

**“Crisis fails to stop international music festival”
Yvonne Georgiadou Interview to Alix Norman
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Festival goes on despite crisis

As many performers waive their fees, annual Pharos Chamber Music Festival promises a top quality event says ALIX NORMAN

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▶▶ **The 13th International Pharos Chamber Music Festival**
21 May The Shoe Factory, Nicosia Baroque Recital with Mahan Esfahani (Harpsichord) & Michala Petri (Recorders). 24 May The Shoe Factory,

Nicosia Piano Recital with Elisha Abas. 27-31 May Royal Manor House, Kouklia Five Concerts. 1 June The Olive Grove, Dellikipos Open-air concert for Strings.
Concerts start at 8.30pm. Ticket price: €10. BOX

OFFICE: Tel. 7000-9304 (daily 9.30-11.30am) www.pharostickets.org. Kyriakou Fullpage Bookshops: 30 Ellados Ave, Paphos, Tel. 26 822850. For further information contact Pharos Arts Foundation, Tel: 22 663871, www.pharosartsfoundation.org

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The Pharos Arts Foundation may be synonymous with music and the arts, but what you probably didn't know is that it's also at the forefront of tourism! And in a time when many are advocating a return to an industry much depleted in recent years, this can only be a good thing. But before you start picturing Ayia Napa awash with vacationing violinists, remember that our island has a great deal more to offer than merely sun, sand and sea... for 13 years now the Pharos Chamber Music Festival has been offering the more discerning visitor a week of world class performances in exquisite Mediterranean settings. With more than 2000 cultural tourists – from all over Europe, including Britain, France and Italy – expected to attend the festival this year, Yvonne Georgiadou, the Artistic Director of the Pharos Arts

Foundation, is quietly proud of the number and class of tourists attracted by the Festival.

“The majority of musicians performing in the Festival belong to the top of their league; to hear them play elsewhere is often prohibitively expensive. So with tickets costing €10 a head, it's often cheaper for devotees to fly to Cyprus. It promotes a different class of tourism: we're not attracting people whose greatest expense is their sun lounger. The Festival appeals to visitors who are interested in history and culture, who have money to spend and an appreciation for the finer things in life,” Yvonne explains. And as a nonprofit organisation, the Pharos Arts Foundation ploughs every cent back into their work. “We do struggle,” Yvonne says, “we count every little penny in order to save

the money to pay for the event. But the result is worth it; the Festival is an established music event and it's worth it.”

Things have especially difficult for the organisation this year, with the financial crisis robbing the Foundation of much of its financial backing. “We found ourselves at a crossroads,” Yvonne reveals. “Everything was all ready to go, and then the haircut took place.” With many of the regular sponsors unable to continue their support, the Foundation considered calling the whole thing off. “The Festival is a huge expense for us,” continues Yvonne, “and we knew our position would be very difficult. But in the end we decided that it's at exactly times like this that people want music the most, and we chose to go ahead.”

Yvonne explains that she tentatively wrote to each of the participating artists, asking them if they could possibly reduce their fees. And the result was overwhelming: “These are top flight musicians, their fees are often astronomical. So we couldn’t believe it when there was immediate assent, with every single one of our returning artists saying that they would happily waive their fee altogether! It’s allowed us to reduce the ticket price and enable local audiences to enjoy the Festival.”

One of the returning performers is Alexander Chaushian, world-renowned cellist, who will play in the five concerts organised at The Royal Manor House in Kouklia.

“He’s extremely talented, and he’s been here so many times he’s regarded by many as a Cypriot himself,” smiles Yvonne. Other returning artists include pianist Ashley Wass, one of the most important British pianists of his generation, the concertmaster of the Berlin Philharmonic Daishin Kashimoto, and the impressive Russian violinist Boris Brovtsyn. And welcomed for the first time are French cellist Marc Coppey, and Sergei Nakariakov – one of the greatest trumpet players in the world today. The Foundation has also received support from the Embassy of Israel in bringing the hugely talented pianist Elisha Abas – the great grandson of composer Alexander Scriabin – to these shores. And both Michala Petri –

whose exquisite playing of the recorder will move many to tears – and Mahan Esfahani – a Bach aficionado who’s a legend in the making on the harpsichord – have waived their fees to give a Baroque Recital at Nicosia’s Shoe Factory.

“We always try to use alternative venues for our concerts,” Yvonne discloses. “The Shoe Factory feels like a friend’s living room, while The Royal Manor House is surrounded by antiquities and lies right next to the sea.” The third location is The Olive Grove, a purpose-built open-air site located in the forests of Delikipos, where the final event – a Strings Concert – will take place on June 1; wooden decks, shallow pools and olive groves allow the audience to delight

in the musical offerings encircled by the beauty of nature.

“At Pharos, we’ve always aimed for the highest standards in everything we do,” Yvonne concludes. “Our Founder and

President, Garo Keheyian, is a true philanthropist and patron of the arts whose passion for the arts has allowed us to offer exquisite venues and world class performers throughout the years. We take great pride in our professionalism, and

above all, we try to offer quality in everything we do.” And without a doubt, The 13th Pharos Chamber Music Festival will be maintaining its standards of excellence to both local audiences and discerning visitors from abroad.

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24 May The Shoe Factory, Nicosia Piano Recital with Elisha Abas

27-31 May Royal Manor House, Kouklia Five Concerts with Boris Brovtsyn, Daishin Kashimoto, Levon Chilingirian, Monika Urbonaite, Charles Sewart (violin), Sam Barsegian, Diemut Poppen (viola), Alexander Chaushian, Marc Coppey (cello), Hayk Khachatryan (double-bass), Sergei Nakariakov (trumpet, flugelhorn), Ashley Wass, Vahan Mardirossian, Maria Meerovitch, Elisha Abas (piano)

1 June The Olive Grove, Delikipos Open-air concert for Strings

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