



HELLENIC LINK – MIDWEST Newsletter

A CULTURAL AND SCIENTIFIC LINK WITH GREECE

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Upcoming Events

Opera and the Ancient World

On Sunday, April 18 at 3pm, Hellenic Link–Midwest presents Jon Solomon, professor of Classics at the University of Arizona, in a lecture titled “*Opera and the Ancient World: Aida & the Rosetta Stone, the Parthenon, and Empire*”. This lecture will be held at the Four Points Sheraton hotel, 10255 West Irving Park Road at Schiller Park (corner of Irving and Manheim by O’Hare airport, phone: 847 671 4230).

Opera was an attempt by Renaissance humanists and artists to recreate ancient Greek music, but the connection between Greco-Roman antiquity and opera has continued for four centuries. In addition to the hundreds of mythological operas derived from Ovid and Virgil, as well as the hundreds of politically charged historical operas dependent on Tacitus and Livy, Louis XIV and the Habsburgs found in Athens an allegorical justification for their empires and commissioned several operas accordingly—barely a decade before the explosion of the Parthenon. Mariette’s excavations in Egypt, inspired by Greek texts, in turn inspired Aida, and he may have derived the very name of his heroine from the Rosetta Stone. The Romantic movement induced Rossini to contribute towards freeing Greece from Ottoman rule, and the epic *Les Troyens* by Berlioz would not have premiered had it not been for the 1860s Carthaginian craze that swept Paris in the wake of Flaubert’s *Salammbo*. Saint-Saëns and Fauré were two of the first to incorporate authentic ancient Greek music discovered at Delphi in the 1890s, and Stravinsky forty years later employed the first libretto written in Latin, to be followed in the next generation by Orff’s Prometheus in ancient Greek.

Professor Jon Solomon is the author of several books, many of them touching on the connection between ancient and modern culture and lifestyle. His titles include, *Ancient Roman Feasts and Recipes; Adapted for the Modern Kitchen* (1977); *The Ancient World and the Cinema* (1978 – 2001), *Opera and the Ancient World: The Greco-Roman Tradition*, (forthcoming); *The Complete Three Stooges: The Official Filmography and Three Stooges Companion*. He has also authored numerous academic papers, monographs, reviews, dictionary articles, translations and edited volume contributions.

Jon Solomon earned his B.A. degree in Classics at the University of Chicago and his M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in Greek and Classics respectively at the University of North Carolina, and has taught at the University of Colorado, University of Minnesota, and University of Arizona, where he is currently professor of Classics. His major fields of research are the Classical Tradition, especially, in Film and Opera; Ancient Greek Music & Poetry; Greek Mythology; Roman Culinary Arts.

Athletries: The Untold History of Ancient Greek Women Athletes.

On Sunday, May 23, at 3pm, Hellenic Link–Midwest presents Professor Irini Vallera-Rickerson in a lecture titled “*Athletries: The Untold History of Ancient Greek Women Athletes*”. The lecture will be held at the Four Points Sheraton hotel, 10255 West Irving Park Road at Schiller Park (corner of Irving and Manheim by O’Hare airport, phone: 847 671 4230).

From women bull-jumping in Minoan Crete, and ancient Sparta where girls wrestled in the nude alongside the boys, to women competing in full armor in chariot races, professor Vallera-Rickerson’s book “*Athletries: The Untold History of Ancient Greek Women Athletes*” presents ancient Greek Women as much more than sisters, wives and mothers. Focusing on an area that has long been dominated by men, this book documents women’s participation in the ancient Greek world of sports in an effort to present a full and equitable picture of women in history as valuable contributors to ancient Greek society. Included in the book is a complete list of women winners and the festivals and events, including the Olympic Games, in which they were victorious.

Irini Vallera-Rickerson was born in Athens, Greece. She studied Architecture at the University of Florence in Italy. Seven years later, in 1977, Irini received her doctorate in Architecture, *summa cum laude*, with a minor in Interior Design and Art History. Dr. Vallera holds a Diploma in Italian Language and Culture from the Italian Institute of Culture, in Athens, Greece. Currently, Irini is a tenured professor of Art History at Orange Coast College in Costa Mesa, California, and the former Art Gallery Director of the Orange Coast College Fine Arts Gallery. Irini’s curation and exhibition of the “*Greek Legacy*” show was noted in the Los Angeles Times, Orange County Edition, as one of the top ten exhibitions in Orange County.

In Brief

Need for Reform of Higher Education a Campaign Issue

During the campaign leading up to the March 7 parliamentary elections, the leader of the ruling Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK), George Papandreou, and the head of the main opposition New Democracy Party (ND), Costas Karamanlis, have both called for legalizing the creation of private, non-profit universities in the country, which the Greek constitution now prohibits.

Article 16 of the constitution states that university education in Greece shall be provided exclusively by public institutions that do not charge fees, under the supervision of the state. A few private foreign universities do have branch campuses in the country. However, degrees issued by these institutions are not recognized in Greece.

In mid-February, the European Parliament approved legislation proposed by two ND Europarliamentarians stipulating that an EU country must recognize degrees issued by branch campuses of universities in other EU nations that operate within that country. Under this legislation, which must be approved by the EU Council of Ministers in order to become law throughout the bloc, Greece would have to recognize degrees from European private universities operating in the country.

In a statement, the Greek Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs said that, if the Council of Ministers approved the legislation, the Greek government would appeal the decision to the European Court. The rector of the University of Athens, Yiorgos Babiniotis, issued a statement calling the legislation "a shame and insult for Greek higher education."

Although the Greek public university system provides education free of charge, a recent report released by the University of Ioannina in northern Greece indicated that 73 percent of the families of students enrolled in Greek universities had to pay for private tutorial classes to prepare these students for taking mandatory entrance exams. It is estimated that Greek families spend more than \$1.3 billion annually for these tutorials in an attempt to ensure that their children will be among the limited number of students admitted to the universities.

An EU report published in December 2001 stated that the average Greek household spent 2.4 percent of its total income for education compared to the EU average of 0.83 percent. The report also said that the Greek government's allocation for education, 3.5 percent of GDP, was the lowest of all EU member states, which spend 5.5 percent on average.

Greece has the highest proportion of students enrolled abroad, 60,000, relative to its total population of 11 million. In terms of absolute numbers studying abroad, Greece ranks fourth despite being the 73rd most populous nation in the world.

Need for Social Security Reform - Economic Issues

Particular attention was given during the recent parliamentary election campaign in Greece to the need for social security reform. Revamping the nearly bankrupt, pay-as-you-go social security system into a viable system is one of the country's most urgent priorities. The European Union has emphasized that this reform is one of the structural changes that must be undertaken to make the Greek economy more competitive.

There are now 2.3 employees making social security contributions for every pensioner covered by Greece's largest social security and pension fund, which finances the retirement of all government employees and workers in the private sector who are enrolled in a variety of smaller funds for various professions.

This ratio is expected to drop to 1.3 employees for every retiree by 2035, when 5.1 million employees will be paying the pensions of 4 million people. Greece has one of the lowest birthrates in the EU, and people over 65 are expected to comprise 25 percent of the population in 2040 if the trend continues. Greece's public pension expenditure is expected to reach 19 percent of GDP by 2050.

A Eurobarometer report on Greece made public on February 2 indicated that the top five concerns of Greeks are unemployment, government spending, rising crime, inflation, and health care, in that order. The survey was carried out from October 1 to November 7, 2003. In addition, Eurostat data indicated that Greeks spend 6.3 percent of the GDP on health-related goods and services, more than the citizens of any other EU nation.

Papandreou stated that his recommendations for combating youth unemployment would lead to a 3.2 percent decrease in the overall unemployment rate, which now stands at about 9 percent. Under his program, he said, a young person unemployed for more than six months would receive specialized training and employment support, while education loans for young and unemployed people would be subsidized.

The candidates also targeted the farm sector, which has been hit by particularly bad weather, stiff competition with the agricultural sectors of other European Union countries, and difficulty in repaying bank loans. This sector is expected to be impacted further in May when the EU expands from 15 to 25 members, some of which have agricultural sectors that can market produce more cheaply, such as Poland.

According to a January 2003 report, Greece's farmers comprise 18 percent of the country's total labor force, contribute 8 percent to the GDP, and are responsible for 30 percent of the country's exports.

From Our History

From Thucydides' *The Peloponnesian War*

- *The Response of the Lacedaemonians to the Speech of the Athenians*

After the Lacedaemonians had heard the complaints of their allies against the Athenians, and the observations of the latter, they made all withdraw, and consulted by themselves.....Archidamus, the Lacedaemonian king, came forward, who had the reputation of being at once a wise and a moderate man, and made the following speech:

“I have not lived long, without having had the experience of many wars.... But a struggle with a people who live in a distant land, who have also an extraordinary familiarity with the sea, and who are in the highest state of preparation in every other department; with wealth private and public, with ships, and horses, and heavy infantry, and a population such as no one other Hellenic place can equal, and lastly a number of tributary allies— what can justify us in rashly beginning such a struggle? Wherein is our trust that we should rush on it unprepared? Is it in our ships? There we are inferior; while if we are to practice and become a match for them, time must intervene. Is it in our money? There we have a far greater deficiency. We neither have it in our treasury, nor are we ready to contribute it from our private funds. Confidence might possibly be felt in our superiority in heavy infantry and population, which will enable us to invade and devastate their lands. But the Athenians have plenty of other land in their empire, and can import what they want by sea. Again, if we are to attempt an insurrection of their allies, these will have to be supported with a fleet, most of them being islanders. What then is to be our war? For unless we can either beat them at sea, or deprive them of the revenues that feed their navy, we shall meet with little but disaster.

“And the slowness and procrastination, the parts of our character that are most assailed by their criticism, need not make you blush. If we undertake the war without preparation, we should by hastening its commencement only delay its conclusion: further, a free and a famous city has through all time been ours. The quality which they condemn is really nothing but a wise moderation; thanks to its possession, we alone do not become insolent in success and give way less than others in misfortune; we are not carried away by the pleasure of hearing ourselves cheered on to risks which our judgment condemns; nor, if annoyed, are we any the more convinced by attempts to exasperate us by accusation. We are both warlike and wise, and it is our sense of order that makes us so. We are warlike, because self-

control contains honor as a chief constituent, and honor bravery. And we are wise, because we are educated with too little learning to despise the laws, and with too severe a self-control to disobey them, and are brought up not to be too knowing in useless matters—such as the knowledge which can give a specious criticism of an enemy's plans in theory, but fails to assail them with equal success in practice—but are taught to consider that the schemes of our enemies are not dissimilar to our own, and that the freaks of chance are not determinable by calculation. In practice we always base our preparations against an enemy on the assumption that his plans are good; indeed, it is right to rest our hopes not on a belief in his blunders, but on the soundness of our provisions. Nor ought we to believe that there is much difference between man and man, but to think that the superiority lies with him who is reared in the severest school. These practices, then, which our ancestors have delivered to us, and by whose maintenance we have always profited, must not be given up. And we must not be hurried into deciding in a day's brief space a question that concerns many lives and fortunes and many cities, and in which honor is deeply involved—but we must decide calmly. This our strength peculiarly enables us to do. As for the Athenians, send to them on the matter of Potidaea, send on the matter of the alleged wrongs of the allies, particularly as they are prepared with legal satisfaction; and to proceed against one who offers arbitration as against a wrongdoer, law forbids. Meanwhile do not omit preparation for war. This decision will be the best for yourselves, the most terrible to your opponents.”

Such were the words of Archidamus. Last came forward Sthenelaidas, one of the ephors for that year, and spoke to the Lacedaemonians as follows:

“The long speech of the Athenians I do not pretend to understand. They said a good deal in praise of themselves, but nowhere denied that they are injuring our allies and Peloponnesians. And yet if they behaved well against the Medes then, but ill toward us now, they deserve double punishment for having ceased to be good and for having become bad. We meanwhile are the same then and now, and shall not, if we are wise, disregard the wrongs of our allies, or put off till tomorrow the duty of assisting those who must suffer today. Others have much money and ships and horses, but we have good allies whom we must not give up to the Athenians, nor by lawsuits and words decide the matter, as it is anything but in word that we are harmed, but render instant and powerful help. And let us not be told that it is fitting for us to deliberate under injustice; long deliberation is rather fitting for those who have injustice in contemplation. Vote therefore, Lacedaemonians, for war, as the honor of Sparta demands, and neither allow the further aggrandizement of Athens, nor betray our allies to ruin, but with the gods let us advance against the aggressors.”

With these words he, as ephor, himself put the question to the assembly of the Lacedaemonians. He said that he could not determine which was the loudest acclamation (their mode of decision is by acclamation not by voting); the fact being that he wished to make them declare their opinion openly and thus to increase their ardor for war. Accordingly he said: "All Lacedaemonians who are of opinion that the treaty has been broken, and that Athens is guilty, leave your seats and go there," pointing out a certain place; "all who are of the opposite opinion, there." They accordingly stood up and divided; and those who held that the treaty had been broken were in a decided majority. Summoning the allies, they told them that their opinion was that Athens had been guilty of injustice, but that they wished to convoke all the allies and

put it to the vote; in order that they might make war, if they decided to do so, on a common resolution. Having thus gained their point, the delegates returned home at once; the Athenian envoys a little later, when they had dispatched the objects of their mission. This decision of the assembly judging that the treaty had been broken, was made in the fourteenth year of the thirty years' truce, which was entered into after the affair of Euboea.

The Lacedaemonians voted that the treaty had been broken, and that the war must be declared, not so much because they were persuaded by the arguments of the allies, as because they feared the growth of the power of the Athenians, seeing most of Hellas already subject to them.

From The Riches Of Our Cultural Heritage Poetry of Constantine Kavafis

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PHILHELLENE

Make sure the engraving is done skillfully.
 The expression serious, majestic.
 The diadem preferably somewhat narrow:
 I don't like that broad kind the Parthians wear.
 The inscription, as usual, in Greek:
 nothing excessive, nothing pompous—
 we don't want the proconsul to take it the wrong
 way;
 he's always nosing things out and reporting back to Rome—
 but of course giving me due honor.
 Something very special on the other side:
 some discus-thrower, young, good-looking.
 Above all I urge you to see to it
 (Sithaspis, for God's sake don't let them forget)
 that after "King" and " Savior,"
 they engrave "Philhellene" in elegant characters.
 Now don't try to be clever
 with your "where are the Greeks?" and "what things Greek
 here behind Zagros, out beyond Phraata?"
 Since so many others more barbarian than
 ourselves
 choose to inscribe it, we will inscribe it too.
 And besides, don't forget that sometimes
 sophists do come to us from Syria,
 and versifiers, and other triflers of that kind.
 So we are not, I think, un-Greek.