Catherine Zeta-Jones
On Life and What’s Next

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The New Italian Voice of Romina Arena
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Romina Arena is a vibrant internationally known female artist noted for a unique style of operatic pop, rock and classical crossover. As a singer and a songwriter, Romina’s use of the new genre of music that mixes the older classical symphonies with the new fast beats, brings an outstanding combination of style and success to her career.

Born and raised in Sicily, of a Sicilian mother and a Roman father, at age 16 she left Italy to come to the U.S. under the wing of Sal Pacino and his wife Katherin Pacino, the parents of the actor Al Pacino. Starring in her own rags-to-riches classic Hollywood story, the now renowned Italian singer came to America with only 40 dollars, a Gucci bag and a solid reputation from a hit record back home—and struck it big. The new Italian voice currently “lives” in Malibu, yet spends most of her time travelling around the world.

In our chit-chat, we found out the reasons behind Arena’s success. Inspired by beauties of life’s treats, her unique operatic voice reminds us of the hearts of great composers, artists and many others.

ALO: We all love and admire the great singing stars Andrea Bocelli and Josh Groban, and you are considered to be the younger generation version of them. Tell us more of what you are doing today that is leading you to become the next big Italian name?

ROMINA ARENA: I met the great composer-musician Ennio Morricone as a teenager and asked him to let me work with him. He said, “Come back when you are more experienced.” After 20 years, destiny brought us back together through the New York agent that we had in common, Giancarlo Ioppolo. That’s when he heard me sing for the first time, and he stood up and applauded me with “Bravo bravo! You are the most outstanding, dominant female voice I’ve heard.” Morricone then chose me to write lyrics for his music, and I am honored that he has chosen me over major artists to make the great record “Morricone. Uncovered.”

The passion I have for what I do is reflected in the lyrics I write in my songs. Being the first official female Italian pop-opera singer called the “tenorette” with a five-octave voice, I am thankful for the great gift I have and the people around me, such as Jay Hall, a great, very experienced manager.

ALO: As an international artist fluent in Italian, English, French and Spanish, what made you interested in learning and recording in many other languages including German, Portuguese, Japanese, Greek, Bulgarian and Hebrew?

RA: We live in a global world where we need to keep the doors open to our neighbors and make the effort to learn their languages not just for a song, but as respect for their countries. When I learn the language of the country I am visiting, I don’t use the language to record music and sell records. I want to be able to connect with the people in a language they resonate with. I learn from them and make a difference in their lives through my lyrics. I am striving to become the international ambassador of goodwill and good things. So far I have received the Global Citizenship award from the UN for helping children in Haiti, and there’s more to come.

ALO: How about the Middle East? Have you traveled there, and which countries did you visit? If not, are you planning on visiting with all that is currently happening there?

RA: I have not been in the Middle East yet, but have received two offers from Dubai
and Abu Dhabi. I have always been interested in the culture regardless of what is temporarily happening there because Sicily, where I grew up, was colonized by the Arabs, so we have many things in common, including the same Mediterranean weather.

RA: I am constantly traveling, and on my next world tour I am hoping to hit Las Vegas once again.

ALO: As a young female artist, how does your career affect your personal and romantic relationships?

RA: (Laughs.) You said romantic. (Laughs again.) I can barely sleep; I am so taken by all the duties. It is hard to be in a relationship and take care of business at the same time. It’s also difficult to find the right person; now there is someone I care about in my life, but I don’t know what the future holds for us. I worked hard to get to this point and believe if something is meant to happen it will be.

I have suffered so much from love, and the songs that I wrote reflect personal experiences. Everything is written from deep feelings I have gone through. We live in a very cold world, and we have to bring love to our lives and to each other. For me, music plays the most beautiful language that heals the wounds because the world will always need love, sweet love.

ALO: What are some future projects you are working on that will be out soon? Any television or acting appearance on the way?

RA: Well, where should I start? A major two-time Oscar-winning film producer is currently making a major motion picture based on my life story and a Broadway musical that I will be writing for. Everything is still developing.

I signed a major five-book deal with Linden/Quill Driver Books. My first book will be published in June 2014, titled Where Did They Film That? It talks about all the movie shoots that took place in Italy like The Godfather, Life Is Beautiful, Romeo and Juliette, Eat Pray Love and others. The book will be released in 13 languages for people to get to know Italy. I am also a motivational speaker and was recently in Molokai in the “Live the Life You Love” workshop. I am grateful for all of the opportunities.

ALO: What about your family? Do you have a history of talented people, and how did you grow up to love music?

RA: My father was an opera lover, and I...
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grew up listening to Luciano Pavarotti and Mario Lanza. That’s why I couldn’t break away from that particular genre of music, mixing it with some modern pop to make it appealing to the younger audiences. My mother is an artist as well; she inspired me all throughout my life as she’s a great photographer, painter, singer, songwriter and a jewelry designer.

ALO: At four years old, you were involved in an Italian version of Disney’s Topolino as an Italian Musketeer, and since then you’ve had a very long journey of singing and performing. Did you ever feel like your childhood was stolen from you, or that you have missed out on having a normal life for being in the spotlight from an early age? How did Disney find you?

RA: My mother made me take ballet classes where the teacher had connections with the local Disney people. I had an audition, and when they heard my voice, I was chosen to play the musketeer role. Yes, childhood was stolen from me; my father left, and I was devastated. I call him “The broken knight in shiny armor.” Then my mother kept me busy by putting me in classes to learn how to dance and sing. My mother pushed me, and I hated it. I was four years old and I wanted to play Barbie, instead of working. However, I thank my mother now, because I love what I do, and I owe her for my love of music and everything I’ve done.

ALO: From your previous experiences, what would be some advice that you would like to give to the younger artists in order to make their career paths successful and smooth?

RA: It’s not up to your agent to succeed; it’s up to you. Even if you are surrounded by many people, you have to be on top of your game and get things done. Focus on your passion, not on what people tell you. To be happy as an artist you have to “live the life you love,” as a dear friend used to tell me. People criticize because they are not able to do what you’re doing.

ALO: Would you like to leave us with an “end note” or add anything else to this conversation?

RA: I want to say that all things are possible if you keep your mind open to receive and your heart ready to achieve. Appreciate what you have, but don’t be afraid to ask for more and want more in order to grow, as long as you keep on giving back. Don’t be motivated to do things because of money, but find your passion. Follow your passion, and your money will follow. “Persistence is the ability to overcome any obstacles between you and your goals.”
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