



Maestro Peter Tiboris

Peter Tiboris: Carnegie Hall Maestro Brings Opera to the Aegean

By Vasilis Papoutsis

Peter Tiboris has a long and distinguished career as a classical conductor. Growing up in Sheboygan, WI, he knew from an early age that he wanted to be a musician. At a young age he became the organist of the St. Spyridon Greek Orthodox church and went on to study music in the University of Wisconsin.

In 1984, Tiboris was invited to conduct a concert in New York and that led to the creation of the MidAmerica productions. As MidAmerica's General Director of Productions, he has conducted over 1,000 classical concerts at Carnegie Hall, rendering him the largest independent producer in that venue's history. Tiboris also conducted Mikis Theodorakis' *Electra* the opera with Mikis and the Manhattan Philharmonic in June, 2000.

In 2005, Tiboris founded the Festival of the Aegean on the Greek island of Syros. While looking for a location in Greece, he was informed that the Apollo Theater in Ermoupolis, had gone through an extensive €25 million renovation. "The festival was created because of the historic and beautiful Apollo. It is a stunning concert space with a grand history" he said. Also known as La Piccola Scala, the Apollo is an architectural jewel. Believed that it was modeled after the famous La Scala di Milano Opera House, Apollo was built by the Italians in 1864 as Syros had become an important stop to the route leading from Venice to the Middle East. Hundreds of Italians resided in the island in the summer months when opera performances took place. Damages created during World War II led to the theater's demise and the municipality closed it in 1959 and remained closed until 2000.

The Festival of the Aegean produced the first opera performance in the theater in more than 100 years. "Performing these great classical works in the Aegean is a special opportunity for artists worldwide as well as bringing the classical arts to the island of Syros and Greece" Tiboris emphasized, noting that the festival is widely successful

despite the fact that classical music does not have a huge following in Greece. "We get classical music lovers to the festival from many parts of Greece and nearby countries. There is great interest in classical music now." That interest was the driving force in creating an educational academy The Greek Opera Studio.

Tiboris is married to acclaimed soprano Eilana Lappalainen, who is the academy's Artistic Director. The month long summer program provides vocal training, private coaching, public master class, movement and dance classes, acting training oratorio classes, and audition presentation. The instructors are teachers and artists who have worked in the world's most respected opera and music venues.

The academy is one of its kind in Greece. Speaking to Tiboris about the Greek crisis and how it affects his efforts he told TNH, "We are very proud that we are able to continue to provide this classical festival and musical academy to the Greek people during this difficult time." As for the overall effect on the Greek society he said "I am optimistic about Greece and I count on our resiliency and faith to overcome this situation. But the Greeks need to complete the reforms and adopt to the idea of paying taxes. It is not in the Greek fabric to pay taxes and that adjustment needs to occur." He also said that the "EU in its present formation is a disaster. Unless they adopt the concept of a federal government as it is in the United States, it will be hard for the EU to function effectively. Even then it will be difficult since the national identities are so strong and exist for thousands of years." In cultural terms he said that he is "thrilled with the new Opera House opening up in Athens. It has been long overdue." The Opera House was built with the assistance of the Niarchos Foundation.

The 12th Annual Festival of the Aegean will take place July 10-23. Participating are 240 artists from 20 different countries. More information is available at festivaloftheaegean.com.