



*Hellenic Actors Union
Kaniggos 33, Athens
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As the Greek government cheerily celebrates Eleusis being the 2023 Cultural Capital of Europe, the rest of us, for 45 days and counting, have been dealing with an incredible crime against Culture.

On December 17th, 2022 we were informed of the shocking and exasperating Presidential Decree 85 signed by the Greek President Katerina Sakellaropoulou, which announced that all graduates of higher education drama schools, dance schools and film schools are to be considered workers categorized as having completed solely Secondary Education. In other words the diplomas and degrees of performing artists of public and private institutions alike, are now considered virtually meaningless.

With the signature of the highest state official, all artists of the performing arts are now officially equated to high school graduates and all that that categorization entails in regards to their labour rights. All this in addition, of course, to the exceedingly obvious ethical, artistic and professional invalidation this decree brings. This is the official tomb stone on the nearly thirty year fight of artists to reform their education and to have their professional rights recognized.

It is a fact that since 2003, following European instruction, upper tier education for artists has been abolished in Greece. Since then, the government of Greece, the country that proudly boasts internationally its identity as the “cradle of civilization” and the "birthplace of theatre," has purposely created a kafkaesque institutional gap where there is no plan or even discernible intention to create a Higher Education Training program for the Performing Arts. At the same time, there is no solution in sight for the chaos that has now come about for the thousands of performing arts graduates from 2003 until the creation of said program.

Unfortunately Greece is the only country in which this practice has been instated. The lack of recognition of our diplomas and moreover the refusal to change this unequal and unfair situation means that because our diplomas are equal to a high school diploma, we do not have access to masters degrees in our discipline. Individuals that hold a masters degree or PhD from a foreign university (that accepted them based either on a separate degree in a different field or by recognizing the chaotic reality that is Greece's educational system) find, upon returning to Greece, that these degrees are not recognized, that they have access only to the lowest tier of the unemployment benefits and that overall, their salaries have been reduced. This is a complete

targeted assault on Culture, the Arts and on professional Artists. It is an antilabor attack on our rights and our artistic identities.

For 40 days now the drama schools at the National Theater, the National Theater of Northern Greece and the Municipal Theater of Patras have been occupied by their students, running the risk of the losing the academic year of their studies. The professors at the National Theater Drama School are standing behind their students and have announced that they will resign from their positions by the 8th of February if this situation is not resolved. Today the National School of Dance is also occupied by its students, while the students at the drama school at the Conservatory of Athens and other private drama schools and conservatories refuse to attend. The situation is becoming critical.

For 60 days now the artistic world has been united in the streets taking public action in a number of ways and clearly stating its position against this abominable statute.

For 60 days now we have been meeting with political leaders to gain their support.

For days now the Government has not backed down in its position and has proceeded to lie and make various statements that go against our common sense.

Adding insult to injury, on Tuesday, January 31st the government made an amendment to a public statement made a few days earlier on social media by Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis. This amendment not only does not fix the damage done by the Presidential Decree 85/2022, it nullifies whatever rights artists had left. The amendment states that every type of emolument, payment or salary for artists will be defined by ministerial decisions made by the ministries of Finance, Culture and the Interior in addition to whatever other ministry is deemed relevant depending the circumstance. This means that from here on out the salaries of artists in the greater public sector in addition to the private sector will not be defined by the Collective Labor Agreement, but by the whim of the given government.

This is a direct attack on our worker's rights that sets a precedent in order to apply this model to other sectors. This regulation can only be described as a mockery. Let us not be ridiculed in this way. We will resist this attack and we will fight until our demands are met.

We demand:

- The withdrawal of the current classification of Performing Artists from the Presidential Decree 85
- The establishment of a Public University of Performing Arts free of charge for all students

-A definitive solution to the problem of the status of diplomas issued from 2003 until said establishment

-Collective Agreements for the theatrical and audiovisual private sectors as well as for the regional municipal theaters of Greece

-A generous increase in the amount of public funding for the theater

We ask for your support.

Yiannis Panagopoulos

Actor/Director

Chairman of International Relation of the Hellenic Actors' Union

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Yiannis Panagopoulos', is written over a horizontal line. The signature is stylized and cursive.