

# Emotional evening

## REVIEW

The Brazilian pianist Arnaldo Cohen flew into Cyprus for a single day and dazzled the appreciative audience with a simply awe-inspiring recital of Brazilian music in the first half followed by Liszt's *Sonata in B Minor*.

We were privy to experience a side of Brazil not often seen, with a carefully chosen selection of miniature piano pieces which are nostalgic, full of pathos and further enhanced by the exquisite playing of Cohen.

The programme began with Nopomuceno's *Air* from the Suite Op. 11 – a very poignant piece made even more so by its minor tonality. Part of the beauty of the piece was its utter simplicity, and Cohen caught the bottom notes with a firm touch making them truly sing.

Because of its size, the PASYDY Auditorium, has a rather intimate atmosphere and Cohen immediately created a rapport by laughingly explaining, "I don't usually talk in my recitals but I have waited years and years to do so and would like to share with you why I chose these pieces."

The next selection was of waltzes by Levy, Gnattali and Braga (who wrote the Brazilian national anthem) which he played without interruption. Levy's *Valsa Lenta No. 4* was particularly moving with a clever twist on the tonality, from the minor to a more optimistic major before reverting back to the minor chord. Cohen displayed dexterity and effortless accuracy while never sacrificing the musical shape or clarity. Every single

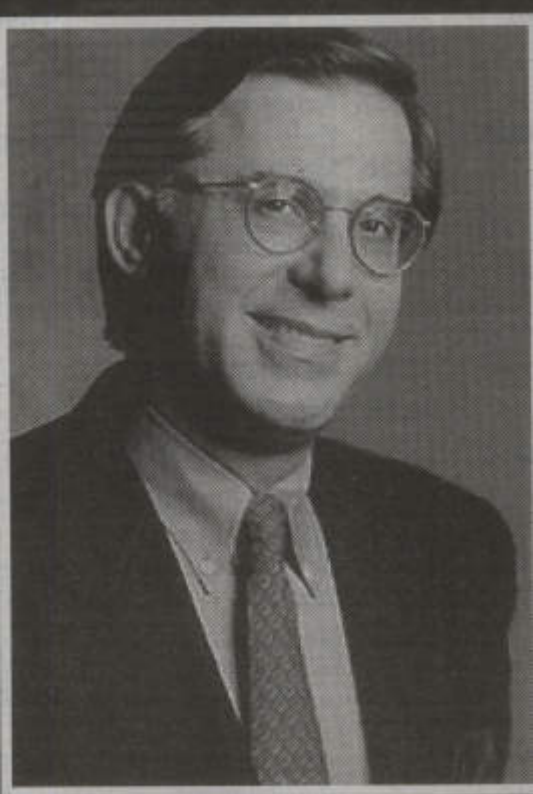
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Pharos presents Arnaldo Cohen. October 16. PASYDY Auditorium, Nicosia



note was carefully placed with the playing about projecting the music and not himself or his ego.

Nazareth was a self taught composer inspired by Chopin's music, which was clearly reflected in *Odeon* written for the opening of a cinema by the same name and *Apanhei-te Cavaquinho*, ('I plucked my little guitar') – a delightful piece exploring the extreme ranges of the piano and displaying Cohen's considerable keyboard prowess making an indelible impression.

Cohen also included a work by chemist and amateur pianist Eduardo Dutra – *Preludio*, which was written in 1940

and dedicated to his son. Cohen explained that "many Brazilians have talent but are not always given the opportunities and as a tribute to these gifted but unknown composers, I have included this piece.

"I think that the composer, who died in 1964, would have been proud to have his piece recorded and played all over the world."

To close the first half, Cohen included miniatures by Santoro and Mignone grouped together for their rhythmic exploration.

After such a moving first half, I didn't think that the Liszt *Sonata in B Minor* would follow well but I was wrong. Cohen's romantic temperament perfectly highlighted Liszt's immensely chromatic harmonies.

The fluency of his playing was effectively displayed in his left hand figurations while the expansive, lyrical and yet dramatic lines were never underplayed.

The contrapuntal section showed his musical intelligence and deep and meaningful understanding of the work. Cohen achieved a glorious and ample sonority with an immaculate touch, perfect timing and his carefully shaped range and variety of dynamics created a shimmering and powerful presentation of this gigantic sonata.

Thank you to the sponsors and to the Pharos Trust. Those who didn't attend lost out on a marvellous evening of simply superb playing.

By Saskia Constantinou

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