

# National Theatre of Greece

Saturday and Sunday, September 20–21, 2003  
Greek Theatre

## Medea

Translation	Stratis Pascalis
Director	Stathis Livathinos
Set and Costume Design	Eleni Manolopoulou
Music	Theodoros Abazis
Choreography	Mariela Nestora
Lighting	Alekos Anastasiou
Special Co-operators	Irina Promptova, Andrey Shchukin
Assistant Director	Stratis Panourios
Assistant Set Designer	Angeliki-Vassiliki Sideri
Nurse	Maria Savvidou
Tutor	Giorgos Dampasis
Medea	Tamilla Koulieva
Creon	Dimitris Imellos
Jason	Ioannis Mavritsakis
Aegeus	Vassilis Andreou
Messenger	Aris Troupakis
Medea's Children	Nikolas Linaritakis-Liodakis, Ioannis Bilianis
Women's Chorus	Katerina Alexaki, Margarita Amarantidi, Serafita Grigoriadou, Aimilia Zafeiratou, Kora-Maii Karvouni, Alexia Kokkali, Despoina Kourti, Vera Lardi, Alexandra Lerta, Lilly Meleme, Eleni Boza, Mary Bouga, Ioanna Papadaki, Natalia Stylianou, May Channa
Men's Chorus	Vassilis Andreou, Stathis Grapsas, Giorgos Dampasis, Dimitris Imellos, Nikos Kardonis, Panagiotis Bougiouris, Nikolas Papagiannis, Dimitris Papanakilaou, Aris Troupakis
Musicians	Spyrogiannis Alexandratos, Tasos Drampalis, Spyros Manesis

Tonight's program will be performed without intermission.

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Like many ancient Greek dramas, Euripides' *Medea* depicts a domestic conflict following a series of epic adventures and heroic triumphs. The hero Jason, in order to secure the throne of Iolcus, seized

from his father Aeson by the villainous Pelias, embarks on a quest to capture the famed Golden Fleece of Colchis, a region on the eastern coast of the Black Sea. He builds the first ship, Argo, and assembles a famous crew of heroes, the Argonauts. Jason and the Argonauts endure various hardships and achieve various successes (several of which are mentioned by Medea's nurse in the opening monologue of the play) before reaching Colchis, where they face further trial, as the king Aeëtes, Medea's father, reluctant to yield the Golden Fleece to this band of upstart Greek youths, sets a test for Jason. He must plough a field with a team of fire-breathing bulls, sow the field with dragon's teeth, and slay the fierce warriors who will then spring up from the earth. Jason succeeds, but only thanks to the magical powers of the princess Medea, who has fallen in love with him. It is Medea, in fact, who secures the Golden Fleece for the Argonauts by bewitching (in some versions, even killing) the sleepless dragon who guards it. The Argonauts flee from Colchis, carrying with them not only the Golden Fleece but also Medea; Aeëtes and his men pursue them across the Black Sea and up the Danube. Again it is Medea, whose name is generally associated with the Greek verb *mêdesthai* (to "devise" or "plan"), who contrives their escape: she lures her brother Apsyrtus to his death and scatters his limbs at sea to delay the pursuing Colchians. Once back in Iolcus, Medea and Jason plot a gruesome revenge against the usurper Pelias; beguiled by Medea's persuasion and magic, the daughters of Pelias butcher their own father with the vain hope of restoring his youth. Medea and Jason flee and take refuge in Corinth. This is the point at which Euripides' tragedy begins.

In Euripides' play, Jason, now an exiled hero without a kingdom, has eagerly accepted the offer from the Corinthian king Creon of his daughter in marriage, despite the fact that he and Medea are now married with two sons. Jason claims that the new marriage will benefit their family politically, but Medea remains unconvinced, especially since Creon orders that she be exiled along with her children. After securing a place of refuge for herself with Aegeus, king of Athens, Medea enacts a shocking vengeance, not only murdering Creon and his daughter by poisoning them but also slaughtering her own sons in order to cause the greatest possible pain to Jason and to leave him utterly lost.

The Athenian audience would have been familiar with the main outlines of the story of Jason and Medea, although many competing versions of the myth existed, and it was always expected that an epic poet or tragic playwright would find new twists and surprising angles even within traditional material. The most startling innovation introduced by Euripides appears to be the murder of the children by their own mother: in previous versions, it was the citizens of Corinth who killed them in retaliation for Medea's murder of their king and princess. But since the first production of Euripides' play (431 BCE), Medea has been forever associated with infanticide, and her character and motives are complex. From one perspective (taking Jason's view), she is a barbarian witch, a female intruder into the Greek civilized world, who, by her very nature, is unable to temper her jealousy and violent behavior with rational thought. From another (and this view seems to be that of the Corinthian women of the Chorus), she has been a loyal and devoted wife, who now finds herself rejected by an unfeeling husband, and is thus driven to the only forms of retaliation available to her, and only after intense deliberation and self-examination.

It may be impossible to reconcile fully these two views of Medea, and indeed we would expect audiences, both ancient and modern, to experience variable responses to her throughout the play. Medea shows many conflicting aspects within herself: she clearly is indeed a foreigner, and thus a likely object of suspicion and prejudice according to 5th-century Athenian attitudes. In Euripides' play, the typically Greek values of reason and self-control are repeatedly contrasted with the dark arts and emotional excess of the "barbarian" East. But Medea also invokes Greek gods and participates in Greek institutions: she has exchanged oaths with Jason, an act that symbolizes reciprocal relations between peers and is marked by the clasping of right hands. Likewise, she persuades Aegeus to be her ally through the rhetoric of Greek supplication and guest-friendship. Both of these acts compel us to reconsider her "barbarian" status as well as Jason's assertions of Greek cultural superiority, but at the same time they draw attention to the challenges that Medea's status as a woman presents. To an Athenian audience, especially, Medea's skill in persuasion and concealment (both generally regarded as dangerous female activities) are rendered even more threatening by her appropriation, also, of male spheres of action and language (she uses political

and military diction normally reserved for men) in a manner that recalls Clytemnestra in Aeschylus' *Oresteia*.

Above all, however, the characters that Euripides has created in *Medea* are larger than life: their strengths, their weaknesses, their complexities, and their struggles are all magnified. The mythic realm of Jason and Medea gives the playwright license to express their anxieties and passions to the fullest possible extent, a feat that he achieves through the techniques of the theater: music and dance (both features that many modern productions, unlike this one, tend regrettably to omit), poetic language, rhetorical brilliance, and visual spectacle. Greek tragedy, as it regularly pivots between the grand conflicts of the epic past and the political and domestic tensions of contemporary Athens, thus continues to exert an appeal and relevance that show no sign of fading today.

—Sonia Sabnis

Sonia Sabnis is a PhD candidate in the Classics department at UC Berkeley.

The National Theatre of Greece was founded in 1900 as the Royal Theatre by King George I. The Royal Theatre remained active for nine years, with Angelos Vlachos as artistic director. Then in 1930, it reopened as the National Theatre of Greece, with the poet Ioannis Gryparis as artistic director.

Since then, the primary objective of the company has been to revive ancient Greek drama. Its first productions of these works were held in the indoor theater at Agiou Konstantinou Street in Athens, but later the organization began to stage productions at the ancient theater of Epidaurus and at Herodion. The well-known Greek director Dimitris Rondiris was one of the first to work passionately in this revival, starting with productions of Sophocles' *Electra* (1936) and Euripides' *Hippolytus* (1937), both presented at Epidaurus. In 1955, the annual festival of ancient Greek drama began at Epidaurus; it continues to this day, attracting thousands of Greek and foreign spectators.

The current artistic director of the National Theatre of Greece, Nikos Kourkoulos, is one of Greece's leading actors. Under his direction, the company operates five stages, all dedicated to the very best ancient, classic, and modern theater. Kourkoulos has also taken over the renovation of the historic theater at Agiou Konstantinou Street.

The National Theatre of Greece, with its productions and international tours, has defined as its fundamental principle the belief that ancient Greek drama deals with vital intellectual questions still applicable to the problems of present and future times. A modern interpretation, therefore, while respecting the form of the ancient drama, must avoid the pitfalls of stilled revivals and convey the eternal message of the plays to a modern audience. For more than 70 years, the National Theatre of Greece has created its own theatrical tradition concerning ancient Greek drama as well as international and Greek classic and modern repertory. It continues to champion the eternal message of the Art of the Theater for an international audience.

Theodoros Abazis (music) was born in 1967 and studied piano and music theory at the National Conservatory in Athens. An Onassis Foundation scholarship allowed him to continue his composition studies under Tristan Keuris in 1993. From 1993 to 1995, he furthered his composition studies under Dimitris Terzakis. Abazis represented Greece in the 1991 European Organ Festival and at the 1996 cultural capital events in Copenhagen. In April 2000, he represented Greece in the BIG Turin 2000, a biennial event for emerging artists. Also in 2000, he founded—along with actresses G. Daliani, D. Saridaki, and M. Kallimani—the music-theater group Opera. Their first production, *Femme Savant*, was presented in April 2001, with *Koita me* (*Look at Me*), following in October 2002. Since 2001, Abazis has been teaching music at the Actors and Directors Workshop of the National Theatre of Greece.

Alekos Anastasiou (lighting) was born in Athens, and has studied electronics and cinema. Since 1984, he has worked as director of photography in various film and television projects. Since 1990, he has worked in theater as a lighting designer. Anastasiou has collaborated on 80 productions in Greece and abroad for directors including M. Volanakis, M. Lyberopoulou, and G. Lazanis. In

addition, he has designed lighting for 20 dance pieces, working with choreographers such as K. Michou, M. Tsouvala, and L. Santala.

Vassilis Andreou (Aegeus) was born in Cyprus in 1971, and graduated from Tzeni Karezi Drama School in 1999. He has performed as Malvolio in *Twelfth Night* (Actors Theatre, 1999), Don Adriano de Armado in *Love's Labor's Lost* (National Theatre of Greece, 2002), and in *An Endless Story: Greek Poetry of the 20th Century* (National Theatre of Greece, 2003). He has also appeared in Janin Meerapfel's film *Anna's Summer*.

Giorgos Dampasis (Tutor) was born in 1973 in Larisa, Greece, and graduated from the Kostas Kazakos Drama School in 1999. He has performed in *Twelfth Night* (Actors Theatre, 1999), Alexandros Papadiamantis' *Nostalgos* (Actors Theatre, 2001), *Love's Labor's Lost* (National Theatre of Greece, 2002), and *An Endless Story: Greek Poetry of the 20th Century* (National Theatre of Greece, 2003). He also participates in the Actors and Directors Workshop of the National Theatre of Greece.

Dimitris Imellos (Creon) was born in Athens. While he was a student of the law school of the University of Athens, he joined V. Diamantopoulos' theater workshop and later the D. Fotiadis Drama School. He has also studied theater in the Moscow Theatre Academy. As an actor, Imellos has worked with N. Triantafillidi in *The Snow Queen*, A. Kokkinou in *Iphigenia in Tauris*, S. Tsakiris in *Oedipus at Kolonus*, L. Vogiatzis in *The Persians*, G. Kimoulis in *Antigone*, and S. Livathinos in *The Illusion*, *Nostalgos*, *Love's Labor's Lost*, and *An Endless Story: Greek Poetry of the 20th Century*. He has also worked with S. Livathinos as assistant director for *Twelfth Night* (Actors Theatre) and *Avant la retraite* by T. Bernhardt (Praxis Theatre). Since 2001, he has taught in the Actors and Directors Workshop of the National Theatre of Greece. Imellos also teaches in the Drama School Iasmos. He has worked in cinema, and in 2001 won the Dimitris Horn Award for his performance in Tony Kushner's *The Illusion*, directed by Stathis Livathinos.

Tamilla Koulieva (Medea) was born in Moscow. She has studied theater direction at the Cultural Institute of Moscow and received a diploma in theater and cinema acting from the State Institute of Cinema of Moscow (VGIK). After receiving her master of fine arts degree, she taught educational development and improvisation based on Chekov's method of acting at the VGIK. She also has a diploma in piano from the State Musical School of Moscow. From 1986 until 1992, Koulieva worked at the Ousatsofka theatrical workshop in Moscow. Since 1992, she has lived and worked in Greece. Koulieva has had leading roles in the films *The Trap*, *The Secrets of the Koran*, *A Little Devil*, *Night Dance* (awarded the Golden Alexandros Award in the International Film Festival of Thessaloniki, 1992), *Vassiliki* (awarded First National Award for Best Movie of the Year, 1998), *Tomorrow We'll Know* (awarded First Award for Best Actress in the International Film Festival of Alexandria), *A Sea Apart*, and *Tomorrow is Another Day*. In Greece, she has performed on the stage as Seta in *Beast on the Moon*, *Vergilia in Coriolanus*, *The Orchestra* (under her own direction), *Grace in Faith Healer*, and *The Trojan Women* and *The Woods*. Koulieva has also acted for television. Since 1992, she has taught acting and improvisation in various drama schools. From 2000–2003, she taught at the Actors and Directors Workshop of the National Theatre of Greece.

Stathis Livathinos (director) was born in Athens and graduated from the School of Drama of Pelos Katselis and from the department of English literature of the University of Athens. He worked as an actor for the Greek Popular Theatre of Manos Katrakis from 1981–1983. He then studied theater direction at the Moscow State Institute of Theatre from 1984–1990 and was awarded the Moscow Critics Award for his performance in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* in the Mayakofski Theatre in 1990.

Livathinos has directed *Dying As a Country* by D. Dimitriadis, *Little Tragedies* by Alexander Pushkin, *Kazanova* by M. Tsvetaeva, *Eleonora Douze* by Gigo de Kiara (with the famous Greek actress Aspasia Papathanasiou), *The Isle of Slaves* by Marivaux, *Beast on the Moon* by Richard Kalinoski, *Twelfth Night* and *Love's Labor's Lost* by William Shakespeare, *Avant le retraite* by

Thomas Bernhard, *The Illusion* by Tony Kushner, *Les Romanesques* by Edmond Rostand, *Nostalgos* by A. Papadiamantis, *An Impossible Meeting* by Paul Bartz, *Glengarry Glen Ross* by David Mamet, and *An Endless Story: Greek Poetry of the 20th Century*.

Livathinos has taught the directing workshops organized by the department of theater studies at the University of Patras (1997–1999), and has also taught directing and acting in the department of postgraduate studies at Harvard University (American Repertory Theatre). Since 2001, he has been the director of the Experimental Stage of the National Theatre of Greece.

Eleni Manolopoulou (set and costume design) was born in Larisa in 1972 and studied interior decorating and jewel designing at the Vakalo School from 1989 to 1992. She continued studies at the Athens School of Fine Arts until 1997, where she attended the set designing workshop of Giorgos Ziakas. Manolopoulou taught set design in the Embros drama school from 1998–2000. She has worked with the most important Greek directors and choreographers on productions such as *Angela*, *Beast on the Moon*, *The Illusion*, *Glengarry Glen Ross*, *Twelfth Night*, *Crime and Punishment*, *Agamemnon*, *The Orchestra*, *Astronaut's Diet*, *The Backgammon Game*, *The Diary of the Sand*, *Love's Labor's Lost*, *Woyzeck*, *Six Persons in Search of An Author*, and *Proof*. She has also worked on St. Niziris' film *Wrong Century*.

Ioannis Mavritsakis (Jason) is a graduate of the National Theatre of Greece's Drama School (1986). He has worked with the National Theatre of Greece, and the Open Theatre, where he performed in *A Midsummer's Night Dream*, *Oresteia*, and other plays. Mavritsakis has also performed with the theater group Theama, appearing in *Victor*, *Tis Pity She's A Whore*, and *Roberto Zucco*. Since 2001, he has been working with the National Theatre of Greece, performing in *Love's Labor's Lost* and *An Endless Story: Greek Poetry of the 20th Century*.

Mariella Nestora (choreography) was born in Athens and studied biology and human molecular genetics in London before taking up studies of contemporary dance and choreography at the London Contemporary Dance School and visual design for dance at the Laban Centre London. She worked as a freelance dancer and as a lighting designer for If Co., Hanna Gillgren & Co., M. Ruegg, and Allmouth. In 1996, she founded YELP danceco. Nestora has also choreographed for film, video, and theater. She has worked on theatrical productions of *The Romantics*, *Nostalgos*, *Love's Labor's Lost*, and *An Endless Story: Greek Poetry of the 20th Century*, all with director Stathis Livathinos. Since 2001, she has been teaching movement at the Actors and Directors Workshop of the National Theatre of Greece.

Stratis Panourios (assistant director) was born in Lesbos, Greece, in 1967, and graduated from the National Theatre of Greece's Drama School in 1993. In 1991, he was awarded the prize for the Best Greek Poem and participated in the Young Greek Playwright's Workshop, organized by the Greek Playwrights Association. He also worked on the production of *Orestia*; Fragments presented by graduates of the National Theatre of Greece's Drama School in Greece and abroad. As an actor-dancer, he was a member of the dance groups of Sophia Spyratou and Zouzou Nikoloudi. Panourios has participated in several children's productions by the National Theatre of Greece, including *Sleeping Beauty*, *Koppelia*, *Love for Three Oranges*, *The Char With the Long Beard*, and *Odyssey*. He has also taken part in several productions by Greek and foreign playwrights, including V. Ziogas, D. Solomos, Chr. Thessalonikefs, R. Abbot, K. Mourselas, and I. Drosos. In 1998, the theater group En Plo presented Panourios' play *Psimithies*. Since 2001, he has been participating in the Actors and Directors Workshop of the National Theatre of Greece. He also worked as an assistant director in the production *An Endless Story: Greek Poetry of the 20th Century*.

Stratis Pascalis (translation) was born in 1958 and is considered one of the most important poets of his generation. In 2003, his poems were published under the title *Somebody Else's Words*. He has written many articles, critiques, and essays, and has translated many foreign writers, poets, and playwrights, including Shakespeare, Racine, Rostand, and Euripides. Pascalis has been awarded many prizes, and his poems have been translated into several languages.

Maria Savvidou (Nurse) was born in Kavala, Greece, and has been a member of the Theatre Workshop of the Institution of Friends of the Arts in Kavala, participating in a number of its productions. She studied accordion and harmonium at the Conservatory in Kavala and graduated from the Kostas Kazakos Drama School in 2000. Savvidou participated in the International Festival of Drama Schools Istropolitana in Bratislava with the production of Euripides' Bacchantes, directed by S. Peppas. She has performed in The Petty Bourgeois, Love's Labor's Lost, An Endless Story: Greek Poetry of the 20th Century, and The Coat, the last three with the National Theatre of Greece.

Aris Troupakis (Messenger) was born in Athens in 1976 and graduated from the drama school of the Greek Art Theatre I in 1996. He has performed with the Greek Art Theatre in Pluto, The Sticks of the Blind, Alcestis, The Killing Game, and Dixi of Animam Levav. He has worked on numerous productions with the Theatre of the South, the theater group Krama, the Portuguese Theatre Company, and the theater group Petaei. With the National Theatre of Greece, he has performed in Love's Labor's Lost and An Endless Story: Greek Poetry of the 20th Century. Troupakis also participates in the Actors and Directors Workshop of the National Theatre of Greece.

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