

## Choursoglou Clip 1

### **Philippides:**

Good morning. It is the 29<sup>th</sup> of June, 2012, I find myself today with the well-known Greek film-maker Periklis Choursoglou, who has also been teaching for some time at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. Today I will ask of him a few questions, the answers to which we look forward to hearing. Mr. Choursoglou, welcome...

### **Choursoglou:**

I'm glad to be with you.

### **Philippides:**

[Welcome] to our program. We would want to hear both about the work you have done in your own films, for instance if you want to talk about your most recent work, and/or alternatively how you see your role as a professor of Film at the University of Thessaloniki.

### **Choursoglou:**

I'll tell you a brief story. In 1973, when I was 18 years old and had to decide what I would do in life, I decided to apply to the University of Thessaloniki to study Math. I wanted to study Math and actually become a Math teacher, i.e., I didn't want to go into research. I wanted to become a teacher. I think that I'd been influenced significantly by a French teacher in my school. My vision was quite idealistic: I would teach in a Greek village on Crete, and on Saturdays I would round up the students and talk to them about Math. I liked to show others what I knew, to communicate my knowledge to them.

I got into the university, as I told you, I got into the University of Thessaloniki. I wanted to leave my parents' home. I happened to room with a kid who is called Alexandros Mountzis. He lived in the room next to mine and he was very fond of the cinema. I say it like this because the thing I loved was the theater. I said that I would study Math, but afterwards, as a hobby, I would also go to the School of the Art Theater, to see how the theater is; I would still keep Math as my main subject. My fondness for the theater as a hobby was slowly changed by my roommate; he turned me towards film.

After finishing the first year at Thessaloniki, I transferred and came to Athens to enroll in the sole existing film school, the Stavrakos Film School. And I was fortunate: the School wasn't outstanding, yet the first person I met there was a very well-known Greek film-maker, Pantelis Voulgaris, who became my teacher and subsequently I served as his assistant in five or six full-length feature films. It's not just a professional relationship, but one where Voulgaris calls me his little brother and I call him my big brother. It's mainly from him that I got my knowledge of film.

After working for a while as an assistant, I began to work as a film-maker. I made two short films. The first one was based on a scenario by Pantelis Voulgaris, titled *The Cuff Links*. The second is called *Touch Typing*, and the third (not short-length) is a film with the title *Style*. For the short-length films, *Touch Typing* and *Style*, I wrote the scenarios myself. I have also written the scenarios for the four full-length feature films that I have made. The first, of 1994, is *Lefteris Dimakopoulos*. In 1997 I directed *The Man in Grey*. In 2004 I made *Eyes of Night*. In 2008/2009 I completed *The Building Manager*. In 2010 I directed a series of documentaries for Greek television: thirteen portraits of people who practice traditional crafts. The series is called *I Met Happy Craftsmen*. Now, having completed this TV series, in the second half of 2012 I am preparing my fifth full-length film.

At the same time I teach in the University's Film Studies Department. I related previously the story of how I started out with Math, because my love of conveying what I know

found ground ... actually during the 2003 Film Festival (held annually in Thessaloniki, in November), the then Minister of Culture, Evangelos Venizelos, (at last) announced the founding of the first University film school in Greece, within the Fine Arts Faculty at the University of Thessaloniki. Fine Arts included up to that point three departments: Visual and Applied Arts, Drama, and Music Studies; Film Studies was then added as a fourth. This autonomous Film Studies department in the Fine Arts Faculty of the University of Thessaloniki requires five years of study. It has seven applied specializations: film-making, scenario, production, editing, sound, photography, costume design, and one theoretical direction with history/theory.

Following the then Minister of Culture's (Mr. Venizelos) announcement, some months later, without any further information I called the central phone number of the University of Thessaloniki and asked, "I've heard that a new Department of Film Studies will be formed: is this true?" And they said, "Yes, it is true". Within the Fine Arts Faculty there was a small office that had some information; they told me that in a few months I would read an announcement in the newspapers that the University would be accepting applications from prospective teachers. I then told them that I wanted to teach. I said, "Will there be a Film Department? My name is Choursoglou and I would like to teach there". They responded, "Fine; pick up a newspaper in a few months, when the announcement will be printed".

That is how it happened. And I believe that all the work that I have been doing now for eight years, from 2004 to 2012, is based precisely on the principle that I want to share what I know with others. I believe absolutely that when I teach I am taught in return by my students. I don't believe that I have some knowledge and simply transfer it. I always get something from a class, from each student. At the same time I continue to make films and I believe that -- and this is one direction in our Department -- we are all instructors who are involved in film-making. I consider it important that the people who teach an art can best pass this art along to younger people, if they are at the same time producing the art. I said this some months ago in a faculty meeting of the Film Studies Department. I said, "Don't ask the faculty of the Department to be restricted only to teaching. Give us the time to make films, because as we make films we become better teachers and as we teach we become better artists." That's it, in a few words.