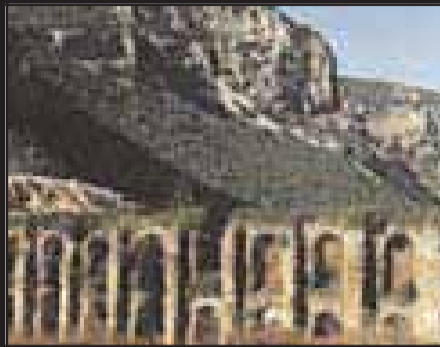


Nikopolis: The City of Victory

Nikopolis (Greek for "city of victory") is an ancient city in western Greece. It was founded by the Roman Emperor Augustus to commemorate his naval victory in Actium against Mark Antony and the Queen of Egypt, Cleopatra in 31 BC.

Its strategic location at the edge of a gulf in the Ionian Sea made it an ideal place for the Romans to impose their dominance in the region. Nikopolis quickly became a commercial, port city, as well as an important religious capital, favoured by the emperor who had granted the city freedom and privileges. Augustus also established the "Actian" athletic games, and honoured the God of light, Apollo.

The 8th century marks the beginning of the city's



decline. First it was looted by Arabs and Bulgarians and was finally destroyed in the late 11th century. It was only in the beginning of the 20th century that the city saw the sun's light again when it was revealed through archaeological excavations.

Among the sites excavated we find walls dating back to the Roman era, a theatre and an Odeon, baths, an aqueduct and a Roman house, all restored. Visitors can also admire a variety of findings in the local museum of Nikopolis.

La noche es para mi Soraya to release her song in Greek and Swedish!



Soraya the Spanish Eurovision representative revealed during her press conference that she will be releasing her Eurovision entry *La noche es para mi* in Greek and Swedish. She also expressed her gratitude to the fans for their support. She is more than happy and honoured to represent Spain at the forthcoming Eurovision Song Contest. The Spanish delegation flew in from Madrid to Moscow on Friday. Soraya and her entourage have been busy rehearsing and preparing for the Eurovision final next Saturday. During the press conference Soraya hinted that they haven't revealed the whole concept of their performance yet, they are still keeping a surprise or two.

Spanish Soraya shot to fame several years ago in the casting show *Operacion Triunfo* and has released several successful albums since then. She recorded a duet with Belgian star Kate Ryan last year who had represented Belgium in the 2006 Eurovision Song Contest. Now Soraya is on that big stage, too - will she be able to reach the top 10 here in Moscow?

The song was originally intended for a Greek artist, but it ended up with Soraya who convincingly won the Spanish final earlier this year with it, getting the highest number of televotes from the Spanish viewers. Soraya didn't reveal her dress for the final night, she was wearing casual clothes, just as her backing singers and dancers. The choreography of *La Noche Es Para Mi* is very distinctive and one can see that the Spanish team has put a lot of effort into the performance. Soraya got huge roars of applause from the Spanish journalists and fans in the hall and she took her time to speak to them.

Shadow puppeteer Spatharis passes away

Evgenios Spatharis, a Greek master of shadow puppet theater, has died days after sustaining injuries in a fall, a state news agency reported Sunday. He was 85.

Spatharis died Saturday at an Athens hospital, where he was being treated after falling from a staircase Wednesday while he was on his way to a performance. No details have been given about the type of injuries he suffered.

He was well-known throughout Greece for his puppet theater stories revolving around the hunchbacked character "Karagiozi," who came to represent the virtues and vices of the average Greek. Cunning and rebellious against authority, Karagiozi was often shown as a liar and petty thief who worms his way out of difficult situations.

The stories, deeply satirical, featured a varying cast of characters whose accents and mannerisms poked fun at various people in Greek society. Authority figures were represented by a Turkish pasha.

Spatharis said recently that, while touring a western Greek island, he was warned not to present a local character or he would be beaten up. "I played the character in the end,



and they applauded me," he told the *Tachydromos* magazine in an interview published earlier this month.

Shadow theater, now a dying art form in Greece, is thought to be from China or India and arrived in Greece when it was part of the Ottoman Empire from the mid-15th century until the late 1820s. For decades after Greece won independence in 1829, shadow theater was the only organized form of public entertainment. Spatharis bemoaned the lack of gifted performers, and called for the Greek state to help preserve the art. He himself set up a shadow puppet museum at his home in a suburb north of Athens.

"Evgenios Spatharis served the shadow-puppet craft with remarkable dedication for decades," Greek Prime Minister Costas Karamanlis said. "All of us who grew up watching

the figures of these heroes bid farewell to someone very close to our heart."

Spatharis was born in Kifissia Jan. 3, 1924, and followed his puppet master father, Sotirios Spatharis, into the craft, and became involved with painting and the making of shadow puppets after completing his studies. He began to perform himself during the German occupation of Athens during WWII, putting on shows in theatres, embassies, the Gennadion library and other venues.

From his first performance in 1942, he worked until the end of his life, most often as a solitary performer manipulating his puppets behind a small semitransparent screen.

He also collaborated with theater and dance companies to expand the art form. He recorded 15 stories starting in the 1960s.

Spatharis was a member of the Chamber of Artists of Greece and the UNESCO International Theatre Institute, while he has carried out several international tours. He also took part in several painting exhibitions in Athens, Zurich, Paris and New York.

He was awarded the Rome Prize in 1962, the Toscanini medal in 1978 and several other awards, while in 2007 the Greek culture ministry awarded him the title of 'Grand Master' in recognition of his great contribution to his art.

