass' technical prowess. He excelled in the running passages and retained a good balance mirroring the dynamics of the strings. There were some rather over exuberant passages from Chilingirian in the *Finale*, but played with unfaltering enthusiasm. These were evenings of fresh, engaging interpretations which were intensely emotional and which will have a lasting impact. The unanimity of spirit and genuinely felt personal expression permeated through all the performances.

You still have the opportunity to attend two more concerts – tonight's programme includes the leading soprano of the Royal Danish Opera Gitta Maria Sjoberg, a warm and beguiling person, who will sing Rodrigo's *Cuatro Madrigals Amatorios*, Schoenberg's *Verklarte Nacht* and Brahms' *Piano Quartet in C Minor*.

The final evening includes Mendelssohn's *String Quintet No. 2* and Brahms' *Piano Quartet in G Minor*.

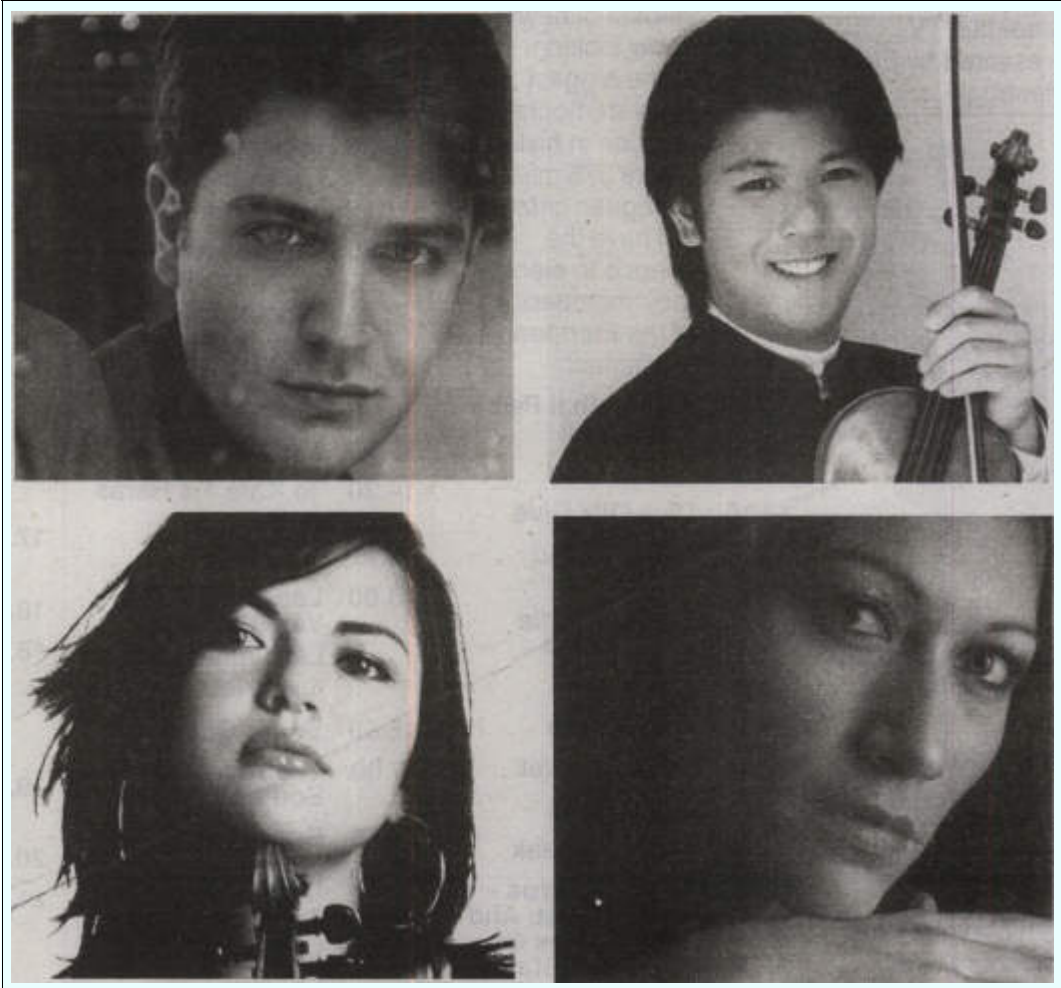
Ninth International Pharos Chamber Music Festival
Eighteen world-acclaimed musicians perform an intensive week of concerts, encompassing an array of instrumental combinations and repertoire. May 28-June 4. Royal Manor House, Kouklia, Paphos. 8.30pm. €12-20. Tel: 22-663871 or visit <http://www.pharosartsfoundation.org/>

By Saskia Constantinou

CYPRUS MAIL

Τετάρτη, 3 Ιουνιος 2009, p. 35





CYPRUS MAIL

Τετάρτη, 3 Ιουνιος 2009, π. 35

