## A perfect partnership

The opening concert of the Pharos Trust Winter/Spring 2007 season began with a fine concert of the usual high standard with which we have come to associate the Trust. The concert was well-attended and the evening's performance was dedicated to the memory of Pefkios Georgiades.

Schoolchildren were again privy to an educational concert run by the Pharos Trust in conjunction with Maro Skordi from the Ministry of Education and Culture. Parents should not underestimate the unique and lifelong gift which they can impart to their children by taking them to concerts from an early age. Cellist Alexander Chaushian and pianist Ashley Wass presented an evening of sonatas beginning with Mendelssohn's Sonata for Cello and Piano in D major Op 58.

The balance between the two was perfect with all the nuances and dynamic shading clearly audible with the piano open on full stick. It is sheer joy to watch Alex play – he exudes confidence and clearly derives such pleasure from performing which permeates through to his audience.

The sonata was full of passion and variety but with a typically light Mendelssohnian feel. From the outset of the second movement Scherzando, pianist Ashley Wass determined the bright, joking character of the movement, perfectly imitated later by Alex.

The opening, rolled chords of the third movement demonstrated the sensitive touch and pedalling of Wass, with the harmonic development highlighted with his right hand making a perfect introduction for the poignant, romantic and contemplative playing of Chaushian. The final movement attacca changed the spirit with runs brilliantly executed by both.

The Beethoven Sonata for Cello and Piano in C Major Op 102 followed. This sonata is one of the last two and described by Beethoven as a 'free sonata' which was his way of accounting for the irregular, almost monothematic design

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of the main body of the first movement and the rhapsodic introduction to the second and last movement.

The sound was very focused with both players dovetailing each other and Wass following Chaushian's phrasing closely. This was a very stylistic performance with limited vibrato and with the exception of literally one or two notes throughout the concert, spot-on intonation.

Following the interval was Mosei Vainberg's Sonata for Unaccompanied Cello Op 72, a first hearing for me of this work that I enjoyed and of which I will definitely obtain a recording.

The highlight of the evening was undoubtedly the Rachmaninov Sonata for Cello and Piano in G Minor Op 19. It was a riveting performance with arresting ardour and relentless fire with Wass providing an almost symphonic foundation for Chaushian to project Rachmaninov's moody thematic course.

Both musicians are superb technicians which gives them the freedom of ex-

pression and interpretation. Chaushian elicits an arrestingly beautiful tone quality from his cello which can be attributed not only to his firm left hand technique, but to the phrasing and varying speed of his bow arm.

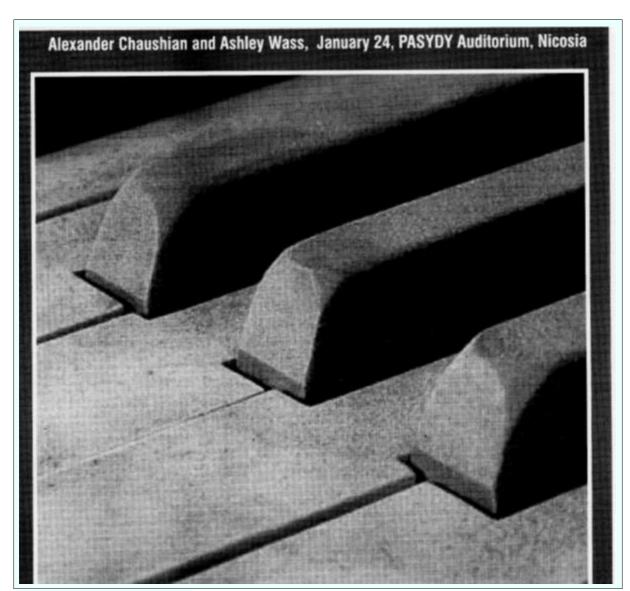
Bow changes are unheard in his pianissimo passages and the depth of his passion and feeling is something which can only be witnessed rather than described. This was a dramatic, poignant and romantic reading, full of expressive nuances which blended and balanced extremely well. This was a night of warmth and passion from two splendid artists for whom we will wait with bated breath to hear again in the Pharos Chamber Music Festival in late May. The next Pharos Concert is a song recital by the mezzo soprano Angelica Cathariou and pianist Emmanuel Olivier with works by Massenet, Bizet, Offenbach, Poulenc, Sammoutis and Mikroutsikos on February 26.

By Saskia Constantinou

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