

# *News, Events, and Exhibitions at the* **National Hellenic Museum**

*Museum Newsletter*

*Summer 2026*



An Ancient Hero Has His Day in Court: The Trial of Odysseus

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Discovering the Enduring Relevance of the Past

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# A Letter from the Museum Chairman

Dear Friends,

The National Hellenic Museum continues to grow as a vibrant public square where history, culture, and contemporary life come together in genuinely meaningful ways.

Through ambitious partnerships with leading museums, universities, and organizations, the Museum is expanding its role as a cultural leader—bringing people together across generations and communities to discover the histories and experiences that connect us.

Your support makes this work possible. From children on school visits, to lifelong learners attending public programs, to online audiences joining us from across the country and around the world, the National Hellenic Museum creates space for conversation with history, culture, and one another.

The Museum also preserves and shares the Greek American story through its collections, archives, and oral history program. In doing so, it helps connect people to the stories and traditions that continue to shape our community today.

You will see this spirit reflected throughout this newsletter—in Museums in Conversation, where we partner with cultural institutions across Chicago; in our Year of the Odyssey programming, which connects the Museum to a broader cultural moment; and in the exhibitions, educational initiatives, and public programs that expand our reach and impact.

As you look through these pages, you will see a museum that is growing, evolving, and becoming an important cultural presence—made possible by a community that believes in the power of connection.

As Chairman, I am proud of what we have built together, and excited about what lies ahead. Thank you for your continued friendship and support. I hope to see you soon at your National Hellenic Museum.

Sincerely,



John P. Calamos, Sr.  
Chairman, Board of Trustees



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The mission of the National Hellenic Museum is to share Greek history, art, and culture and preserve the Greek American story in meaningful and relevant ways.

Save the Date



# Gala 2026

Join us for the National Hellenic Museum Gala

**Saturday**  
**September 26, 2026**

## **Hilton Chicago**

720 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60605

6:00 PM Reception

7:00 PM Dinner, Auction, Music, Dancing

Headliner Performance by Giorgos Tsalikis

—*Black Tie Optional*—

Featuring  
**Giorgos Tsalikis**

Generously Sponsored by:  
Mr. and Mrs. Ernest C. Karras  
John and Martha Cannis



Tickets and Sponsorships:

**NationalHellenicMuseum.org/Gala2026**

gala@hellenicmuseum.org | 312.448.2850

# Enduring Relevance of an Ancient Reckoning Trial of Odysseus



## Odysseus Found Not Guilty

An audience of over 700 gathered at the Harris Theater for the *Trial of Odysseus* this March. The legendary king of Ithaca and his defense team stood before a distinguished panel of judges and a jury tasked with weighing the actions of a Bronze Age hero against the principles of Classical Athenian law.



## Thank You To Our Generous Sponsors

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- Sotos Law Firm, James G. Sotos

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Defense attorneys **Patrick M. Collins** (King & Spalding LLP) and **Tinos Diamantatos** (King & Spalding LLP) successfully defended Odysseus, the King of Ithaca and hero of the Trojan War, powerfully portrayed by **Christos Vasilopoulos**. They faced a spirited prosecution by **Antonio M. Romanucci** (Romanucci & Blandin, LLC) and **Daisy Ayllón** (Romanucci & Blandin, LLC), who called to testify Odysseus's court poet and lifelong friend, Phimeus, portrayed in a compelling performance by **Leonardo Sfondouris**.

The trial was presided over by **Hon. Georgia N. Alexakis** (U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois), **Hon. Jeffery G. Chrones** (Circuit Court of Cook County), **Hon. Sara L. Ellis** (U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois) and **Hon. Anthony C. Kyriakopoulos** (Circuit Court of Cook County). The judges concluded by a vote of three to four Odysseus was not guilty.

The *Trial of Odysseus* offered yet another opportunity for the National Hellenic Museum to make history come alive, inviting audiences to engage directly with the enduring questions of the Hellenic legacy. Support for this landmark event was made possible through the generosity of donors and sponsors.

We thank all who joined us for this unforgettable evening of history, drama, and debate.



**Save the Date for Trial 2027**  
Thursday, March 4, 2027 at 7 P.M.  
Harris Theater, Chicago

Thank you to the Trial Committee:  
**Andrea Darlas, Hon. Anna H. Demacopoulos (Ret.), John V. Kalantzis, and Jim Sotos.**



**Our Esteemed Jury**



Moyo Adeolu, *Reporter & Social Host, Axios Chicago*

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Hon. Frank J. Andreou, *Circuit Court of Cook County, Law Division, Trial Section*

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Professor Nicholas Doumanis, *Professor and Illinois Chair in Hellenic Studies, University of Illinois Chicago*

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# This Summer at the Music Box Theatre **The Odyssey**



## Special Screening of Christopher Nolan's *The Odyssey* with Post-Screening Q&A and Guest Panel

**Saturday, August 1, 2026 at 2 PM**

### Music Box Theatre

3733 N. Southport Avenue  
Chicago, IL 60613

The program will bring together historians, classicists, film scholars, and artists for a post-screening discussion on why Homer's ancient epic continues to speak to audiences today.

### Tickets and registration:

Visit [NationalHellenicMuseum.org](https://NationalHellenicMuseum.org) for updates.

## Why the Odyssey Matters

Homer's *Odyssey*, the ancient Greek epic and arguably the oldest surviving work of Western literature, has found its way onto the silver screen many times. The first cinematic adaptation of *The Odyssey* appeared in 1911, at the very dawn of cinema, in the silent-era classic *L'Odisea*, directed by Giuseppe de Liguoro. More than a century later, Homer's stories continue to be reshaped for new generations.

The omnipresence of the stories of the Trojan War and its heroes for more than 2,500 years makes it clear that the question is not "Is Homer still relevant?" but rather, "Why do these poems, which first took their present form in the heart of the Bronze Age, still speak to us in the 21st century?"

Homer's epics continue to shape how we understand war, heroism, exile, homecoming, and the search for meaning. The *Iliad* and *The Odyssey* ask timeless human questions: What do we owe one another? How do we endure suffering? What does it mean to belong? Whether sung by ancient bards, printed in books, taught in classrooms, or projected onto the big screen, Homer's stories continue to endure because they speak to something fundamental about what it means to be human.



## Gathering in a Vibrant Public Square

### 2025 Arthur G. Nikelly Lecture Marks World Philosophy Day

This year's Arthur G. Nikelly Lecture for the Preservation of Hellenic Heritage and Culture was presented in celebration of World Philosophy Day. In partnership with the Consulate General of Greece in Chicago, the Museum welcomed Professor John D. Proios of the University of Chicago for a compelling lecture, *Escape the Cave: Rethinking Plato for a New Age of Freedom*.

Community members filled the Museum for an evening of lively questions and discussion inspired by Plato's enduring ideas. The lecture series, endowed by Ms. Eve Nikelly in memory of her brother Dr. Arthur G. Nikelly, reflects the Museum's ongoing commitment to exploring Hellenic heritage and culture in meaningful and relevant ways.



### Living a Global Life with Professor Gazmend Kapllani

This December, journalist, novelist, and scholar Gazmend Kapllani joined the Museum for a conversation with Director of Research and Content Dr. Katherine Kelaidis on literature, language, and borders. Professor Kapllani reflected on his experience as an Albanian immigrant in Greece, his journey to becoming an award-winning writer in Greek, and what it means to build a life across cultures and identities. The evening offered a timely reminder of the power of storytelling to connect people across generations and communities.



## Gathering in a Vibrant Public Square

### Inaugural AGORA Lecture Explores Greek Political Thought

In January, the Museum partnered with the Consulate General of Greece in Chicago and the ENOSIS Federation of Illinois to inaugurate the AGORA Lecture Series. The evening featured Professor Elizabeth Kosmetatou of the University of Illinois Springfield presenting *From the Polis to the Republic: Greek Political Thought and the Making of the American Democratic Imagination*. Her lecture explored the influence of Greek political thought on the development of American democracy and sparked thoughtful discussion among attendees.



### Another Successful International Women's Day

The Museum was proud to once again partner with the Consulate General of Greece in Chicago for International Women's Day. This year's program featured Professor Artemis Leontis of the University of Michigan, who delivered a riveting lecture on Eva Palmer Sikelianos, the American artist whose work helped inspire a modern revival of Greek culture. Following the lecture, Nicole Mitroussias, Petros Kourkouvis, and Vangelis Mitsopoulos filled the Museum with music that beautifully complemented the evening's themes of memory, creativity, and women's lives.



## Understanding Greece's Role in the European Union

For the second installment of the AGORA Lecture Series, the Museum welcomed Dr. Konstantinos Kourtikakis, Teaching Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, for a timely lecture on Greece's evolving role within the European Union. Dr. Kourtikakis explored how Greece has navigated questions of identity, democracy, and political power within a shared Europe, prompting thoughtful conversation among attendees. The event was presented in collaboration with the Consulate General of Greece in Chicago, the ENOSIS Federation of Illinois, and the Hellenic Professional Society.



## Celebrating the International Day of Greek Language

The Museum partnered with the Consulate General of Greece in Chicago, ENOSIS Federation, the Center for Hellenic Studies, and the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign to celebrate the International Day of Greek Language with a vibrant afternoon of lectures, poetry, and performance. More than 120 guests joined the celebration.

The program featured a lecture on Sappho by Professor Calliope Dourou of the University of Chicago, poetry readings by University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign students in ancient and modern Greek and English, and a dance performance led by choreographer Jessica van de Koot and her ensemble. Together, the program highlighted the beauty, history, and living legacy of the Greek language.





# *Learning Through Culture, History, and Discovery*

## **Guided Experiences for Every Generation**

Education is at the heart of the Museum's mission. Each year, our guided tours welcome students, families, educators, and lifelong learners to explore Greek history, art, and culture together. Through storytelling and conversation, visitors discovered the richness of the Hellenic world while making connections to their own lives and communities. Schools, churches, and community groups are invited to schedule tours at [Education@HellenicMuseum.org](mailto:Education@HellenicMuseum.org).





## **Museum Programs Beyond Our Walls**

NHM's educational outreach also brings Museum programs directly into schools. Through activities such as Junior Archaeology digs and Readers' Theatre workshops, students experience the ancient Greek world through participation, creativity, and play. This year, outreach programs served 300 students at Rotolo Middle School, 120 students at Indian Knoll Elementary, and participants at the Hellenic American Academy Summer Camp, where students engaged in hands-on activities. We look forward to reaching even more students and communities in the year ahead.

## **Field Trips That Bring Learning to Life**

NHM partners with public, private, and parochial schools to create field trips that complement and deepen classroom learning. Programs support Common Core and Illinois Learning Standards, and this year we are expanding offerings for schools using the Core Knowledge Language Arts (CKLA) curriculum. Students step into the ancient world through archaeological digs, mythology workshops, and Greek-inspired artmaking that transform literature and history into hands-on experiences. By combining creativity, literacy, and discovery, these programs help students build lasting connections to the past.

## **Bus Reimbursement Available for Greek Community Groups**

**Are you part of a church, school, or community organization in the Greek community?** Thanks to a generous grant from the Hellenic Foundation, your group may be eligible for bus reimbursement for a visit to the National Hellenic Museum.

To learn more, contact [Education@HellenicMuseum.org](mailto:Education@HellenicMuseum.org).



## Building Connections through Culture

The National Hellenic Museum proudly launched Museums in Conversation, a major initiative bringing NHM together with institutions across Chicago to create shared programs and explore connections across cultures and communities. The initiative reflects the Museum's belief that museums can bring communities together through dialogue, traditions, and shared experiences.

Our first collaborations included the University of Chicago's Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures and the Ukrainian National Museum. Together, we explored themes ranging from Greek immigration to Orthodox Easter traditions through panels, family programs, reciprocal admission opportunities, and special behind-the-scenes experiences.



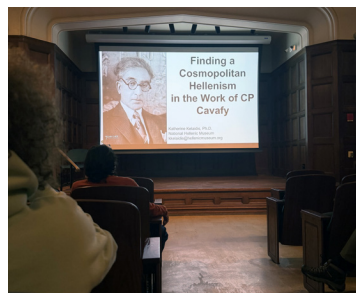
MUSEUMS IN CONVERSATION

The series continues with the Heritage Museum of Asian Art, exploring how everyday rituals, stories, and traditions preserve heritage across generations. Programs include a public roundtable discussion and a family program featuring a Chinese tea ceremony alongside Greek coffee traditions. Members of the National Hellenic Museum receive free admission to partner institutions throughout the partnership period, with reciprocal admission opportunities continuing through May and June.



Scan to learn more and participate in Museums in Conversation

[NationalHellenicMuseum.org/museums-in-conversation](https://NationalHellenicMuseum.org/museums-in-conversation)



## With Gratitude and Friendship



On behalf of the National Hellenic Museum, we extend our heartfelt gratitude to Consul General Emmanuel Koubarakis and Consul Georgia Tasiopoulou as they prepare to conclude their service in Chicago this August.

The Museum was honored to work alongside Emmanuel and Georgia during their time in Chicago. Their collaboration, friendship, and enthusiasm meant a great deal not only to the Museum, but to the broader Greek American community and to the many people and institutions whose lives they touched throughout the city of Chicago and the Midwest.

Their time in Chicago leaves behind a lasting impact. And because the Greek poet Homer taught us that our journeys often bring us back to places and people, we know this is not goodbye, but instead:

**Καλή τύχη. Εις το επανιδείν.** Good luck. Until we see each other again.



## For the Museum's Mission NHM Associates Share Their Passion

The NHM Associates are building energy, community, and connection around the Museum's mission by bringing together the next generation of leaders. Through programs and events, the group is helping shape a vibrant future for the Museum.

We asked two members of NHM Associates, Lexy Prodromos and Nicholas Theofilos about the group and why they chose to be involved. Here is what they said:

### Why did you become involved with NHM Associates?

**Nicholas:** I was interested in becoming an Associate because it allowed me to finally step up and feel like a part of something bigger in the Greek Community.

**Lexy:** I have always loved the National Hellenic Museum and view it as such a point of pride to have an entire museum dedicated to preserving and promulgating our culture.

### Please share any upcoming events or programs currently being planned by NHM Associates.

**Lexy:** We are excited for our upcoming 2nd Annual Rooftop "Night at the Museum" in September which will precede the National Hellenic Museum gala.

**Nicholas:** Some Associates, including me, are assisting with the Museum's Annual Golf Outing, taking place on Friday, June 5.

### Who is eligible to join NHM Associates?

**Lexy:** Anyone that has an interest in preserving Greek culture and heritage through the NHM is welcome to join the NHM Associates!

### What is your interest in Greek history and culture and what does that heritage mean to you?

**Lexy:** Modern Greek history and the story of immigrants coming to this country is one that resonates with so many other cultures that call the US home, and so preserving those stories for future generations is very important to me.

**Nicholas:** I am proud to be Greek and this pride in my heritage is what I feel being Greek truly is, to never shy away from your heritage and beliefs and to do everything you can to make sure it continues for the future generations ahead of us.

### Interested in being an NHM Associate?

Contact Elena Kountoures Nowak at [EKountoures@HellenicMuseum.org](mailto:EKountoures@HellenicMuseum.org) or reach us via our Instagram page: [@nhmassociates](https://www.instagram.com/nhmassociates).



# Connecting Greece and America

## Welcoming the Evzones to NHM



NHM was honored to welcome members of the Presidential Guard of Greece, the Evzones, during their visit to Chicago for the Greek Heritage Parade. Their visit was a special and meaningful moment for the Museum, reflecting the deep pride, history, and cultural traditions the Evzones represent for Greeks and Philhellenes around the world.

Their appearance at the Museum created a memorable and moving moment. NHM extends special thanks to George Reveliotis, President of the ENOSIS Federation of Illinois, for helping arrange the visit and to 2nd Lt. Paraskevas Kokkinakis.

### Who Are the Evzones?

The Evzones are Greece's elite ceremonial guards, with roots in the Greek War of Independence. Best known for standing watch at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Athens, they remain one of Greece's most revered national institutions, representing history, military tradition, service, honor, and remembrance.



With gratitude to the visiting Evzones: 2nd Lt. Paraskevas Kokkinakis, and Privates Athanasios Kateris, Dionysios Gounaropoulos, Vasileios Kokkinakis, Georgios Kontopodis, Konstantinos Themelis, Evangelos Paschos, Nikolaos Kanavos, Vasileios Mito, and Kyriakos Magkriotis.

## The Ambassador of Greece to the United States Visits NHM



We were honored to welcome the Ambassador of Greece to the United States, His Excellency Antonis Alexandridis, along with Greek Embassy officers Ms. Connie Mourtoupalas and Ms. Alexia Papadosifaki, to tour the National Hellenic Museum. The visit offered an important opportunity to explore the Greek American experience through conversation, history, and cultural exchange. NHM is deeply grateful to Consul General of Greece in Chicago Emmanuel Koubarakis, Consul Georgia Tasiopoulou for helping arrange the visit and to NHM Board of Trustee's Vice-Chairman Jim Logothetis for being present to join in welcoming our guests to the Museum.

## In Memoriam **Themi Vasils**



NATIONAL HELLENIC MUSEUM, THREADS OF TRADITION:  
THE WEDDING, GALA: Courtesy of Diane Alexander White

### **Celebrating the Life and Legacy of Themi Vasils**

*(Dec. 9, 1924 – Feb. 6, 2026)*

Themi Vasils fell asleep in the Lord. Fiercely devoted to her Greek heritage, Ms. Vasils was an early director, volunteer, and steadfast advocate for the mission of the National Hellenic Museum. Her tireless contributions to the Museum's earliest days helped shape the institution we know today.

Together with Jim Mezilson, Themi led a dedicated group of volunteers who made it possible for the Museum to offer programs and welcome the public to its first home at 400 North Franklin. Her leadership, generosity, and commitment helped build the foundation for the Museum's future.

With her gentle and dignified demeanor, Themi cultivated relationships across the Greek American community and beyond, helping ensure the Museum would grow and flourish. She was also a trusted leader during the effort to establish the Museum's permanent home in the heart of Chicago's historic Greektown neighborhood, helping build the support and momentum that made it possible.

Themi's legacy lives on in the Museum she helped build and in the community she served.



DORA STRATOU GALA AT THE CHICAGO HISTORY MUSEUM:  
Courtesy of Diane Alexander White



NATIONAL HELLENIC MUSEUM, THREADS OF TRADITION:  
THE WEDDING, GALA: Courtesy of Diane Alexander White

# Investing in the Museum's Future

## Pissios Family Foundation Supports Greek Language at the Museum

The National Hellenic Museum is deeply grateful to the Alexander S. Pissios Family Foundation for a generous \$10,000 grant supporting Greek language access at the Museum. This meaningful investment will help launch the Museum's efforts to create new opportunities for people of all ages to engage with Greek language across generations.

The Foundation's commitment to developing, enhancing, and preserving Greek culture, education, and language makes this support especially meaningful to the Museum. We value the opportunity to build this partnership and look forward to sharing more about the program this grant will help make possible.



ALEXANDER S. PISSIOS  
FAMILY FOUNDATION

## GARA Supports the NHM Oral History Project

The National Hellenic Museum is deeply grateful to the Greek American Restaurant Association (GARA) for a transformational gift of \$100,000 to support the Museum's Oral History Project at the Frank S. Kamberos Oral History Center. This extraordinary commitment will help expand the Museum's efforts to preserve the Greek American story through the voices and lived experiences of those who shaped it.

Through oral history, the Museum captures personal stories, family histories, and the journeys that helped build communities across the country. GARA's support will help strengthen this work, including efforts to preserve the stories of Greek Americans whose contributions to the restaurant and hospitality industry have had a lasting impact on American life and culture.



## Membership Matters

Members are at the heart of the National Hellenic Museum. Of course, membership includes benefits such as free admission, special discounts, and priority invitations, but what continues to inspire us is that individuals join because they believe in the institution—in the importance of cultural connection, gathering with community, and helping ensure the Museum continues to thrive for future generations.

Member support helps make the Museum a vibrant place where people and communities come together to engage with ideas, traditions, and stories that continue to matter.



**Become a Member Today**  
[NationalHellenicMuseum.org/  
become-a-member](https://NationalHellenicMuseum.org/become-a-member)

## Ways to Support the Museum

Every act of generosity helps advance the National Hellenic Museum’s mission in ways that inspire and connect communities across generations. Many supporters also choose to honor their family, celebrate a loved one, or recognize their business through these opportunities.

### Sponsor Exhibitions, Events, Programs

Help create experiences that bring people together through culture, learning, and shared experiences that strengthen community.

### Make a Planned Gift

Leave a legacy that endures through a planned gift, retirement account, life insurance policy, or appreciated securities that help sustain the Museum for future generations.

### Purchase a Legacy Brick

Honor a loved one, celebrate a milestone, or recognize your family with a lasting tribute displayed at the Museum.

### Matching Gifts through Your Employer

Double or triple the impact of your support by checking with your Human Resources department to see whether your employer offers a matching gift program.

To learn more about ways to sustain the Museum through financial support, contact us at: [Development@HellenicMuseum.org](mailto:Development@HellenicMuseum.org)



**Make an Online Gift Today**  
[NationalHellenicMuseum.org/Donate](https://NationalHellenicMuseum.org/Donate)



## NHM Online: Learning Without Borders

Explore all things Greek through engaging online programs that connect audiences across the country and around the world. Whether you are a student or lifelong learner, NHM's virtual experiences make it easy to learn, discover, and participate from anywhere.

### NHM Discussions

Join thought-provoking online conversations exploring mythology, art, philosophy, and the Greek diaspora. A welcoming space for curious minds to exchange ideas, spark insight, and build meaningful connections.

### NHM Online Book Club

Read, reflect, and discuss books on Greek history, mythology, and works by Greek and Greek American authors. Share insights, discover new perspectives, and enjoy thoughtful conversation in a lively and welcoming community.

### NHM Online Film Club

Watch and discuss films inspired by Greek mythology. Explore how timeless stories come to life on screen in a relaxed online space for lively discussion and fresh perspectives.

### NHM Young Readers Online Book Club

For readers ages 10–14, this club explores Greek mythology through fun, engaging discussions. Meet new friends, dive into classic myths, and discover the joy of reading together.

### Join Us Online!

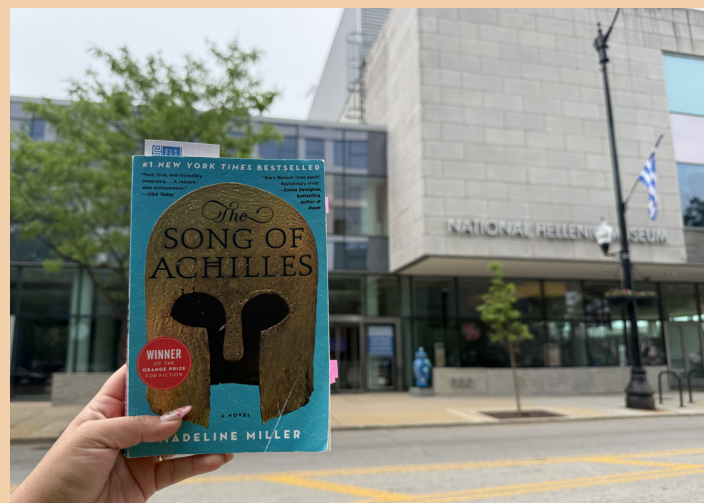
Register on the National Hellenic Museum's Eventbrite page or scan the QR code below to join the adventure.

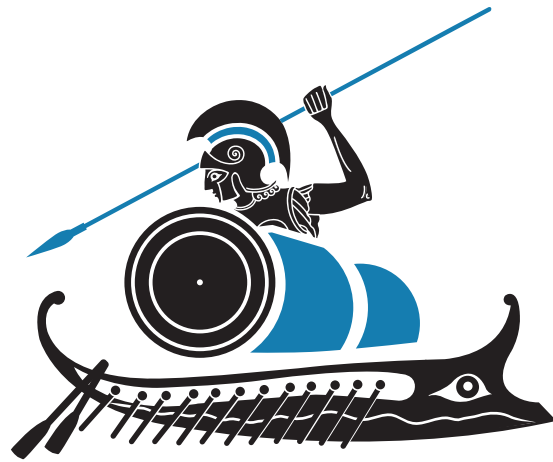


## New This Summer: NHM Staff Book Pick

What happens when NHM Staff read the same book? This summer, NHM staff are reading Madeline Miller's *The Song of Achilles*. The novel sparked conversations about Homer and why ancient stories continue to resonate today. Rather than keep those conversations to ourselves, we decided to record one and share it with you.

Premiering July 30 on the Museum's YouTube channel, NHM staff will discuss *The Song of Achilles* and explore themes of friendship, love, heroism, and fate, while considering how contemporary authors continue to reinterpret the ancient world for new generations. Grab a copy and follow along.





# HOMERATHON

**TWO DAYS. ONE EPIC READING.**

Join NHM and UIC for a community reading of Homer's *Odyssey*.

Free and open to all.  
Sign up to read or just stop in to listen and enjoy.

**Thursday, October 29**

12:30–8 PM



**Homer Happy Hour**  
6–8 PM



**Friday, October 30**

10 AM–4 PM



At The National Hellenic Museum  
333 S. Halsted Street | Chicago, IL 60661



**Register to Read**  
a short 3-minute passage.

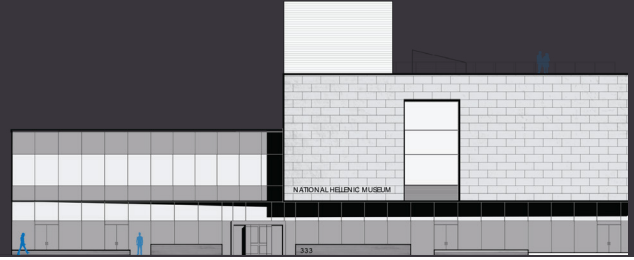
[NationalHellenicMuseum.org/Homerathon-2026](https://NationalHellenicMuseum.org/Homerathon-2026)



**LIBERAL ARTS  
AND SCIENCES**

Department of Classics  
and Mediterranean Studies

# News, Events, and Exhibitions at the National Hellenic Museum



National Hellenic Museum  
333 South Halsted Street  
Chicago, IL 60661



Learn more, donate, or stop by  
[NationalHellenicMuseum.org](https://NationalHellenicMuseum.org)



## News, Events, and Exhibitions at the National Hellenic Museum

*Museum Newsletter*

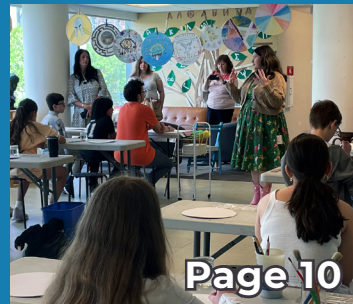
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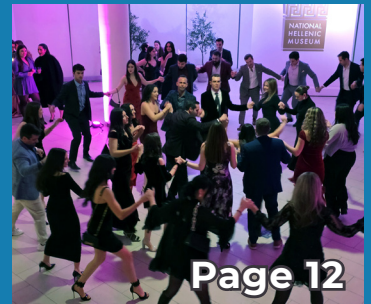
The Trial  
of Odysseus



A Vibrant  
Public Square



Inspiring  
the Future



Building  
Connections

**Museum Public Hours:** Thursday - Sunday 10 AM - 4 PM

**Tours are available seven days a week.**

To schedule a tour, email [Education@HellenicMuseum.org](mailto:Education@HellenicMuseum.org) or call **312.544.1221**

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