

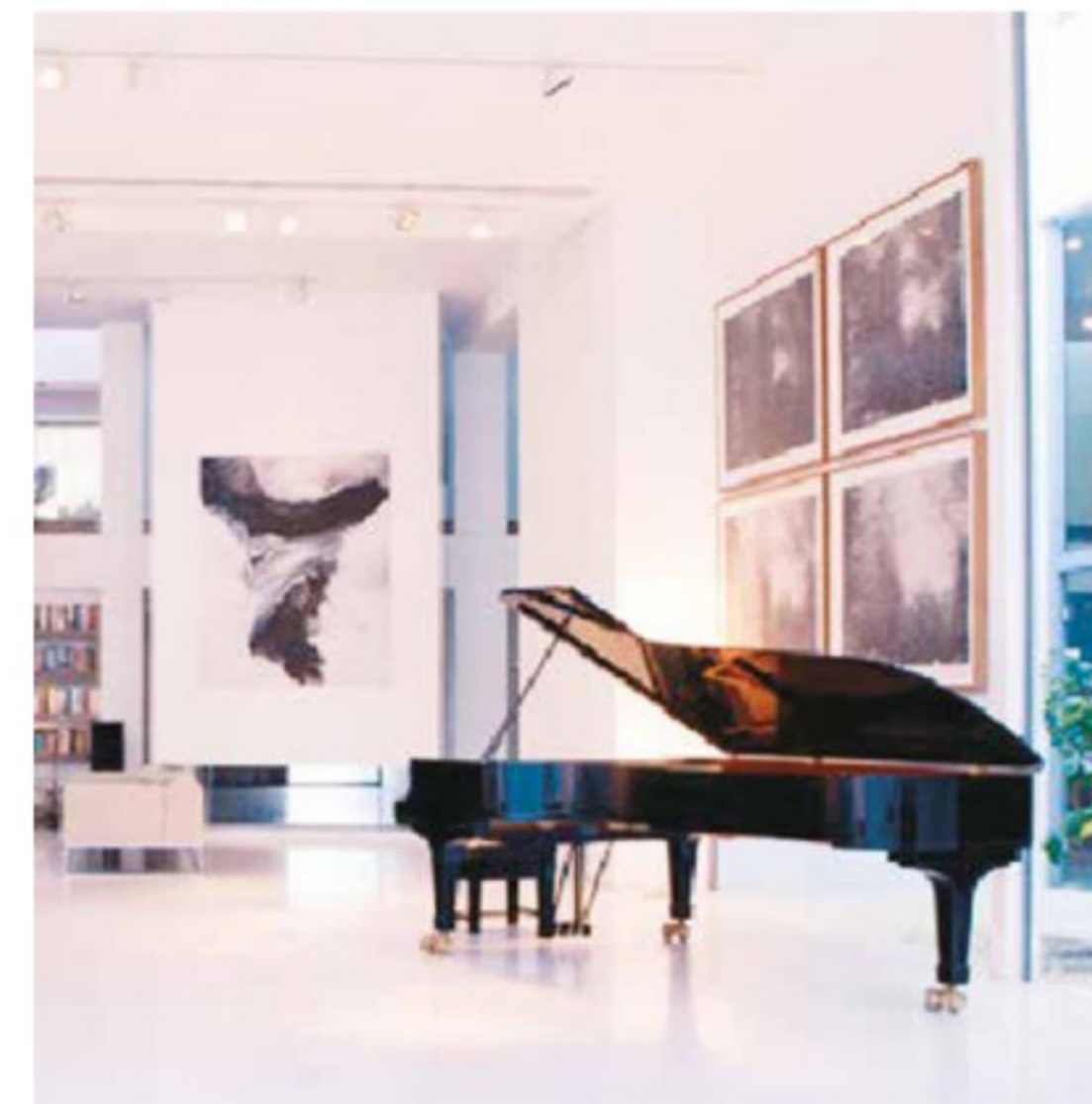
For years, the Pharos Arts Foundation has devoted itself to making a difference to the island's cultural front through a rich cultural programme. This year it celebrates its 15th anniversary and continues to pursue its vision of providing groundbreaking initiatives in the arts and humanities



CO-ARTISTIC
director of the
Festival and re-
nowned cellist,
Alexander
Chaushian



VADYM
Kholodenko, age 26
Ukraine,
performs during the
semi-final rounds of
14th Van Cliburn In-
ternational Piano Com-
petition at Bass Hall in
Fort Worth,
Texas, USA



**'THE Shoe
Factory':**
the prem-
ises of the
Pharos Arts
Foundation
in the old
town of
Nicosia

Pharos celebrates 15-year milestone

Annual International Pharos Chamber Music Festival marks the arts foundation's success

By **Melissa Hekkers**

Fifteen years ago, the vision of the Pharos Arts Foundation was set in stone, at a time when the island was somewhat a 'cultural desert', as Yvonne Georgiadou, Artistic Director of the Foundation describes it.

"There were hardly as many things going on and there were also many stereotypes surrounding classical music," elaborates Georgiadou as she attempts to lay out the prospects of the upcoming 15th International Pharos Chamber Music Festival.



RUSSIAN
violinist, Boris
Brovtsyn

"Through the dedication and vision of (the foundation's founder) Garo Keheyan, Pharos started reaching more people... The beginnings were difficult but a few years later, the inauguration of a chamber music festival as the annual culmination of the Foundation's Concert Series, proved a necessity for the Foundation and Cyprus as well," explains Georgiadou.

"Today, the foundation is renowned all over Europe for the diversity of its series, its sophisticated programming and groundbreaking initiatives, but mainly for the quality of its concerts and the calibre of the artists it hosts," she adds. Initially known as The Pharos Trust, the non-profit cultural and educational foundation is dedicated to the promotion of the arts and humanities and aims to promote artistic excellence by bringing audiences in Cyprus into contact with some of the most exciting and talented musicians and artists on the Cypriot and international scene.

For years, the Pharos Arts Foundation has aimed at creating a permanent home for the arts, culture and global dialogue in Cyprus, bringing

artists, writers, musicians, composers and philosophers together for creative expression and exchange, taking advantage of the island's unique cultural and geographic situation on the crossroads of Europe, Asia and Africa and the European Union's south-eastern boundary.

Now in its 15-year milestone, the International Pharos Chamber Music Festival is perhaps one of the Foundation's most credible examples of its contribution to the local art world, a success which can be traced back to three fundamental pillars.

"I would not really define a festival's success by how many years it's been organised or by anything financial. Its success depends on whether or not this festival meets its objectives and the International Pharos Chamber Music Festival's success is all down to three things: the unsurpassable quality of its guest musicians and programmes year after year; the extremely hard work and commitment of the people who work behind the scenes; and the love and sincerity with which we surround this festival, it is all absorbed by and reflected upon our audience," says Georgiadou.

"This is the longest and probably most important annual music event in Cyprus; it has truly placed Cyprus on the international cultural map, yet it struggles to survive because we haven't yet managed to convince the authorities about how important such initiatives are for Cyprus. [The festival] strengthens Cyprus' cultural profile, promotes cultural tourism, whilst inspiring and enriching the lives of thousands of Cypriots.

"There is more enduring publicity about Cyprus in an article written about the festival in the media abroad than 20 advertisements portraying the country as the perfect destination for sun, sea and meze," points out Georgiadou, without dismissing the path the foundation has managed to engrave for itself.

"Artistically, the Pharos Chamber Music Festival is going from strength to strength, year after year despite the numerous financial obstacles. Out of its 15-year history, the festival has taken shape and form and it has reached a huge base



PART of the festival will take place at the Royal Manor House in Kouklia, Paphos



VIOLINIST, Levon
Chilingirian

of audience and followers. It has also secured a 'resident' cluster of the best musicians in the world, which is broadened every year by incorporating some renowned newcomers, giving the festival a breath of freshness and individuality," says Georgiadou.

And although one may assume that delving into classical music is something enjoyed by few, the foundation comes in to falsify such impressions, only to consolidate the benefits of being confronted with music which is deeply rooted in traditions of the West.

"Classical music is not elitist, it should not be boring and it is not something to be enjoyed only by the few. Obviously a percentage of the audience is able to understand and appreciate it more, but everybody benefits from regular concert going, especially the youth. I have always maintained that the most difficult art is that of listening, communicating with your inner self through music.

"By reaching such a wide and diverse audience, I feel that Pharos has almost accomplished one of its basic missions. But we must never forget that attending a classical concert should not be an end in itself. It is the quality of the concert that counts and this is related to the level of the performance, the musicians involved and the general organisation of the event. Not everything 'classical' is quality, as not everything 'non-classical' is low-grade," asserts Georgiadou, confident of what the foundation offers.

"We give Cypriots the opportunity to enjoy the best soloists at a ridiculously cheap ticket. People usually spend 10, 20 times more to enjoy these musicians elsewhere in Europe. But it is our responsibility as a non-profit foundation to make things easy for the audience: to offer the right ambience and to make concerts affordable," she adds.

A great part of the foundation's programme is also dedicated to education and community service.

"The foundation's education programme had shyly made its first steps about 10 years ago, and in recent years it has expanded to such a degree



**CONCERTMAS-
TER** of the Berlin
Philharmonic,
Daishin Kashimoto



AMY Dickson; one of the musicians participating in the festival

that it has benefited over 65,000 students from all over Cyprus. Part of this is organised in collaboration with the Ministry of Education but it is solemnly a Pharos initiative.

"It rockets our annual budget but we consider it our first and foremost priority because today's students will be the decision-makers of tomorrow. We need those to be as enlightened as possible, no matter if they are musically talented or they become professional or good amateur musicians," reveals Georgiadou.

According to Georgiadou, research has proved that the minds of people who are acquainted to music from a young age are more open, expansive and problem-solving.

"We engage almost all our visiting musicians, visual artists and intellectuals to be involved in some kind of educational activity - an educational concert, a masterclass or workshop, a lecture, as well as many custom-made programmes for the youth.

"I remember in my first ever educational activity for Pharos 10 years ago, the students were extremely untamed, laughing uncontrollably. Now it is a totally different picture. They ask the most profound and interesting questions, they show great respect and love to what is offered to them. And this is only after 10 years. Imagine the

outcome in 20 years; imagine if music education were integrated more strategically and thoroughly in the general education syllabus, not in order to raise musicians, but to raise an accomplished future generation," concludes Georgiadou.

The 15th International Pharos Chamber Music Festival will take place from May 20 to June 2 and will encompass a series of concerts and recitals at The Shoe Factory in Nicosia and the Royal Manor House in Kouklia, Paphos. More information about the Pharos Arts Foundation and the festival's programme can be found on www.pharosartsfoundation.org

