

# BEHIND THE SCENES

A series of unedited dialogues  
between Yvonne Georgiadou and  
artists participating in the  
14th International Pharos Chamber  
Music Festival

ALEXANDER  
CHAUSHIAN

MAHAN  
ESFAHANI

AMARCORD  
ENSEMBLE

ASHLEY  
WASS

FRANÇOIS  
FRÉDÉRIC  
GUY



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# ALEXANDER CHAUSHIAN

## CELLO

**So you are here again! Don't you ever get bored returning to Cyprus year after year?**

Well Cyprus is a special place, close to my heart, so of course every single time I look forward to returning there.

**You have been part of this Festival since almost its very beginning, and I sense you have both evolved simultaneously...** The festival is very popular now, judging by the number of emails I receive from different agents and musicians who would like to perform there, musicians do develop so much from playing chamber music, we all learn from each other.

**One wonders, I wonder sometimes, what it is that makes this Festival so special compared to other, perhaps bigger European festivals.** The warm but discerning audience, the air and landscape of Cyprus, the food, as well as the enthusiasm of everybody involved. **And perhaps the most discerning audience of all is the students of Palaipafos area. You are always quite cool with them, they know you on a first name basis...** I am always so happy to see those kids. I think children do love music more than we think, so it's so important to educate the ear from an early age. I am always amazed by how carefully they listen... it's true that their concentration doesn't last for more than 10-15 minutes but that's enough sometimes.

**So what were your influences when you were young?** My most important influence has been my grandfather who was my first teacher. I doubt I would have become a musician if it were not for him and his patience. He was a fantastic cello teacher. **And what are your ambitions now?** My ambitions have always been the same always: Search for the better and never stop learning.

**Levon Chilingirian told me once he remembers you waking up in the morning and start practising the cello with a cigarette on the mouth. Do you still do that?** Well, yes I do smoke and it's not a good habit but I never practice with a cigarette. **Well at least I have a smoking buddy throughout the Festival. For me it's a stress reliever but you always seem so laid back, as if you never get stressed.** I do, a lot, but if I show it, it won't make things better. Any upsetting incidents then? Well I remember long time ago, when I was touring in Austria with the Armenian Philharmonic, we went to this city and the mayor came to greet us just before the concert. As he was leaving the room, he had a heart attack and died unfortunately, there you go!

**Chamber music is a family affair. Most composers have revealed their true selves through it and musicians everywhere in the world seek to take time off to perform**

in chamber concerts, perhaps because it is more liberating, creative and rewarding. I still can't get over the contradictoriness of performing chamber music in huge venues, it's such a discrepant combination. It all depends on the acoustics, but surely chamber music is more intimate and original when performed in smaller venues. I think our beautiful hall (the Royal Manor House) in Paphos is just perfect for chamber music, as well as The Shoe Factory, which is a very unique place to perform with excellent acoustics. **Yes, The Shoe Factory was created with that kind of intimacy in mind.** I haven't played there for some time now, and I am looking forward to my recital with Yevgeny Sudbin. **The two of you are a match made in heaven and I am sure The Shoe Factory is looking forward to being in Heaven!**



**"I THINK CHILDREN DO LOVE MUSIC MORE THAN WE THINK, SO IT'S SO IMPORTANT TO EDUCATE THE EAR FROM AN EARLY AGE."**

Alexander Chaushian has won the Third Prize in the 12th International Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow and the Third and Special prizes given by the Munich Chamber Orchestra at the ARD Competition in Germany in 2005. Chaushian has appeared in prestigious venues throughout the world, and as a soloist, he has played with a number of renowned orchestras, including the Vienna Chamber Orchestra at Vienna's Konzerthaus and at the Bruchnerhaus in Linz, the London Mozart Players and the Philharmonia Orchestra in London, the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, the Royal National Orchestra of Belgium, Les Solistes Européens de Luxembourg in a gala concert conducted by Yehudi Menuhin, the Boston Pops Orchestra at Boston Symphony Hall, and the Armenian Philharmonic Orchestra at Carnegie Hall. He frequently appears in important festivals such as the Kuhmo Festival in Finland, La Jolla Festival in the USA, and the Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris. His solo debut recording for the BIS label of Weinberg's Sonatas, in which he is partnered with Yevgeny Sudbin, was released to much acclaim. It was recently followed by another highly acclaimed CD for BIS, which includes cello sonatas by Rachmaninov, Borodin and Shostakovich



# MAHAN ESFAHANI

## HARPSICHORD

**Mahan this is your third time performing for Pharos. You must really love it here!** I love the sincerity of people. People living the way they should live. **Any particular places you want to visit this time?** I am interested in the Byzantine heritage of the island and I want to visit the medieval castles and churches. **I will drive to you to some Ancient Greek sites for sure.**

**Last year, while talking to you on Skype, I had the idea of bringing you and Michala Petri together on stage. I admit that was one of my proudest moments. You've taken Europe by storm since then, you became close friends, you got rave reviews...**


**What's next?** Michala and I have already recorded a disc with the Corelli Op.5 sonatas, and in October we are recording a second disc with works of the 20th and 21st centuries, and commissions by contemporary composers. It seems like we've known each other for ages, but we just met a year ago in Cyprus. If it were not for Pharos we wouldn't have done that.

**But this year you will treat us to an Italian Baroque programme, which is great, but what are your reasons?** In principle, the fact that Cyprus has so many links with the crusaders, it has been greatly affected by the Venetian rule, so I decided to include some 16th century music. **Italian, French or English Baroque then?** J.S. Bach is my

favourite composer but if I have to choose one genre, then Italian. **But surely you don't just like Baroque, right?** Oh I love Elgar. I also love Wagner, Haydn... Dvorak, Schoenberg. But for me, the big giant is Ligeti. **I love them too, especially Wagner, but does music have a future?** Yes. **You really think so?..** Absolutely, no question. Steve Reich has given a completely new life with his musical language.

**The greatest challenge on stage?** I like to have the kind of audience member who is difficult to convince. **You have me, but tell me about your most unpleasant experience.** The most unpleasant experience...having to deal with people who gave me good reason to believe they had racial prejudice towards me. This is the worst feeling. **Speaking of this, how do you confront those who just don't get your art?** If they don't get my art, or any art in general, I just let them make fools of themselves. If, of course, I have a bad day performing that is absolutely my problem.

**Being an active musician is...** It's exciting because every day is absolutely different. Good or bad, it doesn't matter. It's a new experience. I love meeting people, speaking languages, tasting different food, visiting new places. **Besides this?** I like writing a lot, engaging with culture, learning new things. I also like to teach – not necessarily lessons,

A close-up portrait of a man with dark, curly hair, wearing a dark suit jacket, a light blue dress shirt, and a dark tie with diagonal stripes. He is looking down with a slight, thoughtful smile. The background is a plain, light gray.

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but I want to show people new things, share experiences. **How do you relax after a concert?** I am pretty relaxed before and after a concert. Before a concert I always read. After a concert I just sit and joke with my friends and have a glass of wine. **The most influential person in your music advancement and career?** My father because he always followed through good and bad.

**Those who know you, know also that you have an amazing sense of humour. How useful do you think this is when you have to cope with stress or disappointments?** I think we, Greeks, Persians, Mediterranean people in general, have been through a lot so we know how to make the most of it. We never felt the need to invade other countries to show our power. **Humour is actually a Greek word, meaning juice. We are juicy people.** We are just expressive. Humour is part of our nature.

**You have recently been shortlisted for the Royal Philharmonic Society Award. What was your immediate reaction?** Disbelief. **Will you believe it if you win it?** If I win it, I will be humbled. But I will feel it is something big for the harpsichord too.

**Tell me a secret nobody knows.** I used to be a violinist.

Hailed as the “leading harpsichordist of his generation” (Opera Today), Mahan Esfahani (b. 1984) is the first harpsichordist to be named a BBC New Generation Artist (2008-2010). In 2009 he gave his solo recital debut at the Wigmore Hall, about which the Daily Telegraph exclaimed “the harpsichord comes out of hiding... magnificent,” thus launching a major career as a recitalist, concerto soloist, and more recently, conductor. His recording of the Poulenc harpsichord concerto was issued in May 2010 with BBC Music Magazine, and he has been featured as a “Hot Property” by Classic FM magazine. Recent and future highlights include appearances with the Academy of Ancient Music, the Hamburger Sinfoniker, the Prague Symphony chamber concerts, the Istanbul Bach Days, the Hanover Band, the BBC National Orchestra of Wales, the Festival of Flanders at Bruges, Utrecht Oude Muziek, New York’s Frick Collection, and at the major recital halls of Cologne, Vienna, Vancouver, London, Tokyo, and Nagoya.





**"I AM PRETTY RELAXED BEFORE AND AFTER A CONCERT. BEFORE A CONCERT I ALWAYS READ. AFTER A CONCERT I JUST SIT AND JOKE WITH MY FRIENDS AND HAVE A GLASS OF WINE."**

# AMARCORD

## **How did the five of you meet together?**

There were initially six of us who first met at St. Thomas's Boys Choir Leipzig. We just wanted to keep singing after nine years in this choir. And we wanted to sing something else, apart from Bach. Even after some (rare) changes we are still an all-St. Thomas Group, with the three lower voices being the original members and serving as the right base for the higher voices.

**There is a tremendous amount of vocal music which was written in the past, and male choruses were a popular form of entertainment but nowadays these works are scarcely known. Are you still amazed when discovering old, previously neglected pieces?** This is in fact one of the great excitements in the job, being able to "premiere" pieces that have been lying around for decades or even centuries. Also, this becomes us and our adventurous minds. This feeling is only surpassed by the actual premiere of a living composer's piece specifically written for us.

**The first part of your concert at The Shoe Factory is about music for male chorus written in the 19th century by Leipzig based composers. Schumann's Op.33 is surprisingly humorous. It truly seems like an indirect attack to Friedrich Wick with whom he had court cases open...** The "Song Year" you mentioned is the year 1840 when,

# VOCAL ENSEMBLE

after having lived in Leipzig for several years, Schumann was allowed to eventually marry Clara Wieck, despite her father Friedrich's opposition. Consequently, Schumann's Op.33 is breathing the fresh air of love's delight, and you can hear birds sing, all nature celebrating a wedding... the overwhelming joy of a 30-year-old, going to marry his true love. Quite understandable...

**On the other hand the Mendelssohn pieces are more direct, not so ground-breaking music wise, but always enjoyable. What issues, do you have to address when performing Op.50 as opposed to Op.120?** Most of them written in Leipzig, Op.50 is the only set of male choruses that Mendelssohn published during his lifetime. So there's much ground to speculate why, as a composer sceptic with music for male voices, Mendelssohn would have them printed, and why not the others. Anyway, all the pieces are great music and a joy to sing, and despite some inner "lightness" they must not be underestimated!

**Both composers were allegedly intimidated by male choruses. Schumann was remembered saying "Even when you've been making music all day, you can't get to like the endless six-four chords of male singing".** During Schumann's and Mendelssohn's days in Leipzig, there was a guy, Heinrich August Marschner, who



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wrote six-four chords pieces on end. This was the kind of musical standard set for male voice music then. So, the two great contemporaries had to put this aside, overcoming their own prejudices when thinking about male choruses, and bless this field of music with their genius, thus creating something that we are looking for in all music: vocal chamber music.

**In your programme you will include many contemporaries of Schumann and Mendelssohn who are hardly known to audiences today. Of particular interest is Carl Steinacker who was generally accepted as a major talent back in his time.** Steinacker died aged 30, on a wound he got during the wars against Napoleon. He certainly was a major talent coming from Leipzig but, having died too early like so many of the Romantic composers, poets and other artists, was forgotten too easily. There is this great cycle of his, Op.11 for male voices, that reflects a very own voice of this composer who could have grown to great renown. **Zöllner's Scherzo is hilarious... The text comprises a whole restaurant menu. I've read that the composer wrote the piece in order to win a bet that "any text can be set to music".** Yes, this is truly as the story goes. Apparently, a student of Zöllner's was challenging his master's claim that "any text can be set to music (by me)". So, once they all met in a traditional Leipzig restaurant called Zill's Tunnel, the student

picked the menu and said: You can't put that to music. Well, Zöllner could and presented the piece to his students the following morning.

**You have premiered on disc many of these pieces. Do you ever have any disagreements between you about new music you will explore / include in your CDs?** It would feel strange when all of us agreed right from the beginning. This group wants all opinions to be put on the table, no matter how diverse, so then we can have a discussion about it. As there is no musical director, we have to convince each other. The result, in our opinion, will be even better. And it will not be a mere compromise, but the result of conviction. But this is true not just for CD planning, but for interpretation, programming, and travel schedules as well.

**You have also explored a lot of contemporary music. Don't you feel that contemporary composers sometimes stretch the human voice beyond its limits?** Despite the fact that this is quite a rhetorical question, I agree. And disagree, because it's by no means limited to contemporary composers. Händel was way beyond voice limits, but with singers in mind who could "handel" it. So were Pérotin, Ockeghem, Wagner, Berg ... They always came up a bunch of singers who could master the challenges of these guys,

successfully stretching the voice limits, in terms of phrase length, sheer vocal power, stamina, intellectual content. But what helped these composers was a general knowledge of (or at least interest in) the human voice. If a composer is unaware or doesn't have an interest in singers' needs, I'm likewise uninterested in him and what he does.

**You have pretty much sung every style. Obviously your basic vocal technique is the same throughout but what stylistic changes do you address in contrasting programmes?** Basically, this is right, the five of us are using the same technique in order to blend and create a unified sound. But to enhance the stylistic changes needed for valid interpretations, we also implement different vocal techniques, according to style and genre, that again are used by all of us. This includes regulation of vibrato, vowel shaping and colouring, the amount of breath put on the tone, harshness of vocal onset, the amount of body tension, to name just a few. But we also have to be able to produce "white" tones or sing with "no technique" – which, if done right, is a technique of its own.

**What do you sing when you want to go back to basics and maintain your vocal health?** We then tend to sing Romantic music that suits the group's sound and our individual ranges well. On an individual



## " NO HUMAN BEING IS JUST A HOMO ECONOMICUS."

basis, we regularly return to our singing teacher called "the coach", who is putting things in order when needed.

**I always say that singers have the most difficult task – having to carry their instruments with them at all times, they are susceptible to a number of environmental triggers. How does one overcome these issues without sacrificing the joy of living?** The solution is: don't sacrifice the joy of living! Thinking and worrying too much is just not helpful and will also bring down your immune system. Getting enough rest, sleep, fluid, and food are obvious basics, especially on tour through different time-zones. And if the virus strikes you there is of course some secret natural and pharmaceutical panacea at hand which we won't reveal here.

**Let's send a message to those authorities that control funding for the arts.** No human being is just a Homo economicus. In fact, none of our friends, colleagues, or acquaintances are. Stop forcing artists into mode of self-justification and instead support the arts with all your might. As a signer of human creativity they are among the finest creations of mankind. They are what makes us – human.

**And let's give a piece of advice to all young aspiring singers.** Passion for what you do. Patience with yourself and the growth of

your art. A prospect of the future no matter how clear, and the power to detect the point when following the master needs to be replaced by becoming yourself, singing your own repertoire with your own voice. **Passion, Patience and, may I add, Respect.**

Founded in 1992 by former members of the St Thomas's Boys Choir in Leipzig, Amarcord has since become one of the world's leading vocal ensembles. Amarcord's hallmarks include a unique tone, breath-taking homogeneity, musical authenticity, and a good dose of charm and humour. Amarcord performs a vast and highly diverse repertoire of music, from medieval plainsong to madrigals and Renaissance masses, to compositions and cycles of works of the European Romantic period and the 20th century, arrangements of a cappella folksongs collected from all over the world, all the way to new works written especially for the Ensemble. Amarcord has won prizes at many international competitions, and alongside the Gewandhaus Orchestra and St Thomas's Boys Choir, it is now one of the leading representatives of Leipzig's music scene in Germany and abroad, regularly appearing at important music festivals all over the world.





# The Shoe Factory

304 Ermou Street, Nicosia

*A modern recital venue in the heart of the city*

# ASHLEY WASS

## PIANO

**Have you ever counted the number of times you came to Cyprus for a concert?** No, but I must be well into double figures now! **I am sure we'll reach triple figures at some point. In any case, it's always the greatest pleasure to have you back. The Pharos Festival is special, right?** Genuinely, there are so many things that make the Pharos Festival special. The laid-back atmosphere, the weather, the location of the hotel, the inspiration of the sea, the magical ambience of the Manor House at Kouklia and the great Cypriot salads and grilled meats. But perhaps the reason I really look forward to returning every year is the chance to see dear friends and colleagues again – fellow musicians, the Pharos team, audience members and even hotel staff. Of all the places I visit for concerts on a regular basis, this is probably the one where I feel most relaxed and at home.

**Pick your favourite work from this year's programme.** Ravel's Piano Trio. It's the King of trios. Nothing else even comes close. **In one of our conversations a couple of years ago I remember you expressing the wish to start experimenting with unexplored repertoire. We've seen the first evidence in your solo album with the Pastoral transcription for solo piano. I remember you saying that transcriptions are not for everyone. How was that received by the audience eventually?** I think transcriptions

will always divide opinion, especially when the transcribed work is as famous the Pastoral. Moreover, I didn't record it on a modern piano; instead I chose a fortepiano dating from the 1820s which made for a very unique sounding performance. I think it's fair to say the critical reception was split – some loved it, one or two hated it – which was exactly what I expected. I quite like challenging people's perceptions with provocative projects and I'm perfectly happy to accept criticism if and when it comes my way; it's more than worth it for the sense of discovery one experiences when undertaking unusual ventures. Nearly all my public performances of the Pastoral have been given on a modern instrument and the reaction from audiences has been overwhelmingly positive. Liszt's transcription is one of the hardest things written for the piano and the sheer physicality and theatricality of it seems to excite.

**It certainly excited The Shoe Factory audience a year ago. Besides you participating in the Festival now, you'll be back soon with the Trio Apaches. How did it all start with the other two guys?** I officially formed the trio in the summer of 2012 with Matthew Trusler and Thomas Carroll, both of whom also have very successful solo careers. The name, by the way, is taken from a Parisian group of artists musicians, writers, poets and critics

in the early 20th Century that included Ravel and Stravinsky. They took great pride in referring to themselves as 'artistic outcasts', a moniker we're more than happy to adopt! The French translation is 'hooligans'; most people tell us it suits us well! First and foremost, the group's based on friendship – we have tremendous fun both on and off stage – but we also share an interest in expanding the trio repertoire and exploring quirky collaborations. For example, we're planning future projects with actors and performance painters; to us this is much more exciting than constantly touring the same old Beethoven and Brahms trios that have already been played and recorded a gazillion times. It's tricky fitting concerts and rehearsals into our busy individual schedules, but we're all determined to make the trio a major part of our lives.

**And soon came the La Mer project...** The first piece we ever performed as an official group was The Seafarer Trio (with narrator) by the wonderful British composer, Sally Beamish. We fell in love with it and immediately decided to make it our first recording project. We searched high and low for a sea-related partner-piece, but came up empty-handed; that's when we had the idea to ask Sally to transcribe Debussy's La Mer. At first she thought we were mad, but we soon persuaded her it had to be done and she cleared her diary and set to work.

The end result came from a process of close collaboration and we're delighted with how it sounds; one could easily imagine it was always intended as a piano trio and we're certain it'll become a major addition to the repertoire. We've already recorded both works – with Sir Willard White narrating The Seafarer – and the disc is due out in September.

**Surely, this required a lot of resources...**

Needless to say, funding such an enterprise didn't come cheap, so we created a scheme – a kind of 'club' – called Les Amis de La Mer. The premise is quite simple; there are 90 pages in the piano score of Sally's transcription and we're 'selling' each of them for £90. In return, sponsors get their names printed in all future editions of the score and receive a signed copy of their chosen page. It's been a remarkably successful idea and we're quite proud of its inclusive nature. We didn't want to rely solely on the philanthropy of a wealthy few – this scheme provides an opportunity for everyone to support the creation of new art.

**I am sure a lot of people would love to have their names printed on the pages of such a great work – I am very proud to have my name printed in one of the pages of the last movement, but tell me, have you ever been tempted to try out really contemporary music?** Well, I've premiered a few new works over the years, but nearly



all the contemporary music I've played has been quite accessible in its structure and style. Take Sally's works for example – they're very concise and communicative on first hearing. Commissioning is something I've become very interested in, both for the trio and as a soloist, and I've recently commissioned another British composer – Huw Watkins – to write a piano suite for me to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the publication of Alice in Wonderland in 2015.

**Sometimes I am wondering, don't musicians lose touch with their basic instincts if they are involved too much with contemporary music?** Well, I guess it's true that many specialists in modern music display little interest or empathy with classical and romantic traditions. I approach contemporary repertoire with the principle belief that it's nearly always expressing the same basic emotions that are found in the music of the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries; the only difference is the language in which they're communicated. I'd like to think my performances of modern music have informed and improved my interpretations of the core repertoire. And vice versa, of course.

**So what pieces you revisit when you want to stay in top performing shape?** I don't really have any! In fact, I try to make sure I

have a fair amount of time – even in the busiest of patches – away from the piano. Keeping the mind fresh and invigorated with other interests and activities is much more important than most people realise.

**You have always been a great pianist but I must admit, ever since your daughter was born, I feel that your expressivity has blossomed. We will never forget the exquisite way you performed Liszt's Petrarch Sonnets in last year's Festival while your daughter was sleeping outside, and I am really wondering if parenthood really affects the performer...** I hope and believe I'm constantly improving as a musician, but exactly how and why can often be a mystery. However, becoming a parent forces one to understand oneself better and I guess the process of self-discovery can only be positive when it comes to musical maturity. At the end of the day, all our major life experiences – falling in love, having our hearts broken, losing a loved one, becoming a parent – deepen our expressivity and, when channelled productively, galvanise our powers of communication.

**How does baby Amelia react to your practising?** Her current favourite game is to run into my studio, pull my arm away from the piano mid-phrase and run away again. I can only assume she's hinting at something!



**"ALL OUR MAJOR LIFE EXPERIENCES – FALLING IN LOVE, HAVING OUR HEARTS BROKEN, LOSING A LOVED ONE, BECOMING A PARENT – DEEPEN OUR EXPRESSIVITY AND, WHEN CHANNELLED PRODUCTIVELY, GALVANISE OUR POWERS OF COMMUNICATION."**

## "OF ALL THE PLACES I VISIT FOR CONCERTS ON A REGULAR BASIS, THIS IS PROBABLY THE ONE WHERE I FEEL MOST RELAXED AND AT HOME."

**What would you advise her if one day she announces that she wants to be a musician?**

No, no, no! I'd love for her to understand and appreciate great music, but there are far easier lives to be led than that of a musician. **Tell me about it. So how many hours does she allow you to practise when you have a big concert?** My wife's pretty good at keeping her entertained when I'm busy and stressed. We try to divide child-care depending on our schedules – it's not easy!

**A few years ago you decided to abandon London for the country and I remember the transition was not easy for you. How is it now?** It's honestly the best thing I've ever done. I still have to travel into London most weeks and that can be quite tiresome, but it's a small sacrifice to make for living in such a beautiful and peaceful place. I feel it's so much healthier to be in an area where I'm not constantly surrounded by music and musicians; it helps me switch off and remain fresh of mind. Most importantly though, we're so happy we're raising our daughter here instead of London. She has a lovely garden to play in and fields, forests and hills just seconds away. It's awesome.

**Let's send a message to all those who make the decisions about funding for the arts.**

"Music, when healthy, is the teacher of perfect order, and when depraved, the teacher of perfect disorder." (John Ruskin)

Described as an “endlessly fascinating artist”, Ashley Wass is firmly established as one of the leading performers of his generation. He is the only British winner of the London International Piano Competition, prizewinner at the Leeds Piano Competition, and a former BBC Radio 3 New Generation Artist. Increasingly in demand on the international stage, Ashley has performed at many of the world's finest concert halls including Wigmore Hall, Carnegie Hall and the Vienna Konzerthaus. He has performed as soloist with numerous leading ensembles, including all of the BBC orchestras, the Philharmonia, Orchestre National de Lille, Vienna Chamber Orchestra, Hong Kong Philharmonic, RLPO, and under the baton of conductors such as Simon Rattle, Osmo Vanska, Donald Runnicles, Ilan Volkov and Vassily Sinaisky. Renowned for a broad and eclectic repertoire, Ashley has received great critical acclaim for his recordings of music from a wide range of styles and eras, and his discography boasts a number of Gramophone ‘Editor’s Choice’ recordings and BBC Music Magazine ‘Choices’.





## ROYAL MANOR HOUSE

Kouklia, Palaipaphos

A UNESCO World Heritage site and one of the finest surviving monuments of Frankish architecture in Cyprus, transformed every year by the International Pharos Chamber Music Festival into a unique concert venue and music education hub.

# FRANÇOIS-FRÉDÉRIC GUY PIANO

**François, welcome! How does it feel to be in Cyprus for the first time?** Well it is an enormous pleasure to discover this dreamy island with its Greek and roman ruins. And of course playing all this wonderful music with my friends Alex, Diemut and Daishin.

**After having performed Beethoven's opera omnia for solo piano, which work comes closest to your heart?** If I may say, the Sonata I'm about to perform, Opus 111. I love all Beethoven music equally, whether it is a small bagatelle as "für Elise" or a masterpiece like concerto 5, Hammerklavier (I have played this one 92 times and recorded three times!!!) or Opus 111. Each sonata has its own story, organic form, modernity... For me, the Beethoven sonatas remain the "alpha and omega" of the entire music history. **The Op.111 Sonata is a personal favourite too even though but I've noticed it is not performed in concert very often ...** Opus 111 is amongst the most poignant of all 32 sonatas. Especially the second movement, the arietta where Beethoven drives us directly to heaven with a completely stunning writing, including extreme register, full-page trills, syncopation rhythms... Without forgetting the powerful first movement with its introduction that refers directly to the Pathétique sonata but 28 years later... A time he already revolutionised the whole music history.

**What would you ask him, Beethoven I mean, if it were ever possible to get him to answer?** How it is possible you know so deeply the human soul that you became its most famous "Porte-Parole"? And he would answer: "The Lord of heaven... I am desperately human and I speak to humanity". **There's no question about who your favourite composer is, but what about your least favourite one?** Max Reger.

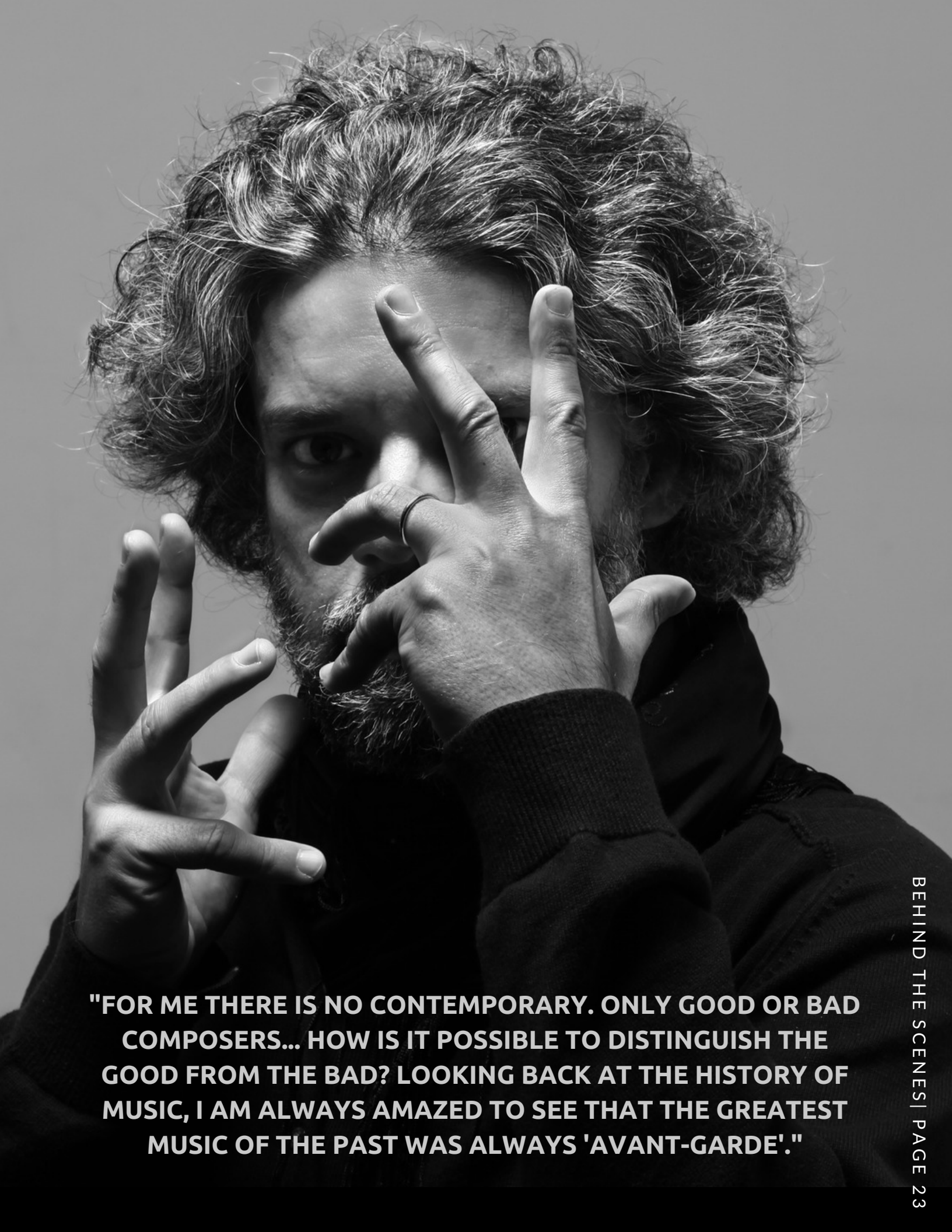
**Is there a particular work you avoid performing?** The Goldberg Variations by JS Bach. **How come?** I feel so small even to face this "cathedral" that I don't even dare opening the first page, although I would die for it.

**What about the work/s you revisit when you want to stay in performing shape?**

Always the Beethoven sonatas which I perform at least once a year. But Brahms and Prokofiev concertos help me keep my fingers "awake"... I would not mind going back to Rachmaninoff either who I admire more as a pianist than as a composer, although I used to perform his major concertos and etudes.

**I know you've performed a lot of works by contemporary composers. Is there a future for music? Isn't it getting too elaborated and difficult to understand?** Ah very big question... For me there is no contemporary.





**"FOR ME THERE IS NO CONTEMPORARY. ONLY GOOD OR BAD COMPOSERS... HOW IS IT POSSIBLE TO DISTINGUISH THE GOOD FROM THE BAD? LOOKING BACK AT THE HISTORY OF MUSIC, I AM ALWAYS AMAZED TO SEE THAT THE GREATEST MUSIC OF THE PAST WAS ALWAYS 'AVANT-GARDE'."**

Only good or bad composers... How is it possible to distinguish the good from the bad? Looking back at the history of music, I am always amazed to see that the greatest music of the past was always "avant-Garde". Monteverdi operas, Bach or Scarlatti keyboard music, Mozart piano concertos and opera, Haydn string quartets, all the Romantic music from Beethoven to Liszt, Wagner, Mahler, Schoenberg, Debussy, the Russian school, Messiaen, the 1925 generation (Boulez, Stockhausen, Berio)... All the others have disappeared. There were only two exceptions: Richard Strauss and Rachmaninoff who succeeded in creating masterworks without following the evolution. But I never believed a true composer should compose as it was 100 years ago.

**Who were the most influential figures in your music development and career?** Karl-Ulrich Schnabel (son of the great Arthur Schnabel who first recorded the 32 Beethoven sonatas) and Leon Fleisher who was my mentor. I was also influenced by Maurizio Pollini, in combining the classical repertoire with contemporary works. The young conductor Philippe Jordan is for me a permanent source of inspiration when I share the stage with him, as well as when I listen to his incomparable performances of Wagner operas. Otherwise, Bernstein conducting the Mahler symphonies or

**"INVESTMENT  
IN ART  
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DON'T FORGET  
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Celibidache conducting the Bruckner symphonies.

**How many hours do you practise a day when you are preparing for a big concert?**

Between 6 and 8 hours a day except on the day of the rehearsal and the concert. **And what do you do to relax when not performing?** Staying at home quietly with my wife, and discovering amazing places for holidays once or twice a year... Like the Seychelles for example.

**I want you to help me send out a few messages, in your own words. First, to piano students and aspiring pianists.** Work but not only at the keyboard. Develop your symphonic, operatic and chamber culture. It will prevent you from sounding all in black and white!!

**Then to all those who make the big decisions about funding for the arts.** Investment in art development is the key to civilisation don't forget this.

**And lastly, to people, especially youngsters, who feel intimidated by music.** Don't be afraid. It is as simple and often less expensive as pop music! But the reward is 1000 times bigger and it will last for all your life.

François-Frédéric Guy is regarded as one of the most fascinating pianists of his generation. He has performed worldwide with many important orchestras such as the Berlin Symphony, Hallé, Philharmonia, London Philharmonic, Munich Philharmonic, Orchestre de Paris, Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, Orchestre du Capitole de Toulouse and San Francisco Symphony, to name just a few. He collaborated with world renowned conductors including Esa-Pekka Salonen, Bernard Haitink, Kazushi Ono, Marc Albrecht, Philippe Jordan, Daniel Harding, Neeme Järvi and Michael Tilson Thomas. In recital, François-Frédéric Guy has performed in major concert halls all over the world, and at important festivals including La Roque d'Anthéron, Chopin in Warsaw, and International Beethoven Festival Bonn in Lucerne. Guy has won great critical acclaim for his Beethoven project that has included recording and performing in concert all 32 Beethoven Sonatas and the 5 Piano Concertos. François-Frédéric Guy is also a dedicated chamber musician and he has recently made his conducting debut from the piano with Orchestre Philharmonique de Liège.

**YVONNE GEORGIADOU** is the Artistic Director of the Pharos Arts Foundation since 2006. She studied at Royal Holloway, University of London (BMus Honours), and subsequently completed her postgraduate studies at Trinity College of Music and Birkbeck College, University of London.

The **PHAROS ARTS FOUNDATION** is a Cyprus-based, non-profit cultural and educational organisation dedicated to the promotion of a wide range of activities in the fields of the humanities and the arts. The Foundation presents cultural and educational programmes that are characterised by a strong commitment to artistic excellence and the creative process.

**Music:** Through its Concert and Recital Series, which takes place throughout the year, the Pharos Arts Foundation has so far organised hundreds of concerts by some of the world's most renowned soloists, chamber music ensembles and chamber orchestras. Since 2001, the Pharos Arts Foundation has been organising the annual International Pharos Chamber Music Festival, which has established itself as the most important annual music event in Cyprus and has gained an international reputation for its quality concerts and magnificent settings. In 2009, the Pharos Arts Foundation introduced the annual International Contemporary Music Festival, the mission of which is to propagate the music of 20th and 21st centuries and to present contemporary works and newly-commissioned compositions. The Festival has so far presented over 100 world premieres by a number of exceptionally gifted contemporary composers from all over the world.

**Education:** The Pharos Arts Foundation's Education Programme presents workshops, master-classes, lectures and educational concerts for the benefit of students of state and private schools from different ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds, promoting music as a non-verbal expression vehicle which transcends the boundaries of language. Over 75.000 students from all over Cyprus and hundreds of students from abroad have benefited from the Programme in the last ten years. Through the Foundation's Residency Programme, artists, writers, musicians, scholars and composers are invited to visit Cyprus and create new work.

**Visual Arts:** The Pharos Arts Foundation's Visual Arts Programme features contemporary art exhibitions by distinguished international artists working in all ranges of media; the Pharos Centre for Contemporary Art hosts major contemporary art exhibitions, acting as a space where artists can create and present their work. Exhibition catalogues on the hosted artists, as well as other monographs and books on contemporary art and photography are published by Pharos Publishers.

*The Pharos Arts Foundation is directly dependent on sponsorship and other contributions for the development and enrichment of its activities. Cyprus Registered Charitable Trust S.C. 91.*



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Transforming society through  
**EDUCATION AND CULTURE**







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