

Music

Start on a high

The Ninth Pharos Chamber music opened on Thursday night at the Royal Manor House in Kouklia on a high note in an atmosphere of keen anticipation.

The programme began with Haydn's *Andante and Variations in F Minor* with the young pianist Alessio Bax. He had barely sat down when he began this most profound set of variations transporting us back to Haydn's world. Not only does he have technical mastery with beautifully clear and articulate fingerwork, but his stylistic and musical abilities are rare. It is a long time since I have heard such a wide dynamic range – too often we hear forced piano playing or over pedalled – this was a simply stunning interpretation by a most exciting artist.

The Mendelssohn *Piano Trio No. 1 in D Minor* followed with violinist Daishin Kashimoto, Alex Chaushian and pianist Ashley Wass.

In the long first movement, Wass pushed the music forward, with the virtuosic figuration and flying arpeggios neatly executed. But although the piano drives the music relentlessly forward, Kashimoto and Chaushian showed that they were equals. Kashimoto is a fine musician, with the most beautiful sound quality, which he produces seemingly effortlessly.

The second movement opened slightly fast and lost its edge of sentimentality. Again, with supreme musicality, Kashimoto and Chaushian moulded their warm sound with beautiful vibrato. The very exuberant and bright tempo of the third movement elicited some exaggerated swells in the piano and lost rhythmic stability. But this did not detract from making it an exciting reading

much appreciated by the audience.

The concert ended on a very high note with Franck's *Piano Quintet in F Minor* played by Kashimoto, Chilingirian, Diemut Poppen, Bernhard Hedenborg and Phillipe Cassard.

This is the first time I have seen Chilingirian playing second violin – his wealth of knowledge and experience coupled with his consummate understanding of the complexities of chamber music balanced and blended with Kashimoto perfectly.

The turbulent, driving rhythms of the first movement were expertly and passionately driven forward by Cassard, making the most of the open piano with exciting crescendos and achieving the yearning quality of the music.

The second movement was sublime – the connection these musicians had with each other having just met was inspiring. Mention must be made of Poppen's playing – it is always a pleasure to hear her play.

This was also remarked on by audience members I spoke to during the interval. As one couple said "I think that few people in Cyprus realise how lucky we are to have these artists come together in Kouklia. They are all prize winners of huge, internationally renowned competitions, and play all over the world. The fact that we have a chamber festival with musicians of this calibre on our doorstep is an immense privilege." This was an emotional and inspiring beginning to the Festival. The atmosphere, excellent programme notes (which cover the entire festival) and first class musicians will surely make this even more successful than previous years.

By Saskia Constantinou

CYPRUS MAIL

Τρίτη, 2 Ιουνίου 2009, p. 35

