didaskalia
gazeta teatralna

From the issue: **Didaskalia 167**
Release date: luty 2022
DOI: 10.34762/gzzg-jd55
Source URL:
https://didaskalia.pl/en/article/no-one-will-ever-be-alone-again-performances-precarity-and-solidarity-amid-greek-metoo

/ performing #metoo

“No one will ever be alone again”: Performances of Precarity and Solidarity amid the Greek #MeToo

Marissia Fragkou | Canterbury Christ Church University

This essay considers how #MeToo’s recent iteration in the Greek context has stirred trouble in the theatre, instigating a politics of resistance against obdurate histories of injustice against women’s bodies in the industry whilst also creating spaces for solidarity among performers and theatre makers. My main intention is to examine how the above issues form part of the same ecology of precarity that dovetailed when the Greek #MeToo began to take force. In doing so, I will first focus on two recent major incidents occurring in the country’s flagship state theatre, the National Theatre of Greece, which involved two of its former male artistic directors in order to discuss how debates around precarity and exclusion in the theatre industry were unearthed. I will then shift focus to Greek artists’ self-organizing tactics through the examples of the activist network Support Art Workers and the Actors’ Trade Union who have started developing codes of conduct and strategies to challenge the devaluation and feminization of artistic labour. The article will further make reference to specific developments across the international theatre industry that connect to the tenets of the #MeToo which offer apertures for progressive change in the field of Greek theatre and its institutions.

Keywords: #MeToo; Greek theatre institutions; solidarity; precarity; feminism

Introduction

“To name is to reveal. When you reveal, something changes” (Papakonstantinou/ODC Ensemble, 2020).

Elli Papakonstantinou’s and ODC Ensemble’s multilingual feminist cinematic opera *Traces of Antigone* tackles familiar and urgent tropes of heteronormative and patriarchal violence performed against female bodies, and how women are trained to “fear” that they will become a victim in the hands of a male abuser. The piece, based on the eponymous play by the Swedish-Greek playwright Christina Ouzounidou, is a digital performance specifically designed for Zoom, that responds to global COVID-19 lockdowns (Papakonstantinou, 2020). Papakonstantinou names this type of performance “theatre of seclusion” to highlight its rehearsal and production process, foregrounding seclusion as a trope reflecting female experiences of Othering (Papakonstantinou, 2020). The female performers confined in their own private homes were able to connect their voices, thus creating a “distanced” communal space of resistance and solidarity.

Traces of Antigone inadvertently captures a gendered structure of feeling that became palpable during the COVID-19 pandemic: the position of women as precarious subjects exposed to patriarchal hierarchies of power and violence. The huge global increase in gender-based violence during the pandemic has exacerbated women’s vulnerability as they remain trapped with their abusers in a domestic setting (Anon, “The Shadow Pandemic…”, 2020). Papakonstantinou's performance further reverberates the tenets of #MeToo, one of the most influential feminist movements of the 21st century.[1]

#MeToo actively seeks to bring into sharp focus issues of sexism, sexual harassment and violence against female bodies as perennial feminist concerns that need to be tackled in public and private spheres inhabited by women. The invitation that #MeToo extends, becomes an empowering gesture of solidarity where victims of abuse join their voices and confront their abusers without fear. The #MeToo movement manifests as "a series of collective resistant gestures deeply tied to our personal performances of civic (dis)obedience and identity" (McDonald, 2021, p. 16). Tracing back its roots to second-wave feminism, Elaine Aston defines the movement as a "radical-feminist outcry against harassment and proclamation of anti-patriarchal solidarity […] [which] attested to the patriarchal 'virus' as a deadly disease of pandemic proportions" (Aston, 2020, p. 18–19). In *Living a Feminist Life*, feminist cultural theorist Sara Ahmed notes that "living a feminist life […] might mean asking […] how to create relationships with others that are more equal; how to find ways to support those who are not supported or are less supported by social systems; how to keep coming up against histories that have become concrete, histories that have become solid as walls" (Ahmed, 2017, p. 1). In this vein, the #MeToo movement could be said to performatively expose and trouble those concrete, "obdurate histories" (Roth, 2001, p. 38) of injustice against women's bodies and attack the "virus" of patriarchy. Building on this idea of a feminist return to the "walls" of patriarchal histories of exclusion and violence as a means of caring for others, this essay will consider how #MeToo's recent iteration in the Greek context has stirred trouble in the theatre industry whilst also creating spaces for solidarity and resistance to such "obdurate histories".

Despite positive developments regarding social policies on gender equality since the beginning of the *Metapolitefsi* (the years following the colonels' junta between 1967 and 1974), owed to factors such as feminist

mobilizations and Greece's entry into the EU (see Stratigaki, 2013, p. 60–83), the ideologies and mechanisms underpinning gender stratification still remain deeply embedded in Greek society. Such institutional and ideological structures resemble a brick wall one comes up against when implementing policies such as those concerning the prevalence of gender-based violence in its various forms (Lathiotaki et al., 2021, p. 256). Although the #MeToo movement has had a global impact, it did not attract much attention in Greece until recently. Writing in 2018, Katerina Glyniadaki attributed the reluctance of Greek society and media to respond to #MeToo to "institutionally imbedded patriarchal notions" which constitute "a major impediment to the implementation of GBV-related policies". "The Greek society", Glyniadaki concludes, "is a bubble that is harder for the #MeToo Movement to burst" (Glyniadaki, 2018).

In spite of Glyniadaki's pessimism, the Greek #MeToo surfaced in the Greek social fabric in January 2021 when Gold sailing medallist Sophia Bekatorou revealed that, at the age of 20, she had been raped by the head of the national sailing team during preparations for the Sydney Olympics. Bekatorou's public confession received much attention and was described as a turning point and a breakthrough moment in gender relations in Greece (See Smith, 2021b; Kallergis, 2021). Bekatorou was invited by the (first) female President Katerina Sakellaropoulou who praised her for breaking her silence and stated that "I hope her brave revelation will blow like a rushing wind and sweep any hypocrisy, any cover-up attempt away" (Reuters, "Greek President…", 2021). Bekatorou was criticized by some for not stepping forward before; such views reflected limited understandings of the trauma of gender-based violence and other reasons that would prevent victims from reporting it to avoid further scrutiny or due to fears of being dismissed (See Lathiotaki, et al., 2021).

Following Bekatorou's confession about her own sexual abuse, cases from sports, higher education and theatre began to emerge. In late January, the actress Zeta Douka revealed on live TV that she had suffered psychological abuse and verbal assault from the well-known director and theatre manager Giorgos Kimoulis; her confession was followed by a barrage of claims of sexual harassment and rape from several actresses against male actors and directors who were immediately reported to the Trade Union of Actors in Greece (Σ.Ε.Η.) (See, for instance, Newsroom, "Actor Petros Filippidis…", 2021; Kitsantonis, 2021). As I will show below, those allegations have shifted the conversation to a focus on working conditions in terms of hierarchical structures, remuneration, codes of behaviour and accessibility to marginalized groups in the theatre industry. In addition, it has created rippling effects involving debates about workers' rights and gender-based violence and femicide.[2]

In the following sections, I will focus on two strands of developments that specifically concern the Greek theatre industry: two prominent cases that swept the National Theatre of Greece and debates regarding the absence of a code of behaviour and secure structures for the protection of actors' conditions of work and pay. Although these issues might be seen as separate, they form part of the same ecology of precarity that emerged when the Greek #MeToo began to take force.

Institutions and abuses of power: the case of the National Theatre

Douka's bold move generated debates about abuse and harassment, which so far had remained invisible and naturalized in the theatre industry; in addition, it mobilized young student actors. Following Douka's statement,

the students' union of the National Theatre's Drama School (the most prestigious Drama School in the country), released a statement expressing solidarity with her and all the actors who have suffered abuse by Kimoulis and other directors:

> The time is ripe for the numerous cases of bullying, sexism, racism, homophobia, transphobia, ablism, ageism and exclusion in the entertainment industry [to be revealed]. […] Many of us have experienced – to varying degrees – similar incidents that unfortunately we have not been able to name, out of fear of having misunderstood them or being stigmatized in the future. What just happened gives us hope that change is coming: tutors cannot take advantage of the "naivety" of young students and act as the only source of knowledge, we cannot tolerate abusive techniques and tactics under the pretext of pedagogy and of training the young generation of theatre makers. […] We recognize how difficult it might be for someone who has been harassed to find the courage to report it; for this reason, we would like to collectively create a space for those individuals who have been harassed to directly speak about it, a space where they can report, assert their rights and find justice. In a world full of barriers and exclusions, we dream of an inclusive theatre which functions as a space of free expression and creation based on genuine acceptance [of others], healthy dialogue, empathy and solidarity. No one will ever be alone again (National Theatre Students' Union, 2021).

The above statement carries the power of a speech act that, in addition to naming a significant problem, also looks at the multitude of identities who

are the recipients of extant actor training pedagogies embedded in theatre institutions. This public proclamation also chimes with the surge of a larger critique targeting conservatoires for their exclusionary practices. Most notably, in the aftermath of #BlackLivesMatter, Drama School graduates in the UK shared their experiences of abuse on social media, which led to formal apologies from particular institutions (Bakare, 2020). Similarly, debates around sexual harassment, "institutional walls" and the absence of a code of behaviour in Drama Schools have begun to gather pace in Poland (Kwaśniewska-Mikuła, 2020). In Greece, following the students' statement, the newly appointed director of the National Theatre's Drama School, Dio Kangelari, praised their initiative and courage to speak out publicly against abusive behaviours and encouraged them to step forward and officially call out people and specific experiences "without fear and with the force of their own truth". In her statement, Kangelari also informed the students that the School had already initiated the development of a code of conduct which is now under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture (Newsroom, "Director of National Theatre's Drama School…", 2021).

The arguments regarding abuses of power articulated above became more pronounced following two major events that implicated the National Theatre of Greece and which featured prominently in national and international media in the first half of 2021. These two incidents, although very different in nature and gravitas, concerned the two former artistic directors of the National Theatre. The first involves its [now] former Artistic Director Dimitris Lignadis who, in February 2021 resigned from his post and then was arrested on charges of rape and sexual assault against minors and male student actors (Smith, 2021a). Lignadis's case garnered much attention not least because he was appointed to the post on the recommendation of the Greek Prime Minister Kiriakos Mitsotakis. The BBC directly linked the

incident with #MeToo in a short article entitled “Greece #Metoo: Prominent Actor Dimitris Lignadis held over rape accusations” (Anon, “Greece #Metoo…”, 2021). What ensued was a second round of media debates regarding networks of knowledge of and silence over Lignadis’s actions. As it is often reported, spaces like sports, arts, politics and the media are replete with “stories of abuse of power” that remain hidden (Smith, 2021b). Vanessa Coffey et al. draw attention to how information about harassment and abuse in the entertainment industry circulates through “whisper networks” that seek to “unofficially name” abusers to warn other actors (2019). This “common knowledge” in actors’ circles seems to be relevant here as many actors confessed that Lignadis’s arrest proved what they all had already suspected whilst also unearthing stories of abuse and rape against male bodies.

The second high profile case concerned the actor and director Stathis Livathinos, Lignadis’s predecessor at the National Theatre during the period 2015–2019.[3] In an interview at the daily newspaper *Kathimerini*, Livathinos expressed his deep disappointment with the growing number of allegations of sexual harassment and his fear that this would have a negative impact on theatre itself: “Theatre is not [just] a job, it is a *mission* and I would not want to see it hurt during such an important moment. […] I am sorry for the people who have suffered and suffer still. Unfortunately, violence is everywhere” (emphasis added) (Ioannidis, 2021). Livathinos’s statement triggered public responses criticizing him for generalizing the causes of violence and refusing to locate its roots; amongst them, the actor Panagiotis Bougiouris, who worked with Livathinos at the National Theatre’s Experimental Stage, publicly accused him of “Stalinist” pedagogical practices that consisted in “psychological violence, manipulation, terrorization and homophobia” masked under a “fake politeness” that caused

trauma to young actors (Anon, “Bougiouris to Livathinos…”, 2021). The focus on trauma and abuse that Bougiouris addressed echoes (but is not identical to) other international cases such as the controversy involving the renowned Belgian director Jan Fabre. In 2017, the performers of his theatre company Troubleyn released a collective statement in which they specifically referred to the damaging psychological impact of Fabre’s attitude towards his actors:

> Fabre’s shifting attitudes and volatile behaviour have affected the self-esteem and self-worth of many employees. Many of us needed to seek psychological help after leaving the company and have described our experiences as having left traumatic scars on our being. One performer concluded: He calls us “warriors of beauty”, but you end up feeling like a beaten dog ([Former] Employees and Apprentices at Troubleyn, 2018).

In protest, Livathinos’s Drama School students refused to attend his classes which led to his resignation in early March 2021. His departure triggered further questions centring on equality and inclusion in actor training and theatre at large. The Movement for Disabled Actors reported Livathinos to the Actors’ Trade Union (Σ.Ε.Η) for excluding an applicant from the School for being deaf in 2017. According to the group’s allegations, Livathinos expressed the view that disabled actors would not would not be able to become professional actors as the theatre is by nature undemocratic, ableist and competitive: “the purpose of the National Theatre is to train professional actors to go out to a competitive workplace. […] The theatre is not democratic, it is fascist and chooses the most able ones. We [at the National Theatre] are looking for champions. We do not address equal opportunities but look for abilities” (Efsyn, 2021).

Although Livathinos created more performances that were accessible to disabled audience in the NT buildings and abolished the criterion of able-bodiedness from the School's entry exams during his tenure (Efsyn, 2021), the issues surrounding inclusion and accessibility are much larger than his particular case and affect actors and audiences at a deeper level. As Petra Kuppers argues: "the act of ascribing 'disability' to a person is not value-free: effects include stereotyping, harassment, paternalism or hate as well as accommodations, etc.… One of the definitions of disability is focused on a lack of agency" (Kuppers 2003, p. 5). Such discussions around the underrepresentation and lack of agency of disabled actors are slowly gathering pace across different countries and their actor-training systems with Greek theatre now following suit (Masso, 2018).

Although the cases of the Greek actors-cum-directors who have been called out for abusive practices are very different, they all stem from deep-seated patriarchal ideologies based on the ideal of the Master Director that have dominated theatre since the late 19th century and from Romantic understandings of theatre as a "mission" or "as a temple of art and not a place of work" (Lech, 2021) which often mask the labour of the actor as *work* whilst maintaining hierarchies and (often) toxic power relations between directors and actors. The next section shifts attention to the artists' labour conditions that have become exacerbated during the pandemic and how they interface with the demands of #MeToo.

Precarious labour and solidarity collectives

Since the 2010 debt crisis, the Greek theatre landscape has changed rapidly (See Fragkou, 2017; Hager, 2017). One of the reasons for those changes was, on the one hand, the suspension of state subsidies between 2011 and

2017, and, on the other, the emergence of three major privately owned cultural institutions: the Onassis Cultural Centre (OCC), the Cacoyiannis Foundation and, more recently, the Stavros Niarchos Foundation (which now hosts the Greek National Opera in its new building in a southern suburb of Athens).[4]

In the absence of state funding streams and in the midst of conditions of acute social and economic precarity, artistic activity in Greece also shifted beyond traditional institutions, thus developing new methodologies and aesthetics. As Natalie Zervou notes, "the crisis did create an opening that fostered alternative approaches to art making and also furthered the critical engagement of artists with the social structure." (Zervou, 2017, p. 108) Artists turned to DIY practices and self-organizing, performing in unconventional occupied cultural venues or in outdoor public spaces and devising tactics of "improvisatory politics" that allowed them to imagine performance-making beyond conventional structures.[5] As a result, there was much activity in re-imagining public space through "community encounters, impromptu street interventions, homemade theatres and solidarity platforms" (Argyropoulou, 2016, p. 3). However, such anti-institutional practices, are "by their very nature […] impotential, precarious and insufficient" (Argyropoulou, 2017, p. 226) as they cannot offer a financially viable model of artistic labour.

Although the politics of state subsidies in Greek theatre are complex and raise questions over what type of work is prioritized (See Sambatakakis, 2014), they also enabled an alternative theatre scene to emerge through the creation of new theatre spaces and the development of new theatre forms by younger artists, thus providing some security (although not fully sustained) to theatre makers who could find a home in non-commercial venues (Hager,

2017). As a result, more state-funded work opportunities for actors beyond the summer Athens and Epidaurus Festival and the two regularly funded state theatres (the National Theatre in Athens and the State Theatre of Northern Greece in Thessaloniki) were created. As Philip Hager infers, the suspension of state subsidies led to a devaluation of artistic labour and a shift to a privatized and competitive rather than a welfare model of work (Hager, 2017, p. 146). Such a work economy was buttressed by the arrival of major cultural institutions that appear to be "the only antidote to the crisis and austerity" (Argyropoulou, 2017, p. 225), thus becoming key players in shaping the conditions of making, producing and disseminating theatre work as well as the criteria of what is deemed "high" or "avant-garde" art. On the one hand, these institutions seem to be benevolently improving the conditions of the wider devaluation of artistic labour by offering opportunities for new and experimental theatre companies to perform their work. For example, the OCC's "permanent festival" brand promotes the image of an outward-facing institution hosting several international companies and artists as well as commissioning and co-producing many exciting local creative projects. Although a more thorough investigation needs to be carried out to accurately estimate the number of artists and projects funded so far by the OCC and thus evaluate its levels of access and exclusion, the institution's public events programme and its performance commissions attest to an emphasis on artistic work addressing LGBTQIA+ or, to a lesser extent, racial issues. In this sense, it offers a mainstream platform for diverse voices to be represented. On the one hand, this commissioning and producing model enables Greek artists to gain social capital through access to wider audiences and the international festival circuit beyond fringe performance venues; at the same time, such short-lived project-based approach further turns culture to a commodified product

whilst also deepening the casualization of artistic work.[6] It also reveals the paradox that the institution's cultural capital feeds from the cutting-edge creative work developed during the Greek crisis but without necessarily offering a sustainable model of work that would possibly challenge the politics of precarity and gig economies buttressed by the crisis itself.

As Shannon Jackson notes, the precarious position of artists working in the theatre and dance is not something new as "the pervasive narrative of performance labour is one of temporary contracts and itinerancy" (Jackson, 2012, p. 23). Greek artists are no exception to this and there is a long history of precarity in the theatre and film industry that is now receiving scholarly attention (See Delveroudi and Potamianos, 2020). Yet, during the pandemic, the precarity of artists was exacerbated as theatres remained indefinitely closed and culture was excluded from emergency funds that would help the arts to survive. Artists in Greece turned again to improvisatory and communal practices of self-organization developed during the debt crisis years as strategies of survival and solidarity. During the first lockdown in April 2020, a collective of over 200 art workers founded the #SupportArtWorkers network (hereafter SAW) in response to their invisibility and exclusion from the Greek government's plans to subsidize other sectors during the pandemic.[7] In May 2020, the Minister of Culture Lina Mendoni pledged to invest 100 million euros in the arts which would be also used to address the perennial issue of undocumented labour through the creation of a register of all artists working in Greece. Such measures were criticized by the collective as short-lived, sketchy, inaccurate and failing to understand the working conditions of artists in Greece (Anon, "Support Art Workers…", 2020).

This discontent was also raised by the actors performing in the National

Theatre's production of *The Persians*, directed by Dimitris Lignadis, during their first socially distanced rehearsal in May 2020 which was unexpectedly attended by Greek Prime Minister and the Minister of Culture.[8] The actor Argyris Xafis, a founding member of #SupportArtWorkers cast in the role of Xerxes, articulated a critique vis-à-vis the Ministry's plans to handle the arts crisis during the pandemic, laying out the complexities of artistic remuneration and working conditions in Greece:

> The main issue faced in the [Greek] artistic sector is not the undocumented artistic labour but its particularly complex working relations. We might be the only workers in Greece who are paid under all the existing ways of receiving payment. […] Apart from the actors who do not work for the National Theatre, 90% of the sector works for privately owned institutions for which there should be more financial support in order [for them] to survive and to create more opportunities to find work (Harami, 2020).

Xafis's description of actors' working conditions in Greece was echoed by Aris Laskos, the secretary of the Actors' Trade Union in Greece, who noted that "in the last ten years, actors have worked in theatres without official contracts. They do not dare ask for their contract […] that would specify their responsibilities and those of the theatre producer, when they will be paid or how much" (Mastorakou, 2021).

Laskos further stipulates that the seeds of the abusive conditions in the theatre industry that the #MeToo movement has unearthed can be located in a general devaluation of the actors' professional identity and the deep-seated assumption that actors work in the theatre as a hobby (Mastorakou,

2021). Laskos's observation further reveals a wider feminization of artistic work; more specifically, questions around the poorly paid affective and material labour of artists who perform their craft out of love for the theatre chime with Marxist feminist critiques regarding the implications of gendered social structures which undermine and render women's affective and reproductive labour invisible. As Jackson notes, "affective labour resembles 'women's work'. And – akin to other performance laborers – gendered workers have experienced such anchoring work as deeply 'material', whatever its immaterial effects and despite the fact that their employers were able to claim 'cognitive' creativity for themselves" (Jackson, 2012, p. 24–25). This gendered dimension of artistic labour acquires more significance in the context of the pandemic where work precarity has been compared to a "shecession" to highlight its impact on women who predominantly have to carry out care and affective labour without remuneration (Alon, T. et al. "From Mancession to Shecession…", 2021).

It seems that in the light of SAW's creation and #MeToo, more artists are keen to openly discuss and call out unequal and abusive conditions of artistic work without the imminent fear of being excluded from the profession. Since Douka's public statement, the Actors' Trade Union saw a sharp increase in the number of actors joining and has received several official testimonies from actors reporting abuse (Kangelari, 2021). One of SAW's key priorities in 2021 was to push for the development of a code of conduct (which, as mentioned, was already in development in institutions such as the National Theatre but not yet implemented) and to develop training on how to create respectful arts spaces. Such actions were largely facilitated by online platforms as the collective was able to organize training workshops and conversations with local and transnational artists who would bring their expertise from the artistic scene inside and outside Greece.[9] Artists also

found opportunities to develop other online fora such as the bilingual *Act2mag*, a theatre magazine that playfully evokes the tenets of #MeToo and the need for action. Articles in *Act2mag* for example, focus on critiques of the institutional authority and pedagogy of directors or the precarious working conditions of mothers working in the theatre industry.[10]

Coda

According to Ahmed, "if a world can be what we learn not to notice, noticing becomes a form of political labour […] once you become a person who notices sexism and racism, it is hard to unbecome that person" (Ahmed, 2017, p. 32). Recent developments in the Greek arts industry have proven that this political labour is currently at work. The process of naming, as both Papakonstantinou's *Traces of Antigone* and Ahmed remind us, constitutes a significant building block to instigating change. Similarly to other theatre contexts such as Ireland where #MeToo had a profound impact in calling out "sexual violence across a spectrum of behaviour from unwelcome comments and touching, to rape", the first step of change is the acknowledgment "that something did happen, and that none of this behaviour is acceptable" (Fitzpatrick, 2020, p. 84). As I have argued in this article, the eruption of #MeToo in Greece against the backdrop of a global pandemic homed in the urgency of addressing the issues of gender-based violence as well as physical and mental vulnerability. It facilitated the debunking of myths surrounding theatre and hegemonic (patriarchal) practices that remained unquestioned, bringing into sharp focus questions around the feminization of artistic labour and institutional practices of exclusion. It also led to the creation of solidarities and networks of support within and outside institutions in Greece and beyond, that would bring about changes demanded by the artists themselves regarding their precarization by giving

them more agency and visibility.

Whilst naming is the first step towards change, we also need, on the one hand, to consider to what extent #MeToo might feature as the "glorious herald of the change that never happened" (Beard, 2020, p. 99) and, on the other, to safeguard that any commitments made will not end up becoming "non-performatives" (Ahmed 2012, p. 117) or that those who report sexual harassment will not come up against "brick walls" (Ahmed, 2017, p. 136). In her important study on institutional processes of committing to diversity and inclusion, Ahmed has shown that institutions might well seem to be making advances towards diversity and inclusion through the creation of statements of commitment yet these remain "non-performatives: they do not bring into effect what they name" (Ahmed, 2012, p. 119). Following Lignadis' resignation, the National Theatre's female Interim Artistic Director Eri Kyrgia announced the theatre's programme for the 2021–2022 season. For the first time in the theatre's history, there is a clear effort to redress previous gender imbalances in appointing directors, having an even split among male and female directors. One of the commissions for the theatre's main stage was Lope de Vega's 1619 *Fuente Ovejuna*, a play that echoes the tenets of the #MeToo movement as it addresses community solidarity and revolt against an authority who abuses women; the piece is directed by Eleni Efthymiou whilst one of the members of the ensemble is Loxandra Loukas, the first actress with Down's syndrome to professionally perform at the National Theatre in Greece. Whether such major institutional steps towards gender equality and inclusion in the theatre that speak to issues of representation and work opportunities will be sustained or remain "non-performatives", remains to be seen; at the same time they leave their own mark by means of naming the issue and open the way for further consolidating such commitments towards inclusion and diversity.

In creating apertures for revisiting actor training pedagogies and ethics, #MeToo shows how Drama Schools can also take the role of "the vanguards of change" (Kwaśniewska, 2019, p. 223). These might gesture towards less hierarchical dynamics within the studio and an understanding of the need for a politics of inclusion in the theatre and society as a whole in order to transform students and tutors into more sentient subjects. In a recent interview, Kwaśniewska lucidly addresses the need to critically interrogate the histories of actor training and radically revisit the unquestioned "infallibility of the director" and "the *actor-artist-priest* role" (Lech, 2021). She argues as follows:

> We need new ethics for theatre based on care, empathy, well-being and safety, both physical and economic, that lead to the empowerment of all workers in theatre institutions and the democratization of work and creative processes. In this context, theatre is not a temple of art in which people are sacrificed, but a safe space for creative cooperation based on mutual respect, exchange and shared goals (Lech, 2021).

In a similar vein, Christina Kapadocha, a graduate of the National Theatre Drama School and Lecturer in Theatre and Movement at East 15 Drama School in London, makes a case that changes which need to happen in the context of Greek Drama Schools include

> the composition of a code of conduct that can bring to both educators and learners the awareness of actor training as an environment of mutual responsibilities and sensitivities. This code though should not stay on paper but must be really infiltrated

> within the actual practice and diverse experience of training. It's about time to leave behind the "masters" and the "personalities" because this has been the root of the problem, at least in my experience (Kapadocha, 2021).

The onus of this process, Kapadocha continues, falls on the educators themselves as well as the institutions that provide the means of the training. From her position of the National Theatre's Drama School Director, Dio Kangelari also echoes Kapadocha, arguing that some of the key aims for Drama Schools in Greece should be:

> the implementation of a code of conduct that will guarantee a safe educational environment based on mutual respect and trust and which will promote transparency and constructive dialogue so that the students are protected from abuses of power and violence. [W]e need to act against exclusions: to instigate inclusive practices that encourage all social groups, genders and nationalities to be represented; to create practical and institutional conditions to include disabled actors in theatre education. The curriculum should also include content that addresses such questions through workshops, invited speakers and bespoke classes. The National Theatre's Drama School has already organized a colloqium reflecting on all those issues in order to launch an ongoing open dialogue (Kangelari, 2021).

In pursuing such changes, one also has to closely look at international developments and good practices that respond to the same issues or extend them, to begin changing the policies, attitudes and pedagogies and to create

“brave spaces where we can sit with discomfort but also look after each other’s well-being” (Studham, 2021, p. 73). There are now policies around inclusion and representation in the theatre developed through initiatives led by members of the arts industry or arts institutions: in the UK, Tonic Theatre is an official organization that supports “the arts and the cultural sector to achieve greater equality, diversity and inclusion”;[11] the recent trans-casting report commissioned by the Royal School of Speech and Drama “asks theatres, arts organisations, producers and broadcasters to better support trans, nonbinary and GNC [gender non-conforming] actors in their organisations and, specifically, to always cast trans, nonbinary and GNC actors in trans, nonbinary and GNC roles”.[12] This has led many UK theatres to commit to changing their casting practices (Bakare, 2021).

In addition to instituting codes of behaviour, the role of intimacy co-ordinator or facilitator would be necessary to support actors performing in intimate scenes that make them vulnerable: “this involves setting up a framework of agreed upon boundaries with cast members, verbal consents, understanding and being responsive to triggers, adjusting and/or creating a shared vocabulary, and creating the movement that depicts danger, without putting the performers at risk” (Studham, 2021, p. 77). Despite resistance from many international producers and directors to include intimacy facilitators in their productions, this role has recently started to gain visibility in the film and TV industry but has yet to achieve significant credibility in the theatre sector specifically.[13]

Notwithstanding the development and implementation of codes of conduct regarding what is acceptable, a recognition of the intricacies of work relations within the industry that facilitate the artists’ precarization should be scrutinized. Artistic labour might be producing immaterial effects that

generate emotions for creative teams and audiences, yet theatrical labour also involves “an intense degree of materiality” from processes of performer-training, technically managing a production (Jackson, 2012, p. 14) to the work and pay conditions that should be acknowledged and made visible. As Kwaśniewska suggests, documenting changes that challenge dominant orthodoxies in the theatre “seems all the more important because these cases seem to comprehensively encapsulate the various institutional and affective conditions that have and continue to constrain the #MeToo movement and point to methods of how they can be broken” (Kwaśniewska, 2019, p. 223). In the same way as “feminist hashtag resistance encourages digital forms of public assembly, which leads to a performative assertion of the right for marginalized experiences of sexual harassment and assault to be made visible and, consequently, supported” (MacDonald, 2021, p. 19), #MeToo in Greek theatre has led to new solidarities and generated connecting threads across several geographical theatrical contexts. For these reasons, more concerted efforts to establish international connections and public (digital) assemblies would further benefit the movement’s sustainability and impact. Both dimensions of #MeToo analyzed in this essay reveal acting and performance as spaces of *work* involving material and affective labour; in doing so, they also gesture towards the need to address such questions through intersectional approaches in creating spaces for solidarity and resistance against obdurate histories of patriarchal privilege within the arts industry and beyond.

Wzór cytowania / How to Cite:

Fragkou, Marissia, *“No one will ever be alone again”: Performances of Precarity and Solidarity amid the Greek #MeToo*, „Didaskalia. Gazeta

Teatralna” 2022 nr 167, doi: 10.34762/gzzg-jd55.

Author

Marissia Fragkou (marissia.fragkou@canterbury.ac.uk) – dr, holds a Ph.D in Theatre Studies (University of London) and is senior lecturer in Performing Arts at Canterbury Christ Church University, UK. Her publications include the monograph *Ecologies of Precarity in Twenty-First Century Theatre: Politics, Affect, Responsibility* (Bloomsbury, 2019) and essays on contemporary European theatre and performance. ORCID: 0000-0002-3951-5875.

Footnotes

1. #MeToo was instigated in the US in 2006 by black female activist Tarana Burke and rapidly became a global phenomenon when in 2017 white actress Alyssa Milano began inviting women from Hollywood to break their silence and share their experiences of sexual harassment. This raises questions regarding white feminism’s privilege but this debate goes beyond the scope of this paper.
2. Greece is one of the 12 EU countries that do not consider femicide as a distinct crime and it was only in 2018 that questions concerning femicide began to gain purchase in Greece following widely broadcasted murders of young women. In June 2021, President Katerina Sakellaropoulou articulated the urgency to address the gaps in Greek law regarding gender-based violence.
3. Livathinos founded the National Theatre’s Experimental Stage in the early 2000s and the first Department of Theatre Directing (as part of the National Theatre’s Drama School) in 2018.
4. Although the Stavros Niarhos Foundation now officially belongs to the Greek state, it operates under the auspices of a private foundation.
5. See Argyropoulou and Vourloumis, 2015; Argyropoulou, 2017. It is worth noting that such tactics have been already developed in Greece since the early 2000s by artists who remained in the periphery of institutions without access to funding or structures of production. See Argyropoulou, 2017, p. 224.
6. See Argyropoulou and Vourloumis, 2015, p. 1; Hager, 2017, p.154. The Onassis Cultural Foundation has a dedicated “Onassis Cultural Export Programme”, whose purpose is to promote Greek art and culture abroad.
7. See Support Art Workers, https://www.supportartworkers.org/en, accessed 10 November 2021.
8. *The Persians* was one of the very few theatre productions that would go ahead for the Festival’s 2020 season and which were produced by state-funded institutions such as the National Theatre, the State Theatre of Northern Greece and the National Opera.
9. See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1u_klwtcrxc, accessed: 10 November 2021, and

https://m.facebook.com/Support-ART-Workers-115572620137765/videos/creating-and-maintaining-respectful-workplacescreating-and-maintaining-respectfu/507067070420004/?locale2=ko_KR, accessed 10 November 2021.
10. See *Act2Mag*, https://act2mag.com/en/home/, accessed 31 July 2021.
11. Tonic Theatre website, https://www.tonictheatre.co.uk/, accessed 31 July 2021.
12. See transcasting statement, http://www.transcastingstatement.com/about, accessed 30 November 2021.
13. The role originates in stage combat and dance pedagogy. IDI (Intimacy Directors International) was founded by Tonia Sina in 2004. Most famously, Ita O'Brien has worked with actors on the Netflix series *Sex Education* and *I May Destroy You*. For more information on the role, see Susan Fenty Studham (2021, p.77) and Mark Brown (2021).

Bibliography

Ahmed, Sara, *On Being Included: Race and Diversity in Institutional Life*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2012.

Ahmed, Sara, *Living a Feminist Life*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2017.

Alon, Titan, et al., "From Mancession to Shecession: Women's Employment in Regular and Pandemic Recessions", *National Bureau of Economic Research*, April 2021, https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w28632/w28632.pdf, accessed 30 November 2021.

Anon, "The Shadow Pandemic: Violence Against Women During COVID-19", *UNWomen*, 2020, https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/in-focus-gender-equality-in-covid-19-response/violence-against-women-during-covid-19, accessed 31 July 2021.

Anon, "Bougiouris to Livathinos: 'I spit in your face for the pain and trauma you caused me'" ["Μπουγιούρηςπρος Λιβαθινό: 'Σας φτύνω κατάμουτρα για τον πόνο και το τραύμα που προκαλέσατε"], *Koutipandoras*, 13 Feb 2021, https://www.koutipandoras.gr/article/mpoygioyris-pros-libathino-sas-ftyno-omos-katamoytra-gia-ton-pono-kai-trayma-poy, accessed 31 July 2021.

Anon, "Greece #Metoo: Prominent actor Dimitris Lignadis held over rape accusations", *BBC News*, 20 February 2021, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-56140274, accessed 31 July 2021.

Anon, "Support Art Workers: The video and the letter for the government's Measures for Culture" ["Support Art Workers: Το βίντεο και η επιστολή για τα μέτρα της κυβέρνησης για τον Πολιτισμό"], *Ethnos*, 11 May 2020, https://www.ethnos.gr/politismos/104970_support-art-workers-binteo-kai-i-epistoli-gia-ta-metra-tis-kybernisis-gia-ton, accessed 31 July 2021.

Argyropoulou, Gigi, “DIY, Crisis and Monopolies: Thoughts on Cultural Imaginaries and Infrastructures”, *Journal of Greek Media and Culture* 3.2 (2017): 223–27.

Argyropoulou, Gigi, “Improvisational Practices in the Production of the Precarious Common Spaces in the Periphery of Europe”, *Critical Studies in Improvisation/Études Critiques en Improvisation*, 11.1/2 (2016): 1–10, p. 3. https://www.criticalimprov.com/index.php/csieci/issue/view/204, accessed 10 November 2021.

Argyropoulou, Gigi; Vourloumis, Hypatia, “Settings and Steppings”, *Performance Research*, 20.4: 1–5.

Aston, Elaine, *Restaging Feminisms*, Cham: Springer, 2020.

Bakare, Lanre, “Drama Schools Accused of Hypocrisy over Anti-Racism Statements”, *The Guardian*, 9 June 2020, https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2020/jun/06/drama-schools-accused-of-hypocrisy-over-anti-racism-statements, accessed 31 July 2021.

Bakare, Lanre, “UK Theatres Promise to Only cast Trans Actors in Trans Roles”, *The Guardian*, 26 May 2021. https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2021/may/26/uk-theatres-promise-to-only-cast-trans-actors-in-trans-roles, accessed 31 July 2021.

Beard, Mary, *Women and Power: A Manifesto*, Profile Books, 2020.

Brown, Mark, “Top intimacy coach says too many TV bosses still do not value role”, *The Guardian*, 7 June 2021, https://www.theguardian.com/media/2021/jun/07/top-intimacy-coach-ita-obrien-says-too-many-tv-bosses-still-dont-value-role, accessed 31 July 2021.

Coffey,Vanessa, et al., “Shifting the Landscape: Why Changing Actor Training Matters in Light of the #MeToo Movement”, *The Polish Theatre Journal*, 1–2 [7–8] (2019): 1–19. https://www.polishtheatrejournal.com/index.php/ptj/article/view/209, accessed 31 July 2021.

Delveroudi, Elisa Anna [Δελβερούδη, Ελίζα 'Αννα] and Nikos Potamianos [Νίκος Ποταμιάνος], eds. *Working in the cultural industry: Greek theatre and film, 19th-20th centuries* [Δουλεύοντας στο χώρο του θεάματος: ελληνικό θέατρο και κινηματογράφος, 19ος-20ος αιώνας], University of Crete, School of Philosophy, 2020.

Efsyn, “Reports Stathis Livathinos for Ableism” [“Καταγγέλειτον Στάθη Λιβαθινόγια Μισαναπηρισμό”], *Efsyn,* 18 Mar 2021, https://www.efsyn.gr/tehnes/art-nea/286093_kataggellei-ton-stathi-libathino-gia-misanapirismo, accessed 31 July 2021.

Fitzpatrick, Lisa, “Contemporary Feminist Protest in Ireland: #MeToo in Irish Theatre”, *Irish University Review*, 50.1 (2020): 82–93.

Fragkou, Marissia; Hager, Philip, “Dramaturgies of Change: Greek Theatre Now:

Introduction", *Journal of Greek Media and Culture*, 3.2 (2017): 139–144.

Glyniadaki, Katerina, "The MeToo Movement and the Greek Silence", *Blogs LSE*, 2018, https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/greeceatlse/2018/05/29/the-metoo-movement-and-the-greek-silence/, accessed 31 July 2021.

Hager, Philip, "Trajectories of transition: Economies and geographies of theatre in contemporary Athens", *The Journal of Greek Media and Culture*, 3.2 (2017): 145–160.

Harami, Stella [Στέλλα Χαραμή], "What was actually said during Mitsotakis's visit at the National Theatre" ["Τι πραγματικά ειπώθηκε κατά την επίσκεψη Μητσοτάκη στο Εθνικό Θέατρο"], *Monopoli.gr*, 22 May 2020, https://www.monopoli.gr/2020/05/22/istories/epikaira/391507/ti-pragmatika-eipothike-kata-tin-episkepsi-mitsotaki-sto-ethniko-theatro/, accessed 31 July 2021.

Ioannidis, Sakis [ΣάκηςΙωαννίδης], "StathisLivathinos: The Greatest Victim will be the Theatre Itself" ["*Στ. Λιβαθινός*: «Το μεγάλο θύμα θα είναι το ίδιο το θέατρο»"], *Kathimerini*, 5 Feb 2021, https://www.kathimerini.gr/culture/561253600/st-livathinos-to-megalo-thyma-tha-einai-to-idio-to-theatro/, accessed 31 July 2021 (my translation).

Jackson, Shannon, "'Just in Time': Performance and the Aesthetics of Precarity", *TDR,* 56.4 (2012): 10–31.

Kapadocha, Christina, email interview with the author, 15 July 2021.

Kitsantonis, Niki, "Accusations over Sexual Harassment Rock the Greek Arts World", *The New York Times*, 16 Feb 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/16/world/europe/greece-sexual-abuse-metoo.html, accessed 31 July 2021.

Kallergis, Kostas, "Greece #Metoo: Women ending silence of sport abuse shake Greece", *BBC News*, 20 Jan 2021, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-55716338, accessed 31 July 2021.

Kwaśniewska-Mikuła, Monika, "#MeToo in Polish Theatre Education", *Facta Universitatis, Series: Philosophy, Sociology, Psychology and History* 19.3 (2020): pp. 219–39.

Kangelari, Dio, email interview with the author, 23 July 2021 (my translation).

Kuppers, Petra, *Performance and Disability*, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2003.

Lathiotaki, Katerina, et al. "Trauma Recovery of Greek Women Who Have Experienced Gender-Based Violence: A Narrative Research", *Sexes* 2 (2021): 256–71.

Lech, Kasia, "Krytyczki as Activists: On Theatre Criticism, Affect, Objectivism and #MeToo in Polish Drama Schools: Interview with Monika Kwaśniewska", *Critical Stages/Scènes Critiques*, June/Juin issue 23 (2021), https://www.critical-stages.org/23/interview-with-monika-kwasniewska/, accessed 31 July

2021.

Masso, Giverny, “Disability in drama schools – study reveals extent of under-representation”, *The Stage*, 11 July 2018, https://www.thestage.co.uk/news/disability-in-drama-schools--study-reveals-extent-of-under-representation, accessed 31 July 2021.

Mastorakou, Natassa [Νατάσα Μαστοράκου], “Aris Laskos: Nobody can ever say again that they did not know” [“Άρης Λάσκος: Πλέον δεν θα μπορεί να πει κανείς ότι δεν ήξερε”], *In.gr*, 25 May 2021, https://www.in.gr/2021/02/25/culture/aris-laskos-pleon-den-tha-mporei-na-pei-kaneis-oti-den-iksere-eythyni-tis-politeias/, accessed 31 July 2021.

McDonald, Shana, “‘Vital Acts of Transfer’: #MeToo and the Performance of Embodied Knowledge”, in Judith Rudakof (ed.), *Performing #MeToo: How Not to Look Away*, Bristol: Intellect, 2021, pp. 15–29, p. 16.

National Theatre Students’ Union, ”Text on the phenomenon of bullying at work and sexist violence in the theatre”, *Facebook* 30 January 2021.

Newsroom, “Actor Petros Filippidis Indicted over Sexual Abuse”, *Ekathimerini*, 12 May 2021, https://www.ekathimerini.com/news/1160959/actor-petros-filippidis-indicted-over-sexual-abuse/, accessed 31 July 2021.

Newsroom, “Director of National Theatre’s Drama School: Find the Courage to Call Out Names without Fear” [“Διευθύντρια Σπουδών Δραματικής Σχολής Εθνικού Θεάτρου: Βρείτε το κουράγιο να κατονομάσετε πρόσωπα χωρίς φόβο”], *LiFo*, 2 Feb 2021, https://www.lifo.gr/now/greece/dieythyntria-spoydon-dramatikis-sholis-ethnikoy-theatroy-breite-koyragio-na-katonomasete, accessed 10 November 2021.

Papakonstantinou, Elli, ODC Ensemble, *Traces of Antigone*, performance, Digital Tour 2020.

Papakonstantinou, Elli, *Traces*, infopack, 2020.

Reuters, “Greek President Praises Sophia Bekatorou for Reporting Alleged Sexual Assault”, *The Guardian*, 18 January 2021, https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2021/jan/18/greece-olympic-sailing-champion-sofia-bekatorou-makes-sexual-assault-allegation, accessed 31 July 2021.

Roth, Moira, “Obdurate History: Dinh Q. Lê, the Vietnam War, Photography, and Memory”, *Art Journal*, 60:2 (2001): 38–53, p. 38.

Sambatakakis, Giorgos [Γιώργος Σαμπατακάκης], “Money and Theatre: State Funding in the 21st century” [“Χρήμα και θέατρο : κρατικές επιχορηγήσεις θεάτρου για τον 21ο αιώνα”], in Giorgos Pefanis [Γιώργος Πεφάνης] (ed.), *The Glamour of Money in Modern Greek Literature: From the Cretan to Renaissance to the 21st Century* [*Η Λάμψη του χρήματος στη νεοελληνική λογοτεχνία: Από την Κρητική Αναγέννηση στην αυγή του 21 ου αιώνα*], Ίδρυμα

Κώστακαι Ελένης Ουράνη, Athens, 2014, 140–155.

Stratigaki, Maria [Μαρία Στρατηγάκη], “The Politics of Gender Equality in the Vortex of the Economic Crisis” [“Η Πολιτική Ισότητας των Φύλων στη Δίνη της Οικονομικής Κρίσης"], *Ελληνική Επιθεώρηση Πολιτικής Επιστήμης,*41 (2013): 60–83.

Smith, Helena, “Greek Theatre Director Arrested on Charges”, *The Guardian*, 21 Feb 2021a, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/feb/21/greek-theatre-director-arrested-on-charges, accessed 31 July 2021.

Smith, Helena, “Olympic Gold Winner’s Sexual Abuse Case is a Turning Point for Greece”, *The Guardian*, 20 Jan 2021b, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/20/olympic-gold-winners-sexual-abuse-case-is-a-turning-point-for-greece, accessed 31 July 2021.

Studham, Susan Fenty, “Supporting Brave Spaces for Theatre-Makers Post-#MeToo: A Chicago-Based Study on Rehearsing and Performing Intimacy in Theatre”, in Judith Rudakof (ed.) *Performing #MeToo: How Not to Look Away*, London: Intellect, 2021, pp. 68–85.

(Former) Employees and Apprentices at Troubleyn, “Open letter: #metoo and Troubleyn/Jan Fabre”, 13 Sep 2018, https://www.rektoverso.be/artikel/open-letter-metoo-and-troubleynjan-fabre, accessed 31 July 2021.

Transcasting Statement, http://www.transcastingstatement.com/about, accessed 30 November 2021.

Zervou, Natalie, “Rethinking fragile landscapes during the Greek crisis: precarious aesthetics and methodologies in Athenian dance performances”, *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance*, 22:1, 2017, p. 104–15.
