Yannatou evokes pure, sincere melancholy

MISCHA ANDRIESSEN

world

Savina Yannatou & Primavera en Salonico ****

Earlier this year the Greek singer Savina Yannatou released the incisive "Songs of Thessaloniki". On it she interprets seventeen late-19th en early 20th century songs which all have a link to Thessaloniki. At that time the harbor city sheltered many different culture, and thus Yannatou sings a.o. Turkish, Armenian, Bulgarian and Serbian songs. And as a surprising stranger in its' midst an Irish song which was popular in the First World War.

One of the greatest qualities of both Yannatou and the musicians supporting her, is that they let the songs themselves do their work. The arrangements are sober, but striking. The musicians partly shine in what they don't play, which is meant as a great compliment. Each form of decoration is omitted, the music is played meticulously without blowing up the emotions any further. An extraordinary musician like Harris Lambrakis impresses on the nay (shepherds flute), exactly because he isn't enticed into antics for a moment.

With this mentality Primavera en Salonico makes a perfect match with Savina Yannatou, a formidable singer who refrains from coquetries and mannerisms, neither does she lose herself in unnecessary vocal acrobatics or thickened emotions. At some point this Sunday she walked away from the microphone and, singing a capella, silenced the already very silent Korzo in the Hague even more. Her voice as a story apart.

In the songs she sings it's often women and girls who have their say One has run away from her angry mother, one is locked up by her father, the other dies three days before her wedding. Such dramas are already impressive on their own, nothing needs to be emphasized. With this humble, devoted approach Yannatou & co gradually got a full Korzo under their spell. Not with big gestures, but with a pure, sincere melancholy which slowly and without pressure permeates the listener with the fact that this multicultural rich Thessaloniki doesn't exist anymore.