



H KAΘHMEPINH

Oh Fates...the Dilemma of Romeo and Juliet

Translated from
Kathimerini, July 20, 2007

July 20, 2007

“You decide who plays whom!” That was the invitation-challenge from the actors of the Aquila Theater Company of New York just before the play started at the historic Apollo Theater in Ermoupolis, Syros, rendering the audience an “accomplice” to a theatrical performance that characterizes the whole Festival of the Aegean.

This time, the third consecutive year this annual summer festival took place in Syros, the American-born conductor of Greek ancestry **Peter Tiboris** (the mind behind the festival’s programming and organization) decided not to limit it by just presenting classical music concerts. This year, after a successful premiere of Mascagni’s rare opera *Zanetto*, a vocal recital, and a staging of *Romeo and Juliet*, the festival will present two nights of Jazz music (today and the day after tomorrow) as well as an outdoor concert with songs of Asia Minor performed by Greek musicians who live abroad.

Casting Lots for Their Roles

What was that invitation the actors of Aquila extended towards the audience at the Apollo Theater? The idea behind it is each actor of the company has learned all the roles of the tragedy, and just before the performance the audience is asked to draw names from a small velvet pouch to assign roles. It becomes possible for a man to play Juliet (a direct reference to Shakespeare’s era when a strictly male cast alternated in different roles) and makes any age difference, as between father and daughter, obsolete.

We attended the first of two performances and it was more-or-less conventional: Juliet was a woman and Romeo a man! According to the theater company, they want the audience to participate in the “play of chance” played by “theatrical destiny” trying to simulate and approach the interpretations of Shakespeare’s era by introducing the element of the “unforeseen.”

The Serbo-American Natasha Piletich, who portrayed Juliet in the first performance, told us “I played the role of Juliet for the first time. The way we do it, every performance is completely different from the previous one. There is a basic pattern/plan as to our positions and movements on stage, a concept of Peter Meineck and Robert Richmond who made the arrangement and adaptation that we follow; however, the improvisation and unforeseen is always there.” Natasha admitted that she prefers to play Romeo. “In one of the past performances it happened that the other female actress of the troupe, Lindsay Rae Taylor, was playing Juliet and I was playing Romeo—that was a most interesting experience.”

The whole performance was very interesting, as well as the “feel” of being in the Apollo Theater. During the intermission we met with Peter Tiboris who stressed the fact that this historic theater was the main attraction to create the festival, saying: “The people of Syros have embraced the festival and that motivates us to try new ideas in the future.”