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After the Campsite, production by National Theatre of Northern Greece

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How the National Theatre of Northern Greece is Making a Social Impact

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The National Theatre of Northern Greece has adopted a forward-thinking and dynamic approach to making social impact. We explore how they are setting a new age

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Located in Thessaloniki, [The National Theatre of Northern Greece](#) (NTNG) was founded in 1961 and is Greece's largest theatre. Since it opened, the NTNG has been active in both the cultural and social spheres. Today, the cultural organisation consists of five theatre spaces, including two open-air theatres, and works with the Greek community and internationally.

This year has seen the cultural organisation take an increasingly active role in working with disenfranchised and vulnerable communities. Their new initiatives build on their long-standing commitment to social awareness and responding to the changing needs of the Greek community.

The most recent initiatives are the NTNG's work with refugees, which began a few years ago, and the new workshops they run for young people with disabilities. These workshops offer a mix of theatrical activities, improvisation, games and music lessons. The intention is to increase confidence and creativity, and to help young people (aged 12-30) enjoy and embrace the endless possibilities that theatre play affords. At a time when many young people in Greece face challenges, supporting those with disabilities is more important than ever. As Kostas

supervisor of the workshops, explains: “I believe through this class, made theatre their own home and they realised that this place belongs much as to anyone.”



After the Campsite, a production by National Theatre of Northern Greece | © National Theatre

The same is true of the workshops the NTNG runs for [refugees](#). This is the first theatre workshop by the NTNG for young people who live in reception and accommodation centres in Thessaloniki. Seventeen children participated in the making of a new work, titled *After the Campsite*. The play focuses on the dreams and ambitions of the children and teenagers within the community. Another inclusive initiative, the final work produced will be presented to the public at the Theatre Festival “The Future of Europe” this June. Not only does the

provide a safe and nurturing space for young people to integrate in, but also ensures increased exposure and support on an international

“It was a sharing experience”, says director Mihalīs Sionas. “In a show we felt accepted by the children. We got to know each other, we built a group and a trustful environment, we shared stories, we shared our things that are important to us. We tried to enable the young refugees their strengths and express their dreams for the future.”

The positive effects of these workshops were apparent for all involved. Stefania Zora states, “We all spoke a different language. Some of them a little bit Greek, some a little bit English. Despite our language divide somehow understand each other. Those differences helped to form communication rules.”



After the Campsite | © National Theatre of Northern Greece

Alongside the workshops, the NTNG takes an active approach to a variety of open and inclusive social policies. These include fundamental accessible ticket prices and proceeds of performances going to local charities. Recently, they have donated to Maria's Home (a single women's guidance and shelter) and the Shelter for Abused Women of the Municipality of Thessaloniki. The NTNG collaborates with organisations such as the Greek Union for Alzheimer's Disease, the KETHEA Rehabilitation Program, KAPI (a care centre for the elderly) and the Thessaloniki Centre for Recovery and Rehabilitation.

For those outside Thessaloniki, the organisation conducts regional tours to villages around the region. This ensures that local communities can engage with culture in a way that they would not otherwise have the opportunity to.



After the Campsite | © National Theatre of Northern Greece

These initiatives happen alongside the dynamic productions that are created by the NTNG.

theatre throughout the year. Their productions are devised by Greece as well as international writers.

Given the challenges faced by Greece, a commitment to fostering culture inspiring the imagination is crucial to the cultural evolution of the nation. There has been much talk about [Athens's cultural revival](#) in the wake of 2014. Last year, there has been less media attention on the transformation of cultural institutions across Greece more widely.

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