

A challenging performance

REVIEW

Formed in 1980, the Frankfurt-based Ensemble Modern comprises 18 soloists from different nations. The string-section of the Ensemble gave a concert on Friday night at the PASYDY Auditorium in conjunction with the Pharos Trust and supported by the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany and the Goethe Zentrum.

The evening concert was preceded by educational concerts in the morning with the group and Cypriot composer Evis Sammoutis achieving the incredible feat of making a mammoth impression on 400 children.

It is a measure of the immensity of a composer's achievement that, 55 years after his death, he can still empty any hall – in fact Arnold Schoenberg has been described as “box office poison”. In spite of this awkward detail, the concert was fairly well attended.

Schoenberg's 12-tone *String Trio Op 45* began the programme. It has been portrayed as his “resurrection” piece. The composer had been living in exile in America since 1936, and on August 2, 1946 suffered a violent heart attack that nearly killed him; in fact his heartbeat and pulse ceased, and he was revived by hypodermic injection directly into his heart. Just three weeks after the attack, he was working on the string trio.

The members of the Ensemble Modern gave a stimulating, thought provoking performance achieving the ugliness of the music with the violent dissonances.

The effects of glissandi, sul ponticello (made by playing near the bridge of the instrument), harmonics and the complicated rhythmic structure were ably performed. Confident, sure playing with an intricate knowledge of all the parts is required for a solid performance, which was accomplished by all.

Evis Sammoutis' *Echopraxia* followed – a world premiere of this work especially commissioned by the Pharos Trust. To fully

appreciate this composition, it is important to understand the medical term ‘Echo-praxia’ which was the inspiration for the piece. It is a neurological disorder where one repeats by imitation the movements of another. The action is not willed or voluntary and has a semiautomatic and uncontrollable quality with the disorder also a side-effect of schizophrenia.

Sammoutis' work written for string sextet was thought provoking, effective and suitably disturbing. The moments of silence were especially effective and intriguing after the frenzy of musical effects. It

however also raised for me personally the question of what composers wish to achieve with their writings and whether they wish to achieve posterity.

The final work on the programme was Schoenberg's *Verklärte Nacht* which is in no way dissonant, but has the harmonic warmth of late Brahms.

The Ensemble Modern produced a good balance in this complex and difficult score, with an atmospheric reading. The performance of first viola Thomas Rossel as well as violinists Rafal Zambrycki-Payne and Marcus Barcham-Stevens and cellist Eva Bocker were particularly noteworthy for the beautiful, lush tone which they produced. The luxurious sound of the string sextet is comparatively rarely heard, and the ensemble revelled in the romanticism of the work from the serene moments to the intensely dramatic. The atmospheric performance was enhanced by an impressive range of dynamics and tight ensemble playing with surety of intonation.

The next Pharos Concert is on May 28 with the Chilingirian Quartet joined by Swedish pianist Bengt Forsberg at the PASYDY auditorium. It is an anniversary concert with music by Mozart, Schumann and Shostakovich. Tel: 22-663871 or visit <http://www.thepharostrust.org>

By Saskia Constantinou

CYPRUS MAIL

Τετάρτη, 24 Μάιος 2006, p. 19





CYPRUS MAIL

Τετάρτη, 24 Μάιος 2006, π. 19