

[cinema]

Wrinkles and Dreams

Strolling through the back streets of Agia Triada, you would think you were in another town inside Heraklion. This neighbourhood, deep in the heart of the old city, is a setting with an unusual beauty from a different time. And then, in 2008, the time came for this natural stage to become the protagonist in a film. The title of the film "Wrinkles and Dreams" is nostalgic in itself. It was directed by choreographer Gogo Petralli, who has now realised an idea she had in her mind three years before she was offered funding from local organisations.

By Maro Tsagkarakis - photographs by Zenia Drosou, Nikitas Albanis.

"The idea first came to me towards the end of 2005 when I felt the need to do something for the neighbourhood of Agia Triada, inspired by its Asia Minor atmosphere. I began to shoot experimental takes by myself using a small hand-held camera in corners which inspired me architecturally and photographically."

Gogo Petralli is inextricably linked to the neighbourhood, as she was born here. She has made the most of the opportunity which was given to her to showcase her neighbourhood through the thing she knows and loves the most: dance. "This project started with the need to show off this neighbourhood somehow, to honour my father in my mind and in my heart, with dance as the mode of expression."

Shooting took place "of the seafront in the north, Kalokairinos in the south, Giamalaki in the east, and Plastira in the west, as well as of the city walls," covering the wider area the neighbourhood encompasses.

The star of the film could, in fact, be Agia Triada itself; but there are also characters, in whose faces and movements the buildings, squares and roads of the area take shape. "The neighbourhood is the star, but the viewer needs to identify with a person. Therefore, the neighbourhood is personified as an aged man of Asia Minor decent (Giannis Pakes), who wanders around the back streets of Agia Triada and remembers, imagines, forgets. Beside him, like a spirit, is his childhood love (Maria Manoura) who died at an early age. We also see scenes from their childhood (David Nikolidakis-Outens, and Dafni Vretoudaki)."

As well as love, the other element which completes the double meaning of the film is death. "It is dedicated to my father, who died 20 years ago. So inside me there is also the element of death. There are also elements from fairytales, from completely personal experiences and from my own imagination. We have the three Fates (Ida Sidenvall, Drosia Triantaki and Irini Tsimpragou) who appear in three or four scenes, symbolising the beginning, the middle, and the end. Sometimes happy and in love, sometimes modern and other-worldly. More generally, the Fates are beings which particularly interest me, and they reappear in another project I am working on."

In order to bring the memories of the hero alive, they were hung on a carousel: fires were lit on Ai Gianni Street in September, and the Aivaliotis coffee house was resurrected and a real party was held there. "The film has 15 scenes, and each of these is a flash-back. It tells a story and I try, through each scene, to show various images; different places with different feelings and completely different qualities of memory. In the shoots at Aivaliotis people were crying. We created a scene with people of all ages enjoying themselves, something which is missing today. His wife Stella, who gave us permission to re-open the coffee house, cried when she saw the atmosphere."

Even though she was not making a documentary, the choreographer-director did not neglect the historical monuments of the neighbourhood (the Priouli fountain, the Palmeti fountain, the Dermata Gate, the Armenian church), which she integrates figuratively into many scenes of the film. "I don't show the people from Asia Minor with a historic reference. It is neither a fictional film nor a dance video. I wanted to use movement to show off the corners of the neighbourhood I had originally selected. Either dancing a *zeibekiko*, or throwing clothes in the air, with modern dance, or traditional, or even walking."

The film is based on the concept of community dance. This means that professional dancers work together with amateurs and residents of the area, all taking part in a dance event. "It has elements of community dance as it relates to the community. It revitalises it. Community work was not my only aim, because I managed to marry together the concept of an architecture dance video, revealing or immortalising certain corners of the neighbourhood. Giannis Pakes is a resident of the area. He has walked these back streets. In the narration, the person who speaks has lived what he speaks of. Just as when I try to exist through the emotions of my father, or Giannis or anyone who has lived in Agia Triada. It is community work in this sense. Of course, because the city is small and it is a very lively neighbourhood, everyone has a story, and it is really moving."

The choreographies represent missing dialogue, and the heroes' feelings are depicted using different styles of dance. "At the Dermata Gate the material is contemporary kinesiology. At Aivaliotis, Pakes dances a *zeibekiko* he created himself. However, there is also the well-known Asia Minor *Gioula*, which the musicians interpret vividly. It represents an age when they gathered there and enjoyed themselves, smoking a narghile. In the tango, the couple dance with simple footwork, as people used to dance in Europe during that period, but - at the same time - there is contemporary choreography at the same pace. On Ntentidakidon Street, where David and the children play ball, the young boys dance with elements of *Capoeira*. In the great fire scene, there are girls dancing classical ballet moves, and small boys dancing a *maleveziotis*. This is where the concept of contemporary dance comes from, taking elements from all different styles of dance and marrying them together."

The film conveys a feeling of nostalgia, as it is built on the personal memories of the director. She is sure, however, that many people will identify with the same memories and images she wants to resurrect. "I am a child who has grown up here, so the memories, the sounds, the images that I have, even the scents, are really intense. I remember shadow theatre performances, songs! Many people will be moved by the scene where Giannis goes down Ntentidakidon Street and says goodbye to everything, and everything is closed up. The whole market was there: the greengrocer, the cleaner's, the bakery, the knife shop, the needlewomen, the cobbler, professions which are close to vanishing. I have vivid memories of myself there as a child, as my father owned a corner shop. There was a mirror right outside, and everyone who walked past would stoop down to make sure they looked alright. And that mirror is still there today. It is at precisely that point that Giannis stops and fixes his hat. It is a moment which is particularly personal."

Many things may have changed in Agia Triada, but many others have remained the same. It is a little like the play "Avli ton Thavmaton", as the creator puts it.

"Yes. Children play on the streets, the doors are open. Old ladies go out and do embroidery and have evening parties. There are also lots of minorities. I have dealt with this fact in a humorous

way, putting two gypsies throwing clothes in the air in front of a very interesting, very sturdy, old building. It marries yesterday with today in a very figurative way."

The plot is based on the places, the scenes and the feelings that the director wanted to awaken. "The memories I have of fairytales from Asia Minor that my grandmother used to tell me in the summers when she came to see us from Chios were full of colours, perfumes and scents. When I wrote it, I heard it being told by my grandfather and grandmother. I use verbs like they do in Asia Minor. Both my mother and my father are from Asia Minor. These are the personal details which I have brought as my signature to this work."

This is the first time she has acted as director, and Gogo Petrali's experience was certainly shocking: "I felt like I was performing an experiment with myself as the guinea pig! I experienced it with all the love and enthusiasm my initial idea brought me, because this started long before I got the help of the municipality and district authorities, but without their help I don't know how long it would have taken to make it happen. As the director, I bore all the uncertainty and fear, all the wavering, the stress and the questions. If there was any kind of plan, it was clearly my love for this neighbourhood."

It seems that the residents themselves were mostly in favour of the whole project:

"What particularly moved me was that we all became good friends. We would go into their houses and they gave us power, they helped us and we listened to their stories: during the shooting we experienced deaths, accidents happened, we changed the filming because the neighbourhood was in mourning. Love, nostalgia and curiosity came out."

However, beyond the emotion of the matter, there is the goal of essentially showing off the area and its people: "Certainly I wanted to say something to the competent authorities with this film: that there is a core, it isn't just the seafront. Until twenty, or even fifteen, years ago, this neighbourhood was really lively. Then other shops opened, houses were deserted, and people grew old... And the tragicomic thing is that funding came through exactly at the moment the neighbourhood was taking its last breath. I want to believe that by awakening memories, people were awoken: a frightened old man understood that there was life out there, a mother saw children playing during filming, others saw strange people dancing with strange movements. This was also my biggest wager: to become culturally and politically active in Agia Triada, and not just that. To set up some modern art, history and community events. And to give people opportunities to generate some kind of help."

The film will be ready at the beginning of November. It will be played at various festivals, and will be shown on Cretan television next year. "One of my main aims is to show it next summer on walls in different parts of Agia Triada. A dance event combined with a film screening."

I found myself at one of the biggest takes of the filming - in the square between Dikty and Skra Streets - and I must admit that it was an incredibly tiring, but ultimately very enjoyable, experience for the fifty plus people who took part. Young girls were enthusiastically dancing around the fire, and the older boys were walking around above the Maedes - they almost certainly saw it as an opportunity for action and fun.

The young protagonist David, who was very comfortable and familiar with filming, liked the scene with the fire best - and not without reason, since a real fete was set up for the burning of the Maedes." His partner, Dafni, was a little more worried, but also excited to be playing in a film "so that old Heraklion can be learnt about in other areas" as she told me.

The main protagonist, Giannis Pakes, was born and bred in Agia Triada. "Memories of a different life came to me, from when the area was more densely populated, full of refugees. I believe that the area will be helped by this film, which will show something other than the seafront which everyone knows, or the area a little further in."

Anastasia Heiladaki, one of the professional dancers, was born in Agia Triada and still lives there. "I am really into the film. So I can easily understand the style and the message she wants to put across: the feeling of the old neighbourhood and how it was then, for everything to be modernised, what has been lost... This film will really help, because even a person from Heraklion who used to live here and now lives in Mastaba will see the neighbourhood being promoted."

Effrosini Arkoulaki, another dancer who has lived in the area for two years, is a little less optimistic. "Images are like adverts now. We see them and they pass us by; they don't have an impact on people's hearts. But as an experience it was perfect! We artists seek out moments like these."

On the other hand, Katerina Anastasaki, an amateur dancer, had a new experience: "It was new, but wonderful because people who had never worked with dance came together. And it was wonderful to see how they worked together, the children particularly." The residents were really friendly. They gave us their houses. We tried to give life, colour and sound to the square, which is also the film's leading lady."

Production: Fysalida Dance Company

Scenario / Direction / Choreography: Gogo Petrali

Director of Photography: Giannis Panagiotakis

Post-production editor: Giorgos Maridakis

Stills photographers: Zenia Drosou, Nikitas Albanis

Original soundtrack: Manos Sgouridis

Starring: Giannis Pakes, David Nikolidakis-Outens, Dafni Vretoudaki. Dancers: Ida Sidenvall, Effrosini Arkoulaki, Rhodoula Kraniotaki, Maria Manoura, Drosia Triantaki, Irini Tsimpragou, Anastasia Heiladaki,

Approximately one hundred extras, residents and amateur dancers also took part.