

MUSIC ON SYROS (22 06 12)

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ESCAPE FROM ATHENS

Sweet sounds to the ear

The annual international music festival held on the island of Syros is about to open its doors again this year with 19 visiting choirs and a guest appearance by composer John Rutter

SYROS, an island heavily influenced by the Genoese, Venetians and Franks, safe harbour for refugees from the eastern Mediterranean throughout the ages and noted for its neoclassical architecture pointing to a legacy of affluence left by 19th-century Greek merchant families, has long had the reputation of being cosmopolitan. The past seven years it has also been the seat of a choral music festival which this year opens its activities as the 8th International Festival of the Aegean, under the direction of composer Peter Tiboris, also the festival's founder. Scheduled events will involve 400 musicians, among whom there are 19 choral groups performing classical and modern compositions - most of which will be held at Apollon, the municipal theatre in Syros' capital Ermoupolis that was built in 1864 along the lines of Milan's La Scala opera house and is affectionately known as "La Piccola Scala". This year's highlights will include performances by pianist Dimitris

Sgouros, who will share opening night with bass opera singer Dimitris Kavrakos and the Symphony Orchestra of Albania's State Opera (July 9) and Richard Strauss' opera *Salome*, in which associate director of the festival Eilana Lappalainen will hold the title role (July 10, 12 and 14). Guest performers include composer John Rutter, who will be conducting the world premiere of his work *Fanfare*. Other acclaimed performers and groups include the National Opera Symphony Orchestra and its corps de ballet performing Johann Strauss' *Alles Walzer* (July 19-20, 22), New York City's Aquila Theatre Company performing Euripides' tragedy *Heracles* (July 17) and concerts with San Antonio's Yellow Rose Singers choir and the New Zealand Chamber Soloists, both groups performing at separate venues on the same day (July 13). With boats leaving Piraeus and Rafina and the trip lasting on average a little under 2½ hours with high-speed ferry, you have a choice of two different weekends of festival events to entice you

away from Athens' heatwaves and crowded beaches to some Aegean blue and a different kind of cultural history.



Composer and conductor John Rutter

8th Festival of the Aegean, July 9 to 22 at Ermoupolis, Syros Island. For more info, 22810-85192 (Apollon Theatre), www.festivaloftheaegean.com

Eilana Lappalainen, associate director of the festival