

# **An Exhilarating Theatrical Experience and Cocktail Party**

## **The Major Benefit Event for the Bellport- Brookhaven Historical Society**

**Saturday, June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2010**  
**4 p.m.**



**Performance:**  
**Bellport Middle School Auditorium**  
**35 Kreamer Street**  
**Bellport NY 11713**

**Cocktail Party:**  
**12 Bell Street**  
**Bellport, NY 11713**

## ***Cavafy: Passions and Ancient Days***

A solo performance based on the life and work of Alexandrine poet Constantine Cavafy (1863-1933)

Performed by Yannis Simonides, Emmy Award Winner

This year, the major benefit event for the Bellport-Brookhaven Historical Society will be a theatrical presentation in the tradition of Julie Harris's *The Belle of Amherst*, about poet Emily Dickinson. *CAVAFY: Passions and Ancient Days*, is a solo performance piece based on the life and work of the great modern poet Constantine Cavafy (1863-1933) who wrote in Greek but was born and lived in Alexandria, Egypt, as performed by Emmy Award winning actor Yannis Simonides. Cavafy was Jacques Kennedy Onassis' favorite poet and his poem "Ithaca" was read at her funeral.

Constantine Cavafy is the only modern Greek poet who is so well-known and admired that his work in translation has become part of English literature. Cavafy's poetry has been championed by and reflected in the work of some of the greatest writers of our age such as poets T.S. Elliot and W.H. Auden, and novelists E.M. Forster and Lawrence Durrell. In his poetry he is inspired by parallels between the modern age and that of the Hellenistic and Greco-Roman periods. Politics, history, eroticism, art and love of learning are the ostensible subjects of his very particular voice, conveying a pagan sensitivity to physical pleasure and a bittersweet sense of historic futility.

E.M. Forster, Arnold Toynbee, and T.S. Eliot were among the earliest promoters of Cavafy in the English-speaking world before the Second World War. His name reached a broader audience right after the war when he became the poet of Lawrence Durrell's city in the four novels of the "Alexandria Quartet". His strong reputation in American poetry circles really began when W.H.

Auden declared, in his 1961 introduction to the translation of the complete works of Cavafy, that for some 30 years this poet “has remained an influence on my own writing; that is to say, I can think of poems which, if Cavafy were unknown to me, I should have written quite differently or perhaps not written at all.”

But who was this modern master? Actor-writer Yannis Simonides evokes the remarkably prescient spirit that inhabits Cavafy’s work, gracefully weaving the author’s poetry into the story of his life in cosmopolitan, multi-cultural Alexandria. The riveting performance is accompanied by music and images of Cavafy’s time as well as of his beloved Alexandria.

After the performance, Benefit-Subscribers are invited to meet the performer at a cocktail party to be held in the Society’s Brown Building at 12 Bell Street.

Tickets are \$100 and include a cocktail party featuring Greek savories after the performance at the historical society’s Brown Building, 12 Bell Street, where the audience can meet Mr. Simonides. Please make reservations by calling 631-776-7640 or on our [website](#). To see a flyer for the event, [click here](#).



**Yannis Simonides**

Born in Constantinople and raised in Athens, Yannis Simonides, is a Yale Drama School trained Emmy-Award winning actor / writer/ documentary producer. He has served as professor and chair of the NYU Tisch School of the Arts Drama Department, and is the founder and director of the Greek Theater (Elliniko Theatro) in New York and of Mythic Media, a performing arts lab.

His performance work, past and ongoing, includes plays by Euripides, Sophocles, Aristophanes, Shakespeare, Brecht, Korres, Kambanellis and others, along with solo and ensemble pieces culled from the writings of C.P. Cavafy, General Makriyannis, Nikolai Gogol and others. He has received the support of the National Endowment for the Arts, The Greek Ministries of Culture and Foreign Affairs, The A. S. Onassis, I. Kostopoulos, S. Niarchos, M. Tsakos and A. G. Levendis Foundations, IBM, Time Warner and the Mobil Foundation. He co-produced Mikis Theodorakis’ 75th Birthday Celebration at Lincoln Center with the Montreal Symphony Orchestra and has been associated with the Annual Festival of Greek Music and Dance at Symphony Space in New York City, presented by the World Music Institute and AD&M Productions. He narrated the PBS specials *Axion Esti*, *Visions of Greece* and *Return to the Homeland*.

He recently wrote and directed SMYRNA, a docudrama on the post World War II Asia Minor genocides, which will be touring North America and Europe in 2011. He has performed the Apology of Socrates, in Greek, English and Spanish, at theatres, festivals, schools and universities in the USA, England, Greece, Cyprus, Turkey, Canada, Luxembourg, the United Emirates and Uruguay, and is scheduled to take it on tour in Egypt, Spain, Germany, France, Poland, Russia, Argentina, Mexico and Australia through 2012. As a directing member of The Readers of Homer, he has helped staged marathon audience-participation Readings-Celebrations of the Iliad and Odyssey on the island of Chios in Greece, at the Library of Alexandria, the Dahesh Museum in New York, and in Troy, Delos, Pylos, Malta, Sicily, Napoli, Ithaca and Montevideo, in Greek, Arabic, English, Spanish, Italian, Chinese, Dutch, Russian and Japanese, and with his colleagues he is bringing the Readers of Homer to the Dodecanese, Los Angeles, Sydney, and again to Alexandria and New York.

In 2009 he was honored by the city of Athens as Ambassador of Hellenism for his lifelong service to Greek arts and letters worldwide.

The GREEK THEATRE OF NEW YORK was founded in 1979, and it has since served Greek and English speaking audiences with acclaimed productions, nationally and internationally. The company has sought to approach the classical, medieval and contemporary Hellenic repertory with discipline, delight and occasional irreverence.

GTNY has always been mindful of nurturing young talent in all fields of the performing arts. Over the years it has become known for its festivals of new plays, its solo and ensemble performances, its children theatre tours and its imaginative staging of Greek oratorios. Ellen Stewart of LaMama has praised it as one of her brightest children, and Melina Mercouri supported it as one of the most accomplished theatres of the Greek Diaspora.

## **How Students can Request a Complimentary Ticket for the Performance**

A limited number of student tickets to ***Cavafy: Passions and Ancient Days*** are provided free of charge thanks to the generosity of audience sponsors. To request a complimentary ticket, please email us and include the name of the school you attend at [cavafy@bbhsmuseum.org](mailto:cavafy@bbhsmuseum.org). Your ticket will be held at the door in your name on June 5th. Seats are limited; first come first served. Admission is to the performance only.