



# The Anglo-Hellenic League

*Promoting understanding and friendship between Britons and Greeks*

## **THE LEAGUE CELEBRATES TIES BETWEEN BRITAIN AND GREECE IN AN EVENING OF ANGLO-HELLENIC FRIENDSHIP**

In the presence of a specially invited audience, including the Greek Foreign Minister HE Mr Nikos Dendias, and the Greek Deputy Minister of Culture, Mr Nikolaos Yatromanolakis, and with a virtual audience watching online, the British Ambassador HE Mr Matthew Lodge hosted at the British Residence in Athens an evening of Anglo-Hellenic friendship organised by The Anglo-Hellenic League.

The League, which is a charitable organisation based in London, has existed without interruption since 1913 and promotes friendship and understanding between Britons and Greeks, through cultural and educational activities and through fund-raising for charitable causes in Greece and Britain. The League's flagship event is the Anglo-Hellenic League Runciman Award, given annually for the best book written in English about Greece or the Hellenic World.

The Chair of the Council of the League, Dr John Kittmer, said: *"It is wonderful to celebrate the real and continuing friendship between Britain and Greece. Our event tonight was testimony to the unbreakable cultural and educational links between our two countries. Thanks to the great support of the British Ambassador, Matthew Lodge, and our two main sponsors, the A.C. Laskaridis Charitable Foundation and the A.G. Leventis Foundation, we were able to bring something of the Runciman Award to Athens, through the presence of Roderick Beaton, the 2021 winner, and Joshua Barley, whose work with David Connolly to translate the poetry of Michalis Ganas, was shortlisted by the Runciman judges. I am equally delighted that Dimitris Skyllas, one of the most exciting young musical talents of Greece, has given us the first VIP performance of his three new piano works. As the League looks to expand its activities and its membership base, the raising of our profile in Athens is a sign of our ambition."*

The cultural event consisted of a keynote address and two recitals.

Prof. Roderick Beaton FBA gave a talk entitled 'On being a British writer about Greece'. Prof. Beaton commented: *"The Runciman Award, administered for almost 40 years by the Anglo-Hellenic League, has a very special significance for anyone who writes in English about Greece, Greek culture, or the wider world of Hellenism. Sir Steven Runciman's books about Byzantine history and the Crusades set a benchmark for lucid and approachable writing, combined with original scholarship, and as I understand it the Award is intended to encourage this combination of qualities in new writing on those subjects. To win is an extraordinary privilege, to be included on the Award's longlist or shortlist a mark of recognition that publishers and authors all over the world are proud to acknowledge."*

The first of the recitals was a poetry reading by Joshua Barley of some of the poems of Michalis Ganas translated by Barley and David Connolly in *A Greek Ballad* (Yale University Press, 2019). The poems were read in Greek by poet and performer Pavlina Marvin. Joshua Barley commented: *"To translate literature is to inhabit the world of a writer from another culture. Translating a poet such as Michalis Ganas, who engages so deeply with his country's history and traditions, opens the deep and rich resources of Greek culture to English-speaking readers. I am delighted that the Anglo-Hellenic League decided to celebrate his work in Greek and English."*

The cultural programme ended brilliantly with a piano recital by Dimitris Skyllas of three new works composed by him: *Triptych*, *The Balcony Scene* and *The Dark Ballad*. Dimitris Skyllas commented: *"Born*

*and raised in Greece and a citizen of London, tonight I felt that I am creating a musical bridge, a dialogue between the two cultures. I was honoured to be surrounded by special individuals who represent the best qualities of both countries and to me, this feels like home.”*

Salutations were given by the Greek Foreign Minister, the British Ambassador and representatives of the Laskaridis and Leventis foundations.

*The evening, taking place under the patronage of the British Ambassador, was sponsored by the A. C. Laskaridis Charitable Foundation and the A. G. Leventis Foundation, with additional sponsorship by Akrathos Newlands Winery.*

#### NOTES TO EDITORS:

1. The Anglo-Hellenic League was founded in 1913 in the aftermath of the Balkan Wars, to counter anti-Greek propaganda in the United Kingdom. Dedicated to promoting Anglo-Greek understanding and friendship, the League has a long history of charitable, educational and cultural work. The League is a charity, registered in England and Wales, and is a membership organisation, based in London and run by a Council of trustees elected out of the membership. The current chair is Dr John Kittmer, British Ambassador to Greece (2013-2016).
2. The Anglo-Hellenic League Runciman Award was conceived in 1983, as an initiative of Earl Jellicoe, the then chairman of the League, in honour of Sir Steven Runciman, the distinguished historian of Byzantium and longest-serving chairman of the League (1951-1967). It was first awarded in 1986 and has been awarded most years since then. The award is given to the best book (or books) written in English in the previous year on a Greek subject. Books published in 2019 and 2020 were eligible for the award in 2021.
3. In 2021, the award was won by Roderick Beaton for *Greece: Biography of a Modern Nation* (Allen Lane, 2019; Patakis, 2020 (in Greek)). Roderick Beaton previously won the award in 1995 for *An Introduction to Modern Greek Literature* (Oxford: OUP 1994); in 2004 for *George Seferis: Waiting for the Angel – A Biography* (New Haven: Yale UP 2003); and in 2014 for *Byron's War: Romantic Rebellion, Greek Revolution* (Cambridge: CUP 2013). He is the only person to have won the award four times. Roderick Beaton is a Fellow of the British Academy (FBA), a Fellow of King's College (FKC), and Commander of the Order of Honour of the Hellenic Republic. From 2019 to 2021 he served as a member of the Committee "GREECE 2021", charged by the Greek government with overseeing events commemorating the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the start of the Greek Revolution in 1821, and from September to December 2021 as A.G. Leventis Visiting Professor in Greek at The University of Edinburgh. From February 2022, he is Chair of the British School at Athens for a four-year term. His latest book, *The Greeks: A Global History*, was published by Faber in the UK and by Basic Books in the USA in November 2021; a Greek translation will be published by Patakis in autumn 2022.
4. The competition for the Anglo-Hellenic League Runciman Award 2022 is underway. The panel of judges, chaired by Prof. Peter Frankopan, announced their long list in January 2022. See further: [www.runcimanaward.org](http://www.runcimanaward.org).
5. Joshua Barley's translations of Michalis Ganas (with David Connolly) were published by Yale University Press as *A Greek Ballad* and shortlisted for the Runciman Award in 2021. In summer 2022, he is due to publish the first translations of modern Greek folk songs in over a century with Aiora Press. Pavlina Marvin's first book, *Stories From All Around My World*, was published by Kichli Publishing in 2017 and received the Yannis Varveris Prize from the Hellenic Authors Association. As a writer and performer, she has participated in a wide range of interdisciplinary art projects and festivals.
6. Between an intellectual creative and a pop persona, Dimitris Skyllas is one of the most dynamic composers of his generation internationally. His work is influenced by values such as traditional rituals, laments and religious music, while it contributes to the fields of theatre, contemporary dance, visual arts and currently cinema. He often appears as a soloist of his piano music, while many of his pieces are performed by world-class performers. After his UK debut at Westminster Abbey in 2016, he appeared at the V&A Museum, the Royal Albert Hall and the British Ceramics Biennale. In Greece, the Onassis Foundation invited him to perform his piano piece "Abyss" at the first public appearance of Maria Callas' historical piano. In 2018 he composed the original score for the tragedy "Electra," staged at the Ancient Theatre of Epidaurus by the National Theatre of Greece. With "Kyrie Eleison" (2020), co-commissioned by the BBC and Onassis Stegi, he becomes the first Greek composer to write for the BBC Symphonic Orchestra at the Barbican Centre. As a consequence of his career path, Skyllas' life and music will become a full-length documentary film, produced by the Onassis Foundation (2022). The composer also signs the original soundtrack of the film.

7. Enquiries about the League can be made to [info@anglohellenicleague.org](mailto:info@anglohellenicleague.org) and about the Runciman Award to [runciman@anglohellenicleague.org](mailto:runciman@anglohellenicleague.org).

Council of the League

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