

Hello Hayak

The pianist in the next Pharos Concert Series reveals his early inspiration and discusses his favourite topic, 20th century music

Hayak Melikyan has a strong yet warm personality and is the pianist in the next Pharos Concert Series. Born in Yerevan, he first studied with Irina Grishinskaya and later at the Yerevan State Conservatory. I spoke to him about his beginnings.

“In order to want an apple, one should first try it. Mine came from my mother and classical recordings in the house. I clearly remember from then that I wasn't only listening, but was dynamically involved from the outset.”

The question of how to educate children musically can have many approaches.

“They should have opportunities to listen to different types of music. I

see a positive impact from my three years old cousin, who willingly listens to my practise of both contemporary and classical music.”

As with all concert pianists, Melikyan ‘touches’ the piano daily.

“If I don't, it impacts all my daily activities and I start to feel disjointed. I carry the traditions of the Russian piano school and, more specifically, of Konstantin Igumnov. Listening to other pianists' recordings is also of importance, it's part of a maturing process. I clearly remember how Alfred Cortot and Pollini inspired me with their Chopin interpretations and Horowitz's Rachmaninov.”

Melikyan does not have any particular preferences regarding concerti,

recitals or chamber music.

“Each format is attractive and I would even add a fourth – that of performing as concertmaster, which is another unique art. But the recital format allows me to reach full self-expression”.

Melikyan's face lights up when we begin to discuss 20th century music.

“It's my favourite topic. Winning 2nd prize in the International Valentino Bucchi Competition raised my interest. I was curious to discover the compositional technologies of the 20th century, the language, rhythm and feeling as well as the combination of electronic sounds with piano. This epoch gives me great satisfaction as an





artist, both as co-composer and performer”.

Melikyan uses the term ‘co-composer’ as he believes contemporary music always requires a duality from performer and composer.

“Sometimes though, one needs to go beyond those borders and have compositional input. This led me to compose and create transcriptions which, incidentally, requires excellent playing skills. I also wanted to be part of the input of Armenian transcriptions. “

Cyprus is not unique in not having a huge 20th century music following.

“I am sure that each person, regardless of nationality, values or musical preferences can find a ‘native’ contemporary work. It’s very dependent on the moment. Being a multi-level experience means that mood, feelings, memories all play an important role when touching the listener. So, contemporary music is more exacting as it requires dynamic participation.

“Contemporary music is a result of human evolution, so I am really excited about the 22nd century” he says smiling.

Contemporary music has different levels of accessibility for different people. Melikyan explains: “I remember, after one concert, a middle aged person said Part was more accessible than Xenakis. After a few more questions, I realised that she meant more harmonic or melodic. If we use this logic and terminology, we lack one more term – understandable. Harmonic music doesn’t need to be understandable or accessible, and non-harmonic music can never be accessible without understanding.

Although a typical day leaves Melikyan surrounded by music and his loved ones, he is fascinated by the art of collage.

“It is very connected to the music I play and have found more time for involvement lately. When I have free time, I always try to realise one of my ideas which germinate while playing the piano.

“Thank you and I’m really looking forward to the recital and my visit to Cyprus.”

Hayak Melikyan performs tonight at the Shoe Factory in Nicosia at 8.30pm.

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