

1. ARTISTIC EXCELLENCE

Μέσο: SUNDAY MAIL LIVING

Ημ. Έκδοσης: . . .28/05/2017 Ημ. Αποδελτίωσης: . . .28/05/2017

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▶▶ **17th Pharos international Chamber Music Festival**
June 2 to 20 in Kouklia and Nicosia. Tickets cost €10 per concert. For bookings, the full programme and more information, call 22 663 871 or visit www.pharosartsfoundation.org

Artistic excellence

The International Pharos Chamber Music Festival is the epitome of mental, physical and emotional relaxation: a perfect respite from the stresses of ever-impending deadlines, with all the benefits of a gentle, musical yoga retreat. Now in its 17th year, the festival is possibly the best classical music event of the summer season: a concert series which attracts top musicians from around the world and has built a reputation for quality performances and magnificent settings. "Guided by a visionary spirit and dedicated to artistic excellence, the festival is now recognised as one of Europe's preeminent music festivals," organisers say. "Placing Cyprus on the international cultural map and garnering enthusiastic acclaim from music lovers all over the world!" – including yours truly – "the festival has

The 17th International Pharos Chamber Music Festival opens its doors this week. ALIX NORMAN looks forward to some breathtaking music in stunning locations

made chamber music more accessible to the general public by presenting exciting programmes and performances of the highest level by some of the world's most renowned soloists."

Chief among the unique attributes of this wonderful festival are the locations: the Royal Manor House in Kouklia is a qui-

et corner of paradise, one of the finest surviving monuments of Frankish architecture in Cyprus and a UNESCO World Heritage site; The Shoe Factory, although bang in the middle of the capital, is nevertheless a spacious recital venue designed to let the cluttered mind achieve true tranquility. But ultimately, it's the music that's so unique... exploring the many forms of the chamber music genre, the festival encompasses "an impressive array of instrumental combinations and repertoire, ranging from the Baroque to the 20th century, as well as a number of rarely performed masterpieces."

Opening on June 2 in Nicosia, the festival kicks off with a voice and piano recital by the renowned Danish coloratura soprano Susanne Elmark joining forces with international répétiteur Christian Westergaard (winner of the 2015 International Lied Duo Competition) in a programme of songs by Debussy, Berg, R Strauss, Prokofiev and Grieg. A week later, on Friday June 9, the same venue will see a performance from the sensational young pianist Vitaly Pisarenko (winner of the First Prize in the 8th International Franz Liszt Piano Competition and Third Prize winner at the 2015 Leeds International Piano Competition) organised in collaboration with the Keyboard Charitable Trust in London and set to include works by Schubert, Schumann and Liszt.

In that Pharos maintains a strong tradition of community service, with educational concerts organised for students of public schools and a number of



Alena Baeva



Alexander Chaushian



Cyprus Guitar Trio

master-classes for young instrumentalists, there's then a bit of a break in the programming. But it all starts up again on June 15, with the festival moving to the other end of the island for the final six concerts. The Royal Manor House at Kouklia is "specifically transformed by the festival to a first class recital hall" for the duration, and will be welcoming "some of the world's greatest musicians, who will be performing an impressive array of works."

Words, however, can't do the festival true justice: for that, you'll have to book your place and head along to one (or all!) of the concerts for the finest Mozart, Mendelssohn, Saint-Saëns and Schubert you may ever have the privilege to hear. Even if you're not a huge fan of classical music, it's well worth the time and effort; there's just no better event at which to totally unwind and enjoy yourself. And surely that's the true power of music!