

Constellation - The Planets (Mars)

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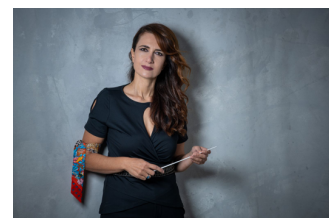


The internationally acclaimed orchestra conductor and artistic director of Berlin's Camerata Europæa, is an ambassadress of Greek culture in Europe

Maria Makraki

The music lives inside her

Text: Evi Kallini | Photographs: Maria Makraki's Archive



Born in Thessaloniki and of Cretan descent, Maria Makraki found herself drawn by melodies right from the early stages of her life, getting acquainted with the study of music at the tender age of four years old. Having studied Physics at the National and Capodistrian University of Athens, Maria Makraki obtained her degree in Piano and Superior Theoretics, and went on to study Orchestral Conducting at Berlin University of the Arts. Subsequently, she concluded her post-graduate and doctorate studies at Hanss Eisler Academy of Music in Berlin and Zurich University of the Arts.

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How do these two seemingly different fields, physics and music, find a way to coexist in her heart? In her own words: "I have been preoccupied with seeking common ground between physical sciences and music throughout the entire spectrum of my studies. Physics is encompassed in music and vice-versa. These two systems not only interact with each other, but at times go as far as to bind with one another".

Maria Makraki has an outstanding resume under her belt, riddled with non-stop awards and distinctions, starting from 1996 when she won the first prize at the 5th International Conducting Competition held in Czech Republic, as well as the special prize at the "Carl Maria von Weber" Conducting Competition hosted in Munich, an award that paved the way for a long-term collaboration with the **Munich Radio Symphony Orchestra**. Thenceforth, she has conducted prominent orchestras both in Europe and the USA, while since 2007 she has taken up the post of artistic director of **Berlin's Camerata Europæa**. "Through the German Music Council (Deutscher Musikrat), a state institution aimed at promoting orchestral conductors, I was selected for the "Tomorrow's Maestros" (Maestros von Morgen) program, where I had the chance of performing alongside distinguished orchestral ensembles and gain unique experience in my field," she points out.

Laying out her philosophy as a musician and a conductor, she makes it clear that she has set a multifaceted goal: "I'm constantly up against the challenge of running high expectations of myself, pushing me to pursue the optimal result. I aim at the pluralistic interpretation of every piece I conduct, striving to go beyond the conceptual, technical and structural boundaries. I attempt to transform written music into a multitude of feelings and experiences. The sound comes alive, reshaped into something deeply personal, while the energy released may prove to be overwhelming."

Can a woman bring a breath of fresh air to this male-dominated field? "A woman, in her own unique way, can touch upon sensitive chords and release unseen forces, as long as her approach is genuine. However, the quality filters through which one interprets a work of music from a standpoint of morphology, structure and plasticity, are a mixture of skills, a cerebral, psychological, mental, descriptive, social amalgam, which is not gender-driven."

Greece, which she usually visits for summer holidays purposes, but also on account of concerts or other professional activities, holds a special place in her heart. Maria Makraki is particularly attached to her birthplace, having associated Thessaloniki with the image of the peer and the landmark White Tower, "an image I hold within me as treasure."

Her upcoming plans include a series of Camerata Europæa concerts, within the framework of the "**Odyssey**" cultural project, scheduled to take place in Berlin (June 12th), Innsbruck (May 15th) and Athens (March 13th), conditions permitting. "My future plans mostly focus on enlivenment, sustainability, and mobility of the European cultural agents, as well as on the cross-border spread of art works through world premiere performances. In addition, further collaborations with international music ensembles are in store, and I am currently serving as head of both the European Festival of Culture and the Athens Regain Contemporary Music Festival, aiming to bring forth talented artists on national and international level. Last but not least, I have joined the newly founded Music Academy of the Anargyreos and Korgialeneios School of Spetses."

info

www.mariamakraki.com

contact

makraki@camerata.eu

Images

