



HELLENIC LINK – MIDWEST Newsletter

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Upcoming Events

Soul Murder and the Tragic Art

On Sunday, February 20, at 3pm, Hellenic Link–Midwest presents drama professor Andonia Cakouros, in a lecture-performance titled “*Soul Murder and the Tragic Act*”. This lecture will be held at the Four Points Sheraton hotel, 10249 West Irving Park Road at Schiller Park.

The ancient Greeks captured in the great tragedies the suffering and demise of the soul through their carefully crafted characters. Catharsis, as experienced through these characters at crisis point, allows for the character and the audience the release and liberation congested deep within the soul. Without this release the soul fragments and moves into an abandoned wasteland until retrieved.

Greek Tragedy gives a unique opportunity for exploration of the murdering of the soul as represented through some of the most powerful women of Greek tragedy. Medea, Agave, Elektra are a few of the examples that illustrate soul murder and help to illuminate through the original monologues the search to find fragments of the soul.

The presentation will include explanation of the actor process as well as a comparison of “soul murder” today. The performance part of the presentation will be one or two monologues, including that of Agave from the *Bacchae*—a long, demanding, and quite vocal and physical monologue. Andonia played this role on the stage in 1980 under the direction of Takis Muzenidis, who was the Director of the National Theatre of Greece.

Andonia Cakouros is a professor of Acting and Recreational Drama at California State University in Sacramento (CSUS). She has been teaching full-time at CSUS for 28 years, with emphasis in Performance. She has taught all levels of acting, movement and oral expression of literature. She has also worked as producer, writer, director, choreographer and actor in Sacramento theaters. In addition to the *Bacchae* performance mentioned above, she has also performed as Eleni Kazantzakis in the *Man of Crete* (1983), which she also choreographed, and as Jocasto and Manto in *Oedipus* (1990). She has written, produced, and directed *Greece: the Soul*, shown on cable television in Sacramento. Her productions at CSUS include *A Thousand Cranes*, *There's a Fence Around My House*, and *Antigone*. She prepared a one-woman show of Greek monologues for performance in Sacramento, New York, and in Athens in honor of the 2004 Olympics.

Greek Independence Day Celebration: The Poetry Of 1821

Our Annual Celebration of the Greek Independence Day will take place on Sunday, March 20, at 3pm, at the Four Points Sheraton hotel, 10249 West Irving Park Road at Schiller Park.

Yannis Simonides will perform excerpts from poems and songs that helped inspire the Greek War of Independence, heartened the heroes during the fighting and have celebrated the legacy of the Revolution from then to the present. The performance includes: folk songs that mourned the Fall of the *Vasilevousa*; poetry that fueled and kept alive the spirit of revolt, like the *Thourios* of Ferraios, the *kleftika* and *demotika* for Botsari, Papaflessa, Karaiskaki and Kolokotroni and Victor Hugo's *The Ellinopoulo*; excerpts from the lyrical memoirs of Makriyannis, Solomos' breathtaking *Ymnos stin Eleftheria* and *Eleftheroi Poliorkimeno*i, Andreas Kalvos' *Odes*, verses of Palamas, Valaoritis, Stratigis and Drosinis; and poetry of Cavafy, Sikelianos, Kariotakis and Seferis.

Yannis Simonides is a Yale Drama School trained actor/writer and Emmy-winning documentary producer. He has served as professor and chairman of the NYU Drama Department and as executive producer of Greek Orthodox Telecommunications; he is the founding director of the Greek Theater of New York and the executive director of Hellenic Public Radio - COSMOS FM in New York.

Mr. Simonides' performance work includes plays by Euripides, Aristophanes, Shakespeare, Brecht, Korres and Pontikas, along with solo and ensemble pieces culled from the writings of C.P. Cavafy, General Makriyannis and Nikolai Gogol. He has received the support of the National Endowment for the Arts, the Greek Ministries of Culture and Foreign Affairs, the A. S. Onassis, I. Kostopoulos, and Levendis Foundations, and of Time Warner and Mobil Foundations. He co-produced Mikis Theodorakis' 75th Birthday Celebration at Lincoln Center with the Montreal Symphony Orchestra, and he is associated with the Annual Festival of Greek Music and Dance at Symphony Space in New York City, presented by the World Music Institute and AD&M Productions.

Mr. Simonides recently narrated the PBS specials *Axion Esti*, *Visions of Greece*, and *Return to the Homeland*. He is currently touring North American schools, universities and cultural centers in a solo performance of Plato's *The Apology of Socrates*, directed by Broadway veteran Loukas

Skipitaris and designed by Oscar winner Theoni Vahliotis Aldredge. He is the founder and president of Mythic Media International, a communications and entertainment company developing theatrical and television projects worldwide.

From Our History

Engineers in Ancient Greece

(Based on excerpts from a special edition of the Newsletter of the Technical Chamber of Greece–November 2003)

Although not as well known to us, the accomplishments of engineers in Ancient Greece can be paralleled to those of the great artists, poets and philosophers of the time. The high level of civilization, art, and intellectual enquiry in classical antiquity was accompanied by significant technical projects and practical discoveries.

Those well-traveled ancestors of today's engineers first learned a lot of practical skills from contacts with the empires of the Near and Middle East (Egypt, Persia, Mesopotamia). Thus the first empirical technologies were developed. After the 6th century B.C., they gradually introduced science, which started to enrich and expand the inherited practical technology. Thus the empirical technique of measuring farm lots develops into the science of Geometry. According to Herodotus, the great mathematician Thales of Miletus, who was also a great engineer, constructed a channel in order to divert the flow of river Alis to allow the troops of king Croesus to march through.

In the metal ore mines of Lavrion one finds, dating from the 5th and 4th Century B.C., wide excavation shafts, twin wells for mechanized lifting, organized mechanical incineration and melting, novel technologies for ore enrichment and mechanized coin minting.

Significant constructions of war machines demonstrate a complex approach. Thucydides describes the first flame thrower in history, used during the Peloponnesian war. It consisted of a long wooden pipe, made by splitting a tall ship mast along its length, hollowing out each half, and tying the two back together. A kettle was attached to one end, containing burning coal, sulfur and tar, having a nozzle on the other end. The whole assembly was pulled by many carts near the walls of the besieged city and when close enough air was blown into the free end of the pipe using a mechanical blower. The air went into the fuel kettle and caused a burst of flame to be emitted by the nozzle, which set the city walls on fire.

Ancient Greek construction engineers were distinguished by high creativity, accompanied by a quest for ideal architectural solutions and respect to the natural environment. Modern scholars of ancient Greek

architecture are impressed by innovative structural details, that served a variety of purposes, such as combating the effects of moisture, either external or caused by steam condensation in baths: One solution consisted of layering a sequence of materials with varying granular morphology; on other occasions they would design discharge ducts, drains, ventilation gaps, insulations (e.g. lead casting), or even physical processes (wall heating for minimizing vapor condensation).

Architects skilled in perspective were known to introduce deliberate asymmetries in the building design, which however improve the visual sense of symmetry experienced by the observer.

The breakwater of Samos, 35 meters in depth and 335 meters long was one of the biggest building works of ancient times. A tunnel built by Efpolinos from Megara, 3.5 meters high and 835 meters long, built around 500 B.C., is impressive even by today's standards.

Ctesibius, more widely known for his pumps, also developed the *aerotonon* which was an engine originally used for throwing stones. This engine, combining a spring and compressed air provided by a metal piston and a cylinder, created the basic mechanism present in all thermal engines used as motors today.

Heron of Alexandria designed an automatic device consisting of a boiling water kettle, cylinders, pistons, and pulleys, which utilized the expansion of heated air in order to open and close the doors of a miniature temple used as altar. Other designs by Heron featured pulleys with complex groove design, which enabled programming the forward and backward movement of the vehicle being towed. Heron left behind considerable written work, such as *Metrika*, *Mechanica*, *Baroulcos*, *Pneumatica*, *Automata*, which demonstrate his high scientific and technical skills. In the introduction to his *Pneumatica* he mentions: "by combining either three or all four of the following elements: air, fire, water, and earth, one can generate various types of energy, which can be used to either satisfy basic life needs or create amazing illusions". Heron's "*aeolipili*" (steam ball), which today looks like a toy, was in reality the first working steam engine.

Empire and the Price of Arrogance and Greed

From Thucydides History of the Peloponnesian War – The Speech of Alkiviadis

"I have a better right to command, men of Athens, than another; for as Nicias has attacked me, I must begin by praising myself; and I consider that I am worthy. Those doings of mine for which I am so much cried out against are an honour to myself and to my ancestors and a solid advantage to my country. In consequence of the distinguished manner in which I represented the state at

Olympia, the other Hellenes formed an idea of our power which even exceeded the reality, although they had previously imagined that we were exhausted by war. I sent into the lists seven chariots, no other private man ever did the like; I was victor, and also won the second and fourth prize; and I ordered everything in a style worthy of my victory. The general sentiment honours such magnificence; and the energy which is shown by it creates an impression of power. At home, again, whenever I gain *éclat* by providing choruses or by the performance of some other public duty, although the citizens are naturally jealous of me, to strangers these acts of munificence are a new argument of our strength. There is some use in the folly of a man who at his own cost benefits not only himself, but the state. And where is the injustice, if I or any one who feels his own superiority to another refuses to be on a level with him? The unfortunate keep their misfortunes to themselves. We do not expect to be recognised by our acquaintance when we are down in the world; and on the same principle why should any one complain when treated with disdain by the more fortunate? He who would have proper respect shown to him should himself show it towards others. I know that men of this lofty spirit, and all who have been in any way illustrious, are hated while they are alive, by their equals especially, and in a lesser degree by others who have to do with them; but that they leave behind them to after-ages a reputation which leads even those who are not of their family to claim kindred with them, and that they are the glory of their country, which regards them, not as aliens or as evil-doers, but as her own children, of whose character she is proud. These are my own aspirations, and this is the reason why my private life is assailed; but let me ask you, whether in the management of public affairs any man surpasses me. Did I not, without involving you in any great danger or expense, combine the most powerful states of Peloponnesus against the Lacedaemonians, whom I compelled to stake at Mantinea all that they had upon the fortune of one day? And even to this hour, although they were victorious in the battle, they have hardly recovered courage.

“These were the achievements of my youth, and of what is supposed to be my monstrous folly; thus did I by winning words conciliate the Peloponnesian powers, and my heartiness made them believe in me and follow me. And now do not be afraid of me because I am young, but while I am in the flower of my days and Nicias enjoys the reputation of success, use the services of us both. Having determined to sail, do not change your minds under the impression that Sicily is a great power. For although the Sicilian cities are populous, their inhabitants are a mixed multitude, and they readily give up old forms of government and receive new ones from without. No one really feels that he has a city of his own; and so the

individual is ill-provided with arms, and the country has no regular means of defence. A man looks only to what he can win from the common stock by arts of speech or by party violence; hoping, if he is overthrown, at any rate to carry off his prize and enjoy it elsewhere.

“What reason can we give to ourselves for hesitation? What excuse can we make to our allies for denying them aid? Like all other imperial powers, we have acquired our dominion by our readiness to assist any one, whether barbarian or Hellene, who may have invoked our aid. If we are all to sit and do nothing, or to draw distinctions of race when our help is requested, we shall add little to our empire, and run a great risk of losing it altogether. For mankind do not await the attack of a superior power, they anticipate it. We cannot cut down an empire as we might a household; but having once gained our present position, we must keep a firm hold upon some, and contrive occasion against others; for if we are not rulers we shall be subjects. You cannot afford to regard inaction in the same light as others might, unless you impose a corresponding restriction on your policy. Convinced then that we shall be most likely to increase our power here if we attack our enemies there, let us sail. By the help of our acquisitions there, we shall probably become masters of all Hellas. Nicias must not divert you from your purpose by preaching indolence, and by trying to set the young against the old; rather in your accustomed order, old and young taking counsel together, after the manner of your fathers who raised Athens to this height of greatness, strive to rise yet higher. Consider that youth and age have no power unless united; but that the lighter and the more exact and the middle sort of judgment, when duly tempered, are likely to be most efficient. The state, if at rest, like everything else will wear herself out by internal friction. Every pursuit which requires skill will bear the impress of decay, whereas by conflict fresh experience is always being gained, and the city learns to defend herself, not in theory, but in practice. My opinion in short is, that a state used to activity will quickly be ruined by the change to inaction; and that they of all men enjoy the greatest security who are truest to themselves and their institutions even when they are not the best.”

After an unsuccessful attempt of Nicias to dissuade the Atheniansall alike were seized with a passionate desire to sail;.... the main body of the troops expected to receive present pay, and to conquer a country which would be an inexhaustible mine of pay for the future.

Upon this the Athenians at once decreed that the generals should be empowered to act as they thought best in the interest of the state respecting the numbers of the army and the whole management of the expedition. Then the preparations began. (*to be continued*)

From The Riches Of Our Cultural Heritage

Poetry by George Vafopoulos

George Thomas Vafopoulos was born in Gevgeli, a town near the Yugoslavian border, in 1904. He completed his high school studies in Salonika, and for a while studied mathematics at the University of Athens. From 1939 to 1963 he directed the Municipal Library of Salonika, and in that capacity was invited by the British Council to visit Great Britain in 1951, and by the United States Department of State to visit America in 1957. He is the author of seven books of poetry and of a poetic drama. He has been influenced not by surrealist devices, but by the insistence of that school on the subconscious and on unknown forces drawn from the spirit of the times. His poetry, the result of a dual tension, a dialogue between the two parts of his severed self, is the expression of painful experiences which range from a desperate love of life to the inevitable acceptance of death, the tragedy of the solitary man. He was awarded the First State Award for Poetry in 1966.

H NYXTA

Όταν χτυπήσουν τα μεσάνυχτα, να μη βιαστείς
ν' ανοίξεις το παράθυρο. Την ώρα εκείνη
γυρνούν οι άνθρωποι στο σπίτι από τα θέατρα
κ' οι παρθένες στις σκοτεινές γωνιές έρωτα κάμνουν.

Όταν χτυπήσουν τα μεσάνυχτα, δεν είναι νύχτα.
Επλημένες οι στολές των στρατηγών χορεύουν
Και των επισήμων τα φράκα υποκλίνονται
Μπροσ σ' ανθισμένες άδειες μουσελίνες.

Όταν χτυπήσουν τα μεσάνυχτα, είναι μέρα.
Και τα δικά σου μάτια δεν αντέχουν σε τέτοιο φώς
κι' ούτε στα φωτισμένα των ανθρώπων πρόσωπα.

Πρέπει να υπομείνεις πολύ. Κι' όταν πεισθείς
πως όλα μπήκαν στίς ντουλάπες, πως οι μελωδίες
τυλίχθηκαν να κοιμηθούνε μέσα στα όργανα,
άνοιξε το παράθυρο με προσοχή και κοίταξε
το φως των άστρων: είναι άλλο φως. Ή δέξου
το ράπισμα της καταιγίδας: είναι άλλο ράπισμα.

Κι αν ξαφνικά το μάτι σου διακρίνει
κάποια σκιά, μες στο πυκνό σκοτάδι
έναν κλέφτη, που το περίπτερο διάρρηξε
μιά μάνα, πού το μεθυσμένο γιό της περιμένει
ένα γιατρό, πού φεύγει από το σπίτι πεθαμένου,
μη βιαστείς το παράθυρο να κλείσεις.

Αυτό που είδες άνθρωπος δεν είναι.
Είναι της μεγάλης νύχτας το φάντασμα,
πού το λένε: αμαρτία, αγάπη η χρέος.
πού καταφύγιο ζητά την ώρα τούτη.

Σκύψε μες στο πηγάδι αυτό τού σκοτούς,
που με το βάθος μετριέται της συνείδησής σου,
και δώσε το χέρι σου στο φάντασμα της νύχτας.
Κ έπειτα κλείσε πάλι το παράθυρο σιγά,
πριν οι άνθρωποι ανοίξουν τα δικά τους παραθύρια.

THE NIGHT

When midnight strikes, do not hasten
to open the window. At that hour
people are returning home from the theater,
and virgins make love in dark corners.

When midnight strikes, it is not night.
The uniforms of the generals dance with arrogance
and the frocks of the officials bow low
before flowering, empty muslins.

When midnight strikes, it is day.
And your own eyes cannot bear such light
nor even the lighted faces of men.

You must endure much. And when you have made
certain

that all have entered the wardrobes, that the melodies
have curled up to sleep in the instruments,
then you may open the window with care and gaze
at the light of the stars: it is another light.
Or accept the slap of the hurricane: it is another slap.

And if suddenly your eyes discern
a certain shadow in the thick darkness
—a thief who has broken into the pavilion,
a mother who is waiting for her drunken son,
a doctor who is leaving a dead man's house—
do not hasten to close the window.

What you have seen is not man.
It is the spectre of the vast night
and which is called sin, love, or duty.
In that hour it was simply seeking shelter.

Lean into the darkness of this well
which is measured by the depth of your conscience
and give your hand to the night's spectre.
Then quietly close your window once more
before men fling open their own windows.