

# SEEN AND HEARD INTERNATIONAL

## **NEW!** SOPRANO ELENA MOȘUC IN CONVERSATION WITH CASEY CREEL

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[‘Verdi wants more blood in the singing’: Elena Moșuc on embracing new drama in her repertoire](#)



*The lyric coloratura soprano Elena Moșuc has a decent claim to being one of the hardest working people in show business, ever sizing up new repertoire and planning new recordings at this advanced stage of her career. After a highly successful recital in this spring in Zurich (reviewed [here](#)), I submitted Ms Moșuc to an extensive list of questions about a wide range of topics: her early days, her future plans, the current state of her voice, and all sorts of hypothetical questions. Her answers do not disappoint; she used them as an opportunity to reflect at length on questions of artistry and career. I found Moșuc to be sincere and introspective, with less than the normal dosage of boilerplate self-promotion inherent to these sorts of press events. The interview has been edited for clarity.*

**What is it like coming back to Zurich these days to perform after your start here long ago?**

To be on stage of Opernhaus Zürich is like coming home to family. I have such beautiful and important memories that keep me connected. First of all, I started here my career in 1991, when I had almost no stage experience. I had at that point only sung the Queen of the Night in Munich, when I won first prize in the German ARD competition in 1990. In 1991 I wished to make my début in Iași, my home city in Romania, as Gilda, Lucia and Violetta. After that, all my repertoire came from Zurich, singing with all greatest opera stars, working with the greatest conductors of the world, and major stage directors. So it was the perfect ambiance to train in.

Also, I met my husband Christoph on stage in Zurich, when he was still a law student. He sang already as a little child on stage of the Opernhaus and after that he remained in the youth choir and now in the supplementary choir. He is a great musician; he studied piano, he loves opera, he knows my voice very well, he gave me many good ideas for interpreting characters, and he always had ideas for conducting. Furthermore, he studied in particular with some important conductors in Zurich. This year his dream came true: he conducted me in two important concerts in Romania!

### **What is a stage or city where you have never sung, but would like to?**

Even though I've sung all over in the world, there are some still on the list: Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires, and at the Palacio de Bellas Artes in Mexico where Maria Callas sang many times (I've heard that there are fantastic acoustics); or in San Francisco, Los Angeles, Johannesburg, St. Petersburg, and the famous house in Sidney.

### **Where are the toughest audiences, and where are the easiest audiences?**

Easy audiences are in the Far East. Japan, China, Taiwan, South Korea – people there are very thankful and touched and give their applause from their heart. I was also very moved at the reception I got at the Metropolitan Opera in New York: that's an audience that loves its singers. Or Dallas, too. I wish very much to sing more in the USA, I love that country. And not least is the reception in all of Italy, where opera was born.

### **Are Italian audiences really as critical as people say?**

It is true that the Italian audience is very critical, because they know their music so well and because they still have a firm attachment to the correct style of singing; they're comparing you to interpretations from the big names of the opera during the golden age. They are not shy with tons of Bravos for good singing and a lot of Boos for bad singing. But sometimes they are also very subjective, especially with home-grown artists. Or when they simply love a singer, it doesn't matter anymore how he sings. But, in general, the Italians are correct and enthusiastic when the interpretations are beautiful and the high notes are good! I always had big success in Italy, from the beginning with my Queen of the Night in Rome in 2001, and then in the Arena di Verona as Gilda and Violetta and all major Italian opera houses. That includes the Teatro alla Scala, where I made my début with *La traviata*, then *Rigoletto*, *Luisa Miller*, *Carmen*, and then *Lucia di Lammermoor*. These were all successes, and I gained many, many Italian fans and friends.

### **What role are you tired of singing? What role no longer suits your voice or style?**

First of all, I never get tired of singing; every role is important for me and every time when I sing, I sing like it is for the first time. Each performance is a singular performance; none is exactly like the other. I discover every time new dimensions in a role, new details. I simply LOVE SINGING! I gave up the Queen of the Night a few years ago, the role that made me famous across the operatic world. I sang it during 250 performances, plus concerts. Over the years, as I moved to singing more lyrical roles or dramatic coloraturas roles like Maria Stuarda, Luisa Miller, *La bohème*, *Don Giovanni*, Lucrezia Borgia, Norma, or Anna Bolena, the voice became heavier and not so easy for the Queen's coloraturas. I still have a good high F in my voice that I also put to use during *Lucia di Lammermoor* many times in my career, starting with my first Lucia in 1991. (I last sang this role a year ago, in June, in Genoa), or in *I puritani* at the end of the first act. But I can no longer sing the queen's coloraturas with the same ease, even if now I have the perfect age for the Queen (**laughter**). But soon I would like to try again to see what happens. Instead of the Queen of the Night, I now sing the other Queens: Maria Stuarda, Anna Bolena and I hope soon Elisabetta in *Roberto Devereux*. I am honoured

to sing *Norma* and *Lucrezia Borgia* and I am thinking that the future will bring me good roles. I already did Leonora in *Il trovatore* this year, and next year I will sing Gilselda in Verdi's *I Lombardi alla prima crociata*. This trajectory of the voice is normal for a singer; otherwise she can die of boredom.

**What is your favourite part of the German repertory besides Mozart?**

Oh, one of my favourite roles is Zerbinetta in *Ariadne auf Naxos*, with her beautiful humour and not-easy music. I love so much to sing the coquette; the last time I sang this role it was in Salzburg in 2012. (It's on DVD with Kauffmann and Magee.) The original version has extra coloraturas and a high F sharp (higher than usual and higher than the Queen of the Night), and I think that Zerbinetta from 2015 at the Opera de Bastille may have been my last Zerbinetta (maybe), in a wonderful production. I also loved to play Aminta/Timidia in *Die schweigsame Frau* by Richard Strauss, but I sang it only during a few performances in Zurich with the great conductor Christoph von Dohnányi.

**Your French and Italian diction are both superb. What language do you enjoy singing in the most and why?**

I love to sing in both languages. The French music is so perfect for my voice, and I love the finesse of the French composers in such delicate music, such impressionistic writing. But maybe I love singing more in Italian because for me it is very easy – it's very close to my native Romanian. I think for all singers, even for French singers themselves, it is not easy to sing in French, because of its difficult pronunciation. But I love it and I do it, even if means twice the work than for Italian pieces. For my recent recital in the Opernhaus Zürich, I worked for three months straight, two to three hours every day, on pronunciation and memorisation. It was a long recital with French and Romanian chansons, and in the second part with difficult Verdi arias. The satisfaction for me was huge when I heard the audience applause and knew I had pulled it off.

**What is a role for which your interpretation has changed substantially over the years?**

Gilda, Lucia, Violetta are clearly very different for me now in 2018 compared to 1991, when I débuted all three. But the changes are good. First of all, because of the normal biological changes of the voice over the years. Plus the experience you gain from many productions, with visions from different conductors and stage directors or even my own new vision of the roles. I am always working to refine my vocal technique to remain on top and not to go down! I was working hard with my maestra Mildela D'Amico in Milan (she was a colleague of Renata Scotta studying with the same maestra Mercedes Llopart, a great maestra), or with another maestro, the great tenor Ion Buzea in Zurich. It is important to always have balance and support the voice and not to lose the high notes! I am still keeping my high notes from the beginning of my career, but these high notes are now more dramatic. Also, it is important to still be able to sing the *piano* notes – this is also a good sign of good technique.

**Is singing in the studio very different from singing on the stage? What are the major differences in approach?**

I recorded the last CDs in concert halls, so it is almost like singing in concert. But recordings are always exhausting, I have to say – so much focus is asked of each sound. On the other hand, you don't have to give as much as in a concert; you pay attention even more to technique and control of volume. Plus, microphones pick up each trace of air. So I actually prefer recording in concert halls, where I feel more control in my voice than in the small room of a recording studio. In fact only my first CD was in a studio; since then they've been in concert halls or churches or even museums.

**Is being a diva or having a ‘diva’ stage personality a requirement for a Verdi soprano to have a successful career?**

Well, to sing all the roles that I sing, the personality is very important. When a singer is singing important roles on important stages, she gets famous and has this Diva aura. Many singers are good without becoming divas. Being a diva requires something more, something that distinguishes you. Sometimes ‘Diva’ means someone who is capricious, but is the wrong way to be a diva. A real diva is someone with finesse and a strong personality on stage. And yes, Verdi needs divas for his operas. And you become a diva if you also have a successful career, because the totality of your work goes into being one.

**If you could be a bass or tenor for a day, what aria would you sing?**

**(She laughs.)** When I was studying many years ago in Romania I used to sing the aria from *Tosca*, ‘E lucevan le stelle’. It is a wonderful aria. I could not resist singing it. Only for me, with me alone in the room! I also sang the tenor aria from Bellini’s *Il pirata*, which I found in an album of arias, not knowing it’s a tenor aria. And when I saw *Il pirata* many years ago in Zurich with Mara Zampieri and Savatore Fisichella, I was shocked when I heard Salvatore singing ‘my aria’ **(laughter)**.

**You have a new album out, *Verdi Heroines*. How did that come about, how did you pick the music, and how did you find the right musicians to record with?**

Well, I recorded a Donizetti album in 2013, thinking that it was time after so many years of singing bel canto roles to show my experience. But I think my voice is very well suited to some of the difficult Verdian music, and I’ve sung roles in *Rigoletto*, *Traviata*, *Luisa Miller*, *Il corsaro* (and now also *Otello* and *Trovatore*) in major houses. This album lets me show my audience the direction that my voice and my musical interests are taking. My intention was that people understand that my Gilda days are over.

I can do more now with new repertoire, even if some people overstate the difference between Verdi and bel canto. Don’t forget that Leonora in *Trovatore* was sung back in the day by sopranos who also performed Gilda and Violetta! Why shouldn’t I? Think about it, many Leonora’s of our time are very dramatic and don’t achieve the beautiful suspended piano phrases in ‘D’amor sull’ali rosee’. So I recorded it.

These dramatic roles help the health of the voice, provided one’s technique is good. My new Verdi CD has arias from his middle and early eras, the perfect period to show the bel canto transition. Verdi starts asking for more drama in his singing, especially with dramatic coloraturas that have these celestial phrases at the top of the register. He is asking for more vocal modulation, more ‘blood’ in singing, more truth in interpretation. In other words, Verdi asks everything from you, including your soul. Verdi is total! Each aria has a specific character, whether lyrical, heroic, melancholic, exalting, resigned, joyous, prayerful, or whatever. My vocal future will be in this perfect mixture.

Anyway I would like to attempt a second Verdi CD very soon. The musicians I worked with for the last one were just fantastic. The famous Zagreb Philharmonic Orchestra under the direction of Maestro Ivo Lipanović (with his strong temperament) was perfect for this repertoire, as were the choir. After Maestro Lipanović’s wonderful *Traviata* in 2000 in Verona, we stayed in touch and performed together; doing albums in Zagreb was his idea.

**What are the key differences for you between singing Donizetti and Verdi?**

Donizetti, Bellini, Rossini are the most important bel canto exponents. A singer must have a beautiful voice, perfect vocal and breath technique and the 'morbidezza' (softness) to sing bel canto. Bel canto needs perfection, and perfection means many hours of studying, and the new generation, unfortunately, doesn't have time for it. 'Those who can sing bel canto can sing anything', said the great Callas. So, this is why nowadays the perfect singers for this style almost do not exist anymore, because it asks for perfection. Verdi has in his music beauty, character and, that which is most important, drama. Verdi has all that bel canto has, but often his music needs much more drama. Also, Verdi's phrases are more difficult, because very often in a short time the singer has to pass between two or even three octaves to resolve something (e.g. arias from *Attila*, *Aroldo*, *Vespri siciliani* etc.) .To sing Verdi, you need to have a good and solid voice with perfect technique.

**What soprano roles are overperformed, and which ones are underperformed, in your view?**

Maybe Violetta, Gilda, Lucia, but I will not say 'overperformed' because they are very beautiful, almost modern, and audiences love their music. I think underperformed are *Maria Stuarda*, *Anna Bolena*, Elisabetta in *Roberto Devereux*, Lucrezia in *I due Foscari*, *Lucrezia Borgia*, Elena in *I vespri siciliani*, Giselda in *I Lombardi alla prima crociata* and many others, precisely because these roles are asking for perfection. There is no middle way. The singing here is either perfect or bad.

**What music do you enjoy singing in English?**

Usually I do not sing in English, since I haven't had many occasions. But I sang my own concert, RESONANCE, with some pop songs by Romanian composer Marius Dragomir orchestrated in a classical way, and I would sing some orchestrated Lieder by Purcell or Gershwin or Bernstein.

**How do you choose the art songs that you record and sing at recitals?**

For me it is very important that I love the music of the songs. I will never be able to sing something that I do not feel and that does not resonate. And that must be a good programme with a unique vision. All Lieder I choose for their varying sound, so that there's a dynamic and a movement. I love Lieder, especially the French chansons, but usually I sing opera arias in the second part of a programme, where I really feel at home. And this June in Zurich I chose Verdi's arias to promote my new Verdi CD.



### **Is Fauré the greatest composer of French art songs in your view?**

I wouldn't necessarily say so. But in my recital I had more from him, that's true. He is different from the others, with more direction in the music and with more soul in the accompaniment. Maybe Fauré touches my soul at the moment, but I love Chausson and Debussy in the same way.

### **How long does it usually take you to learn new music for a première, and what is your approach?**

To be really musically good, to prepare a new role, it takes more or less one month and studying daily. I don't think I've ever sung an operatic world première, though.

### **Has any music ever been composed specifically for you to sing it?**

Yes, actually, it was by a film composer, a friend of mine, Flavio Motalla, who scores films in Hollywood. I asked him to write something especially for my voice. He heard me in Zurich and on CD and composed four vocalises that we recorded in London with John Scott, who's a bit of a legend. It's fantastic, very well written music, somewhere between opera and film music. *L'amore è poesia* is the name of our CD from 2016, on Sony/Solo Musica.

I also sang work by composer Marco Giubileo, who plays viola for the orchestra of La Scala in Milan. He composed a piece of sacred music for me, very beautiful and difficult, but wonderful, melodic and touching: 'Preghiera e Contemplazione', a Cantata for soprano, choir and orchestra.

I will sing another piece of his in a première in Romania on the opening night of the festival in Târgu Mureş, in 2020.

### **How are Romanian audiences different from Swiss ones?**

The Romanians love classic music in general and they attend the performances in opera houses and the Philharmonic concerts very much. Unfortunately, there are not the same possibilities as in Switzerland. They appreciate good singers and know very well how to classify them. Normally when good singers, especially those who are famous, come to Romanian stages, they're welcomed like heroes. The Swiss audiences are the same, really. They are used to good quality and appreciate the art of each singer – especially in Zurich where, during the time of Alexander Pereira, they got the *crème de la crème*.

### **What influence has the culture of Romanian folk songs and harmonies had on your style and taste, if any?**

Folk songs had less influence on my style and taste, but church music influenced me very much. I was in the choir of my orthodox church as a little child with my beloved grandparents, and there I learned a great deal about music. We did rehearsals weekly and we learned new pieces, so it was like a real music school for me. I also learned much music in school, where I had a very good (and very strict) teacher. Then there are the things I learned alone; I was often an autodidact in those years. But I was really influenced by the church, especially in learning to sing *piano* like an angel. And bel canto

asks for *piano*, so I think about of this angel-music from the church. When I was a little child I sang some folk songs in the school, but really folk music did not have influence on my interpretations.

That being said, I included in my Zurich recital some classic songs inspired by traditional folk Romanian music and they are beautiful: melancholic and with typical Romanian harmonies.

### **Has your nationality ever been a hindrance to you professionally?**

I was born in Romania and I have Romanian and Swiss nationality. Honestly, I never had problems in my career because I am Romanian. In fact, there are many Romanian singers who are very appreciated. In the music profession there are no borders! It is like a sport. Whoever is good professionally is appreciated.

### **Do women or men have an easier time as professional singers?**

I think that this profession is easy for nobody. First of all you must be very well trained. Then, there are so many singers today and what is sad, the quality nowadays has less to say than it did in the golden age of opera. Unfortunately. But I think it *is* easier for a tenor or a good baritone or bass to make career than a soprano. The soprano voice is normal for a woman; so many, many singers are soprano. Fortunately I made my career in the time when many directors and conductors had good ideas about how to choose a good singer. Today a singer must be unknown (easier to sell!), young, beautiful and only then, if possible, with a good voice. At the beginning of my career, first and foremost, each singer had to sing well. Today nothing is normal anymore.

### **Who are some composers whom you respect but whose music doesn't suit your voice or doesn't interest you as a performer?**

I have big respect for Wagner, but I do not wish to sing it because it's not 'my world' or voice. I sang one of the *Zaubermaidchen* in *Parsifal* in Zurich at the beginning of my career, and I sang with great pleasure the *Wesendonck Lieder* and Isolde's *Liebestod*, both with orchestra in a concert in 1993 in my home city Iași. It was a crazy concert because in that time I was supposed to also sing *Vier letzte Lieder* by Strauss and the final aria of *Salome*. And I sang all these arias by Wagner and Strauss in a mammoth concert with the Philharmonic Orchestra. It was wonderful, but of these only *Vier letzte Lieder* stayed in my repertoire.

### **How do you know you're ready for a new role?**

We are always ready for new roles. The problem in our profession is to be intelligent enough to choose the right roles. The voice, and with it the career, have to grow in an intelligent way. The voice is something very sensitive and we have to be very careful with her. First and foremost is the hard work that comes in developing proper technique. This must be the first thing that a singer has to have permanently fixed in their eyes: to find a good voice-teacher and learn the right vocal technique. Next, you must not force the voice in an overly dramatic way. You move slowly and carefully to the right roles at the right moment. When a singer already has solid experience and starts to feel confident, they will have the courage to experiment with new vocal repertoire.

For example, I grew my repertoire in Zurich. Pereira gave me one or two new roles every year to *début* and to see how they would suit me. In hindsight, I can say now that all the roles were perfect for me. No damage, no undue force on the vocal cords. (In February 2000 I made two *débuts* in one month, first *Luisa Miller* by Verdi, and two weeks later *I puritani* by Bellini.) I now have a big repertoire, different styles, with a heavy emphasis on *bel canto*, which I discovered that is the right

thing for me and my voice. But I still want to expand to yet more roles by Bellini and Donizetti, and also more and more Verdi.

**When you have the choice between different concerts or roles, what influences your decision-making?**

For roles I have to love the music and to have beautiful costumes and scenes. And of course the right cachet. **(Laughter)**. Concerts, it depends. I love concerts, including open-air. As I said, this year I gave a special concert that had a special and unique concept with arias but also cross-over pieces, many composed and orchestrated for me, pieces with classical-guitar, Lieder that were orchestrated, pop music orchestrated in a classic style, etc. This year my husband Christoph Hebeisen and I closed our festival in an open-air concert transmitted live on Romanian TV, which ended in a standing ovation.



**Who are some other sopranos you admire and why?**

There are many, especially the ‘golden age’ sopranos. I considered all these sopranos ‘Maestras’ for me, whether only listening to their recordings or seeing them live on stage. I will put now in first place ‘La Superba’ Montserrat Caballé, who left this world just a few weeks ago in October and was from another dimension. I love her very much for the beautiful and unique colour of her voice, warm and electrifying, but especially for her capacity to sing wonderful phrases in *piano*, with very long breath – infinite phrases. She sang in piano where nobody was expecting. She could sing each sound perfect, each phrase, it didn’t matter how difficult it was. And I think that my voice has something from her voice in the way I construct phrases and produce the sounds, especially *piano* notes. As I said, as a young girl I always sang the high notes in *piano* in the church to imitate the singing of the angels. I dedicated the aria of Elisabetta di Valois from *Don Carlo* on my last CD ‘Verdi Heroines’ to her. I did so because of the last sound ‘la’ that she sang very, very long and so softly. I did the same in her memory.

The same *piano* shows up in the singing of Edita Gruberová, my colleague from Zurich, where we alternated many roles on ‘our’ stage like Lucia, Zerbinetta, Elvira from *Puritani*, etc. I always was very impressed by her *pianissimo*, used with intelligence. I love and admire the acrobatic technique very much of ‘La Stupenda’ Joan Sutherland. She was so perfect in her unique and personal coloratura. Like a perfect machine. Incredible. I loved to sing her variations in *Semiramide*’s aria and

I have to confess that I worked very much to sing it almost perfectly. I had the opportunity to know her personally and her husband Maestro Richard Bonyng in Zurich many years ago.

And for sure I love 'La Divina', Maria Callas, who could sing almost all soprano and mezzo roles in perfect style and with such emotional and electrifying interpretations. I also love my friend and Romanian soprano from the golden age, Virginia Zeani! She was perfect in all roles that she sang, with a beautiful voice, equal in each register, perfect breath technique, and wonderful interpretations. Maria Callas legitimated her as her successor! I visited her last month in Florida, and even now her blue-green eyes are very expressive. Her soul, her modesty, her huge personality and especially her fresh voice at 93 years of age touched me in an incredible way! I cannot forget her Lucia that she sang in Covent Garden. I never heard such perfection in the madness coloratura; the voice was equal from the top to the low register, and oh, the way it emanated!

I love the beloved Italian soprano Mariella Devia, who is still singing at 70 years old in a perfect way and with a fresh voice thanks to her professionalism, perfect technique and discipline. I have big respect and love for American soprano Beverly Sills! She was incredible! She had such a powerful voice and perfect technique. She had a very big imagination to create all the variations, sometimes too many, but her voice was incredible! I love very much the way in which Renata Scotta made up the musical phrases in a very refined way, such power and the wonderful taste in singing! I worked with her doing *Lucia di Lammermoor* in Thessaloniki, where she was stage director. Mirella Freni was an example of a beautiful lyric voice, beautiful warm singing, beautiful expression.

I mentioned here only a few sopranos who touch my soul and inspire me!

**Your breath control, phrasing and dynamics were exquisite at the Zürich Liederabend. How do you find the right dynamics, the right touch, for different arias?**

I have now 28 years of experience on stage. I always trusted my instincts and my way of expressing something. At the beginning of my career I learned very much in the Opernhaus Zürich, working with the best conductors of the world, who gave me the last word of advice after working with the *répétiteur*. In Zurich we had pianists who knew the different styles of opera and singing intimately, so I could learn from them.

Of course in my life I listened to many recordings of good singers, but now I do not anymore. When for example I study Lieder like the French chansons of my Liederabend in Zurich, I look first at the text, I study the music and I do the right combination for me from both sides, so that in the end the whole music of the chansons says something. It is important to transmit the right message of the composer through my personality. My interpretations are very personal, I do not like to imitate because my instrument (my voice) is mine and I have my specific chance to say something.

Many times I feel a song in a different way from another colleague. Singing is something very individual and if somebody imitates someone, the end product is artificial. The truth in all that I am singing, that's what's important – for with my voice, my soul and my interpretations. Plus, giving the right dynamic correspondence for the word (the text of the Lieder are very, very important; they are like small operas), to have an architecture of the phrase, to have the direction of the musical idea and to modulate each sound. You can create every sound in different ways, so I try it by practicing different ways and at the end I choose the 'right' one.

As my voice has changed, I have more possibilities to express something. Which is normal, I have more experience. So, my Lieder from now are very different from the recorded ones. Also the

Romanian songs are different now, but with the same Romanian soul. For my most recent recital, I did not work with a coach, I worked alone with my instinct and experience. This was in the first part.

In the second part of the recital I wanted to show to the Zurich audience the direction of my voice now. They know me very well, but I have not sung there so often since the new leadership came, four or five years ago. I pleased the audience not only with my high notes, which are now more dramatic, but also with new repertoire showing my new capacities for dramatic interpretation.

### **How has your relationship to Verdi's music changed?**

Now I am in a phase to convince managers of the theatres that my voice asks now for more dramatic coloraturas roles like Anna Bolena, Maria Stuarda, Norma, Lucrezia Borgia, Leonora in *Trovatore*, Desdemona in *Otello*, Elisabetta in *Roberto Devereux*. I struggle to tell them that Gilda times are over, even if I can sing it. But what reason has still to sing Gilda if I can sing better Anna Bolena? or Norma? I still need a little bit of time to convince them.

### **Why is madness so prevalent in opera?**

This is a typical, appealing subject of the Romantic era, and it was and is still very demanded in theatre. Also, it's still modern. It is very interesting theatrically to present a mad woman or man as if they were normal. And there are so many operas with this subject, so we have to interpret it. I did it from the beginning of my career and I specialized myself on madness (**laughter**).

### **What should composers working today know about the soprano voice?**

They have to know the real soprano register and compose to not damage the soprano! Well, also the soprano herself has to know technically how to approach modern music and to preserve herself (**laughter**). I do not personally like much modern music, so I don't have to worry about it.

### **Is Regietheater more your style or do you prefer simpler or more traditional stagings?**

Look, if the modernity of the *Regietheater* does not disturb and is done in a good way, I like it. I did *Lucia di Lammermoor* with Lorenzo Mariani recently in Genoa. The stage was more or less modern; I was a modern Lucia who was smoking, who had the capacity to think and fight for her love. Also the madness wasn't 'traditional' (I created it with my specific personality after I knew the geometry of movements on stage).

I loved very much the beautiful and aesthetic production of *Norma* by Robert Wilson. It had the right intentions, being simple, very suggestive, with its famous hand movements and beautiful placement of the choir and soloists, plus fantastic light frames. Very modern and very beautiful. I love traditional productions, but they should not be dusty-looking. They should have beautiful costumes and sets, normal interactions between partners, but in the same time also some modernity.

### **Who are some directors that brought out your best singing?**

The singer must have very good contact with the conductor and the orchestra. In the famous *Norma* of Robert Wilson in Zurich, I could really concentrate only on the music. After I learned the hand movement 'alphabet' it became automatic. I love *Anna Bolena* of Graham Vick that I debuted last year in Lisbon and sang again this year in Verona (the production was born 10 years ago in Verona). It was the perfect *mise en scene* for this opera. It was a very stylized stage, there were beautiful costumes, and the positions were very near to orchestra so I had very good contact to the conductor.

It was fantastic. I found it perfect. It also aided relations with the other colleagues. I sang *Maria Stuarda* in Genoa last year too, directed by Alfonso Antoniozzi, who himself is a singer, so he knows the demands of singers. I should add that I also sang *Norma*, *Anna Bolena*, and *Trovatore* last year, also in Genoa, without the slightest damage to my voice; it really is all about good form and technique, no matter the production.

In Zurich and in general in the world I was lucky and I always had very good productions. A bit difficult is to sing open-air in a big places like Arena di Verona. But quickly I learned how to manage it and now I feel like at home there. But it's true, in theatres it is much easier.

**What are some artistic risks you've taken that have paid off? What are some risks that didn't?**

I always was very careful with my voice and my repertoire, I did not make risky professional errors, because I love my voice, I take care of it. (I'm still working with Maestra Midelda D'Amico in Milan, because a check-up of the voice is always welcome during the career.) I now have the courage to leave the classification of a coloratura soprano and am starting to sing new repertoire, like *Anna Bolena*, *Maria Stuarda*, etc., especially this year with my début as Leonora in *Trovatore*. I did it my way, using the right bel canto approach that is correct for this role. Maybe nobody thought that I could sing this dramatic role, but I did it and I am very happy! Next year I will have the courage to make my début as Giselda in *Lombardi*, again using the bel canto technique of singing!

**What music would you enjoy recording in the next several years?**

My precise wish is now to record a second album with Verdi arias, and I hope to produce it very soon. Then I would love to record a Puccini CD with his beautiful and touching music, which is easier than Verdi. I wish to do an album of French arias, because I love French music. And then one day another bel canto CD. I hope to do all these and I know that I will!

**What would you like people to say about your singing in five years' time?**

I wish to become a complete singer, especially in bel canto and in Verdi repertoire. I hope that the audience and my fans will remember my art, my soul, and to feel my sincerity, my true singing. Each time I leave something of my soul on stage for the audience. It almost feels sometimes like being the spark of life between God and the audience, and I wish with every performance that they come home a little bit richer in their soul.

*Elena Moşuc was interviewed by Casey Creel*