

Istanbul surpasses New York in cultural life, NYC transplant says

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Former opera singer and fashion designer, Alexandra Ivanoff definitely knows a thing or two about the thriving music scene in Istanbul.

As a music critic for five publications including *Time Out Istanbul* and a singing teacher to Turkish and French students, Ivanoff undoubtedly has a jam-packed schedule training the next generation of singers and discovering the city's musical hotspots. Yet, Ivanoff described her life in Istanbul as "a continual adventure" and said that the only thing that she missed about her former home, New York, was its "special brand of humor."

As a music critic, Ivanoff spends time both promoting and reviewing cutting-edge concerts and shows. She puts down Istanbul's unique charm to the fact that it lies at the crossroads of many different cultures and their respective influences.

"Istanbul is the place where everything crosses over, you find fusions of things that are uniquely born here because of what Istanbul is : a crossroads," she said.

Formerly based in New York City, Ivanoff is used to seeing the creme de la creme when it comes to cultural performances, nonetheless, she remained adamant that there is as much, if not more happening in Istanbul.

"New York City is the Mecca of culture, there's so much going on it's overwhelming, but it's the same thing here now. Istanbul has actually surpassed NYC in its own way. NYC has one symphony orchestra whereas Istanbul has three - so there's more of a symphonic life here."

Ivanoff also highlighted the different geographical arrangement of the two cities. She noted that while NYC is separated into five boroughs, in Istanbul it is more a question of hopping over from one continent to the other. Although Ivanoff commented that there was currently more musical action on the European side, she expressed hope that in the future there would be as much buzz on the Asian side.

As a music critic, Ivanoff has traced her own map of the eclectic sounds of Istanbul, yet it is not just music that ties her to the city. She recounted how her Bulgarian grandmother attended an earlier version of Robert College in Istanbul as a child, attributing her own organic well-being in the city to a "connection with the Earth" where her "DNA had preceded her."

"Life here is a continual adventure - the minute that I open my door and I go outside I follow my nose and it leads me places I could never have predicted. The ferry is one of my favorite things - that's a mystical journey every time I take it - it's almost like my soul requires it," she said.

Sources

Source : Hürriyet Daily News, January 7, 2011