

Translation of Azeri article - ? November 2014

French Imperial Princess Caroline Murat is a sixth generation direct descendent of the Emperor Napoleon and his Chief of Cavalry, later King of Naples, Joachim Murat.

Of her own father, the French writer wrote "Here the Prince Murat comes, resplendent in all."

On her mother's side, Princess Caroline traces her family back to another prestigious Austrian line - that of the Haffner family of Salzburg, the patrons of Mozart, for whom the composer wrote both the Haffner Symphony and the Haffner Serenade.

In her own lifetime, Princess Caroline Murat has become famous as a pianist under her stage name "Caroline Haffner" as as an ambassador for music around the world. She is the founder and organizer of many musical festivals and events. She has dedicated her life to the service of art and culture. It is appropriate that her chosen instrument is the 'king' of them all - the piano.

Princess Caroline has been the honoured guest of Azerbaijani Cultural Days in Cannes, France. This interview is one taken from life. It is not just a simple chronicle of events but an interesting story and description. If you thought stories of heroism by royalty and high-life princesses were bygone myths you will find, as you read this article about real, life-time work and activity, that you are in for a surprise.

My dynasty

"When I had just started to learn to be a musician, one of my family said to me: 'Your biggest problem is that you are the Princess Caroline Murat. And the person with something to say is called 'Caroline Haffner.' Of course this was a very strict definition. But to some extent, my relative was right. It was for that reason that I began my career as "Caroline Haffner."

As a teenage I was faced with a certain dilemma and two starkly different visions of life before me. My mother's Austrian-German and my father's Franco-Italian. From my mother's side a life of study to become a great pianist - no weekends and vacations - just work. From my father and his family's side there was permanent access to clubs, walks in the country, complete holidays.

Now I am happy and balanced with both characters - with my own, real identity as a pianist.

In my private life I am Caroline Murat. I receive visitors, organize evenings and give full freedom for this part of my identity to take precedence. I am very proud of my family. My father's ancestors were outstanding people and to be a part of the sixth

generation makes me feel close to them. I delight in being the descendent of the Emperor Napoleon. His youngest sister Caroline married Marshal Joachim Murat who led the largest cavalry in history and was a great strategist. He was an educated and talented military man as well as an honorable person. After battles, whatever the circumstances, he would visit the hospital to review the condition of wounded soldiers. Caroline Murat became Queen of Naples and during her relatively short seven year rule she did a lot for the city.

King Joachim Murat of Naples, my ancestor, died as a hero. I read his farewell letter to his wife, Caroline, the Queen of Naples. My own father used to say that title does not give rights, it confers duties. He too was a hero in war. As godson of the Empress Eugenie he concealed his age, which was just 16 years at the time, to go to war as a volunteer. He later became a pilot. He was injured on the battle field and lost a leg. My father showed me by example what is necessary to serve with a title.

In my work as a musician I have always tried to be worthy of representing my country properly. When I received music awards and they played the French national anthem, la Marseillaise, I understand that in my own way I continue my family's history. I have always used my status as princess for just one person - to be helpful.

My music

For many years I confess I was resentful towards my mother as I had a strict childhood. But in time I realized the value of things and had the opportunity to thank her. I was lucky that I had a certain talent for playing the piano. I was surrounded by many other musicians and they too worked for many years and spent thousands of hours in rehearsal. But there is always a danger that it may not lead to success. There are great teachers for technique, such as Bashkirov. He can teach people to play piano even with a broom! But talent is the crucial factor. To love, to listen to, and learn music - that is what is needed always and for everyone.

I will try to explain in this way. Over 30 years ago my father spent the winter in Martinique. I visited him there and later organized a small Inter-Caribbean music festival. There are a lot of musicians from the Caribbean and African musicians. But this is also an area of much violence. Many young people are unemployed; there is an atmosphere of idleness, criminality takes hold. When I was there I tried to talk to the local ministry for chess and music to be added to the school courses.

But I was told it was better to promote sport. There is nothing bad in doing sport. But if it makes a person stronger and fearless, chess develops the mind and a sense of strategy. Classical music develops concentration and mental application.

But today's youth is the generation of the smartphone, of computers and mobile

phones which take over their lives, their social connections and their thoughts.

It is difficult to say that art can change a person but music can encourage higher feelings. The Emperor Napoleon said that music is the highest of the arts as it communicates directly with the soul. You can not avoid music! You can close a book. You can walk away from a picture. But music penetrates the soul.

My great friends and colleagues

I have some lovely - and significant memories of my first meetings with my musical Gods. For example, I took part in one of the major music competitions in Bolzano in Italy and the great Italian pianist and maestro Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli - who was always my God - was to appear at the end of the festival. I was told that he would come and meet the three finalists - and I was one of them. We were all in a state of disbelief, and joy. We waited for an hour or two and finally the door opened. The Maestro came to us in the dressing room. We saw him at the entrance and I heard the director of the festival say, in Italian, 'Maestro, let me introduce you to the finalists.' At this point Michelangeli replied 'I am not interested in them' and left the room. And that was my first meeting with God!

Later a friend of mine who was one of Michelangeli's students talked about how she travelled with him for two weeks to concerts. He was unbearable! She said that he would wake her up at three or four in the morning to talk about the concert. No one could deal with such a schedule.

On the other hand I am great friends with the opera star Placido Domingo and his wife Martha. Domingo is a very kind and friendly person. We even celebrated his anniversary at my home in Monaco. He plays the piano very well and I was happy to help him when he started his Operalia competition.

And then with the great Russian cellist Mstislav Rostropovich. I first met him during a master class in Paris when I was there as piano accompanist. At the end of the class Rostropovich came to me and said 'I really liked your performance. I want to listen to you again. Play something.' He sat down at the piano and we played one of Mozart's Four Hands pieces. I was amazed with the generosity and fineness of his soul. He offered to record my performance and arrange everything himself. The problem was that I was very shy and I did not want to tell the great Maestro that there had been problems with the technical equipment. He never knew that the recording had failed.

My view

There was a sort of revolution in classic music which began in the last century, the 20th century. It was made by two different groups of great musicians. Some of them

changed the art of music into a business. They profited from everything: from concerts all the way through to their photos in the background of a publicity for an aircraft or for a Porsche car.

The other group managed to make classical music more popular. They were musicians who learned to make incredible money selling an image. People started to listen to music as it became fashionable again.

Decades ago, when I lived in Salzburg in Austria, I would go to the bakery to buy a cake and heard housewives talking about music. They talked about it in such a profound way that I was impressed. Today people learn how to watch and listen and, in my experience, often give the same reaction to completely different events. They give the same ovation - regardless of whether something is good or bad.

I am not criticizing, just stating what I see. In our schools art has become secondary. We have forgotten Beethoven who met Goethe, Haydn and Mozart. He spoke with politicians. They all created their inner aura. Conductors and musicians from the past who I met amazed me with the depth of their knowledge and awareness, even on subjects outside of music. I took part in one of Austrian conductor Karl Bohm's rehearsals and was surprised at his knowledge of philosophy, his inner world. I felt so small and insignificant in comparison with these individuals.

Today when I talk to young, famous musicians I see how limited their knowledge is. The main thing that changed perhaps is that music has become a business. It may be for the good or for the bad but this reflects our time.

I would share my observation of the Chinese pianist Lang Lang. He is a nice young man. I remember a long time ago when he sat at the piano and played a C major scale. He played so fast I could not even see his fingers. It was like a trick. But I have to say also, that when he plays some compositions I do not hear what the composer intended.

Technique without soul has no sense ...

My mission

Today I am surrounded by people, by a small group of musicians who I value and appreciate very much. They play at my festivals with generosity, and with pleasure. We do all these events to help, to promote music. With the help of the Verbier Festival Academy, which I co-founded and worked with for many years, I managed to obtain scholarships for young students.

The greatest thing is that there are people who continue to sincerely love music. They do so without regret or with a search for fame. They are not concerned that musical

colleagues are driving Ferraris to their lovely seaside villas. There are only a few of them but believe me they do exist and continue to serve music.

For me it dates back perhaps to a day when I played a piano recital at a hospital in Algeria. I was a teenager and had just received my music diploma. I became interested and started to help the Red Cross. This day was for me a big shock and a day when I re-evaluated everything in my life. I was 15 years old and went to play for the wounded soldiers. When I saw them they seemed barely alive. One young, very beautiful young man was lying face down as he had been shot in the back. I remember that I was playing Chopin and he was listening. From that day I told myself that my music would serve to alleviate pain to raise people over it and give solace and that I would try to whole, heartfelt generosity to do this. Music exists for this. Perhaps it is so - music is generosity.

Ends

