

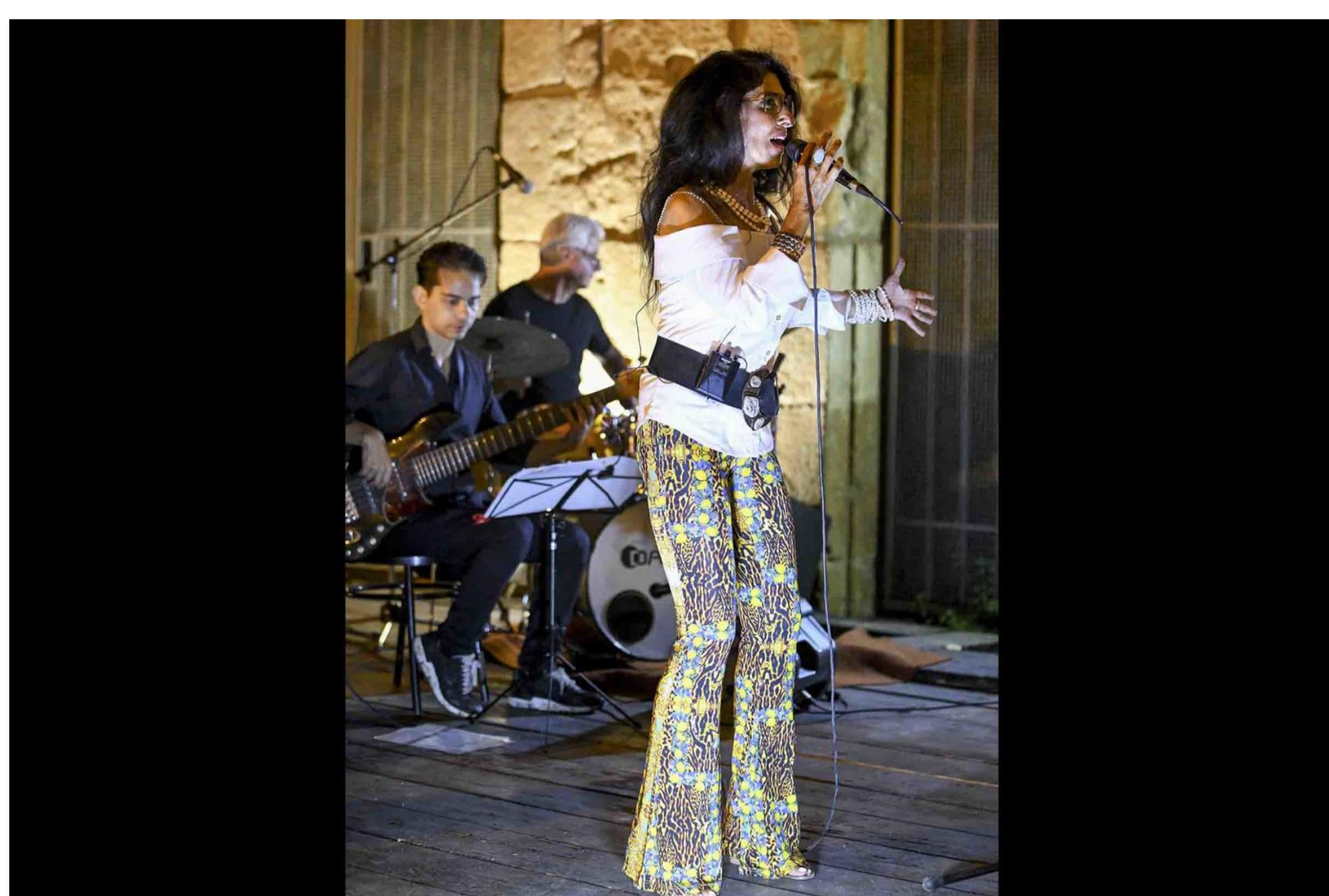
# SCOTTSDALE PROGRESS

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SPOTLIGHT

## Scottsdale vocalist takes stage in Rome

By Kristine Cannon, Progress Staff Writer Oct 6, 2019



Marcellino Ristorante co-owner Sima Verzino performed in Italy this past summer.  
Sima Verzino/Special to the Progress

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Sima Verzino is no stranger to the stage.

Every week since 2015, Verzino sings with her All-Star Trio band in the main dining room of Marcellino Ristorante, an Italian restaurant in Old Town Scottsdale she co-owns with husband and chef Marcellino Verzino.

Prior, Sima was a top recording artist in Europe, performing many times on national RAI TV in Italy as her records were played in heavy rotation on major radio stations in Europe.

“Back in the day when I had my records and I was doing very big venues, probably up to 4,000 or 5,000,” Sima said.

Now, Sima – a highly trained vocalist – has one more venue to cross off her robust list: Teatro Marcellus, an ancient, open-air theater in Rome.

Sima performed at Teatro Marcellus on Aug. 29 as part of the venue’s four-month “Concerti del Tempietto” series that took place from end of June through October and where artists from all over the world were invited to perform.

“I had lived in Rome for 10 years as a recording artist, so I had traveled all over Italy with my dancers, my musicians. But I had never performed in this venue,” she said.

International Brazilian jazz artist and Sima’s dear friend, Jim Porto, played an instrumental role in getting her name added to the lineup of performers.

After inviting Porto to perform at Marcellino Ristorante – his first performance in the states – he recommended Sima to organizers of the concert series in Italy.

She was asked to perform in April.

“It took me a minute to actualize this incredible invitation,” Sima said, adding:

“When [Porto] called me and told me what he did, that he had spoken about me for the concert in Rome, I was so overwhelmed with love and gratitude. This invitation was very special for me. For any artist to be invited to this venue is a very humbling point in one’s career.”

After spending three days rehearsing in Rome, Sima performed a carefully curated set of 10 songs.

They included a few songs she performs at Marcellino Ristorante, such as “Italian Mambo” by Bob Merrill and “Do You Wanna Dance” by Bobby Freeman – a song close to Sima and Marcellino’s heart.

“On [Marcellino’s] birthday, I always sing that to him,” Sima said.

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Because the performance took place during Sima and Marcellino’s yearly trip back home to Italy, Marcellino and their friends and family members were in the audience that late-August evening.

“I try not to look at him because I tend to cry, and I can’t cry when I’m singing,” she said with a laugh. “Every time, it is overwhelming; emotion comes over me when I sing that song.”

Sima called the performance in front of the crowd of 100-plus people “amazing” and “overwhelming.”

“When I came out on stage and looked around, you’re under a starry sky in the middle of this ancient with the ruins all around you, and you just get overwhelmed for a quick second, realizing that you are standing somewhere where people almost 3,000 years ago stood. It’s very overwhelming to be in the presence of all of those old souls,” she said.

As a performer, Sima describes herself as an emotive one.

“I like to believe that I transmit emotion through my interpretation of songs,” she said. “I am a rather large presence on stage. It’s kind of like containable combustion.”

A performer since she was 7 years old, Sima was practically born into music; her father was a classically trained vocalist, saxophonist, clarinetist, and conductor.

“My parents started me with classical dance lessons at age three and piano lessons at age six. At 14, I auditioned for and was accepted into the famous Fiorella LaGuardia School for the Performing Arts ... in New York City, where I majored in drama and minored in dance,” she said.

Sima went on to attend the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York, where she studied marketing, public relations, and journalism.

After graduation, however, she went back to music with the help of New York’s top vocal coaches, Marty Lawrence, who trained Liza Minnelli, and John DeMaio, worked with American operatic soprano Beverly Sills.

“I had to audition for these brilliant coaches as they handpicked their students,” Sima said. “They gave me an understanding of the instrument inside me.

“With their training, my voice blossomed and put me on the very top of my game. It enabled incredible and all-powerful control of my voice to perform with perfection and vocal gymnastics that makes me who I am.”

Ahead, Sima will continue performing at Marcellino Ristorante, which celebrates its 16th anniversary on Oct. 26.

To catch Sima in action, she will perform at Marcellino Ristorante with her All-Star Trio band on the following dates: Oct. 10, 12, 24 and 26; Nov. 7, 14 and 21; Dec. 5, 12, 14, 19 and 26.

Information: marcellinoristorante.com





The venue in Rome was overwhelming, Verzino said. *(Sima Verrzino/Special to the Progress)*