

Theatre in Modern and Contemporary Cyprus **[Το Θέατρο στη Νεότερη και στη Σύγχρονη Κύπρο]**

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It is a great pleasure to welcome the publication of the Proceedings of the conference *Theatre in Modern Cyprus*, which took place in Limassol, from October 30 to November 1, 2015. The conference was organized by the Cyprus Theatre Museum, the Bank of Cyprus Cultural Foundation, the Municipality of Limassol and the Cyprus Theatre Organization (THOC), in collaboration with the Graduate Program 'Theatre Studies' of the Open University of Cyprus. The conference was dedicated to the memory of the writer and philologist Giannis Katsouris (1935-2010), who is regarded as the father of Cypriot Theatre Studies.

The voluminous book is edited by Dr Andri H. Constantinou, Associate Professor at Frederick University, Dr Kaiti Diamantakou, Associate Professor at the Department of Theatre Studies of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, and Dr Leonidas Galazis, reviewer of literary courses of the Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus. It gathers numerous contributions from theatre experts and is a treasure trove of information and theoretical reflection on the subject of theatre in Cyprus and its place in the modern international theatrical scene. The book constitutes the 'statutory act of a distinctive Cypriot theatre studies discipline', to reproduce the apt expression of the professor emeritus of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Walter Puchner, in the relevant foreword to the volume. The proceedings are part of the series 'Theatrologica' directed by Professor Puchner and were published in 2020 by Herodotus Publications in collaboration with the Cyprus Theatre Museum.

In the editorial note, Andri Constantinou and Kaiti Diamantakou provide an outline of the methodological parameters applied to their scientific work, as editors of the volume. It is followed by a preface by Professor Walter Puchner, offering a diagrammatic overview of Cypriot theatre, from the medieval Cypriot Passion Circle to the dialectal theatre of Cyprus and the modern institutions of Cypriot theatre. His main conclusion is that the 'small-scale' history of theatre in Cyprus is an integral

part of the 'larger' history of Modern Greek theatre and the even wider history of the European theatre.

This position dominates in the next chapter by Professor Puchner, entitled 'Theatre and Space: Small-Scale theatre studies (with special reference to Cyprus)'. This is one of the honorary keynote speeches of the conference, which serves as a general introduction to the broader topics of the volume. The chapter discusses the issue of spatiality and timeless locality through the prism of modern theatrical historiography. The case of theatre in Cyprus is representative of the emphasis that the historical approaches give to local stories, which are irreplaceable pieces in the larger mosaic of the theatre history of the Western World.

In the next chapter, which has emerged from the second honorary keynote speech of the conference, professor emeritus Savas Patsalidis also focuses on the concept of spatiality, national boundaries and locations in the age of globalisation. The title of the chapter is 'The theatre of "small" countries in the age of global empires', and it examines in detail aspects of the international cultural market, the cultural policy of the metropolitan centers compared to that of the small states of the periphery and seeks answers to key questions regarding the position of Greek or Cypriot theatre on the world theatrical map. In the end, the expectation for an inclusive theatre of humanity –and no longer a theatre of nations and states or subservient to the laws of the market– is expressed.

The main part of the volume is divided into five sections, developed around the following main issues: Cypriot drama: the beginnings, The younger generation of Cypriot playwrights, The theatre in Cyprus and Greece. A dialogue, Theatre, Society, Politics and Criticism and The reception of ancient Greek and foreign drama.

The first contribution of the section on the beginnings of Cypriot drama is signed by the co-editor of the volume Leonidas Galazis and focuses on the painstaking and systematic work of Giannis Katsouris on Cypriot playwriting. The tireless Cypriot theatre historian has collected more than 500 titles of works and has proceeded to a periodisation of modern drama, starting from 1869 until the end of the first decade of the 21st century.

Professor emeritus Chrysothemis Stamatopoulou-Vasilakou then presents, in a biographical study, two Cypriot sisters, both teachers and intellectuals, who embarked on theatrical writing in the second half of the 19th century. Sappho and Emilia Leontias developed a remarkable activity within the schools where they taught, writing plays and performing them with the participation of their students, but at the

same time they were active (especially the latter), in the field of theatrical translation, while contributing significantly to the issue of women's liberation. Remaining in the 19th century, the philologist and researcher Angelos Kyriacouides deals with the theatrical work and the general intellectual contribution of the physician and intellectual Ioannis Karageorgiades, while analyzing two of his historical dramas, as well as a fairy tale comedy.

Moving into the 20th century, Dr Katerina Karra studies the work of Loukis Akritas, who was active in Athens in the 1940s. Through her research, which is based mainly on indexing the press of the time, the portrait of the Cypriot writer is completed and at the same time new light is shed on the Athenian theatrical movement during the years of German Occupation and Resistance. The following article is penned by Ph.D. candidate Anthi G. Chotzakoglou, to develop her research around the Cypriot puppet shadow theatre performer Christodoulos Antoniadis Pafios and a handwritten screenplay focusing on the myth of Oedipus, which enriches his work. At the end of the chapter the reader can browse the pages of the manuscript.

In the next chapter, professor emeritus Kyriaki Petrakou delves into the ancient dramaturgy of Kypros Chrysanthis, a highly productive writer who dealt with many literary genres, always with a dominant Cypriot theme, and at the same time distinguished himself as a theatre critic. Continuing this in-depth Cypriot dramaturgy, the architect, director and actress Angela Constantinidou analyzes the presence and function of the traditional Cypriot residence in a number of Cypriot plays, concluding that the Cypriot folk drama is a first-class source of information regarding the rural architecture of the island.

Many contributions revolve around the younger generation of Cypriot playwrights, which is the broad theme of the next section of the volume. Dr Efsevia Chasapi-Christodoulou examines the creative versions of the myth of Pygmalion and Prometheus in the work of the Cypriot writer and playwright Panos Ioannides. Dr Eleni Gkini raises the issue of the perception of historical memory in the dramaturgy of Giorgos Neophytou and Vassilis Katsikonouris. In the next contribution, associate professor and co-editor of the volume Kaiti Diamantakou turns her attention to the innovative dramatic writings of Antonis Georgiou and explores his sources, drawn from mythology, history, literature, theatre, cinema, as well as from collective memory.

The playwriting of Charalambos Giannou is the subject of the contribution of the associate professor and co-editor of the volume Andri Constantinou, who focuses on his idiosyncratic theatrical writing that goes beyond the narrow limits of Cypriot or

Greek drama production, competing for a place in the large family of modern European drama. At the same time, interesting documentary elements are presented, which mark the stage life of these dramatic works. In the same thematic context, theatre director Dr Magdalena Zira attempts to introduce us to contemporary Cypriot drama, through representative works, which were distinguished in events and institutions, and to construct a first typology of their topics.

In the next, fourth part of the volume, the dialectical relationship of Cyprus and Greece in the field of theatre is explored. The contribution of associate professor Konstantina Ritsatou centers on the performances of the actor Konstantinos S. Prevelis in Cyprus, examined within a wider tradition of tours or visits of Greek theatrical companies to the island at the end of the 19th century. The author tries to trace the artist in the murky landscape of the largely unexplored theatrical life and activity in 19th century Cyprus. More generous will prove to be the primary sources of the first decades of the 20th century, as evidenced by the contribution of Ph.D. candidate Kostas Karasavvidis, who studies the appearances of the 'Nea Skini' troupe of Fürst, Myrat, Rosan and Louis in Limassol, Larnaca and Nicosia, during the 'excellent season' of the spring of 1931. The study shows that Cyprus was established as a major stop for tours and visits of the Greek troupes of the time.

In her paper, associate professor Barbara Georgopoulou focuses her interest on the activity of the Cypriot troupe 'Prometheus' and the invaluable contribution of two important theatrical personalities, Adamantios Lemos and Mary Giatra, in the renewal of its repertoire, the professional empowerment of its members, its gradual establishment and the wide dissemination of its activity inside and outside the island. Respectively, professor of Theatre Studies Konstantza Georgakaki presents the action of a Cypriot theatre company in Athens in the 1950s. This is the 'Kypriako Teatro', the first Cypriot troupe that dares to try its hand outside the island, in a demanding theatrical market, such as that of Athens at the time, in fact emphasizing the elements of its specific locality, such as folklore themes and the idiomatic recitation of dialect speech.

In the next contribution, Dr Eleni Doundoulaki offers an approach to the activity of an international star of lyric theater, the Cypriot baritone John Modenos, who distinguished himself by performing major roles in the international opera scene and was active as a protagonist and artistic director of the Greek National Opera. Another Cypriot artist, who distinguished himself on a Greek state stage, is the subject of the contribution of associate professor Sophia Felopoulou, who examines the artistic

career of the Cypriot director Evis Gabrielides at the National Theater of Northern Greece. His work spans the period 1978 to 2007 and includes directing and translating highly successful performances, with Menander's 'The Girl from Samos' as its highlight.

The political and social dimensions of the theatre in Cyprus are analyzed in the next section of the volume, which contains numerous related thematic contributions. The theatrical columns of Cypriot educational journals are collected and presented by PhD candidate Maria Andr. Spyropoulou. Dr Eleni Petritsi sheds light on aspects of colonial British cultural policy in Cyprus during the period 1940-1970 and evaluates its consequences. Ph.D. candidate Marina Athanasiou discusses amateur theatre in Cyprus during the critical years 1955-1974, which was inextricably linked to the dramatic historical events of the period (Liberation Struggle, Independence, Coup, Turkish Invasion). Of particular interest are the paragraphs discussing the amateur theatre of the Turkish Cypriot community, the Armenian community and the Maronite community respectively.

Moving on to the Cypriot diaspora, Dr Styliani Keramida observes the action of the Cypriot Theatro Technis in London, a robust theatrical organisation that has been operating since 1957, constituting an important chapter of the Cypriot theatre. Dr Panagiota Sotirchou then takes the discussion back to dramaturgy, in order to look for aspects of immigration representations in Greek Cypriot drama of 1960-1974. Actress and playwright Vasiliki Andreou tackles the issue of actors' education in Cyprus in her study, in which she attempts a flashback to its history. The theatrical poster in Cyprus and its function as a tool of intervention in the visual culture of the island as well as of political expression forms the topic of discussion of the next authors, stemming from the field of Journalism and Mass Media Emilios Charalambides, assistant professor at Frederick University, and Christiana Karayianni, lecturer at the same institution. In their research, selected representative posters of the Cyprus Theatre Organization from four different periods of the history of the institution are analyzed.

There follows an interesting study by professor Yannis Leontaris, who approaches the case of the iconic performance of the documentary theatre production 'Forget-me-not', presented in Cyprus and abroad in 2010 and 2011, and attempts to interpret the levels of its experiential and intellectual reception by the audience in proportion to the degree of awareness of the historical memory and the political events that the play deals with. An in-depth overview of contemporary theatre practice and cultural policy in 21st century Cyprus is provided by the contribution of associate professor

Avra Sidiropoulou. All aspects of the Cypriot theatrical activity of the 21st century are examined: institutions, drama, artistic groups and performers, theatrical education, ideological and social dimensions, major performances.

Modern Cypriot dramaturgy also lies at the centre of Sotiris Theocharides' and Emilios Charalambides' joint paper, both at Frederick University, in the light of the shifts in its subject matter around the central axis of the traumatic experience of the Invasion. The section closes with the study by assistant professor Zoe Ververopoulou, who examines contemporary theatrical criticism in Cyprus and evaluates its practices through a thorough research in print and online press.

The last part of the volume is dedicated to the reception of ancient Greek and foreign drama in modern and contemporary Cyprus. Elena Christophorou (UNIC online) in the first study of the section examines the teaching of ancient Greek drama in the Cypriot educational system and the ideological implications of the integration of ancient Greek tragedy in school activities. It is followed by a paper by playwright Antonis Georgiou (MA Theatre Studies), who investigates the reception of Euripides' 'Medea' on the Cypriot stage, starting with the amateur performances of 1940 to the present day. In a similar vein, music in contemporary ancient drama productions is examined by Dr Angeliki Zachou, with a special case study of the work of the composer Michalis Christodoulidis, who has been for many years a regular collaborator of the Cyprus Theater Organization and especially of the director Nikos Charalambous.

The presence of ancient drama in the Pancyprrian School Theatre Games is the subject of the next contribution, signed by Dr Neophyta Kyprianou. Her study offers quantitative data in order to document the pedagogical function of ancient drama and its central position in the performances of this remarkable state institution. The next study, by Aspasia Skouroumouni Stavrinou, focuses on the dominant visual element in the production of Euripides' 'Hecuba', staged by the Cypriot director Magdalena Zira. The performance is analyzed in detail, while the photographic material that accompanies the text allows us to visualize the detailed descriptions.

The reception of the American drama in Cyprus is discussed by Dr Maria Hamali, in an attempt to compare it with the corresponding reception of American repertoire on the Modern Greek stage. In this context, the author surveys the performances presented initially by the Greek theatre companies visiting Cyprus and then the relatively late introduction of this repertoire to the permanent theatrical stages of the island. Dr Christakis Christofi, in the last article of the volume, studies the introduction of Sam-

uel Beckett's drama in the Cypriot theatrical scene, pointing out that it too develops with a relative lag and to a cautious reception from the Cypriot theatrical audience.

The volume concludes with summaries of the contributions in English.

The voluminous book *Theatre in Modern Cyprus* brings rich and multifarious fruits concerning a subject matter that is approached with such completeness and multiplicity for the first time. It offers the theatrical community a valuable legacy of sources, information, and critical approaches and is expected to become a reference work for any further research and publication on the subject of theatre in Cyprus. This volume strengthens the position of Cypriot theatre studies in the Greek and international academic field, while upgrading the role and contribution of the theatre of a small country on the world stage. Finally, it is worth praising the exemplary work of the team that edited the volume, Andri Constantinou, Kaiti Diamantakou and Leonidas Galazis, who were confronted with 38 studies, 640 pages and more than 800 bibliographic references!

Avra Xepapadakou