

PROGRAM

Epidaurus Festival 2018

Ancient Theatre of Epidaurus

29 & 30 June [*The Acharnians* by Aristophanes](#)

Direction - adaptation - choreography: **Kostas Tsianos**

Set and costume design: **Yannis Metzikov**

Music: **George Andreou**

Lighting design: **Lefteris Pavlopoulos**

Cast: **Petros Filippidis, Pavlos Haikalis, Kostas Koklas, Pygmalion Dadakaridis,**
and a chorus of 15 performers

Director's note:

The Acharnians was first presented at the Lenaia festival, in the sixth year of the Peloponnesian War (425 B.C.), earning the then-19-year-old Aristophanes the first prize. In this play, Aristophanes sets out to ridicule war and warmongers, expressing people's longing for peace. The comedy is set in rural Attica, in Acharnai (modern-day Menidi).

Aristophanes is fully aware that the genre of comedy hails from religious ceremonies of fertility. Throughout *The Acharnians* there are many references to Dionysus. In one memorable scene, Dikaiopolis and his family perform a phallic procession and sing a phallic song. There are also excellent comical scenes, typical of the Megara farces. The lively chorus of the old coal-miners of Menidi transforms this wonderful comedy into a frantic Dionysian feast. Our performance will draw on popular tradition, echoing the Dionysian spirit so prominent in Aristophanes' *The Acharnians*.

Kostas Tsianos

06 & 07 July [*Agamemnon* by Aeschylus \(ORESTEIA cycle\)](#)

Translation: **Yorgos Blanas**

Direction: **Cezaris Grauzinis**

Set and costume design: **Kenny MacLellan**

Music - musical coaching: **Haris Pegiazis**

Movement: **Eddie Lame** Lighting design: **Alekos Giannaros**

Assistant director: **Syngklitiki Vlahaki**

Cast: **Yannis Stankoglou, Maria Protopappa, Iovi Fragatou,** and others

Production manager: **Anastasia Kavalari**

Communication: **Anzelika Kapsampeli**

Artistic direction of Stefi Productions: **Aliki Danezi-Knutsen**

Production: **Stefi Productions - Yiannis M. Costas**

Director's note:

In Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, the tragic characters are doomed to suffer and die, whereas the members of the Chorus are doomed to suffer and live, revisiting their misfortunes and seeking a way out. In a Polis doomed to self-destruction, citizens, here represented by the Chorus, must muster their strength and faith, and redefine their moral and civic values, thus ensuring their continued survival. This tragedy addresses the crucial need for reawakening citizens' sense of duty. Conflict is built upon these grounds: even obedient citizens will inevitably find themselves at odds with the status quo.

Cezaris Grauzinis

13 & 14 July *Plutus by Aristophanes*
National Theatre of Greece

Direction: **Nikita Milivojević**
(*Cast TBA.*)

Director's note:

From Aristophanes' time to our own, *Plutus* (Greek for "wealth") is invariably the most powerful deity on the face of the earth; the driving force behind everything. Today's inequality in wealth distribution is striking: the 100 richest people on the planet have accumulated more wealth than half the world's population. Whether Wealth is blind or has the gift of sight is completely irrelevant: what matters is that the rich get richer and the poor get poorer.

Nikita Milivojević

20 & 21 July *Electra by Sophocles*
National Theatre of Greece

Direction: **Thanos Papakonstantinou**
(*Cast TBA.*)

Director's note:

Written in the shadow of the Peloponnesian War, *Electra* is one of Sophocles' most brutal plays. From the very first scene, the return of matricide Orestes, to the final scene with the victorious battle-cries of the chorus, the entire play is structured as an interplay of light and darkness; a battle of contradictions built around a trial, a violated balance and the need to redress that balance. Sophocles invites us to watch the workings of the natural world – the law of retaliation – through the lens of civil conflict.

Sophocles is not interested in the morality of the issue at hand. Whether balance will be restored in a peaceful or violent manner is irrelevant. Violence pervades human relationships. Violence breeds violence: wrongdoing invites retaliation. The fact that revenge here, in the form of matricide, goes far beyond what is normally expected in a so-called civilized society is also irrelevant. Sophocles' *Electra* calls for retribution rather than justice.

Thanos Papakonstantinou

27 & 28 July *Thesmophoriazusae by Aristophanes*

Translation: **Pantelis Boukalas**

Direction: **Vangelis Theodoropoulos**

Music: **Nikos Kypourgos** Costume design: **Angelos Mentis**

Choreography: **Cecil Mikroutsikou** Assistant director: **Pantelis Dentakis**

Cast: Makis Papadimitriou, Odysseas Papaspiliopoulos, Nantia Kontogeorgi, Giorgos Chrysostomou, Eleni Ouzounidou, Giorgos Papageorgiou, Andri Theodotou, Katerina Maoutsou, Nancy Sideri, Eleni Boukli, Antigone Fryda, Irida Mara, Fragiski Moustaki, Natasa Sfendylaki, and others.

Director's note:

In *Thesmophoriazusae*, one of Aristophanes' three "women" plays, written in 411 B.C., at a time when Democracy was overthrown and replaced by Oligarchy, women call for political stability. Nowadays, women are no longer in the same difficult position. They are no longer restricted to imagining a political future without having the right to participate in the Polis. However, there are still plenty of minorities with no access to the workings of the Polis. A play about gender issues, the quest of personal identity, the right to equal civil rights, the crisis in values, law and nature. Above all, a play bursting with humour and theatricality, enabling actors to be fully present on stage as political entities.

Vangelis Theodoropoulos

03 & 04 August 2018 [*Orestes / Euripides*](#)
[National Theatre of Greece](#)

Translation: Yorgos Blanas

Direction: Yannis Anastasakis

Set and costume design: Yannis Thavoris

Cast: Christos Stylianou (Orestes), Ioanna Kolliopoulou (Electra), Christodoulos Stylianou (Menelaus), Nikolas Maragopoulos (Messenger), and others

Director's note:

Three young people, Orestes, Electra, and Pylades are caught in a spiral of blood and violence. Gods and humans have spun an intricate web of hatred and vengeance. Sibling love turns into complicity; friends become partners in crime; the people's verdict leads to capital punishment. No end in sight for this war. The city will burn.

Euripides's tragedy lays bare the human soul. When everything terrible is said and done, only the *deus ex machina* remains, coming, as usual, without warning. Problem is, nobody believes in god's fairy tales anymore.

Yannis Anastasakis

10 & 11 August 2018 [*The Frogs / Aristophanes*](#)

Translation: Yorgos Blanas

Direction: Kostas Filippoglou

Movement: Sofia Paschou

Cast: Lakis Lazopoulos, Sofia Filippidou, Antonis Kafetzopoulos, Dimitris Piatas

Director's note:

In *The Frogs*, Aristophanes conjures a phantasmagorical *nekylia*, a descent to the underworld. Much like Odysseus, Aristophanes seeks a path to his utopian Ithaca. He can only fulfil his life by finding the meaning of death. The Polis must come to terms with its own lack in order to gain a greater presence. The Polis needs to plunge deep into Hades to regain its lost identity.

Disguised into Hercules, Dionysus descends to the underworld to bring Euripides back among the living, since Athens no longer boasts a great poet. Even though this journey unfolds under the twilight of the dead, it is a cheerful and entertaining journey, a guided tour, almost akin to a medieval carnival. Dionysus does not go down among the dead to retrieve a great politician, a worthy philosopher, or general. The whole point of his mission is to bring back a dramatic poet. Aristophanes evidently considers poetry and drama the only power capable of saving the Polis from its decline; a truly curious perspective, by contemporary standards.

This carnivalesque underworld, as depicted by Aristophanes, is healthy when compared to the diseased world of the seemingly "serious" living. Comedy, with all its hilarious episodes, becomes a political lesson, still relevant to our times.

The Frogs stand in for humanity itself. Humans are like amphibians, foreign both in land and sea, yet also feeling everywhere at home, ready to sing and dance. The carnival symbolizes humanity's attempt to go beyond themselves, to conquer a distinct identity. This identity is not expressed by the "realist" Euripides; it is expressed by the epic storyteller Aeschylus, this great poet. In his competition against Euripides, Aeschylus constantly dismisses his opponent with the phrase "Iekythion apolesen," that is, "lost his little oil flash," an expression which is commonly held today to be a joke about Euripides' sexual impotence. The world of the living slowly dies away, due to their inability to come up with new respectable myths, no matter how outrageous these myths may be. Conversely, the underworld bursts with life, because its inhabitants retain the power of imagination and are capable of taking a distance from themselves, while still preserving a flair for games.

Kostas Filippoglou

17 & 18 August 2018 [Oedipus at Colonus / Sophocles](#)

Direction: Yannis Kokkos

Director's note:

Sophocles' final tragedy is at once a meditation on human fate and a tribute to his favourite city, Athens.

Burdened by horrific crimes and haunted by his city, Thebes, the elderly Oedipus arrives at Colonus, almost as if he were a migrant, choosing this area as his final resting place.

Oedipus has been sentenced by the gods, led by them to Colonus, the place of his redemption.

Previously the *agos* of the polis, Oedipus re-emerges as a hero at Colonus. Its people receive him, both for moral reasons and for reasons of interest. A tragedy about physical and metaphysical borders, about the mystery of human freedom in the face of gods' omnipotence, about responsibility, about old age, about the political rule of the Polis. *Oedipus at Colonus* is an intimate poem, a spiritual journey.

From Syracuse to Epidaurus, our tragedy will carry Oedipus all the way to the sacred forest of the Furies, to his final apotheosis.

Yannis Kokkos

A Note from the Artistic Director of Festival al Teatro Greco di Siracusa:

In 2018, the Istituto Nazionale del Dramma Antico will invite audiences to Syracuse for three plays debating the issue of power and addressing the complex and shifting role of the hero and the tyrant in the ancient world, both in their heightened representation in tragedy, as well as in their representation through farce and ridicule. These plays are: *Oedipus at Colonus* by Sophocles, *Herakles* by Euripides, and *The Knights* by Aristophanes.

Oedipus at Colonus is a tragedy about old age, recounting the story of an old man, Oedipus.

Having previously wandered around as a scapegoat (*Oedipus Rex*), Oedipus retires to Colonus, becoming the area's *genius loci*. Sophocles' final tragedy is nothing less than a spiritual testament, evoking the image of an entire population of people on the brink of disaster. The play is a meditation on the great themes of humanity: the mystery of existence and death; the conflict between political and religious morality; the relationship between the objectivity of guilt and the subjectivity of punishment; the inexorability of a destiny determined by omnipotent forces; the fragility of reason and human justice. Athena represents eternal values, such as hospitality towards supplicants, opposition to the arrogant, respect of the law, the worship of the gods. The tragedy comes to an end with the final redemption of a man who was first humiliated and then elevated to the rank of hero. Sophocles delivers verses of extreme purity, exemplified by the sublime poetry of the chorus celebrating "the best dwelling on earth, candid Colonus."

It is a great honour for us to present *Oedipus at Colonus*, directed by Greek cosmopolitan artist and intellectual Yannis Kokkos. More importantly, this performance will be held at the Ancient Theatre of Epidaurus, kicking off a precious and significant collaboration, built upon a geography of the soul, as evidenced in the sublime energy of the two ancient theatres in Sicily and Epidaurus. As a great contemporary writer has said: the essential mandate of a civilization that takes its future to heart is to guard and bequeath Beauty.

Roberto Andò