

## **On Theatre, Archaeology and Genes**

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On Friday, November 4th, students of the Department of Theatre Studies of the University of Athens taking the Theatre of Antiquity module (C: Euripides' dramatic world) attended a lecture by the organising team of *Thucydides Dramaticus: The Theater of War* project, the philologist John Lignadis and the archaeologist Andronike Makres. Although usually any discussion about theatre and antiquity sums up productions and analyses of ancient Greek dramas, different perspectives were explored through the aforementioned project. The leaders of the project, which has been organised by the Hellenic Education and Research Center and attracted students from different countries wishing to immerse in ancient Greek theatre and the archaeology of the Peloponnesian War, presented how archaeology can become a living piece of history and a means for teaching history and also how can the hidden dramatic potential of a historical text come to life.

One of the most interesting ideas developed within the concept of dramatisation was the "theatrical gene": this is an essential element that John Lignadis spotted and refers to the inherent performative qualities of a non dramatic text. Answering the question about which texts are suitable for dramatisation he explained that this gene is a prerequisite for him and although he believes that he could work with any kind of text, some are definitely more appropriate than others, based on the direct speeches they contain, the story they narrate and the images they describe.

The proposed combination of on-site archaeology and dramatisation of historical texts fuses the methodology of performance, which is by definition in the present, with that of history and archaeology, which both

refer and look back to the past. Thus students who participated in the project had the opportunity of simultaneously experiencing the joint of two historic moments that are distanced from each other by 25 centuries and the completion of the narrative of an archaeological site by using performance techniques. This method of educating through dramatisation and creation of what could be called “archaeological site specific documentary theatre” needs to be expanded so that it could be included in academic curricula where students of Art and Humanities disciplines would benefit the most.