

THE CAVE

ELLI PAPAKONSTANTINO •  

PRESS PACK

Proud winners of the Music Theatre NOW 2018 competition

"Elli Papakonstantinou's THE CAVE takes us by storm with its powerful sound and visuals from the very first minute. Very much like today's worldwide "reality": a cacophony of social media, "news," non-stop visual information, and the voices of the multiple channels of information that bombard us from dawn to dusk. But, is this "reality" or are we still trapped in Socrates's cave?"

[Jury Statement, Shoshana Polanco for the Jury Members of the 2018 edition of MusicTheatreNOW competition](#)



★★★★★

...A veritable bombardment of all senses. Eye, ear and not least brain fought to keep up. It's strange and beautiful, ugly and cloudy....like everyone else in the chamber, I was blown away".

[Bent Stenbakken, nordjyske.dk](#)

★★★★★

...the piece redefines the meaning of contemporary musical theatre with a social message away from any reference to prosaic complaints. A substantial aesthetic event."

[Dimitris Tsatsoulis, greek-theatre.gr](#)

★★★★★

"An amazing cyber-punk new opera"

[LIFO](#)

★★★★★

"One of the best representatives of Greek avant-garde, Elli Papakonstantinou, never ceases to surprise us"

[Maria Kryou, ATHINORAMA](#)

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REVIEWS / INTERVIEWS

Elli Papakonstantinou - ODC Ensemble, the CAVE, Megaron - The Athens Concert Hall

Elli Papakonstantinou (Fulbright Award 2018-9, Stanford University, USA) made use of the form of musical theatre, with the help of Tilemachos Moussas, in order to highlight in an aesthetic way crucial social issues and to comment on the actual international timeliness using a contemporary elliptical look, fascinating, paradoxical and blindly shiny. It is a most completed work that comes as a result of her past experimental performances, one that redefines the meaning of contemporary musical theatre with a social message away from any realistic reference to prosaic complaints. A substantial aesthetic fact.

Dimitris Tsatsoulis

13/10/2018

<http://www.greek-theatre.gr/public/gr/greekplay/index/pointviewview/1647?fbclid=IwAR27sKELd21u62QibQswVHkajeA0ihY-d8Tr4pWpw0VYYgdJ-bNmsqfz6Q>

Punkopera: It's strange and beautiful, ugly and cloudy

Punk Opera The Cave brings four star show into the cave - strange and incomprehensible, yet the audience was blown away by the experimental Greek ensemble.

...the cave "bid on a veritable bombardment of all senses. Eye, ear and not least brain fought to keep up... strange and beautiful, ugly and cruel".

... but like everyone else in the chamber, I was blown away by this completely different experiment...

Bent Stenbakken

11/8/2018

nordjyske.dk

<https://nordjyske.dk/plus/punkopera-det-er-saert-og-smukt-grimt-og-grumt/433687e3-98d4-41d1-9800-236cd68580ce>

The Cph Opera Festival goes avantgarde.

[...] The Greek ODC Ensemble is just exploring every step of the CAVE, and Elli Papakonstantinou's disruptive interpretation of Platon's allegory, with punk, video art and shadow theater, is avant-garde at it's darkest.[...]

[...] It's a solid, courageous and multifaceted ensemble, and right now they even have a guest star in the show, the legendary Blaine Leslie Reininger from Tuxedomoon – cool to see the old silver dots keep the style and straighten the tie.

THE CAVE is a mix of opera, video, sound effects, shadow theater and soundtrack from Trump's press conference, and if you think you're true to reality, think again. Or should you? [...]

Sceneblog

8/8/2018

Sceneblog

<http://sceneblog.dk/the-cave-odc-ensemble-gr-paa-hippodromen-folketeatret/>

...the return of last year's Audience Award winners, Greek company ODC Ensemble...

...The sixty-minute performance was an extraordinarily modern piece of theatre and like their previous piece, it drew on operatic music, live video streaming and images from popular media to produce a cultural commentary.

The piece was entirely stylised and completely interpretive. It was certainly memorable due to it being a piece that steered away from our usual concept of theatre...

Elisabeth Halpin

7/7/2018

A view from Behind the arras

<https://www.behindthearras.com/Reviewspr/2018/ReviewsPRjul-sep/be-festival-sat-BR07-18.html>

"Elli Papakonstantinou does not juxtapose the ideal of the Platonic truth with the fake news era (as it is so easily made by the "valid" information providers). As she has done in the past, she brings into dialogue, Plato's ideas with the present that poses new questions. And she benefits from this very dialogue to reflect critically on the present. Using visuals and performing techniques, the ODC Ensemble team represents the platonic cave in a digital way. But with two essential differences: on one hand, the shadows that dominate the cave wall are of the people themselves and not of the objects of the natural world. And, on the other hand, the subjects coexist with their shadows, their action with their depiction, their speech with its transformations. Physical presence

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coexists with its representation, creating a new reality. It is in this context that the problem of truth is raised anew. It's not a problem that can be solved easily. But Papakonstantinou seems to imply that the solution is linked to the search for a third dimension, which will reintroduce the sense of perspective into a universe where the subject of knowledge itself is dissolved into light."

Avgi

11/2/2018

Manolis Patiniotis

<http://www.avgi.gr/article/10965/8704698/to-spelaio>

"Elli Papakonstantinou: The persistent representative of the Greek avant-garde

....

Bold, controversial, often sarcastic, Elli Papakonstantinou always manages to surprise us. But this is not her purpose.

...

Like many European artists, she believes that theater is an art of survival within regimes, systems, and destructive habits; Papakonstantinou goes into a deeper process aiming at performances that cause deep and psychic vibrations.

...

ELLI 'S 3 STRONG POINTS:

Interactivity with the audience

Already since her work at Vyrsopeio, the hot spot of the postmodern Athenian theater, she manages to transform stage action into live experiences, allowing her audience to take long promenades in industrial spaces, as was the case in "After" (2011) and "Louissette: the backstage of a revolution" (2017).

Music

For Elli, music leads to a time space beyond the ordinary; she constructs narratives alongside with musician Tilemachos Moussas on stage. "Cave's" music is based on a vast range of influences: traditional music, loops, etc.

Extroversion

Many of her performances, such as the much-talked and successful "REVOLT ATHENS" and now "The Cave", evolve through international residencies and collaborations over time, while playing in theaters and festivals abroad. After the performances at the Technis Theater, "Cave" will be performed at the BE Festival, in the U.K."

ATHINOPAMA

Maria Kryou

27/01/2018

http://www.athinorama.gr/theatre/article/elli_papakonstantinou_i_epimoni_ekprosopos_tis_ellinikis_avant_garde-2526336.html

"In a shattered time loop, in a semidetached dimension, future / past, perhaps in a time curve, Plato can stand next to Netflix, darkness leads to a less dark virtual reality, shadows can be the reality, and - like a trampoline - that can send you out - or again inside the cave.

No worries. Do not panic. Here comes the good news:

The good news is: The Cave by Elli Papakonstantinou - active and dynamic - at the Technis Theater - I saw it and definitely recommend it.

Combining new media with new opera, this is an overwhelming show of visuals and music taking us through the philosophical perspective of a suffocating, dark era.

From Plato's allegorical cave to facebook's fake life.

The music of Tilemachos Mousas shines at the heart of the project - four voices, santour, piano and live electronics - continuous movement and alternation.

All the elements of the performance, the music of Tilemachos Mousas, the speech, the visuals (Pantelis Makkas), the acting (Stavros Jagoulis, Anastasia Katsinavaki, Vivi Petzi, Marilena Chrysochoidis), the shadow puppetry (Tasos Konstas), the intense and dynamic style of Elli's company ODC Ensemble are so complete and ready to fly in theaters / theatrical scenes abroad."

www.mariamarkouli.com

Maria Markouli

09/2/2018

<https://www.mariamarkouli.com/2018/02/the-cave-%CF%84%CE%BF-%CF%83%CF%80%CE%AE%CE%BB%CE%B1%CE%B9%CE%BF/The>

"Ultimately, the philosophical question posed by the Platonic "Cave of Ideas" in my opinion, is one and simple: Does the old being, imprisoned in obsessive ideas, prejudices, in superstition of scientific axioms and divine laws, desire this New Knowledge, at the time of digital Information, when this Knowledge extends to the area of "metaphysical", of UNATTERABLE, of unspeakable,

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largely inaccessible from COMMON LOGIC

Are we again at the same time-space crossroads when man came out of the Middle Ages and before enjoying the luminous Renaissance was unable to think and admit the simple ancient truth that the earth is NOT flat?

Lest that the Platonic parable of the first great victim of Athenian democracy is more relevant than ever, when the fascism of "scientific truth" and experimentally demonstrable knowledge hangs like a sword of Damocles over the heads of visionaries, poets and prophets of the Future?

I regret whenever an expert, unilaterally trained to a minimum, to a slice of specialized knowledge, offends me by urging me - sometimes kindly and sometimes lubberly - to "restrict myself to my cognitive subject" !!! My good man, good people, gentlemen (when you are human), have you not heard the term "Renaissance man"? Would you cast in your modern medieval fires enlightened spirits like Da Vinci, Galileo, Giordano Bruno? Because there are of course their analogues today, but they act in secret to avoid monolithic aphorisms and your brain calculus!!!

So, under the weight of these thoughts, I double and triple enjoyed this youthful, postmodern, deconstructive, unpredictable and groundbreaking effort to tell an old story in a new way and to pour the wine into new bottles.

.... I can only greet every attempt to modernize and revive the Truth that is always one, no matter how it changes clothes and shoes, armor and shades from one time to another.

....Do not miss it. Bravo to Marianna Kalbari, who - as a capable artistic director - opened the historical Technis Theater to contemporary innovation, while remaining faithful to the spirit of its founder, Karolos Koun.

WordPress

Konstantinos Bouras

05/02/2018

<https://grafei.wordpress.com/2018/02/05/%CF%84%CE%BF-%CF%83%CF%80%CE%AE%CE%BB%CE%B1%CE%B9%CE%BF-%CF%84%CE%B7%CF%82-%CE%AD%CE%BB%CE%BB%CE%B7%CF%82-%CF%80%CE%B1%CF%80%CE%B1%CE%BA%CF%89%CE%BD%CF%83%CF%84%CE%B1%CE%BD%CF%84%CE%AF/>

Popaganda, February 7, 2018, Giorgos Boudiklaris

<http://popaganda.gr/elli-papakonstantinou-interview/>

Elli Papakonstantinou: "I am stunned at the level of talent in our country"

The director of ODC Ensemble shares her thoughts on her newest, fascinating project, staged at the Greek Art Theatre Karolos Koun, that brings Plato's Cave to the era of fake news and social media.

The concept of the performance – drawing connections between the shadows in Plato's Cave and the Internet, fake online profiles and fake news – is, without a doubt, a bold and fertile one. Working on the allegory of the Cave in the format of an oratorio or a contemporary rock opera certainly ups the ante. ODC Ensemble presents the fruit of their labour at the Greek Art Theatre Karolos Koun for a few days. Director Elli Papakonstantinou spoke to Popaganda about this exciting project.

How does one begin to make theatre based upon Plato's Cave?

In good faith: one uses the contemporary world and the contemporary individual as a take-off point. Naturally, one does not begin with Plato himself: he is too remote, too distant from us. In a sense, one uses Plato to talk about what is happening today and perhaps to draw some parallels about how this culture has not really evolved for thousands of years. Some issues raised by Plato include the Matrix, how humans relate to the truth, to the inner and to the collective truth, to the existential and socio-political dimension of the truth. These questions have not been addressed. We may in fact be retreating rather than advancing, more than ever before. But I do not care to make such estimates, to say whether we are behind or ahead. A text is open for interpretation, it engages in dialogue with each time period. This is how I view it. And I use contemporary reality as a take-off point.

How did it the concept come about?

Some texts are very difficult to adapt for the stage. I am talking about texts that are more philosophical, more complex and multidimensional. I am extremely interested in this type of texts. And this specific text (the Allegory of the Cave), has been on my mind for a very long time. I conceive this allegory as a type of Matrix: what's the relationship between the news and the facts? How are news and facts treated by journalists and politicians? How does our culture as a whole and even we, ourselves, reproduce and disseminate news and facts, sometimes unwillingly, by presenting opinions as facts in social media? How do we skim the news? Facts have been replaced by opinions. We are now at a point where we hold conversations only with those who share similar views with us. We no longer verify our views, we do not choose to substantiate them, we do not choose our interlocutors, or rather we choose them on the basis of similarity and intimacy. And when we think we are opening a dialogue in social media, we do so through the algorithms, with our 'own' people.

And where has this led to?

It was precisely this marginalization, this clique mentality and inability to control things, the fact that we do not learn from all this and we do not try to control our views that pushed me towards Plato. But I did not want a text describing what I am talking about right now, a text focusing exclusively on current affairs. I was interested in learning and drawing things from a complex text, which has

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multiple interpretations; a text that opens humans and their soul up on several levels. And I really wanted to converse with such a text. I also feel stuck in a rut, caught in a reality of fragmented time, constantly on the go in order to make ends meet, constantly looking at my watch, not being able to catch my breath and reflect; a reality that seldom allows me the time to chat with people whose way of thinking I appreciate. And I've begun thinking why this is happening.

So, why is this happening?

Why don't I have the time to see my friends, listen to music, talk about books? Why do I feel confined to the present, not united with an inner centre, not united with that time of innocence that feelings may unlock, when the breath and the soul fly away and are in tune with the world around me?

And what answers did you get to these questions?

I almost guilt-trip myself into thinking that I must know absolutely everything that is happening today in the world. That I can sometimes be too 'clever' for my own good. And finally, that I cannot control truth itself or the news; I can only reproduce them. Starting from that, I began to think that something is happening around me. And it has nothing to do with the Greek crisis. The crisis put us in a tight spot, got us running around like Europeans do. Our thoughts became less fluid, more task-oriented. Even the language: I often catch myself sending very brief text messages, using a more perfunctory language; language as a tool that cannot afford to express nuances, to wonder, to ramble on, to get lost in black holes, to be silent. A language that is strictly task-oriented. In my opinion, all this betrays an attachment to the surface of things. And this issue of language is extremely important. We disseminate information without thinking.

But if you distort language, you also distort meaning. If you cut down on language, you also cut down on thought.

Exactly. And that's what I think is happening in politics. You see politicians, both in Greece and abroad, increasingly using mottos, black-and-white concepts, and marketing tricks to attract voters. This is extremely problematic for me. Political discourse has stopped being reflective. Keeping in mind that public discourse often instructs us how to think, this lack of reflection in political discourse makes it responsible for fascist phenomena. Today, everything is about impressions: who is going to leave the best impression. That's what I started thinking about. That's where my love for Plato, not only for the Republic and the Allegory of the Cave, but also for Socrates as a whole, for the dialectic method, came about. Socrates constantly says: Put yourselves under control. Check your views, your ideas. But for this to happen, you need to have a strong conversationalist. You need to have an argument and a counterargument. It's like we have dispensed with this notion altogether. We do not want it. We do not find ourselves in dialogue with it.

That's why in social media we restrict ourselves to a group of people who think in a way similar to ours. Let us remember genetics, though: it is usually through inbreeding that mentally challenged offspring are born.

Precisely: thinking ceases to exist! Thinking is like electricity, an electric field that is produced whenever we are confronted. There is no confrontation. Is there an intellectual battlefield, so to speak, nowadays? I wasn't aware that the algorithms are choosing for us. We keep regurgitating various myths: I used to believe in the myth of the free Internet! We keep saying that this is the most democratic period in human history, that there is access to knowledge more than ever before, and so on. But what algorithms do is to feed to you the news they know you are interested in. You are not allowed to chat with a fascist: even if you friended one, s/he will not see your posts. That's why you can't open a debate in social media; I've never come across any interesting online debates. If something happens, you'll call your friend on the phone, you'll ask them, what's going on, are you all right? Why did you post this and that? You will not argue publicly! So what is the point of it all? To build a false self, or to promote one's work. However, we do not get any truth there. And those who do, are usually the odd people of social media – those who promote an online 'persona' of sorts.

What's your idea of an allegory?

An allegory is an imperfect simile. It is this lack of perfection which makes it so alluring, because it exposes the viewer at once to the existential, the political, the social, the private, hitting simultaneously at everything, and I hope this happens with our performance as well. And one last thing I recently discovered and has really impressed me: Plato refers to the word "μύσθαι", which means 'searching for the truth', 'researching the truth'. It shares the same root with the words 'music' and 'muses'. He also refers to the myth of Hero, a man who went to the underworld and came back to recount the process of reincarnation (which Plato believed in) and how exactly it happened; a revealing narration about souls and their successive reincarnations, with Muse at the very top of this universe.

And what does the Muse do?

She is the Siren coordinating the great pendulum of the universe, and below her are the Fates, talking to the souls and assigning to each of them their next life, which they have not chosen. There is a knowledge that goes beyond reality; within each soul there is a memory of this contact with a holistic, universal, cosmic knowledge, and music unlocks this knowledge. That's why it opens individuals and human speech up to unknown significations. It is significant that we know more than we know we know. We just do not have the courage to confront what we know. Our cowardice is symptomatic of the lie in which we live in. Through the fruitful process of confrontation we formulate the truth that our soul knows. We exclude ourselves from the truth because we do not give it this time of reflection. This is all very simple; it could be carried out inside a café.

I find it interesting that your performances vary wildly. *Richard II*, *Louissette* and *The Cave*, at first glance, have little to do with each other. But there is something called an ensemble, teamwork, and this is prevalent in all your performances.

This is certainly true. My team is the most important thing to me. Jointly, we pose these crucial questions, trying to formulate them. Maybe that's why you say that they appear in a different form with each new production. They certainly do. Every single time the materials are crystallized into something else. Every single time the mechanisms are different because we start from within, and we want to take risks. Because when you do that, you have no idea what will come out of it. It is easier to copy the form or some

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already recognizable mechanisms. But this kind of work I'm talking about cannot be copied. How I could go about Shakespeare and Plato in the exact same manner? I'm going into the material myself, listening to it; I do not want to grasp it on an academic level. I try to find the way to share it, to format it. And the form is always different. What's important there is what everyone says, how everybody comes into this job. I have made a promise to myself for some time now that in any project I undertake I will keep with me a core of partners. the ODC Ensemble, my basic collaborators, who also want to have new experiences and renew themselves. For the other members of my team, I will hold an audition. Adding new blood to the team has a revitalizing effect and I am very happy to do so. I have discovered excellent talents, people who have worked so much with themselves. I am stunned at the level of talent in this country.