

**Cyprus Theatre Organisation 1971 – 2021.  
Half a Century of Theatre. An Entire World.  
[Θεατρικός Οργανισμός Κύπρου 1971 – 2021.  
Μισός Αιώνας Θέατρο. Ένας Κόσμος Ολόκληρος.]**

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This volume can be viewed as a continuation of previous works edited by the Cyprus Theatre Organisation: (a) *Cyprus Theatre Organisation, the First Ten Years 1971-1981*, Nicosia 1982 [Θεατρικός Οργανισμός Κύπρου, Τα Πρώτα Δέκα Χρόνια 1971-1981, Λευκωσία 1982], (b) *1971-1996, 25 Years of THOC*, Nicosia n.d. [1971-1996, 25 Χρόνια ΘΟΚ, Λευκωσία χ.χ.] and (c) *Scenes – Cyprus Theatre Organisation*, Nicosia 2000 [Σκηνές – Θεατρικός Οργανισμός Κύπρου, Λευκωσία 2000], in order to celebrate its existence and evidence its cultural contribution to the Cypriot society throughout time. At the same time it creates a collective testimony regarding the actions and the people that have founded and supported the state theatre. The authors of the book attempt to reproduce the history of THOC, while paying tribute to its key personalities and crucial moments, and to its repertoire. Apart from that, the book aims to give special attention to the role of THOC as a vehicle of theatre development in Cyprus. At the end of the book, an extensive list of all its performances, around five hundred (from 1971 until today), is available to the reader, as well as information about independent theatre groups that have been subsidized by THOC, followed with a full presentation of all the recipients of the THOC theatre prize. A big part of the book consists of photographs from the activities, rehearsals, performances and much more, taken by a great number of notable photographers.

The book begins with the welcoming notes of the President of the Republic, the Director of the Press and Information Office (since the book is the result of a collaboration between the two organisations, PIO and THOC), and the President of the Board of Directors of THOC, adding up to the celebration mood permeating the volume. All three emphasise the importance of culture in general and of theatre in particular for the society and express their enthusiasm for this magnificent tribute of a book. Four men who have served in the positions of director or artistic director

of THOC introduce the book and share their experience. The opening part ends with a very detailed summary of the book's contents by Antonis K. Petrides, the scientific editor of the whole effort, who highlights the most significant moments of this theatrical journey, described in the 504 pages of the volume.

Chapter A consists of the history of THOC and is divided in three sections. The first one is delivered by Andri H. Constantinou, who aspires to provide a thorough look into the 50 years of THOC, giving evidence for its founding and of all the procedures that have established and transformed its identity. Moving forward to its evolution, some major performances are described, and so are moments that have changed or improved the organisation.

The second section of Chapter A is dedicated to the grand moments, as the title suggests, historical performances and important developments in the structure of THOC. This part unfolds in 16 subchapters, written by ten different authors and deals, for instance, with the decision of the then young Republic on founding THOC and with *Agamemnon* (1971) -its first production- and with the struggle of THOC to decode and reflect on the experiences of the turbulent period of 1974. It refers briefly to the milestone productions of *Mother Courage* (1977) and *The Suppliants* (1978). The following subchapters analyse six significant productions of THOC throughout the years (from 1975 until 2018). The selection has been made by the authors and strictly represent their opinion, leaving out, I dare say, far more interesting and important productions that do not seem to have merited further attention and detailed mentioning.

Furthermore the reader finds out about the creation and activity of the Experimental Stage of the Organisation, hosted in Agios Andreas' Market between 2001 and 2011, about the founding of the New Stage of THOC, about the need and the decision of having a Theatre Development Section, about the building of the new THOC theatre, about the ending of the permanent company and the establishing of the position of the artistic director, about the Children's Stage and the Stage 018, about the involvement of THOC in the European Theatre Convention and, finally, about the history of the institution of the THOC theatre prizes.

The third section of Chapter A presents 46 personalities that indelibly marked the history of the Cypriot theatre. Here one can enjoy black and white portraits and read a small curriculum vitae of a series of artists, mostly actors and actresses, directors, stage and costume designers. A great number of people is surprisingly absent from this part of the book, for example playwrights and other members of the company of

THOC that served the organisation for decades. The criteria for the specific selection are not clear.

Moving forward to Chapter B, which discusses the repertoire of THOC, five indicative subchapters are designed in order to accurately approach the different categories of plays that the organisation has produced: ancient drama, international repertoire, modern Greek theatre, Cypriot dramaturgy, and children's and teenagers' theatre. Each subchapter analyses thoroughly every domain, giving detailed information about all the productions and illustrating the vast range of performances with a great number of historical photographs.

Chapter C presents, and analyses at the same time, the many aspects of the theatre evolution, as it is approached by the organisation. This section is divided in ten passages, aiming to demonstrate the multiple activities of the organisation towards this specific direction. Apart from an introductory chapter which gives the historical framework and suggests the goals, strategies and structure of the theatre development department of THOC, the next topic deals with the philosophy and the ways in which THOC subsidises other theatre companies. The importance of the Cypriot dramaturgy as a main focal point of the organisation follows, seen in a historical perspective. In this subchapter the programme PLAY is described, as well as its achievements since its application. Moving forward the reader has the opportunity to glean information about a number of activities organised by THOC that aim to familiarise students and others with the art of the theatre, such as the theatre school festival, theatre workshops (offered, for example, to teachers) and the amateur theatre festival. These actions intend to train the younger generations as theatre-goers and also to give them the chance to personally experience the magic of the theatre, thus creating future theatre professionals. A tribute to the Theatre Museum of Cyprus in Limassol comprises the next part in Chapter C, all the efforts of its creation are documented, as well as the milestone of 2015: the first scientific conference about theatre in Cyprus, that recorded a big number of participations and stated the constitutional act of the Cypriot Theatre Studies, as Professor Walter Puchner proclaimed in his keynote speech. Later on, the importance of the involvement of THOC in international openings is outlined, for instance the programme Young Europe under the auspices of the European Theatre Convention. The active participation of THOC, starting from 1991 until today, at the Prague Quadrennial, which is considered to be one of the most significant set design festival in the world, is also stated. Chapter C closes with a note on

the special circumstances the pandemic has forced on the organisation, which kept producing and, by doing so, kept up the spirit throughout the Cypriot society.

An Appendix constitutes Chapter D, first by giving all the information the reader needs regarding all the performances of the organisation throughout the 50 years of its existence. Starting from 1971 until 2021, counting 50 theatre periods, this detailed list is accompanied by a characteristic photograph for each production. The next big section of this chapter is dedicated to an analytical list of subsidisations the organisation has given to independent companies, from 1979 until 2020. The next part of this section presents all the artists who won the Theatre Prizes THOC (from 1999 until 2021) in all different categories. Under the title 'The People Backstage', all the names of the members of the Board of Directors, as well as the names of the members of the Artistic Committee, are listed, next to the names of all the directors of THOC. Finally, the personnel that worked but also the people still working for the organisation are mentioned, followed by a list of the authors of the texts of this volume and a list of the photographers who provided the illustration for and embellished the edition.

The positive aspects of the album lie in the multiplicity of its approach towards all the activities of THOC that reach every possible spectrum. The work achieved is tremendous and the reader enjoys a part of Cypriot culture history at its best. All the essays have a scientific background which makes the different aspects of the book fascinating, while discovering the plethora of the work done. It is a spectacular documentation of Cypriot society that needs to find a home in every educational institution, because it serves the cause of giving insight about this grand cultural theatrical tradition but also exhibits the synthesis of the various sectors that are engaged with theatre and its subdivisions. The book is suitable for students and researchers that are interested in the relevant fields, but also for those who aspire to go back in time and remember again or learn anew about the bright theatrical moments of the Cyprus Theatre Organisation.

The less positive aspects that I personally detected have been mentioned in this review. I would also include the absence of a part about the critics of the various performances by THOC. In order to embrace the whole impact of a production, especially of some exceptional ones, I believe the reviews of the few trained spectators that express their written opinion would have been an extra asset to this volume. I would also have preferred a short curriculum vitae for all the authors who have contributed to this book instead of a title referring to their occupation. Regarding the edition, I would comment on the large size of the volume (the dimensions are 24,6X33,1 cm),

which makes it a bit difficult to deal with, but the reader could alternatively use the option of its electronic version. The choice of the photographs selected in order to illustrate the different sections of the book is not always ideal, I believe that not all photographs are representative enough for what has been achieved.

To complete this review, the volume *Cyprus Theatre Organisation 1971 – 2021. A Half-Century of Theatre. An Entire World.* is an excellent choice for those who want to discover the beautiful pages of this island's culture. It is highly recommended for everyone as it opens doors into new spaces, unknown to many people. A future English version of the book is highly recommended.

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