

Presentation of the Artistic Programme
Ancient Theatre of Epidaurus
2026

A First Greeting – One Part of a Whole

With today's announcement, the Athens Epidaurus Festival presents the first instalment of its new series:

Ancient Theatre of Epidaurus, Artistic Programme – Section I

Summer 2026

The complete programme for the Ancient Theatre of Epidaurus will unfold in full across three consecutive editions (2026 / 2027 / 2028), which, together, form a single, overarching Whole. What we present here is its opening iteration.

Each edition stands on its own, conceived as a thorough entity in itself. At the same time, it is continually reshaped by the sequence it belongs to, as well as by the interaction and cumulative depth of the editions that precede and follow it.

At the Ancient Theatre of Epidaurus, contemporary dramaturgies and new, multi-layered engagements with Ancient Drama enter into dialogue with other performative forms and artistic languages. Through these encounters, Ancient Drama is reanimated, with its timeless core sharpened against a turbulent present and its relevance amplified across the international stage.

Epidaurus becomes, above all, **a locus of encounter**. Audiences are invited to experience distinctive readings by Greek and international artists across both canonical works and others less frequently staged. Distinct terrains of the performing arts, such as theatre, dance, and opera, coalesce into a shared effort to foreground the enduring power and dynamic resonance of ancient dramaturgy.

This year's programme at Epidaurus will be further framed by a cluster of accompanying initiatives, which we look forward to presenting at a later date.

Thank you,
MM

OPERA NEW PRODUCTION

20 June

GREEK NATIONAL OPERA

Medea

By Luigi Cherubini

The Greek National Opera revives Luigi Cherubini's *Medea* at the Ancient Theatre of Epidaurus for an exclusive performance on 20 June 2026, sixty-five years after the legendary 1961 production featuring Maria Callas in the title role, directed by Alexis Minotis, with sets and costumes by Yannis Tsarouchis, and choreography by Maria Mors.

Within the framework of the 2025/26 season's thematic spine, which explores the notion of "tracing the opera of the future through the womb of the past," the Greek National Opera returns to the historic *Medea* of 1961 through the materials of the present. Drawing upon Minotis' directing notebooks, Tsarouchis's original designs, and the extensive photographic material from Callas's iconic performances at Epidaurus, the new production summons the spirit of the original staging as conceived and realised by those legendary artists who have left an indelible mark on Greek cultural history.

Following the temporary closure of the Odeon of Herodes Atticus for restoration purposes, the GNO furthers its long-standing tradition of summer opera productions, this time at the Ancient Theatre of Epidaurus, nearly seven decades after its last opera presentation there, and for the first time in the 21st century.

Through the enrichment of the GNO Archive with new collections, photographic material, and rare documents, the restoration of a significant portion of Tsarouchis' costume work by the GNO Costume Department, and after establishing a channel of collaboration with the National Bank of Greece Cultural Foundation's Greek Literary and Historical Archive, as well as with the Minotis – Paxinou archive, Artistic Director of the GNO, Giorgos Koumendakis,

has assembled a new creative team. Comprised of Panaghis Pagoulatos (stage director), Lili Pezanou (set design), Tota Pritsa (costume design), and Christos Tziogkas (lighting design) and through meticulous research into the surviving documentation, the team undertakes a rigorous reconstruction of the original production, offering contemporary audiences a rare encounter with an unassailable landmark of modern Greek culture.

The title role is helmed by the eminent Italian soprano Anna Pirozzi. She is joined by Jean-François Borrás as Giasone, Tassis Christoyannis as Creon, Alisa Kolosova as Neris, and Danae Kontora as Glauce.

Historical 1961 Production

Stage director **Alexis Minotis** • Set & Costume design • **Yannis Tsarouchis** •
Choreography **Maria Hors**

Reimagined version of the historic production of 1961

Artistic direction **Giorgos Koumendakis** • Conductor **tba** • Stage direction
Panaghis Pagoulatos • Set design **Lili Pezanou** • Costume design **Tota Pritsa** • Lighting design **Christos Tziogkas** • Chorus master **Agathangelos Georgakatos** • Cast **Anna Pirozzi** *Medea*, **Danae Kontora** *Glauce*, **Alisa Kolosova** *Neris*, **Jean-François Borrás** *Giasone*, **Tassis Christoyannis** *Creon* • With **Soloists**, the **Orchestra** and the **Chorus** of the Greek National Opera

THE GREEK NATIONAL OPERA
IS FUNDED BY
THE MINISTRY OF CULTURE



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Ministry of Culture

Lead Donor of the GNO

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THEATRE PREMIERE

3 & 4 July

Christos Theodoridis

The Persians

By Aeschylus

*Alas, how vast and how sweet
our life once truly was.*

On this night, a thousand-year deep night, somewhere in the world, twenty-five people await the news of an inevitable catastrophe. Their fears are confirmed. Suspended between the magnitude of mourning and an act of resistance that feels unattainable, they remain powerless and adrift. On this night, six people can do nothing but weep.

With its narrative compass set on the news of the crushing defeat at the Battle of Salamis, the main thread of the story is lament – long, sustained, and uncompromising – for those vanished, and for a joyful past that has irreversibly perished.

In his first appearance at the Argolic theatre, this young director from Thessaloniki confronts the nucleus of the Aeschylean tragedy. Written in 472 BC, *The Persians* is the oldest surviving complete work of ancient Greek dramaturgy, and, at the same time, the earliest case of History's transcription into a purely theatrical deed. Christos Theodoridis invests himself in this profoundly anti-war work, furthering the conceptual trajectory he has traced in recent years through politically charged and acutely contemporary works (*To You Who Are Listening to Me*, Loula Anagnostaki; *Who Killed My Father*, Édouard Louis; and *The Iran Conference*, Ivan Vyrpaev, among others).

Deviating from the mythological narratives that typically dominated tragedy, Aeschylus here composed a singular form of “documentary theatre”, unparalleled within the corpus of ancient Greek drama. An eye-witness and Athenian warrior at the Battle of Salamis (480 BC), he forges an unprecedented

form of performative war “coverage” merely eight years after the historic naval confrontation. For the first time, History steps onto the stage.

At the core of this artistic endeavour stand the human being and loss. The names of people, for which the Chorus so obsessively addresses the messenger, are not merely Persian; they are the names of people who have vanished – and who continue to vanish – every minute in our present time.

Twenty-five actors, continuously present on stage, form a **Chorus-protagonist** which, using only language, movement, and music, gives voice to the collective trauma of a society struck numb.

Translation **Panagiotis Moullas** • Direction **Christos Theodoridis** •
Dramaturgy **Isabella Konstantinidou, Christos Theodoridis** • Costume
design **Angelos Mentis** • Lighting design **Tasos Palaioroutas** • Music **The
Boy** • Choreography – Movement **Xenia Themeli** • Production **Marossoulis
Productions** • Co-production **Athens Epidaurus Festival**

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10 & 11 July

Further details to be announced soon.

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THEATRE PREMIERE

17 & 18 July

National Theatre of Greece

Dimitris Karantzas

Alcestis

By Euripides

A contemporary parable of a profound political gravitas, a dual-natured work, a constant hovering between life and death, playfulness and nightmare, harrowing tragedy and unannounced drollery, Euripides' *Alcestis* unfurls at the Ancient Theatre of Epidaurus, presented by the National Theatre of Greece and directed by Dimitris Karantzas.

In the play, Admetus can only evade Death's claim if someone else consents to die in his place. His spouse, Alcestis, offers herself as a fulcrum of this curious exchange. Her sacrifice unfolds publicly, before the eyes of the citizens, as a preordained killing – an act that, from today's perspective, can only be read as femicide, legitimised by the prevailing societal and political order.

Alcestis is the sole surviving work from the body of ancient Greek tragedy to bring not only Death onto the stage, but also Resurrection. And yet the question remains unresolved: what does it mean to restore life once the sacrifice has already been made? What lies within Alcestis' deafening silence? And what is the true cost of salvation when it rests upon the self-sacrifice of the most vulnerable?

Dimitris Karantzas orchestrates *Alcestis* as a stage experiment, in which music, sound, movement, and the oscillations of theatrical tone coexist organically, conjuring a fluid, liminal, and ever-morphing world. With a remarkable cast of actors and collaborators, the performance becomes a staged argument that does not merely recount the myth but poses burning questions about power,

gender, sacrifice, and society's responsibility towards the perishing of the eponymous heroine – and of others beyond her.

Adaptation – Direction **Dimitris Karantzias** • Dramaturgy consultant **Geli Kalambaka** • Set design **Konstantinos Skourletis** • Costume design **Ioanna Tsami** • Music **Panagiotis Manouilidis** • Movement **Tasos Karachalios** • Lighting design **Eliza Alexandropoulou** • Cast (in alphabetical order) **Konstantinos Avarikiotis** *Pheres*, **Iro Bezou** *Alcestis*, **Yiannis Niarros** *Admetus*, **Kostas Nikouli** *Apollo*, **Aineias Tsamatis** *Servant*, **Theodora Tzimou** *Death*, **Dimitra Vlagopoulou** *Maid*, **Giorgos Zygouris** *Hercules*

Chorus to be announced soon.

The **National Theatre of Greece**
is funded by the **Ministry of Culture**.



HELLENIC REPUBLIC
Ministry of Culture

THEATRE PREMIERE

24 & 25 July

Nikos Karathanos

Eirene (Peace)

By Aristophanes

A revisit to Aristophanes' work

*Who will still be alive
this summer? Who tomorrow?
Not even ol' time knows,
let alone the star
of Epidaurus*

*Once again, Nations hit the deck
Won't you hear my sweet strumming
from the rim of this pit,
stacked with corpses*

*Make a wish for Peace,
Won't you, Miss Universe?
For every war of mine
is I against I
a Civil War through and through*

Eirene is the celebration of a vanished agrarian world, a comic and unflappable argument, a feast of everyday men and women culled from the fumes of wartime, a shadow screen set ablaze amid the horror. Nikos Karathanos, Foivos Delivorias, and Angelos Triantafyllou are the principal accomplices in a new production, a new adaptation, a new response to madness with madness itself.

Aristophanes' original comedy was first taught at the City Dionysia in 421 B.C., where it was honoured with the second prize. Written during a critical cusp in history, shortly before the validation of the Peace of Nicias, it stood as an expression of hope for seizing the hostilities of the ten-year-old Peloponnesian War – a hope that arose only after the deaths of the warmongering generals, the Athenian Cleon and the Spartan Brasidas, during the Battle of Amphipolis. The play captures the intense social fatigue of the war and addresses, with lyrical eloquence and the unmistakable Aristophanian sting, the irrational obsession with warfare and its harrowing repercussions on the daily lives, labour, and welfare of people. Aristophanes juxtaposes the violence and profiteering of warmongers with the fertility, eros, and collective prosperity fostered by peace. Despite its seemingly utopian resolution, the comedy refrains from being naïve, acknowledging the resistance, vested interests, and inertia that hinder the restoration of peace.

Eirene holds a pivotal place within Aristophanes' entire oeuvre as the most conciliatory and optimistic among his political comedies. Though deeply rooted in the era that birthed it, it remains timeless, shedding light on a mechanism that has perpetuated itself to this day: the wars that keep protracting at the expense of the many and for the benefit of the few. The insistence of ordinary individuals on claiming peace, even in the face of blatant power, renders the work urgently relevant in a contemporary world where invasions, violence, threats, insecurity, and cynicism are repeatedly replayed as unavoidable reality.

Adaptation – Original Text – Songs **Foivos Delivorias** • Direction – Concept **Nikos Karathanos** • Direction collaborator **Angelos Triantafyllou** • Dramaturg for the performance **Eri Kyrgia** • Set design **Eva Manidaki** • Costume design **Angelos Mentis** • Music **Foivos Delivorias, Angelos Triantafyllou** • Songs – Lyrics **Foivos Delivorias** • Lighting design **Eliza Alexandropoulou** • Movement **Amalia Bennett** • Ancient text consultant **Giannis Asteris** • Assistants to the director **Dimitris Stavropoulos, Orestis Stavropoulos** • Cast **Galini Chatzipaschali, Thanasis Alevras, Panos Papadopoulos, Giannis Kotsifas, Ioanna Mavrea, Vasso Kavalieratou, Foivos Delivorias, Nikos Karathanos, Angelos Triantafyllou, Yilmaz Chousmen, Alkis**

Bakogiannis, Konstantinos Kontogeorgopoulos, Konstantinos Zografos, Vassilis Papadopoulos, Giannis Sampsalakis, Spiros Bosgas, Antonis Christou • Guest musician **Andreas Polyzogopoulos** (trumpet) and additional musicians • Production **Technichoros Theatrical Productions** • Co-production **Athens Epidaurus Festival**

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THEATRE PREMIERE

31 July & 1 August

National Theatre of Greece

Eleni Efthymiou

The Trojan Women

By Euripides

The quintessentially humanistic and fiercely anti-war work by the great tragedian is brought to life by a group of twenty-two performers – including members of the En Dynamei ensemble – of all ages, with and without disabilities, accompanied by live music on stage. At the Ancient Theatre of Epidaurus, the National Theatre of Greece presents Euripides' *The Trojan Women*, directed by Eleni Efthymiou, in a performance probing the perennial horrors of war and loss as collective memory, but above all, the female body as a universal emblem of human tragedy.

In Euripides' *The Trojan Women*, the bodies of women were not always held captive. Though embedded in a deeply patriarchal society, they were, by the standards of their time, free, possessing choices, dreams, and the possibility of a dignified life. Yet, as the end of an era approaches – of a life once glorified and at times merely bearable, of their very History – the Trojan women

articulate the horror of war through the prism of the (female) body, which senses its imminent objectification and dehumanisation.

In Eleni Efthymiou's staging, *The Trojan Women* are not only the beautiful, robust bodies of the privileged royal household awaiting their final sorting. Their bodies are mixed with others – underage, disabled, elderly – bodies that even before the war never governed their own fate and are rarely granted the privilege of narration; bodies the system ostentatiously ignores, which power chooses either to manage or to annihilate. After all, death excels in being “just”, as he equates the more with the less, before condensing it to nothing.

And if all these skins, souls, gazes, wombs, and memories can be symbolically seen as the eternally oppressed femininities of this world, can these subjects regain their right of choice? And in what way? By crying out in rage? By mourning or laughing in the face of chaos and deadlock? Is there, after all, a way for these heroines to repossess their bodies?

Translation **Yannis Tsarouchis** • Adaptation – Direction **Eleni Efthymiou** • Dramaturgy consultant **Sophia Eftychiadou** • Set design **Evangelia Kirkine** • Costume design **Angelos Mentis** • Music **Eleftherios Veniadis** • Lighting design **Zoi Molyvda-Fameli** • Sound design **Sofia Kamayianni** • Music teacher **Melina Peonidou** • Cast (in alphabetical order) **Lydia Fotopoulou** *Hecuba*, **Yorgos Karamichos** *Menelaus*, **Evi Saoulidou** *Andromache*, **Nancy Sideri** *Cassandra*, **Vassiliki Troufakou** *Helen*, **Argyris Xafis** *Talthybius* • Chorus **Myriam Artzanidou**, **Maria Dachlythra**, **Eleni Dimopoulou**, **Nikos Kyparissis**, **Irini Kourouvani**, **Loxandra Loukas**, **Lygeri Mitropoulou**, **Theano Papavasileiou**, **Katerina Papandreou**, **Niki Petala**, **Chryssa Toumanidou** • **Michalis Mitsis** as the young *Astyanax*

The **National Theatre of Greece**
is funded by the **Ministry of Culture**.



Production Sponsor  **ALPHA BANK**

DANCE
THEATRE
GREEK DEBUT

7 & 8 August

Alan Lucien Øyen

Antigone

Inspired by the work of Sophocles

We do not simply restage Antigone.

We strip it to its essence.

Not just the words, but the weight of them.

Not just the conflict, but the cost.

Alan Lucien Øyen

Antigone is a new, radical reimagining of Sophocles' tragedy, fusing the poetry of movement with the expressive force of text and spoken word. Crafted by Alan Lucien Øyen, one of Norway's most restless and compelling contemporary choreographers, writers, and directors, the work brings to the stage the performing arts ensemble he founded two decades ago, winter guests, a creative unit comprising dancers, actors, writers, and designers. Joining them are leading collaborators and dancers from Pina Bausch's Tanztheater Wuppertal, in a rare and meaningful artistic encounter: Øyen was the first choreographer invited to create a new, full-length work for the feted ensemble following the death of its founder.

As Øyen remarks, "Our *Antigone* is not merely a staging of Sophocles' text, but a daring reimagining of his timeless tragedy through the physical poetry of Tanztheater, merged with spoken word and contemporary dance."

More than a retelling, the work is a rediscovery of the play's ideas – through movements, words and situations. The performance foregrounds a profoundly

human mode of expression, confronting the unresolved dilemmas at the heart of the play: duty, dignity, morality, and the complexity of power.

In an era when what is wrong is branded as evil and what is right is dismissed as sanctimonious, where is God in all this chaos? Human dignity and humility are at stake in a struggle for respect for human law.

Through howling wind and screaming birds, through desperate grief and violent tyranny, the scenes of the play hurl their meaning back at our present-day dilemmas. Demanding and arresting, political without didacticism and lyrical without ornament, *Antigone* asks the urgent question: what does it mean to act when law and justice part ways?

Direction – Choreography **Alan Lucien Øyen** • Creative collaborators **Andrew Wale, Daniel Proietto** • Cast **Enoch Grubb, Douglas Letheren, Pascal Marty, Antonin Monié, Nazareth Panadero, Hélène Pikon, Julie Shanahan, Fernando Suels Mendoza, Meng-Ke Wu** • Scenography **Åsmund Fæarvaag** • Costumes **Stine Sjøgren** • Light **Martin Flack** • Sound **Gunnar Innvær** • Video **Mathias Grønsdal** • Still photography **Mats Bäcker** • Technical manager **Chris Sanders** • Stage manager **Daniel Hones** • Wardrobe manager **Anna Lena Dresia** • Produced by winter guests • Co-production **Fondazione Teatro di Roma, The Norwegian Opera and Ballet, Centro Servizi Culturali Santa Chiara** • Executive producer **Essar Gabriel** • Producers **Ornella Salloum, Syv mil v/Tora De Zwart Rørholt, Ingrid Saltvik Faanes** (for winter guests) • Supported by **Arts Council, Norway, City of Bergen** • Rehearsal space in kind support received from **Pina Bausch Zentrum**

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THEATRE

21 & 22 August

National Theatre of Northern Greece

Asterios Peltekis

Lysistrata

By Aristophanes

Lysistrata is not merely a comedy about war and love. It insists on being a profoundly political, deeply human-centred work, focused on that moment when a society, exhausted by blight, urgently seeks a new mode of organising itself.

The National Theatre of Northern Greece presents a contemporary stage reading of Aristophanes' comedy, which, by virtue of laughter, addresses us with an authentically lyrical yet comedic earnestness, speaking to the entropy into which societies so often lapse.

As a term springing from physics and philosophy, entropy denotes the gradual unwinding of order, the dispersal of energy, and the inability of a system to achieve self-regulation.

In *Lysistrata*, the city-state exists in a condition of prolonged decay, in which war has turned into an end in itself, politics has severed its ties with lived human experience, and the body has been expelled from public discourse.

The archetypal figure/heroine does not propose reform, nor does she introduce any new institutional rearrangements. On the contrary, Lysistrata brings forward something entirely different: the reinstatement of the body, of desire, of care, and of collective responsibility as political action. Abstinence from the act of love does not translate to punishment, but to a gesture of "entropy suspension", a temporary "freezing" of the system so that its restart remains feasible.

At the core of this directorial approach by Asterios Peltekis lies precisely this gesture, one accomplished not through violence or coercion, but through the

conscious refusal to participate in this vicious cycle. Women do not merely take over the Acropolis; they take over time, the flow of events, the very same rationale behind the inextricable calamity. Here, comedy does not serve as a decompression valve but as a generator of revelation.

Aristophanes reminds us that any society that loses touch with the body and with joy is inevitably driven to violence. Moreover, that reconstitution does not begin from the higher echelons of power, but from a grassroots instinct for survival – from that instance when a human being dares to say, “enough.”

At the Ancient Theatre of Epidaurus, where for centuries we gather as a community to confront our limits, our very own *Lysistrata* aspires to resurface not as a monument of ancient dramaturgy, nor as a reflection of an ancient-bound expression, but as a breathing political event. A reminder that even amid the direst decay, renewal remains possible if only we dare to imagine our existence and, mostly, coexistence under a new light. As if in a dream.

Translation **Konstantinos Bouras** • Direction – Dramaturgical adaptation **Asterios Peltekis** • Cast **Elisavet Konstantinidou, Alexandra Palaiologou, Krateros Katsoulis, Panagiotis Petrakis, Nikos Georgakis**, and others

The **National Theatre of Northern Greece**
is funded by the **Ministry of Culture**.



HELLENIC REPUBLIC
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THEATRE

28 & 29 August

Cyprus Theatre Organisation

Thomas Moschopoulos

Ion

By Euripides

One of the most enigmatic cases of ancient Greek dramaturgy, *Ion* defies clear classification. It is not a “pure” tragedy, as it teeters between the tragic and the comic, myth and realism, mysticism and scepticism, always stirring issues of identity and belonging. Moreover, it is a work that appears to converse directly with present-day experience, in an era where everything seems to be under constant consideration and renegotiation.

The action transpires within the sacred oracle of Apollo at Delphi, a site that constitutes a threshold between the sensed and the invisible, the public and the private. There, the young Ion grows up nameless, with his true origins unbeknownst to him. He struggles to put together a sense of identity through fragments, even as the audience already knows the truth. Through contradictions, refractions, and misinterpretations, an obscure and nearly invisible past crystallises into a solid, tangible present, while an anticipation of meaning rises through the void.

The play, a production of the Cyprus Theatre Organisation under the direction of Thomas Moschopoulos, attempts to foreground the playful and ambiguous spirit of the work, transforming the stage into a multi-prismatic space of contemplation, where the reflections of truth and falsehood overlap – revealing and concealing one another – while the question of identity gapes wide open, fluid, and agonising.

Direction – Translation – Dramaturgy **Thomas Moschopoulos**

Cast and creative team to be announced

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