

In October 2024, CHORUS presented Amisthos Fylakas in Eleusis, a theater performance that brings to the forefront the collective memories of the local community, focusing on the marginalized figure of Panagiotis Farmakis. Developed through community research sessions in 2023 and numerous interviews conducted until May 2024, the project became a platform for Eleusis' residents to share their personal stories, their encounters with Panagiotis, and reflect on key historical events shaping the city at that time. These stories intertwine across time, sometimes clashing, diverging, and converging, all coming together in the performance.

Performance text:

Panagiotis was a man who searched for ancient artifacts, for stones, as he called them, on mountains of rubble and took them to the archaeological site of Eleusis. He was a pariah who contributed to the city, who contributed to our social fabric. He was a collector.

I wasn't afraid of him, maybe because I also saw my parents talking to him and getting very close to him. My mother, when she saw him, wanted to give him some money, and she always gave it to me to hand it over to him, so that Panagiotis wouldn't be scared by her, because he had a fear of people, but also so that I could get closer to him.

So I remember going to him, he would take it, and he'd say to me: "Are you well? Are you reading anything? You should read!" I felt a kind of pride, like a child, talking to him.

I had heard that he read a lot. I remember his eyes, they had a spark, his eyebrows were thick when he looked at you. I remember his voice, I remember how he walked.

When I found out he had died, I felt like I had lost someone close to me; a friend.

It had been a long time since I'd seen him, because he hadn't been out much lately. It felt like the end of a chapter.

K: Where was he born?

M: Here.

K: Where, in Eleusis?

M: No, in Darimari, which was later renamed Dafni.

K: Did he go to school there?

M: He finished elementary school there, in a single-classroom school, and then they went to Klidi, his mother's village.

K: Did he live there?

M: No.

K: So where did he live?

M: Basically in Eleusis. He would go back and forth to Darimari. He also passed through Thebes, Skourta, Menidi, and Athens. But he spent his whole life in Eleusis.

K: And how did he get around?

M: On foot, by trucks, by agricultural vehicles... but he would only ride in the back of the trucks... he wouldn't ride inside.

K: That's how he lived his life?

M: Yes, he lived his whole life like that, searching for ancient artifacts.

K: When was he born?

M: In 1930.

K: And what was his name?

M: Panagiotis Farmakis.

K: Was that what they called him, Panagiotis?

M: They also called him Panousis.

K: As a nickname?

M: No, his name was Panagiotis, Panousis.

K: What kind of person was he? Can you describe him?

M: He wore two jackets...

K: He had two jackets and would wear one or the other?

M: No, he wore both at the same time, and he also had a cloak, and he always kept it on his head and ran around the streets hunched over.

K: Where did he live?

M: It depends. Wherever they hosted him. They say he lived in a bakery, in a storage room, in a stable... because Eleusis at that time had a lot of cows... and on a staircase of an apartment building, where it was warm.

K: And what kind of work did he do?

M: He worked for a while at the mines of Skalistiri in Mandra, transporting straw to Thanasis Mylonas, there at the corner of Keleou and Karaiskaki, but his main (unpaid) job was collecting ancient artifacts and delivering them to the archaeological site of Eleusis.

K: And is that considered a job?

M: It was for him. And it was a very important job.

K: He was probably an eccentric person.

M: Some considered him that way.

K: He lived outside of society, so he was a pariah.

M: No, he lived within society, but society acted as if Panagiotis wasn't part of it.

K: So he was a pariah.

M: What does "pariah" mean?

K: We'll see right away.

The term "pariah" is a word that comes to us from India. It was coined there in the 16th century by European soldiers, missionaries, and scholars. Two centuries later, it would return and spread in European contexts. However, in the West, during the humanist period of the 18th century, emancipation didn't apply to everyone. The pariah emerges as the ignored figure of the recent declaration of human rights. In political speeches and debates, it represents slaves, free people of colour, Jews, women, the people, and the proletariat. Theatre and literature spread this image, and the pariah acquired characteristics of a cursed artist with the idealised, marginal persona. In romantic culture the pariah gains value due to the persecutions against them, without, however, ever being liberated.

To put it simply: A pariah is the lower-class person, the marginal, the inferior, the outcast — in other words, the black sheep, the eccentric, the fool, the madman of the village.

M: We are all made of the same material. Let's not begin labelling now. And let me tell you something—I don't consider Farmakis a pariah. He was an enlightened person.

K: Why was he an enlightened person?

M: Who else would have saved so many ancient artifacts?

K: Yes, but he lived on the margins. They considered him crazy.

M: Who considered him crazy?

K: The whole world!

M: Yes, and we've seen the "rational" ones. How they destroyed Eleusis, how they destroyed all of Greece. I wish we had more people like Farmakis; things would have been better. But now they are all gone. These "crazy" people you talk about, these eccentrics, the ones we consider mad—they stopped being part of society. Today, they are gone from the big cities. We hide them inside homes or institutions with pharmaceutical support. When and why did space stop existing for the margins? When did these people stop existing in public spaces?

M: He used to come to the bakery. (Katerina moves to the side of the table.). It was warm there. He wanted warmth. He was looking for a warm and protected space. (Maria sits on the cart.) He read a lot. He was always asking to learn. With the curiosity of a small child. How did it happen? What does this mean? He had a light around him. I remember his eyes, his eyebrows were thick. He would look at you.

K: As a child, I remember he gave me the feeling that he wanted me to sit with him so he could tell me things, stories. When you approached him, it was as if the surrounding environment disappeared, and you only saw Panagiotis, with a light around him. He was like a celestial being.

M: My mother used to say that when he was 13 or 14 years old, during WWII, the Germans—captured him and beat him continuously in the river for days, trying to make him tell where his father was. His father was in the mountains, in the resistance. However, one neighbour said that his life happened the way it did because they had already beaten him in the army.

K: So, when I was still a student of classical philology, I worked for financial reasons at the archaeological site. I went to the archaeology department and introduced myself. (Maria takes a cloak and covers herself with it.) I begged them, and they placed me here, in this area. It was around '65. Then, Panagiotis came and told me:

M: "Look, there's chaos in this town."

K: He was wearing two jackets, an overcoat on top, and something on his head, as if he wanted to hide inside his clothes. I thought it was strange. He told me:

M: "I guard the ancient site, and be careful, because they're planning to build houses here."

(Maria points to Katerina.)

K: I can't say that I took him seriously. But two days later, he came to the office at the museum and said:

M: "In this plot of land, I've found ancient remains, and you should go see, because a bulldozer is about to come in."

K: I went with whatever knowledge I had at the time. I thought the man must be right. I contacted the service. This happened countless times.

Archaeologists would come with their little shovels and tiny brushes, carefully starting to work. Panagiotis would be there, standing guard. In 99% of the cases, I believed him. And this continued to happen. He would notify me about any plot of land that needed attention. We had this connection. He would tell me: "There's a whole statue there. Go, and you'll see."

M: Once, we had found a plot with graves, and we were worried about what would happen that evening when we left. So, we left Farmakis to guard the excavation site all night. I told one of our conservators, who lived in Eleusis, "Go take him a plate of food, he's staying there until the morning."

K: Panagiotis had a unique ability. A special intelligence. He searched the earth and its contents, the ancient findings. He had the ability to evaluate, to dig into the earth, to search, and to see. How did Panagiotis know how to evaluate the finds?

M: Amazing things.

K: Once, they pushed him and he fell into the pit. Right where Alfa Bank is now. He had become a nuisance. They didn't want him around. It was during this excavation that they took his ladder, and he couldn't get out.

M: Another time, they locked him inside a well for three days, just to keep him out of the way so they could continue with the filling works.

K: He was the guardian of the ancient site. He would step in front of the bulldozers, and the foremen would beat him. He was their fear. Some called him "the informant of archaeology."

Filippos Koutsafis (director of the movie "Mourning Rock", which featured Panagiotis)

From the first week I began gathering material for Eleusis, Farmakis appeared as well. In some way, we were on the same path. I wanted to film the excavations on private land. Usually, they would dismantle whatever was there, and a building would take its place. This world wasn't buried; it disappeared. They would map it, photograph it. There was a stratigraphy of the city that came to light briefly and then vanished. At first, my interest was

to document this. Eleusis was an incredible treasure. Farmakis, a few stray dogs, and I, were adopted by Popi (the director of the Archaeological site at the time). We were the adopted ones of the archaeological site. That is an unbelievable stroke of luck. The film was made thanks to Popi. Those were relaxed times. Today, the use of spaces would need to be budgeted. The film was shot from 1988 to 2000. Panagiotis would go where excavations were happening. That's what he did in his life. He wanted to see and to preserve. He brought masterpieces to the archaeological site. He wasn't concerned with all the things that matter to us. He was like the birds from the sky: *Do not worry about tomorrow*.

K: Farmakis didn't worry about his food.

M: In fact, it was offered to him.

K: You had to offer him food, place it somewhere and then he would take it. He wouldn't just take it from our hands directly. My mother would leave a plate for him on the windowsill. At home, with others, he wouldn't eat; he'd take the plate, eat, and return the plate washed.

M: From us, he'd take it by hand.

K: And he didn't smell. That meant he bathed. Shall I bring some brandy?

M: Bring it. We talked. He was from Darimari. He read a lot. He had read all of ancient mythology. Every day he'd carefully read the newspaper; he wouldn't crumple it. He'd fold it carefully and give it back to the kiosk owner, who'd then sell it.

K: I remember him once, at night, in the rain, washing his clothes with a washboard.

M: Chrysoula's mother worked at a workshop and had some clothes that she'd give him. The neighbourhood was the common bond. We lived in "Paradise" area. In the Papakosta District.

K: He didn't take money when he ran errands. They'd give him money, and he'd pay bills but accept nothing for his effort. He didn't need us as some pariahs usually do, begging, asking, wanting us to pity them. He had dignity and pride.

M: Panagiotis cared deeply about people. When someone was sick or had a problem, he'd ask, "What are we going to do? How can we help?" I remember when I took the university entrance exams, waiting for results, Farmakis sat by the radio all day to listen for my name, to see if I'd passed the national exams.

K: When he stayed in my grandmother's storage room, he kept sacks of clothes and sacks of stones. The stones that Papageli wouldn't keep in the archaeological site, as they weren't of archaeological interest, he didn't discard because he believed they, too, had value. When my aunt got married, he kept saying for days he'd bring her a wedding gift. One afternoon, he brought her a nylon sack filled with his most precious possessions—those stones.

Furious, my aunt yelled at him: "Take these stones back! Return them to where you found them!"

M: I would let him watch my kids when they were little—I had three—and I'd run an errand. He'd sit there until I returned, a vigilant guardian. He was very trustworthy.

K: Once, when I was sick and didn't go to the archaeological site, he'd come by every day

to find out what was happening. He didn't leave until he saw me come out of the house and knew I was well.

M: When I finished school and was looking for a job, he told me, "Go to such-and-such factory—they're looking for engineers." He knew everything.

K: Later, he sent my daughter, after she finished law school, to a lawyer who was very good, to become her assistant so the girl could do her internship.

M: Since he thought I had some influence locally, he once asked a favor for a soldier who was far away, leaving behind a wife and young child. Could we, he asked, transfer him somewhere closer so he could see his child?

K: I was so surprised when he stopped me one day in the square and said, "A very good book on Euboea has been published. Don't miss it; go buy it." He knew, it seems, that I was from there and thought I should be informed about such an important publication!

M: Every night, if the last customer hadn't left yet from my father's café—my father was disabled—and my mother hadn't locked up, Farmakis wouldn't budge. He'd sit outside and wait. He worried about his people.

K: Panagiotis was a person who reacted to what was happening around him. He never spoke of what he did or what happened to him. This makes me think about the things I do and, mostly, the things I don't do. What do we do today?

M: I don't know what you're saying, but what enchanted me and what I can't forget was his sense of humor. He'd joke about what you said and what he said. He laughed at himself, too. Right?

K: He never told me crazy things, even though he seemed crazy. He never complained that something happened to him or that someone hit him or did anything to him. He was an unpaid guardian.

M: When you hand over antiquities, you're compensated by the Ministry of Culture. I did the paperwork, and they awarded him a symbolic fee. He never went to collect it. We have a special box labeled "Farmakis Collection."

K: And, most importantly, he brought us the head of a kouros. He found it among the rubble somewhere near the quarries.

M: He didn't just bring antiquities from Elefsina; he brought things from Boeotia too. Once he brought me a relief of a Thracian Horseman.

Katerina and Maria lower their voices gradually, speaking silently by the end.

K: Really? Only from Thessaly did he never bring us antiquities.

M: I'd see him, and my soul would tremble.

K: I had the same feeling.

M: I'd think, how am I going to organise all this?

K: Yes, every day, he brought something new.

M: The yard was filled with Farmakis's antiquities.

K: Poor man, may God rest his soul!

AUDIO *Kostas*: Farmakis walked a lot, whether he was going to Menidi to find stones or Elefsina. There's a spot (before reaching Skourta), an area high up on a mountain curve, completely rocky, from where you can see Oinofyta below, Schimatari, the sea, Halkida, all of Euboea across the way. Panousis would often go there, sit on the peak, and gaze. He'd sit for a long time, hunched, unmoving. He must have felt awe. On one of these outings, a truck unfortunately hit him. That's how people die—by other people.