**70 years of the Athens Epidaurus Festival**

An ideal scenery

It is with great emotion that we welcome you to a year of profound significance: seventy years of the Athens Epidaurus Festival, 1955–2025. This anniversary is not merely an occasion for a historical retrospective, nonetheless necessary; above all, it is a creative springboard into the future, an opportunity to reflect on the Festival’s role today, after decades of a defining presence in both the Greek and international artistic landscape. Its history is not a static archive, but a living, pulsating tradition that passes from one generation to the next, lighting the way for tomorrow’s artistic vision.

For seven decades, the Festival has served as a compass of cultural vitality, an ideal scenery from where the voice of Ancient Drama is transmitted across the contemporary world. A place where Theatre, Music, and Dance converge through innovative performances that engage with eternal existential quests while fostering thriving communities. Iconic artists from across the globe, emblematic performances, accounts of legendary figures who have graced its stages, fearless experimentation and ceaseless exploration have shaped the character of this institution, establishing it as a pillar of cultural identity that knows no borders. A festival of such enduring presence has been both witness and catalyst for cultural developments. It is interwoven with our very lives. What has transpired in Epidaurus and Athens is not a mere collection of snapshots for a museum of past glories. Instead, the history of our institution is a true beacon guiding our artistic exploration forward.

This anniversary marks a moment of reflection, but also the birth of a new chapter. It is the perfect occasion to reassess the Festival’s relationship with its audience and the contemporary artistic scene. Can the Festival serve as a fertile ground for radical new approaches to art? Can it embrace an even broader spectrum of artistic voices, becoming a locus where diverse disciplines converge in response to the challenges of our era? What does an anniversary truly stand for in an era where Art itself is under siege—when hard-won freedoms of expression and speech are heavily challenged, and the rhetoric of hatred and fanaticism constantly gains ground?

We believe it is our duty to present works that help us navigate through inhospitable times, works that illuminate the challenges of the future and prepare us for what is lying ahead, and—why not—works that may unsettle and disorientate us. Works that dare to provoke and awaken us, and, just as crucially, works that heal and console us.

In this year’s anniversary programme, we welcome prominent figures of the Arts while simultaneously turning our gaze toward the future, offering a platform to the voices of the younger generation—on a scale unprecedented in our history! In addition, we launch thematic Cycles that draw from Literature and our cultural traditions. We give prominence to formidable women who are leading the way in Theatre, Dance, and Music. We create landmark global events in Epidaurus, unveiling a constellation of productions full of surprises. We invite artists from dozens of countries, making the international character of the festival more pronounced than ever. We initiate public discussions on the pressing agonies of our times, participate in film production, expand our free-access events, embark on new artistic journeys, and establish strategic partnerships that thrust the Festival into its next era.

Moreover, we invest in infrastructure projects, forge new artistic communities through our winter educational activities, systematically support contemporary Greek literary production through the commission and publication of new works, and venture into new fields of collaboration. Above all, we offer you an artistic programme as captivating and ambitious as the history of our institution itself.

**THE PROGRAMME**

**Classical Music Cycle**

The artistic realms that gave birth to the institution and have been at the core of our programme ever since—Ancient Drama and Classical Music—retain their central role in this landmark year.

The programme at the Odeon of Herodes Atticus is defined by a cohesive Classical Music Cycle, featuring stellar names from the global stage. Grand orchestras and remarkable soloists, such as Yuja Wang, Daniil Trifonov, and Emmanuel Ax, will perform this year at the Roman Odeon, while, thanks to the generous sponsorship from Piraeus Bank, we will have the rare pleasure of witnessing the supreme soloist Hilary Hahn performing with the Münchner Philharmoniker under the baton of conductor Andrés Orozco-Estrada. Joining the celebration will be our “international” conductors, Constantinos Carydis and Teodor Currentzis, with the latter poised to deliver a spellbinding evening of Mahlerian oeuvre, leading Utopia in a riveting performance at the orchestra of the ancient theatre.

The programme of the Odeon of Herodes Atticus, of course, does not conclude here. Eminent figures of contemporary music, opera performances from the Greek National Opera, a grand tribute to the legacy of Mikis Theodorakis, Dance and Theatre productions—all find their place in a programming rich in creative contrasts and marked by artistic depth.

**Epidaurus stands for Festival**

A cornerstone of our programming at Epidaurus, Ancient Drama remains the unwavering protagonist of a rich, pulsating tradition that constantly seeks new avenues of expression and communication with the current cultural momentum. Because Epidaurus stands for Festival and, primarily, Ancient Drama.

In recent years, the Festival has designed and established initiatives that strengthen research, foster fruitful dialogue, and renew the genre. Our mission is to create a bridge that dialectically connects the legacy of Ancient Drama with today’s performing arts and dramaturgical quests. Rather than investing our efforts in a museum-like reenactment, we seek a bold re-interpretation, a courageous confrontation with the present that bequeaths new experiences to today’s audiences. To this end, the Festival has adopted strategic actions to highlight the dialogue between ancient texts and contemporary dramaturgy.

**Contemporary Ancients Cycle**

One of our signature initiatives is the Contemporary Ancients Cycle, a project celebrating its fifth anniversary this year. Centred around the commissioning of new plays, as well as the publication of works inspired by Ancient Drama, the Cycle has successfully spawned a new and fascinating Theatrical Series. From 2021 to 2024, thirteen original works have been presented at both theatres of Epidaurus by internationally acclaimed creators who responded to our call, demonstrating the timeless appeal of ancient myths.

This year, the Cycle is significantly enriched. At the Ancient Theatre of Epidaurus, distinguished dramaturg and director Wajdi Mouawad will present *Europa’s pledge*, a contemporary work that shares a profound affinity with ancient tragedy: the schism at the heart of family, the struggle between genders, displacement, the dire reality passed from one generation to the next, and the search for catharsis are themes that resurface in his plays, many of which are directly informed by the heroes and heroines of Ancient Drama. Leading an international cast, celebrated French film actress Juliette Binoche will perform for the first time on the stage of Epidaurus. At the Little Theatre of Ancient Epidaurus, the month of July is purely dedicated to the Contemporary Ancients Cycle, featuring a programme not strictly theatrical but also rich in music-theatre and film projects, initiating an intriguing fusion of diverse genres and languages that proposes a brave and multi-dimensional approach for the future.

At the same time, we continue inviting prominent international directors with distinctive artistic signatures to collaborate with Greek ensembles. Following Frank Castorf in 2023 and Timofey Kulyabin in 2024, this initiative opens a new chapter with the invitation of Ulrich Rasche, one of the most outstanding directors of his generation. After thrilling audiences in Epidaurus with his production of Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon* (2022), Rasche will now tackle Sophocles’ *Antigone* for the opening of the Epidaurus Festival, directing a cast of talented Greek actors in a co-production with the National Theatre of Greece—a collaboration of profound symbolic significance. Fathomless in its possibilities, the Ancient Drama is here and invites us to approach it with the same daring spirit its legendary original creators once did. For an institution with such deep roots must always look ahead, daring to take risks.

**Forces on the Rise and Iconic Presences**

The same boldness, infused with youthful energy, runs through our programme in Athens. First-time participants in the Festival, young Greek creators, as well as trailblazing voices from the international stage, will present original works of Theatre and Dance at Peiraios 260. This cluster of venues, which the Festival first discovered and activated twenty years ago, has since become a symbol of the innovative spirit in Greece’s performing arts scene. From Noemi Vasileiadou, Dafin Antoniadou, and Konstantinos Papanikolaou to Sofia Antoniou, Alexandros Stavropoulos, and Emily Louizou, youth takes the reins, engaging in dialogue with the international vanguard: Carolina Bianchi, Idio Chichava, Faye Driscoll, and Miet Warlop are just a few of the revered artists who will introduce us to their distinct stage universes this summer.

However, the 70th anniversary of the Festival would not be complete without some legendary figures, whose journeys have been intertwined not only with the history of the institution but also with the history of international and Greek artistic creation. Therefore, the iconic Ariane Mnouchkine and the historic Théâtre du Soleil will inaugurate the programme at Peiraios 260, unleashing the “dragons” of history across the venue of Hall D. In its recent anniversary production, the legendary troupe approaches, through the insightful poetic gaze of Mnouchkine, the nascent days of the October Revolution. Mercurial visual artist and director William Kentridge revives a milestone work from his past by revisiting *Faustus in Africa!* Within a meticulously orchestrated universe—populated almost entirely by puppets!—he tells the story of the protagonist who sells his soul to the devil in exchange for unlimited joy and everlasting youth—this time, setting it in Africa!

Meanwhile, masters of theatrical Αrt, such as Theodoros Terzopoulos, Yannis Houvardas, and Michail Marmarinos, will bring their creations to the stage of Epidaurus—a distillation of their remarkable journey in Theatre.

The long history of the Festival is further addressed through a visit to the institution’s archival wealth and the creation of an anniversary album, curated by Panos Giannikopoulos, as well as a documentary featuring testimonies and accounts from artists and individuals who have experienced the Festival “first-hand” and “from within.”

At the heart of this year’s programming lies the representation of as many artistic disciplines and languages as possible across all venues. Visual installations, cinema, round tables, and summer live performances featuring sounds from all over the world are woven into our activities, embracing every breath of artistic expression, diverse forms, dramaturgies, repertoires, and creative contributors.

In an unexpected collaboration, the Festival joins hands with the Hellenic Film Academy to produce a film inspired by Sophocles’ *Electra*, directed by seven filmmakers—a direct nod to the seven decades of our institution’s existence.

**Engaging with the Global Artistic Community**

Reinforcing the international character of the Athens Epidaurus Festival and fostering communication with the global artistic community are key components of our mission. Beyond facilitating encounters between international and Greek artists, this dialogue also materialises through showcasing outstanding Greek creators who excel in theatre, music, and dance—artists who are making their mark on the world stage. The outstanding conductor Teodor Currentzis will confront the grandeur of the Mahlerian oeuvre at the orchestra of Epidaurus, in a rare musical presentation at the Ancient Theatre. The musical brilliance of Constantinos Carydis will shine through as he will lead the Chamber Orchestra of Europe at the Odeon of Herodes Atticus. Patricia Apergi, a choreographer with a significant imprint on the international dance stage, will present the struggles of women across the centuries at Peiraios 260, while Cypriot-born Alexandra Waierstall, distinguished for the poetic depth of her work, will unveil her latest creation in collaboration with an international ensemble of performers.

**grape**

grape, the platform dedicated to promoting and exporting Greek performing arts worldwide, has reached its third year and become an indispensable part of the Festival. With the continued support of Mastercard and the National Bank of Greece, this year’s edition welcomes more than 90 guests from over 30 countries. Alongside its rich programme of dynamic Greek artists—whose work will be showcased to artistic directors and heads of programming from across the globe—it launches a major collaboration with the European Festivals Association, the network of Europe’s leading festivals. Together, they will co-organize and host a conference at Peiraios 260, exploring the potential for cultural exchanges, collaborations, and educational initiatives. We take particular pride in the platform’s growing impact, as it nourishes the outreach of Greek artistic creations through their showcase in more than forty cities across Europe, Asia, and the United States. Overall, grape strengthens the Festival’s role as a key partner in cultural exchanges and at the same time positions it as a bright ambassador of our country across prestigious organisations and historic festivals worldwide.

**Significant Synergies**

In addition, partnerships with institutions, organisations, and artistic ensembles from Greece and abroad lay the groundwork for future creative and collaborative endeavours. Longstanding collaborations, developed over decades, continue to be a driving force in our programming, with key partners including the National Theatre of Greece, the Athens State Orchestra, the Greek National Opera, and the National Theatre of Northern Greece, while we join forces anew with Megaron – The Athens Concert Hall for a concert featuring the cinematic masterworks of Nicola Piovani. This year, we are proud to announce a set of new and major collaborations: a partnership with Technopolis and the City of Athens for the Lycabettus Theatre, a venue deeply embedded in our history, and which we are returning to with four contemporary musical events—kicking off with a concert by the unconventional Arca! Furthermore, two unique productions in collaboration and co-production with the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center, extend the Festival’s reach, engaging in dialogue with one of Greece’s most dynamic cultural institutions. And finally, a site-specific performance along the banks of the Cephissus River, created in collaboration with the Municipality of Kifisia. Concluding at the Roman Hadrianic Aqueduct in Dexameni, this project carves out new artistic pathways within the city while powerfully reflecting on the pressing issue of water resources and their management.

**Subset Festival**

The Athens Conservatoire remains a steadfast companion in the organisation of the Subset Festival—returning this year with a more pronounced international character than ever. Featuring Ryoji Ikeda, Mouse on Mars ft. Dodo NKishi, Christina Vantzou, and many more artists and soloists, ensembles, and groups from Greece and abroad, the festival further boasts workshops, commissioned works, sound installations, and an enveloping electrifying atmosphere that showcases the *new* music right here in the heart of Athens. As an initiative, Subset Festival corresponds to one of the creative agonies of the Festival: to expand its audience through an array of artistic events that invite and inspire new legions of viewers and listeners, with a special focus on young audiences —the very foundation of the Festival’s future and development.

**Formidable Women**

At Peiraios 260, the spotlight is wholly reserved for women. Formidable ones with a profound artistic legacy, such as Ariane Mnouchkine, who inaugurates the Festival’s activities in Athens; fearless ones belonging to the younger generation, whether making their debut on our stages or already acclaimed and award-winning; expounders of diverse artistic languages, bearers of novel ideas, persistent and singular visionaries—all these formidable women breathe life into the Greek and international programme. From Carolina Bianchi, Eline Arbo, Daria Deflorian, Faye Driscoll, and Miet Warlop το Katerina Giannopoulou, Sofia Karagianni, Elena Mavridou, Io Voulgaraki and many more artists of this year’s roster, these spearheading artists join their voices on the Festival stages and make a resounding statement on the power of female creativity.

**Books on Stage Cycle**

Two special thematic cycles dominate the programme at Peiraios 260. Books take the stage this year, with eight productions—six Greek and two international—based on contemporary masterworks by esteemed authors and lesser-known yet highly intriguing cases from the world of literature. Among them are three Nobel laureates; Annie Ernaux, Han Kang, and José Saramago, whose masterful writing opens up new dimensions into the theatrical experience, raising fundamental issues around the human condition.

**Roots Cycle**

Roots Cycle heralds a return to the origins of the theatrical language and Greek tradition with five theatrical works—from Chortatsis’ *Katsourbos* to a post-apocalyptic version of Karagiozis, and from the improvisational farces and slapsticks of a bygone era to archetypal female figures of the Greek province. The Cycle further incorporates a musical evening at the Little Theatre of Epidaurus, while August remains exclusively dedicated to Music.

Four outstanding, large-scale artistic events, specially designed for the 2025 Anniversary Year—staged by Ulrich Rasche, Yannis Houvardas, and Wajdi Mouawad, as well as the concert by Teodor Currentzis with Utopia—are embraced this year by the Stavros Niarchos Foundation, whose generous support helps bring the Festival’s grand productions to the Ancient Theatre of Epidaurus.

In the framework of this anniversary year, we proudly announce a significant infrastructure project to be realised at Epidaurus, next to our exhibition space, with the kind sponsorship of PPC (DEI—Public Power Corporation of Greece), a lead sponsor and steadfast companion in our endeavour. The multipurpose pavilion at the Archaeological site of Epidaurus, designed by the architectural office Flux Office, achieves a rare-seen harmony between construction and nature as it seamlessly integrates into the landscape of Epidaurus.

We invite you to wander through the more than one hundred events of this year, presented in detail in our comprehensive catalogue as well as our website, and, above all, we sincerely hope that you will stand beside us throughout this fascinating festival summer.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Minister of Culture, Ms. Lina Mendoni, for her invaluable support to our anniversary planning. Special thanks, for their substantial contributions, are also due to Mr. Dimitris Passas, President of the Board of Directors, along with all its members, our invaluable Artistic Advisors, our General Director, and, of course, the entire Festival team, whose enthusiasm and dedication have brought this ambitious and multifaceted programme to fruition. A deep appreciation goes out to our network of partners across institutions, foundations, and artistic organisations, as well as to our donors, sponsors, and supporters, whose contributions are instrumental in realising our vision. Above all, a heartfelt thank you to the more than 3,000 artists who are leaving their unique mark on this year’s edition, shaping an extraordinary artistic mosaic.

Please, join us in celebrating 70 years of a Festival that has transformed our summers, and let us wish it an ever-evolving future, and, above all, to remain forever young in spirit so that it can continue thriving in an atmosphere of freedom and creativity.

Happy Anniversary, Festival!

Katerina Evangelatos

Stage Director

Artistic Director of the

Athens Epidaurus Festival