

# Little Theatre of Ancient Epidaurus

## Program

**22 June 2019**

### **9th ATHENS OPEN AIR FILM FESTIVAL**

Athens & Epidaurus Festival continues its successful collaboration with Athens Open Air Film Festival. Last year marked the first time ever that a film screening was held at the Little Theatre of Ancient Epidaurus: Michael Cacoyannis' *Electra*. Faithful to its annual foray into cinema, Athens Festival has scheduled yet another surprise screening to be held at the Little Theatre of Ancient Epidaurus on 22 June.

**28 and 29 June 2019**

### **GREEK NATIONAL OPERA – ALTERNATIVE STAGE**

Avant-garde musical theatre and ancient myths

Works by Xenakis, Christou, Koumentakis

Conductor: Yorgos Ziavras

Set and costume design: Petros Touloudis

Lighting design: Dimitris Kasimatis

Also featuring Ergon ensemble

Produced by the Alternative Stage of the Greek National Opera

Production manager: Manolis Sardis

Communication manager: Vaios Machmountes

Executive producers: Lila Karangelou, Stavroula Baroutsas, Marianna Tzani

Stage managers: Alexis Zervanos, Vicky Kalaitzidou

Founding donor of GNO Alternative Stage: Stavros Niarchos Foundation

The Greek National Opera Alternative Stage performs at the Little Theatre of Ancient Epidaurus for the first time ever, giving audiences a taste of its activity, presenting three iconic works of musical theatre by avant-garde Greek composers inspired by ancient myths. Following the historic performances of 1960 and 1961, with Maria Callas as Norma and Medea, the Greek National Opera returns decades later in these hallowed grounds of theatre. Ancient drama has been an endless source of inspiration for two of the leading composers of the 20th century: Iannis Xenakis and Jani Christou. Having composed, early in their career, music for National Theatre of Greece productions presented in Epidaurus, both composers have conceived contemporary musical theatre works drawing on ancient drama. Both Iannis Xenakis' *Kassandra* (chronologically the final piece he composed for his *Oresteia*) and Jani Christou's *Anaparastasis I: The Baritone* draw on Aeschylus, and in fact both works use the extant ancient text. Giorgos Koumentakis also draws on an ancient text, in this case Homer's, in his short, youthful opera *The Day Will Come...*, a highly demanding work on a musical and a vocal level, epitomizing the achievements of the avant-garde scene of the last few decades. In all three works, the antiquity provides the material and the springboard for a dive into archetypes and an unconditional opening up to the future. Contributing to this debut of the Alternative Stage at the Little Theatre of Ancient Epidaurus are the accomplished director Ektoras Lygizos, who has

presented his work in Epidaurus twice already; the up-and-coming principal conductor Yorgos Zavras, who has made successful worldwide appearances; acclaimed actors, such as Yannis Stankoglou in his first ever foray into contemporary musical theatre, and the stars of the Greek National Opera Dionyssi Sourbis and Myrsini Margariti. The first two works will be directed by the artistic director of the Greek National Opera Alternative Stage, Alexandros Efklidis. Ergon ensemble, one of the most established contemporary music ensembles, acclaimed in Greece and abroad, will also perform. Marinos Tranoudakis, principal timpanist of the orchestra of the Greek National Opera will perform the demanding percussion sheet music of *Kassandra*.

### ***Kassandra (1987) by Iannis Xenakis***

Directed by Alexandros Efklidis

Soloists: Dionyssi Sourbis (baritone), Marinos Tranoudakis (percussion)

Xenakis' *Oresteia* was created in 1966 and completed in 1987 with the addition of the *Kassandra* scene. Far from being an accurate adaptation of Aeschylus' tragedy, this work is an idiosyncratic response to the poetic power of the play and arguable the fruit of the composer's deep relationship with antiquity. *Kassandra* marks the only occasion (along with the monologue of Athena, also written for baritone Spyros Sakkas) in which Xenakis revisited an earlier work to revise and update it. *Kassandra* constitutes a study on the prosody of the ancient text, which Xenakis devotedly follows as the basis of his compositions, pushing the performer to vocal extremes, accompanied only by a solo percussionist and a psaltery, a plucked stringed instrument played by the baritone.

### ***Anaparastasis I: The baritone by Jani Christou***

Directed by Alexandros Efklidis

Featuring Yannis Stankoglou

Written in 1968, the text comprises the first seven lines from Aeschylus' tragedy *Agamemnon*. In the beginning, an exhausted and worried watchman has been waiting for over a year at the roof of the palace in Argos for a sign signalling the fall of Troy in the hands of the Greeks. Having an accurate depiction of the watchman by the soloist or being immersed into the setting of Aeschylus' tragedy is not within the goals of this work. The text serves more as a vehicle, with the soloist attempting to utter the words, as if they were incantations. Instead of accompanying the performer, the ensemble actively partakes in the ritual.

### ***The Day Will Come... (1986) by Giorgos Koumentakis***

Directed by Ektoras Lygizos

Cast: Dionyssi Sourbis (blind singer), Myrsini Margariti (Helen of Troy)

The opera *The Day Will Come...*, with the explanatory subtitle "imitation of action in six episodes," was written twice: once in 1986 to be performed at Heraklion and once again in 1995 for the Argos Festival. The first version did not contain any choral parts, which were later added in the second version (text and music). The opera revolves around the fall of Troy thanks to the Trojan Horse ploy and Odysseus' cool-headedness, as recounted by Menelaus and Helen to Telemachus in Book 4 of the *Odyssey*. In its original edition, the opera consisted of six episodes: War and death in Ilium – Prophecy about the fall of Troy – Hector's death – The Trojan Horse – The destruction of Troy – Exodus: The human fate. Four out of these six episodes (the first, second, third, and fifth) draw entirely on the *Iliad*, the fourth episode draws on the *Odyssey*, and the sixth episode draws on both Homeric epics.

## 5 and 6 July 2019

### Theogony by Hesiod

Directed by Sofia Pachou

Dramaturgical collaboration: Patari

Project Movement: Erifili Stefanidou Set design: Evangelia Therianou

Costume design: Claire Bracewell Music: Nikos Galenianos

Lighting design: Sofia Alexiadou Cast TBA.

Hesiod's epic, narrative poem, a foundational text of ancient Greek literature (7th century BC) describes the genesis of the world and the lineage of the ancient Greek gods and divinities, attempting a dynamic synthesis of disparate mythological traditions. Invoking the divine inspiration he has received through Zeus and the Muses, Hesiod delivers 1,022 lines drawing on early observations of natural phenomena and the world, the earth, the sky, the stars and the sea. Starting from Chaos giving birth to the first divinities, Eros, Erebus and Nyx, the poem then moves on to the union between Gaea and Uranus, the castration of the tyrannical Uranus by his son, Cronus, the emergence of the Olympian gods, the myths of Prometheus and Pandora, the Titanomachy, the demolition of paternal power when Zeus dethrones Cronus. The phantasmagorical universe of Theogony brims with romantic couplings, weddings and births, conflicts and achievements, constituting above all a game of succession, the transfer of power from one generation to the next: from Gaea to Uranus to Cronus and, ultimately, to Zeus, who is presented as the deterministic culmination of things, power in its most legitimized form. In contrast to his predecessors, Zeus is cast as the all-wise and just father-ruler who enjoys the support of his subjects. The docile goddesses by his side have seemingly replaced the earlier menacing female figures.

Director's note:

Hesiod's Theogony, a big feast In these times we are called upon to start from scratch, having only ourselves to rely on and realizing that the world increasingly needs to come to terms with its origins. Children and adults alike feel like listening to a fairytale before going to bed; a fairytale justifying that which cannot be explained through reason. Theogony is one of the very first attempts to explain the beginnings of humankind, one of the earliest great fables. The performance takes off from a big feast, inspired by one of the greatest ancient texts. Similar to how Hesiod revisits the first matter, the roots of the world, our performance employs the body, with all its properties and abilities, as a raw material and as a narrative medium. An energetic, entertaining and moving performance, which will make us wonder: what is our version of Gaea, our Uranus, our Chaos?

## 12 & 13 July 2019

### Griffón Dance Company

#### KAOS

Choreography: Ioanna Portolou

Performers: Ioanna Apostolou, Cecil Mikroutsikou, Yannis Nikolaidis, Elias Chatzigeorgiou

Music: Anthony Palaskas Costume design: Ioanna Tsami

Lighting design: Tasos Palaoroutas Production and communication manager: Yorgos Katsonis

Ioanna Portolou's Griffón Dance Company returns to Epidaurus with KAOS, a performance about the corporeality of tragic language, bringing to a close the exploratory and artistic process beginning last year with the workshop "Chaos & Order" during the second cycle of Epidaurus Lyceum 2018. The performance focuses on the mythical depictions of humans' endless journey towards creating a lawful order of boundaries and collectivities, as seen in ancient Greek mythology. Gods, demigods and mortals experience chaos and the struggle for collective harmony, reassemble themselves and seek catharsis as a point of balance and placement within the group. Tackling archetypes and symbols in contemporary terms, the choreographer is inspired by the mythological narratives of tragedies, and also by Biblical imagery, reintroducing on stage her own version of the first humans wandering on the face of the Earth – a planet conceived here as a contemporary Babel.

## 19 and 20 July 2019

### Daphnis + Chloe by Longus

#### Un amore bucolic

Directed by Dimitris Bogdanos    Translated by Giana Tsailakopoulou    Cast TBA.

One of the most famous and iconic love stories of all time, the pastoral idyll Daphnis and Chloe is one of the earliest novels ever written and the only surviving work of the writer Longus from Lesbos, whose life is mostly shrouded in mystery. The various plot twists – the trials and tribulations faced by the two lovers before they finally end up together – are secondary to what is the real issue here: the romanticized and nuanced description of the nature of Lesbos. Each season signals a different chapter in the youths' romance, reflecting the ebb and flow of their emotions.

#### Director's note:

Dating from the 2nd century A.D., Longus' romance Daphnis and Chloe has inspired numerous visual and performing artists over the ages. Dimitris Bogdanos and his creative team revisit the text, translated by Giana Tsailakopoulou specifically for this performance, and allow it to 'breathe' inside a contemporaneous venue: the Little Theatre of Ancient Epidaurus. Dating from the Roman years, the Little Theatre is the ideal venue for this site-sensitive performance, bringing to life the pastoral idyll of a timeless couple. Inside this extraordinary open museum, in a unique realm created for the audience, these two iconic lovers are restored to their natural habitat. Spectators are invited to theatrically experience one of the earliest novels ever written, a story which evokes parallels with the Greek pastoral dramas of the early 20th century. Borrowing from theatrical sources, such as *The Lover of the Shepherdess*, and from early Greek films, such as *Astero*, Longus' romance is enriched with choral sections and music derived from pastoral dramas and comic idylls. Both the dramaturgical and the choral associations establish dynamic connections. At the same time, the performance echoes works by visual artists, including Marc Chagall, François Gérard and Jean-Pierre Cortot, providing commentary on the European perspective on Greek culture.

## 26 and 27 July 2019

### Phèdre by Racine

Translated by Stratis Paschalis    Directed by Efi Theodorou

Set design: Eva Manidaki    Costume design: Angelos Mentis

Music: Kornilios Selamsis    Lighting design: Sakis Birbilis

Assistant director: Aspasia-Maria Alexiou    Actress depicting Oenone TBA

Cast: Maria Skoula (Phaedra), Yannos Perlengas (Theseus), Giannis Papadopoulos (Hippolytus), Giorgis Tsampourakis (Theramenes), Penelope Tsilika (Aricia), Eleni Boukli (Ismene/Panope)

The play is based on the well-known myth of Hippolytus and Phaedra, which has inspired numerous writers from the ancient years to the present, from Euripides to Seneca to Sarah Kane. Unlike Euripides' *Hippolytus*, Jean Racine's tragedy focuses on the lovelorn Phaedra, Hippolytus' stepmother, and the experience of being rejected in love. In the beginning of the play, Hippolytus intends to elope with Aricia, the daughter of a rival house, whom he plans to marry, taking advantage of the absence of his father, Theseus. Meanwhile, Phaedra confides her love for Hippolytus to Oenone, her nurse. Later, learning of Theseus' death, she is compelled to confess her feelings to Hippolytus, who coldly rebuffs her. Everything changes when the news of Theseus' demise is proved to be false and the king returns to the city. Hoping to avert her lady's catastrophe, the nurse claims that Hippolytus attempted to rape his stepmother. Confronting his father, the youth reveals his love for Aricia, while refusing to expose Phaedra. Exiled and cursed by his father, Hippolytus falls to his death from a cliff while riding his chariot. Ultimately, Phaedra reveals the truth and then kills herself. The play finishes on a note of sadness and atonement: having destroyed his house, Theseus takes Aricia under his protection, thus honoring the memory of his dead son.

#### Director's note:

Maddened, where am I! What did I say? Where have I let my will and spirit go play? I have lost them: the gods deny me their use. Oenone, blushes cover my face, its truth. Racine's classical tragedy *Phèdre*, a 17th-century

masterpiece, drawing on Plutarch and Virgil and inspired by Euripides' *Hippolytus* and Seneca's *Phaedra* is presented at the Little Theatre of Ancient Epidaurus, not far from the town of Troezen, where the play takes place. "I feel *Phaedra* is haunted by the Greek landscape," says the poet and translator Stratis Paschalis. Almost 30 years after the first version of the Greek translation in free verse was released, Paschalis revisits his translation and delivers a new version which brings vividly to life the form of the original text filtered through a more contemporary language, complete with verse and rhymes, as faithful as possible to the original text's tones and rhythms. This new translation brings to the fore the musical quality of the original text, allowing for a fresh dramaturgical, directorial and performing approach, highlighting the 'dialogue' between the musical quality of the different languages, echoed in the recorded excerpts of the text recited in French by actors of Comédie-Française.

## 2 and 3 August 2019

### *Danaids* by Andreas Kalvos

Translated by Dimitris Arvanitakis

Directed by Natasa Triantafylli

Set design: Eva Manidaki      Costume design: Ioanna Tsami

Music: Monika      Dramaturgy: Elena Triantafyllopoulou

Lighting design: Sakis Birbilis      Production manager: Manolis Sardis / Pro 4

Cast: Lazaros Georgakopoulos, Lena Papaligoura, Aris Balis

Live singing by Artemis Bogri

The apex of Andreas Kalvos' literary career, the tragedy *Danaids*, the only one that the writer completed and published in his lifetime (1818), epitomizes neoclassical plays, both reconstructing and updating the format of ancient drama, at the same time paying homage to the tragic tradition and the origins of tragedy as a theatre of political community, invoking a universe full of dramatic contrasts, emotional contradictions and fatal choices. The tragedy draws on the myth of the Danaids, through fragments found across various mythical and literary sources, including Aeschylus' *The Suppliants*. The play is set in the city of Argos, where the fifty sons of Aegyptus ask the fifty daughters of the king and Aegyptus' brother, Danaus, to marriage. Danaus fears that one of his sons-in-law will dethrone him, having already received word about this from the oracle. Hoping to escape his fate, Danaus instructs his daughters to murder their husbands on the wedding night. The only one who disobeys his command and refuses to heed the oracle is Hypermnestra, who is in love with her husband, Lynceus, a feeling that is mutual.

#### **Director's note:**

Thanks to the dramatization of the myth of the Danaids by Andreas Kalvos, we have in our hands a tragedy focusing on three characters, Hypermnestra, her beloved Lynceus, and her father, King Danaus, plus the Chorus with its meditations and lyrical flights. Originally written in Italian, Kalvos' text remained mute for almost two centuries, biding time before it could come alive on the stage, its poetry revealed for all to see. The play, tackling themes such as the terrible clashes among family members, the obstacles of marriage and the conflict between moral philosophy and the unquenchable thirst for power, is having its world premiere at the Little Theatre of Ancient Epidaurus. Hypermnestra remains loyal to her own true feelings, thus provoking her father who fears he may lose his power, while also eliciting the love of young, heroic Lynceus. The characters are driven to their actions as if possessed; actions which come with the promise of liberation "out of those walls inside which we grew up" ("quelle mura fra cui crescemmo"), while they unwittingly confront their hidden, innermost instincts and the limits of human existence. The Chorus, sympathetic to their plight and wishing the best for them, keeps the tempo and the atmosphere proper to a melodrama, bravely gazing at a laughing sunray shooting up through the peaceful clouds ("or che Pace dai nemi manda ridente un raggio") and exclaiming: "Sadness, do not return!" In the orchestra of the Little Theatre, three actors and a mezzo-soprano will be immersed into Kalvos' world, where dramaturgy and poetry will coexist on a fragile balance. They will seek to shake off the shackles of this caged tragedy and break through the bonds of mythological characters and perhaps even the bonds of their very being.