

Intensive Course Exploring European Identities/Ideologies by Means of (Re)presentations of Ancient Greek Drama

- Media -

Seven years have passed since the *European Network of Research & Documentation of Performances of Ancient Greek Drama (Arc-Net)* launched its first Intensive Course on Ancient Drama in Epidaurus. The Intensive Course is a fifteen-day summer seminar on the performance of Greek drama, with special interest in the plays staged at the Ancient Theatre of Epidaurus at the same period. Since 2007 the course has been part of the Epidaurus Festival.

The summer course is reaching the end of its three-year cycle *Exploring European Identities/Ideologies by Means of (Re)presentations of Ancient Greek Drama*. Within this rubric, the course has tackled issues of identity and ideology, examining both formal and contextual aspects characterising the reception of Greek drama. In the last couple of years the focus was on "European Theatre Festivals" (2007) and "Adaptations" (2008). This year's topic will be "Media".

The various activities of *Arc-Net* have thus so far encouraged the dialogue between Theatre and Classical Studies. This year's course has also invited academics and students working on Film, Media and Cultural Studies. This expansion into different disciplines within the

wider fields of Performance and Media Studies hopes to offer the study of Greek drama and its reception as a common platform upon which new theoretical perspectives can intersect and inform each other.

The completion of one cycle is at the same time the beginning of a new phase for the course. It is a time to look back before planning ahead. The students who have made the course happen over the past years are the most appropriate evaluators of the programme, and their feedback has always been of great value.

The present issue of *Parodos* is based on student evaluations, submitted at the end of each course. It also includes texts written several years later by participants who enjoyed the course enough to join the organising team in subsequent years. The texts and images in this issue capture memories of fifteen days spent in Epidaurus in the middle of the summer.

*The Arc-Net Organising Team
June 2009*

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Acknowledgements

The Intensive Course would have been impossible without the kind support of:

- The Erasmus Programme and the Greek State Scholarships Foundation (I.K.Y.)
- The Municipality of Asklepieion and the Cultural Centre of Ligourion
- The Hellenic Festival
- The Benaki Museum

Special thanks are due to the friends of *Arc-Net*:

- Mr George Loukos, Prof. Angelos Delivorias, Ms Eirini Geroulanou
- Mr Christos Tsakaliaris, Mr Alexandros Tsilogiannis
- Prof. Vasilis Lambrinoudakis, Ms Anna Banaka, Mr Vangelis Kazolias, Mr Spyros Petrounakos
- Ms Varvara Lazaridou, Ms Maria Panagiotopoulou, Ms Klimentini Vounelaki
- Ms Elina Mavrogiorgou, Ms Maria Hatzara, Ms Anastasia Makri, Mr Nikos Minas
- Mr Tasos Smyrlis, Mr Vasilis Verdellis
- Ms Marianna Pana, Mr Dimitris Papakonstantinou



Intensive Course Students 2002 – 2008: Responses, Experiences, Memories

Students' feelings about the Intensive Course

Year	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	Total %
Number of Students	22	22	24	28	28	26	28	
Positive	22	20	24	28	26	25	28	97,2%
Negative	0	2	0	0	2	1	0	2,8 %

“Moments to remember and share”

It was during the summer of 2006 that I became member of the “Network family”. First as a student and since 2007 as part of the organising committee, I have precious moments to remember and share. The summer course remains a constant point of reference for all students who have participated in this amazing experience, as it combines daily lectures on ancient drama given by theatre scholars of worldwide renown with the opportunity to meet fellow students from diverse cultural backgrounds and to share knowledge and opinions. Every year is special as we form each time a small and unique community, which stays deep in our hearts and at the end when we part, we promise to meet again as we make friendships that last in time and distance...

Sofia Alexiadou, Athens

“An academic community of like-minded peers”

When my professor asked if I would gather information on Finnish performances of ancient Greek drama, I was new

to academia. Little did I know, that over the following years the summer school would offer an opportunity for deeper engagement with these plays and contextual knowledge which is not available in books. It might have been the heated debates, the memorable performances, the retsina or a divine intervention, but whatever it was I am also very grateful for having found an academic community of like-minded peers, with many of whom I continue to catch up at conferences, seminars and online.

Linnea Stara, Helsinki



Discussion groups, 2005

“Each year has offered me new knowledge”

Being part of the Intensive Course on the Study and Performance of Ancient Greek Drama since 2002 – the very first year of its creation – as a university student and then as a member of the organising committee, I am in the position to evaluate what I have gained from this programme. Each year has offered me new knowledge on the subject of ancient Greek drama, in general, and has given me the opportunity to listen to different and often opposite opinions. Moreover, it has brought me in contact with people speaking different languages and having different cultures from mine. I was forced to expose myself, to cooperate with others, to discuss and to express my views freely. In addition, the course has helped me to improve organisation skills and to take on initiatives and responsibilities. Furthermore, I have learned how to interact in a team spirit.

The most significant is human interaction. I have made strong friendships which still form an invaluable part of my life.

Maria Hamali, Athens



Students attending lecture, 2008

The students extended their knowledge

Year	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	Total %
very often	4	5	5	10	4	6	8	24,2%
often	5	12	13	12	13	12	8	43,3%
sometimes	11	3	6	7	11	7	2	27,1%
seldom	3	1	0	0	2	1	1	4,6%
never	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0,57%

The academic program reflected the students' expectations

Year	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	Total %
Yes	10	12	10	16	16	15	9	52,69%
It was better	2	7	11	9	9	4	9	30,53%
It was worse	11	4	2	3	3	4	1	16,7%

"An ongoing dialogue on ancient drama"

I joined the activities of the *European Network of Research & Documentation of Performances of Ancient Greek Drama* in Epidaurus in 2003 as a student and in 2005 as an organiser. In December of the same year I organised the three-day symposium "Staging of Classical Drama around 2000" at the Institute for Classical Studies in Prague. Many graduate students I had

met in Epidaurus visited Prague to continue an ongoing dialogue on ancient drama. Some of the outcomes of this dialogue are presented – in an expanded form – in the symposium proceedings *Staging of Classical Drama around 2000*, which I co-edited with Alena Sarkissian for Cambridge Scholars Publishing in 2007.

Pavλίνα Šípová, Prague

The non-academic program reflected the students' expectations

Year	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	Total %
Yes	4	12	13	12	12	16	11	48,78%
It was better	2	9	7	14	13	4	6	33,53%
It was worse	14	2	2	3	3	3	2	17,68%

“Epidaurus is the heart from which these arteries emerge”

My experience of the summer course in Epidaurus has certainly been life-changing. I first came as a student in 2002, for the inaugural course, and it has been my great fortune to be involved as an organiser every year since. The course has become – for many people – an integral part of the calendar, and I have been delighted to see its development into such a fruitful site of interdisciplinary and international exchange. Relationships formed in Lygourio have strengthened and gone on to produce meetings, conferences, publications, and even performances! Not bad for two weeks of the year spent in rural Greece... There is something very special in the air in the deme of Asklepieion. I think it no accident that so much creativity, rigour, enthusiasm and joy emerges in people who spend time there.

Various paths have opened for me thanks to my frequent visits to Argolida – they have led me from Dublin to Tokyo, to Oxford, to Helsinki, to Prague and to my current sojourn in Los Angeles. For me, Epidaurus is the heart from which these arteries emerge, and I hold it – and particularly the people I've met there – very close to my own.

Conor Hanratty, LA

“Epidaurus has become less of a commonplace”

There is something special about the Ancient Theatre of Epidaurus compared to other theatrical spaces, or so the myth says. As a student I was trying to understand what makes the silence just before the beginning of the performance so unique there. My participation in the summer course in 2004 changed my relationship with the space as a spectator and as someone reflecting on the reception of Greek tragedy. I listened to actors describing how it feels to stand in the

middle of the orchestra before an audience of thousands; archeologists talking about the special requirements of the monument; directors who believed in the metaphysics of the space and directors who wanted to go against it, evoking the rebel humans who struggle with their gods in the Greek plays. Most importantly, I found myself in the *koilon* among students coming from different backgrounds and with different cultural references. Epidaurus has become less of a commonplace and more of an experience that I have in common with people living in different parts of the world. After all, we all shared the moment of anticipation in the silent theatre at the point where discussions had ceased before the beginning of the performance.

Eleftheria Ioannidou, Athens



Student in the Ancient Theatre of Epidaurus, 2004

The course changed the students' ideas about:

Year	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	Total %
the performance of ancient drama in present society	11	22	18	22	23	19	13	29,5%
the performance of ancient drama in the fifth century BC	3	15	6	8	7	7	6	14,3%
the relationship between scholarship and practice	7	21	9	10	14	9	10	18,4%
the relationship between classical philology and theatre studies	17	18	13	19	19	15	13	26,3%
theatre festivals and their connection to European identities/ ideologies						15	9	5,5%
representations of ancient drama and European identities/ ideologies						14	11	5,7%

"Travel around the world in... fifteen days"

I first attended the Epidaurus summer course in 2004 and I can still remember that those two weeks had been a real revelation for my studies in Greek theatre. Interesting workshops, lectures and discussions with theatre practitioners changed my point of view on the study of Greek drama; until then it was covered with a veil of sacrosanct antiquity, away from any innovating idea. But what I have kept in my heart more than anything else is the strong friendships I

have made with the students of the course. People from around the world who share the same love for ancient Greek theatre gathered in a small village of the Peloponnese is something really affecting by itself. Although since 2005 I have been spending there two busy weeks as a member of the organising team, my contact and everyday life with twenty foreign people from different places offers me the chance to "travel" around the world in... fifteen days!

Petros Vrachiotis, Athens

“During the two weeks, Dionysus spared no one”

To say that attendance at the Epidauros summer school is a “perspective-changing” (possibly, life-changing) event for an aspiring classicist is, in my view, not to overstate the case. Epidauros 2008 proved to be exactly that in my case. Two intensive weeks of deep-involvement with the process of exploring identities and ideologies through representations of Greek drama, was intensive indeed, even cathartic perhaps, but thankfully, a well-balanced programme and an equally well-balanced group of students (together with lots of laughter, excellent food and wine by the water’s edge) ensured that sanity was maintained (mostly!) at all times.

It also helped a great deal that the group leader had the agility/ability to hone in exactly on where the group was at any one time, and to veer between the scales of sanity/insanity required to maintain order at (mostly!) all times (what chaos there was, was equally enjoyable, and perhaps, necessary for balance to be maintained). Here, life imitated art: during the two weeks, Dionysus spared no one in casting his spell on all us *maenads* and *Pentheuses*, one way or another; thankfully, we all emerged with our heads intact. I would go back to the magic that was Epidauros (and the summer school) any day!

Bijon Sinha, Newtown, Wales

About the organisation

Year	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
In general	47,6% Satisfactory	91,3% Very Good	78,2% Very Good	57,6% Good	71,4% Very Good	50% Very Good	89,5% Very Good
Schedule	40,9% Satisfactory	63,6% Good	52% Good	59,2% Good	51,7% Good	57% Good	52,6% Very Good
Accommodation	54,5% Satisfactory	71,4% Very Good	42,8% Very Good	37% Good	48,2% Very Good	40,7% Very Good	42,1% Good
Food	40,9% Satisfactory	45,4% Very Good	45,4% Very Good	42,8% Good	60,7% Very Good	55,5% Very Good	57,8% Good
Personnel	36,6% Good	81,8% Very Good	95,6% Very Good	70,3% Very Good	78,5% Very Good	45,8% Good	89,4% Very Good
Lecture room and technical support	31,8% Satisfactory	59% Very Good	56,5% Very Good	55,5% Very Good	60,7% Very Good	53,8% Very Good	80% Very Good

Total number of evaluations submitted: **178**

Students who attended a summer course for the first time: **147**

Students who had attended a summer course before: **31**



News from Partners

Professor Cleo Protokhristova University of Plovdiv, Bulgaria

The Bulgarian team of *Arc-Net* at Plovdiv University organised the workshop "Who is Medea to us?" which took place on 16-17 April 2008 and discussed the reception of Euripides' tragedy in Bulgarian literature and scholarship as well as in the available translations and theatre productions. Participants included Diyana Dobрева, an actress and a director of an experimental *Medea* performance (2006); Nadezhda Sejkova, director of two performances of *Medea* (2002 and 2008); Svetoslav Ovcharov, the director of *Re-enacting Rehearsal*, the film reconstructing the 1978 performance staged by Luben Grojs, which has been perceived as a cult; the costume designer of that performance Elena Kamburova; composer Romyana Marton, the author of the mono-opera *Medea's Dreams*; theatre historian Antoniya Karakostova; theatre studies expert Iskra Nikolova, Plovdiv University lecturers Svetla Cherpokova and Cleo Protokhristova.

The purpose of the workshop was to elucidate the specificity of the Bulgarian reception of *Medea*, exceptionally intensive and overwhelmingly various in its concretisations. With its twelve translations (twenty-five editions) and its fifteen performances, the tragedy is an ambitious rival of the most intensively appropriated works of ancient Greek drama in Bulgaria: *Antigone* and *Oedipus the King*. An interesting fact from the Bulgarian reception of *Medea*, is the surprising capacity of the story to generate political meanings and its appropriations in the discourse of the press. Somewhat paradoxically, the figure of the tragic heroine

was well established there, even before the tragedy was staged in Bulgaria or translated into Bulgarian (Cf. Botev's publication *Narodat. Vchera, dnes i utre*, 1871 [The people. Yesterday, today, and tomorrow]). The plot is taken up in music (Romyana Marton's mono-opera); it is adapted in modern ballet (Maria Gredechlieva: *A Propos Medea*, 2001); even employed in landscape (Nikolaj Dyulgerov, 1930; Ivan Chernev, 1937) and photography (Lora Cholashka). Bulgarian literature has its own susceptibility to the plot.

The discussions were seeking an answer as to the reasons for the specific Bulgarian interest in Euripides' tragedy and the resultant motley pragmatics that manifests our perceptions of *Medea*.

A workshop proceedings volume is to be published as a follow up of the event.

**Professor Lorna Hardwick
Open University, UK**

The Reception of Classical Texts Research Project at the Open University is developing an international collaborative research project on "The Democratic Turn" in Classical Reception Studies. Since our many international collaborators are geographically scattered we are approaching this in three stages: first, some informal discussions now (of which this is the first message); secondly, an e-mail seminar in the autumn of 2009 to take discussion to the next stage and firm up themes and possible panel participants for the conference; thirdly, a conference in June 2010.

International conference: to be held in Milton Keynes on 18-20 June 2010 (please put the date in your diaries). This conference will be the culmination of the collaborative work that is being developed with colleagues in Australasia, Europe, South Africa and the US on the implications of the "Democratic Turn", in which classical texts, material culture and ideas seem in recent years to have become more widely used among all sections of society and cultural groups, rather than restricted to elites. The conference will include case studies, analysis of the implications for how classical culture is perceived and transmitted, evaluation of approaches, methods and scholarship and, especially, critical examination of the extent to which the impression of more "democratic" impact is, or is not, justified by the evidence. We expect the conference to lead to a substantial publication.

We shall aim to get funding to cover the accommodation costs for Plenary speakers and Panel chairs/discussants. However, please note that it is unlikely that we will be able to fund travel. This conference will be organised by Lorna Hard-

wick, Stephen Harrison, Carol Gillespie and Kate Nichols. There will also be some special sessions for graduate students (who will be welcome to attend the whole conference).

E-seminar: As a preparation for the conference we shall use our autumn 2009 electronic seminar to set up some preliminary discussions and help Conference Panel members to co-ordinate their contributions. More details about this soon but please contact Carol Gillespie as soon as possible if you would like to contribute (NO developed papers, just short pieces to open up ideas). Her e-mail is: C.A.Gillespie@open.ac.uk

Journal: As many of you will know the new Oxford University Press *Classical Receptions Journal* is now inviting articles to be submitted for its launch issue in November 2009. You can find out full details at www.crj.oxfordjournals.org. The *CRJ* will also commission some review essays on groups of publications or particular issues (please contact the editor, Lorna Hardwick, if you are interested in contributing to these.)

Best wishes to you all – and please get in touch with your ideas and suggestions for key research questions and Panel themes for the e-seminar and the conference.

The Open University is incorporated by Royal Charter (RC 000391), an exempt charity in England & Wales and a charity registered in Scotland (SC 038302)

Professor Freddy Decreus
Ghent University, Belgium

During the academic years 2008-2009, my research focused on three topics:

1. A four year's project (2007-2010), granted by the Research Foundation-Flanders, deals with the poststructuralist interpretation of Jacques Lacan's psychoanalysis. More specifically, it focuses on Greek mythology and tragedy, and the (totally new) ways that myth functions in non-essentialist contexts. Stepping stones in this research programme are Marcel Detienne's provocative statement that "myth does not exist" (at least not in the traditional sense, as an illusive literary category called "myth", *L'invention de la mythologie*, 1981) and Hans Blumenberg's notion of *Wirklichkeitsabsolutismus* (*Work on Myth*, 1985). Together with Lacan's theory on the Real, both Detienne and Blumenberg point at certain "blank maps" that cannot be structured and precede the *logos*.

2. Another poststructuralist approach is constituted by the application of Gilles Deleuze & Felix Guattari (*Anti-Oedipus*, 1972; *A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980) to certain post-dramatic performances. Especially, the "nomadic" theatre of the Societas Raffaello Sanzio and their ceaseless use of classics have been investigated (*Giulio Cesare*; *Oresteia*; *Tragedia Endogonidia*; *Divina Commedia*).

3. Situated half between the departments of Classics and Theatre Studies runs my project on Ritual Studies. It deals with theory (Artaud, Brook, Grotowski, Turner and Schechner) and discusses contemporary case studies (Terzopoulos, Raffaello Sanzio, Perceval, De Volder and Wayn Traub). Just published: *Ritueel theater of de droom over onze verloren oorsprong* (Gent, 2009, Academia Press, 302p).



Oresteia, Societas Raffaello Sanzio



**European Network of Research & Documentation
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