

WHEN THE SUN...

The face of the week: Venia Stamatiadi actress

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Kyriakos Kouroutsavouris

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The idea for the play, "When the Sun...", was her own. The occasion was the loss of her beloved writer, Georges Sari, last June. And Venia Stamatiadi's performance cannot leave you unaffected. It drags you in and immerses you in the world of a great Greek woman to such an extent that it seems evident that Alki Zei, having recently seen the work, must have felt deep emotion. The young theater arts graduate portrayed her childhood friend from the 1930s and 40s in Athens so realistically...

"For me, acting means truth, it means life, and it has nothing to do with lies. The character on stage is alive, a real person, breathing, relating, thinking, communicating. The audience is not deceived; it believes only in truths. The actor must first believe in his own tale, feel truly on stage, to move and captivate the audience. Because the great challenge is to convince the viewer for two hours that what he sees is true, to forget that he is in the theater," says Venia in All4fun, revealing how she perceives the term acting.

Having also studied in the Department of Communication and Mass Media, Venia has a well-formed opinion on other topics unrelated to her work. She expresses it, but mainly follows what she says in her life, serving as a modern model for how the new Greek woman of 2013 should act. And if Georges Sarri looks down from somewhere on what happens every Monday and Tuesday at the Art Theater in Plaka, she must feel proud of the actress who embodies her on stage...

- Acting – as a general term – entered my life at a very young age. I was one of those kids who always had a poem at school, participated in theater, and in the choir. I remember vividly my joy when in the third grade, I was selected to participate with a poem in the celebration of the older classes. A poem and older kids! Pride, not a joke! But I had never said, "I want to become an actress when I grow up." I declared professions in the scientific field and especially in the natural sciences. Every three months, a different one. Until I reached the point of saying I would become a pilot. On the other hand, my involvement in the theater was always steady. The decision to engage professionally was made while I was already in university. The trigger was my participation in the theatrical group "Afanti" of P.O.F.P.A. for two years (2005-2006). For me, it was clear that only with theater was I happy, and I decided to take exams at the Art Theater. I believe that deep down, I knew from a very early age that this was what I wanted to do. Maybe that's why I changed professional orientation every three months. Here's something that happens in the theater. Every three months, you are someone else. With a different age, character, profession, aspirations, problems. You never get bored!
- Acting... Acting, for me, means truth, it means life. And it has nothing to do with lies. In fact, it is the exact opposite. The character on stage is alive, real, a real person, breathing,

relating, thinking, communicating. It does nothing less or nothing more than what we do in everyday life. And above all, it is not fake. Because if it is, the game is lost. The audience is not deceived; it believes only in truths. The actor must first believe in his own tale, feel truly on stage, to move and captivate the audience. Because I think that's the big challenge: to convince the viewer for two hours that what he sees is true, to make him forget that he is in the theater. If a performance achieves this, then – and only then – it is successful.

- Georges Sari is part of my very tender memories. I grew up with her books, was shaped by them. I had read some of them more than once. I loved her, and I still love her through her writing. I always felt like I knew her a little. I think that Georges Sari, along with Alki Zei, has shaped an entire generation with their books. A friend of mine says that because of Georges Sari, he became leftist. That from the "Winners," he learned who the "good" and who the "bad" guys are. That's why we are a very lucky generation. We grew up beautifully and were molded with such ideas, with such "true fairy tales." However, years had passed since I first picked up a book by Georges Sari, and the magnitude of the loss was understandable only from the perspective of a reader. So, last year, on June 9th, when she passed away, somehow, instinctively, I was led to pick up "When the Sun" again. It had always been my favorite. Everything else almost happened on its own. Georges Sari, being not only a writer but also an actress, has an absolutely theatrical writing style. She gives the reader the feeling that she writes her books in one night without removing or censoring anything. And that's why they are filled with primitive emotion, giving them uniqueness and making them incredibly charming. So, reading "When the Sun," the images and characters came to life on their own in front of my eyes. I started the adaptation, as a team, we requested to stage the play at the Greek Art Theater, the artistic director Mr. Diagoaras Chronopoulos trusted us, and everything took its course.
- Our main position as a team was not to make inaccurate updates to elements of the work. Others who will see the performance might say that the staging "is too classic." For us, though, this is intentional; it's a stance. It is of immense importance that the viewer, seeing a story that takes place purely in 1940-1944, comes and tells us afterward that the work is relevant. And this without us having pointed it out to him, without emphasizing it, having remained absolutely faithful to the text. For me, it is very important for everyone to remember that the concept of "patriotism" is a concept linked to the left, and only to the left. EAM and EPON were national liberation movements, fighting for the freedom and independence of Greece, and their core was communist. It is important to remind ourselves of this with the performance. The phrase "I care for and protect my homeland" should stop being a slogan on the right and especially on the far right.
- Alki Zei is with us in everything, from the beginning until today. She spoke to us about Georges, their friendship, the years of the Occupation. She read the text, told me her opinion, made suggestions. Her contribution is invaluable, and the love she showed us... what can I say? Touching? It understates it. Words are not enough to describe what I feel about her presence. We talk, ask, answer, discuss. And here comes the day of the premiere, and she is there, front row, seeing herself and her friend on stage. How lucky I feel to have met her.
- Georges Sari was an incredibly charming personality. Her assertiveness, innocence, her inexhaustible emotion. "Life wants to be loved. To be loved without bargaining, very

generously." She dragged me in and still does completely. That's why I can't say that it was "difficult" or "provocative" to embody her. She transported me and continues to transport me, and all I can say is that I am fascinated, I feel beautiful, and I enjoy it immensely.

- Our team, "Pedio Technis," is a wonderfully fortunate situation. We are connected by many things, and that's why we communicate and fit together so well. From school, what has stayed with me is a very sweet taste, and this taste always accompanies professional collaboration with classmates. That's why I feel really lucky for what we have achieved so far with this team. I hope the future holds very beautiful things for us. In any case, we are certain that we will work a lot, united and against every difficulty. It is worth mentioning everyone one by one: Anastasia Georgopoulou, Artemis Grympla, Giannis Damalas, Antigone Doumou, Panagos Ioakeim, Gogo Kartsana, Vasiliki Kissa, Augustinos Koumoulos, Elias Latsis, Giannis Minos. And, of course, our director, Demosthenes Philippas, to whom we owe this result. Thank him very much. Kelly Varsani and Anda Kalapothakou, who provided us with shelter, furniture, and dressed us. Also, Angelica Kapsabeli, who managed to organize this chaos and, together with Angeliki Poulou, communicate it externally. Finally, gratitude and a big thank you to Giannis Degaitis and Katerina Ziogou who helped us with their acting maturity and stage experience. Oh, and let me tell them that they are the best parents I have ever had in the theater!
- I believe that art not only can but is obligated to take a stance against the social reality of Greece. We need to know why we are doing theater, to want to communicate and to have goals. Not only individual but also collective goals. If the actor is not a social being, if what happens in society does not concern him, perhaps it's better for him to change jobs.
- The truth is that I have been lucky and have worked with very important and experienced people in the field. Indicatively, I mention Sofia Spiratou and Diagoras Chronopoulos. Perhaps as a "milestone" in my journey, I can mention my participation in the play "Ploutos" at the Art Theater in the summer of 2010 in Epidaurus. The first time an actor "steps" into Epidaurus is always a "milestone" for him. For me, I don't hesitate to say that tears came to my eyes as I entered the orchestra.
- I also participate in the children's play "Trelantonis" at the Acropol Theater, directed and choreographed by Sofia Spiratou. There, too, I have been very lucky from various perspectives. We are united as a team, there is a very good relationship among us, despite any difficulties that may arise from time to time. It is a very valuable, honest, and well-crafted work by all of us. There is a lot of effort and a lot of love behind it, and I think that is evident scenically. It is particularly important to have good children's theater. We should never forget that we, to the extent that it concerns us, bear responsibility for shaping the characters of our young audience.
- I have also graduated from the Department of Communication and Media Studies at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. I worked as a journalist for a short period, specifically in the field of culture. It was a nice experience, but I couldn't continue. How can one comment or judge a space in which they are actively involved? On the other hand, our faculty, the Department of Communication and Media Studies, is a very good faculty. It opens your mind and exposes you to all kinds of art—theater, painting, sculpture, performance, cinema. I have never regretted for a moment that I graduated from this school

and later took exams for the Art Theater. I would have missed out on a lot if I hadn't attended. What fascinates me greatly about this field is the aspect of radio. Until a few months ago, Ilias Latsis and myself hosted the radio show "Bolek and Lolek" on CR Radio. We enjoyed it immensely, and the connection with the audience on the radio is magical. Due to workload, unfortunately, we couldn't continue, but the truth is that we miss it, both of us.

- I am a child of Athens. I was born here and grew up here. I have never left. I love it very much, and I am enchanted by its anarchic landscape. I believe, for example, that Exarchia is the most beautifully ugly area in the world. Dirty, with broken sidewalks, graffiti-covered walls, and countless cars. But really now, is there a more charming neighborhood in the whole of Greece? I will never forget when in Paris, a Frenchman was passionately asking me and wanted information about the "anarchist neighborhood of Athens." That's how charming they are!
- At All4fun, I like that it has a lot of passion behind it. It seeks, discovers, supports young artists, and new proposals. It truly loves theater and promotes it with pure motives. And of course, I can't help but mention the beautiful day photos by Kyriakos Kouroutsavouris.

Interview to Kyriakos Kouroutsavouris, April 15, 2013.