

Shoes with Wings

by Maria Papayanni

AUTHOR BIO

Maria Papayanni was born in the city of Larissa in Greece. She grew up in a house full of people, family members and beloved friends. Her older cousins provided books and music. Every summer they would spend three months playing, swimming, biking and watching movies in open-air cinemas. She went on to study Greek Language and Literature in the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. More friends there, more of exchanging (books and music) and a lot of travelling. When she graduated, she moved to Athens, where she worked as a journalist for many years. In 1996, she married the composer Thanos Mikroutsikos. Her first book, "Goodnight Mum", was published in 2001, the same year as her second child was born. In 2002 she co-wrote the middle-grade adventure "Catch them!" with Philippos Mandilaras and together they received a Merit Award by the Greek section of IBBY. Ever since then she writes stories for toddlers, children and adults alike and her books have won important awards ("As If By Magic": Greek section of IBBY Award & Diavazo Literary Magazine Award. "The Lonely Tree": National Award & Diavazo Literary Magazine Award). Her story "You Will Win Another Day", illustrated by Eve Tharlet, was published in various languages by Minedition and in Greek by Patakis Publishers. She also writes for theatre, libretto and plays, performed in the Athens Concert Hall and other stages. She lives with her family, dogs and cats in Athens. If you want to know more about Maria Papayanni, here she is in her own words: <http://www.mariapapayanni.gr>

ABSTRACT

My name is Rosa and I live in the Cat Kingdom. If I had to change the world, I'm not sure what I'd change about it. My dad says that there are two sides to every coin. The downside and the upside. If the downside is that our home is on the ground floor, then the upside is that we live in the Cat Kingdom, and that our little skylight looks out onto the road where Carlito lives. I'll bet he's the only nightingale in the whole world who loves cats and whom cats love back. Either that or they've just grown used to him. My dad's name is Ares and as you've probably realised he's a poet, but he doesn't know it. Fisherman by day, poet by night. Besides me, Carlito, his poets and his boat, my dad loves cats. He comes home from sea at the crack of dawn and all the cats gather around: Rimbaud, Éluard, Sappho, Homer, Praxilla, Woolf, and Plath. By the time he's opened his baggie of fish they're all meowing in unison and trying to claw their way up his body. I'm sure you'll agree with me that our cats have anything but regular cat names- my dad picked out every single one of them, and that was no easy feat.

This is how Rosa, Maria Papayanni's latest heroine, presents her world in a brand new book, 'Shoes with Wings'.

It is a book about poetry, little miracles, and big struggles; it's about pursuing a Utopia. It's a book about ordinary people who never give up dreaming of the extraordinary; about two worlds: the real one, and the *other* one, which is well hidden underwater. At times it exists in our imaginations but it helps us answer some of the thousands of questions that pain and wound us. If poetry is at the forefront of the real world, then the foundation of the other world is revolution. Maria Papayanni's writing is riddled with elements of traditional fairytales, granting her a unique tone and writing style, and even influencing the title of her new book, 'Shoes with Wings'.

A FEW WORDS ON THE PLOT:

Little Rosa is growing up with her father who is a fisherman but secretly writes poetry, names the cats after poets and often speaks in poetry verses. On account of a movement disorder Rosa has suffered from since birth, they move into a groundfloor apartment, also known as "The Cat Kingdom". In her new neighbourhood Rosa will make new friends, meet Ms Irene who owns the "Little Eden" corner shop, and Anna, a formerly great pianist who lives in her car. The only thing that casts a shadow over her new world is Ms Strange. It doesn't take much for everything to shift, and for a persued little Rosa to follow Gabito into the Underwater Kingdom. There she will make friends who use words and language as a currency in order to buy a donut. She will attempt to understand why dead languages are so important to them. Until then it had never occurred to Rosa that languages die and that fairytales die with them; music and dreams too. "So what you're trying to say, Gabito, is that all these people who lose their languages are also losing a piece of their souls?" Rosa asks as she slowly comes to realise why the Underwater Kingdom is preparing to go to war. Rosa will slowly but surely learn that in life we must dare to keep our spirits high. This is what she will be doing- standing tall beside her new friends during their struggles, small or big.

"In writing this book I wished for it to become a friendly force that drives children towards developing a relationship with real poetry. I always say that poetry makes us better people and that people who believe in Utopias and a better world are those who dare to "dive deep" to help others. Only a crazy dream can keep the blood pumping through our veins" says Maria Papayanni.

REVIEWS:

Excerpt from a review posted on *Evi Tsitiridou Blog*, 05/07/2016

With all the artistry of a master of words, and led by Rosa, her fragile yet fiercely charismatic main character, our beloved Maria Papayanni weaves a story as real as a fairy tale and fairy-tale-like as real life. There's nothing amiss in this book.

Everyone and everything –people, animals, concepts, words– have their place, their passion, and their purpose.

Rosa's father, Ares, is a parent, a fisherman, and a poet. He is the one who, by simply uttering a few words, has the power to overturn life's harsh, dark side into light and tender-heartedness. And this he does not only for his daughter, but for every creature that crosses his path; even the stray cats he feeds and names after poets from all over the world; even Carlito, the wandering nightingale, which he takes in and fosters without depriving it of its liberty. Carlito is free to choose between the makeshift cage that is the basement on number 3 Myron Street, which was named "Cat Kingdom" at Rosa's request, and the woods or wherever else. Sensing that Ares is a deeply sentimental person, it stays by his side to keep him and Rosa company with its warbling and warm-heartedness.

[...]

In this kaleidoscopic Wonderland [...] Rosa will go headlong into the adventure of growing up, in the most unconventional of ways. Step by step she will even overcome her movement handicap and discover all that is seen and unseen. All that is and all that pretends to be. All who are brave enough to face their reflections in the mirror and all who have forever banished mirrors from their sight. A conglomeration of one-of-a-kind neighbours: Irene the corner-shop lady with her "Little Eden" corner shop; Hashim, the young friend from Pakistan and his family; Anna, the lovely pianist who having been evicted now lives in her car and secretly cultivates tomatoes on the hill; sensitive Louisa who never again danced Flamenco and directs a small Theatre/café where she shelters aspiring young actors and musicians; Athena, her new friend and her brother Costi from Syria; sad Ms Elisenta with her black, Cyclops of a cat, Gabito; and so many more, fantastic and unique, real and imaginary, will lead Rosa to unfathomable adventures, ones which every child will relate to.

And when, like Alice, Rosa jumps into the matchbox she herself drew on her bedroom wall using chalk, the miracles will come crashing down. A second world, the Underwater Society, will emerge and demand her attention. A flabbergasted Rosa will utter the magic words "words hang on trees" and be let into the dark lair where a conference is taking place between Babel, who bears an uncanny resemblance to Don Quixote, and all who have declared war against the "Languageslayers", and who create dens for endangered languages, for communication, which keeps on deteriorating, for stories which are being forgotten and for fading dreams.

Rosa will begin to go back and forth between two societies: that of Myron street where she leads a "normal" life with her father, and that which exists within a matchbox– the Underwater Society. As a member of both she needs to fight for what she believes in and whom she loves respectively. Both will bestow upon her friends and allies, but also foes. In both she will be forced to look herself in the eye and wear shoes with wings. In both she will fight to save and be saved. In both she will win and lose. In both she will be part of adventures she will never have enough time to ever fully comprehend and retell. Because in both it will be "worth it to live for a dream, even if it hurts sometimes". In both she will be in the company of words and magic...

Maria Papayanni invites you to delve into the true and timeless meaning of Humanity; into the true and timeless meaning of Poetry; into the true and timeless meaning of Language– of every rare and unique language through which people communicate Love, History, and Identity.

<http://www.evitsitiridou.me/2016/07/05/%CF%80%CE%B1%CF%80%CE%BF%CF%8D%CF%84%CF%83%CE%B9%CE%B1-%CE%BC%CE%B5-%CF%86%CF%84%CE%B5%CF%81%CE%AC/>

“Shoes with Wings”

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