

## **ATHENS & EPIDAUROS FESTIVAL**

### **2019 Artistic Programme**

#### **Note from the artistic director,**

#### **Vangelis Theodoropoulos**

The end of April marks three years since I came on board as artistic director of the Athens & Epidaurus Festival; it also marks the official end of my term.

I took over, being convinced that an institution of this magnitude could and should contribute in its own, creative way in times of crisis such as those we are living through.

These three years have turned out to be a fascinating but also wild ride. Despite the adverse conditions in the Greek public sector and the bureaucratic hurdles plaguing the Festival, I am pleased to say that our basic goals have been met and have begun to visibly bear fruit, being gradually well-received by audiences, critics and journalists – to a large extent thanks to the perseverance of yours truly and my team of collaborators who have held by back from the very beginning. Let me go through the accomplishments of the past three years:

First, I should mention Epidaurus Lyceum, the educational institution we designed and brought to realization in collaboration with the Theatre Studies Department of the University of the Peloponnese in Nafplio, through which students graduating the programme are now certified with ECTS credits.

Following its two first active years, this international summer school of

ancient drama, run by the Festival's co-curator for educational programmes, Georgina Kakoudaki, has firmly established itself on the map of ancient drama research at an international level: with eminent and erudite artists and scholars being invited from around the world to teach there, with plurality and intercultural education as its main pursuits, and also with its special relationship with the area of Epidaurus, a location blessed with the energy of young people visiting from all over the world, the Lyceum has many benefits to its name.

However, the Lyceum is but one, perhaps the most dynamic, facet of the Festival's educational policy. Young people and young audiences have been among our top priorities and with that in mind each year we have been holding a number of theatre, dance and music educational events helping audiences connect with the Festival programme, both throughout the active Festival season but also on a long-term basis. Back in October, in our Epidaurus programme press conference, I spoke in length about the connection between artistic production and education, the hallmark of the Festival's identity. Let me remind you that especially in the case of Epidaurus we have launched a number of educational projects in addition to the Lyceum: Educating Audiences in Ancient Drama; Dialogues; Educating international audiences, and, last but not least, the Epidaurus for Children creative workshop, running for the fourth consecutive year parallel to the performances at the Ancient Theatre of Epidaurus. In Athens, in addition to the post-performance talks with international directors, we have successfully launched a number of platforms, giving food for thought, encouraging younger artists and bolstering collectivity in art: the annual Symposium held in collaboration with the Hellenic Association of Theatre and Performing Arts Critics, this year focusing on contemporary theatre criticism and its relationship with the new theatre market; Young Greek Classics, held in

collaboration with the Athens Conservatoire, which this year will pay tribute to cello, presenting young Greek musicians distinguished in this instrument; the workshops organized by Yo-Yo Ma and Ricardo Mutti, and the multifaceted dance platform known as A Day Full of Dancing, to name a few.

Our second major innovation was the launch of the Opening to the City, a section with site-specific performances taking place in Athens and Piraeus with the support of Athens Culture Net and the Piraeus Municipal Theatre respectively. Ever since it was launched in 2017, the Opening has aimed to expand the Festival's scope beyond conventional venues, promoting art as a vehicle for a more effective connection with the city and encouraging a more active presence of the various collectives in Athens and Piraeus. I am confident that our efforts have borne fruit. One can see that in the many Opening events which audiences seek out and actively engage in – not only due to the fact these performances have free admission but, mostly, because they approach the public space through a uniquely artistic perspective: through theatre narratives, through literary lens, ultimately through re-arranging and re-imagining a well-known or less well-known story.

Our third accomplishment: Already in the debut appearance of the incumbent artistic direction, we were stressing the significance of supporting Greek and younger theatre and dance artists, and we have succeeded in our goal, at the same time highlighting cutting-edge dance and theatre work from around the world, with particular emphasis to artists from more unfamiliar cultures and rapidly rising artists, whom we have introduced to the Greek audiences.

The dynamics between the international and the Greek programme are understandably different: as far as the international programme is concerned, as a rule we choose already finished productions, whereas when it comes to the Greek programme we are interested in making new productions from

scratch, commissioning new work and having artists submit their proposals. Regardless, we are interested in maintaining the balance between finished works and works in-progress. Let me just state the following to reiterate the significance that the Greek programme holds for us: even though the practice of open calls is generally avoided by the most prestigious international festivals, we continue to issue a call for submissions to Greek artists every year, and the finalized programme on each given year draws on the pool of submitted proposals. This process of selection entails a very in-depth and thorough assessment of all submissions, in order to be able to single out the most promising, groundbreaking and festival-friendly proposals, based on their boldness and relevance of themes. We have already proved that highlighting young Greek artists, emerging tendencies, and projects has been a priority of ours, along with the inclusion of already established artists and large-scale productions suited for festivals.

Given that this a 'Hellenic/Greek' Festival, we are not just interested in supporting contemporary Greek theatre, dance and music, but also in connecting the ancient and contemporary traditions of our country, realizing this is a prerequisite for renewing and redefining our aesthetic identity as a nation. With that in mind, it is of paramount importance for us to adopt an approach connecting contemporary theatre research with ancient drama (and this year ancient mythology, as well). This approach has essentially transformed the Little Theatre of Ancient Epidaurus into a hotbed of younger Greek artists with alternative takes on ancient drama. Let me add as a reminder that the 2019 programme of the Ancient Theatre of Epidaurus and the Little Theatre of Epidaurus, as well as the Epidaurus Lyceum, were announced in October and can also be found in today's press kit.

Equally important to us was our tribute last year to the major postwar dramatist Loula Anagnostaki, which included *Rooms of Memory*, an

experiential installation - simulation of the artist's world, curated by Dimitra Kondylaki, co-curator for contemporary Greek theatre and editor of all official Festival publications.

Therefore, supporting contemporary Greek theatre has been extremely important to us, as we had stressed from the first, though from a qualitative rather than a quantitative point of view. By that I mean, as one can tell by having a look at the 2019 Greek theatre programme, that we are interested in the content of the plays rather than their nationality.

My fourth point: Our original mission statement included bolstering the Festival's openness, adopting a more extroverted stance, and achieving co-productions with international institutions. Incidentally, all Greek productions, including those held at Peiraios 260, now come with English surtitles for our international visitors (in the past, only Epidaurus performances used to have English surtitles), and there are Greek surtitles in all Greek productions for the hearing impaired and for the comfort of all theatre-goers in general. To cut a long story short, not only did we support Greek theatre, but we also boosted the Festival's international character, taking a risk and going ahead and participating in international co-productions with major artists, such as Romeo Castellucci and Krzysztof Warlikowski in theatre, and Marlene Monteiro Freitas, Hofesh Shechter and Euripides Laskaridis in dance. Thanks to our participation in international co-productions, the Festival has emerged as a major European force of cultural production. Furthermore, our collaborations with networks such as the [DNA] and institutions such as the newly launched international artist and curator residency programme Onassis AiR of the Onassis Foundation, actively support Greek artists through structures and collaborations which go much further than the simple presentation of a finished work, accentuating the very process of art making, and encouraging collaborations and exchanges at an international level.

This international orientation applies to Epidaurus, as well. As previously announced, this year we have invited Comédie-Française to make its Epidaurus debut with *Electra / Orestes*, directed by the internationally acclaimed, avant-garde director Ivo Van Hove, a collaboration which has been years in the making. Robert Wilson will also be making his Epidaurus debut with *Oedipus*. Our third Epidaurus highlight this year is *Prometheus Bound*, a co-production of Athens & Epidaurus Festival with the Municipal and Regional Theatre of Patras, featuring the celebrated Greek-British actress Kathryn Hunter in the title role. Let me give you a foretaste of the 2020 artistic programme: a Warlikowski production in Epidaurus has already been decided.

Pursuing co-productions, both with international institutions, as well as with Municipal and Regional Theatres and private businesses in Greece has proved to be a practice that pays off, both in terms of budget and also in how these performances are promoted and catch on with audiences.

Maintaining a balance between Greek and international productions is also an integral aspect of our Odeon of Herodes Atticus programme, curated for the Festival by Costa Pilavachi. This year we have invited internationally acclaimed orchestras, such as the Orchestre Philharmonique du Luxembourg along with its famous soloist Yuja Wang; the Wiener Symphoniker under the baton of conductor and soloist Leonidas Kavakos; the Luigi Cherubini Youth Orchestra of the Ravenna Festival; conducted by Riccardo Muti, and lastly the China National Symphony Orchestra. Major soloists such as Yo-Yo Ma performing Bach's 6 suites for cello, along with the Athens State Orchestra joining forces with Maxim Vengerov under the baton of Stefanos Tsialis, Händel's *Alcina* by the musicians of Armonia Atenea - Friends of Music Orchestra and George Petrou featuring the great soprano Myrto Papathanasiou, and the ERT National Symphony Orchestra performing Nikos

Skalkottas' *The Sea* on the occasion of the Skalkottas Year will also be featured. The Greek National Opera will also be included in this year's Festival programme with two new productions: *Norma*, conducted by Georgios Balatsinos and directed by Carlus Padrissa and La Fura dels Baus, and *La Traviata*, conducted by Loukas Karytinis and directed by Konstantinos Rigos.

Internationally acclaimed, contemporary music artists, such as Jethro Tull, Dead Can Dance, Loreena McKennitt and Tindersticks will also take over the Odeon by storm, along with major Greek composers and singers, including Eleni Karaindrou, Yannis Markopoulos, Maria Farantouri and George Dalaras. A standout of this year's Odeon programme is a dance performance by one of the leading dancers and choreographers in the world, Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker and her world-famous Rosas group. De Keersmaeker will be making her Odeon debut with her own take on Bach's *6 cello suites*.

All of the abovementioned points serve our common, all-encompassing goal: to establish the Festival's scope and prestige both in Greece and abroad, making it at once a national and an international, contemporary, versatile institution, but also a socially conscious one, open to all types of audiences, whose main concern is to *produce* culture and artistic collaborations instead of merely hosting them. We envisage the Festival as a breath of life, a form of entertainment, meditation and joint collaboration for everybody. This has been our master plan: we are as proud for having achieved this social expansion and for fostering the Festival's international orientation as we are proud of its distinctly modern artistic sensibility. Of course, this does not entail that we are resting on our laurels. Far from it: we still have a long way to go.

With society being what it is right now, seething with unrest, and numerous issues threatening social stability and order, we wish even more so today to

emphasize the Festival's social dimension, focusing on an aspect that is crucial to harmonious co-existence: respect and tolerance of others, regardless of ethnic background, gender, and sexual orientation. Therefore, this year's Festival pays tribute to 'diversity' and 'difference,' what one could call the most obvious of rights, that is, the right of people to be whoever they want to be and identify themselves as they please. This consideration is also reflected in the Festival's official visual identity for 2019: the figure of a hermaphrodite, open to multiple interpretations.

Both at a Greek and at an international level, there are numerous problems that we simply cannot overlook: a growing fear against whatever and whoever is perceived as different; a shift towards so-called traditional values, nurturing practices of exclusion; a backlash towards any values perceived as 'progressive'; a rise in fascism. We are concerned with these problems and with how exactly to address them. How to get people who are not necessarily what one would call 'avid Festival theatre-goers' more involved? How to bring together diverse types of audiences? How to promote art and entertainment that are at once responsive to current social needs and first-class works of a high artistic standard?

A few months ago, Zak Kostopoulos, an HIV-positive gay activist and drag performer and actor was brutally murdered in Athens. Shortly afterwards, a young woman was brutally raped and murdered in Rhodes. Two years ago, a young man, a student in Ioannina, committed suicide after being routinely bullied by his fellow students for being 'different.' Another case in point: recently, high school students in Kalamaria occupied their school for a rather unexpected cause, with the full support of their parents. They were not protesting an educational reform or trying to right a wrong: rather, they were championing the removal of one of their classmates from school, deeming him as 'problematic.' In other words, they were supporting their own version of



that most 'obvious' of rights while actually violating another person's right in being different. These students' stance projects an idea of society desperately clinging to a homogeneous image of itself, with fear providing its social glue, its cohesive force. It goes without saying that art has an important role to play here.

Our 2019 programme delves into this issue more intricately than ever before, exploring diversity and alterity in almost all of the various forms they can assume – the word does not imply focusing only on gender issues, but also on all sorts of minorities and marginalized groups and cultures.

The Greek plays scheduled to be presented at Peiraios 260, from Giorgos Papageorgiou's *Giannoula Koulourou* to *Strange Doors*, an unpublished text of the late Manos Eleftherious entrusted to Nena Menti and directed by Manos Karatzogiannis to *Himmelweg* by the contemporary Spanish playwright Juan Mayorga, directed by Elena Karakouli, and Eleni Efthymiou's *Horse in Love*, anatomize the cases of individuals or entire groups on the fringes of society, reflecting on their cruel treatment by society as a whole. The cruelty and social injustice prevalent in provincial towns against anyone perceived as different (*Giannoula* and *Strange Doors*), an entire nation of people being exterminated (the Jew population at the Prague concentration camp in Mayorga's play), or a group of individuals claiming what, for many people, is far from obvious, their right to love and be loved, that is, their right to live, all represent different facets of our meditation on the issue of difference and the consequences arising from not being able to accept what is different.

We also wish to emphasize that our criteria for the Greek programme is artists themselves, above all other considerations. It was about time we presented a work by the provocative Dimitris Dimitriadis: the stage premiere of *Chrysippus*, directed by Thanos Samaras, will accentuate difference in a

reverse manner, through a figure of *homme fatale*, personifying absolute beauty. This is the case of a hero destroying those around him rather than the other way around. The same goes for the production of *Richard III* by the Little Things Orchestra and Christos Theodoridis, first included in our programme back in 2016 with another bloody Elizabethan drama. Again, here, the community is destroyed by the demonic version of the Other, an incarnation of absolute evil. In other words, we are focusing on ‘otherness’ and difference, not to engage in polemics, but to approach the issue from different angles.

The Greek programme in Peiraios 260 will also feature two performances, whose humorous and self-sarcastic tone addresses the loneliness and alienation of contemporary individuals, appealing in vain for a way out of this deadlock: *Against Freedom* by the Catalan Esteve Soler, directed by Vassilis Mavrogeorgiou, and *Summer Swimming* by Kostas Koutsolelos and Vasso Kamaratou, a duo of performers and dramatists who are quickly turning into Beckettian figures of the contemporary Greek scene. The Greek programme will also include an adaptation of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* by the up-and-coming C. for Circus group, focusing on how violence can become beauty.

Children are another special category of citizens. This year, for the first time ever, we will include a number of child-friendly artistic events at Peiraios 260, hoping to rouse children’s creativity and to actively engage them. The Peiraios courtyard will come alive through vivid colours, movement and theatrical games. From 30 May to 30 June, an installation doubling as an interactive work of art and a giant toy, created by the internationally acclaimed artist Mark Hadjipateras (creator of many site-specific installations in galleries, museums and public spaces such as the NYC subway and the Nea Paralia in Nea Thessaloniki) will be set up at the Peiraios 260 courtyard, with children being asked to assemble it and put it together, building cities, buildings,

bridges and all sorts of environments. Moreover, a workshop for children, focusing on the connections between ancient clay artifacts and Picasso's contemporary ceramics will be held at the Peiraios courtyard for two weekends, in collaboration with the Museum of Cycladic Art, running parallel to the *Picasso and Antiquity. Line and Clay* exhibition launched at the Museum on 20 June. We intend to prioritize local children, Greek and refugee/immigrant children alike, for participation in the programme. That's why the aforementioned project will be realized in collaboration with the Municipality of Nikaia – Renti. The Museum of Greek Children's Art will also prepare a children's art exhibition at the Peiraios courtyard, inspired by this year's Epidaurus performances, where the exhibition is scheduled to be moved at later on. Running parallel to this exhibition, there will also be a workshop for children and parents organized by the Museum every weekend from mid-June to mid-July at its headquarters in Plaka, entitled "At the Odeon of Herodes Atticus with the Museum of Greek Children's Art." Last but not least, in our attempt to support diversity and tolerance in a family-friendly manner, this year's programme will include *Drag Queen Story Hour*, in which drag queens will introduce themselves to parents and children, and tell them stories about diversity. This educational project was first launched in San Francisco in 2015 and will now be introduced in Athens by Dora Androulidaki, who has been organizing it in Berlin with the cooperation of the local LGBTQI+ community. The project, held in schools, libraries and festivals in many cities across the globe, challenges social stereotypes.

The question of diversity also features prominently in the Opening to the City, touching upon various events and venues. The LGBTQI+ community is the focus of the *Aphrodite\** platform and the performance *A New Era (?)*, the latter employing narratives and live dialogue with the audience in order to explore the thoughts and experiences of the new generation of LGBTQI+

people in Greece, that is, whether we have truly evolved and opened our minds and whether we have truly entered a new era of acknowledging people's right to self-definition. Substance abuse is another theme of this year's Opening to the City, inspiring an exhibition by the artist Ilias Poulos, entitled *We Are Looked at By What We Overlook*, featuring rare photographs of drug addicts of the interwar period. On the occasion of the exhibition discussions and an evening of drug-themed rebetika songs will also be held. A series of audio walks will also be organized jointly with the KETHEA Cultural Club. Starting this year, we will also incorporate the Invisible Tours of the Shedia street paper in our programme: homeless persons or people who used to be homeless will guide audiences through social and solidarity institutions in downtown Athens (soup kitchens, homeless shelters, drug rehabilitation centres, day centres).

The issue of diversity and difference is also related to the concept of 'foreignness' and to what extent we are capable of integrating refugees and immigrants and making them a part of our neighbourhood. This question informs Pantelis Flatsousis' performance, built around narratives of children of various ethnic backgrounds currently living in Kypseli – a performance providing us with a different perspective of everyday life in the area.

Poetry and literature remain standard themes in the Opening to the City, encompassing three fascinating performances which will unlock spectators' individual rapport with the city: Hernán Rivera Letelier's *She Was Moved by Movies*, a story about cinema and people being thirsty for narratives, directed by Thanassis Chalkias in beloved open-air cinemas in Athens; *Amica mea*, an assemblage of several love epistles of Ovid about passion and loss, directed by the Lotus Eaters and the promising director Panos Delinikopoulos at Kerameikos, and a selection from the complete works of the major writer and

poet Marios Hakkas, staged by Zoi Xanthopoulou, active in Greece and abroad, at Hakkas' house in Kaisariani, with the participation of locals.

We will also be continuing our extremely successful collaborations with the Athens Conservatoire, the Greek Film Archive, the Elliniki Etairia – Society for the Environment and Cultural Heritage featuring Manolis Korres' popular guided tours, and of course with the Piraeus Municipal Theatre, this year offering a series of fascinating events collectively titled *Humankinds*, with the Holy Bible serving as a sort of poetic context, in collaboration with Piraeus-based social institutions.

Let me also mention that this year we signed a memorandum of cooperation with the Hellenic Chamber of Hotels and the Athens – Attica and Argosaronic Hotel Association. On that note, we have included the successful project *The Stones Speak* in our programme, featuring theatrical events held at archaeological sites and museums in Athens. The goal of this collaboration is to further establish a connection between the Festival and the tourism industry through events involving all three institutions.

As far as the international programme is concerned, our collaborator and friend Matthias von Hartz is passing the torch to Carolin Hochleichter, our new co-curator for international productions, with a rich background as curator to international festivals, including Berliner Festspiele and Ruhrtriennale. The 2019 international programme is exceptionally diverse, covering approaches and theatrical languages from many different countries, with particular emphasis on women artists. It should be mentioned that for the first time in the Festival's history of international programme women make up over 50% of the invited artists.

Two huge names and all-time favourites of the Athenian theatre-goers will present their latest work, promising to dazzle audiences with their poetic

narratives and breathtaking imagery. Robert Lepage and the legendary Théâtre du Soleil will present *Kanata - Episode 1 - La Controverse*, a hotly debated performance on the natives of Canada and the relationship between contemporary art and society. Meanwhile, the acclaimed Romeo Castellucci is expected to rivet audiences with his hypnotic, dreamy *La Vita Nuova*.

The programme includes powerful female voices, namely three women artists, each of whom has been distinguished for her distinctive, idiosyncratic style. Angélica Liddell returns to the Festival with one of her latest works, *Genesis 6, 6-7*, inspired by the Old Testament; a performance raising existential questions, delivered in the performer and dramatist's signature style, with Liddell herself performing on stage.

The equally electrifying New-York based nora chipaumire will present *#PUNK*, a hybrid performance inspired by the artist's formative years in Zimbabwe, combining theatre and dance, and taking its cue from Patti Smith's music style.

The third female artist in question is the South-African Candice Breitz with her video installation *Love Story*, featuring superstars Alec Baldwin and Julianne Moore, juxtaposing the real-life testimonies of refugees with their re-enactment by Hollywood stars, including the staggering story of Sarah Mardini, the Syrian refugee who washed up in Lesbos, became an activist in the area and was accused last year by the Greek authorities of smuggling people.

The Mapa Teatro company that was enthusiastically received last year at the Athens Audience will return with a triptych performance examining the various aspects of violence in contemporary Colombia.

As well as well-established artists, the international programme will also include performances by dynamic artists making their Athens debut: Susanne Kennedy's stunning adaptation of Jeffrey Eugenides' novel *The Virgin Suicides*; Caroline Guiela Nguyen's deeply moving, heartbreaking *SAIGON*, excavating the traumas of the shared French-Vietnamese history; Thom Luz's *Girl from the Fog Machine Factory*, a modern fairytale on beauty in the capitalist era, and *The Mysterious Lai Teck* by the accomplished Singaporean visual artist Ho Tzu Nyen, taking us along on a journey through the dark underbelly of South East Asia spies in the age of colonialism. Visitors will also have the opportunity to enjoy Bouchra Khalili's video installation *The Tempest Society*; originally shot at Peiraos 260 for Documenta 14, it is now presented in the form of a video installation in the same venue where it was first filmed, inviting audiences to participate in a debate performance about the significance of solidarity and community.

Last but not least, our dance programming. Not unlike previous years, the 2019 dance programme includes productions, co-productions, parallel events and collaborations expanding beyond the active Festival period, aiming to support creation throughout all its various stages. Steriani Tsintziloni is our co-curator for dance, as you probably know by now.

*Return Trip* is an ambitious project, the result of a collaboration between the Athens Festival and Fondazione Nazionale della Danza / Aterballetto, supported by the Stavros Niarchos Foundation. The programme consists of an artistic and an educational part. Greek choreographers (Patricia Apergi, Christos Papadopoulos, Euripides Laskaridis) will present their work in Italy. Accordingly, the Ateballetto, one of the leading Italian dance groups, will perform at the Athens Festival, choreographed by Hofesh Shechter and Johan Inger. As far as the educational part of the programme is concerned, ten young Greek dancers, aged 18-25, were awarded scholarships following an audition

in order to attend an educational programme in Italy where they will be taught by Greek and Italian choreographers.

Further expanding its network of collaborations, the Festival will also collaborate with the newly launched artist and curator residency programme Onassis AiR of the Onassis Foundation. As part of the 2019 Pilot Collaborations project, six selected artists whose work will be presented at this year's Festival will participate in a specially designed cycle of workshops, under the guidance of curator and choreographer Satu Herrala, dramaturg Peter Stamer, and producer and curator Silke Bake; a project aiming to support research, production and international promotion of the works in question.

The Festival's collaboration with the National School of Dance is also extremely important to us. Young dancers of the School, a hothouse of the new generation of Greek dancers, will perform pieces of the internationally acclaimed Greek choreographers Ioannis Mandafounis, Andonis Foniadakis and Christos Papadopoulos; a testament to the lively Greek dance scene.

We are very pleased to announce that this year's programme will include the world premiere of a new piece by Boris Charmatz, the world-famous choreographer who captivated Festival audiences last year. An international Athens Festival co-production, *infini* will mark the beginning of a new era for the brilliant artist following the end of his term as director of the Centre chorégraphique national de Rennes.

This year will also mark Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker's debut at the Odeon of Herodes Atticus, along with her Rosas group, presenting *Mitten wir im Leben sind/Bach 6 Cellosuiten*, inspired by Bach's *6 cello suites* and featuring the major cellist Jean-Guihen Queyras.

We will also be introducing the Lebanese Omar Rajeh to the Athenian audiences, an artist who has been instrumental to the development of contemporary dance in the Middle East. His piece, inspired by the destruction of Aleppo, examines violence, catastrophe, and our share of responsibility in



such phenomena. The rising Portuguese artist Marco Da Silva Ferreira will also be making his Athens debut with *Brother*. Ferreira, who has a background in hip-hop, is rapidly emerging as a force to be reckoned with in European dance.

Our Greek dance selections focus on artists with distinctly personal styles, investigating in depth the fundamental ingredients and constituents making up a choreography: relationship with audiences, themes, conditions of viewing and research methods. Audiences can become familiar with the work of Androniki Marathaki, Aris Papadopoulos and Martha Pasakopoulou, and Kostas Tsioukas at Peiraios 260, and Evi Souli and Katerina Foti at the *Opening to the City*.

The dance programme will also include two one-of-a-kind performances at the *Opening the City*: the big party at the Pedion Areos, designed for public spaces by the French choreographer Nathalie Pernette, featuring the Polkar band, a collaboration involving Institut français, Fluxum Foundation and Flux Laboratory, the Administration of Attica and the Athens Festival, and also a performance by Elena Antoniou to be held at a museum.

I would also like to remind you that as of 2017 the Festival is funded by the European Regional Development Fund and Cohesion Fund 2014-2020, thanks to which many of our theatre and dance productions, particularly *Opening to the City* productions, have been realized in the last couple of years.

It has been evident, both from the goals I set out to accomplish during my term but also by the rationale behind this year's programme that in the last three years we did our best to continue serving the Festival's legacy as a public and open cultural institution in the most comprehensive way possible. In these three years I managed the budget of the artistic programme without any excesses; for the first time in the Festival's history, I asked for no extra funds or budget increases, even though an increase in budget always works in favour of the quality of the presented works. I have succeeded in this thanks to

the numerous collaborations I clinched with foundations, institutions, organizations and even private business able to afford the cost of their productions by themselves. The increase in co-productions, the rise in audience numbers and therefore the rise in ticket revenue were also instrumental in that. From an economic point of view, my three-year term has had a surplus, as you already know by now from my annual reviews. What we haven't been able to achieve yet is to open up ticket presale concurrently with the official programme presentation, as is the case in all international festivals.

As a closing remark I would like to thank all those who have contributed to the realization of this year's programme. It's a long list. Allow me only to take a moment to thank the Festival employees, the contract staff comprising the vast majority of the Athens Festival staff who have been working without receiving any pay for the last couple of months, after their contracts expired, in service of the artistic programme. I didn't ask them to do it; they did it by themselves. Without them, we wouldn't be having this press conference today. I thank them from the bottom of my heart.

Let me add that the little gifts contained in the press kit were made from recycled paper from old Festival programmes and were created as part of the Shedia Art social environmental project.

Artistic creation receives feedback, and derives inspiration and vitality from its own reserves of strength.

*The Mple Trakter wine is courtesy of the Ktima Kir-Yianni Greek Wines*

