**Art - Intellect - Senses: Wide Open**

**50,000 people attended the Athens & Epidaurus Festival**

Despite the unprecedented pandemic, which has dealt a heavy blow to the global community, and the fact that the artistic programme originally announced last March was significantly cut as a result, the Athens & Epidaurus Festival has been consistently supportive of audiences’ and artists’ vital relationship with Culture. The Festival once again left a strong mark this unusual summer with its edition “Υποσύνολο – Fragment”, a special series of artistic events held at the open-air Festival venues – the Odeon of Herodes Atticus, the Ancient Theatre of Epidaurus and the Little Theatre of Ancient Epidaurus. This year’s extraordinary circumstances did not allow the opening of the Peiraios 260 venue.

With all theatre venues operating at 45 percent of their original capacity, and with strict observance of regulations and necessary adjustments in place making sure that audiences and artists alike can feel safe, the Festival welcomed over 50,000 spectators. It was unanimously acknowledged by audiences and critics alike that “the preparation was evidently flawless, and crowds were aware and respectful of the measures” (*Efimerida ton Syntakton*). Concerns initially raised about “the implementation of the health protection measures dissipated in the face of the excellent Festival organisation” (*Ta Nea*). “Everything worked out perfectly as if this had been our normality for years. The Athens Festival staff consisted of an exceptionally well-coordinated team who managed – without previous work experience under such circumstances – to turn this year’s Festival premiere into a veritable celebration” (*To Vima tis Kyriakis)*. “As far as the measures are concerned, they were all diligently observed, with audiences wearing their masks and the Athens Festival employees offering them a bottle of water upon their entrance. In fact, all those in attendance were impressed by how obediently everybody complied with the measures” *(iefimerida*).

Experiencing the Festival venues in an unconventional manner and investing them with a startingly original spirit: these goals set the new tone of the Festival. This year’s programme opened with Dionisis Kavallieratos’ in-situ installation at the heart of the Odeon of Herodes Atticus, *Disoriented dance / Misled planet,* in collaboration with NEON Organisation for Culture and Development,which cast an unexpected light on the iconic Roman Odeon. The 2020 Odeon programme encompassed a wide range of collaborations with major Greek orchestras, state institutions, and beloved Greek artists who brightened our summer evenings with music and emotion.

The programme of the Little Theatre of Ancient Epidaurus was also strikingly original, infused, as of this year, with an experimental quality, exploring the boundaries across various art forms and featuring musical/theatrical performances running the gamut from Baroque opera and jazz to ambient and traditional music.

Along these lines, the Epidaurus Festival opened with a world-class, surprise event marking a special occasion: the celebration of 65 years of continuous Festival history. The internationally acclaimed violinist Leonidas Kavakos stood alone at the heart of the Ancient Theatre of Epidaurus, performing works by Johann Sebastian Bach, and inviting us to a musical prayer for the age of the pandemic; a prayer to which we all listened intently in what was a rare, therapeutic moment: *“This event, amid the current circumstances, can only be described as awe-inspiring (…). The audience were almost holding their breath as Leonidas Kavakos took on Bach’s partitas and sonatas at the very heart of the ancient theatre”* (*Kathimerini*). This recital was followed by large-scale productions by the National Theatre of Greece and the National Theatre of Northern Greece, once again offering us the joy and pleasure of watching performances at the Ancient Theatre of Epidaurus.

We wish to give our heartfelt thanks to all artists and Festival employees for working in such unprecedented circumstances, so that this year’s edition could be realised. We also wish to thank all of you, the audience, for your trust in this institution and for having faith in our efforts. We will continue to be close to you, supporting the irreplaceable condition of live artistic experience in every way possible.

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This year, for the first time in its history, the Athens & Epidaurus Festival will expand its activities during the fall and winter season, responding to artists’ need to sharpen their tools and once again be active in these challenging times. Next week, a series of educational events and collaborations will be announced, aimed both to artists and to a broader audience of all ages. The situation remains uncertain; however, it is our mission to keep the contemporary cultural landscape active. It goes without saying that a society without Art and meditation is inhuman.

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Watch here some of our greatest summer highlights: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lG8Wpscr-w4&ab_channel=GreekFestival>

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**Υποσύνολο-Fragment 2020**

City Project 2020

A Collaboration with NEON Organization - Dionisis Kavallieratos

Disoriented dance / Misled planet

A Tribute to Thanos Mikroutsikos

Set Up the Spotlight

Ert National Symphony Orchestra - George Petrou

Beethoven Gala

Monika

Something is Blooming at Herodion

Thessaloniki State Symphony Orchestra - Zoi Tsokanou - Simos Papanas

Works by Bartók and Vivaldi, featuring TSSO’s famed strings

Greek National Opera - Pier Giorgio Morandi

Two Opera Galas

Giannis Aggelakas - Nikos Veliotis

Wolves in Wonderland

Armonia Atenea - The Friends of Music Orchestra

George Petrou

Marianna Calbari

Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria

by Claudio Monteverdi

Athens State Orchestra - Stefanos Tsialis

Beethoven 250 Years

Leonidas Kavakos Performs Bach in Epidaurus

National Theatre of Greece - Dimitris Lignadis

The Persians

by Aeschylus

National Theatre of Greece - Odysseas Papaspiliopoulos

Lysistrata

by Aristophanes

National Theatre of Northern Greece - Giannis Rigas

The Birds

by Aristophanes

Alkinoos Ioannidis

Live Looping

Mihalis Kalkanis Group

Featuring Haig Yazdjian & Jannis Anastasakis

Rafi Music Theatre Company - Nova Melancholia - Michalis Siganidis

Il diluvio universale

by Michelangelo Falvetti

Myrsini Margariti - Maria Papapetropoulou - Maria Panourgia

“J’ai des yeux à la place des oreilles”

La voix humaine

by Francis Poulenc

Savina Yannatou

Primavera εn Salonico

Featuring Lamia Bedioui

The Athens & Epidaurus Festival is funded by the Hellenic Ministry of Culture & Sports.

