

Mei Yi Foo

The captivating young pianist who wowed Cypriot audiences during her 2009 tour returns next week

I had an opportunity to catch up with Mei Yi Foo earlier in the week and began by asking about her last year.

“I had a very productive 2010,” she said. “It marked the first time for me as soloist/director with the Russian Virtuosi and the Malaysian Philharmonic. My residency with the Malaysian Philharmonic was also a personal high, as it allowed us to reach a wider audience as our performance took place at the Palace. I think it was a hectic year for all pianists with the anniversaries of Chopin and Schumann.”

In January 2011, Foo was awarded the medal of Setiawan Tuanku Muhriz her contribution towards art and culture in her home country. Foo explained that in order to gain children’s interest in classical music “it’s extremely important that music is not placed on a pedestal. As a performer, one should be faithful and search for an aesthetic truth behind the music we practise. But in terms of spreading interest

amongst children, the children should always be reminded that art is something they experience within themselves. When I undertook an outreach programme called Pianoforte senza Frontiere, I was astounded to discover the richness in imagination and boundless creativity among the children – many of whom had never heard a note by Beethoven or Mozart.”

Foo has a special interest in contemporary music and wanted to be a composer at one stage. “But, I had difficulty finding my way as the landscape was so large. In recent years, I have been lucky to work with composers who are also keen to work with me. This creative/performing relationship is both enlightening and enriching, and I am just letting it grow organically into my recital ritual.”

There are many emerging avant-garde composers from Malaysia at the moment, piquing Foo’s curiosity.

“Malaysia’s music comprises of important folk tunes which belong to the cultures of Malay, Chinese, Indians and

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other ethnic groups and there are many specialist groups who actively promote Malaysian artwork.”

Foo humbly adds that it’s possibly her lack of expertise which dampens her sense of responsibility in this genre.

Although Mei Yi Foo will be giving a recital programme in Cyprus comprising of Shostakovich, Kurtag, Liszt and Gubaidulina, she doesn’t have a particular preference towards solo work, chamber music or teaching.

“Each form taps into different facets of me as a pianist. As much as I find pluses in one form of music making, I also find minuses in the same form! So, striking a balance is important. Very often good things come simply from being idle, as that’s when creative ideas have a chance to brew and develop.”

Tickets are only available online or by telephone and a booking is essential as tickets sell out quickly. www.pharostickets.org or call 70009304.

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