

'I always strive to be better'

Percussionist Marios Nicolaou will perform works by Stockhausen, Xenakis and Moustoukis in performance at The Shoe Factory in Nicosia this month

The Pharos Arts Foundation will open its new season of the Cyprus Artists Series with a concert by percussionist Marios Nicolaou at The Shoe Factory, Nicosia at 8.30pm on January 29.

Well known to Cyprus audiences as percussionist in the ranks of the Cyprus Symphony Orchestra as well as for his exciting performances of many world premieres, Marios' concert will include works by Stockhausen, Xenakis, Tanaka, Moustoukis and Nicolaou amongst others.

Marios was born in Limassol in 1974 and has studied both in Athens and Germany. Going back to his earliest memories, he explained what led to a career in music.

"Although my parents were not professional musicians, they always inspired me and supported my decisions. I remember myself as a child, always enraptured by the percussive parts of the music, and setting up different objects trying to create sounds and rhythms."

Although he has appeared as a soloist with the Cyprus Symphony Orchestra, much of his work is orchestral. He has been the Timpanist of the Ballet Orchestra of the Greek National Opera since 2003 and has collaborated with the majority of Greek orchestras as well as the Kolner Philharmoniker Gasteig in Munich, Steinway Haus Dusseldorf and at many festivals.

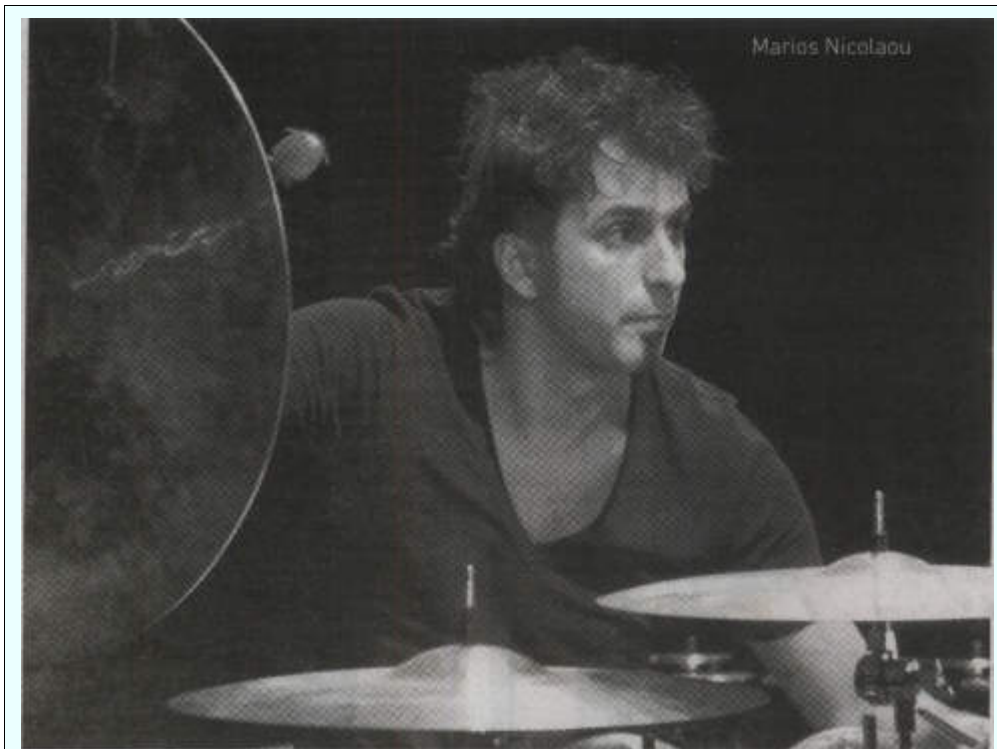
A percussionist differs from other musicians in the orchestra in that they have to master many different instruments. "The number of instruments one has really depends on the conditions under which one is living.

For example, abroad, there are many orchestras, so, when young musicians first get a job, they are able to use the orchestra's instruments to practise and therefore don't have to buy anything. In Cyprus though, things are different and I had to purchase my own instruments one by one. It is a huge investment and

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instead of buying a house or a new car, all my savings went into instruments. If someone decides to specialise on one instrument, the marimba for example, then he only needs to buy that, but then he isn't a percussionist but a marimbist. I have a more worldly outlook and interest and like to take up the challenge of every new piece which is written regardless of the instrument. I just have to find them and start practising."

Marios illustrates that whether one is a soloist or orchestral player, the performing responsibilities remain the same. "The difficulties and challenges are the same simply because the aim in music is difficult in itself. Establishing oneself as a musician is tough, not because of the complexity of the instrument because it's not about the instrument, but about the music."

Although we are in Europe, musically speaking we are not in the hub of classical music activities and I wonder if it is a hindrance to Marios as a percussionist. "Not

really, there are difficulties of course, but when you have a twelve hour day practising, teaching, rehearsing or researching, there is not too much time left, which minimises complaints" he adds laughing.

Marios' repertoire is quite diverse and he's premiered works of many Cypriot composers. He is especially enamoured of the compositions of Iannis Xenakis, Karlheinz Stockhausen and Helmut Lachenmann whom he describes as "pioneers, who, in the 1950s and 1960s, realised the extensive possibilities of percussion instruments.

Through their different set ups, they discovered new sounds and by combining them with complex rhythms, they brought percussion music to new dimensions. For this concert, I will be playing some of their works for marimba, snare drum, vibraphone, timpani and other various percussion instruments."

His goals for the New Year remain as always "to discover new music and to become a better musician by practising a lot!"

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