

In 2019, Belgium's most beloved singer, Dana Winner, is celebrating 30 years in show business. She has released more than 250 shows and sold more than 3.5 million albums. Dana's popularity in her own country is phenomenal, and she has received the award for best singer five times. The rest of the world has also discovered her golden voice; with sold-out performances and songs charting in countries such as the Netherlands, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Denmark, Sweden and South Africa, Dana is also a hit on YouTube. Her cover of Whitney Houston's One Moment In Time went viral and has yielded in excess of 18 million views to this day.

### What does ABBA mean to you personally? When did their music come into your life?

ABBA entered my life when I was a young girl. ABBA's music was a true inspiration and will remain so for a lot of artists for centuries to come. Their style of music was fundamental for many, myself included. Even when their music wasn't taken seriously at times, it is now clear to everyone that they are one of the most successful bands in history.

### What is so exceptional about their music?

I always found that ABBA were musical innovators, and yet they succeeded in remaining recognisable. You immediately knew 'this is ABBA' when hearing one of their songs for the first time. Another unique element is the perfect harmony between their voices, all four of them. They were also breaking new ground when they first started with electronic music. There is an enormous 'brain' behind their music. The production of their recordings is superb, almost unbeatable. I expect their new songs, which I'm really looking forward to, to be contemporary ABBA. It will be wonderful to experience that feeling once again of that music we are all craving for [smiles]. We will savour it with delight. Their legacy is unique, comparable to The Beatles. It has become part of our cultural heritage.

**You recorded an ABBA medley. Does the selection of the songs (Chiquitita, The Winner Takes It All, Mamma Mia, Knowing Me, Knowing You, Fernando, SOS, Take A Chance On Me) match your personal preference?**

I recorded that medley because I'm so enthusiastic about them. Their music transgresses all generations, young and old. My daughter, for example, who is 20 years old, thinks they are fantastic. The medley we did is put together very

well by the award-winning American arranger, musician and composer Tom Salisbury. We have chosen the songs from ABBA's repertoire that are in the collective memory of the people. All ABBA songs are in a way part of

that collective memory, but those are the songs that stand out. When you make a medley, it is very important to choose songs that match and to ensure you have beautiful transitions between them.

### You also recorded the ABBA song Put On Your White Sombrero.

That song is a hidden gem. I discovered it on the 1994 box set *Thank You For The Music*. We thought it was a fantastic song, and that's how the idea started to record it.

### What do you remember about the recording session for that song?

It was amazing to do it. It is always a great experience that when you start to analyse ABBA's music, you are flabbergasted by how well it is constructed; the build-up of the voices is incredible. For our version, we didn't work that way; as a solo singer, it is just my voice you hear. We could have used a choir, but the typical ingredient of the original ABBA songs remains the layering of the voices which, in combination with the music, makes it such a musical highlight. When we were recording, I was overlooking the whole process, from the embryonic start to the full orchestrated version and the many phases in between, and you hear why an ABBA song deserves a great production.

### The production of the song, recorded at the famous Galaxy studios, is indeed topnotch.

I have always tried to set the bar high production-wise. With each new production, we aim for top quality. If we hadn't been certain we could have achieved that with this and the other ABBA songs, we would have kept our hands off them. But I'm so happy we finished off those recordings to everybody's satisfaction.

### And you succeeded in turning it into a true Dana Winner song.

Some people think it is easy to cover a song, but it is my conviction that it is important to make it your own as a singer. You have to put so much of your own soul into it that people start wondering who the original version is by. That's a good sign [smiles].

### You are, of course, an excellent singer but, in general, would you say that the ABBA songs are easy or difficult to sing?

Naturally, it becomes easier for people when they've heard a song a thousand times. But even if you have the melody right up there in your head, to try and sing it yourself or, as a professional singer, to try to match or to do even better than the original, *ce n'est pas évident* [it is not that simple]. Not at all!

### What is, for you, the ultimate ABBA song?

Of their ballads, I Have A Dream is a favourite. It's a fantastic song. Chiquitita is also right up there because it is such a stirring song. When this song 'bursts out' in the chorus, it gives myself when I perform it and the audience an enormous kick. It gives so much joy. It's a musical explosion - an apotheosis!

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