

## KITIC'S HOTS

Latin dance, The Pegasus School, Korean spas, AnQi at South Coast Plaza

## KITIC'S NOTS

Not appreciating the arts, bullying, materialism, never experiencing opera, a distaste for travel

## ENCORE!

MILENA KITIC LEFT THE STAGE TO RAISE HER SON—AND NOW THE O.C. OPERA STAR'S BACK WITH SONGS TO SING.

By William Lobdell | Photography by Frank Ishman

Newport's biggest diva doesn't appear on *The Real Housewives of Orange County*, and she's never made a scene because she can't get a table at Red O Restaurant. These days, the town's real diva—internationally renowned opera singer Milena Kitic—can be found back on the stages of Segerstrom Center for the Arts and the Los Angeles Music Center after a five-year hiatus to raise her son, Spencer. And that's music to opera-lovers' ears, especially those who want to hear Kitic in her signature role as Carmen, which she'll perform in February with the Pac Symph ([pacificsymphony.org](http://pacificsymphony.org)) at Segerstrom.

The Belgrade-born mezzo-soprano says her decision to temporarily exit the stage (and walk away from two signed contracts with NYC's Metropolitan Opera) to allow her son the stability that comes from local schooling was a difficult one. "It became impossible to keep traveling and performing in a different city or country every three to four months," says Kitic. "I had to part from something that I truly loved, had been doing all my life, and was [and still is] very successful in. ... It was also extremely rewarding, since I was [raising] my only child."

Kitic, who is divorced from Newport businessman and former Prime Minister of Yugoslavia Milan Panic, remained in the game by teaching at various SoCal colleges, including Chapman University and USC. Kitic made a grand entrance back into the spotlight in the fall of 2012 by playing Suzuki in *Madame Butterfly* at the Los Angeles Music Center, quickly re-establishing herself as one of the country's premier singers and getting standing ovations, including from Spencer.

"Performing in front of him is the most beautiful feeling," Kitic says. "Though by [that] time... he already knows every single note of my music because I rehearse at home—and I apologize to my neighbors for it!"

CENTER STAGE Milena Kitic at L.A.'s Dorothy Chandler Pavilion



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