

The Nemitsas Prize for Excellence in the Arts and Sciences 2011

On 16 September, the 2011 Nemitsas Prize for Excellence in the Arts and Sciences was awarded to pianists Cyprien Katsaris and Martino Tirimo. The award ceremony took place at the Presidential Palace in Nicosia, where the President of the Republic Demetris Christofias conferred this prestigious honour of international stature on the two laureates.

Following the first awards for Medical Sciences in November 2010, the Takis & Louki Nemitsas Foundation managed, within ten months, to complete the necessary procedures to recognise excellence in a very different field, the Arts. Katsaris and Tirimo are acclaimed pianists whose performances delight and thrill any audience fortunate enough to hear them play – they have made Cyprus known across the world through classical music. The Prize was given

equally to both piano virtuosos “because in art, and particularly in music, every creator has his own particular gifts with which he enchants and speaks to the soul of each and every one of us”.

President Christofias addressed the award ceremony, as did Nemitsas Foundation board member Eleftherios P. Ioannou and Chairman of the Foundation Takis Nemitsas. President Christofias presented the awards; the presentation was followed by individual performances by both pianists.

During his speech, the President remarked:

An awards ceremony of two prominent citizens and artists and such similar events are a small oasis in the desert created by the worldwide crisis of institutions and values...[Katsaris and Tirimo] embody the ideals of the artist, in the ancient sense, as



President Christofias awards Martino Tirimo and Cyprien Katsaris



in the *Memorandum and the Articles of Association of the Foundation*, dedicating their lives and their work to music, the most ethereal of all arts...Culture is of paramount importance and value to the existence and development of every people. For Cyprus, culture is integral to its survival. For this reason, one of the priorities of the State is an integrated plan for culture, with the main aim to defend and promote cultural heritage and tradition. At the same time, the development of contemporary artistic and intellectual endeavours is encouraged and supported. The aim is to effectively face foreign and local low culture, promote our specific cultural traits and resist the continuing Turkish occupation. To promote universal principles and values of culture, as well as highlighting the commonalities of Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, as shaped by the course of history.

In closing his speech, President Christofias congratulated the Takis & Louki Nemitsas Founda-

tion and expressed his hope that Cyprien Katsaris and Martino Tirimo continue to use their music to contribute to universal harmony and help people cope with the existential anguish afflicting them in today's world.

In his remarks, Mr Ioannou referred briefly to the broad and diverse work of the two pianists:

...with this in mind, and in accordance with the recommendations of the Selection Committee, the Board of the Takis & Louki Nemitsas Foundation considers itself justified in awarding these two musicians, who promote Cyprus and its culture through the significant work they have achieved on an international basis. Each of these two artists has been blessed with their own gifts, enabling them to follow their individual oath, but with a common devotion to art. Together with sincerity and hard work they have managed to scale their own peaks and include us all in their musical embrace.

After praising the work of the two pianists, Mr Nemitsas told the audience:

The Nemitsas Prize 2011 is tonight being awarded at Cyprus's most official venue, the Presidential Palace, and by the President himself; a sign of highest respect to the musicians who constitute the best Cyprus has to offer to the international music scene... our country could not have been left unaffected by the many unexpected and unpleasant problems facing the entire world today. However, culture –celebrations and cultural events, such as this one tonight– is food for the soul. It is something that must be encouraged and promoted, even during the hardest of times, to send the message that life does go on in spite of all the difficulties and that it does, eventually, triumph.

Mr Nemitsas stressed the colossal importance of the arts, especially music, in the development of culture, giving particular praise to the piano. He thanked the Protocol Department and staff of the Presidential Palace for their assistance, as well as Andy Bargily and Display Art for the beautiful set and the general presentation of the event.

Cyprien Katsaris

Cyprien Katsaris, the French-Cypriot pianist and composer, was born in Marseilles in 1951 and spent his childhood in Cameroon. He first began to play the piano at the age of four.

A graduate of the Paris Conservatoire, he won the International Young Interpreters Rostrum-UNESCO (Bratislava 1977) and the First Prize at the International Cziffra Competition (Versailles 1974); he was the only western-European prize-winner at the 1972 Queen Elisabeth of Belgium International Competition.

His international career includes performances with many of the world's greatest orchestras: The Berlin Philharmonic, Staatskapelle Dresden, The Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, Cleveland Orchestra, The Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra (Amsterdam), The Philharmonia (London), The NHK Symphony Orchestra (Tokyo), Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra, the Philadelphia Orchestra, and others.

He has collaborated with world-renowned conductors such as Leonard Bernstein, Kurt Masur,



Cyprien Katsaris's performance

“I am convinced that Cyprien Katsaris represents the greatest artistic value of his generation”.

György Cziffra

Myung Whun Chung, Sir Simon Rattle, Mstislav Rostropovich, Charles Dutoit, Nikolaus Harnoncourt, Christoph von Dohnányi and Eugene Ormandy.

Mr Katsaris has recorded extensively for Teldec (Grand Prix du Disque Frédéric Chopin, Warsaw 1985; Grand Prix du Disque Franz Liszt, Budapest 1984 and 1989; British Music Retailer’s Association’s Award 1986; Record of the Year 1984, Germany, for the *9th Symphony* of Beethoven/Liszt), Sony Classical, EMI, Deutsche Grammophon, BMG-RCA, Decca, Pavane and for his own label, PIANO 21, which he founded in 2001.

In 1992, Mr Katsaris and Japan’s NHK TV produced a thirteen-program series on Frédéric Chopin which included master classes and a performance by Mr Katsaris. On 17 October 1999, New York concert goers gave Mr Katsaris a standing ovation in Carnegie Hall for a recital dedicated to Chopin on the occasion of 150 years since Chopin’s death.

On 27 January 2006, the 250th anniversary of Mozart’s birth, Mr Katsaris was the soloist at the inaugural concert of the Mozart Orchestra Mannheim, founded and conducted by Thomas Fey. In March 2006 Mr Katsaris was the first pianist ever to give master classes in Franz Liszt’s house in Weimar since Liszt, who taught there for the very last time in 1886, the year he died. In August 2008, Mr Katsaris was invited to give two concerts on the occasion of the Beijing Olympic Games at the National Centre for the Performing Arts. In addition to the world premiere of a concerto for ten pianos and orchestra –*China Jubilee*– by composer Cui Shiguang, Mr Katsaris improvised on an ancient Greek melody and, inter alia, Chinese melodies, in a tribute to the universality of the Games.

Mr Katsaris has been a member of the jury at the following international competitions: Chopin (Warsaw 1990), Liszt (Utrecht 1996), Vendôme Prize (Paris 2000), Marguerite Long-Jacques Thibaud – Ville de Paris (2001), and Beethoven (Bonn 2005). He was the Artistic Director of the Echternach International Festival (Luxembourg) from 1977 to 2007.

Cyprien Katsaris has been “Artist of UNESCO for Peace” (1997), “Commandeur de l’Ordre de Mérite du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg” (2009), “Knight of the Order of Arts and Letters” (France 2000), and “Knight of Merit of Cameroon” (1977); he also received the “Vermeil Medal of the City of Paris” (2001). He is a member of ADAP, the Association of Artists for Peace.

Martino Tirimo

Born into a musical family in Larnaca in 1942, Mr Tirimo began piano and violin lessons with his father, a distinguished conductor and violinist, in early childhood. He gave his first concert at the age of six and conducted seven complete performances of Verdi’s *La Traviata*, including soloists from La Scala, Milano, at the tender age of 12.

In 1955 the Tirimo family immigrated to London, where the young Tirimo continued his education at Bedales School. At the age of sixteen he won the Franz Liszt Scholarship to the Royal Academy of Music, graduating with the highest honours, after which he completed his studies in Vienna. He later worked closely with Gordon Green, whom he regards as his greatest mentor. Victories in the International Piano Competitions in Munich and Geneva, in 1971 and 1972, respectively, launched his international career.

Mr Tirimo has appeared with many of the world’s leading orchestras, including the Vienna Philharmonic, the Dresden Staatskapelle, the Leipzig Gewandhaus, the Bayerischer Rundfunk, the London Symphony, the London Philharmonic, Philharmonia, Cleveland, the Academy of St Martin in the Fields, the Cham-



Martino Tirimo's performance

ber Orchestra of Europe, the English Chamber, and many others. He has worked with some of the world's finest conductors, including Barbirolli, Sanderling, Masur, Marriner, Norrington, Berglund, Bychkov, Klee, Mandeal, Tortelier and Spivakov.

Mr Tirimo's repertoire is enormous – it includes 80 concertos and most of the major solo works of the great composers. He is a champion of the Dvorak Concerto and the Tippett Concerto, which he has performed several times in Germany and the UK. Among his more than 50 recordings are the two Chopin *Concertos*, the two Brahms *Concertos* and a CD of Rachmaninov's *Concerto No. 2* and *Paganini Rhapsody* with the Philharmonia, one of EMI's best sellers and a Gold Disc in 1994 (sales of this disc

“Tirimo's playing belongs to a past generation of 'greats'”.

Bill Newman

in the UK alone topped 200,000 in 1993). In 2006 he recorded the complete piano works of Mozart at the Leipzig Gewandhaus.

Mr Tirimo is particularly renowned for his Schubert interpretations – in 1975 became the first pianist to perform a truly complete cycle of the *21 Sonatas* in public, with his own completions of the unfinished movements, at the Queen Elizabeth Hall. In 2004 Mr Tirimo participated in the Athens Festival, part of the celebration of the 2004 Olympic Games, performing Beethoven's *Concerto No. 4* with the Vienna Philharmonic.

Recent highlights from his career include performances of the *Tippett Piano Concerto*, a series of eight concerts to celebrate Mozart's 250th birthday, concerts in China, a recording of the complete piano works of Beethoven, and a unique series of twelve concerts at Kings Place, London, of the complete works of Chopin, in honour of the 200th anniversary of the composer's birth.

Interview with Mr Takis Nemitsas, Chairman of the Takis & Louki Nemitsas Foundation

Mr Nemitsas, the Foundation recently celebrated its first two years. Tell us about its first steps.

The idea of creating a Foundation to recognise Cypriot scientists who either live in Cyprus or abroad, who invent, discover, or create, came to me early on, when I was young and full of ideas and depending on the opportunities and the facilities the Republic of Cyprus provided to young people from the time of its establishment.

I then devoted myself to education, to creating a family and educating my children; this, together with my business activities in industry and commerce, meant the idea for a foundation had to be placed on the back burner, where for awhile it was forgotten. Professional success followed, as did my involvement in politics

and my election to the House (1976-1981) and then my appointment to the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Tourism (1988-1993). As time passed and after much experience, both pleasant and unpleasant, and after considerable reflection, the idea returned to the foreground – this time, however, I was possessed of far more knowledge than I had been in my youth.

The ordeal of the death of my first wife, Daisy, and my good fortune in meeting Louki, my second wife, who stood by me as my first wife had done, but even more so, helped me develop and cultivate this idea. She embraced it, contributing both her wisdom and her breadth of knowledge of classical music.

From 2005, I began studying all the literature, statutes and websites and so on that I could find for prestigious foundations around the world. I was naturally particularly impressed with the Nobel Foundation and strove, within the financial abilities of the foundation that Louki and I decided to establish, to emulate the Nobel Foundation. This meant carefully selecting the sectors the Takis & Louki Nemitsas Foun-



dation would be able to cover, financially and organisationally. This resulted in the five areas referred to briefly in the Foundation's Memorandum of Association, Engineering, Environmental Protection, Seismology, Health and Medicine and Classical Music.

The work to lay down the aims and the objectives of the Foundation began in 2006 with the development of the general aims of the Foundation and the review of the laws of the Republic of Cyprus that regulate such bodies. Once the first notes had been completed, I began contacting and sounding out leading Cypriot personalities among my friends. I had numerous meetings with Dr Alkis Pierides, my close friend and personal doctor, with my friend Demetris Eliades, the current Minister of Defence, and with many others.

I sought the opinion of many academics, and I was fortunate that at the time the Technological Institute of Cyprus had been established in Lemesos. I met with the first Chairman of the Administrative Committee, Professor Andreas Demetriou (later Minister of Education & Culture), with Professor Demetriou's associates, Andreas Malloupas and Mimis Sophocleous, and with Professor Demetriou's successor, Professor Antonis Constantinides. These meetings helped me determine the scope and activities of the Foundation. I also consulted Mr Nikos Rossos, who had just prepared the charter for his own foundation.

On the basis of a plethora of notes taken from the websites and charters of other foundations, I prepared the Foundation's first complete draft, methodically and with great care, based on the Charitable Foundations Law, Cap. 41. This was at the end of 2007. In January 2008 I approached the Law Office of Chrysses Demetriades & Co, which had merged with the Law Office of P. L. Cacoyiannis, to assist me in drafting the Charter and registering the Foundation.

I must say I was most moved by the interest shown by my late friend Yiannakis Agapiou, by his son, Agis Agapiou, and by Christos Ma-

vrellis. With Agis Agapiou as coordinator, we began to draft the Memorandum and Articles of Association in accordance with the Companies Law, Cap.113. We registered the Takis & Louki Nemitsas Foundation as a limited liability company on 25 September 2009. This, in a nutshell, is the story behind the creation of the Foundation.

Please explain the objectives of the Foundation.

The objective of the Foundation, as it was finally set down, is to grant awards –in accordance with the procedure established in the Articles of Association– as follows:

- I. To the person or persons who make the most important discovery or invention in all the branches of the science of engineering, in particular in the fields of Mechanical Engineering, Electrical Engineering, Civil Engineering and Architectural Engineering, which result in bettering the situation of mankind with the least possible detrimental impact on the environment and at the lowest possible cost.
- II. To the person or persons who make the most important discovery or invention for the improvement and protection of the planet's environment, resulting in an improvement in human life and enhancing the quality of life in Cyprus and in every country on Earth.
- III. To the person or persons who conceive such anti-seismic measures and applications offering increased protection to the world from earthquakes and the destruction they cause.
- IV. To the person or persons who make an important discovery in Health and Medicine that cure people of previously incurable diseases or increase the useful span of human life.
- V. To the person or persons who have had an outstanding international career in classical

music, painting, sculpture and the arts in general, a career that has been recognised worldwide as worthy of reward.

Every year a different area is chosen for an award. How is this selection made?

In its first two years, the Foundation has presented awards for Health and Medicine, on 23 November 2010, and for Classical Music, on 16 November 2011.

The founding members of the Foundation and the Board of Directors (BOD) were chosen very carefully. One of the founding institutions is Takis Nemitsas Investments Ltd, a company which has allotted all of its shares to the Foundation, as well as its office space and personnel. Since our inception we have all been working together, my wife Louki and I and the Board of Directors, which includes Andreas Christou,

Afxentis Afxentiou, Michael Sarris, Stathis Papadakis, Christos Mavrellis, Eleftherios P. Ioannou and Agis Agapiou.

Once the Foundation was established, the Coordinating Committee was created. In addition to the founders, this committee included Professor Antonis Constantinides of Imperial College, London, Agis Agapiou, advocate and the Foundation's Secretary, and Costas Kalli, an accountant. There were regular – almost daily – meetings, and we worked intensively to realise and bestow the first award within our first year. We wanted our first award to coincide with the 50th anniversary of the Republic of Cyprus, so the award would be part of the celebrations for the first half-century of the Republic. The active cooperation of all of our board members resulted in our successful presentation of the first award in Medical Sciences.



From left to right: Takis Nemitsas, Martino Tirimo, Louki Nemitsas, Cyprien Katsaris

I would like to express my sincere thanks to Professor Antonis Constantinides, whose assistance from London and Cyprus ensured the great success of the first ceremony. The following board members also provided tremendous assistance: Andreas Christou, the Mayor of Lemesos; former Minister Michael Sarris; Stathis Papadakis, a tireless friend and associate; Agis Agapiou our legal advisor, and Costas Kallis, our accountant. I thank, from the bottom of my heart, all the other members of the board and the staff at Takis Nemitsas Investments Ltd, our legal advisors, and all of the government departments and Ministries who helped us.

The first award ceremony, which took place at the Hilton Hotel in Lefkosia, was a real triumph. At last, Cyprus has an award to recognise Cypriot scientists and artists who excel within our borders and far beyond them.

Every year a sector is chosen from the five different fields as established in the articles. We then form a prize selection committee comprising scientists and academics based in London.

We received 30 applications for the first award. Our prize selection committee reviewed these applications, which took more than three months, finally selecting Professor Kypros Nicolaides of London for his advances in embryonic medicine and Professor Eleftherios Diamandis of Toronto, Canada, for his advances in biomedical research and cancer prevention.

And what of Cyprien Katsaris and Martino Tirimo, this year's winners for Classical Music?

For 2011 we decided to present the award in a very different area for us, the arts, particularly classical music, and our selection committee was charged with a very difficult task, one that required extensive research – the committee interviewed a wide range of musicians and others involved in classical music, ultimately selecting two Cypriot success stories truly deserving

of the award, Cyprien Katsaris and Martino Tirimo, and our board approved the decision of the committee.

We hope, as part of this year's awards, to arrange a recital within the scope of the Cyprus Presidency of the EU in 2012. We want to present a performance by our virtuosos for EU leaders who will be visiting Cyprus during its presidency, and for the people of Cyprus.

Which sector have you designated for the 2012 award?

Engineering, and we've already begun working toward the award, which will be for Electrical Engineering. We will announce the details once the board has made its decision.

I would like to mention that Professor Marios Mavronikolas, the Vice Dean of the University of Cyprus, was recently elected Coordinator of the Foundation, and he has already begun helping us to organise the Foundation's Academic Council. The Academic Council will include between 15 and 25 academics from all over the world who will assist our board and Professor Mavronikolas in selecting the Prize Committee for each award.

What are the Foundation's future plans?

We will continue with our program of yearly awards, and we will continue to improve the structure of the Foundation and build its financial strength and international standing.

The Foundation doesn't receive grants or subsidies from the state; it is entirely self-sufficient. As with just about every Foundation, however, serious donations or bequests are accepted and welcomed with great respect and appreciation.

The Foundation recently accepted a donation from the Law Office of Chrysses Demetriades & Co, which has undertaken all the legal work and other tasks related to the Foundation's establishment without any charge whatsoever to the Foundation. We would like to thank them in particular as the first benefactors of our Foundation.