



Nana Mouskouri bids farewell

World-popular Greek vocalist to give two sold-out performances at the Herod Atticus Theater

AFP

The voice. Nana Mouskouri comes to Athens this week for two farewell concerts which are part of a farewell tour around the world.

Some goodbyes are tougher than others. In the case of Nana Mouskouri, it signifies bidding farewell to half a century of live appearances, countless recordings and the kind of adulation by world audiences that very few artists experience in their – short or long – careers.

The veteran vocalist is in Athens this week for two farewell concerts tomorrow and Thursday at the Herod Atticus Theater. Part of the Greek Festival, the sold-out concerts are also part of the singer's farewell tour which will take her from Europe to Australia, followed by

Asia, South America, the United States and Canada.

From Manos Hadjidakis to Bob Dylan via jazz, gospels and so many more music genres, Mouskouri's distinctive voice has sold more than 300 million albums around the world.

Born Ioanna Mouskouri in Hania, Crete, in 1934, Nana's musical gifts were apparent from early on. Along with her sister, she enrolled at the Athens Conservatory at the age of 12 to train in classical music and opera. Soon afterward, she discovered jazz and began singing on the radio.

In 1958, she met Hadjidakis. Impressed by her voice, the composer started writing songs for her. "Kapou yparchei i agapi mou" (My Love is Somewhere out There), co-written by Hadjidakis and Nikos Gatsos (lyrics), won first prize at the first ever Greek Song Festival. Two years later, Mouskouri earned top spot at the Mediterranean Song Festival, resulting in a recording contract with a French label.

A year later, Mouskouri's voice accompanied a German documentary on Greece, singing "Weisse Rosen aus Athen" (The White Rose of Athens), her first recording in the German language. Translated into various languages, it became a signature Mouskouri tune – along with so many more.

In 1962, the singer met Quincy Jones, who persuaded her to record a jazz album in New York. A year later, Mouskouri left her homeland behind and established her residence in Paris where she collaborated with local composer Michel Legrand. Four years later, she embarked on a US tour with Harry Belafonte.

Besides music, the singer has embraced the world through other activities: Appointed a UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador in 1993, Mouskouri visited Bosnia and was deeply affected by the living conditions of the children. The following year, she was elected as a member of the European Parliament – only to resign in 1999.

At the Herod Atticus Theater, Mouskouri will be accompanied by Luciano Di Napoli (piano and vocals), Yannick Deborne (guitar, bouzouki and vocals), Lucien Zerrad (guitar), Philippe Pregno (saxophone, keyboards, percussion and vocals), Jean-Philippe Roux (bass) and Christophe Gallizio (drums).

Both concerts will run the gamut of Mouskouri's repertory, including Hadjidakis and Dylan, of course, but also Irish ballads and polyphonic folk songs from Epirus.

For more information go to www.greekfestival.gr.