



Global learning through theatre

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Outsider in

Story inspiration for the Izmir MS festival 2022-2023

There's a hillside in Turkey where you can stand and see the ruins of three great religions. From that vantage point, it's hard not to be in awe of the vastness of history and the momentary accomplishments of humankind...This place is Ephesus: A place which has held meaning to diverse cultures and different spiritual beliefs through the years and a place where people have come together over time to worship women.

It all began with the influence of an all-powerful female goddess. Local legends claim the site itself was initially set down by powerful women, the mythical Amazons, a group of dominant women warriors especially devoted to the worship of a mother goddess named Cybele, The Great Mother Goddess symbolised universal motherhood. She was the great parent not only of gods but also of human beings and beasts. She was called the Mountain Mother, and special emphasis was placed on her maternity over wild nature. Cybele also had the power to spare mankind from the sometimes destructive cycles of nature. For the people of that time, Cybele came to be regarded as a protectress of civilisation itself and she was highly respected.

Then they say that the city of Ephesus was supposedly founded by Androkolos, the mythological prince of Athens. The oracle at Delphi gave him a message: *Build a great city, one of the largest and most beautiful the world has ever seen. A boar and a fish will show you the way.* Androkolos was confused by the oracle's message at first and rightly so...how might you react if you received a message like this? Yet one night on his travels, whilst his men were cooking, a fish leapt from the pan, setting the woodland alight and a boar rampaged from the wooded area which Anrokolos had to then kill. Inspired by this moment, the prince decided to start a new Greek city on the site. He renamed it Ephesus, and the worship of Cybele transitioned to the Greek worship of Artemis.

Although Artemis was, in Greece, the Goddess of hunting. The Ephesus goddess Artemis, sometimes called Diana, was the goddess of fertility. She was often pictured draped with eggs or multiple breasts, symbols of fertility, from her waist to her shoulders and referred to as the Mistress of Wild Beasts. The temple of Artemis was huge, and her cult – run entirely by

female officials – was the religious centre of the whole area. Images of Artemis, large and small, dominated the city.

Ephesus flourished! It had some of the richest soil in Asia Minor, access to the silk road and a port to trade with the rest of ancient Europe. A city of old marble was built containing a stadium that sat tens of thousands of people, a two-story teaching hospital, a sprawling library, a theatre and the Temple of Artemis, one of the Seven Wonders of the World. After hundreds of years of Artemis worship, pagan cults were replaced by Christianity with the efforts of St Paul and John – When St Paul arrived in Ephesus preaching a belief in one god, he was confronted by the Ephesians chanting their slogan "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians".

Ephesus was eventually burned down on July 21, 356 B.C.E. by agents of a man called Herostratus, who reportedly sought worldwide fame by destroying the world's most beautiful buildings. It was later rebuilt several times. Its ultimate destruction though occurred at the hands of a Christian mob... In the Christian era, the worship of their goddess was banned but they did though transfer some of the attributes of Artemis to the Virgin Mary.

You see, they say that Ephesus is the city where Saint John and Mary came together to Meryam Anna Evi (Mary's House) She supported the apostles and other men and women who were fleeing persecution. According to the tradition of Ephesus, John and Virgin Mary stayed together after the crucifixion as Jesus entrusted Mary to John the Evangelist. Ephesus is a place that is a threshold of east and west today; Europe and Asia, The Christian world and the Muslim world coming together to worship women, motherhood and fertility. Outside you can find a prayer wall, a collage of small paper letters containing prayers of women from all over the world.

