

Fantastic finale

The final concert of the Seventh International Pharos Chamber Music Concert was a resounding success with the Royal Manor House again filled with a hugely appreciative audience.

The scheduled concert of cellist Steven Isserlis with pianist Ian Brown had to be cancelled due to serious illness in the family and was replaced by participants in the festival, violist Diemut Poppen, flautist Sharon Bezaly and pianist Ashley Wass who all performed solo works.

The *Six Suites for Unaccompanied Cello* by Bach are some of the greatest works ever written for solo cello and are thought to have been written between 1717 and 1723 when Bach served as Kapellmeister in Cothen.

The suites have been transcribed for numerous instruments including double bass and classical guitar, and this performance of the *Suite No. 2 in D Minor BWV1008* was a transcription made by Poppen herself.

The suites contain a great variety of technical devices encompassing a wide range of emotions with some of Bach's most compelling conversations. The six movements – Prelude, Allemande, Courante, Sarabande, Minuet and Gigue – are all consistent in their order with the technical complexity and emotional richness increasing from the first to the last.

Poppen played absolutely beautifully. The prelude, with the strong recurring theme in the first part ethereal. She has a superb technique from her left hand

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as well as her bow arm; coupled with her perfect intonation and beautiful phrasing, nothing more could be asked for. She produced an astonishing range of colours with the string crossings crystal clear.

This was followed by Sharon Bezaly who has a phenomenal technique and coupled with her 24 carat gold flute, especially built for her by the Muamatsu team in Japan, produced some incredible sounds. What is most impressive though, is that her performances are seemingly effortless. A very exciting musician to have had in Cyprus.

The final work on the programme was Liszt's *Annees de Telerinage* (Years of Pilgrimage) with pianist Ashley Wass. Throughout the festival, Wass has shown himself to be dedicated to detail

and this evening's performance was no different. He gave a rich-textured, virtuosic rendition of this technically demanding work with aplomb capturing the work's storminess and bringing the festival to a close on a high note.

Chamber music the world over is one of the most difficult areas of classical music to sell in comparison with orchestral music. The fact that the Pharos Trust has had such good attendance and such an enthusiastic response from the public is a sure sign that the high standard of playing, the warmth of the artists, and the superb organisation and work behind the scenes of this festival has made it a resounding success. Bravo and thank you for some very special concerts.

By Saskia Constantinou

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