

# Vivacious virtuoso

## REVIEW

Greek mezzo soprano, Angelica Cathariou and French pianist Emmanuel Olivier gave a song recital on Monday night at the PASYDY Auditorium as part of the Pharos Trust's Winter season.

Both artists participated in the Pharos Educational Series in the morning bringing to light different aspects of singing and songs. This was one of the most successful of the series, possibly assisted by the fact that Cathariou could communicate with the young audience directly in Greek coupled with her warm personality and vivaciousness.

The explanations of the text together with the demonstrations by Olivier were well-received and the question/answer session at the end brought about some interesting perspectives.

The concert had a French feel with songs and opera excerpts by French composers with the exception of German composer Kurt Weill. However, the link was prevalent as the songs heard originate from his 'French' period.

The evening began with the aria *Va! Laisse couler mes larmes* from the third act of Massenet's opera *Werther*. It was a dramatic beginning and from the outset, we experienced the joy which Cathariou derives from singing, a fact she perceives to be the most important as a performer. She boasts a powerful, passionate voice full of richness which coupled with an incredible stage presence warmed the audience to her immediately.

Ravel followed with the *Kaddisch*

from the *Deux Melodies Hebraiques* written in 1914 particularly moving and beautifully sung. The songs were commissioned by Alvina Alvi, a soprano in the St Petersburg opera and based on one of the masterpieces of the Jewish liturgy from the Jewish prayer book.

Cathariou's breath control and colouring were simply breathtaking. Pianist Emmanuel Olivier provided a strong support, and despite an open stick, did not overpower or overshadow the voice.

The richly comic and beautifully expressive aria from Offenbach's *La Perichole* was well received with Cathariou again vocally secure and showing her prowess as the coquette.

Cypriot composer Evis Sammoutis' arrangement of a well known Cypriot folkloric songs *Tillirkortissa* closed the first half of the programme. This was the least successful of the first half with the piano opening not well articulated and some ragged ensemble.

The highlight of the second half for me was the collection of Kurt Weill's songs *Je ne t'aime pas* and *Youkali*. Cathariou gave an emotionally gripping and deeply passionate rendition of both these songs with an intense commitment and musical intelligence.

It was the purest vocal sound, constantly varied with colour and intensity according to the mood and meaning of the words. Cathariou has a remarkable ability to vary her timbre to suit the expression of the text, thereby giving the song depth and musicality.

Despite an over rigid piano accompaniment in the final piece, an excerpt from Bizet's *Carmen*, Cathar-





you managed to maintain the rubato and expressive warmth of this aria with a smoky, sultry performance. A wonderful evening with a charismatic personality who has a voice of penetrating richness and beauty mixed with a rare depth of expres-

sion.

The next concert is the Leipzig String Quartet on March 18 with works by Mendelssohn, Puccini, Verdi and Mozart.

*By Saskia Constantinou*



CYPRUS MAIL

Τετάρτη, 28 Φεβρουάριος 2007, π. 43