

Athens & Epidaurus Festival 2019

ANCIENT THEATRE OF EPIDAURUS

21 & 22 June

Oedipus

Directed by Robert Wilson

Co-production: ConversAzioni - Teatro Olimpico Vicenza - Pompeii Theatrum Mundi - Teatro Stabile di Napoli

28 & 29 June

NATIONAL THEATRE OF GREECE

ORESTEIA by Aeschylus

Agamemnon

Directed by Io Voulgaraki

The Libation Bearers

Directed by Lilly Meleme

The Eumenides

Directed by Georgia Mavragani

5 & 6 July

NATIONAL THEATRE OF GREECE - CYPRUS THEATRE ORGANISATION

The Suppliants by Euripides

Directed by Stathis Livathinos

12 & 13 July

Oedipus Rex by Sophocles

Directed by Konstantinos Markoulakis

Co-production: Athinaika Theatra - Municipal and Regional Theatre of Crete

19 & 20 July

NATIONAL THEATRE OF NORTHERN GREECE

Iphigenia in Aulis by Euripides

Directed by Yannis Kalavrianos

26 & 27 July

COMÉDIE-FRANÇAISE

Electra / Orestes by Euripides

Directed by Ivo Van Hove

2 & 3 Aug.

The Clouds by Aristophanes

Directed by Dimitris Karantzas

9 & 10 Aug.
MUNICIPAL AND REGIONAL THEATRE OF PATRAS

Prometheus Bound by Aeschylus
Directed by Stavros Tsakiris

LITTLE THEATRE OF ANCIENT EPIDAUROS

22 June
9TH ATHENS OPEN AIR FILM FESTIVAL

Surprise screening

28 & 29 June
GREEK NATIONAL OPERA - ALTERNATIVE STAGE

Kassandra by Iannis Xenakis
Anaparastasis I: The Baritone by Jani Christou
Directed by Alexandros Efklidis

The Day Will Come... by Giorgos Koumentakis
Directed by Ektoras Lygizos

5 & 6 July

Theogony by Hesiod
Directed by Sofia Paschou

12 & 13 July
GRIFFÓN DANCE COMPANY

KAOS
Choreographed by Ioanna Portolou

19 & 20 July

Daphnis + Chloe by Longus
Un amore bucolico
Directed by Dimitris Bogdanos

26 & 27 July

Phèdre by Racine
Directed by Efi Theodorou

2 & 3 Aug.

Danaids by Andreas Kalvos
Directed by Natasa Triantafylli

Ancient Theatre of Epidaurus

21 and 22 June

Oedipus

The iconic story of Oedipus comes alive in Robert Wilson's series of breathtaking, distinctive tableau vivant. The celebrated director follows Oedipus' story chronologically, without faithfully adapting Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, from the moment of Oedipus' birth and his abandonment as an infant to the moment of his self-inflicted blinding, following the horrific revelations: from the first light of birth to the last light he sees before it all goes black. Two 'witnesses,' a man and a woman, spin his tale, the life and times of Oedipus, speaking across the centuries.

Concept - Directing - Set design - Lighting design: **Robert Wilson**

Co-directed by: **Ann Christin Rommen**

Dramaturgy: **Konrad Kuhn**

Original music: **Dickie Landry, Kinan Azmeh**

Costume design: **Carlos Soto**

Set design collaboration: **Annick Lavallée-Benny**

Lighting design collaboration: **Solomon Weisbard**

Sound design: **Dario Felli**

Lighting programming and supervision: **Marcello Lumaca**

Make-up: **Manu Halligan**

Sound engineer: **Marco Olivieri**

Technical manager: **Enrico Maso**

Mechanic: **Adriano Pernigotti**

Seamstress: **Lara Friio**

Stage design: **Cecilia Sacchi**

Follow spot operator: **Isadora Giuntini**

Hairstyle and make-up artist: **Nicole Tomaini**

Video: **Andrea Villa**

Assistant to the director: **Sara Thaiz Bozano**

Cast: **Angela Winkler, Lydia Koniordou, Michalis Theophanous, Casilda Madrazo, Kayije Kagame, Alexis Fousekis, Dickie Landry**

Also starring: **Meg Harper, Laila Gozzi, Alessandro Anglani, Marcello di Giacomo, Gaetano Migliaccio, Francesco Roccasecca, Annabella Marotta, Francesca Gabucci**

Voice acting by: **Robert Wilson, Lydia Coniordou, Christopher Knowles**

Production manager: **Virginia Forlani**

Production assistants: **Maddalena Papagni, Elisa Crespi**

Commissioned and co-produced by: **ConversAzioni - Teatro Olimpico Vicenza - Pompeii Theatrum Mundi - Teatro Stabile di Napoli**

28 and 29 June

NATIONAL THEATRE OF GREECE

***Oresteia* by Aeschylus**

A bold, original concept by the National Theatre of Greece: *Oresteia*, the only extant ancient drama trilogy is presented in Epidauros in a single performance by three directors in their Epidauros debut, featuring a single cast and crew: *Agamemnon* by Io Voulgaraki, *The Libation Bearers* by Lilly Meleme, and *The Eumenides* by Georgia Mavragani.

Translated by **K. H. Myris**

Set design: **Paris Mexis**

Lighting design: **Lefteris Pavlopoulos**

Cast (in alphabetical order): **Dimitris Georgiadis, Stefania Gouliot, Stelios Iakovidis, Maria Kitsou, Filareti Komninou, Despina Kourti, Alexandros Logothetis, Argyris Xafis**

Agamemnon

Directed by **Io Voulgaraki**

In the first part of Aeschylus' trilogy, King Agamemnon returns to Argos, shortly after the end of the Trojan War. Agamemnon triumphantly marches into the city and his palace, flaunting the Trojan princess and Apollo priestess Cassandra as his captive. Clytemnestra welcomes her husband, all pomp and circumstance. However, it is quickly revealed that her enthusiasm conceals a well-orchestrated plan. She has decided to take revenge for the murder of their daughter, Iphigenia, sacrificed by Agamemnon to get the Greek ships sailing about ten years ago. The red carpet Clytemnestra rolls out for Agamemnon's return foreshadows the impending bloodbath, as she and her accomplice/lover, Aegisthus, plot to murder the king and his concubine.

Director's note:

Agamemnon, the first part of the *Oresteia* trilogy, marks the beginning of Aeschylus' multifaceted theatrical project, built around the myth of the Trojan War, making a deep impact at the time it was written (5th-century Athens) and leaving its mark to every single era it has been ever since. Ten years after the end of the most terrible of wars, the Trojan War, the king returns home, only to be murdered by his wife. Ten years of anticipation for such a heinous crime. Within this poetic universe, where man remains an inscrutable enigma and the heavens bear witness to human actions, the victim and the victimizer swap parts. A ruling class silently watches this power play; a class that is ultimately divested of its power and its very being. Who is given the right to commit a crime and who grants this right to begin with?

The performance will establish a dialogue with the two other parts (*The Libation Bearers* and *The Eumenides*), in what is an original collaboration, a joint exploration of a dramatist who 'invented' the theatre, at least Western theatre as we know it.

The Libation Bearers

Directed by **Lilly Meleme**

In the second part of Aeschylus' trilogy, Electra take centre stage, mourning her murdered father and obsessively anticipating the return of her brother, Orestes, her beacon of hope, with whom she plans to take revenge for Agamemnon. In the beginning of the play, Electra mourns over her father's grave. The Libation Bearers, the women of the Chorus accompanying her, add to her laments. There, Electra is reunited with her brother, who returns after many years abroad, together with his loyal friend, Pylades, both disguised as outsiders. Upon seeing her in mourning, Orestes realizes they will be allies and reveals himself to her. Things escalate very quickly: aided by Electra, Orestes and Pylades pretend to be foreigners bringing the dead Orestes' ashes home to Clytemnestra. After Clytemnestra welcomes Orestes, he reveals his identity to her and subsequently murders both her and her lover and accomplice, Aegisthus. The Furies arrive, relentlessly pursuing Orestes until the moment he will be acquitted at Areopagus.

Director's note:

The second part of *Oresteia* is set ten years after the finale of *Agamemnon* and constitutes the bloody, beating heart of the trilogy. The ground has been laid for the arrival of Orestes, the young avenger who is under obligation to obey the ancient laws and retaliate: blood for blood. The dead father exacts revenge on his murderers. Agamemnon's presence in this play is as palpable, albeit in a different way, as it was in *Agamemnon*. The landscape in *The Libation Bearers* is bleak and menacing. A new state has emerged, plagued by violence, terrorism, and a frightful silence, ruled by the illicit couple of usurpers, those who deceitfully stole the power from the rightful king, stained their hands with blood and plunged the country into darkness and chaos.

The old world has reached a deadlock and is morally, socially, and politically bankrupt. Orestes' appalling act is enforced by the gods and the universe itself. Violence breeds violence and the Furies lie in wait. The bright light of the burgeoning Justice that is set to reconcile the old world with the rising new world still has a long way to go – and it will be a long and arduous

road. There is no other option left. The repetition of a crime turns into a cleansing ritual for an entire society transitioning from darkness to light.

The Eumenides

Directed by **Georgia Mavragani**

The third part of the trilogy revolves around Orestes' pursuit by the Furies and the holy trial he must submit himself to in order to be acquitted so that the Furies can be appeased and transformed into Eumenides. The Areopagus court is also established in this play, often considered to be a foundational play of Athenian Democracy.

Director's note:

Orestes is at the oracle of Delphi, pursued by the Furies. He is a suppliant at the temple of Apollo, asking for the god's protection. Following Apollo's advice, he comes to Athens, where he becomes a suppliant at the statue of Athena. The raging Furies follow in hot pursuit, urged on by Clytemnestra's ghost. A solution will be reached at Areopagus, the court of Athens. Orestes and the Chorus of the Furies will, each in turn, vindicate their beliefs. Athena's tie-breaking vote acquits Orestes, who sings the praises of Athens and declares that from this point onwards an unbreakable bond has been forged between Athens and his homeland. As per Athena's declarations, the Furies are transformed into benevolent divinities, the Eumenides.

The trilogy comes to a close with the balance being redressed, on a note of reconciliation. Shortly afterwards, in 462 BC, due to democratic reforms, homicidal crimes will start falling under the jurisdiction of Areopagus.

The final and most difficult cleansing is attempted here. A chorus of ten actors will try to carry it through, setting up a trial for everybody: dead, living, men, women, mortals, gods - a deeply political action.

5 and 6 July

NATIONAL THEATRE OF GREECE - CYPRUS THEATRE ORGANISATION

***The Suppliants* by Euripides**

Translated by **Giorgos Koropoulos**

Directed by **Stathis Livathinos**

Music: **Angelos Triantafyllou**

Music coaching: **Melina Paionidou**

Cast featuring Greek and Greek Cypriot actors to be announced

Co-production: **National Theatre of Greece - Cyprus Theatre Organisation**

Director's note:

Two national theatres, the National Theatre of Greece and Cyprus Theatre Organisation, join forces to produce an iconic play: a tragedy about war and the dead, existential dread, dignity, faith and resilience, in a new translation by Giorgos Koropoulos.

It has been 43 years since the tragedy was last staged by the National Theatre of Greece – the only time in the National Theatre's history – directed by Takis Mouzenidis, and 29 years since the first presentation of the play by the Cyprus Theatre Organisation in Epidaurus, directed by Nikos Charalambous. This new production, a joint venture of Greek and Greek Cypriot artists, is brought to life by the incumbent artistic director of the National Theatre of Greece, Stathis Livathinos.

The mothers of the Argive generals who perished in Thebes fighting by Polynices' side become suppliants at the temple of Demeter in Eleusis, joined by Adrastus, king of Argos. The suppliants plead with Theseus, king of Athens, to help them: the Thebans are keeping their dead sons as spoils of war and will not allow them to be buried.

In response to this just plea, Theseus decides to send out a message to Creon, king of Thebes. Soon, a Theban messenger arrives bringing a message to Theseus: he is to drive Adrastus and the mothers away, otherwise the Theban army will attack the Athenians.

Theseus leads the Athenian army against Thebes and ultimately retrieves the corpses and has them carried to Eleusis, where they are to be burnt properly. A delirious Evadne, widow of

Capaneus, jumps into the funeral pyre to burn along with her husband. Mothers and children return home, carrying the ashes of their beloved ones with them.

Written in 422 BC, the tragedy echoes the battle of Delium (424 BC), in which the Thebans, allies of Sparta, defeated the Athenians and for several days would not allow them to retrieve their dead and bury them properly.

12 and 13 July

***Oedipus Rex* by Sophocles**

Translated by **Yannis Lignadis**

Directed by **Konstantinos Markoulakis**

With **Dimitris Lignadis** as Oedipus and **Amalia Moutousi** as Jocasta

Produced by **Athinaika Theatra – Municipal and Regional Theatre of Crete**

Sophocles' masterpiece and arguably the ancient Greek tragedy *par excellence* begins with a mystery. The city of Thebes is afflicted with plague. King Oedipus wants to know why this is the case. The oracle is clear: Apollo demands that Laios' murderer be punished in order for the city to be cleansed. The king decides to solve the mystery, thus setting in motion a series of horrific revelations.

Director's note:

I have confronted *Oedipus* on stage twice: the first time was when I depicted the character in a Spyros Evangelatos production. On the second occasion, I portrayed three characters, Jocasta, Tiresias, and the Shepherd in a performance directed by Cezaris Graužinis.

There are two aspects in this play, arguably the absolute masterpiece of ancient Greek drama – at least among the extant plays – that act in a complementary manner.

The first thing to note is its flawless plot. It is the first play in the world canon that can be classified as suspense/thriller (or *whodunit*, as the British would have it). Unravelling the plot, the hero masterfully reaches the centre of the maze, the point where the pursuer and the pursued are proven to be one and the same. Even if we sometimes overlook this detective aspect of the play, perhaps rightfully seeking other qualities in it, I can't help but remember the audience gasping in unison at hearing the phrase: "Polybus was not your father" – an audience response which gave me chills.

The second aspect, the one making *Oedipus* the first existentialist play in the world canon, is the question it raises: "Who am I?" The tools employed by the character to answer this question are the same tools that humans – especially Western humans – have idolized: reason, thought, logic. They are the only tools in our possession, the instruments that have taken our species to the very top, yet they do not suffice. If one decides to raise this particular question, one must also be prepared for the answer that comes with it. As the poet Odysseus Elytis once wrote: "Truth is given only in exchange for death."

Oedipus is the first Man, the Adam of ancient drama. And his fate cannot but humble us.

19 and 20 July

National Theatre of Northern Greece

***Iphigenia in Aulis* by Euripides**

Translated by **Pantelis Boukalas**

Directed by **Yannis Kalavrianos**

One of Euripides' late plays, it was written between 408 and 406 BC and presented posthumously at the Great Dionysia, where it won first prize. The tragedy focuses on the fateful decision of Agamemnon, commander of the Greek forces, to sacrifice his daughter, Iphigenia. In the beginning of the play, the Greek fleet plans to sail to Troy, but remains stuck in Aulis as the wind has lulled. The seer Calchas reveals that the wind has died down due to Artemis being furious with Agamemnon after being insulted by him. The goddess will only be appeased if Agamemnon sacrifices his daughter, Iphigenia. Agamemnon invites Iphigenia to Aulis, on the pretext of

marrying her to Achilles, the most admired warrior among the Greeks, prior to their departure for the war. Faced with a horrific dilemma, torn between his daughter and his people, Agamemnon nevertheless decides to proceed to the sacrifice, dismissing the pleas of Clytemnestra, Iphigenia, Achilles, the army threatening him with mutiny, even his own brother, Menelaus. The noble Iphigenia ultimately reconciles herself with her tragic fate and her heroic death for her people's sake. In the denouement, a messenger announces to Clytemnestra that Iphigenia's body disappeared from the sacrificial altar shortly before receiving the final blow.

Director's note:

Written near the end of his life, Euripides' play is full of twists and dilemmas, replete with irony and startling moments of comedy; an oft-performed text that even nowadays raises a number of questions on literature, drama and theatre.

Similar to the other plays tackling the Atreides family, the characters in *Iphigenia in Aulis* are burdened with an ancestral curse. We know from the first that things are not likely to turn out very well.

Imbued with the atmosphere of its time, with the Athenian democracy on the brink of collapse and the imminent defeat at the Peloponnesian War looming large, the tragedy conveys a crumbling world where faith to heroics and patriotic values has been shaken; a world in which the mob takes matters into their own hands, whereas the weak, petty, cowardly, unstable and temperamental heroes begin to disintegrate. The pursuit of power remains the only constant, each time assuming a different form. The tension between the public and the private, the male and the female, the *polis* and the family generates characters who will not hesitate to cross the line.

This subversive tale of twists and turns is neither one of romantic self-sacrifice nor is it one of patriotic drama; rather, it addresses a constant struggle and an upset of balance.

In Aulis, it is not just the wind that has abated; life itself has died down. Everybody is eagerly waiting for something to happen. Very soon, something will indeed ensue: the abolition of logic.

26 and 27 July

Comédie-Française

***Electra / Orestes* by Euripides**

Directed by Ivo van Hove

Stage adaptation: Bart Van den Eynde and (Ivo van Hove

Translated into French: Marie Delcourt-Curvers

Set and lighting design: Jan Versweyveld

Costume design: An D'Huys

Original music: Eric Sleichim

Choreography: Wim Vandekeybus

Dramaturgy: Bart Van den Eynde

Assistant to the director: Laurent Delvert

Assistant to the set designer: Roel Van Berckelaer

Assistant to the lighting designer: François Thouret

With the actors of Comédie-Française:

Claude Mathieu (chorus), Cécile Brune (chorus), Sylvia Bergé (chorus), Éric Génovèse (Phrygian slave), Bruno Raffaelli (old servant of Electra / peasant), Denis Podalydès (Menelaus), Elsa Lepoivre (Clytemnestra / Helen), Loïc Corbery (Pylades), Suliane Brahim (Electra), Benjamin Lavernhe (Mycenaean man), Didier Sandre (Tyndaerus), Christophe Montenez (Orestes), Rebecca Marder (Hermione), Dominique Blanc (Coryphaeus), Gaël Kamilindi (Apollo).

And the actors of L'Académie de la Comédie-Française: Peio Berterretche, Pauline Chabrol, Thomas Keller, Olivier Lugo, Noémie Pasteger, Léa Schweitzer

Produced by **Comédie-Française**

Premiere: Salle Richelieu, 27 April 2019

Live screening from Salle Richelieu: **Pathé Live 23. 5. 2019**

In collaboration with Athens & Epidaurus Festival

Supported by the Institut Français de Grèce

Comédie-Française on the collaboration with Athens Festival

Following the hugely successful *The Damned* which premiered at the Cour d'Honneur of the Palais des Papes at the Festival d'Avignon 2016 and was repeated at Salle Richelieu, Ivo van Hove once again joins forces with the company of Comédie-Française, delivering another impressive gallery of characters, focusing on the House Atreides. This second collaboration of Comédie-Française with one of the internationally acclaimed masters of theatre, this time on an ancient Greek tragedy, was the perfect opportunity for Éric Ruf, general administrator of Comédie-Française, and Vangelis Theodoropoulos, artistic director of Athens & Epidaurus Festival, to bring together these two great institutions of European theatre in a collaborative project.

This performance marks the first time ever that the oldest active theatre company in the world will perform at the Ancient Theatre of Epidaurus.

Ivo van Hove, who opened Athens Festival 2018 with his extremely successful stage adaptation of Bergman's *Persona / After the Rehearsal* has clarified that all of his collaborations are born out of his love at first sight with a particular text. In this case, the director brings together two Euripides plays telling the story of Electra and Orestes and more specifically how the two siblings reunite and make a pact to take revenge against their mother, Clytemnestra, and her lover, Aegisthus. This performance also marks the first time that Euripides' *Electra* will be performed by Comédie-Française. *Orestes* was last presented by the company at Salle Richelieu back in 1923.

Widely acclaimed for his formidable talent and his ability to dramatize texts, the director of Toneelgroep Amsterdam constantly redefines his aesthetics and his relationship with the actors. Even though Van Hove denounces the concept of the 'method,' he revisits the ancient drama, paying tribute to its social dimension and illuminating the myth with a very clear sense of its relevance to our times.

The story in Ivo van Hove's words

Electra and Orestes are brother and sister. Young, hurt, fragile and vulnerable, they turn into savage beasts. They have never really known their father, who left when they were little to serve as the commander of the Greek army during the Trojan War. They think of their mother, Clytemnestra, as the enemy, and of their family home as the battleground. Agamemnon's absence has elevated him into a hero in their eyes. Driven away from their home, the former royal offspring, Electra and Orestes, have become refugees inside their own family and their own country.

Excerpts from Ivo van Hove's interview

The family is the Gordian knot of society, and, as such, creates a number of problems. We are standing in front of a mirror reflecting the negative image of our own impulses. Is this an incestuous family? Not in the literal sense (or at least, not *just* in the literal sense) of the word, but in the sense of family as a battlefield on the one hand, a place where problems are resolved, and on the other hand, a place to separate the wheat from the chaff, those who have been chosen to stay from those who will be permanently banished.

In our performance of *Electra / Orestes*, we want to enact a world of great cruelty, a naturalistic world even, on stage. Truth be told, I conceived this performance as a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, a total work of art in the Wagnerian sense of the term, in the sense that we are perhaps taking part in a ritual.

I consider myself Belgian as much as I consider myself European and citizen of the world. Talking about society means talking about the world at large.

The Greeks pose a crucial question: what is that element which unites us instead of dividing us? This is the central question in *Electra / Orestes*.

I hold my collaboration with the actors of Comédie-Française in high esteem. I felt they have a burning desire to perform theatre; a visceral need to embrace an artistic adventure. Admittedly, Comédie-Française and Toneelgroep Amsterdam are my two best experiences as a director. When Éric Ruf proposed yet another collaboration, I accepted his proposal at once.

A few words about Comédie-Française

Founded in 1680 by Molière's company of actors, Comédie-Française is one of the most famous and oldest active theatres in the world. Spanning three centuries of rich history, the permanent company breathes life into a classical and modern repertoire, both French and international, cutting across 3,000 works by over 800 writers. With a staff of 400 making sure that the curtain rises every night on the central stage of Palais Royal in the heart of Paris, Comédie-Française is the only theatrical venue in France today still using the practice of rotating repertory. With two more performance halls in Paris, Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier and Studio-Théâtre, the company tours regularly in France and around the world.

The motto of the company, *simul* and *singulis* (*together and individually*) conveys its power and longevity: the collective nourishes the individual, who in turn enriches the collective. The beehive, as emblem of Comédie-Française, denotes a multifaceted, constantly renewed creative force, highlighting the House of Molière as a school of arts and language, a home for artistic growth and creativity.

2 and 3 August

***The Clouds* by Aristophanes**

Translated by **Giannis Asteris**

Directed by **Dimitris Karantzas**

Dramaturgical collaboration: **Theodora Kapralou**

Assistant director: **Geli Kalampaka**

Set design: **Cleo Boboti**

Costume design: **Ioanna Tsami**

Music: **Henri Kergomard**

Movement: **Tasos Karahalios**

Lighting design: **Alekos Anastasiou**

Cast: **Evdoxia Androulidaki, Alexandra Aidini, Giorgos Gallos, Nikos Karathanos, Karyofillia Karampeti, Giannis Klinis, Emily Koliandri, Christos Loulis, Elina Rizou, Theodora Tzimou, Aineias Tsamatis, Lydia Fotopoulou et al**

Produced by **Tagaris Theatrical Productions**

Aristophanes' masterful comedy was first presented at the Great Dionysia in 423 BC and attacks Socrates' teachings and the philosophical ideas of the time. The elderly, largely uneducated Athenian Strepsiades, is in debt owing to the extravagant lifestyle of his profligate, pampered son, Pheidippides. Strepsiades tries to convince him to enrol in Socrates' Phrontisterion (Thinking Place), where he will be taught the difference between right and wrong reason and will learn to defend himself in court against his creditors. When Pheidippides refuses to comply, Strepsiades enrolls himself, despite his advanced age. There, impressed by the wealth of ideas he comes across he asks to meet the master himself. Socrates appears and the induction ceremony of the elderly student begins. However, Strepsiades proves to be an inept student. Ultimately, Pheidippides succumbs to his father's threats and is forced to enrol in the school. Father and son watch as the Superior (Right) and Inferior (Wrong) Reason clash, each arguing they can offer the best education to Pheidippides. The Wrong Reason emerges victorious. Strepsiades later returns to pick up his son, now transformed into a paragon of intellect. Strepsiades makes a feast at his house to celebrate his son's transformation and even drives away two creditors who show up asking Pheidippides to appear in court. When Pheidippides threatens to beat his father, using the arguments he has been taught, a raging Strepsiades decides to destroy Socrates' school.

Director's note:

In *The Clouds*, Aristophanes suggests we dispense with rationalism and sets us on a direct collision course with the poverty of ideas. Central in this tragicomedy is an Everyman, Strepsiades, coming in contact with Socrates and through him with the great immaterial ideas, the Clouds. Through his Chorus of Clouds, the Messiah-like Socrates initiates Strepsiades into a new kind of faith and a novel way of viewing the world as a godless place, an intellectual utopia. When Socrates' theory and the integrity of his teachings crumble, Strepsiades feels betrayed and resolves to destroy Socrates' school in what is one of the most enigmatic and tragic finales in Aristophanes' oeuvre. Both arguments represented in the play are undermined in the face of a despairing void.

Remaining faithful to Aristophanes' biting comedy, scathing empty knowledge and the clientelism prevalent in mentor-student relationships, the performance casts the Clouds as the protagonists, bringing into question the omnipotence of reason and heralding the return to a long-lost spirituality.

9 and 10 August

Municipal and Regional Theatre of Patras

***Prometheus Bound* by Aeschylus**

Translated by **Dimitris Dimitriadis**

Directed by **Stavros S. Tsakiris**

Music: **Thanos Mikroutsikos**

Movement: **Marcello Magni**

Set design: **Kostas Varotsos**

Costume design: **Yiannis Metzikov**

With **Kathryn Hunter** as Prometheus

Prometheus is punished by Zeus for giving fire to humanity. Hephaestus is tasked with chaining Prometheus on steep mountain rocks. Cratus and Bia keep watch on the reluctant Hephaestus. Oceanus' daughters, the Oceanids, lament the hero's torment. Prometheus and Oceanus discuss Zeus' cruelty. Enter another creature who has suffered the wrath of the gods: Io, Zeus' mistress. He once transformed her into a heifer to save her from Hera's jealousy. In response, Hera dispatched an annoying gadfly to relentlessly pursue Io to the end of the world. Prometheus foretells her future, linked with his own, since a distant descendant of Io is destined to set Prometheus free several years in the future. Prometheus also foresees the fall of Zeus. However, he refuses to disclose the exact circumstances of Zeus' fall to Hermes, the messenger god. The tragedy reaches its climax with a raging Zeus unleashing his thunders against Prometheus, the still-resisting prisoner retaining his free will.

Director's note:

It could very well be the most ancient tragedy. Or the most enlightened text of all time. Or the most cryptic text in the world. Or the profanest text ever written. Or the most sympathetic text about this writhing creature, caught between the profuse light of the universe and the deepest darkness which others try to impose on him.

Gods, great and small ones alike; prejudices and fears.

Man, the greatest of torture victims, now and forever.

A sacred text or a liberating manifesto? Elevated by rage or wisdom? Do its words betray mourning or vengeance? Do the *dramatis personae* communicate resignation or perseverance?

Prometheus is not one of those conventional stories found in epic cycles. The pace is breathless, comes in fits and starts, elliptical, even in long monologues; not unlike a delirium, a nightmare or a dream of the future. One keeps wondering whether life is a punishment, the result of the original sin, or rather a choice for man himself to define his fate on Earth on his own terms.

A contemporary *Prometheus* performance can no longer serve as allegory or parable. It cannot be built on symbolism or give way to an exoticization, as it usually happens when we rely on our imagination to visualize the beginnings of the world.

Today, we can only be moved by a Prometheus banished in the wilderness of a modern metropolis, a scapegoat of contemporary societies anticipating and seeking his redemption. If the minor characters of Bia and Cratus, the servants of the invisible Zeus, assume the form of Fear that takes root around us and inside us, then the agony to live is transformed into meaningful action and Prometheus emerges as a 'useful' hero. The fire stolen by Prometheus is the ever-burning light.

Little Theatre of Ancient Epidaurus

22 June

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

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 Ziavras, 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: **Dionyssis 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

***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

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 Palaioroutas**

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 & 20 July

Daphnis + Chloe by Longus

Un amore bucolico

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 & 27 July

***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**

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

Actress depicting Oenone TBA

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 honouring 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 & 3 August

***Danaïds* 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 *Danaïds*, 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 nembi 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.