



ZEYNEP TEMEL

Possessing a Soul That Understands Humanity

"I believe true success does not lie solely in great achievement, but in possessing a soul that understands humanity—a soul that remains sincere and childlike in its wonder."

*Born in Istanbul, soprano Zeynep Temel began her musical path in school choirs before advancing through Maltepe University's Part-Time Conservatory and Aydın Doğan Fine Arts High School. Currently studying opera at the Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University Istanbul State Conservatory under Assoc. Prof. Dr. Tülay Uyar Hatip, she has received recognition in several international competitions. In this conversation, she reflects on unlocking the tragic depth behind Bellini's *I Puritani*, the transformational nature of performance, and her dedication to artistic growth.*

WHEN DID YOU FIRST FEEL THAT SINGING WAS MORE THAN A CHILDHOOD PASSION—THAT IT COULD BECOME THE PATH OF YOUR LIFE?

For me, there was no single “first moment” and no clear beginning. Music had always been inside me. Adding color to emotions with my voice and sharing them with others captivated me deeply. That childlike passion and enthusiasm still live within me, and I believe I can only continue this journey with them. Every moment on stage when I felt, “This is my place”—the excitement before stepping into the light, feeling the atmosphere with my entire being before singing the first note, focusing fully on the emotion of the piece, and of course, my racing heartbeat—these were the most beautiful parts. Experiencing that childhood passion afresh



each time and knowing that this journey is truly my life's path is a magnificent feeling.

WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO CHOOSE ELVIRA'S ARIA FROM I PURITANI, AND HOW DO YOU APPROACH A ROLE SO FULL OF EMOTION AND BEL CANTO STYLE?

This special role was introduced to me by my teacher, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Tülay Uyar Hatip, who means a great deal to me. I have learned endlessly from her and continue to do so. When I first listened to the aria, I was deeply moved by the connected, soulful, flowing quality of Bellini's music—how seamlessly it merges with the spirit of the story. I became curious about Elvira's world, her past, and her inner landscape. Elvira, once a joyful bride, descends into delusion and withdraws from reality after the heartbreak of Arturo's sudden disappearance on their wedding day. When I sing the cabaletta, like Elvira, I enter that dream. Yet while expressing her bright, exaggerated joy, I always remember the profound sorrow hidden beneath, carried through both the music and the narrative. My aim is to reflect Elvira's desperate attempt to veil her painful truth beneath this false happiness. I envision her with this intention and try to build a deep emotional bond with the audience so they, too, can feel the pain beneath the surface.

YOU'VE STUDIED WITH MANY IMPORTANT TEACHERS. WHAT HAS EACH STAGE OF YOUR VOCAL TRAINING TAUGHT YOU?

I have been fortunate to work with valued and experienced teachers, each of whom gave me priceless insight. Early on, I learned that I must believe both in my work and in myself. I learned to use my voice correctly, to discover its natural timbre, and to allow the story and the music to become one through my interpretation. I learned to be strong, courageous, and humble; to let my voice be heard by everyone without distinction; and to become an artist open to criticism and deeply motivated in my craft. I discovered how essential it is to sing on the breath for my voice to develop healthily. I came to understand that technique and stage presence grow from the love, energy, and quiet joy that live within me.



YOU EARNED PLATINUM AT THE MOZART COMPETITION AND LATER BECAME THE ABSOLUTE WINNER OF THE FENIX AWARD. WHAT CHANGED OR GREW WITHIN YOU BETWEEN THESE TWO PERFORMANCES?

The Mozart Competition was the first competition I had ever entered—and my first international one as well. Representing my country filled both my loved ones and me with pride. It was also a beginning that renewed my confidence and courage. By the time I reached the Fenix Award, however, I felt a significant personal transformation. I had internalized the story of the aria much more deeply; I interpreted the character with greater nuance and emotional depth. I believe every competition contributes to my artistic growth, allowing me to observe myself more clearly and better understand where I am developing and where I must continue to grow.

5. WHAT EXCITES YOU MOST ABOUT STUDYING OPERA AT MIMAR SINAN FINE ARTS UNIVERSITY?

Since middle school, I had dreamed of studying at such a distinguished institution. The education I received at Aydın Doğan Fine Arts High School played an enormous role in helping this dream come true. Mimar Sinan University is one of the most prestigious state

conservatories. What excites me most is the school's vision: to offer young talents international opportunities by involving them in significant artistic projects. As a concrete example of this, I had the chance to attend a masterclass at our university led by maestro Richard Hetherington, who had previously worked with my teacher, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Tülay Uyar Hatip. These international experiences, combined with the inspiring atmosphere of the school, keep my excitement and motivation alive. The dream of leaving a meaningful legacy at my university and taking part in unforgettable projects is a powerful force in my journey.

WHAT ARE YOUR BIGGEST DREAMS FOR THE FUTURE—ROLES, STAGES, OR ARTISTIC GOALS YOU HOPE TO REACH?

I don't believe in setting limits on dreams. My greatest dream is to perform on major stages around the world and eventually establish an international academy where I can share my stage experience and artistic discipline with future generations. As for roles, I trust that the largest roles will come with time—through the growth of my voice and my artistic maturity. I ground my dreams in the roles I am working on now. I want to live and feel each role's excitement and sorrow fully. Beyond all of these ambitions, I believe true success does not lie solely in great achievement, but in possessing a soul that understands humanity—a soul that remains sincere and childlike in its wonder. What sustains me on this path is the unending excitement music gives me in every moment.

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