**Epidaurus Lyceum front stage**

Since its inauguration in 2017, the Epidaurus Lyceum – International summer school of ancient drama has brought together over 600 young artists and renowned teachers and scholars from all over the world in Epidaurus, the location of the best-preserved theatre of the ancient Greek world.
It was in this very theatre that the Epidaurus Festival was launched in 1954, marking a more systematic approach to the staging of ancient drama in the 20th century and inspiring theatre professionals to visit and perform at this space of unique vibe and natural beauty.
A long-standing need to connect the artistic process in Epidaurus with education and research in the discipline of performing arts gave birth to the Epidaurus Lyceum, an original idea of Vangelis Theodoropoulos, artistic director of the Athens & Epidaurus Festival, thus creating a ‘triangle’ between the Ancient Theatre of Epidaurus, the Little Theatre of Ancient Epidaurus, where more experimental performances of ancient drama take place, and the Epidaurus Lyceum educational programme.
The first three-year cycle of the curriculum of the Epidaurus Lyceum was inspired by complementary thematic axes. In 2017, with “The Arrival of the Outsider”, we explored the ritual and religious origins of ancient drama. In 2018, with the “City (Polis) and the Citizen”, we looked into how ancient drama emerged and developed within the context of democracy.
In 2019, we conclude our first three-year cycle with “Reinventing ancient drama on the contemporary stage”, examining how this form of art has developed through the centuries and interacted with other forms and how this interaction has contributed to its reinvention on today’s theatre stage.
During these three years, the Epidaurus Lyceum has explored the relationship between the contemporary theatre world and ancient drama: where it comes from, what it means and how traditional and contemporary acting and movement techniques can help us approach and understand its multiple readings.
The Lyceum’s main goal is to open up a discussion on how ancient drama can be staged by revisiting a wide range of acting techniques and discussing 20th-century aesthetic approaches to the genre. This dialogue provides artists who are usually confined to preconceived ideas of ‘dos and don’ts’ with creative freedom and a more optimistic and less dogmatic approach to ancient drama. The programme is a multicultural platform of ideas, a democratic vessel of artistic narration that stands as a source of inspiration, expanding the ways in which we deal with ancient drama, resist dominant trends and acquire invaluable expertise and knowledge.
The Epidaurus Lyceum experience allows our students to understand ancient drama, both as artists and as audience members, working with archetypal performative forms ranging from the Indian martial art kalarippayattu and the Khon traditional Thai dance to the Chinese practice of Tai Chi and the Japanese Kabuki theatre. The Mediterranean basin, a hub of ancient civilisations, is also a useful source where traditional Greek dances or acting techniques like Commedia dell’arte, which encapsulates elements of the Greco- Roman art and civilisation, offer a better understanding of how the past has survived all the way to the present. A variety of acting approaches including method acting, biomechanics, post-dramatic performances, director-driven methods like those of Suzuki and Grotowski, or other, more distinctive, like Sanjoy Ganguly’s community theatre, offer students an opportunity to explore these techniques in the open space and use them for their own benefit as contemporary performers. Finally, a programme of lectures, masterclasses and theory workshops, supporting the practical work, enriches students’ perception of the programme’s content and goals.
Our young artists have shared a remarkable communal experience in nature, where the private becomes public, a whisper is transformed into a scream, all that is small is also grand, and the starry sky turns into theatre roof and lights. In just 15 days, we ‘ve seen them grow, rediscover their limits, strengthen their creative abilities, gain knowledge that they can fully utilise as future professionals, stand barefoot next to the ancient ruins, sweat under the summer sun, dance together amidst clouds of soil.
Epidaurus Lyceum has laid the foundation for a well-needed artistic dialogue with ancient drama, this rare cultural asset and unique treasure of human thinking, placing it front stage.

**Georgina Kakoudaki, Head of Epidaurus Lyceum**