



ΖΩΓΡΑΦΕΙΟ
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 **MANDOULIDES**
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PRESS RELEASE

International Student Conference “Odysseas Elytis: Poet of the Aegean”

The International Student Conference entitled "Odysseas Elytis: Poet of the Aegean," organized by Zografeio Lykeio of Istanbul and Mandoulides Schools in Thessaloniki, under the auspices of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, has concluded. Because of the recent tragic events in Istanbul, this year the conference was held at Mandoulides Schools in Thessaloniki, from March 30th to April 3rd, and was dedicated to His All Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch and the 25 years of his work. Some three hundred students and teachers from 18 public and private schools of Greece, Cyprus, the U.S., and Istanbul met with prominent academics, writers, actors and journalists.

It was a unique journey on the wings of a dream, with "art, luck, and courage" over the universal roads mapped out by the work of our great poet Odysseas Elytis. The conference theme was multifaceted and compelling. Particular reference was made to the universality of Elytis and the Byzantine echoes of his great work, "Axion Esti." Issues relating to the translations of his poetry, to numerology, solar metaphysics, and the artistic measure of the poet, as well as to Elytis' theoretical exploration, and to his unique literary language were analyzed and discussed.

On the first day of the conference, after welcomes from dignitaries and the presentation of the official opening remarks by His All Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch Vartholomeos, the State Regional Theater of Kavala presented the musical performance titled "A walk in the Small Cyclades with the Grand Nautilus," directed by Thodoris Gkonis. Christina Maxouri and Filareti Komninos, along with actors of the Kavala theater, sang and read poems respectively. The moving welcome given by Mrs. Aikaterini Mantoulidou, the remarks by Metropolitan Bishop Elpidoforos of Prousis, who is Abbot of the Monastery of the historic Theological School at Halki, and the opening speech of the President of the Academy of Athens Thanasis Valtinos, deeply stirred the audience. Sissy Pavlopoulou, wife of the President of the Republic of Greece, honored the conference's efforts with her presence.

The second day of the conference began with the presentation of theatrical plays by the students of the Zografeio Lykeio and the Zappeion Lykeio of Istanbul. Lectures about the magical world of the mythology of the Aegean, the universality of Elytis' poetry, the surrealist images that we find in his work, and a discussion of Elytis as a translator followed. The second day ended with the screening of two films related to

the life and work of the poet directed by Giorgos Sgourakis and Lakis Papastathis, held at the Olympion cinema in downtown Thessaloniki.

On morning of the third day, participants visited the Vlatadon Monastery and attended the C' Sequence of the Salutations church services there, then visited the Telolgleio Art Museum of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, where they attended a lecture by the poet Ioulita Iliopoulou and toured the exhibition titled "The World of Odysseas Elytis: Poetry and Painting." In the afternoon session, participants discussed issues concerning miracles in the poetry of Elytis and the importance of transformation, love, and death. This was followed by recitations of Elytis' poems with special emphasis on his poetry set to music. Verses from the work of Elytis were sung by Makis Aivazoglou, Giorgos Papoudis, and Ioannis Poimenidis. Special honors were directed to actor Minas Chatzisavvas and to professor Vangelis Kechriotis, who had participated in previous conferences, and who had passed away last year. The evening ended with a concert by the Orchestra of the Music School of Volos, under the direction of Konstantinos Gravos and with soloist Vasilis Agrokostas.

On the fourth day of the conference participants visited the archaeological site of Vergina and the park of Agios Nikolaos in Naoussa. In the late afternoon at the Arts Space of Veria they participated in a broad discussion on "Talking Honestly about Odysseas Elytis," with academics, writers, translators, and students, coordinated by journalist Manolis Pimplis.

The epilogue of the conference was written in a unique way on the Sunday of the Cross at the Church of St. Dimitrios Sykeon, with the prominent presence of His Eminence Metropolitan Bishop Varnavas of Neapolis - Stavroupolis.

The International Student Congress devoted to Odysseus Elytis ended. Our fellowship with the poet became even more compelling, leading us along roads where only great art can lead man at a time when all is questioned.

The idea of the International Student Conference is gaining new friends and new supporters every year. Its organizational integrity and academic and cultural interest are now a challenge for everybody. The successful combination of academic interest, literature and school community activities, beyond their undeniable originality, open new fields of reflection and help to creatively approach works of our great poets and writers. The international character of the conference provides the opportunity for participants to exchange views, to meet and organize joint actions, thus implementing the universality advocated by art.

We would like to congratulate Yiannis Demirtzoglou, Director of Zografeio Lykeio of Istanbul, and Dr. Aspa Hasioti, Director of Mandoulides Schools, but also all those who worked with passion and supported the organization of such a large and revelatory conference.

Until we meet again next year, in the spring of 2017 in Istanbul, at the Sixth International Student Conference which will be dedicated to Giorgos Theotokas.