

Return of a prizewinner

In an interview: Thöne winner Katerina Chatzinikolau talks about her music and herself

As part of the 1st Thöne Violin Competition, the young Greek violinist Katerina Chatzinikolau enthralled the audience and the jury in the Mülheim Stadthalle. Now she returns to the Villa Szusza with a recital. In a conversation with the organiser Zsuzsa Debre and the Mülheimer Woche she talked about her career and the concert and the "Zero".

by Szusza Debre and Sven Krause

How does a Greek woman musically come to "French Romanticism"?

Katerina Chatzi: "I looked for great emotions in classical literature and found them in the French. As a Greek, I am very emotional and I wanted to reveal my personality to the audience. With the selected pieces by Maurice Ravel and Cesar Franck and of course the Carmen fantasy, it is a game between me and the music".

Her Mozart interpretation at the Thöne Violin Competition in June, which was held for the first time this year, surprised many! How do such new ideas come about in old masters?

Katerina Chatzi: "I look for something special in every piece. With the score in my hand I sit down and it becomes a work on myself. Out of it a puzzle emerges, one piece at a time".

On stage they are absorbed in themselves and the violin. Do you perceive the audience?

Katerina Chatzi: "Oh yes, very much so! The audience reacts very subtly. I just must not be distracted! In my "magic sphere" I am responsible for the play and for the interpretation. This responsibility requires concentration."

Since your success at the Thöne Violin Competition you have been on the road with Violin Zero. How is the new partnership going?

Katerina Chatzi: "At the moment it is very interesting! The chance to play on a newly built instrument is something special. The Zero and I, we are looking for our way."

At the age of five, you were already at the conservatory in Greece. That is very unusual. How did it come about?

Katerina Chatzi: "It was actually a coincidence. As a small child I saw an orchestra playing on television and then I showed my mother: 'Look mum, I want to play this instrument'. And that was the violin. My parents are not musicians, but Dad went out and bought a violin for me. As chance would have it, the nearest conservatory was five minutes away from us. I went there with my newly acquired instrument and lo and behold: I got lessons! After one year I won the institute competition with the highest score.

What are your next musical goals?

Katerina Chatzi: "I want to play the Sibelius Violin Concerto with an orchestra! That is a dream. I hope that this wish will soon come true."