

Theatre and Performing Arts – a message from the Launch Event of HICD-UK in London

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I am Andreas Skourtis, architect, scenographer, and Lecturer in Scenography at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama – University of London.

Head of Theatre and Performing Arts, HICD-UK.

I took this photo three years ago, during a stroll around Southbank – it inspired the staging of a performance I did in 2016 on shifting the dialogue on immigration, towards humans, culture and love, instead of just numbers and statistics.

I love bridges. They connect spaces – this one links St Pauls Cathedral, a temple of faith, to the Tate Modern, a temple of contemporary arts.

A floating space, that puts you in-between a river and the sky.

It is one of many bridges in London, the amazing multicultural city/planet we live in.

It is made to be crossed – but is interesting and intense when it is inhabited too.

A meeting point – a place for reflection and, with magnificent views.

An 'in-between' country.

You can cross it quickly, Or, you can enjoy quality of the place for hours.

The time can stop for a little bit.

...

Any of you know me, you know that I can go-on forever with the poetic and the metaphors, so, I should better try to give you a more tangible idea of our future plans.

...

I would like you to close your eyes. Yes, please close your eyes.

I am going to say two words – and let's see what comes in your mind.

The two words are: Greek - Theatre.

What do you see?

Perhaps you see an ancient amphitheatre, Sophocles, Aeschylus, Euripides and Aristophanes.

Great – these Ancient Greeks wrote everything, they have invented theatre, the entire world keeps studying them and learning from their mighty work.

But - what about Greek Theatre Now.

What do you 'see', what do you know? (it's alright, you can open your eyes now) –

So, this is one of the perceptions that we want to shift.

A simple and clear aim is to raise your awareness of what is Greek Theatre Now.

There are some amazing things happening, a very small part of which reaches out London and the UK.

But this is just a part of our aims, and only a one-way route of cultural diplomacy.

What we are even more interested in, is to contribute towards devising and generating creative platforms, for knowledge exchange, active artistic collaboration, collective thinking and learning, cross-national productions.

To co-create, and co-produce.

We want to activate and enable the actual artistic action. To enable artists from both countries to collaborate, create and share the artistic outcomes.

We see Theatre and the Performing Arts as a vessel of an **Active Form of Cultural Diplomacy**.

So, here is the Vision Statement, of the Theatre and Performing Arts department of the Hellenic Institute of Cultural Diplomacy in the UK; in three and-a-half lines:

‘...to raise awareness of current and future thinking and practices by contemporary - established and emerging- artists and academics in the performing arts, through various and inclusive actions and creative platforms, drawing upon the collaborative principles of active cultural diplomacy...’

And here is a brief list of objectives:

- Artistic Research, educational activities and knowledge exchange in partnership with academic institutions and arts organisations in the field, from both UK and GR
- Conferences, Creative Platforms, Co-Productions
- Multi-Lingual Publications
- A London Greek Theatre Festival (we will think of a more creative title for this, soon, I am sure)

Theatre is a collaborative art.

An ideal creative platform to help us explore, even more, what we have in common, what we want to communicate to each other, how we can think, act, work together towards a shared world.

How can theatre help us rediscover, and embrace, our Common Identities through our Diverse Cultures?

Let's share our problems and our dreams.

Let's make sure the borders are kept Porous.

Thank you for being here.

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