



ACS Athens interviews Ms. Vanessa Adam

by Katerina Michalakakou

Harpist and Co-Founder of ADaM Productions and Badminton Theater
Mother of Ares and Orestes



Vanessa Adam, Harpist, former Litigation Attorney and Co-Founder of ADaM Productions and Badminton Theater describes her childhood and talks about her transition from the world of litigation to the world of event productions. She and her husband have hosted more than 680 productions with 2600 artists and have opened their theater doors to more than 800,000 spectators. Vanessa Adam is artistically and musically in tune and this is evident from her careful selection of handpicked shows that have fascinated many art patrons and theater critics around the world.

What do you remember from your school days and how would you describe yourself as a child?

Well, I was born in Pittsburgh, raised in the suburbs of New York, and went to Smith College in Massachusetts, a private girl's high school, with a private boy's high school, conveniently next door (giggles). I loved the atmosphere at the school and I have wonderful memories. I got the best out of both worlds. As a child, I was outgoing, energetic and always into music. From the age of five and actively encouraged by my mother, who wanted her kids to play instruments, I began playing the piano, cello and harp. Every week end I used to go to Boston University for my harp lessons.

As far as schooling is concerned, I was a good student, although I could have worked harder and my favorite class was history.

Did you have an idea what your professional life would be?

I loved music, but I never thought that I'd become a professional musician. I played music not because I had to, but because I loved to. However, at the beginning, I hated the harp, as it was a very difficult instrument. In 9th grade, I had wanted to quit the harp, and it was only after my dad had said to me that he was going to sell the harp that I changed my mind. My world had changed that day and I realized that I could not give up on my harp. It was the day I fell in love with it, and my passion for playing increased tremendously. That didn't mean of course that I wanted to become a musician, because at that time, I certainly did not. I was afraid that if I did become a professional musician, I would lose my love for it. I just knew that I would find my way in due time. Consequently, I had many different interests and three unrelated full careers.



Was there someone or something that inspired you to aim high? Who was your role model?

Other than my mother? (giggles) Both my parents were supportive. However, the thing that inspired me the most was travelling. We used to travel a lot as a family. We went all over the world and this experience revealed a whole new horizon for me. The different cultures, the people, the food opened up all my senses and made me realize that there is a world out there waiting to be explored.

Do you have any hobbies? If yes, what are they?

Most of my hobbies include music. I mostly enjoy going to the theater and watching musicals. Despite my athletic physique, I was never into sports, like my older brother or my father who used to play with the LA Rams, before going to Med School. However, the majority of our family is musically-involved. My mother used to be a professional singer back in the 50s singing in the old dinner clubs, my younger brother is an opera singer and my oldest sister is actively involved with music also.

Do you believe that work and personal life can be balanced? How do you tackle this issue?

Yes, I do believe it can be balanced, as long as you really want it. If someone is organized and manages their time effectively, then they can be able to enjoy both worlds. When I finished Law School, I began thinking of what kind of profession I could also do from home. It takes a lot of planning and thinking ahead, before anyone can achieve a good balance.

How would you describe yourself now and do you take risks?

Three things come to my mind: Energetic, open minded and happy. As far as risk taking is concerned, I do take risks by nature, not physical risks, I don't to budgie jumping, and you will never catch me with a parachute jumping out of an airplane, but in the format of my life and career, I like to take risks.

In 1994, together with your husband you founded ADaM Productions in New York. How did that come about and what made you seek the opportunity to produce events in Greece?

It was a long journey before ADaM Productions came about. After college in 1984, I got an offer from the Northern State Symphony of Greece to play for a year in Greece and ended up staying for three. When I returned to the US, I decided to go to Law School, not because I wanted to become a lawyer, but as I believed that it was the best foundation for any business angle I would take in the future. However, at Law School, I found my little itch, and that was litigation. Soon after Law School, I opened up my own litigation practice, which I had for twelve years. Litigation was a lot like theater, it had a preparation period and then the curtain opened, you performed and then it closed.

I had met my husband during my litigation practice. My husband did not play an instrument, but was very much into music. He was living in New York at the time and was a radio presenter in a Greek radio show. One day, he came up with an idea to create a CD with old Greek songs from the 20s, re-arranged and performed by Greek and Greek-American artists. I had got on board with him on that, and we even recorded one song with me playing the harp. It was a fun project and very successful. A year after we got married.

His next idea was to put up the Mississippi Mass Gospel Choir at the Herodeion in Athens and so we worked together on this and put it up in the summer of 1995. I still had my litigation practice at the time, but as we travelled extensively back and forth to Greece, I decided to close it down and we permanently moved to Greece in 2003 and began searching opportunities to further develop the Greek market.

Has the current situation in Greece influenced your personal and work life?

Business is not what it used to be and so we try to change and adapt with the times. We try to adapt both our business and family lives accordingly.



You have two children: Ares, Grade 9 and Orestes, Grade 10. What factors did you consider before picking the right school for your children? Where your expectations met?

Primarily, my husband and I wanted an American education for our children. Both of us believe in the format, structure and opportunities offered in an American-Style school that focus on preparing and helping the students decide on what career path to follow. We wanted our kid's school to give them options and inspire them. For example, Oreste's Elementary teacher found that he had an amazing talent in writing and she inspired and nurtured this talent.

I was also looking for a caring school environment and I was impressed at how the ACS staff welcomed me when I had first visited the school. They were very simple, polite and did not try to impress me. I liked the way I was handled, talked to and addressed. Nothing formal or fancy! It gave me a wonderful feeling that this is the school I want my kids to go to. I didn't even wait to see the other schools, ACS felt just right. My expectations were met 100%.

If someone asked you to describe ACS, what would you say?

That is easy. The following characteristics come to my mind:

- Broadminded and care-taking, providing a solid education.
- Open and communicative
- Supportive to the parents and focused in the children.

What activities do you enjoying doing with your children?

We enjoy travelling a lot, but we have cut down on this these days. My children are also at an age where they like to go out with their friends, and so my time with them is spent driving them around to the various places. They also like to go to the movies with their father, which gives me freedom to relax at home. However, my children have made Sundays our family day and that is the time when we enjoy each other's company the most.

Are you strict with your children?

I am not strict with them, I just want them to be honest with me as far as what time to expect them back home, who they are with, and where they will be going. We are very communicative and consistent, and as they know my boundaries, we are able to reach a clear understanding.

What vision do you have for your children?

I want them to do something they love and not to wake up in the morning feeling unhappy with what they do. I want them to decide for themselves what they want to do. I am open to any profession they choose, as long as they are happy. Although I tried to give them a musical feel when they were young; they had piano, guitar and drum lessons, they somehow lost their musical interest and became involved with sports. I would never push them into doing something they don't enjoy and so I am willing to give them the freedom to choose their own career path.

What message would you like to share with the ACS community?

My motto, following the turmoil in Greece is, "put it in perspective and enjoy what you have". Everybody is feeling the upheaval and so we need to stay united and hold onto what we have, until the situation in Greece stabilizes again.

As for the school, I have been with ACS for ten years, and I have embraced the changes and the struggle towards these changes. I embrace change, as change brings development and development brings opportunities and success.

