

# Pro Patria, Investigating the Polk Case – Υπερ Ελλάδος, Η υποθεση Πολκ στο προσκήνιο

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Leggi la **Recensione Pro Patria, Investigating the Polk Case – Υπερ Ελλάδος, Η υποθεση Πολκ στο προσκήνιο**

As Hamlet averred, theatrical playing holds up a mirror to nature, but as Brecht warned, art should not just be a reflective surface, but a hammer with which to shape reality. After 70 years of silence, maybe someone has finally started to pound away at the present.



Greek Abstract

Όπως βεβαιούσε ο Χάμλετ, το θέατρο πάντα σήκωνε ψηλά έναν καθρέφτη για να κοιτάζεται η Φύση, μα όπως προειδοποίησε ο Μπρεχτ, η τέχνη δεν θα έπρεπε να είναι μια απλή αντανakλαστική επιφάνεια, αλλά ένα σφυρί με το οποίο να διαμορφώσουμε την πραγματικότητα. Ύστερα από 70 χρόνια σιωπής, ίσως κάποιος άρχισε τελικά να σφυροκοπήσει το παρόν.

[riduci]

Italian Abstract

Come asseriva Amleto, il teatro porge uno specchio alla natura, ma come avvertiva Brecht, l'arte non dovrebbe limitarsi a riflettere, bensì, come un martello, deve dar forma alla realtà. Dopo 70 anni di silenzio, forse qualcuno ha cominciato a plasmare il presente.

[riduci]

In the beginning was the woman. Three women, to be precise. Two mothers, a widow, their lives intertwined by the same broken thread, *nolens volens*. In Pigi Dimitrakopoulou's **Pro Patria**, the female point of view is strong, vivid, necessary; it tells a tale of death and corruption through the proud eyes of an American bourgeois,

the loving hands of a Pontian migrant, the bitter tears of a lovestruck stewardess. It gives details, depth and substance to a bloody chapter of Greek History that would otherwise be as tall and insipid as the few stacks of papers documenting its unfolding. «1948-1949: An American journalist is murdered in Thessaloniki. The government is upset and foreigners intervene. An innocent man is imprisoned. The case closes. Seventy years after the assassination of George Polk, a theatrical play gives voice to the faces of the drama that shocked the country. An innocent man's fate is judged by broken truths and powerful lies. And everything, always and everywhere, is decided "pro patria". We can lose a man if it is to save a country».

Walking tall into the parlous territory of History and its treacherous subjectivitisations of events, director and dramaturgical advisor Dimitrakopoulou leads with tact and firm hand her cast, showing tremendous respect for theatre both as an art form and a passion; a *poor theatre* per se, far from the razzle-dazzle pomposity of nearby big scenes, capable of stunning and moving with its human representation of... humanity. «I struggled to conceive both the victimizer and victim from the same point of view, just like rings belonging to the same chain made of people who had lost their lives. I tried so hard to understand them as "defeated shadows" of a half-ruined reflection on which History becomes blurred», she says, ignoring how successful her attempts turned out to be.

With a mix of symbolism (the tarnished mosaic at the centre of the scene, ideally representing the fallout from the Civil War) and ingenuity (a simple blanket becoming a body, a coffin, a commemorative flag) – and supported by a truly astounding set of interpreters –, **Pro Patria, Investigating the Polk Case** carefully puts together the fragments of a broken mirror to be held in the face of the Past and asks all the right questions under the inquisitive limelight of Truth: «Was it the judges' fault? Was the military police, the ministers or a decayed system, a corrupt regime responsible for what had happened? Were all the aforementioned responsible for that case? Besides, it doesn't make any difference now... "Is there anyone like Staktopoulos (the innocent man jailed by the right-wing police) nowadays?" I wonder. Are there any scapegoats of a society that sweep all its "trash" under the carpet? Are there any innocent people who are made to rot away in prison? Are there any journalists that serve the interests of the ever-changing ruling power? Are there any police officers or judges who sacrifice their sense of justice in order to serve the interests of a particular system?»

In hindsight, it is interesting to notice how most productions presented at the Small Theatre Moni Lazariston ([Gkiak, This Grave is Too Small for Me](#)), other than deserving a much bigger audience, play with the idea of History as fiction and vice versa, pointing the finger at the dangers of biased narrations, false confabulations and facts distortions in the name of a specific political or personal interest. And it is even more interesting to notice how, regardless of the époque or historical events represented, the contradictive shared memory of the Past warns us to beware of the absolute Truths of our times.

**The play was showed at**

**Small Theatre Moni Lazariston**

Kolokotroni 25-27, Stavroupoli – Thessaloniki

from 20 October 2018 to 10 February 2019

Wednesdays at 18.00

Thursdays and Fridays at 21.15

Saturdays at 18.00 and 21.15

Sundays at 20.00

the National Theatre of Northern Greece presents

**Pro Patria, Investigating the Polk Case – Υπέρ Ελλάδος, Η υπόθεση Πολκ στο προσκήνιο**

by Sophia Nikolaidou

director/dramaturgical advising Pigi Dimitrakopoulou

cast Efi Drosou, Sophia Kalemkeridou, Giorgos Kolovos, Christos Papadimitriou, Iosif Polyzoidis, Marianna Pouregka, Giannis Tsemperlidis, Nikolaos Kousoulis, Fani Xenoudaki, Kiki Strataki

sets/costumes Kostas Pappas

music Babis Papadopoulos

movement Alexis Tsiamoglou

lighting Dimitra Aloutzanidou

assistant Directors Katerina-Mayia Andrianou, Kiki Strataki

assistant set/costumes designer Marina Kelidou

production photography Tasos Thomoglou

production coordinator Maria Lazaridou

