



INTERVIEW WITH CLASSICAL MUSIC POWER COUPLE

IN PERFECT HARMONY

THE UNIQUE, COLORFUL AND ENERGETIC MUSICAL COUPLE OF PINCHAS ZUKERMAN AND AMANDA FORSYTH IS MAKING THE ROUNDS OF THE WORLD'S GREATEST CLASSICAL MUSIC VENUES. JW CAUGHT UP WITH THEM FOR A NICE CHAT ABOUT MUSIC AND THEIR FASCINATING LIVES.

BY JEANINE ESQUENAZI

Classical music can be as colorful, vibrant and inspirational as any contemporary music with meaningful lyrics. The chords, melodies, and harmonies can move listeners even deeper than many modern compositions. This music composed centuries ago still appeals to educated and discerning listeners today, and when interpreted with a deeper sentiment, colorful personality, passion and wide vision of life, it can uplift any dormant spirit and evoke the deepest of sentiments and the strongest of emotions. That's exactly what happens when the cello is played by Amanda Forsyth, a celebrated virtuoso and an extraordinary human being that is as bubbly as she is talented. Amanda, a South African-born and Canadian-raised woman, together with husband Pinchas Zukerman, Israeli violinist and conductor and music director of the National Arts Centre Orchestra for 17 years, form one of the strongest and most adored musical power couples in the world.

You have to stare for a second at Amanda to understand how her cello will sound when she plays it. Powerful, unique and energetic, Amanda and Pinchas' concerts make the floor vibrate, and emotions fly high when witnessing not only their expertise from years of playing and directing but also the chemistry between them as a couple.

Their musical backgrounds are quite impressive. Pinchas Zukerman has played the violin since he was eight years old. He launched his conducting career in 1970 with the English Chamber Orchestra. He has also been music

director of the National Arts Centre Orchestra for 17 years. His recordings have received 21 Grammy nominations and he has composed a number of film soundtracks. Pinchas has also served as main guest conductor of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and numerous others.

Pinchas has also served as main guest conductor of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and many more. Amanda Forsyth is the daughter of composer Malcolm Forsyth, and she started playing the cello at age three. She is the former principal cellist of Canada's National Arts Centre Orchestra and the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra. She left her orchestral career to pursue her solo and chamber music career.

What happened when these two music virtuosos crossed paths in life has been an absolute explosion of notes and chords that have made theaters light up and listeners be transported to a wonderful musical world.

So for those thinking that classical music is far from fashionable and modern, think again. Amanda and Pinchas are an example of today's classical music, in which a cello is placed in front of a vibrant couture dress that brings you to the twenty-first century, while the music elevates you as you witness a glamorous presentation.

Their music is an attitude, it is an explosion of energy and soothing notes that will help you disconnect and feel enveloped in sounds. Music is nothing without energy and they both certainly have plenty to transmit.



AMANDA FORSYTH

Who are your favorite composers and the ones that you look forward to interpreting the most?

I enjoy interpreting all composers whose works I perform; there is always a new emotion to discover.

Would you dare to include some of your own notes into a classical music composition to imprint some of your personality and personal touch to a musical piece or do you respect the way it has been written and therefore give it your personal touch in a different way?

In classical music, it is not customary to change any notes or add anything else to what was written by the composer. It is the interpretation of the performer to bring to life what the composer's intention was.

What is your personal take on those who consider classical music boring? How do you counter them?

The younger generations need to have music in the schools as part of their education. It is proven that music improves the brain from a young age.

What other types of music, if any, do you favor?

I enjoy many genres of music, and I do not tend to listen to classical music as a release, because I am so much in the music. It is part of me. I love to listen to music I don't know about so I always add a song to my list whenever I hear one from a friend. For example, I have always loved Prince as my go-to artist to listen to after I leave my own performance. He was a genius and his music so intelligent, as well as the fact that he makes me feel alive and be as hyper as I want to be. His hit song Let's Go Crazy is a release after one of my concerts!

Prêt-à-porter or haute couture?

I love prêt-à-porter as well as haute couture, and being a bit of a fashionista, I love to blend them together in the manner that I dress. Onstage is haute

couture or at least a gown that looks as glamorous as haute couture. I have many gowns from different designers and I keep them all, redesigning some of my old dresses myself over the years to bring them up to date.

Do you attain personal therapy through music or adventure? If so, what kind of adventure?

Music is therapy in itself. It can change your outlook with the mood it gives you and it inspires you to think differently. I also love to play cello for patients who are in some kind of pain or trauma. It lowers their stress levels, similar to how dogs can be therapy animals. I can see the change in people listening to my cello, or other music. It is deeply satisfying to be able to help people.

Some people think the cello is for sad music. Do you believe this is so?

People often think the cello sounds sad all the time, but that is because it has such a deep voice and a large range similar to a human voice. However, the cello can also play exciting fast music, not only the sad sounds. It is capable of portraying any mood.

What are some of your musical turn-offs and turn-ons?

Turn-offs happen when performers have not respected their instruments and their craft, and are using the music to show themselves off instead of the opposite. We should be respectful of the composers who wrote the music we play. Musical turn-ons happen when I hear a musician play beautifully, and also sometimes when I am playing. I experience a wave of emotion that overtakes me, goosebumps, whilst I am completely inside the music.

Do you have a top bucket list item still to be done?

My bucket list changes all the time. I did succeed in zip lining in Costa Rica with Pinchas, and it was a feat in itself to get him to do it! I am not that much of a daredevil, even though I am fit and I love to exercise, but I grew



up having been told that I must protect my hands at all costs, so I was not allowed to do group sports, with flying balls and such, for fear that I might hurt my hands. Now as an adult, I want to push the limits a bit, but really it's not that much. I have never ridden a rollercoaster and do not intend to ever!

What is something that is a personal stamp of your persona, that identifies you in a unique way?

According to my friends, I am very free and fun, love to laugh, dance, and dress up. I have many colorful theatrical friends, from many walks of life, and every day it is a joy to be with them.

When not playing, what is your favorite activity?

When I am not playing, I need to move, move, move! Because I am so focused when I am practicing and I have to sit down, I love to ride my bike everywhere, work out, kickbox. I did get my red belt in French martial arts, which involved less use of my hands, and I love walking around the cities where I perform. It's great to discover new places and watch the local people--what they wear, what they eat, what they drink, how they interact. I try to make a bit of free time as part of traveling for concerts.

If you had any painter, living or not, make a portrait of you, who would it be?

I would love Frida Kahlo to paint me because I love her colorful style and skill for revealing the hidden character and personality of the subject. On the contrary, as great of a painter as he is, I don't think Mark Rothko could do a likeness of me that I would understand due to his abstract expressionist style.

Do you think there is hope to interest the younger generations in classical music?

I believe times are changing with the younger generations being interested in classical music. Hopefully, schools will not cut the arts from their curriculums, so that every child can have the chance to experience

what music can do for them--their brains, their emotions, their cultural awareness--so they can decide within their education how many different forms of art they can enjoy.

PINCHAS ZUKERMAN

Which do you prefer, playing the violin or conducting?

All music-making involves emotions, not one instrument or the other, or conducting. They all fall into the big music-making picture.

What is your feeling about your daughters also being in the music industry in different fields?

My daughters are both musicians, both different genres, and I am so happy for them to experience this musical fulfillment that I am also so lucky to experience.

Have you ever had a student that you believed would surpass you? Any moment when you detected an outstanding talent?

I have always loved talent and always hope that my students can be better than me, and continue the tradition of music-making. I often have had wow moments when coming across a new talent, which excites me, and I try to guide the young musician as much as I can.

Solo or in a philharmonic?

I have always been a soloist and chamber musician, as well as a conductor of orchestras.

What is your perfect add-on to a silent moment?

My mind is never silent, I am filled with the inner sounds of music and nature, for example, when I sit on a beach watching a sunset in appreciation of our existence.

Define you and your wife in a sentence.

My wife and I are in perfect harmony! 🎻