

First interview

Current occupation

- Dance Teacher in 92 Art
- Animator in Asterial
- Dance Teacher in the 4th Primary School of Drapetsona
- Drama Teacher in “Napi-Napi” Center of Preschool Education

Qualifications

- Master of Arts in Dramaturgy and performance (Department of Theater Studies, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens)
- Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing
- Kundalini Research Institute, certified Kundalini yoga teacher
- Musical Theater Performance at New York Acting Studio
- Faculte' des lettres, D'epartement de la langue Francaise στο National and Kapodistrian University of Athens

Stella Papadima.

Actress, dancer, and choreographer



Good evening,

My name is Stella Papadima. I am a dancer and choreographer. I am in to dancing from a very young age. I would like to talk about my own personal experience and my career in this field. As I said, I am in to dancing from very young. I attended an amateur dance studio and later I decided to turn professional. So I started entering competitions, Latin... mainly... I

started with this [Latin]... this is where I obtained my first qualifications... and later... due to the fact that theater had always attracted me ... you know “acting”... in combination with dancing and kinesiology [the study of human movement]... hmm...

I took musical theater lessons. In any case, I am not sure that I have reached my goals, because although I am enjoying what I am doing and although deep inside I know that it is something completely different from any other job, for example working in an office 8 hours a day and earning a basic wage ... for sure I have come across many difficulties. Nevertheless, I think that I have put much effort in order to materialize what I have accomplished, and I mean to obtain the qualifications that have allowed me to find work in that field... experience, obviously, in performing, in hotels during the high [summer] season, or in various events. Actually these are the places where you gain experience. Not only in theory but also in practice, if you want to call yourself a teacher of dancing.

The thing that has always worried me and kept me back is the question of earnings and livelihood. Because, as we know, is difficult in Greece in 2020 to earn your daily bread with this. Well, take the current situation as an example. What happens today in our country? All teachers of dancing are unemployed. Moreover, this is not the only problem. Since we get no stamps [national insurance] for working in a dancing studio, or in any case to work with less than 20 percent of the owed stamps –we are like business partners– hmm we are entitled [to stamps] at this moment and we will not be able to have any earnings [pensions]. Therefore, those with no one to support them financially will starve. I am

sorry to admit, but this also applies to people who have more important career paths from me [in dancing]. They might have finished professional dancing schools, state schools and they work... since there is no other alternative... to work in... places... in nightclubs. And you can't help thinking... 'how nice... if I decided to do only that... my path will be to dance... to work... in clubs at night or in little clubs or to work for 10 to 15 euros in the best of the cases in dancing studios without stamps or I will take the risk to start something of my own and work as self-employer. Something extremely difficult in today's job market.

Nevertheless, I feel extremely happy for having reached here at present. For all the difficulties and hmm the financial deprivation that I experienced all these years so as to achieve all these... I mean I didn't have personal life and friends... thinks that I might have done if I had with the resources I clearly funneled to my training to my dancing, to my diplomas, to my exercise. Simply since this [dancing] is a deadlock, I don't find myself only in this. I am also into teaching theater that brings more money than simply being a teacher of dancing. For sure, I miss performing but... since I see that things have gone this way, there is not use [of insist on performing]. As a matter of fact, the thing that I described [teaching theater] is the good scenario. The worst scenario is having to do other things as a dancer in order to get a job. But as a matter of fact I think that this is also true in every artistic field. Moreover, certainly my plans in the given situation are related to be self-employed, to try to start my own thing, so as not to be under an employer and being independent of whether will there be a show or a performance and who

knows the theme of this performance and to have to measure where to go and where not to go and for how long will I sacrifice my performance art for save money.

I will never forget a work that came up lately

(...)

...dancing all night for 50 euros....

In order to be in something of much more to your liking and be the master of yourself, it is much more preferable to start your own business. Surely, the risk is substantial, but there is no alternative. Certainly, going abroad has occurred me ... going to England to work in musicals but [...] it is still in the back of my head. ...

Never say never...

(...)

When you begin with this road, you can never expect to find it easy unless you have a roof under your head, a meal and no worries whether you parents will be able to support you or not...

(...)

Second interview

Current occupation

Dimitra has written, played or directed a number of theatrical plays with great presence in the Athenian theatre scene, including “In to your head” and “Αλίκη” (Alice).

Qualifications

- Master of Arts in Dramaturgy and performance (Department of Theater Studies, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens)
- “Central Stage” Mimi Denisi School of Drama
- Law School, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens

Dimitra Staikou

Actor, playwright, and director



Well, what going on with actors... hmm... this is the big issue. In Greece the best drama schools to study acting is the National [Theatre of Greece] and the “Kratiko” [the other name of “National”] Theater of Northern Greece. They are tuition free but there are a lot of applicants, too many candidates and only 12 boys and girls are accepted each year. Therefore, as being an organisation of the public sector, conducts and personal connections thrive. Meaning that if you happen to know someone you have a change to succeed. If you don’t... most probably you won’t [succeed]. So...

The second best schools of drama is the “Athens Conservatoire” where you can also study music... [It hs

been] [f]ounded in 1910 and also “Theatro Technis-
[Art Theater] Karolos Koun”. National and “Kratiko”
[theaters] are accepting students until their 25 years of
age. Imagine that when I first came in Athens as an 23
years old, as soon as I finished Law School, I applied
only to “Theatro Technis "Karolos Koun"” and I only
passed the first level of examinations. I did not pass the
second level, therefore I failed. Apart from that, there
are about 24 private drama schools in Athens...
private... where someone can attend at a cost of 300
euros per month for 8 hour per day and from these
[schools] he or she can obtain the “paper” [the
qualification] that he or she can work as an actor or
actress. You have to sit of examinations at the Ministry
of Culture to get your qualification in acting.

Well it is not the case that when you graduate from these
private drama studios you will find a job, this is not a
“panacea”. Large number of people have finished a
drama school and still they do not work professionally
in a theater.

(...)

These schools where you pay 300 euros per month do
not have the highest standards. They want to take kids’
[young adults] money and to make profit from their
[these kids] need to perform. The advantage of those
who finish the National [Theater] and the “Kratiko”
Theater is that they will likely take place in the
productions [of these two theatrical organisations] and
they will get a monthly pay, in contrast to those from
the private schools.

[However] the most important [thing] is not which
school you have graduated. The most important thing is

how much acting experience you have. How many hour you have on stage. This is because there is one thing to be trained as an actor of actress and there is another think to work professionally. This is what counts mostly. That is why that I say that when you go to an audition, the employers ask (in the case that you have not finished a drama school) ... they ask for at least 200 paid days as experience in theater... in acting. And, to tell you the truth [to be honest], apart from the curriculum vitae, everywhere I have been, no one has asked me which drama school have I finished. I have finished the school of Denisi [a Greek actress] -have not finished a famous school. They [the possible employers] look at how you act. If you are good, they hire you no matter where you have study.

For example, there is this actor ... Akillas Karazisis ... one of the most important thespians. He has not attended a drama school at all. The way he performs is... is “imposible” ... no matter what school have you finished. The same applies to writing for theater. Many people attend schools of creative writing without having something staged or even published. No matter how much we discuss for training and technique, talent is the key. This is similarly the case in theater writing, acting, playing music etc. At the end of the day, this is what matters. This is what shows on stage.

The most disheartening thing of all [in theater] is that since actors abound (in my opinion there should be fewer theater schools), there are many young individuals expecting to be a part of it even if they can't be a part of it. These [individuals] are being taken in by

the schools [of drama] that take their monthly 300 euros.

Hmm, as there are so many graduates and as the law for permission of practice does not exist anymore, the economic situation is very difficult in professional theater in the case that you don't have a contract to earn 700 to 800 euros as it is the case with a graduate of National or Kratiko drama school. This means that you are paid at the end of each show. ... If you are lucky [to get paid]. There are stories among actors that many of them are paid by percentage, say a 10%, of the box office. This means that mostly you get nothing. But you keep performing because you need to [do so]. (...). Different people who are professionally into theater have different stories to tell about how they started and how they have find their way.

(...)

Third interview

Current occupation

- Lead singer in “Marzi Mavi” band
- Actress

Qualifications

- Master of Arts in Dramaturgy and performance
(Department of Theater Studies, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens)
- “Agia Varvara” Municipal Drama School
 - Master of Arts Search Université Paris X

Rania Furlanou

Actress, singer, and
songwriter



(...)

I am actress for many years now. This is what I do for living. I studied for a degree in French Philology. Then I was an Erasmus student in Paris doing in Translation Studies. In Paris I took my first theater lessons and when I was back in Greece I decided that that was what I would like to do.

I entered in a drama school and even as a student I was working professionally. As I told you, realized my passion for theater in a very young age and since I was a kid I have known that I would do this (...). I liked it very much. I liked to dance, to sing, and to watch theater. My mother would take me to many plays regardless if they were for adults or for children audiences. I also studies ballet for many years, I was in

a music school. Nevertheless, I could never imagine that I would become an actor. It was so great in my mind, so distant ... a life's dream.

When I finished school, I studied French Literature and because I was studious at school, my parents wanted me to become a... doctor... a lawyer, a philologist... I told them that I wouldn't like to be in these, but I could continue French literature, something that I really liked. And I still do. I wouldn't dare to imagine that I would tell them that I would like to be an actress. The diaries that I kept in lyceum [the Greek higher secondary school] are full with such thoughts: What should I do and how I will do it, and how I will come to tell them. I thought of it as something really big. So... when after "Panellinies" [the Greek university entrance examinations] I entered the school [the university department] that wanted, I started with a music school, or rather I continued something that I had already started –I used to sing a lot in school– we were a team that organised all the festivities and things like that. So I was familiar with this that it was quite natural to tell them [her parents] that I wanted to attend a music school. So that is how I started to sing. And when I returned back from France and my Erasmus, I decided to do just that. I was already sure about me. I spoke to my parents and I am in to it since then.

Being an actress in Greece is something very difficult. Not only because there is a surplus in offer and little availability of places, but also because the economic situation is very bad. Even if you create your own troupe, the things are very difficult. It is almost impossible to stand economically just by doing that. You have to be in many other jobs in order to come

around. For example, I have been in situations that I play two times per night, a morning performance with a children's play. These are all and more difficult as years pass. Nevertheless, I can't think of myself to do something else. Now I am also studying for my Masters in the Department of Theater Studies [of the University of Athens] in Theater Didactics and I like it very much and I find great outlets in this field.

I am also in a band. We are together for some years now. We are working together and we write our songs. Greek music. I would call it [the music] "fusion" because it has many eclectic features. It's a little of *Rebetiko*¹... it has rock elements... western and oriental influences... So I would describe us as a fusion band. Even this, however, since we are doing it with personal means, the problem is still the money. We come across many problems. We try to release a CD that we have recorded for one year now or one year and a half and although we finished first in a very known [music] competition, and since then one of our songs has been released, we have come to many difficulties with relation to our next steps. We are very near now [to the release of the CD] and I hope that everything will be alright.

But this is demanding. We need to dedicate much of our time. And the problem is that the time that we dedicate to this [the commercial part] costs as in creativity. When we must be involved with all these economic aspects of our work and how to do this and that... to speak to the producers and the companies and to deal with all these stuff, hmm there is weariness, a time that is dedicated to this and this affects the creative part. And this is

¹ [Rebetiko](#) is a musical and cultural expression directly linked to song and dance that initially spread among the urban lower and working-class populations in the early twentieth century mostly in Greece.

something that we can live without because our urge is the artistic creation and, as for me, it is artistic creation all the way, in every aspect of it. Hmm, I cannot think of myself to live in a different way. In no way. Honestly. This can't be. It simply can't be.

To resume, I would say that an artist, especially in Greece, must have patience, strong will (drive) and... honestly... an urge for it. Anything less than that... it just can't be. I just can't be. Even for the smallest step. It can't be [without this urge]. It is important for you to have the need to communicate through this kind of work. Through your imaginativeness. For me is a way to communicate.

I want to try to be in it forever. I try not to be put down no matter the difficulties that we face. And I do whatever in my hand. Even my Master's degree focuses on this: being creative doing what I want. The things that I want... the things that I like... the things for which I feel that can be communicative and I have something to offer. For me this is everything.

Recently we had a theatrical performance at the Museum of Modern Art in Plaka² on Picasso and we have now closed down due to the coronavirus [pandemic]. We have sheltered ourselves in our homes. [My] parents –in case that you ask –support me. They are troubled, of course. They worry about me when I am in hardship... when money cannot be found even for the basics. But the truth is that they are proud of me and this is very touching. This is a justification. I mean that for all the difficulties, they [the parents] are here for me and they support me and they are “go on”... and they are

² [Plaka](#) is the old historical neighborhood of Athens, clustered around the northern and eastern slopes of the Acropolis, and incorporating labyrinthine streets and neoclassical architecture.

“you are good and we recognize it”... and they are “be careful” and “we surely would have wanted something else for you ... something that you could live much better and not having all this trouble but we understand we you are in to it and why you want it so much”.

I would like to wish something. Something very basic. First of all, to be well. Second to be imaginative and each time to find new ways ... to find ways... this is the most important. Never lose our courage, our faith, our passion and our will to be alive because at the end of the day when you are into something that you love so much... this is the will to be alive. This is very, very important.