

Strings and wind

The Pharos Arts Foundation's next concert at the Shoe Factory, on November 24, will feature the renowned Elias String Quartet with the Spanish clarinetist Cristo Barrios in a programme comprising Britten's Three Divertimenti and Schumann's String Quartet No 1 in a minor. It will also include the world premiere of Christina Athinodorou's work especially commissioned for this concert.

The work is entitled *Sterna* and deals with the imaginary sounds, voices, images and gestures of seabirds. To composer Christina "it translates in my mind to openness and breath, as well as to an expression of drama which is difficult to describe precisely." However, speaking to Christina, one realises that she has everything worked out.

"By using microtonal and timbral inflections with unusual sounds, I am inevitably able to 'colour' the musical texture. The melange of these unusual sounds and the traditional voices of the instruments, which project clearly in certain moments, along with the repetition and alteration of musical materials, led me to the creation of an evolving sonic body where there is a strong sense of forward direction."

Questioning difficulties in merging wind and string sonorities, Christina disagrees with the term and instead defines it as a "challenge with a historical meaning, as well as one which relates to the personal aim towards achieving a high artistic result."

Although the string quartet has been established through history as one of the greatest chamber formations, Christina sees it with a contemporary view as an ensemble with "great potential for creating new sounds. The clarinet is already a favourite because of its multi-sided character, timbre and pitch range."

Always fascinated by a composer's approach to discipline, Christina believes she is disciplined although not because she sits down each day at a specific



Christina Athinodorou

time and writes.

"Intentional and unintentional composing happens constantly in my head. Ideas can come at anytime. Some of them are like shooting stars, like flashes, and I try to write those down quickly. Some others are more insistent – they return frequently and are therefore easier to remember. So, as a result, I don't have fears when sitting in front of a blank manuscript. It is a continuation of organising my material."

Christina's music is not political and doesn't aspire to make any statements about ethical or moral issues. As with the Romantic painters, she is drawn towards trying to depict the parallel between nature and human situations and the notions of life and 'beyond.'

Art, language and literature are also important resources for her inspirations.

Musicians, composers and artists generally do not consider the creative process as a business and Christina is no exception.

"Each finished piece carries a special importance and weight. An important factor for me is that many special relationships have formed between performers and me due to a piece. These are 'highlights' for me of my career. I particularly remember *Quatre Silences* which I wrote in 2008 for orchestra and which I conducted in Finland. Despite the technical challenges, it was warmly embraced and very well performed, which made me deeply grateful."