Top quality concerts in Gothic surroundings

THE PHAROS TRUST TAKES ON CULTURAL TOURISM WITH ITS LATEST VENTURE – THE 2006 CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL IN KOUKLIA
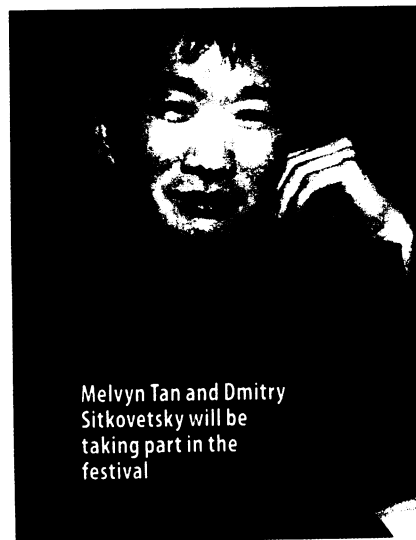
Melvyn Tan and Dmitry Sitkovetsky will be taking part in the festival

Since Cyprus' accession to the EU, we have seen more and more productions being brought to the island – from classical concerts, opera, to pop and rock, art, theatre and anything in-between.

And for its 2006 Chamber Music Festival, the Pharos Trust has chosen to take the cultural tourism route, with the event taking place at the Royal Manor House in Kouklia, Paphos. President of the Pharos Trust, Garo Keheyan, says "cultural tourism is something that can be cultivated very advantageously because of the environment and because we can attract performers of the highest calibre to the island. Gradually we, at the Pharos, want to change the concept of Cyprus as a mass tourist destination and aim to cater for the more sophisticated, discerning visitor to the island. We want to attract music lovers who want a wonderful holiday in a five-star resort, but who will also be interested to appreciate the other flavours of Cyprus. This can be done slowly, in-

crementally and with investment over a long period of time."

It is a concept that has been shown to work elsewhere. The Kuhmo Chamber Music Festival in Finland, which began just over 35 years ago, last year attracted over 40,000 visitors during its two week duration.

And Pharos' is an inititative that has been welcomed by the Cyprus Tourism Organisation, whose Vakis Loizides even held a cocktail party in London about the Kouklia event, distributing pamphlets and brochures.

However, the question still remains, should the CTO not be supporting longer-term developmental projects in Cyprus in a markedly substantial (i.e. financial) way rather than with one-off concerts and ventures?

Back to the issue at hand. From May 31 to June 6, you can treat yourself to a week of cultural bliss in the heavenly surroundings of Kouklia, where the foam-born goddess Aphrodite is said to have risen from the sea. After perfect days, you can settle each evening in the magical setting of a Lusignan period manor house and listen to world-class musicians performing works of Bach, Brahms, Beethoven, Dvorak, Schubert, Schumann and Shostakovich.

As is synonymous with the Pharos Trust, nine excellent musicians internationally renowned and esteemed will be partaking in the festival. They include

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Artistic director and performer Levon Chilingirian

cellist Alex Chaushian, prize-winner in the 12th International Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow, Levon Chilingirian, leader of the renowned Chilingirian String Quartet, the acclaimed duo of cellist Steven Isserlis and pianist Melvyn Tan, celebrated pianists Jeremy Menuhin and Vahan Mardirossian, violinist Dmitry Sitkovetsky whose international career spans many activities including conducting, violinist Yuri Zhislin founder and Artistic Director of the Russian Virtuosi of Europe and violist Alexander Zemtsov, principal viola of the London Philharmonic Orchestra.

Each concert will take place in the Gothic Hall of the Royal Manor House, just a short drive away from the hotels, and one of the finest surviving monuments of Frankish architecture on the island, providing an extraordinarily intimate historic setting in which to enjoy fine performances of superb music. Each concert will have extensive introductory talks by the artistic director of the festival, Levon Chilingirian.

A special package for the concerts has been created for those wanting to make a week of it. It includes accommodation at the Columbia Beach Resort or the Columbia Beach Hotel. A full day tour to the mountain villages with wine-tasting is also included in the package. Another unique experience of the package is the ability to meet the
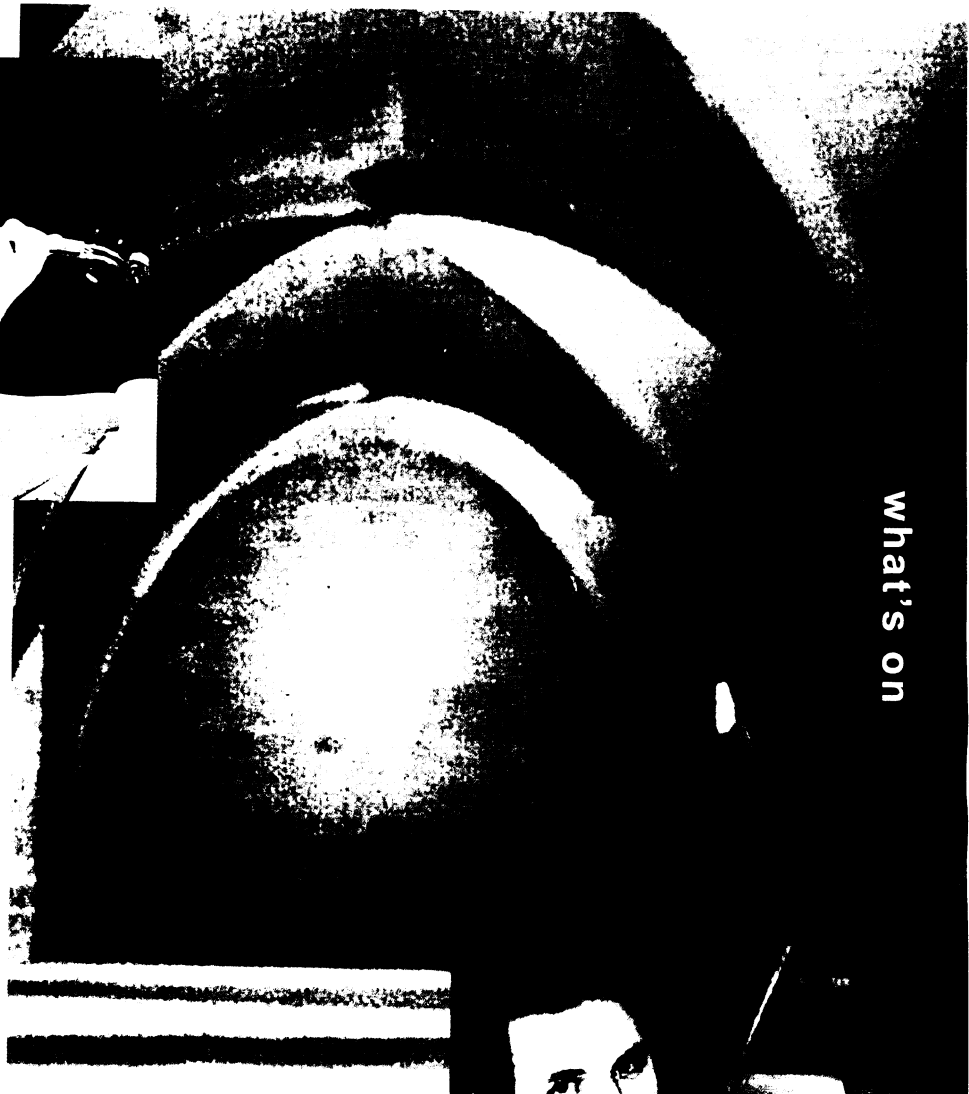
musicians, who will all be staying at the resorts. Guests will have the opportunity to hear their rehearsals, speak to them, and generally understand the rather inimitable life of performing musicians. ■

The Pharos Trust's 2006 Chamber Music Festival

May 31 to June 6. Kouklia Manor House, Paphos District. For tickets, contact the Pharos Trust on Tel: 22 663871. The package has been arranged by Travelorama and can be booked directly with them. Contact Vassilis Stamataris tel: 22 452945. It includes 7 nights accommodation, tickets to all concerts, transfers to concerts, half-day tour to Curium, full-day mountain village tour with wine-tasting

Vahan Mardirossian will be one of the performers at the Manor House in Kouklia (*above*)