

ECHOES OF GREECE

15th October 2024 - Pireos 138

The isles of Greece! the isles of Greece
Where burning Sappho loved and sung,
Where grew the arts of war and peace,
Where Delos rose, and Phœbus sprung!
Eternal summer gilds them yet,
But all, except their sun, is set.

Lord Byron

Two Philhellenes: Lord Byron and Tom Smail.

The former long dead, but fondly remembered still and honoured throughout Greece.

The latter, a relative newcomer, but one for whom Greece has been transformative.

What is it about this land that so captures the hearts of outsiders?

Commemorating the bicentenary of Lord Byron's death, author Sofka Zinovieff will give an introductory talk which will seek to address this question, while examining the legacy of George Gordon Noel Byron.

The theme of the old and the new will be pursued for the rest of the evening through music. Three movements from three of the great composers of Byron's era - Beethoven, Schubert and Mendelssohn - will share the stage with three pieces by contemporary English composer Tom Smail.

These will include his setting of Samuel Beckett's last poem and, at last - after cancellations and the pandemic - the world premiere of his sonata for cello and piano.

The concert will end with another world premiere, his latest commission:

Morias, for large ensemble.

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ΜΟΥΣΕΙΟ ΜΠΕΝΑΚΗ
BENAKI MUSEUM

Programme

Introductory talk

Sofka Zinovieff

Schubert: 1st movement of the Sonata for Arpeggione and Piano in A minor, D. 821 (1824)

Alexis Karaiskakis-Nastos (cello) / Noam Greenberg (piano)

Smail: The Hazard of the Die (sonata for cello and piano) (2016) (World Premiere)

Alexis Karaiskakis-Nastos (cello) / Noam Greenberg (piano)

INTERVAL

Beethoven: 1st movement of Violin Sonata No.5 in F major, Op.24 ('Spring') (1801)

Faidon Miliadis (violin) / Noam Greenberg (piano)

Smail: What Is the Word (Beckett) for soprano, mezzo, cello and narrator (2012)

Kyriaki Kountouri (conductor) / Jonathan Brown (narrator) / Fanie Antonelou (soprano) /

Theodora Baka (mezzo-soprano) / Alexis Karaiskakis-Nastos (cello)

Mendelssohn: 2nd movement of Piano Trio No.1 in D minor, Op.49 (1839)

Faidon Miliadis (violin) / Alexis Karaiskakis-Nastos (cello) / Noam Greenberg (piano)

Smail: Morias - for five strings, clarinet, three percussionists and santouri (2023)

(World Premiere)

Performers

Conductor: Kyriaki Kountouri

Speaker: Sofka Zinovieff

Narrator: Jonathan Brown

Piano: Noam Greenberg

Soprano: Fanie Antonelou

Mezzo-soprano: Theodora Baka

Violin I: Faidon Miliadis

Violin II: Kostas Panagiotidis

Viola: Manos Gouvelis

Cello: Alexis Karaiskakis-Nastos

Double Bass: Ioannis Babaloukas

Clarinet: Kostas Tzekos

Santouri: Angelina Tkatcheva

Percussion: Babis Taliadouros, Nikos Metallinos, Andreas Farmakis

Programme notes

Schubert (1797-1828): Sonata for Arpeggione and Piano in A minor (D. 821) (1824)

This sonata was written shortly after his song cycle and is probably one of Schubert's finest works.

Scored for an instrument which no longer exists, the fretted, six-stringed arpeggione - then known as bowed guitar, violoncello guitar or guitarre d'amore - is connected to the viol family and enjoyed a brief popularity in the 1820's. Schubert's piece, dedicated to the virtuoso Vincenz Schuster, was written a few years before his death in 1828. But it had long gone out of fashion by the time it was posthumously published, in 1871.

Today, the piece is heard almost exclusively in transcriptions for cello or viola.

Smail (b.1964): The Hazard of the Die (sonata for cello and piano) (2016) (World Premiere)

Commissioned by The Pennington Mellor Munthe Trust, with support from The JFR Charitable Trust

The piano is every bit the cello's equal in this piece, not merely an accompaniment.

It is a communion of two instruments, a conversation - and the conversation ranges far and wide: questioning, answering, remembering, lamenting, celebrating, shouting, whispering, furiously arguing and occasionally agreeing. Sometimes they listen politely; sometimes they talk over each other. It ends as it begins, in questioning uncertainty.

Beethoven (1770-1827): Violin Sonata No.5 in F major, Op.24 ('Spring') (1801)

Nine of Beethoven's ten sonatas for violin and piano were composed between 1797 and 1803, for his own performances with various violinists. In the Classical era such works were often described as sonatas for piano with violin accompaniment and Beethoven, though continuing the trend toward full partnership begun by Mozart, certainly wasn't about to undercut the presence of his own instrument. Op. 24 was completed in 1801 and was probably intended as a pair with Op. 23 - both were dedicated to the banker and amateur violinist, Count Moritz von Fries - yet somehow the sonatas were published separately, possibly because of an issue with paper size. The nickname "Spring" was not given by the composer, but it does evoke the pastoral and rippling quality of the opening melody.

Smail: What Is the Word (Beckett) for soprano, mezzo, cello and narrator (2012)

Commissioned by Susanne Kapoor

A setting of Samuel Beckett's last poem, this was premiered at the Kapoor Chamber Concert Series in 2012.

The poem brilliantly depicts the ageing poet struggling for clarity amidst the on-coming fog:

'glimpse', 'seem to glimpse', 'need to seem to glimpse'.

And in his search for 'the Word' - 'afaint afar away over there' - everywhere there is 'folly'.

It is tender and touching, but there is frustration and confusion. Smail takes the tenderness and the confusion and augments the frustration - anger seeps in, 'folly' becomes madness proper.

The cello is an extraordinarily versatile instrument and is perfect for conveying the full spectrum of emotions, from plangent contemplation and tenderness to frustrated questioning to exasperation and rage.

The two sopranos act as witnesses, observers, sympathisers, antagonisers.

They are Macbeth's witches, they are the departing muses, they are wisps of the poet's spirit.

Mendelssohn (1809-1847): Piano Trio No.1 in D major (Op.49) (1839)

Completed in 1839, the Piano Trio is one of Mendelssohn's most popular chamber works and is recognised as one of his greatest, along with his Octet, Op.20. But the piece had a previous incarnation: when it was first completed, Mendelssohn showed it to his composer friend Ferdinand Hiller, who admitted to finding some of the pianoforte passages 'somewhat old fashioned.' Mendelssohn rewrote the piano part, which in turn ended up lending the piece a progressive feel for its era. Schumann, upon hearing the Trio, declared Mendelssohn to be 'the Mozart of the nineteenth century, the brightest musician, who most clearly understands the contradictions of the age and is the first to reconcile them.'

Smail: Morias for five strings, three percussionists, clarinet and santouri (2023) (World Premiere)

Commissioned by Adam Munthe

Morias is a reflection of Tom's deep connection with the Peloponnese, inspired by its breathtaking landscapes and the vibrant fusion of its ancient and modern cultures. It is an embodiment of Tom's personal transformation through his Greek experiences. From his first visit in 2011, to making a home near Kardamyli in 2022, Tom's journey is interwoven with the essence of Greece, culminating in this poignant and powerful musical exploration.



Tom Smail - Composer

A composer of orchestral, chamber and choral works, opera and music for theatre and film.

Recent commissions and premieres include:

Music in the Marble, symphonic work (City of London Sinfonia, RCM)

Soon, chamber opera (Riverside Studios, Tête-à-Tête Festival)

Charade, for violin and piano (Casa dei Mezzo Festival, Crete)

A Winter's Tale (NLC Choir, Queen Elizabeth Hall)

Forgotten Voices of the Great War, WWI song cycle (Petworth Festival)

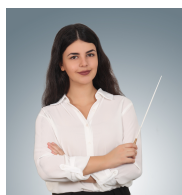
Thro' midnight streets (NLC Choir, Barbican)

Blue Electric, opera (Playground Theatre, London)

Samuel Beckett trilogy (Royal Court, West End, BAM, Barbican)

Recent documentaries include Gauguin (2019) (Director: Patricia Wheatley)

Recent films include Last Words (Director: Jonathan Nossiter) (selected at Cannes 2020).



Kyriaki Kountouri - Conductor

Kyriaki Kountouri (b. 1997) studied orchestral conducting with professor Miltos Logiadis at the Ionian University Music Department and since 2021 she has been a PhD candidate at the same university. She holds a piano performance diploma with honours (class of Christina Panteli, Toniko Odeio). She has collaborated with the Cyprus Symphony Orchestra, the Athens City Symphony Orchestra, the Thessaloniki City Symphony Orchestra, the Symphony Orchestra of the Philharmonic Society of Corfu, the Cyprus Youth Symphony Orchestra etc. Since 2022 she has had an ongoing collaboration with the Learning & Participation Department of the Greek National Opera.

As of September 2023 she is the conductor of the El Sistema Greece Youth Orchestra.



Sofka Zinovieff - Speaker

Sofka Zinovieff was born in London, has Russian ancestry and lives in Greece. She has written about Greece as an anthropologist (with a PhD from Cambridge), a journalist and an author.

Her books include *Putney* (a novel) and *Eurydice Street: A Place in Athens*.

Her next novel, *Stealing Dad* will be published in May 2025.

Podcast documentary series: *Athens Unpacked*.



Jonathan Brown (baritone) - Narrator

Born in Toronto, he studied at the RCM and the University of Western Ontario.

In England he continued his studies at the University of Cambridge and Britten-Pears School in

Aldeburgh with Sir Thomas Allen and Anthony Rolfe Johnson. Operatic roles include Marcello,

Belcore, Count Almaviva, Yamadori, Ariodate and Aeneas. He recently created the role of Leon in a

new production of Tom Smail's opera Blue Electric in London. He made his debut with Sir John Eliot Gardiner in Holland as the baritone soloist in a concert of Bach cantatas and thereafter was a regular

soloist. Recordings include Fauré Requiem (London Festival Orchestra), Forester in Sullivan's The Golden Legend/ Hyperion and world premieres of Wesley's cantata Confitebor tibi/Priory and Eccles' Semele and Weldon's Judgment of Paris (AAM).



Noam Greenberg - Piano

Israeli/British pianist Noam Greenberg's career as recitalist, soloist and chamber musician has taken him all across Europe, to Israel, the Americas and the Far East. Prestigious venues include Wigmore Hall London, Concertgebouw Amsterdam, Konzerthaus Berlin, Konzerthaus Vienna, Auditorio Nacional Madrid and Parco della Musica Roma. He has also appeared as soloist with numerous orchestras. Among his many chamber music partners are violinists Pekka Kuusisto and Ilya Gringolts, cellists Steven Isserlis and Pieter Wispelwey, clarinetist Chen Halevi, the Gringolts Quartet, the Ardeo Quartet, the Doric Quartet, and members of the Kuss Quartet. He also loves working with singers, among them tenor Mark Padmore and sopranos Ailish Tynan and Ruby Hughes.

He is Artistic Director of the *Music at Tresanton* festival, which he founded in 2006.



Fanie Antonelou - Soprano

Awarded the Grand Prix Maria Callas (Maria Callas International Competition, Athens) and the Mendelssohn Prize (Frankfurt), she was a finalist in the "Schubert and Modern Music" competition (Graz). Studied opera, lieder and early music at the Academies of Stuttgart and Trossingen. Currently/recently: Handel's *Messiah*, Orff's *Carmina Burana* (Liederhalle, Stuttgart), Bach cantatas (St. Thomas Boys Choir, Leipzig), soloist in Bach's *Mass in B minor* (Munich Bach Choir, Munich Residenz), Fauré's *Requiem* (MusicAeterna, Teodor Currentzis, Baden-Baden Festival), *Fragments from Kafka* (Attis Theatre, director: Stroumpos), *The Fairy Queen* (director: Skourletis), the White Queen in *Chessboard Escapees* by G. Kouroupos (director: Chatzianthonio). Guest appearances: Stuttgart Opera, Perm Opera, Athens Concert Hall, Handel Festival (Halle). Recently starred in *Exodion*, (short film, Calliope Tsoupaki).



Theodora Baka - Mezzo-soprano

Theodora Baka's core repertoire ranges from the Medieval and Baroque eras to Mozart and Rossini, the Romantic Lied as well as music of her homeland, Greece. She has performed as a soloist (opera, song recitals, chamber music) at prestigious venues in Greece, several European countries and the US, collaborating with ensembles like Il Complesso Barocco (Alan Curtis), MusicaAeterna (Teodor Currentzis), Armonia Atenea (George Petrou), LatinitasNostra (Markellos Chryssicos), Ex Silentio (Dimitris Kountouras), Atalante (Erin Headley) and Fretwork. Her releases include, inter alia, Medieval and Baroque music, and Greek music, both contemporary and traditional. She serves as a permanent singing teacher at the Music Department of the Ionian University in Corfu.



Faidon Miliadis - Violin

Faidon Miliadis studied at the New Conservatory of Thessaloniki with professors Kostas Vozikis and Irina Dragneva, at the Royal College of Music in London with Adrian Levine and at the Koninklijk Conservatorium Brussel with Kati Sebestyén. Resident in Athens since 2014, he regularly collaborates with artists and ensembles on a wide range of projects, from early music concerts to avant-garde staged performances. He has performed as a soloist with the Thessaloniki State Symphony Orchestra and the Athens State Orchestra, where he has been a member since 2017, served as a Concertmaster (2021-2023) and is now leader of the second violins. He is a founding member of Trio el Greco, one of Greece's leading chamber music ensembles.



Kostas Panagiotidis - Violin

Born in Thessaloniki, Greece in 1977, from 1995 he studied at the Hochschule für Musik und Theater in Munich with Gottfried Schneider, graduating in 1999. A member of the Athens State Orchestra (2003-2007), the Athens Camerata – Orchestra of the Friends of Music (until 2010) and the National Symphonic Orchestra of ERT. He is a member of ERGON Ensemble and the Tetraktys Quartet, with whom he has performed in the most important European Concert halls and in Carnegie Hall, New York. He collaborates often as a violinist with Ensemble Modern in Frankfurt. He was the concertmaster of the National Radio Orchestra of Greece and the Philharmonia Orchestra of Athens. Since 2017 he has held a permanent position as principal violinist in the National Opera of Greece.



Manos Gouvelis - Viola

Born in Athens, he studied the violin at the Athens Conservatory with Maria Kaliontzi and Ioannis Tzoumanis and the viola at the Musiki Orizontes Conservatory with Ilias Sdoukos. A scholar of the Greek State Scholarship Foundation, he continued his studies abroad at the Conservatorium van Amsterdam with Sven Arne Tepl, Nobuko Imai and Jürgen Kussmaul. A member of the Athens State Orchestra since 2014, he is now assistant principal viola, collaborating frequently with them also as a soloist and in chamber music groups under their auspices. Simultaneously with his involvement in music, Manos studied History and Archeology at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. He teaches viola at the Kontali conservatory. He plays a St. Di Maglia, Cremona 1947 viola.



Alexis Karaiskakis-Nastos - Cello

Alexis Karaiskakis-Nastos was born in Athens. He plays with equal enthusiasm the modern as well as the baroque cello, with his repertoire ranging from the early baroque, to the contemporary compositions of the 21st century. His appearances both as a chamber musician and a soloist include performances in major concert venues in Greece, the rest of Europe and the US. Alexis was awarded the “Best young artist of the year” award in 2011 by the Theatre and Music Critics’ Association of Greece. He is a founding member of Trio el Greco. He lives, and teaches cello and chamber music, in Athens, Greece.



Ioannis Babaloukas - Double Bass

After finishing his studies in Athens, where he studied double bass with Anastasios Kazaglis and music theory (harmony, counterpoint) with Michalis Rozakis, Ioannis Babaloukas moved to Essen (Germany) in 2004, to continue his double bass studies at the Folkwang Hochschule with professor Niek de Groot, where he graduated with a Diploma and a Master's degree. During his studies he also took part in master classes with Vincent Pasquier and Rinat Ibragimov. As a professional double bass player he has worked in the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Radio Philharmonisch Orkest (Nederland), Züricher Kammerorchester and Concerto Köln. Since 2019 he has been working in the Athens State Orchestra.



Kostas Tzekos - Clarinet

Studied at the *Ionian Conservatory* in Corfu, the *Filippos Nakas Conservatory* in Athens and the *Ecole Normale de Musique de Paris*, where he was awarded the titles ‘Diplôme Supérieur d’Exécution’ and ‘Diplôme de Concertiste de Musique de Chambre’. Throughout his studies he was a scholar of the *YAMAHA Music Foundation of Europe* and the *Greek State Scholarship Foundation*. He is a graduate student in Musicology at the *National and Kapodistrian University of Athens*. He has played at festivals all over Europe and collaborated with *Greek National Theatre*, *Camerata String Orchestra*, *Greek Radio Symphony*, *Greek Youth Symphony Orchestra*, *State Orchestra of Athens*, *Greek National Opera* and music ensembles, such as *Oper(o)*, *Ventus Ensemble*, *ARTefacts Ensemble* and *Beggars’ Operas*. He is a founding member of the *Ergon Ensemble*.



Angelina Tkatcheva - Santouri

Angelina Tkatseva was born and raised in Minsk. There she graduated from the Academy of Music and began her career as a soloist. Since 1989 she has lived in Greece. She collaborates with many orchestras, musicians and the Union of Composers.



Babis Taliadouros - Percussion

Charalampos Taliadouros began his musical studies in percussion at the Municipal Conservatory of Volos. In 1998, he was accepted at the Hochschule für Musik und Theater in Munich and the class of professor Dr. Peter Sadlo and Raymond Curfs until 2003 when he received his Postgraduate Diploma. He holds a Bachelor degree and a Ph.D. in Musicology from the Faculty of Music Studies of the National University of Athens.

He is a percussionist with the Athens State Orchestra and a member of the Ergon Ensemble. He has taught percussion at the Faculty of Music Studies at the Ionian University and the University of Ioannina. Currently he teaches percussion at the Faculty of Music Studies at the National University of Athens and the Ars Musicalis Conservatory.



Nikos Metallinos - Percussion

Nikos Metallinos was born in Corfu in 1986.

He graduated with a Diploma in Percussion Performance (A with Honours) from Athens Conservatoire (Professor Dimitris Desyllas). He has cooperated with many well-known ensembles and organizations including Athens Concert Hall, Onassis Cultural Centre, Stavros Niarchos Cultural Centre, Musicaeterna, Hamburger Symphoniker, Athens State Orchestra, National Radio Orchestra ERT, Orchestra ton Chromaton, Camerata Orchestra, the Ballets of Zurich Opera, Athens City Symphony Orchestra, KYKLOS Ensemble, and Greek Ensemble of Contemporary Music.

He is a member of the orchestra of Philharmonic Society of Corfu, member of VENTUS Ensemble and Typana percussion ensemble, percussion professor in Ionio Conservatory of Corfu and F.E.K and conductor at the municipal Band of Karousades.



Andreas Farmakis - Percussion

Born in Athens and studied percussion at Athens Conservatoire with Dimitris Desyllas.

He has collaborated with Ergon Ensemble and Kyklos, various orchestras in Europe and the prestigious "Progetto M. Argerich and friends".

He is the principal percussionist of Athens State Orchestra.

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