

Greek and Latin Passions Prevalent in Music of Orfanos and Maramis

By Constantine S. Sirigos
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NEW YORK – Singer Lina Orfanos and composer Dimitris Maramis gave musical expression to the truth that the Mediterranean Sea may be the world's greatest cultural incubator during the concert titled AY AMOR in the Metropolitan Room on December 28.

The vessels on the musical journey included love poems by Federico Garcia Lorca, Pablo Neruda, Rubén Dar o and C. P. Cavafy sung in Spanish, Greek, and English as set to brand new music by Maramis.

The music and the poetry inspired passionate moments by the singer and the instrumentalists alike, who were, as always, graciously introduced by Orfanos and included Sophia Anastasia on flute, Megan Gould on violin and Nicholas Tzavaras on Cello.

The combination of intellectual depth and passion common to many of the poems was illustrated by Orfanos' third song, sung in

Spanish, of Lorca's "Casida de la Rosa."

The rose was not intent on the dawn: almost eternal on its stem, it was intent on something else.

The rose was not after knowledge or shadows: the confines of flesh and dreams, it was after something else.

The rose was not intent on the rose.



Singer Lina Orfanos and composer/pianist Dimitris Maramis and their colleagues sailed the Mediterranean at the Metro-

politan Room on Dec. 28 with music set to poetry of Federico Garcia Lorca, Pablo Neruda, Rubén Dar o, and C. P. Cavafy.

Unmoving, against the sky, it was intent on something else.

(Translation by Paul Archer.)

The evening's highlight was the world premiere of Maramis' setting of Constantine Cavafy's poem Ithaca. Orfanos' expressive soprano voice was matched by the haunting Arabic strains

of Sophia Anastasia's flute.

Orfanos was both excited and felt privileged to sing it, telling the audience, "The first time you do a song is awesome."

The poem, whose essence is a paean to humble origins that launch us on a rich life journey, concludes:

"Ithaka gave you the marvelous journey.

Without her you would not have set out.

She has nothing left to give you now.

And if you find her poor, Ithaka won't have fooled you. Wise as you will have be-

come, so full of experience,

you will have understood by then what these Ithakas mean."

(Translated by Edmund Keeley/Philip Sherrard.)

Passions old and new turned up in the delightful banter and commentary to which Orfanos' fans look forward. The songs

evoked memories of boyfriends past, but the artist transformed the pain into humorous riffs and poignant music.

El Amour by Pablo Neruda, which includes the line "I love you without knowing how, or when, or from where..." is one of 100 love poems for his wife Matilda – his third wife as Orfanos informed the guests, who laughed heartily.

She explained that the poem "Amo, Amas - I Love, You Love" by the Nicaraguan poet Ruben Dario "is about universal harmony combined with burning desire," and quipped: "That's a nice trick," as she referred to her Nicaraguan boyfriend.

Maramis followed with a dazzling improvisation that alternated playful and dramatic moments leading to a spectacular climax. Throughout the night he thrilled the audience with furious passages on the Yamaha.

Orfanos spoke of her appreciation for Lorca, whom she called "an amazing poet who thirsted for a deep song that goes to the soul things," before singing his "La Noche – The Night," which begins "A full moon, the night above the two of us/I began to cry and you were laughing."

The Metropolitan Room dark and moody with black ceilings and walls, was the perfect setting for the songs. The acoustics and the sound engineering were excellent.

A CD is now available containing of much of the music that was performed.

Fertility Expert Pantos Talks about IVF, Wider Realm of Medical Tourism

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also in charge of the IVF clinic of the Athens Medical Group.

His research affiliations, through which he continues his pioneering work, include Monash University in Australia and have led to breakthroughs in being able to determine which healthy embryos are most likely to be successfully implanted, but he also offers a more humble reason for being so successful at bringing children in to the world: they respect the uniqueness of each hopeful couple.

After enumerating cases where he and his colleagues succeeded after American doctors failed, he said "in my opinion it is because they put everyone in the same box, and offer the same protocol and treatment... what we do is individualize each case."

"Each couple has its own reasons and problems and causes for failure. We have to identify them and help them get through this and make sure all the right things are in place before we do IVF."

The doctor/patient relationship and the information ex-

change can begin in the United States through tools such as skype conferences. "They can even begin the protocols there and come to Greece only for the end process."

A typical protocol, which entails giving women medication that stimulates their ovaries to produce eggs, requires 20-25 days and half of it can begin in America.

The follow up by ultrasound can be done in Greece.

When a couple desperately wants a child, money is no object, but the savings from going to Greece are substantial. In New York the cost for one treatment in 15,000 euro (\$21,000) and in Greece it costs one third or less of that price.

Pantos explained that when a couple cannot conceive, 40 percent of the time the woman has the problem (things like endometriosis), 40 percent it is the man – low sperm count or potential, and 20 percent of the time the particular couple is the issue – the husband and wife are able to conceive with others.

The eggs of most women in their mid-40s are not healthy, although they can become pregnant through the implantation



Australian-born Dr. Konstantinos Pantos is one of Greece's leading practitioners of In Vitro Fertilization (IVF). During his visit to TNH he discussed medical tourism and IVF.

of eggs – donated by others or their own previously frozen eggs. The mean age for

menopause is 45. After 40 the pregnancy rate drops substantially.

There are now tests, however, that can show whether the eggs of older women are healthy.

Pantos was drawn to the IVF field where he could do pioneering work because "I am attracted to the unknown... and we were able to open new pathways."

Among the worldwide "firsts" and other successes at the Genesis Athens Clinic are: the births of the first baby worldwide following the application of blastocyst biopsy pre-implantation genetic diagnosis (PGD) of beta thalassemia in 2004 and of the biopsy coupled with HLA typing for chronic Granulomatous disease in 2005; the application of PGD for rare genetic diseases and the first birth in Greece following PGD applying Array-CGH for chromosome screening in 2010.

These are powerful tools that save lives and make families possible.

With PGD, before the embryo is implanted cells are taken on days three or five. The genetic constitution of the embryo is then checked, and only healthy ones are implanted.

With PGD, couples who are

carriers for Thalassemia can have healthy children.

They have also saved the life of a child sick from Thalassemia. After a healthy child was delivered through PGD, HLA typing showed the two siblings were compatible, and the healthy child was able to give a transfusion to his sick brother.

Similar miracles were performed with leukemia and other diseases.

Andrew Tsunis, a New York-based attorney who accompanied Pantos to TNH headquarters asked him if there were any serious legal issues obstacles to couples from America seeking treatment. Pantos said there were none, thanks to the law that was passed in Greece in 2005.

Pantos emphasized that counseling is an important component in the services he provides.

He also said they take the ethical element very seriously, especially the temptation to practice eugenics. He said their aim is to help infertile couples and eliminate diseases, not create ideal children. "We are bound by laws and our own ethics."

Helping Greeks Attain Promising Careers

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People can donate to the endeavor through the site and their contributions are acknowledged on their Partners Page.

ONE STONE, MANY BIRDS

Koutsomitis is also pleased with the ethical and philanthropic dimensions. "The idea from the beginning was for it not to be a free lunch, to create an atmosphere and culture among Greek youth of giving back," but the volunteer component simultaneously makes it possible for the mentors to do more than give advice.

"The person who is helping the young professional find a job is also facilitating assistance for even more vulnerable groups," in Greece, she said.

The contribution requirement for the candidates is also a filtering mechanism, ensuring a high level of commitment.

They decided, however, not to drive applicants to specific

charities. People can contribute to registered charities in Greece of their choice.

Staff will be hired beyond the web developers to fill out the personalized dimension – the direct human to human contact. Kasselakis said similar past attempts did go beyond the website, which is just an anonymous bridge.

A lot thought has been put into fostering and monitoring the mentoring, and they already have interns who are working as "mentor coordinators." Each one is assigned to five professionals and will follow up with the young candidates to make sure they are also responding.

There is now a head of mentorship who oversees mentor feedback on a general basis to insure its high quality, and he coordinates with people working on a sectoral/industry basis.

They are especially pleased with the interest expressed by non-Greek potential mentors,

who will enable young Greeks to develop cultural breadth and a more global and cosmopolitan and less parochial perspective.

SOMETHING WAS NEEDED

The amount of time Kasselakis spent living, working and studying both in Greece and the United States provided him with perspective that his peers value, and since the crisis his Athens College high school classmates were asking more and more for advice about working or applying to graduate programs in America, and he helped them informally.

Kasselakis and others then made the startling realization that if graduates of an elite school "were having that much trouble figuring things out, just imagine the rest of the country," he said, and the seeds for CVfromGreece were planted.

It was also born of their concern that if Greek youth is not able to gain education, training and experience in Greece or abroad "they are going to be marginalized in the global economy – permanently."

Ideally, they should not have to leave Greece, but until the structural reforms are implemented and the crisis is overcome, there won't be enough jobs for that generation.

They also believe CVfromGreece can become a vehicle for talent repatriation among those who go abroad and pick up valuable experience and knowledge.

"We will have 50,000 CVs, and five years later we know what 50,000 people have been doing," Koutsomitis said, adding that Greek companies could reach out to them to fuel their expansion plans.

It is also hoped that as Greek-Americans sign up to advise youth in Greece, the two communities will become closer.



TNH/COSTAS BEJ

Greek-American Vana Koutsomitis works in London. In a Starbucks, where people can connect with the entire world, she spoke to TNH about helping young Greek through CVfromGreece.



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We wish all our members,
their families and our friends
a happy and healthy
New Year

