Στέγη Γραμμάτων και Τεχνών
The Onassis Cultural Centre in Athens

The Onassis Cultural Centre Athens is the city's new cultural space hosting events and actions across the whole spectrum of the arts from theatre, dance, music and the visual arts to the written word, with an emphasis on contemporary cultural expression, on supporting Greek artists, on cultivating international collaborations and on educating children and people of all ages through lifelong learning. The foundations of the Onassis Cultural Centre were laid in Athens in 2004.

The construction of the Centre was exclusively funded and overseen by the Onassis Foundation. The Centre was built on a privately-owned 3,000 sq. m. plot on Syngrou Avenue which is bounded by four roads and covers an entire city block. The Centre boasts 16,000 sq. m. of interior space.

Having decided that it needed a building of high architectural value, the Onassis Foundation staged an international architecture competition. The design chosen from the 66 proposals entered from around the world was by the French architectural practice “Architecture Studio,” whose core architectural concept is encapsulated in the building’s facade: an airy white rectangular shell which makes innovative use of white marble bands. The unique configuration of the facade serves as a stage set which imbues the building with a sense of
mystery both during the day, when the marble bands serve to reflect the intense Attic light and create the impression from afar of a gentle wave, and at night when, artificially lit, they turn the image inside out by allowing the inside of the building to shine through and revealing the warm shell surrounding the rooms and auditoria.

A new architectural study was drawn up for the interior of the two amphitheatres, while the ground-floor bar was redesigned by artist Aemilia Papafilippou around an original artwork. The theatre lighting in both auditoria was designed by James Morse from the London-based Light & Design Associates company, while the architectural lighting for the entire building was redesigned by Eleftheria Deko & Associates.

The building includes two main auditoriums, seating 880 and 220 respectively, which are suited to a wide range of events including theatre and dance performances, concerts, film screenings (multimedia, virtual reality), lectures and conferences. The top story is home to the Onassis Cultural Centre restaurant, which extends out onto the rooftop terrace during the summer months and offers breathtaking views of the Acropolis, the Philopappos monument, Lycabettus and the Saronic Gulf. The Onassis Cultural Centre's 18,000 sq. m. of internal floor space are spread over no fewer than sixteen levels, nine of which are underground. The Centre's cutting-edge facilities include:

- **MAIN STAGE**
  An 880-seat amphitheatre. The multiplicity of potential stage and lighting configurations make it possible to use this impressive auditorium for a range of large-scale events, from theatrical and dance performances, concerts and cinema screenings to lectures and concerts.

- **UPPER STAGE**
  A 220-seat auditorium which can be used for smaller-scale theatrical, music and dance performances, presentations, lectures, cinema screenings (multimedia, virtual reality), seminars and conferences.

- **LECTURE & EXHIBITION SPACE**
  A room on the 5th floor which can seat up to sixty on free-standing chairs. It is ideal for lectures, educational programs and round-table discussions.

- **EXHIBITION HALL**
  A 700 sq. m. space on the Centre's underground level specially-designed for exhibitions and other activities. A number of open spaces spread over the Centre's levels and ideal for smaller exhibitions or meetings.

- **LIQUID SKY**
  A meeting point in the Onassis Cultural Centre bearing the signature of the celebrated Greek contemporary artist, Aemilia Papafilippou. Integrating art into public space allows the artist to enter into a dialogue with the visitor and artistic expression to become part of our everyday lives. As we commune with art naturally in an atmospheric space before and after the performance, concert, exhibition or discussion, we realize that, yes, we can live in art.

- **RESTAURANT-BAR-CAFÉ**
  Complete your visit to the Centre by stopping off for a drink or some food in our bar, restaurant or café. Stage your own corporate events in its well-appointed private spaces, or enjoy a coffee break of light meal there during conferences and symposia. The rooftop restaurant offers panoramic views of Athens and is also available for private functions.
Anthony S. Papadimitriou

President and Treasurer of the Alexander S. Onassis Public Benefit Foundation Talks to TNH About the Onassis Foundation’s Cultural Center in Athens (“Στέγη Γραμμάτων & Τεχνών”), Cultural Center in New York, and Vision for Greece to Create its Own Unique Cultural Branding Worldwide

by Aris Papadopoulos
Special to TNH

Dr. Anthony S. Papadimitriou is an attorney and economist, holding graduate and doctoral degrees, who has been employed as legal counselor of the Onassis Group’s shipping company Olympic Shipping and Management S.A. since 1986. He was elected to the Onassis Foundation board of directors in 1988, at the recommendation of its then president Christina Onassis. Since 1995, he has been coordinating the Onassis Group’s executive committee for business activities. He is also responsible for the department of finance and major projects. In 2005, he was unanimously elected President and Treasurer of the Onassis Foundation’s 15-member board of directors.

Most importantly, however, he was taught by his late father and top aide to Aristotle Onassis, Stelio Papadimitriou, about the goals and visions embraced by the extended Onassis family, which includes all those individuals working to help realize Aristotle Onassis’ many dreams for his homeland of Greece.

Dr. Papadimitriou sat down for an interview with TNH to discuss the Onassis Cultural Center (OCC) in Athens (“Στέγη Γραμμάτων & Τεχνών”), ensuring that the special issue dedicated to this modern cultural gem situated in Athens would contain the weightiest viewpoint of all – his own.

TNH: It’s been four years since the OCC has fully operational. Do you believe that the vision you had has now been realized? In other words, is the OCC on the road to meeting its mission?

Anthony Papadimitriou: It is in fact moving along nicely. Our vision was to fill a void present in the cultural life of Greece, its capital Athens, and specifically, between the National Gallery, the National Theater, the National Museum of Modern Art, the National Opera House, and the Athens Concert Hall... All these “national” venues are doing an exceptional job and are led by very qualified individuals, with whom we are in constant collaboration. However, what was missing from this equation was exactly what the OCC is now offering. We want to cultivate the most contemporary art forms present in Greece and the world. And when we use the word contemporary, we are talking about art that is being produced today. Primarily, however, we want to emphasize the work that is being produced by Greeks today. We know what the ancients did, what the Byzantines did, and perhaps what people like Hadjidakis, Theodorakis, Seferis, Elytis, Cavafy, and others did about 50 years ago. But aren’t we working on anything today? Doesn’t our country have a place on the cultural map? We believe that contemporary Greek artists do exist, and we are proving it. Therefore, the realization of our vision is precisely this: that in Greece there is a vibrant society that is producing culture. And this is important!

TNH: Those of us who follow the work of the OCC quickly realized that it is a cultural organization that is fully open to sustaining the shocks that affect the city, society, and culture, while providing an outlet of contemporary cultural expression. In other words, it does not operate according to the usual models of other similar organizations, but rather, it listens to the people. Do you believe that this is the way that the OCC can best serve contemporary culture?

A.P.: Contemporary culture is defined as the culture being produced in our time. In that sense, Hadjidakis and Theodorakis are not contemporary; nor are the great painters like Kontoglou, Engonopoulos, Tsarouchis, and others. They are modern but not contemporary. We want to find out who is today’s Theodorakis, today’s Moralis, today’s Karolos Koun, etc. And that’s what we’re doing. The audience that has embraced us is the 20-something crowd, the young people. And this is not something that one can take for granted right from the start. It was not a sure thing that young people would come to an institution with a name like Onassis and a site that has
I would like to add something equally important. The Foundation tries to combine its various activities and form the necessary collaborations. Here’s an example. We have the OCC, we have the Onassis Cultural Center in New York, but we also have the Hellenic Studies chairs operating in universities all over the world...

We have a network of academicians who have fallen in love with Greece and its culture, and they promote it in their home countries.

its own unique architectural features. But they did choose to come and they have made the place their own. I can happily say this. They come here, sit on the floor, leave their schoolbags and bike helmets at the coat check, and this speaks to us. According to a demographic study that we conducted, we discovered that the audience that comes here is hip and reacts in a youthful manner. Certainly, though, people of all ages attend our shows. And so, you might end up seeing a renown academician seated side by side with his or her students.

TNH: This can only be viewed as a success and it foreshadows the OCC’s progress... And so, you didn’t have to wait for the completion of the five-year period that you had initially set to see if the Organization succeeded in meeting its goals...

A.P.: I think we can see that already. I have now laid out our 10-year goals. What I told our coworkers at the OCC is that “what you're doing now is very nice... but what are we going to do in 2020? What are we going to produce and what will have to offer?” I have ruled out offering the culture product of 2014 in 2020. We are going to have to offer the product that will be produced at that time. That is the big challenge facing the OCC!

TNH: Does that mean that the OCC aims to always be one step ahead of the game?
A.P.: We need to be...

TNH: Was that how you arrived at the decision not to have an artistic director run the OCC? I found this very pioneering, and if I may say so, it was a wise decision to allow the experts heading up the various cultural departments to make the decisions rather than one director. Was this your idea?

A.P.: Right from the start I believed that handing over the administration of the OCC to one single person would limit us to the specific taste and preferences of that one particular individual; and they may have been excellent, but that wasn’t the goal. Right from the beginning, we wanted to be open to everything that’s playing out there, to all the trends, and to whatever is going on in the world. In order to achieve this, we need to have a versatile apparatus that can hear what is coming from every direction, and our artistic team with its group decision-making process is just that. For example, our artistic director Dr. Carras has put together an exhibition on design, even though he is head of the music department. Likewise, another department head might make a suggestion in an area that is not directly under his responsibility. Decisions are always made unanimously. That is the beauty of the OCC. We are open to all directions.

TNH: This was the right choice, since many different artistic genres are mutually intertwined in contemporary culture, which might be why the term hybrid art has prevailed.

A.P.: Precisely. Dimitris Papaioannou’s show [note: a multifaceted artist who directed the conception, organization, and performance of the opening and closing ceremonies for the Athens Olympic Games] last year was just that sort of project. And I use the word “project” on purpose, because it entails dance, theater, performance, video, visual arts...it even included mimicry. Or should I speak about Bob Wilson’s exhibition instead, where you see a photo moving in slow motion... And so, you cannot limit yourself to the terms photography or video art. This is contemporary culture...

TNH: Being that you hold personal views on these issues, do you intervene when you see a production that you don’t like?
A.P.: It’s my job to intervene, but I’d like to think that I’m not the deciding factor. However, I do hear proposals and I participate in the selection process. And even if I do say that I don’t like something, if everyone else insists and they convince me, it will end up happening. Or, I might end up persuading them otherwise... There is a sort of “battle of ideas” that takes place.

TNH: Most of the events at the OCC are sold out. There is also careful management of the production costs. Over the long term, do you see the OCC becoming financially semi-autonomous?
A.P.: No, I don’t see that happening. It would be a miracle if that happened. No cultural organization is financially independent. Everyone relies on grants and private gifts. For us, the ticket price is symbolic. We don’t want admission to be free because whatever is free is misunderstood. On the other hand, however, we purposely keep the price very low. It costs roughly the same as going to the movies. Thus, we’re not about to make any money from our ticket sales. If the productions we put on were held someplace else, the average ticket price would cost between 60 to 80 euros. We offer them for an average cost of 15 euros. We see productions that would cost a Greek viewer 100 pounds to see in London, for example, and they get to see them with us for 15 euros. That’s what the Onassis Foundation has to offer. It enables the average Greek to see an amazing production – like Akram Khan [note: the choreographer of the London Summer Olympics] in a few months – in their country for just 15 euros. Production of this sort would have cost a fortune abroad. We don’t want that to happen here because it is our desire that the people of Greece who cannot go to London get to see this show as well, and in fact, get to do so in their homeland for a very affordable price. This “policy” has yet another asset. Greek audiences stay informed and can see what is going on abroad, they participate, and compel Greek artists who are producing culture to raise the bar. A third element is that since we’ve formed contacts internationally and have engaged in co-sponsoring
Right from the beginning, we wanted to be open to everything that’s playing out there, to all the trends, and to whatever is going on in the world. In order to achieve this, we need to have a versatile apparatus that can hear what is coming from every direction, and our artistic team with its group decision-making process is just that.

productions – the OCC has co-sponsored many events – we have formed a network that we now place at the disposal of Greek artists to help them bring their work abroad... This is already happening with the help of the OCC. In fact, we don’t even pay for the production costs. A prerequisite for a foreign organization to invite a Greek artist to feature their work is to assume the production costs themselves.

TNH: How well is the OCC known abroad at the present time?
A.P.: It has become well known within art circles and is considered a desirable place for artists to present their work, which was not something that was self-evident from the get-go. People know that there is a team working here with a great deal of professional ethos, exceptional infrastructure, and a fabulous audience. The audience plays an especially important role because the artist can sense it.

TNH: That’s true. Especially in the case of the OCC, whose Friends are true friends and not just sponsors and patrons as is the case in other institutions. Now, allow me to inquire whether the collaboration between the OCC and the Onassis Cultural Center in New York will continue to grow.
A.P.: It is within the parameters of our policy to utilize the interplay that might exist between these two venues. First, let me inform you that our venue in New York will undergo two major changes. The first is spatial. The site itself will be renovated and become more aesthetically pleasing, larger, and more effective. It will be expanded and remodeled so as to become more complete and better adapted to the use of multimedia, which is now prevalent. The second change is that Ambassador Lucas Tsilas is leaving. He worked very successfully for many years with my father and me, and he will remain a member of the Onassis Foundation family, but he was the first to realize that he needed to leave. Amalia Cosmetatou, who was director of cultural affairs up until now, will take over. She will assume duties of executive director on January 2. Maria Sereti will stay on as director of academic and educational programs... Aside from this, since we’ve seen that both New York and Athens feel the same way, the collaboration between the two cultural centers will continue and grow continuously. Certainly, however, the Onassis Center in New York will continue to hold major archaeological exhibitions as well as all its other activities. However, we are going to place an emphasis on making Greek artists better known in the Greek Community and in American society, of course. They need to learn about who we are. There are significant things happening in Greece and they don’t know about them. I visit galleries in New York and I ask myself why artists and some Greeks who are very good, if not better, known on a wider scale? For example, why isn’t Moralis an internationally known painter? Why has Stamatos been forgotten? Generally speaking, we have a lot of important people who express and produce art today in fields like the visual arts, music, cinema, dance, and the theater.... Look at Kavakos and Kouretzis, who have made careers for themselves abroad. And coincidentally, they happen to have been Onassis Foundation scholarship recipients... So why not uncover major new artists at the Onassis Center in New York and thus put Greece on the international art map?

TNH: The OCC helps toward this end since it has started becoming an artistic breeding ground...
A.P.: And not only, because it also spreads its reach outside of its venue. The OCC is more than just a building. It encompasses whatever is happening in the city. It is a home away from home.

However, I would like to add something equally important. The Foundation tries to combine its various activities and form the necessary collaborations. Here’s an example. We have the OCC, we have the Onassis Cultural Center in New York, but we also have the Hellenic Studies chairs operating in universities all over the world. These chairs can collaborate among themselves and with us, as well as with the OCC and our center in New York in order to create even more inroads for our cultural activities. We have a network of academicians who have fallen in love with Greece and its culture, and they promote it in their home countries. They are the ambassadors who we can utilize, in the good sense of the word. We’ve already begun taking steps in this direction. There are about 40 university chairs and we are now trying to form nuclei of academicians. In Haifa, for instance, we have a nucleus of six professors who are doing an amazing job. At the University of the Bosporus in Constantinople, we have another nucleus of 5-6 professors... All of them could get together. As of last year, we held a conference of Latin American Hellenists in Mexico for the second time, with Lucas Tsilas in attendance. They met one another, built up contacts among themselves, and informed one another of their work. And so, they built a network between themselves, since they all share a common goal. In addition, we have a program that sponsors visiting professors. Moreover, we sent Greek performers to perform musical renditions of Cavafy's poetry in three Latin American nations. It’s unbelievable to see how much countries like Argentina, Chile, Mexico, and Brazil love Greece.

TNH: Are you disappointed that the European Commission did not approve the immediate financing of projects aimed at upgrading the historic center of Athens, which were designed through the Rethink Athens program?
A.P.: I feel a bit of disappointment, but I see it as a bump in the road. The government needs to demonstrate decisiveness and proceed with the project. According to a poll, the overwhelming majority of the people of Athens support the undertaking. Over 150,000 people visited the two exhibitions displaying the plans of the studies. In the guest book, the overwhelming majority of people offered positive commentary, although many people wondered “will it really happen?” Unfortunately, it did not materialize this time around, but we've climbed back on the saddle and will continue our efforts as soon as the political developments in Greece run their course.

This is a project that will promote growth and with the proper support it can and should be approved by the EU.

TNH: Dr. Papadimitriou, how do you manage to fit everything into your busy schedule?
A.P.: One of my basic duties is to choose the right associates. Otherwise, you won’t get the job done. As the president of the Onassis Foundation, I consider it very essential to choose the right associates based entirely on merit. One man cannot do everything and no one possesses absolute knowledge.

TNH: Thank you for the interview. Have a Happy New Year.
A Discussion
with the Executive Manager and Music Department Director of the Onassis Cultural Center
Athens

By Aris Papadopoulos
Special to The National Herald

Christos Karras is the executive manager and head of the music department at the Onassis Foundation Cultural Center (Στέγη Γ’ Πανεπιστήμιού Και Τεχνών). As one of the individuals best able to describe the goals and framework of activities for the Onassis Cultural Center (OCC), which is a Greek cultural foundation doing visionary work, Mr. Karras sat down with TNH for an interview.

TNH: When you assumed the management of the OCC, had you already formulated a vision or did you receive some directives/guidelines from the Onassis Foundation regarding the nature of OCC’s projects? After all, culture is a very wide-encompassing term...

CK: I feel obliged to say that the OCC is the brainchild of the Onassis Foundation. And so, right from the start were some basic principles that the Foundation laid down and a past legacy that to some extent determined the starting point of the OCC. Besides, the Foundation had been supporting culture in a variety of different ways even before the OCC. Mainly, however, the important thing is that the Onassis Foundation has always placed its support of Greek society and the promotion of its environment as a focal point of its attention. These principles are our starting points. We support Greek productions and help take them abroad.

Of course, there are two essential parameters operating here. The OCC was first envisioned by Stelios Papadimitriou – and subsequently by the current president and board of directors – as a center for modern culture. So, the first point here is that the OCC primarily preoccupies itself with what is taking place today in the world of culture, thought, discourse, the arts, etc.

The second key point is that the Foundation did not want to create an elitist venue, but rather, a place that would be open and very welcoming to society as a whole. And I would say that this is a characteristic of the OCC, in keeping with the outlook that the world of culture today is not a closed space where art is presented, and where anyone who comes in is welcome and anyone who stays out leaves us indifferent. The view of the role of cultural centers in today’s world is that they are active members of society and that they need to promote themselves to the outside world. Their role is developmental and educational, as well as entertaining, financial, creative, and whatever else you might imagine. It is a much more dynamic role that in the past, with the typical image of a museum, for instance. The Foundation had instructed the team that was assuming the responsibility for the OCC that the institution should have this sort of dynamism within society. The mission laid out was to create, promote, and be an active member of society. The object was not for society to come to us because we are promoting culture, but for us to bring culture to society. Our mission was to root ourselves in society and become a part of it.

TNH: The prevailing impression is that the OCC hosts events that, if I may say so, give the impression of an off-Broadway show, which is, however, put together with the criteria, attention, and diligence of a Broadway production. These kinds of productions are unprecedented for Greece, considering they are all presented and gathered under the roof of the OCC. We never saw something like this in Greece before… How has the Greek audience responded?

CK: True enough! There might be other institutions doing similar things out there, but only in part. One of the unique qualities of the OCC is that it spans the entire spectrum of modern cultural creation. We offer theater, music, dance, images, animation, video, visual arts, lectures, educational activities, and we have an ever increasing number of hybrid performances that combine various art forms. Therefore, I will agree with you! We certainly put together performances that could be called “at the edge off-Broadway,” but when it comes to the quality of these performances, or the care and diligence with which they are presented, then we are certainly “on Broadway.” The audience in Greece has responded remarkably. Our activities usually fill up to around 85 percent capacity on average, and this illustrates that the OCC fills a void.

TNH: I read a quote by Onassis Foundation President Anthony Papadimitriu somewhere that the OCC is not a hotel for culture, but rather, that it is creating its own identity and carrying out its cultural activities based on this identity. Nevertheless, the OCC seems to be filling a truly large void. And I imagine that the OCC’s identity is continually being shaped…through these activities. You already defined it for us, but I imagine that the formulation of its identity is a work in progress.

CK: The OCC’s identity is being continually shaped and also changed annually, like any living system. It certainly maintains the values of a modern, open, and Hellenic system. However, the OCC evolves together with its environment. One could say that the OCC will become more extraverted in the years to come. It will venture beyond its headquarters to other parts of Greece and the world. Moreover, it will have a greater presence in the digital world. However, it will always remain focused on the essential elements that make up its identity.

TNH: Precisely because the OCC fills such a great void, you probably receive many proposals. How do you decide which events to choose and is there a pre-existing quota for Greek and foreign productions?

CK: There is a quota that we more or less adhere to, which amounts to roughly 60 percent Greek and 40 percent foreign productions. Nevertheless, foreign productions have their own unique significance for many reasons. They are important in terms of what we bring to Greece for our own experience and impact the relationships we form with foreign institutions, where we can later send our own productions as well. We receive a great deal of proposals. Last year alone, I received around 300 requests from Greece just for musical productions, but I had to choose around ten. That is the reason why we created a system for submitting proposals – mainly for musical, theatrical, and dance productions – where interested parties send their proposals to the heads of these departments by following a specific set of instructions. I am in charge of music, Marylena Karra [note: no relation between the two] is in charge of visual arts, Katia Arfara is in charge of theater and dance, Myrto Lavda is in charge of educational programs, and of course, there are other activities that are put together by the marketing department, which is headed by OCC’s assistant manager, Aphrodite Pani-giotakou. From thereon in, we choose from among the proposals based on the mission of the OCC. They need to be new, imposing, ingenious, related to today’s world, fit our budget, because we are not an organization that handles costly activities, and contain elements of innovation.

TNH: Do young people have a place in OCC if they have an intriguing proposal to offer?
and we are continuing down this route, which is strengthening the OCC’s full name is the Onassis Cultural Center Athens and the Foundation in New York is called the Onassis Cultural Center New York.

**TNH:** What do foreign artists have to say about the OCC?

**CK:** They are excited. We get dozens of messages from artists who presented their work at the OCC and they have nothing but good things to say. We are proud of this fact. In general, we have a very capable and well trained team that oversees everything at the OCC and all our work always goes smoothly. Foreigners see this as well. Besides, we are all dependent on one another because today’s world is very complex.

**TNH:** At the end of the day, what key words could be used to describe the OCC?

**CK:** Athens, inventiveness, design, political theater, diversity, cinema, new technologies, critical thinking, education in all forms... These notions exist both individually and collectively.
One of the first signs you see on the glass walls of the Onassis Cultural Centre on Syngrou Avenue, one of Athens' busiest commercial streets, is one that advertises programs for 65+, a sector often overlooked in the world of arts that so often seems aimed at children and the young, or the educated middle-aged.

Afroditi Panagiotakou, the Centre's Communications Director, who helps oversee the management of hundreds of programs a year at the four-year-old facility, said it's because the elderly are an audience that needs to be served.

Those over 65 can find an array of programs, especially for dance, to which many take happily after some initial reluctance, she said, and then realize the joy of culture doesn’t end with a pension check.

“Their’s no nostalgia about some sort of youth that’s been lost forever. Does it mean because you’re a pensioner you’re going to sit at home on the couch and watch TV? No, she said.

On this particular day, the seven-story structure is abuzz with activity in mid-morning, with a youth group on the bottom floor preparing plays of their own work and teens from area high schools mingling in discussion.

In the main auditorium, with a balcony providing extra seating, a sound stage check is going on for a battle of the bands-type event to be held the next night, featuring composers, musicians, singers, and groups from around Greece who made a final cut to see who would win.

Elsewhere, work is being done to get ready for a Theater for the Disabled performance, part of the Centre’s mission of being all-inclusive and multi-cultural and to reach out to audiences and participants.

The Centre collaborates with other institutions and draws on international figures as well, recently featuring noted Greek-American author George Pelecanos from Washington, DC, one of the most important writers of the Diaspora.

Paintings and sculptures and living art adorn the inside atrium that soars above, with the main theater in an eggshell middle. Strings of dried flowers hang in the open space, art themselves, drawing attention to the sophistication of the arena.

There are lectures, debates, music performances, jazz, folk songs, plays and interactive programs designed to make the center a living arena, especially in the midst of a crushing economic crisis that has sapped the spirit and soul of many Greeks struggling to survive under brutal austerity measures that have created record unemployment, deep poverty and left the arts outside the reach of many, which is why there is a multitude of free programs as well.

“Culture and art aren’t necessary for life. It won’t put food on your table, but it’s the sine qua non, the reason for life,” said Panagiotakou, a sentiment brought down from the ages of Ancient Greece which defined culture and set the standard for the world for today.

“The private sector has to offer more because the state can’t do it anymore, there’s no money anymore,” she said. “We consider education part of our mission. It’s not something that just happens ... there’s been tension but this is a society that’s really vibrant,” she added.

TNH: You’re celebrating the fourth anniversary of operation for the Onassis Cultural Center and the general consensus is that it has filled a deep cultural void... Four years into your work, what would you say about your original goals?

Afroditi Panagiotakou: I would say that you’re right. When the OCC was created to be incorporated into the city’s nucleus, the Onassis Foundation’s impetus was to fill the void in the area of contemporary culture. From what I see today, besides the Athens Festival, there is no steady support present –
Therefore, I believe that the Onassis Foundation had the wisdom to create an organization with a very clear-cut identity, a very precise image, stating that the OCC is going to be an organization that is interested in contemporary culture as expressed in the theater, music, dance, visual arts, and education in terms of our event planning, and will be open to everyone, supporting Greek artists and creating international collaborations.

both financial and in terms of venues – in regards to contemporary productions. Therefore, we thought that there was a need for an organization whose mission is to do precisely this. And if there is one thing that cultural organizations absolutely require in order to make an intervention – and I use this term in the good sense of the word – it is a clearly defined identity.

Therefore, I believe that the Onassis Foundation had the wisdom to create an organization with a very clear-cut identity, a very precise image, stating that the OCC is going to be an organization that is interested in contemporary culture as expressed in the theater, music, dance, visual arts, and education in terms of our event planning, and will be open to everyone, supporting Greek artists and creating international collaborations.

The issue of Greek artists remain a very serious one, because in an environment that is very fiscally unsound, to be discussing support for contemporary Greek culture sounds like a luxury to a lot of people, but it really isn’t.

Therefore, four years later, it is worth our while to take a look back at the courage shown by the people of the Onassis Foundation to create an organization dedicated to contemporary culture in the midst of an economic crisis. However, I believe that precisely due to the fact that the country was in crisis, this organization managed to make headway into the daily lives of the people so quickly. The reason being that everything that someone sees at the OCC concerns the here and now – at least this is our intention and our job. And so, when someone visits the OCC, he or she sees shows or listens to discussions that concern them. From thereon in, these productions help our audience explain what is taking place inside themselves and in the world around them.

The thing about art is that it provides you with the necessary distance so that even if you see a production about the economic crisis, you can appreciate it from a different point of view. And when you leave, you feel a comforting caress. You developed an unpoint of view. And when you leave, you feel

TNH: As head of communications, you have therefore taken on the difficult job of figuring out how to publicize an event. How is something like that done?

AP: It is clear that someone needs to proceed along two parallels, one that is more romantic, and one that is more practical. The more romantic side involves communicating by disseminating information and telling people about the work of the OCC and the Onassis Foundation. There, you can use all your resources and the information at your disposal.

However, there is also a practical side, because the OCC sells tickets. Of course, they are not meant to fully fund our productions. In actuality, we’re talking about a very generous position that the Onassis Foundation has adopted. If someone attends a show with a production cost of 300,000 euros, they might, for example, get to see even though we generate a ticket revenue that doesn’t gross more than 28,000 euros. But you need more than an affordable admission to fill a venue, because you’re asking your audience for more than just their money. You’re asking for their time, you’re asking them to make you a priority and to think about you... You can’t buy these intangibles with an affordable admission fee alone. Besides, nowadays a lot of places are selling affordable tickets to shows and events. Therefore, every time that we decide to communicate with our audience, we make sure that we...don’t...do what the people want. This is never an issue of discussion at our meetings at the OCC, which is composed of a team of people who all work together. We operate almost "educationally." The productions that the OCC puts on are not just rely on a big name to serve as "bait," even if we’re talking about one of the most famous people in the world in his or her field, like Amr Diab, the choreographer of the London Summer Olympics. Of course, with a name like this, you’d have a sold out show in as little as five hours. Nonetheless, the first time that I brought him to the OCC, I had to tell the people who he was. My job as Communications Director is to explain our events, because if I want to say that the OCC is truly a venue that is open to everyone, I need to make sure that everyone understands what we’re doing. How should I go about this, seated behind my desk? Of course not. I need to go to the people. If I want to target teenagers, I need to go to their schools. I don’t mean to say that I will bring the show there. However, I will put together an educational production that involves modern dance, it’s going to be interactive, my target audience will pay a visit to the OCC, get to feel comfortable, and then they will come to see the show. If we’re talking about someone who is an everyday citizen of Athens, well then, I’m not going to roll out the red carpet on opening night so this person feels like they are out of place because they cannot compete socially or economically. Instead, I will visit their local neighborhood. And so, we work with the mass media a great deal, and for us, the Internet is an absolute must because we can reach our audience through it. From thereon in, believe me when I say that even if we’re talking about selling half a million seats, it’s like selling door to door because we have to communicate with people, we have to communicate with the public. We have to explain our events and our mission on display elsewhere – even outside of Greece – and say “oh, that’s an OCC production!” And so, in a sense, our exhibitions, events, and audiences have developed an identity of their own. What we wanted right from the onset – and we always stress this – is to create a point of reference that concerns the content and the audience. Cultural organizations are not buildings. They are made up of the body of work they are housing. Buildings age, their marble dressing fades, and we are cognizant of this. That’s why from the communications sector that I manage, we really insist on making our presence felt every day because it is based primarily on the content and the audience. Cultural organizations are not buildings. They are made up of the body of work they are housing. Buildings age, their marble dressing fades, and we are cognizant of this. That’s why from the communications sector that I manage, we really insist on making our presence felt every day because it is based primarily on the content and the audience. Cultural organizations are not buildings. They are made up of the body of work they are housing. Buildings age, their marble dressing fades, and we are cognizant of this. That’s why from the communications sector that I manage, we really insist on making our presence felt every day because it is based primarily on the content and the audience. Cultural organizations are not buildings. They are made up of the body of work they are housing. Buildings age, their marble dressing fades, and we are cognizant of this. That’s why from the communications sector that I manage, we really insist on making our presence felt every day because it is based primarily on the content and the audience. Cultural organizations are not buildings. They are made up of the body of work they are housing. Buildings age, their marble dressing fades, and we are cognizant of this. That’s why from the communications sector that I manage, we really insist on making our presence felt every day because it is based primarily on the content and the audience.
The OCC does not exclude any art form and we go to the people. We don't broadcast from inside some tower and sit around waiting for people with high resolution antennas to catch our signal. We are out there and we hit the streets a great deal of the time. We do so precisely because we believe that contemporary culture involves and rests deeply in political issues. Democracy is a major political issue.

experience involves not only what is happening on the stage. It begins with the poster that we put up in the street, the way we promoted the event over the radio, the demeanor of the usher and the person at the coat check, and then the audience enters the hall. What we’re talking about here is a relationship, and relationships are built. That’s what the OCC tries to do: build relationships with society. Besides, that is why we’re talking about an organization that takes a political stand in regards to current events. And it doesn’t go without saying that a non-profit institution or a cultural organization does take a political stand in today’s world, because the security of neutrality then becomes disrupted...

THN: That's correct, but culture encompasses politics...

AP: It certainly ought to, in our opinion. We here believe that we need to talk about issues involving racism, immigration, the far right and what is going on around us, as well as to talk about people with disabilities. Since we’re on the subject of communication and social outreach, the programs that deal with open access to culture for the people are a big part of the OCC. Our educational programs and all the other activities involving people with some type of disability or individuals who belong to some special social group occupy a big part of our planning, and the reason for this is precisely due to the fact that, essentially, we don’t believe in special social groups. We all belong somewhere and if we start excluding people, then there won’t be any of us left. Therefore, everyone is included in the OCC’s programs and we work a great deal with audiences who have autism and people with disabilities, while offering coeducational programs as well. We bring together audiences with disabilities and without, because the issue here is not what separates us, but rather, what brings us together. For instance, on December 10th we hosted a production by Jérôme Bel entitled "Disabled Theater," featuring professional actors who have intellectual disabilities.

Audience members who feared that this would upset them, on the contrary ended up enjoying a fabulous show. They ended up forgetting that the actors had intellectual disabilities and came out of the event stronger. This speaks to what I said earlier – you come into a show with a set state of mind and leave a changed person.

THN: So, to put it succinctly, the OCC is an open venue that has spread out like a net across the daily cultural reality, inasmuch as it also covers issues where the state is absent, like people with disabilities and shut-ins...

AP: The OCC does not exclude any art form and we go to the people. We don’t broadcast from inside some tower and sit around waiting for people with high resolution antennas to catch our signal. We are out there and we hit the streets a great deal of the time. We do so precisely because we believe that contemporary culture involves and rests deeply in political issues. Democracy is a major political issue. And so, I cannot claim to be involved in contemporary culture and not behave or at least not try to create structures that strengthen democracy. Therefore, participation by the greatest possible number of people who come from all different walks of life is an element of democracy. This is my obligation. This might sound like a tall order. It needs to be done day by day and through examples that slowly but surely make their way into our psyche and our way of thinking. Ours is not a society that strengthens the concept of being different. It didn’t happen in my generation, and based on my experience from the many visits we pay to schools today, I don’t see it happening now either... And so, everyone does what they can to fill in what is lacking. We find ourselves at a juncture when we don’t have the luxury of asking ‘where is the state?’ The state is presently in a precarious position. Now, let us turn our attention to what we can do.

THN: In terms of how the OCC is developing its plans, are they in keeping with the vision of the late Stelio Papadimitriou or are they being formulated by the current board of trustees of the Onassis Foundation?

AP: I wasn’t around during Stelio Papadimitriou’s tenure. However, I must say that when it comes to the Onassis Foundation, the concept of legacy is very strong and this concept begins with its founder, Aristotle Onassis. Therefore, we at the OCC team need to be aware of the fact that in addition to our work, there are others out there doing a different kind of work, like shipping or managing the board of directors. And so, we are a part of a larger family, and for a family to feed its children, it needs to earn its money from somewhere. That's why this legacy is very much related to the business aspect as
well. We don’t continuously draw funds from an endowment that might one day become depleted. We are allowed to use 40 percent of the profits. As far as Stelio Papadimitriou, what I do know and what I can personally attest to is that we experienced a very emotional moment at the opening of the OCC. The opening ceremony was put together by Michael Marmarinos, one of the finest Greek directors in the business, who is well-known all over Europe as well. The workers who built the OCC played a leading role at the opening ceremony, and it was a tremendously powerful spectacle and feeling for us, considering that we were going in knowing the vision for the OCC that we were called to serve. The workers themselves wanted to take part in the ceremony. When the people entered, they saw the workers on stage, and with the Camerata playing in the background, we viewed live scenes from the workers during construction of the building. At the same time, there they stood decked out in their finest clothes on stage being applauded by the audience. In our minds it is clear that it is all about the people. That is what the OCC is: a story about people. Stelio Papadimitriou had a role in this story as well. In one of the scenes shown at the opening ceremony, he was there announcing the formation of the OCC and explaining that it would be a place of culture. At the end of the scene, he made a gesture with his hand and the current president of the Onassis Foundation Anthony Papadimitriou came up to the stage and gave his address. If Stelio’s announcement included the phrase “we will create a place of culture, with theater, music, visual arts, etc.,” then Anthony subsequently added the key word: contemporary. In other words, the development of the OCC from its initial conception as an idea until its final materialization included the characteristics of transitioning from one generation to the next. The current generation said that we should involve ourselves with the here and now, with an eye towards the immediate future, because the immediate future is now. Therefore, I think that this transition was a very big leap forward.

TNH: And a wager that is being won on a daily basis...
AP: Through a lot of hard work. But we’re talking about a very worthwhile effort. What we have to offer through art and culture is a promise of happiness. Of course, you may not end up happy per se, but your mind and soul will be fulfilled. Essentially, you are investing in the quality of your time, and this is an investment that will follow you wherever you go. You can see a show that will leave you deeply satisfied and this feeling will stay with you for years.

TNH: So, essentially, aside from the fact that the OCC is investing in everyday culture, it also acts like a hard disk that stores contemporary culture...
AP: My sentiments exactly!

TNH: What has been the response of the average Greek citizen?
AP: We put on 150 productions annually. That’s over 400 shows at an audience capacity of 89 percent. And we’re talking about shows that are not self-evident... The wager that we are winning day by day involves gaining the trust of the people, who are now saying “if it’s at the OCC, it must be good.” Moreover, the OCC stands out for having an audience made up of mostly young people. Besides, we have an OCC club that has a membership that has surpassed 4,000 persons in just two-and-a-half years. These patrons attend over eight shows annually. The reasoning behind the creation of this club was to provide an impetus for people to come to our shows who might otherwise not have come because they would not understand the production. For us, the OCC’s patrons are not sponsors. They can join anytime they like, and they get a package of literature and four open tickets priced at 50 euros each. They also receive a personal card that earns them points each time they use it at the OCC. In addition, if they use this card at stores, they can qualify for discounts with participating retailers. In fact, because the numbers of members in the club has grown, they hold their assemblies on site at the OCC, offer proposals, volunteer their spare time, i.e., teachers teaching children of refugees, etc., gardeners tending to the gardens of someone who will compensate them with some other good or service. In other words, the OCC’s club of patrons essentially state their willingness to operate in accordance with the needs of society. And, of course, they are also the people who exercise the most constructive criticism when it comes to our work. Essentially, they are our friends. On our part, we are people-centered and we behave accordingly in our communication and interaction.

And since we’re talking about communication, the OCC and the Thessaloniki-based communication design office Beetroot, with whom we have teamed up and had put together The Greek Monsters Exhibition at the Onassis Cultural Center in New York, won the heralded Red Dot Award for Branding and Communication at the D&AD Awards, earning the top spot from among 7,500 entries from all across Europe. We are proud of this achievement because winning such an important award in cultural branding when you have to compete against giant firms and their design teams is a major accomplishment in my opinion.

Also, I’d like to point out that the OCC has an outreach department that deals exclusively with sending Greek productions abroad. We’ve managed to send 15 shows abroad. And this isn’t done by having the Onassis Foundation rent out a hall in central Paris and inviting the Greek Community living there to come out and see the show. We want to enjoy equal relations with other organizations. What we’ve been doing successfully, considering the fact that we’ve become known throughout Europe in a very short time, is inviting the artistic directors of large organizations to see and come to certain productions that we put on so they can subsequently incorporate them into their schedule and sponsor them through their budget. In the event that we co-sponsor the event, we do so only to a degree. The reason for this is not due to cost cutting, but precisely because we want a Greek production to go abroad because it is a good production. I contribute to this by coordinating these sorts of collaborations, and this is something that the state agencies have not been doing up until now. Naturally, there are also instances where we become full co-sponsors as well.

TNH: What is your relationship with the Onassis Cultural Center in New York?
AP: We share a close relationship, which will continue to grow. The possibilities are tremendous. It was simply a matter of having the OCC grow so that we could get an idea of how to collaborate with our counterpart in New York. We are now planning joint productions that will travel to New York, Athens, and Europe.

TNH: Nonetheless, you don’t have an artistic director, only departmental directors. This is a wise choice, since the OCC is an open cultural organization.
AP: This was yet another innovative idea that the visionaries of the OCC had, and it was something that never became a concern for us. Due to the fact that there was such a good job done with the completely meritorcratic method of hiring the people working at the OCC, when we all met for the first time, we produced this small conclave immediately certain about how well we fit in with each other. And by maintaining absolute respect for each member’s individual opinion, this combination yielded very creative results. After all, the OCC is a team, and that’s why we speak about people. We never even entertained the thought of whether or not we wanted a “king.” Nonetheless, we have an inspired administration – the Onassis Foundation, whose president and executive committee we meet with monthly and report to. We have an exceptional work environment with an administration that is consistent and cares for us like a family. The Onassis Foundation cares a great deal for its people, whether they work at the OCC or on board its ships. It also affords us great freedom, because their thinking is “since I chose you, I know what to expect from you. If I wanted something else for the OCC, I wouldn’t have chosen you.” As a result, the administration supports our artistic decisions, provided that we adhere to the budget. On our part, we try to be innovative... because the Onassis Foundation has a great deal invested in culture – truly a great deal. The Cavafy Archive is one such example. Re- think Athens is another... And all the results are most impressive...
Alexander S. Onassis
Public Benefit Foundation

Alexander S. Onassis Public Benefit Foundation was established in December 1975 in accordance with Aristotle Onassis’ last wish to honor the memory of his son, Alexander.

Culture, education, the environment, health, and social solidarity come first on the Foundation’s agenda and all of its projects relate to Greece or Greek culture and civilization.

The Alexander S. Onassis Public Benefit Foundation’s activities are multifarious, focused on very important areas such as culture, education, environment, health and social solidarity.

Within the framework of its activities for the promotion of culture, the Foundation created the Onassis Cultural Centre on Syngrou Avenue in Athens, totally dedicated to arts and culture. The foundations of the Onassis Cultural Centre were laid in the year 2000 and the building was officially inaugurated in December 2010.

The Onassis Cultural Centre is Athens’ new cultural space, open and accessible to everyone, hosting theatre, dance, music, visual arts events and letters. Its mission is to promote contemporary culture, to support young Greek artists, to cultivate international collaborations, to educate children and people of all ages through lifelong learning.

The Onassis Foundation disseminates Greek civilization abroad and specifically to the United States and Canada, through the affiliate foundation at the Olympic Tower in New York, which organizes conferences, a major archaeological exhibition every year, and a programme of visiting Professors to Universities of North and South America and Canada. In this context, the Foundation undertook the establishment of the Onassis Library for Hellenic and Roman Art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the renovation and equipment of the libraries of the National Archaeological Museum, the Christian and Byzantine Museum and the Benaki Museum in Athens, the architectural preservation and restoration of sites and buildings around the world, as well as countless other endeavors related to arts and culture.

Among its other activities, the Foundation awards scholarships to Greeks for postgraduate studies in Greece and abroad and to non-Greeks for research and postgraduate studies in Greece. Until 2012, approximately 4,800 scholarships have been awarded to Greeks and 720 to foreigners. The Scholars Association, with the active involvement of approximately 1,800 former scholars and the financial support of the Onassis Foundation, organizes conferences, lectures, cultural
and scientific events.

In the fields of social solidarity and health, the Foundation donated to the Greek state in 1992 the model Onassis Cardiac Surgery Centre (OCSC). The 127-bed capacity OCSC is the first hospital in Greece fully certified in the departments of adult and pediatric heart surgery and cardiology, the only certified hospital in Greece for heart and lung transplantations, maintaining of the best survival rates internationally.

Other public benefit projects of the Foundation include financial support to organizations such as ELPIDA for the establishment of cancer hospital for children, and the Hellenic Society for Disabled Children (ELEPAP).

**ACTIVITIES**

The Alexander S. Onassis Public Benefit Foundation's activities are multifarious, focused on very important areas such as culture, education, environment, health and social solidarity.

As part of its cultural activities, the Onassis Foundation has recently acquired the Cavafy Archive in order to protect this valuable material and to disseminate Cavafy's work to the public as well as to promote both poetry and Cavafy's personality on an international level. These goals will be achieved through a series of activities within the framework of a Foundation, and Cavafy's personality on an international level. These goals will be achieved through a series of activities within the framework of a

Within the same framework, the Foundation offers financial assistance to Universities with Greek chairs, departments or programs in Europe, the United States, Canada, South America, Africa, Australia and Asia, where Greek studies are taught.

In appreciation of the contribution made by these Universities, as well as of the difficulties they encounter, the Foundation funds established university Programs of Greek Studies which have done important and consistent work. It also supports primary and secondary schools in Europe and the United States that teach the Ancient and Modern Greek language and culture.

The Foundation's support covers the teaching of Ancient and Modern Greek language, literature, history, philosophy, archaeology and culture. The Foundation donates series of works by the classical ancient Greek authors, Classical Works publications, dictionaries, Greek grammar and syntax books as well as the necessary technical equipment, to the academic institutions concerned. The Foundation has supported more than 100 educational institutions in 40 countries.

Among its other activities, the Foundation awards scholarships to Greeks for postgraduate studies in Greece and abroad and to non-Greeks for research and postgraduate studies in Greece. Until 2013, approximately 5,279 scholarships have been awarded to Greeks and 778 to foreigners. The Scholars Association, with the active involvement of approximately 1700 former scholars and the financial support of the Onassis Foundation, organizes conferences, lectures, cultural and scientific events. In the fields of social solidarity and health, the Foundation donated to the Greek state in 1992 the model Onassis Cardiac Surgery Centre (OCSC). The 127-bed capacity OCSC is the first hospital in Greece fully certified in the departments of adult and pediatric heart surgery and cardiology. Other public benefit projects of the Foundation include financial support to organizations such as ELPIDA for the establishment of a cancer hospital for children, and the Hellenic Society for Disabled Children (ELEPAP).

Another important aspect of the Foundation's work is the awarding of international prizes, since 1978, bestowed on individuals or organizations in the fields of culture, social achievement and the environment. Today, the Foundation offers the Onassis International Prize in Shipping, Trade and Finance, in collaboration with the City of London and Cass Business School of the City University, London.

The Onassis Foundation, in association with the Foundation for Research and Technology Hellas (FORTH) of the University of Crete, organizes the "Onassis Foundation Science Lecture Series", an annual series of high-level scientific lectures that cover the following applied sciences fields: physics, chemistry, biology, mathematics and computer science. The lecture series are weeklong and aim at the further education and advancement of young Greek scientists, both graduates and post-graduates. The lectures, which take place in July at the FORTH premises in Heraklion, Crete, are offered in English by internationally acclaimed scientists and are supplemented by lectures offered by Greek scientists, distinguished in the said fields.

Up to four series of lectures are organized each year, covering topics which are at the cutting edge of international scientific research in the fields of physics, chemistry, biology, mathematics and computer science. The collaboration began in 2001 and since then, eminent academicians have participated in lectures and seminars of the FORTH as keynote speakers. The Onassis Foundation represents in Greece the Lindau Nobel Laureate Meetings since 2009, as the academic collaborator of the Scientific Meetings in Physics, Chemistry and Medicine or Physiology, that take place annually in Lindau, Germany.

The annual Lindau Nobel Laureate Meetings are organized by the Council for the Lindau Nobel Laureate Meetings and the Foundation Lindau Nobel Prize winners Meetings at Lake Constance, with the secretariat support and contribution of the relevant Secretariat.

The Meetings are a universally recognized Forum, where different generation scientists have the opportunity to exchange knowledge and views. They offer inspiration and motive, to highly regarded scientists – Laureates of Nobel Prize that coordinate the meetings from the scientific fields of Chemistry, Physics, Medicine/Physiology and Economics, as also to the new talents of the scientific community, through open dialogues, seminars and events. The Foundation, as the academic collaborator of the Institution, has supported financially combined with other initiatives, will help reverse the climate of social and financial decline and restore the many vacant buildings back into activity, revitalizing thus the most central parts of the city.

For the implementation of this project, the Onassis Foundation signed, as sponsor, a legal Agreement with the Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change, the former Ministry of Transport, Infrastructure and Networks (now called Ministry of Development, Competitiveness, Transport, Infrastructure and Networks), the Attiko Metro S.A., as well as memora of collaboration with the Attica Region and the Municipality of Athens. The overall cost of the intervention will be 92 million euros. The Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change, the Ministry of Development, Competitiveness, Transport, Infrastructure and Networks, the Attica Region and the Municipality of Athens have already announced that the Rethink Athens project will be funded by the NSRF. Therefore, 95% of the project budget will be covered by EU (and not national) funds.

The Re-think Athens project is launching the transformation of the center of Athens in 2016! Extending from Amalias Avenue and Syntagma Square to Omonoia Square and the Archaeological Museum, the city will reclaim its public space and will evolve into a unique place, where citizens from every corner of Athens can meet, both in commercial and leisure activities.
The Rethink Athens Project

The Onassis Foundation, in an effort to meet the needs of the present and take on the challenges of the future is organizing and funding a European Architectural Competition Rethink Athens for the creation of a new city center. The Rethink Athens project is a multifaceted intervention centered on Panepistimiou Street, extending from Amalias Avenue to Patission Street and ending at a brand new Omonoia Square.

VISIONS AND OBJECTIVES FOR ATHENS 2016

The Rethink Athens project is launching the transformation of the center of Athens in 2016! Extending from Amalias Avenue and Syntagma Square to Omonoia Square and the Archaeological Museum, the city will reclaim its public space and will evolve into a unique place, where citizens from every corner of Athens can meet, both in commercial and leisure activities. Upon the completion of the Rethink Athens Architectural Competition, the transformation of the city center along Panepistimiou Street will be ready for implementation.

Within the framework of its public benefit activity, the Onassis Foundation responds to the present need for urban revival by funding and organizing the competition and all the Architectural, Bioclimatic and Technical Studies relative to this aspiring project. Its aim is to improve the quality of everyday life for the citizens by providing the conditions of environmental upgrade, restitution of the urban environment and improvement of the microclimate by planting trees, constructing shelters and prescribing the use of eco-friendly public means of transport which will reduce emissions and will create an inviting environment for both pedestrians and cyclists. All of the above, combined with other initiatives, will help reverse the climate of social and financial decline and restore the many vacant buildings back into activity, revitalizing thus the most central parts of the city.

Nowhere in the world has an emblematic, multifunctional metropolitan avenue endowed with such a rich architectural heritage been reserved exclusively for traffic. Even the iconic “trilogy” area, which consists of a wonderful architectural ensemble reflecting the historical and cultural character of the city, keeps being aesthetically downgraded and reserved exclusively for traffic. Today, more than ever, we have the duty to become visionaries while retaining a firm grasp on reality. This is the right time to rethink Athens and assign new meaning to the city center.

Panepistimiou Street becomes part of an urban and architectural ring that links the pedestrian zone of the archaeological sites with the most significant archaeological museums of the city as well as with the most significant focal points of cultural and commercial activity in the city. Omonoia Square, formerly a roundabout, will now be transformed into an actual square. The backbone of the project will be a new tramline connecting Amalias Avenue with Panepistimiou Street and Patission Street. The functional and environmental upgrade of the city center will shed light upon its most obscure areas. Panepistimiou Street and Omonoia Square can become the most vibrant parts of the city. We all have the right to a friendlier, more inviting city which favors multiple functions involving trade, services, housing, culture and entertainment.

The Onassis Foundation organized and funded a two-stage European architectural competition and will further provide the funds required for all the necessary studies of implementation. The objective is the collection of proposals that will awaken, inspire and reveal possibilities that reflect the character of the city and promote a healthy future image of a lively metropolis that keeps evolving.

The first stage of the competition was concluded in February 2013 with the final evaluation of the 9 shortlisted proposals by a new international jury that awarded the prizes.

The first stage of the competition was concluded in October 2012, when 9 proposals were selected out of a total of 71 submissions. The first-stage international jury also selected a “utopian” proposal and awarded mentions to three more proposals. The second stage of the competition was concluded in February 2013 with the final evaluation of the 9 shortlisted proposals by a new international jury that awarded the prizes.

For the implementation of this competition, the Onassis Foundation has signed, as sponsor, a legal Agreement with the Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change, the former Ministry of Transport, Infrastructure and Networks (now called Ministry of Development, Competitiveness, Transport, Infrastructure and Networks), the Attiko Metro S.A., as well as memoranda of collaboration with the Attica Prefecture and the Municipality of Athens. For the preparation of the final studies and the funding of the projects through EU funds, the Foundation is already collaborating with the Ministry of Environment Energy and Climate Change, the Ministry of Development, Competitiveness, Transport, Infrastructure and Networks, as well as with a number of other institutions that will greatly contribute to the successful coordination of the project.

Athens was designated to be a great European capital whose center would retain its human scale. At the very core lies a deep historical stratification, while around evolves a vibrant modern universe along with all its contradictions. The intervention - on and around Panepistimiou Street will revive the city center by enhancing its commercial and financial activities, by the environmental and aesthetic upgrade of the public space, the promotion of its historical and cultural heritage and by making the city center more accessible to all citizens.

Athens can finally become the vibrant metropolis it deserves to be.

The new metropolitan Athens looks forward to its future.
he affiliated Alexander S. Onassis Public Benefit Foundation in the United States, based in New York, was established in autumn 1999.

It was inaugurated in October 2000 with a major exhibition of 20th century Greek painting and influenced by classical antiquity, organized in collaboration with the Greek National Gallery.

The purpose of the affiliated Foundation is to promote Greek culture in the United States and to cultivate the cultural bilateral relations. In the present cultural environment of international interaction and globalization, the Foundation deems necessary to draw attention to the importance of the Greek spirit and its significant contribution to contemporary civilization.

The affiliated Foundation’s activities are the promotion of Modern Greek culture through exhibitions and other cultural and educational events in North and South America.

The affiliated Foundation is housed in the Olympic Tower on Fifth Avenue, in the heart of New York.

The Onassis Cultural Centre, a 300 seat auditorium, is found on the ground floor.

The Tower’s "Atrium Café" contributes to the lively Greek atmosphere by giving visitors at the Cultural Centre the opportunity to complete their "tour" of Greek culture and entertainment in the heart of New York.

The Tower atrium is decorated with 19th century plaster casts of the Parthenon frieze, of remarkable quality and historical value, the originals of which are kept in the British Museum.

Thus, not only the casual visitor but a great many schoolchildren have the chance to become acquainted with and observe one of the finest expressions of Greek cultural heritage. The Tower atrium also hosts artworks of Alexandra Athanassiadou, Stephen Antonakos, Kostas Varotsos, Barbara Kasten, Kalliopi Lemou and Aimilia Papaphilippou.

For more information regarding the operation and the programs of the Affiliated Onassis Foundation in the United States as well as the on line Greek culture e-learning program, you may visit www.onassisusa.org.
Three-dimensional object printing has moved out of the realm of fiction into the realm of fact: what we could once only imagine is now reality!

At the OCC, we’ll be printing everything from a chair to a heart or even a mini-you in 3D.

What will it be like living in a world where anyone can print everything? The possibilities are endless, but so are the dilemmas.

What we could once only imagine is now reality and on display in the OCC’s exhibition space.

Today, we can print everything in three dimensions: anything from Christmas decorations to houses, from clothes to prosthetic limbs!

The OCC is staging an exhibition that will transport us into the fascinating world of 3D printing. We will be exploring the three dimensions of art, fashion, design, science and architecture through 80 printed objects, a range of ingenious devices, a host of astounding videos by 34 artists, designers and scientists from around the world, plus workshops and lectures.

All the things that could not be made using conventional means can now be printed in three dimensions, changing the way we do things and forcing us to call our working theories into question and to discard mental models in which users, designers and manufacturers are clearly demarcated.

This technology is changing our lives—and it is doing so today!

3D & Science
New methods, experimental operations and pioneering therapies can now be tested using three-dimensional printed replicas of human limbs.

The exhibition includes prosthetic limbs that have made everyday life easier for amputees, while a heart printed in 3D by Richard Arm and his associates at the University of Nottingham Trent in the UK as an aid in delicate surgical operations will be on display in the Onassis Cardiac Surgery Centre from December 17 until January 31.

3D & Fashion
Gabriela Ligenza’s futuristic hats and Silvia Weidenbach’s wildly imaginative jewelry show us that we don’t necessarily have to weave or sew the things we wear: we can print them. Using a range of materials, some colored some not, designers around the world are turning more and more to 3D printing to implement their creations. The incredibly wide range of printed clothing on offer includes elasticated clothes, transparencies and impressively flexible garments, which emulate the movements of human muscles and thus fit the body perfectly.

3D & Architecture
3D printers have been capable of printing as much as three cubic meters of construction material an hour since 2013. At that rate, a building could be completed within a week!

The OCC show takes us on a tour around the magical world of architecture, from Amsterdam, where DUS Architects are designing the first printed house, to the moon, which Foster & Partners will be creating a lunar base out of inflated sections and printed moon rock in partnership with the European Space Agency (ESA).

3D & Design
3D printing is changing the way in which we design and manufacture furniture and utility objects by allowing designers to rethink even our most everyday objects and consumers to participate in shaping the final product.

3D printing has opened up a whole new world of possibilities in design; the creative freedom and mobility it provides is evident in one of the first chairs to be printed in three dimensions (using recycled plastic by the Studio Dirk Vander Kooij) and in Assa Ashuach’s impressive and original creations.

3D & Art
Before the emergence of 3D printing, artists who worked with
digital technology were forced either to create two-dimensional works or to restrict their works' three-dimensionality to the electronic realm.

Now, digital sculpture has broken free from the computer and is establishing itself as an art-form in its own right.

The Amsterdam-based artist Danny Van Ryswyk uses 3D printing software to transform the 2D work on his computer into 3D sculpture, which he then colors by hand. Michael Eden's ceramic vases combine tradition with cutting-edge technology, while Matthew Plummer-Fernandez's abstract and 'distorted' representations of Mickey Mouse test the boundaries of intellectual property law and the concept of a likeness.

Art in the era of 3D printing is changing and on display at the OCC.

Workshops

A series of workshops staged in parallel with the exhibition will provide plenty of opportunities for anyone wanting to create their own object to do so.

Print your own Christmas tree: Saturday 20/12 & Sunday 21/12, 12:00-14:00. A workshop in which parents and children aged 6-11 create their own 3D printed Christmas trees. Tickets €7 / concessions €5 for the workshop and the exhibition.

Print your own robot: Every Saturday from 27/12, 12:00-14:00. A workshop in which parents and children create their own 3D printed robots. Tickets €7 / concessions €5 for the workshop and the exhibition.

You, too, can paint in the air: Every Sunday from 28/12, 12:00-14:00. A workshop in which adults, but also parents and children aged 12 and up, experiment with 3D doodler pens. Tickets €7 / concessions €5 for the workshop and the exhibition.

Bookings: 2130178036

Be your own souvenir, a workshop led by Spain’s BlabBlabLab company in which participants pose for and create a miniature version of themselves. The workshop will be held on December 17 & 18 at City Link – Spyros Milion Arcade (13:00-20:00) and on December 19 at the OCC (10:30-14:30 & 19:00-21:00). Participation in the “Be your own Souvenir” workshop is free and aimed at all ages.

The Curators

The Double Decker curators Wilhelm Finger and Melita Skamnaki have this to say about the exhibition: “The 3D Printing show is open to the general public. The show allows visitors to explore the current capabilities and future directions of 3D technology in a wide range of applications.

The workshops demystify the technology and reveal that the fundamental osmosis it permits between designer, manufacturer and consumer will leave its mark on all our lives.”

Double Decker

Double Decker, which was created by Wilhelm Finger and Melita Skamnaki, is an international curating agency that works with exhibitions, publications and public programs and collaborates with leading museums around the world. Previous projects undertaken by Double Decker include Christian Louboutin’s Walk Into Illusion program at the Design Museum in London, the Katalogue XXL exhibition at the Oscar Niemeyer Museum in Brazil, and the Brain Break program at London’s Science Museum.

Curated by Double Decker – Organized by the OCC Communication & Marketing Department
Flower Installation by Rebecca Louise Law


In this, the OCC’s second collaboration with the team of curators from Double Decker in London, an installation focuses attention on the Centre’s non-stage spaces. Following on from Sebastien Preschoux’s innovative environment in which the artist wrapped the ground-floor foyer in multicolored thread, the English artist Rebecca Louise Law creates a unique universe of flowers and plants in the same space.

Rebecca Louise Law is a name to be reckoned with in two fields: art and fashion. In the visual arts, she has worked with the Royal Academy of Arts and with Damien Hirst; in the fashion world, she has created large-scale projects for houses including Hermès and Tiffany & Co.

For Look up, Garden, the artist transforms the OCC entrance using 11,000 flowers to create an environment which will keep visitors company until the summer. Drawing on the flora of Greece for her inspiration, she uses flowers and aromatic herbs including carnations, roses, lavender, basil, oregano, olive trees and heliotrope to get us craning our necks and staring upwards.

The viewer is brought into direct contact with nature and interacts with it through an ever-changing, ephemeral work which reveals and is revealed by the dazzling sunlight that pours into the space. Look up, Garden, which is scheduled to last a year, will make every visit to the OCC both more alluring and different each time, while visitors will also have the opportunity to watch the flowers “wilt beautifully.”

A green flower-filled sky that won’t live forever, a constantly evolving work of art that greets and bids the gaze farewell in the foyer, Look up, Garden also reflects the evolving, polymorphic nature of the OCC itself.

Production: Onassis Cultural Centre - Athens

The Arrival

January 11-22, 2015 Upper Stage

What’s it like leaving everything you know behind to travel alone to a strange and distant land, to an unknown place where—for you—nothing has a name? What does it feel like to be a stranger in a strange land?

Based on the wordless graphic novel of the same name by the award-winning author, Shaun Tan, Arrival is a visual and auditory narrative which conveys the experience of the “stranger in the strange land” in a highly-inventive way. The director and choreographer Zoe Hatziantoniou has put an original production on stage which brings adults and children face to face with all the changes life can bring, with all the “arrivals” big and small, to which we have to adapt on a daily basis.

The Arrival is a fairytale about immigration in an imaginary time and place. A father is forced to leave his family and his homeland. With just a suitcase and very little money, he crosses vast oceans to reach an unfamiliar world with bizarre creatures and things. Hampered by language most of all, he seeks shelter, food and work in order to build a new life for himself and his family from scratch.

The production is a combination of theatre, dance, photography, silent cinema, video, sound and music. Five performer-narrators employ all the means the theatre provides to compose a history of Arrival live on stage, using objects which produce unfamiliar sounds to construct the production’s sound-world (based on a conception by Dimitris Kamarotos), and conjuring up an on-stage theatrical atmosphere which is on the cusp between reality and fantasy, fairytale and life.

Arrival is the story of every immigrant, every refugee, every displaced person, but it is also a tribute to everyone who has made this journey.

Blindspot Theatre Group

“Hedda Gabler” by Henrik Ibsen

December 22-30, 2014 21:00 Upper Stage

At last, an act!” The outburst belongs to the most stonily rigid, self-destructively solitary, painfully inert heroine in world theater: Hedda Gabler. It certainly isn’t by chance that Ibsen’s masterpiece’s should take its title from the maiden name of its protagonist. Even though she marries the immature and socially and economically inferior Jørgen Tesmann, the fallen daughter of general Gabler would never let herself become Hedda Tesmann. The past, in the form of her unfulfilled love for the inspired and self-destructive academic, Ejlert Løvborg, will not lie quiet. Repressed desires, love triangles, the endless battle of the sexes, social hypocrisy, financial exchanges and blackmail are figure in a tumultuous plot which focuses on a society in crisis—a society like ours today.

The talented Michalis Konstantatos brings
considerable experience gleaned during a distinguished film career to this collaboration with the charismatic Yota Argyropoulou, who plays the titular role. Together, they rework the play into a film script and transport it into a realistic environment and boxes in the players. In the role of L.V.borg, Maximos Moumouris ignites the action...the countdown has begun. Who will be the last (wo)man standing?

An original idea was tried out during rehearsals: creative audience participation. A blog serving as the characters’ diary and a specially designed educational program were employed to initiate a public dialogue about the work which shed a new and creative light on aspects of the directorial approach.

(Yannis Houvardas)

**Hamlet by William Shakespeare**

January 14 – February 1, 2015 20:30

OCC, the internationally renowned director Giannis Houvardas embraces risk in this reading of Shakespeare’s poetic masterpiece which features Christos Loulis as Hamlet, Amalia Moutousi in the role of Gertrude, a fine cast and a new translation from Dionysis Kapsalis.

King Hamlet dies. His wife, Gertrude, marries his brother, Claudius, who is crowned the new king. The ghost of the dead king appears to his son, prince Hamlet, and demands revenge on the plotters who caused his death. Before the backdrop of the Danish court, a corrupt, obsequious, spiritually bankrupt, totalitarian world in which everyone and everything is forever under surveillance, Hamlet stands out, solitary, cut-off, alone.

“It is in this frozen world”, Giannis Houvardas notes, “where no one can hide from anyone or anything, that the story plays out of a generation crushed by the terrible mistakes of its predecessors and by its own spiralling inwards.” If he is to destroy this rotten system, Hamlet must first destroy himself...

Production: Onassis Cultural Centre

**Themelis Glynatsis**

Romanticism: A performance based on Hermann Broch’s “The Sleepwalkers”

March 18-29, 2015 21:00 Upper Stage

Niko Karathanos

“The Cherry Orchard” by Anton Chekhov

April 22 – May 3 2015 20:30 Main Stage

Youth Theatre Festival 2015

April 23-26 2015 Upper Stage

Milo Rau / International Institute of Political Murder

Hate Radio

May 13-15, 2015  20:30 Main Stage

Fast Forward Festival

Matthew Barney and Jonathan Bepler:

River of Fundament

May 22-24, 2015 Main Stage

The event is part of the Cycle FFF 2

A sculptor, visual artist, filmmaker and performer, ex-athlete and ex-model, Matthew Barney (b. 1967) is one of the most adventurous and celebrated figures in contemporary art. River of Fundament, which he is presenting at the OCC as part of a world tour, is an unprecedented happening—a ravishingly beautiful, satanically alluring amalgam of film and theatre whose 350 minutes took seven years to complete. It is not just an avant-garde film or video-art; it’s a hybrid multimedia visual/sculptural monument which adheres to the Wagnerian Gesamtkunstwerk total-art-work tradition in its combination of opera, theatre, performance and the plastic arts.

Toneelhuis/FC Bergman:

300 el x 50 el x 30 el

May 29-30, 2015 21:00 Main Stage

The event is part of the Cycle FFF 2

There’s a hamlet on stage. Behind it, we see the forest. The sharp smell of damp earth and fallen leaves pierces our nostrils. In the foreground, someone is fishing in a murky pond. The atmosphere is uneasy. Suddenly, a cameraman sneaks in among the six wooden huts—from now on, he will project every pa-ranoiac happening in the hamlet onto giant screens. The little community eats, drinks and makes merry, flirts, masturbates and teeters close to the brink of psychosis: the hamlet is a hyperreal world in miniature which no one can leave,

Rogers Bernat: Domini Public

29-31 May 2015 Outside the OCC

The event is part of the Cycle FFF 2

A crowd of people standing in the middle of a square. They are observing, but also star-

DANCE

Aurélien Bory & Le groupe acrobatique de Tanger Azimut

December 28-30, 2014 20:30 Main Stage

In Morocco, they say Sidi Ahmed Ou Moussa, a great Sufi teacher who lived in the 16th century, found the spiritual path to heaven one day. But looking down at the Earth from on high, he decided he wanted to go back. This legend, which symbolizes the acrobatic arc, lies at the very heart of Azimut, a work which tackles return, gravity and the search for our spiritual path.

What does it mean to be an acrobat in Morocco today, in an ever-changing political and social context?

Which road should we choose? It is questions like these that fuel this production di-
rected by Aurélien Bory, one of France’s most authentic artists, in this, his Greek premiere. Between Earth and Sky, the acrobat is sometimes an observer, sometimes a heavenly body. Gravity and its defiance—flight, man’s age-old desire to take to the air—is transformed into a game which involves legendary acrobats, theatrical machines, images awash with poetry and magic, spiritual allusions to Sufism, scenes of contemporary Morocco and a 16th-century legend, and transports us far, far away, up into the heavens. Aurélien Bory is an artist whose paintings are the stage...

Idea, stage sets and direction: Aurélien Bory

With the artists of the Tangiers Acrobatic Company: Mustapha Ait Quarzakmane, Mohammed Hammich, Amal Hammich, Yasine Srsi, Achraf Mohammed Châaban, Adel Châban, Abdelaziz El Haddad, Samir Lârarussi, Younes Yemlahi, Jamila Abdellaoi

And the singers: Najib El Maïmoun Idrissi, Rais Mohand

Leader of the Tangiers Acrobatic Company: Younes Hammich

Director of the Tangiers Acrobatic Company: Sanae El Kamouni

Production: compagnie 111 - Aurélien Bory

Coproduction: Grand Théâtre de Provence - Aix-en-Provence, Marseille - Provence 2013


2nd New Choreographers Festival

Artemis Lampiri: Me on Top

February 14-17, 2015 Upper Stage

The event is part of the Cycle

2nd New Choreographers Festival

The OCC is staging its New Choreographers Festival for the second consecutive year. Under the artistic direction of Katia Arfara, the event will showcase the work of four up-and-coming choreographers whose work stands out for its artistry, aesthetic and technique.

The four artists, all of whom bring a great deal of knowledge and high-profile domestic and professional experience to the event, experiment with a range of disparate methods and mixed techniques in their ongoing quest to renew the choreographic spectacle and their own movement idioms. Focusing on the artist’s responsibilities and taking a critical look at the role of the audience, they test the boundaries of dance, expanding and shifting them as a result.

What is a circle: repetition, an uninterrupted flow? What is a beginning or an end? The circle is the most magical symbol of them all: having neither beginning nor end, it is simultaneously finite and infinite, which makes it into a shape/symbol that unites spirit and matter.

ARound carries on where PARKing, Lia Tsolaki’s first solo choreographic production, left off. In the earlier work, the choreographer of choice for the German master Peter Stein and a number of Greek directors, studied changing human behaviours through the cycle of the seasons. Now, in ARound, Tsolaki gives us a new perspective on the discourse around the cyclical, moving both action and thought into a new thematic context: that of the game.

The protagonists start out in explorative, improvisatory mode, coming up with games of their own devising. Whether searching for structure or subverting it, they keep on playing in the playground they have created. Throughout, new rules continue to redefine the boundaries and conditions of the players’ coexistence and rivalry. Their participation is subject to a cyclical movement: each player in turn is called upon to decide whether they will respond to the challenge to cast caution to the wind and upset the ludic equilibrium.

Choreographic proposals reminiscent of the group games of childhood, recurring phrases like musical refrains, induce a rhythm in the dancers which seems to capture snapshots from the circle of life.

Concept -Direction: Lia Tsolaki

Choreography: Lia Tsolaki in collaboration with the dancers

Original music: Chrysanthos Christodoulou

Production: Onassis Cultural Centre

Kiriakos Hadjiioannou: Or Who Owns the World

February 14-17, 2015 Upper Stage

The event is part of the Cycle

2nd New Choreographers Festival

Lia Tsolaki: Around

February 14-17, 2015 Upper Stage

The event is part of the Cycle

2nd New Choreographers Festival

What can you learn from watching or working with teenagers and children? "They’re astonishingly good at manipulative behavior,” argues Artemis Lampiri. Frend, the recent German production in which the choreographer played a part, was the inspiration for her new work, Me on Top, which addresses the role of power and the power of roles. By choosing to present five interwoven tales in parallel, the work seeks to identify the dimensions of different power relations and the changes people experience through them.

In a minimalist, abstract but warm stage environment, a mother, a child, a friend, a comrade and a boss weave a story which becomes universal. The choreographic approach emphasizes the unique movement identity and power relationships of each role, but avoids personalizing the narrative of the five stories.

As in her previous works, Artemis Lampiri, who made her name at Kinitiras 2012, where she won an award, and through her appearances at various Greek dance festivals, proves herself willing to tackle complex issues once again. After Apathy, Between and After, what will we make of Me on top?

Choreography: Artemis Lampiri

Performers / Dancers: Achilleas Chariskos, Candy Karra, Ioanna Paraskevopoulou, Konstantinos Rizos, Ioanna Toupapkari

Coproduction: Onassis Cultural Centre and MAN dance company

2nd New Choreographers Festival

February 14-17, 2015

Social memory, history, politics... Concepts that can give dance a critical dimension. Kiriakos Hadjiioannou, a distinguished dancer from the Hellenic Dance Company and a collaborator much sought-after by artists from Greece and abroad, presents his personal answer to what theatre, performance and dance are for.

Or who owns the world, which premiered at Kasaret Basel, one of Switzerland’s most important free theatres, is a multdimensional production. Combining past with present, video with live performance, movement with the spoken word, dance with theatre and film, the work generates a powerful on-stage dialogue between actions and artistic means. Realism and fantasy are combined to produce a visual effect whose structure is reminiscent of the TV news, and which invites the gaze to follow its multilayered image.

The production is driven and informed by Kuhle Wampe, the German political film from 1932 which freely translates as “empty stomach” and which was released in English under the title Kuhle Wampe or who owns the world. The film, which was directed by Slatan Dudow, scripted by Bertolt Brecht and features music by Hanns Eisler, tackles the acute social problems facing Weimar Germany (unemployment, fierce political clashes) shortly before the Nazi takeover. The production restates the film’s exploration of the concepts of solidarity, collective organization, equality and social utopia, making them relevant to our own era,
and seeks an answer to an important question: to what extent is our present-day political thought and action incorporated into current artistic practice?

Like a game with five rounds, the production is articulated around different thematic actions and corresponding somatic images of collective structures—each of which seeks its opposite through the repetition and reproduction of movement. In so doing, the production highlights cooperation and social equality, but also demonstrates that the conditions of our present are such that dreams of utopia are condemned to remain just that: dreams.

Concept and direction: Kiriakos Hadjiioannou
By and with: Léonard Bertholet, Kiriakos Hadjiioannou, Anja Meser, Nancy Stamato-poloulou
Music: Falk Rößler
A production of Kiriakos Hadjiioannou in co-production with Kaserne Basel and Gessnerallee Zurich

International Dance Festival "Unlimited Access"

February 26 - March 1, 2015 Main Stage & Upper Stage

Akram Khan & Israel Galvin
TORTOBACA
March 10-15, 2015, Main Stage

Dancing to Connect
March 21-22, 2015, Main Stage

MUSIC

Camerata at the OCC
Christmas in the Paris of the Sun King

December 23, 2014 20:30 Main Stage

Charis Andrianos: baritone
City of Athens Mixed Choir
Choir conducted by Stavros Beris

Music Village at the OCC
January 23-25, 2015 21:00 Upper Stage

Aaron Parks:
Arborescence
February 6-7, 2015 21:00 Upper Stage

The magnificence of the music of Versailles owes a great deal to two masterpieces: the Te Deum motets by the two leading composers of Louis IV’s reign—the King’s favourite, Jean-Baptiste Lully, an Italian-born composer who Gallicized his name, and the Frenchman Marc-Antoine Charpentier, who received an Italian musical upbringing. Their motets are two of the most beautiful religious works in the French baroque repertoire.

Celebratory works written for events of great importance, both Te Deums hymn the power of God (and, of course, the King) with true magnificence. Lully wrote his Te Deum in 1677. The Sun King (as Louis was known) was so enthused with the work that he asked for it to be played again in its entirety on the spot! However, the work would be the death of its creator: in 1687, while attempting to coordinate the efforts of the gargantuan 150-piece orchestra the work calls for, Lully would strike himself—and his big toe—a mortal blow with his court conductor’s baton—the wound turned gangrenous and the composer died.

Charpentier composed the second Te Deum in 1692. This wonderful work was forgotten for centuries before being reinstated in the repertory in 1953. Its introduction would become world famous the following year when it was chosen to accompany the Europe-wide broadcasts of the Eurovision Song Contest!

The Camerata, which performs regularly at the Versailles Royal Opera, is joined on this evening by a cast of outstanding soloists and by the Athens City Choir. This is sure to be a Christmas music experience that brings us closer to the sounds of the Sun King’s legendary court.

Camerata (on period instruments) Conducted by George Petrou

PROGRAM
Marc-Antoine Charpentier
Te Deum (H. 146)
Jean-Baptiste Lully
Te Deum (HWV 5)
Myrsini Margariti: soprano
Vasia Zacharopoloulou: soprano
Vasilis Kavagias: tenor
Christos Kechrakis: tenor

For the third consecutive year, the Musical Village international artistic community will be taking up residence at the OCC to present three days of music covering the whole range from Early Music to the European avant-garde.

This year, small instrumental ensembles and solo praxis will be in the spotlight. There will also be a screening of a documentary about Music Village 2014 on Pelion.

On the first day, the program features Switzerland’s UMS’s JIP, the award-winning cellist, Demos Gouraroulis, who has carved out a singular international career for himself, and a solo performance by the nomadic New Zealand saxophonist, composer and producer, Hayden Chisholm, whose music expresses a different aspect of the European avant-garde.

On day two, the Uruguayan man of the theatre Camilo Betancor will present a contemporary Commedia dell’arte performance, while the singer-songwriter Maria Thiodou joins forces with Kostas Raptis on the bayan, promising a host of musical surprises. Right after that, the guitarist Kostas Makrygiannakis and the saxophonist Theofilos Sotiriadis will perform On Lacrimae, a musical performance with the actor/narrator Achilles Anastasiadis.

The final evening features six singular soloists who have paired up into three somewhat unorthodox duos: the international jazz pianist Giorgos Kontrafouris gets together with Kostas Anastasiadis on drums; the violinist Michalis Kouloumis flies in from London to make music with Spain’s Efrén López; and the Kiwi saxophonist James Wylie joins forces with Thymios Atzakas on oud and guitar to premiere a musical narrative for two.

Program design, coordination: arTree – Thymios Atzakas, Kostas Makrygiannakis

Music Inspires Literature

Cristoph Marthaler
“Une île flottante” by Eugène Labiche
February 13-15, 2015 20:30 Main Stage

Christoph Marthaler, one of Europe’s top directors, makes his OCC premiere with an idiosyncratic farce based on a work by the 19th-century French comic dramatist, Eugène Labiche.

Two wealthy bourgeois families meet ahead
of the wedding that will unite them. Unable to communicate, they sing like there’s no tomorrow, dance the shake, jam themselves into ramshackle chairs, suffer runny noses and gibber away as they pass round stuffed animals. Their behavior as just as incomprehensible as their conversation, but there is an objective difficulty to blame: one family speaks only French, the other exclusively German. Marthaler makes excellent use of this original dramatic mechanism—bilingual dialogue—to accentuate his pompous characters’ temporary aphasia, to mock their urbane, bourgeois ways, and to question just how blessed their lives really are. Of course, brought up to date, the work also works as a parody of communications difficulties within the European Union.

Time and space will never be the same in the European theatre again after Marthaler, who is never afraid to take risks. For two decades now, the award-winning Swiss director has been observing our world and reconstructing it with a poetic sensibility and almost scientific attention to detail.

In fact, Marthaler is redefining comedy with his melancholy humour and politically-, socially- and existentially-laden theatricality. Undermining the elegance of Vaudeville with his irrepressible surrealism, he has redefined burlesque while retaining its eccentric idiom intact: musicality before all else, refined irony, meditative lyricism and purposefully slowed-down rhythms.

By: Christoph Marthaler, Anna Viebrock, Malte Ubbenauf & the cast

Direction: Christoph Marthaler
Sets - Costumes: Anna Viebrock
Dramaturgy: Malte Ubbenauf
Assistant Director: Gerhard Alt
With: Carina Braunschmidt, Marc Bodnar, Charlotte Clamens, Raphael Clamer, Catriona Guggenbühl, Ueli Jäggi, Graham F. Valentine, Nikola Weisse

A bilingual French/German production with Greek surtitles
Translation from the German and surtitles oversight: Giannis Kalifatidis
Translation from the French text: Louisa Mitsakou
The production is a creation of Theater Basel (2013)
Tour production: Théâtre Vidy-Lausanne
Production : Theater Basel, Théâtre Vidy-Lausanne
Coproduction : Odéon Théâtre de l’Europe, Théâtre national de Toulouse Midi-Pyrénées, Le Parvis, Scène Nationale Tarbes Pyrénées
With the support of Pro Helvetia

Conference: “Modernity & musical composition in the Mediterranean”

February 18, 2015 Upper Stage

Continuing its collaboration with the University Paris 8, the OCC is co-organizing a two-day conference on the subject of Modernity and musical composition in the Mediterranean.

Composers and musicologist from almost every Mediterranean country have been invited to the event to develop a constructive dialogue centred on the concepts of spatiality and temporality and to find common ground and orientations in the musical present of a multifaceted region with a long history.

The conference will combine sound and speech, exploring the thinking and music that are molding the musical identity of the Mediterranean today: a complex identity in which discrete traditions interact and in which the relationship between tradition and modernity is more than a fault line, providing composers with a fruitful field to process in their practice. The conference will end with an exhilarating concert on February 19. Held in the Main Stage of the OCC, the event will feature work by Mediterranean composers young and old.

Oversight: Jean Paul Olive (Professor, Univ. Paris 8)
Anis Fariji (Project Assistant, Univ. Paris 8)
Christos Carras (Onassis Cultural Centre)

KYKLOS ENSEMBLE

Mediterranea
February 19, 2015 Main Stage

Wajahat Khan
May 21, 2015 21:00 Upper Stage

Born into a family of legendary sitar and surbahar players, Wajahat Khan started to play the sitar at the age of three at his father’s side. A child prodigy, at eight his fame as a singer had already spread beyond his homeland. As a teenager, he went against the family musical tradition and decided to dedicate his life to the sarod, one of the most popular instruments in Indian classical music.

Today, he is one of the best-known sarod players in the world. As a composer and teacher of Indian music, he does everything in his power to bring the Indian musical tradition to a wider audience.

Famed for his experimentation and his encounters with jazz, Western classical music and flamenco, he has brought his own visionary innovations to the sarod, imbuing this beautiful instrument with new dimensions in the process.

His unique and ground-breaking style employs a huge range of complex classical Indian forms in his quest for emotional expression.

Wajahat Khan: sarod
Hanif Khan: tabla
Azeem Hussain Khan: tanpura

Music Inspires Literature Cycle: Unknown Hellenism
May 22, 2015 19:30 Upper Stage

In the context of its efforts to support original work and interaction between different art-forms, the Greek Plan has set its sights on literature and invited three young writers to write short stories inspired by music. The short stories will be read by their authors.

Poetry
May 19, 2015 20:30 Upper Stage

Kafka Fragments
April 17-18, 2015 21:00, Upper Stage

The Whammies Play Steve Lacy
April 30, 2015 21:00 Upper Stage

Dave Holland, Kevin Eubanks, Craig Taborn, Eric Harland
Prism
May 16, 2015 20:30 Main Stage

Camerata
Mozart Concerto Festival
May 17, 2015 20:30 Main Stage

CINEMA

2nd Short Films Competition
March 6-8, 2015 Main Stage