

10 Years of Hellenic Folk Culture!

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When was the last time you saw the Orpheus Dance Troupe perform? Was it the 1994 World Cup Opening Ceremonies at Soldier Field? The Skokie Festival of Cultures ? Perhaps the Chicago-Athens Sister City celebration or the Illinois State Fair in Springfield. Maybe some of you have never seen the Troupe perform but you have taken a glimpse of the Society's newsletter *Lyra* or browsed through our web-site. No matter how familiar you have been with OHFS in the past, on November 6, 1998 you will have an opportunity to get acquainted with the Society's ten year history and at the same time support its worthy causes.

In what promises to be a spectacular evening at the Chicago Cultural Center, members of the Orpheus Dance Troupe have been busy preparing to showcase the Troupe's past history and offer a taste of its very promising future. Although the majority of Orpheus audiences have seen the Troupe perform in a brief folk dance presentation, during the last few years the OHFS has seized and pursued opportunities where a more comprehensive presentation of Greek folk customs and history is included.

Through the attendance of seminars and dance workshops, the invitation of guest instructors and the continued contact with authorities in the Greek folk tradition in North America and Greece, OHFS has been

able to expand its resources. These resources have been made available not only to the Troupe members but to all individuals and organizations that have sought OHFS assistance.

The establishment of the Orpheus Youth Troupe this fall has been another ambitious endeavor which gives youngsters between the ages of 10 and 14 the opportunity to be exposed to this wonderful part of Hellenic culture. The OHFS recognizes the importance of the youth group and having already observed the excitement in the faces of these young members during the first few sessions, it is indeed encouraging!

The OHFS is proud to have created an environment where young people, both in the youth and senior groups, can work toward a common goal with respect, honesty and enthusiasm. This goal has been realized during the last ten years, and it is critical that this program continue with the strength, moral support and financial resources to survive and expand into the next ten years. This is why we invite you to be part of this special event:

Friday, November 6, 1998
Sydney Yates Gallery
Chicago Cultural Center
77 East Randolph Street
6:30-10:30 p.m.

Delicious Greek food by Pegasus Restaurant and entertainment by the Hellenic Five Orchestra with Jim Stoyneff are sure to satisfy all the senses. Admission is only \$35/person. Even if you cannot attend you can always buy a ticket as a donation or invite a friend.

We look forward to seeing you for this important OHFS milestone: 10 years of folk dance and culture!



Orpheus Youth Group Takes Off!!



The Orpheus Youth Group officially began dance instruction on Thursday, Sept. 24 with a group of enthusiastic and talented students. Marianna Damianides-Keenan serves as instructor of the young dancers, and was impressed with the talent and sincere interest the students demonstrated during their first lessons. Marianna commented on the students' enthusiasm and willingness to learn. "The kids were so involved with the dances that they were disappointed when the lesson ended!" she noted with satisfaction. "They're very excited to be introduced to a greater variety of regional and island folk dances which go beyond the traditional "Kalamatiano" and "Tsamiko."

The future looks very bright for these young students. The group's coordinator, Bessie Kouchoukos-Grosso, was very optimistic about the start of the group and expressed her confidence that more youngsters will join the ranks of this new and exciting endeavor!

The Orpheus Dance Troupe believes the youth group is an important investment in the Troupe's future, but also a vital element of maintaining its cultural roots and keeping the Greek folk dance heritage alive. A big welcome to our new students -- keep up the good work!!

If you are interested in joining the Orpheus Youth Group, please call Bessie Grosso at (773)286-5132 or email us at orpheus@ohfs.org



North American Dance Conference in Montreal Oct. 9-12

The city of Montreal and La Troupe Folklorique Grecque Syrtaki will host the North American Dance Conference scheduled for the Columbus Day Weekend.

George Kotsos and Nancy Harmanta of the Lyceum Ellinidon of Athens are guest instructors for the weekend, returning for the fourth year to share their dance expertise and resources with dances from Asia Minor, Macedonia and the Ionian Islands of Lefkada, Cephalonia and Kerkyra (Corfu). In addition, renowned Pontian researcher and instructor Nikos Zournatzidis will make his first appearance in Canada to teach dances from Pontos, and Dimitrios Tzotzis of La Troupe Folklorique Grecque Syrtaki will be demonstrating dances from Epirus and Macedonia.

Along with the dance workshops and cultural sessions, Saturday night will play host to a "Tribute to Our Greek Heritage" where local and guest groups will perform. The Orpheus Dance Troupe looks forward to participating in the evening's festivities with a suite of dances from Anatoliki Romelia.



Orpheus To Visit Ottamwa, Iowa!

The Orpheus Dance Troupe was invited to perform in Ottamwa, Iowa on October 17, 1998. The local Arts Council is sponsoring a month-long series of activities dedicated to Greece which include exhibits, photographs, lectures, a children's story hour and art show. The Ottamwa Area Arts Council has received assistance from several Chicago Greek Americans in organizing this program such as Leon Marinakos, Cultural Attache of the Greek Consulate; Anna Daskalakis of the Greek Tourist Organization and Themis Vasil of the Hellenic Museum and Cultural Center.

The Orpheus performance will take place at the Indian Hills Community College St. John's auditorium on Saturday, October 17 at 7:30 p.m.

Looking Back On Ten Years...

At the Dagrizikos household, Thursday night was an "E.R." night! Oh, how I loved witnessing George Clooney's weekly medical miracles and love crises until I joined the Orpheus Dance Troupe! Thanks to the ever trusty VCR, I can have the best of both worlds each Thursday night: E.R. and Orpheus. Five years later (and a couple of new VCRs, too), I am still happy with my choice.

One particular memory stands out in my mind. I still chuckle when I remember the time I was five months pregnant with my first daughter, Athanasia, and still dancing! Although I felt fine and wanted to continue, one of the dance instructors started to get very nervous and kindly suggested I should stop. Some of the kids were even joking about getting a special Skopelos folk costume just for me! To this day I wonder if my daughter Athanasia is so bubbly and non-stop because of my inability to stop Greek dancing while pregnant!

I have very fond memories of the first folk dance workshop I attended earlier this year (with Yvonne Hunt as instructor and the Zournades musicians from Flambouro, Greece). Learning, practicing and performing with live musicians from another part of the world was simply mesmerizing and just about transformed me into a full-fledged "ellenitha!" I will simply never forget the connection.

Finally, I am especially proud of the launching of the Troupe's web site. I, along with others on the web site committee, spent hundreds of hours creating, planning, implementing and maintaining the web site which, by the way, just celebrated its 1st anniversary on the Internet with over 4,200 visits! The web site has proved to be an invaluable tool and has connected us with other Greek folk dance enthusiasts from all around the world! (Our web site address is: <http://www.ohfs.org>)

Through Orpheus, I have gained insight into teamwork, commitment and purpose, as well as very fond memories, personal growth and great friends.

- Sherry Dagrizikos

I have only been with Orpheus for about a month and a half and I am having a great time. In addition to learning many beautiful dances relating to my ethnic heritage, it feels wonderful to be part of such a talented and friendly group of people. Every minute has been a blast!

- Rebecca Moraris

Orpheus has given me some great memories: cruising by the moonlit Statue of Liberty on a boat resonating with the strains of a live Cretan lyra; practicing for the World Cup performance with hundreds of other ethnic dancers; sharing pie and ice cream and stories with George & Nancy of the Lyceum of Athens in an all-night diner; and last, but not least, dancing in the ancient Herodeus Atticus Theatre on the Acropolis with new friends from dance troupes from around the world. *That* was a dream come true for me!

I have other memories, too: dragging trunks and suitcases of costumes to our (usually very cramped) dressing rooms, dancing in 90' heat in a wool Sarakatsana costume, leading a dance and tripping over my own feet(!), even ordering food at McDonald's in full Karagouna dress!

We've had a lot of great times, and some struggles too, but Orpheus is important to me not just because I love to dance, but most of all because Orpheus is a group of dedicated young people who work hard and have fun together -- all for a common goal. I've seen the group grow and mature through many performances, special events and intense practices -- but the main element is the special camaraderie between the dancers.

This is what makes the group strong -- our commitment to our Greek folk dance heritage and to each other! Let's look forward to another ten memorable years!

- Christina Pagones

By reflecting back on how the dance troupe started and has developed throughout the last ten years, I have also seen a change in my attitude toward Greek traditional dancing, music, costumes and singing. Having arrived from Greece in 1984, not having a clue about what a "Kalamatiano" or "Tsamiko" were all about, if somebody would have told me that I would be wearing a foustanella during the opening ceremonies of the World Cup or singing "Ola Ta Poulakia," or teaching Greek dancing, I would have told him that he would have a better chance at winning the lottery or being the first man on Mars!

It has been an unbelievable ride full of accomplishments, struggles, and persistence on our road to creating something good and worthwhile -- a ride that has not stopped and one that will never end.

- Kostas Economou

How do you summarize, in a few words, ten years with the Orpheus Dance Troupe? It seems almost like an impossible task. Rewarding, amazing exhausting, sometimes a sentimental roller-coaster could be a few candidates.

What makes me particularly proud about the accomplishments of Orpheus is not just the hundreds of young people that have joined its ranks throughout the years, or the hundreds of performances that the dance troupe has given.

My greatest pleasure comes from the fact that the Greek-American community in Chicago has a team of dynamic and dedicated young adults to represent it throughout the world, with professionalism, solid organization, dedication, honesty and enthusiasm. The wide recognition that the Troupe presently enjoys both in the Greek and American communities has been a result of exactly these qualities.

The Greek-American community can be proud of a successful and consistent ten-year old program that has provided an outlet for young adults in the Chicagoland area to interact and offer their talents in promoting and enhancing Hellenic culture.

It brings to mind a familiar phrase from a movie which says, "if you build it (right) they will come". And indeed they have.

Let's move forward into the next ten years!

- John Economou

My experience with Orpheus has helped me to apply a "never-say-die" attitude in life. Whenever an opportunity that seems like a long shot arises or an obstacle comes in the way of success, the group always takes on a can-do attitude. Amazingly, they always follow through.

Orpheus' success is due to outstanding leadership and cooperation with strong support both within the troupe and in the community as well. Without a doubt, they have set the standard in this community as being innovators and achievers. We are consistently reaching out to the community and growing stronger with each effort and endeavor.

Although there are hundreds of thoughts and recollections that come to mind when I think of my years with Orpheus, they all add to a collective experience that proves how a little bit of interest, determination and commitment can make a profound difference in a community.

- Alexander Kapotas

A decade sounds like a long time. It's over half a lifetime when you're not yet twenty years old! It does not, however, seem that long ago when I first met Yiannis and Kostas. We were all learning the elements of folk dance and performance technique from Nikos, an experienced member of a Greek troupe. That was even more than ten years ago, yet the memory is still fresh.

The experience of learning something new that you "know" you will forever love is not something that is easily forgotten. Our steps were faltering at first, but our enthusiasm was boundless! We tried to drink in every aspect of folk culture and dance technique that we could find. We fed off of each other's energy and grew by leaps and bounds (leap, step, step... inside joke ☺).

In the process we laid the foundation for a cultural awakening among young people living in our culturally ailing society.

The heady feeling of the early years has a way of mellowing over time, but rather than a feeling of loss comes a feeling of maturity. We seek greater depth and subtlety to our movements and activities. Even more so, we fervently hope that the fruits of our experience may be tasted by others: our new dancers, our supporters, and our greater community. May the next ten years be an even more invigorating, exhilarating and maturing experience for the next generation than what we have received from those before us -- and will continue to pass on to those who come after us.

"Xpovia Iolla" Orpheus! Many more years!

– Andy Pagones

Ever since I was a little girl, I always loved to watch the dance troupe performing at church picnics. I loved to see the joy on the faces in the audience while they danced. I said to myself that one day I would also be in a dance troupe. What started out as a dream came to be true, thanks to my friend Voula Drougas who introduced me to the dance troupe in December, 1995.

One of my biggest dreams came true in the summer of 1997 when we went to perform in (Thessaloniki)Greece. My most memorable performance was dancing at Dion. Just the feeling of dancing for your own country and people was great! It felt awesome being up on that stage and seeing people clapping and smiling at us while we danced. It was an experience that I will never forget.

My next dream with the dance troupe is to perform at the Olympic Games in Athens 2004. If we did it in 1997, we can do it again! We just have to think positively! Just the thought of it gives me a rush! Thank you, Orpheus!

– Nikki Tottas

I like traveling a lot with the dance troupe because we get to see different places and we get to meet different people. I feel proud performing dances that came from my country. Thanks to Orpheus and other dance troupes, we keep our culture alive here in Chicago and for the next generation.

– Maria Tottas

I have so many fond memories. Some of my favorites include dancing outdoors at the St. Louis Dance Conference two years ago. We were all singing and dancing as if we were in Greece, having fun at a *panegyri*. I also enjoyed helping launch the Orpheus Youth Group. It's a dream come true for our youth and their future.

My funniest memory was of my first day of dance class. I showed up with all three of my children and tried to let them watch me while I was in the dance lesson. As you can imagine, they were all by my side, trying to dance with me. Kostas just laughed! And I showed up the next week solo, thanks to getting Yiayia to babysit! Thanks, Mama!

– Bessie Grosso

I've seen it all! I'm proud to say that I have belonged to Orpheus since its inception (that's why I can change into my costume so quickly, girls!) I've seen many things change over the years – troupe members, dancing styles and how the girls wear their hats, to name a few. But one thing that has always remained constant, and what I think has kept the troupe going strong for ten years, is our fundamental goal: to provide our audiences with authentic Greek dances and songs performed with quality and integrity.

When I show up at practice or a performance, I am among friends, and for this I am most grateful. We transport ourselves to another time and place as we dance and sing to the music of our ancestors.

– Christina Damianides

It has been three years since I joined the Orpheus Dance Troupe. These past three years have been a great learning experience. Through the dances we learn and the costumes we wear, I have learned about my ancestors in many ways. I have learned what they used to do and what they used to wear. While I am dancing, I feel like I am keeping the spirit of my great-grandparents and my other ancestors alive.

A time in my life I will never forget is the trip Orpheus took to Thessaloniki in the summer of '97. I was able to dance in the country where my ancestors had danced many years ago. In Thessaloniki I got to know my fellow dance group members better and also the members of groups from New York and Canada.

I believe that dancing with Orpheus has allowed me to meet new people and learn what it is like to work as a group. I have realized how important it is to work together to get the project done, whether it is a performance or a dinner dance. I have made many new friends through the dance group, and even though these friendships may not last forever, my memories always will. Orpheus has held strong for ten years and hopefully will hold strong for many more.

Happy Ten Year Anniversary, Orpheus.....

-- Katerina Tomaras.

"As The Thursdays Turn..."

I had seen my sister perform a hundred times and always thought it was pretty geeky of her. The thought of sacrificing every Thursday night for dance practice was inconceivable! What a commitment! Beginners' practice was repetitious and it seemed like it would be eons before I would learn every dance well enough to ever perform. Before I knew it, I was performing at the Museum of Science and Industry to a sea of smiling friends and relatives who were unaware of the numerous mistakes I had made.

Two hundred thirty-four Thursdays later, I have an assortment of memories and experiences full of fun and laughter. Not to mention many dear friends and new relationships I owe to Orpheus.

Now I can't imagine how I would fill my Thursday nights if it wasn't for Orpheus. Gee, how ironic. I guess I'm a geek now too.

- Christina Kakavas

This past year with Orpheus I have had fun dancing, meeting new people and learning about our culture.

One of my favorite memories is of the time we spent with Hara (Deligiannis) from the Lyceum of Athens. She taught me how important it is to feel the music when dancing -- you've got to feel it!

Happy Anniversary Orpheus!!

- Patty Pappas

Anniversaries are celebrations, and I have many memories to celebrate over the last ten years as a member of Orpheus. They are also a time of reflection and sharing. As I look back over the last ten years, I can see why I committed my time and energy to such an endeavor. There is no doubt that my primary motivation was that I love to dance, but it developed into something more than that over the years -- something more worthwhile.

Teaching one's heritage to others, sharing the music and dance and seeing others' enthusiasm and ability to express their pride and heritage, is one of the greatest rewards of all.

Above all, my respect, friendship and love go to Yiannis and Kostas who helped make this last ten years a memorable and fulfilling experience. Their tireless dedication and sheer determination to perpetuate our heritage has never failed. By drawing on the strength of others and keeping a positive attitude, they have created a group that not only takes pride in its heritage, but exemplifies a character and spirit that is the hallmark of the group.

It is with these memories of the last ten years that I celebrate and look forward to the next ten years!

- Marianna Damianides-Keenan

**....and Looking Forward to
the Next Ten Years!**



Dance Instructor From Greece

Orpheus was recently visited by Hara Deligiannis from the Lyceum Ellinidon of Athens. Hara is a dancer/instructor with the Lyceum, and has been with the ensemble for more than 20 years. While in Chicago visiting relatives, Hara and her son Rafael joined Orpheus for three practice sessions in July.

The Troupe was delighted to share the practice floor with Hara, who taught dances from Macedonia, Thrace and Pontos. Her enthusiasm and sense of humor were very much in evidence as she demonstrated dances such as Sfarli, Zervotheksos and Tsestos (all from Thrace) and Omorfoula (a couples dance from Macedonia). The Orpheus dancers had a great time learning the Kotsari from Pontos and trying to master the unique Pontian dance style!

Apart from the dance practice sessions, the Troupe showed Hara some traditional Greek *filoxenia* at a local Greek restaurant one night after practice, and also at a block party hosted by one of the dancers, which featured some lively folk dancing in the street!

The expertise and experience of guest instructors like Hara, is invaluable to the technical and creative development of the Troupe. Orpheus sends thanks to Hara for sharing her talents with us -- and greetings to all our friends in the Lyceum!



"Christmas Around the World"

Mark your calendar for Sunday, November 29 for an afternoon filled with Hellenic Christmas traditions! The Orpheus Dance Troupe is preparing for another presentation at the annual "Christmas Around the World" festival at the Museum of Science and Industry.

The festival features Christmas trees and holiday decorations from many ethnic groups from the Chicagoland area while an array of ethnic performances will be featured. The Orpheus Dance Troupe will perform on Sunday, November 29 at 2:45 p.m.

Along with Orpheus, the Peiraiko Greek School will be presenting traditional Greek poems and songs. The school also has the honor of decorating the Hellenic Christmas tree. This year marks the school's 30th year of being part of the "Christmas Around the World" celebration.

Personal Announcements

☺ The Orpheus Dance Troupe welcomes Anna Ioannou, Valentina Bounas, Rebecca Moraris, Helen Antonopoulos, Eleni Kollias, Anna Antonopoulos, George Tjamaloukas, Stamatia Anna Manolakas, Yannis Styliaras, Kathy Georgiou, Alyson Doulos, Angie Beltsos, Zaphiro Papastratakos, Alexandra Pontikis and Barbara Dallas who joined the Troupe in August/September.

☺ Congratulations to Alexander Pavlos and Rebecca Moraris for their first performance with Orpheus!

☺ Congratulations to Peter and Christina Kanelos on their marriage on August 30, 1998!

☺ Congratulations to Orpheus member Joan Kakos on her recent engagement to Nick Christofer.

☺ Orpheus welcomes Melpo Katsaros to the Orpheus Hellenic Folklore Society Board of Directors in August.

Other events:

■ Via email:

It's my pleasure to let you know that Greek Fest '98 will be taking place in Seattle on 14, 15 November. Instructors are Joe Graziosi and Yvonne Hunt, with Pangeo (Christos Govetas' group) playing for the Saturday night dance. Details will be coming by flyer; we hope you will not only join us but help us to spread the word.

For the next couple of weeks Joe and I will be taking requests for dances you would like to have taught or reviewed. Please let either one or both of us know.

Hope to see you here!!

Happy Fall, Yvonne
bg901@scn.org

- November 6-8, 1998 - "Boston '98 Dance and Folklore Conference" hosted by the V.E.V.A. Hellenic Dance Ensemble featuring instructors from Lykeion Ellinidon. For further information contact V.E.V.A. at VEVAGrkDan@aol.com or visit their website at <http://www.veva.org>.

Performance Schedule:

Sterea Hellas Assoc. National Convention
Marriott Hotel, O'Hare

Rosemont, IL

October 3, Saturday, 8:00 p.m.

North American Dance Conference

Montreal, Quebec

Canada

October 9-12, Friday-Monday

Ottamwa Area Arts Council

St. John Auditorium

Indian Hills Community College

Ottamwa, Iowa

October 17, Saturday, 7:30 p.m.

Orpheus Hellenic Folklore Society

10th Year Anniversary Benefit

Chicago Cultural Center

Chicago, IL

November 6, Friday, 6:30-10:30 p.m.

World Music and Cultures

Concordia University

River Forest, IL

November 16, Monday, 8:00 p.m.

Chicago-Athens Sister Cities Celebration

Chicago Cultural Center

78 E. Washington

Chicago, IL

November 21, Saturday, 3:30 p.m.

Christmas Around The World

Museum of Science and Industry

5700 South Lake Shore Drive

Chicago, IL

November 29, Sunday, 2:30 p.m.

Ppractice Schedule:

Orpheus Youth Group: 6:15 p.m. - 7:15 p.m.

Beginner/Intermediate: 6:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.

Intermediate/Advanced: 7:30 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

Every Thursday at:

River Park Field House

5100 N. Francisco Street

Chicago, IL

(312) 742-7516

BEGINNERS: Members with little or no previous dance experience.

INTERMEDIATE: Dancers who have shown progress in the beginners' class can attend the last hour of practice. At the discretion of the instructors, the intermediate level dancers will be practicing in a separate line.

All dancers, especially beginners, are encouraged to obtain a personal tape of the music used for performances, in order to practice on one's own and become accustomed to the music. Please provide John or Kostas Economou with a blank cassette tape.

Board of Directors/Committee Meetings are held immediately following practice on the *first Thursday of every month*, unless otherwise stated, at the Hilltop Restaurant. Upcoming meetings are to be held on: November 12, December 3, January 7.



Submissions for the January-March issue of the newsletter will be accepted until December 17.

We are always interested in educational essays/articles dealing with the subjects of Greek folk dance, folk music and folk traditions. We continue to accept personal announcements and all other submissions pertinent to the dance troupe and its membership. If an individual wishes to contribute material on a continuous basis, please inform the Editor.

Lyra

Published by:

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