

The second concert of the Seventh International Pharos Chamber Music Festival took place on Wednesday at the PASYDY Auditorium in Nicosia and began with Schubert's *Sonata for Cello and Piano in A Minor D821 'Arpeggione'*.

This was written when Schubert was suffering from advanced stages of syphilis and lapsing into frequent episodes of depression and is most frequently performed on the viola, though this performance was given by cellist David Geringas and pianist Philippe Cassard.

They need a medal for surpassing not only the technical and musical difficulties but the incredibly rude behaviour of some audience members. A mobile phone rang not once, but twice, with the person then falling over his chair, jumping over other rows and the whole episode repeated again with another call, with the wife finally storming out followed by her husband!

For those not familiar with concert etiquette, it is not polite to send and receive SMS, eat, drink, take calls or talk during *any* performance – remember artists have spent not only days and months, but also years practising to offer their art for your pleasure.

David Geringas was born in Lithuania and studied at the Moscow Conservatory with Mstislav Rostropovich winning the Tchaikovsky Competition in 1970. He has had numerous accolades throughout his career and performed with top artists world-wide so it was a privilege to hear him again on our shores. He has a glorious tone, is a fine musician and together with Cassard, gave a performance filled with pathos, sensuality and intelligence.

Geringas' intensity of sound through a well-controlled vibrato and free bow





arm made the phrasing, and his dynamic range, to the softest of pianissimos gave an ethereal atmosphere to the glorious *adagio* movement. Cassard, an extremely sensitive pianist, was ever-present, continuing and echoing the phrasing truly making his instrument sing as few pianists can. A powerful reading which cut to the emotional core.

This was followed by Martinu's *Sonata for Flute, Violin and Piano in C Major* played by Levon Chilingirian, Sharon Bezaly and Philippe Cassard. The balance was not as good, with the piano frequently over-powering the flute and violin. However, Bezaly's solo improvisatory type passages in the last movement came through nicely showing a masterful command of her glorious gold flute.

Following the interval was the Brahms *Sextet No 1 in B Flat Major Op 18* with Chilingirian, Juritz, Poppen, Zemtsov, Chaushian and Geringas. It was evident that the players were more relaxed with each other than on the opening night with a more polished performance with some beautiful solo moments from

all the musicians.

However, Diemut Poppen truly stood out – in the opening of the *andante ma moderato* she displayed her prowess on the viola with her long phrases sung out with divine pathos and colour followed by her sul C passages which were fearless and seemingly effortless. She sits well, (as opposed to many viola players who tend to be rather bent because of the weight of the instrument) which allows the sound to travel, uses plenty of bow but with an intensity which is riveting.

The scale passages too of Geringas (playing first cello for this sextet as opposed to the previous evening) together with his one time student, Chaushian were simply phenomenal. Not only were all the semiquavers in perfect unison, but melodically treated with dynamics. It made scales a pleasure to listen to!

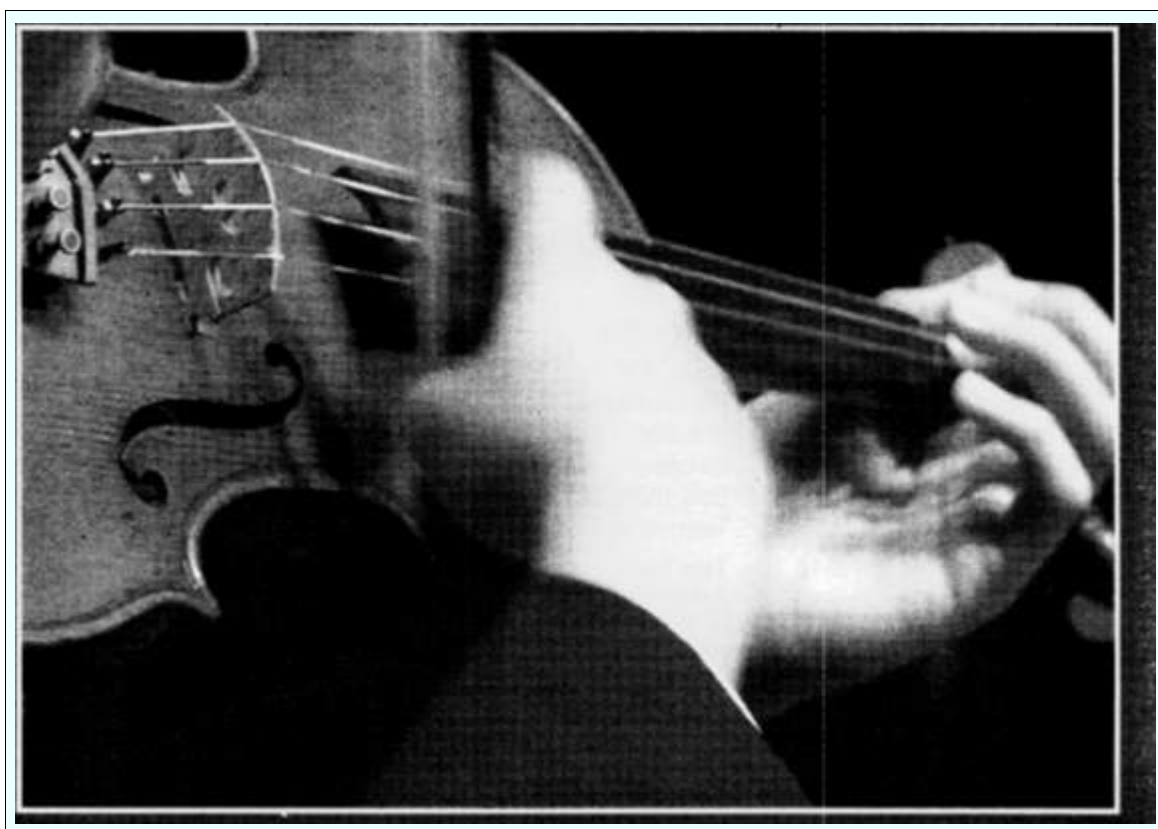
This was a performance of clarity and perception with musical insight which combined the skills of exceptional ensemble players.

*By Saskia Constantinou*

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