



## The soft power of Vassiliki Karayanni

There is an understated confidence in Vassiliki Karayanni's voice. Off stage, the Greek soprano's presence is contained, while on stage she is positively sparkling, and today, having reached vocal maturity, she is making all the right choices. Karayanni is currently singing the role of the Queen of the Night in Mozart's "Magic Flute" at the National Opera's Olympia Theater in Athens.

"I feel more mature than ever before," she said. "My voice is now fuller while – thankfully – maintaining its sense of comfort in the high note area."

For all her success – the singer was recently commended for her performance as Olympia in Jacques Offenbach's "Tales of Hoffmann" at Milan's La Scala – Karayanni remains pragmatic.

"I will never forget the reaction of the audience, the world's strictest public, who applauded my aria for almost four minutes. I was brought to tears on stage," she said of her experience at Milan's legendary theater.

She speaks highly of the Greek National Opera, despite the difficult conditions that the company is now forced to survive in.

"The National Opera gave me the opportunity to make my debut in the majority of roles that comprise my

repertoire," she said. "When I interpret them again abroad I already have the experience of that first time."

The hard work being carried out in Greece is drawing the attention of international directors. "We may not be up to the level of the rest of Europe, but we are on the right track," she said.

What differentiates the local from the global? The working conditions, says the soprano.

"In contrast to Greece, while abroad, I was able to do prep work under ideal conditions. I'm referring to the venues and the organization required in order for artists not to have to deal with anything else but singing. What is lacking in Greece is a proper home for the country's national opera. Our very own theater. The conditions at the Olympia are terrible for the artists. Two or in some cases even three singers end up sharing the same, tiny dressing room. It's inconceivable. It's impossible to warm up and do vocal exercises before going on stage. Concentrating and relaxing before a performance is also impossible."

Karayanni's grievances stem from her love for what she does and a desire to contribute to the common good. Her protests are not a means of keeping a

distance; on the contrary, she's up for the challenge.

She firmly believes that "everyone's passion for their craft pushes them to do their best, taking part in productions which are comparable to those of international theaters. It's an enormous achievement. Imagine how Greek artists would perform in ideal conditions."

Back home, the soprano has a devoted fan base. "I feel that I have a steady following. They get in touch with me through the Internet, they make sure they know of my upcoming appearances and then I see them after my performances or they get in touch again online. It's really moving," she said.

Born into a family of music lovers, Karayannis was encouraged by her parents, who recognized her talent early on.

"First I started playing the accordion, which my dad also played, before moving on to the piano," she said. "At one point I faced the following dilemma: piano or opera? Your instinct, not to mention life itself, provides you with the right answers, of course. These days, what my plans always include is spending more time with my family and especially with my son, who needs me more as he grows up."

### INFO

Vassiliki Karayanni is a young Greek Soprano Coloratura, gifted with extraordinary, velvet and beautiful voice, brilliant and perfectly projected. Vassiliki Karayanni first studied Piano and Accordion at the Patras Municipal Conservatory. After that she continued her studies in Piano and in singing in Athens with Barbara Gavakou and then with Joseph Mettemich in Munich. She decided to relinquish the classical piano for a career in singing in 1996, when at a very young age, she started singing in the Greek National Opera with her first role being that of Queen of the Night in The Magic Flute of Mozart.

