

Ethereal melodies by Turkish harpist

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İSTANBUL - Turkish Daily News



Universally acclaimed Turkish harp virtuoso Şirin Pancaroğlu will play the Çeng, a 1,000-year-old mythical musical instrument of the East, for the first time on stage during her performance at the 36th Int'l Istanbul Music Festival

Şirin Pancaroğlu, a Turkish female harp virtuoso, has captivated thousands of ears with the magical melodies of her harp during many years of performing on stages around the world. Pancaroğlu studied music at the Geneva Conservatory and received a master's degree in music from Indiana University in 1993. Despite leaving Turkey in her early teenage years, she never cut ties with her home country. Rapidly rising on the world stage, she has been described by international media as having "international-caliber talent."

A pioneering artist in her field, Pancaroğlu achieved many "firsts" in Turkey. She harmonized local Turkish themes with Western classical music thereby introducing new pieces to the Turkish harp repertoire.

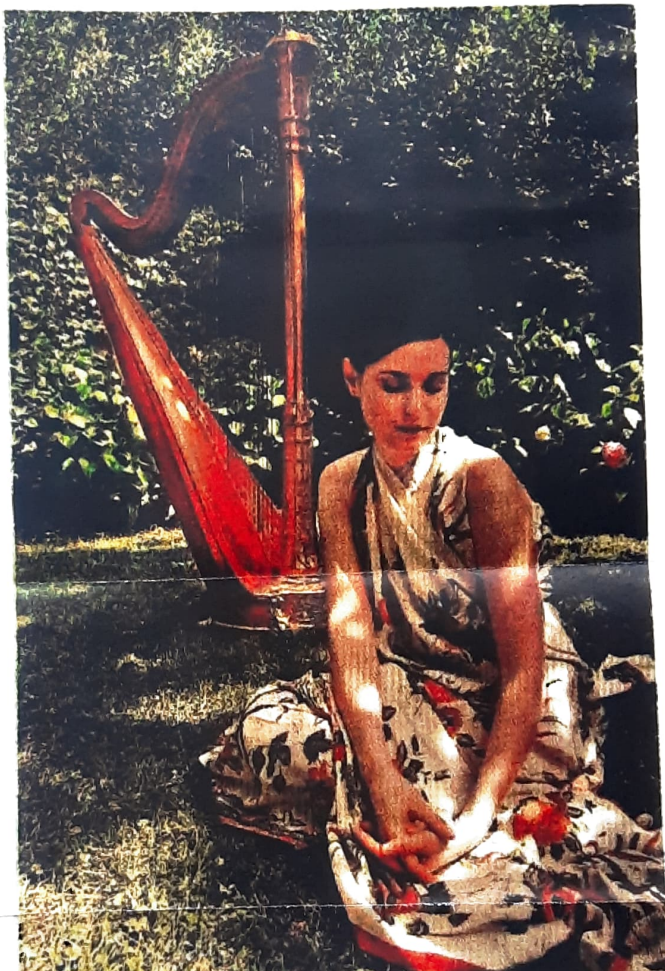
To plant a love for the harp in children, she came out a project in 2004 during which she taught harp to pupils at Fevziye Mektepli, a private school in Istanbul. She used small-stringed harps for the project, which was also a "first" in Turkey. Her chief aim is to make the harp a more widely known musical instrument in Turkey, so in 2007 she opened the Harp Foundation. She is now working hard to create a Harp Center in Turkey.

Pancaroğlu will be on stage in Hagia Irene on June 24 during the 36th International Istanbul Music Festival where the Tekfen Philharmonic Orchestra led by conductor Saim Akçıl will accompany her. Based on a new interpretation of a composition produced by Hasan Uçarsu, she will play a piece called "Davetsiz Misafirler" (The Uninvited Guests) on the Çeng, a 1,000-year-old musical instrument from the East.

Artist chooses to return to home country

Pancaroğlu's adventure with the harp began by chance when she was only 13. She was undecided about what instrument to play for the conservatory's entrance exams when the conservatory jury convinced her to play the harp. "I used to know how to play the piano but I was hesitant about which instrument I should specialize in," she said. "The jury told me that I should play the harp and I accepted that," she added.

This decision was a turning point in her life. Pancaroğlu's adventure with the harp continued thanks to another coincidence: Her family moved to Indonesia because of her father's job and she was sent to Switzerland for her education. "After the conservatory exams, this was the second turning point in my life," she said, adding that she owes her present day success to the high-quality



HARPIST: Harpist Şirin Pancaroğlu achieved many 'firsts' in Turkey, introduced new pieces to the Turkish harp repertoire. She will be on stage on June 24.

she was younger. Although Pancaroğlu spent her adolescence and part of her youth far from Turkey, after completing her musical education she decided to return to her homeland. She was advised not to come back if she did not want her professional career to end, but ignoring these voices, she returned to Turkey.

After her return, Pancaroğlu faced many difficulties in Turkey. These problems derived mainly from the lack of a proper "mechanism of criticism" in the Turkish art environment, she said.

"No matter if it is negative or positive, each feedback or criticism after a

concert is highly guiding for the artist. Such critiques are what make the portfolio of an artist in the international musical arena," said Pancaroğlu.

"But in Turkey, making criticism and being criticized is something to be avoided. No one wants to hear bad things. Despite all adverse conditions, an artist should say to herself that she does not have even a second to spend at being sad. Complaining all the time is something very common in Turkey. I prefer being a productive artist rather than being a complaining one," she added, criticizing some artists and some aspects of art life in Turkey.

Çeng, an eastern instrument

The Çeng has been one of the most significant musical instruments in the East since the 18th century. The word comes from the Persian word "chang," which means "harp" and also "five fingers." Similar to the harp in terms of its shape and function, the Çeng is known for being the musical instrument to accompany philosophical and intellectual gatherings

involving poetry. Evolving from ancient Near Eastern instruments, it was a popular instrument in the Ottoman Empire until the 17th century. Evliya Çelebi, renowned Ottoman traveler who journeyed throughout Ottoman territory in the 17th century - which covered some continents - also mentions the Çeng in the 10-volume chronicle of his travels.