

Astera Titan Tubes Illuminate at 2025 Athens Epidaurus Festival

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Lighting designer Christina Thanasoula of Athens, Greece-based creative design studio, Creative Lighting, has a penchant for invention and thinking out-of-the-box while crafting her art, and was recently a keynote speaker at the 2025 Showlight symposium in Dijon, France.

The 2025 Athens Epidaurus Festival provided an opportunity for Christina to demonstrate her imaginative approach and utilise Astera's popular Titan Tube fixtures in fresh and invigorating ways for two grippingly intense and very different dramas, the world premiere of *Blindness* directed by Emily Louizou; and *Phenomenon* directed by Katerina Giannopoulou.



Phenomenon was viewed by curators from international theatre festivals, invited by the Epidaurus Festival, as part of the “Greek Agora of Performance” programme (grape), which aims to systematically promote Greek artistic visions to the world of international theatre and dance.

Christina uses lighting to weave emotion, meaning and depth into a diverse array of narratives spanning performance genres like opera, drama, dance, theatre, and live music. She sees light very much as a collaborative visual tool for enhancing, painting and atmospherically engineering spaces and places.

Blindness

Blindness is based on the novel by José Saramago, adapted for stage by Simon Stephens, and tells the story of a highly contagious epidemic of blindness which uncompromisingly interrogates the spirit and meaning of humanity in highly destructive circumstances. It was staged in Venue E of one of the festival’s main sites at 260 Peiraios Street, a charismatic, bare-stage former factory in central Athens.

The main setting for the play was an abandoned psych hospital ward in the middle of nowhere, complete with raw, crude, and uncomfortable fluorescent lighting – characteristic of so many institutions.

Christina needed a high-quality, versatile lightsource offering an excellent array of whites plus some very specific colours to faithfully replicate this unnerving environment.

Having worked with Astera products for some time, always finding fresh and different applications for them, she included 24 x Titan Tubes in the technical specification and equipment list needed for staging the play four months in advance and well ahead of even the first rehearsals.

This ensured that the Titan Tubes would be viewed as a main feature of the performance’s visual identity.



“The stage needed to look dirty, musty, dilapidated,” she explained, “Lighting played a key role in defining the location and assisting the action, and I needed fixtures with good light dispersion and smooth, realistic and very accurate colour shifting.”

As the Titan Tube has a very contemporary look, Christina and set designer Thalia Melissa worked closely to disguise them in some battered scenic housings that helped create the stark ambience of the psych ward, where they now resembled institutionalised hospital fluorescents, effectively becoming fundamental to the scenography.

The set department did a brilliant job of creating scuffed and worn-out covers for the Titans,

which were hung in the roof of the performance space and powered through wired connections.

They were the main lighting element of the production, supported by other LED sources and some tungsten lighting.

Around 140 lighting cues were programmed into a ChamSys MagicQ console.

Christina knew Titan Tubes would work for the numerous lighting treatments she envisioned and noted that “silent running was also essential” due to the proximity of the audience to the stage and the intensity of the performance.

She loves the “massive” colour palette of the Astera Titan LED Engine together with the smooth colour mixing and refined dimming. Flickering and oscillating effects were programmed to give an additional layer of illuminative texturing together with a series of dirty, unpleasant red, green and amber flourishes.



The Titan Tubes were rigged in rows that accentuated the 30-metre depth of the space, also allowing movement effects between the linear rows of lights following the fast and pacey action



of the piece, while syncing to the tempo of Irene Skylakaki's specially created soundscape.

"It was a fine balance of creating emotion whilst not making it too overwhelming for the audience, ensuring that lighting enhanced and supported the actors, making everything more realistic and yet stimulating everyone's imaginations," she noted.

The critically acclaimed production was enthusiastically received, with all performances fully sold out.

Phenomenon

Two weeks later, also for the Epidaurus Festival, Christina was lighting *Phenomenon*, a tense contemporary study of knowledge and doubt written by Greg Liakopoulos and inspired by Wittgenstein's *On Certainty* - staged in Venue D at 260 Peiraios Street. The performance postulates on dialectical issues related to distinguishing between real and artificial in an era where rendering and simulation technologies are widely accessible.

Many scenes are set in a car with live camera feeds to screen and projections. Christina worked closely with set designer Niki Psychogiou - who also created the costumes - and camera operator Yorgos Kyvernitis, and chose Titan Tubes, this time running them wirelessly and applied in a more classically cinematic context as in-car fill and for key lighting of the protagonists.

The luminaires were also utilised for highlighting dramatic moments and effects e.g. when a body showed up in the trunk of the car.

The 8 x Astera Titan Tubes had to be carefully positioned and colour-balanced to match the live camera feeds of the filmed actors in the car to pre-recorded background video content of the highway, complete with passing cars and street lights, which was "particularly challenging," noted Christina.

Meticulous fine-tuning of colour and intensity ensured that all lighting fixtures (both tungsten and LED sources) appeared consistent and accurate on camera, while also delivering a cohesive live experience for the audience watching the actors on stage. Their performance still had to be interesting and emotion-evoking.





Balancing the picture for both digital and human eyes is galvanising, and “the Astera fixtures were a great help here,” stated Christina.

Titan Tubes were also used directly as handheld practicals by the actors who moved them across the top of the car, creating an illusion of passing lights above the roof. Being lightweight and easy to handle without any wires, they were effortlessly incorporated into the show.

As it was a camera environment, Astera features like flicker-free operation and high CRI were vital, as Christina used the Titan Tubes similar to a gaffer in composing lighting for TV recordings and filmed shots.

Phenomenon’s lighting, including all the Astera effects, was programmed and run on a grandMA3 console with around 80 cues in total.

Christina is impressed with the diverse range of possibilities of a fixture like Titan Tube, which can be utilised equally effectively to light two completely contrasting productions in the space of two weeks, and enjoys using Titan Tubes in unconventional and unexpected ways, for which she is

constantly thinking of new approaches.



Photos by Elina Giounanli