THE FRIENDS OF ANTIQUITY
26th ANNUAL ANCIENT HISTORY DAY, 20 MARCH 2021
THEME: “SPECTACLE”

Program

9.10—10am (Speaker 1) Emeritus Professor Trevor Bryce: “Ancient Near Eastern Spectacles: Displays of Power and Propaganda and Shows for the Gods”

10—10.50am (Speaker 2) Dr Amelia Robertson Brown: “Corinth, Syracuse & Constantinople: Ancient Greek Drama outside Athens”

10.50—11.15am MORNING TEA (25 mins )

11.15—11.30am Book launch: Emeritus Professor Barry Nurcombe’s new translation of the Iliad to be launched by Professor Alastair Blanshard, Paul Eliadis Professor of Classics and Ancient History; to be followed by a couple of readings by the author

11.30am—12.20pm (Speaker 3) Professor Alastair Blanshard: “The Festivals of Athens”

12.20—1.10pm (Speaker 4) Assoc. Prof. Tom Stevenson: “The Triumphs of Pompey and Caesar: Spectacle and Competition in the Late Roman Republic”

1.10—2.15pm LUNCH (1 hr 5 mins)

2.15—3.05pm (Speaker 5) Dr Estelle Strazdins: “Spectacle and Commemoration of the Dead: the Case of Herodes Atticus”

3.05—3.55pm (Speaker 6) Dr Yvette Hunt: “Pantomime: Imperial Rome’s Forgotten Spectacle”

3.55—4pm Vote of thanks to all speakers and participants: Dr Paul Eliadis AM, President of the Friends of Antiquity

4pm Close

PLEASE NOTE THAT THE R D MILNS ANTIQUITIES MUSEUM WILL BE OPEN DURING THE LUNCH PERIOD
Emeritus Professor Trevor Bryce: Ancient Near Eastern Spectacles: Displays of Power and Propaganda and Shows for the Gods
Throughout their history, vast swathes of the ancient Near Eastern world were ruled by a small number of Great Kings. These kings asserted their rule over their subject states partly through military force; but propaganda, spectacle, and public shows of power played an important role in demonstrating their authority. Perhaps the most awe-inspiring show of royal power was the display of rich plunder which a victorious king brought back from his military campaigns. This was on display for all to see as it was paraded through the subject territories on his way back to his royal capital.

Dr Amelia Robertson Brown: Corinth, Syracuse & Constantinople: Ancient Greek Drama outside Athens.
All the extant ancient Greek dramatists were Athenians, yet several of their works played, or even premiered, outside of Athens in the 5th century BC. Ancient Greek drama developed from traditional songs, music and dances for the worship of Dionysos from the Dorian cities of the northern Peloponnesse, including Corinth. Hellenistic and Roman productions of ancient Greek dramas proliferated in the Middle East and in the western Mediterranean, especially on Sicily and at Rome, becoming ever more spectacular over time. Even in Constantinople, some ancient Greek dramas were staged over a millennium after their first premieres, strongly influencing both medieval texts and Christian liturgies.

Professor Alastair Blanshard: The Festivals of Athens
No other city held as many festivals as Athens. In the fifth and fourth centuries BCE, annual state expenditure by Athens on entertainments was unrivalled in the Greek world. This talk examines a number of these spectacular festivals. In particular, it focusses on the Great Dionysia and the Great Panathenaia. These two festivals mobilized the whole city and attracted visitors from all over the Mediterranean. Looking at the festivals gives us an insight into how the ancient Athenians thought about their relationships with the Gods, their fellow citizens, and other Greeks. These festivals were part of the mechanism by which Athens was able to regulate its Empire and achieve cohesion amongst the various social and economic factions in the city. Athens was a place that took its fun very seriously.

Assoc. Prof. Tom Stevenson: The Triumphs of Pompey and Caesar: Spectacle and Competition in the Late Roman Republic.
Triumphs were not simply great spectacles. They were arenas for competition between successive warlords, who took the opportunity to surge past eh claims made by predecessors and rivals. The aim of this talk is to demonstrate how the triumphs of Pompey and Caesar were each calculated to increase in competitive fashion the claims of these generals to power and pre-eminence.

Dr Estelle Strazdins: Spectacle and Commemoration of the Dead: The Case of Herodes Atticus
The air of this talk is to examine a number of spectacular funerary monuments associated with Herodes Atticus, the famous senator and patron who lived in Greece in the second century AD. Among other impressive monuments, he is responsible for the “Odeion of Herodes Atticus” in Athens, built to commemorate the death of his wife Regilla, and still used for a variety of theatrical and cultural performances today.

Dr Yvette Hunt: Pantomime: Imperial Rome’s Forgotten Spectacle
“The pantomime dance was introduced at that time, (it had not existed previously; Pylades and Bathyllus were the first to make it a career), as well as other things which remain to this day the cause of many evils.” (Zosimus 1.6.1)
In 23 BCE, the emperor Augustus introduced a new form of spectacle to the people of Rome, pantomime dance. An insanely popular competitive format of solo interpretive dance, it was accompanied by fights, frays, and fanaticism. The Roman empire was filled with theatres, and often pantomime dance was what filled these venues. Emperors grew up with these dancers, owned these dancers, and occasionally wanted to be these dancers. This paper will look at what made this entertainment so popular.