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The Newsletter for friends and members of OHFS

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Orpheus Participates in “Horepse ‘09” Dance Conference

What’s better than a weekend full of Greek music and dancing? A weekend of Greek music and dancing in Las Vegas! Recently, members of OHFS participated in the third annual “Horepse” Greek folk dance conference in Las Vegas, Nevada. This was the third year of the conference, which gains popularity among Greek folk dance fans every year. Dance workshops and activities were held at the St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church—a beautiful church with spacious facilities and a very warm and welcoming parish.

Dance instructors Kyriakos Moisidis and Katerina Asteriou-Kavazi were the “stars” of the weekend. Both Kyriako and Katerina flew in from Greece to participate in the conference and demonstrate dances from the various parts of Macedonia. Macedonian dances are particularly significant for Katerina, since her family has ties to villages in the region of Drama, and her pride for her roots was evident she demonstrated several dances from that area. Kyriako concentrated on dances from the regions of Goumenissa and Giannitsa.

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A few Orpheus members participated in the 2009 ‘Horepse’ dance conference. Kostas, Effie and Mary pictured with dance instructors, Kyriakos Moisidis and Katerina Asteriou-Kavazi

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Despite the fact that all the dances demonstrated were from Macedonia, it was interesting to see that there were several differences in the style and execution of the dances. The dances were fun to learn and it was interesting to hear the stories behind and backgrounds of some of the dances. On the second day of the conference, Katerina gave a slide show presentation of the customs and traditions of her native village of Petroussa, lending a level of depth to her dance demonstrations and allowing the workshop participants to better understand how certain dances originated.

There was a strong turnout as conference participants came from all over the United States and Canada. During the breaks, lunches and Saturday night “glendi”, there were plenty of opportunities to re-connect with old friends, as well as several chances to make new friends with fellow dance enthusiasts. The evening glendi was held in the church hall, in the same space where the workshops were held during the day. However, that night the hall had

been transformed into an elegant dining area and the guests were treated to plenty of delicious food, drinks and, quite possibly the best part: a variety of desserts! A definite highlight of the evening was the excellent band that played practically non-stop all night! Band members included Georgios Deliolanis (trumpet), Yannis Mavros (clarinet) and Tasoula Kosmidou (percussion) who flew in from Greece for the occasion, complemented by local musicians Lise Leipman (accordion) and Hector Bezanis (gaida).

The band started playing during dinner, and several guests abandoned their dinner plates prematurely to jump onto the dance floor and kick up their heels. Regardless if the day’s workshops had depleted your energy, or no matter how satiated you were from the abundant dinner buffet, the band’s repertoire soon got everyone on their feet and the dance floor was packed in no time. It was amazing to see the connection that the dancers had with the music. Incredibly, many of them were so revved up, they continued dancing with such animated

joy and self-expression well into the night. In fact, most people watching these hard core dancers from their seats eventually “absorbed” some of that infectious energy, and soon found their way back on the dance floor.

Just when you thought you were too pooped from the workshops to do anything else, the Vegas Strip starts calling your name. The dizzying lights, colorful crowds and an astonishing array of sights and sounds offered all the stimulation necessary to revive us after the workshops and allow us to explore some of the excitement the city had to offer.

Much credit and many thanks go to the organizers and volunteers of this event. Their hard work and love of Greek folk dance and music was quite obvious, playing a significant role in the success of the conference. Now it’s time to pass on the rich dance material and traditions learned from that weekend to our own dance group members, allowing the timeless art of Greek folk dancing to continue for many more years to come! ☐



Group picture of the participants during the last day of the conference

Orpheus Participates in Annual Christmas Around the World Tradition



Group III of the Orpheus Youth group presented a suite of dances from the island of Kerkira (Corfu).

“Ladies and gentlemen, please find your seats and keep the exits free and clear!” urged the Museum representative as the Orpheus Youth group members quickly filled the stage. On Sunday, December 13, it was standing room only at the Museum of Science and Industry’s Holiday Stage area, as Orpheus friends and family members, as well as audience members who never had the opportunity to experience an “Orpheus performance” before, gathered to enjoy the colorful costumes and energetic show. Backstage, however, there was the inevitable “pre-performance drama”: The performers struggled with tangled headpieces, crooked belts and flying bobby pins—as well as the challenge of doing a practice run on the cobblestone floor in the Museum’s “Yesterday’s Main Street” exhibit, trying not to bump into the other museum patrons wandering through the exhibit. Since most were Orpheus veterans, it takes a lot more than that to keep these performers down! The show came together beautifully, as was evidenced by the audience’s enthusiastic cheers and applause.

This year, the Museum of Science and Industry presented its 68th annual “Christmas Around the World” celebration. And for the 17th year, the Orpheus Hellenic Folklore Society participated in the festivities. What started as a salute to American allies during World War II, showcasing 12 Christmas trees representing 12 different countries, has evolved into a spectacular, mesmerizing annual holiday tradition, featuring over 50 magnificent, richly decorated ethnic trees. Right outside the Holiday Stage area was the Christmas tree representing Greece. Many performers and their families could not resist posing for a shot in front of the giant tree, which was decorated with colorful garland, bright lights, and the tell-tale Hellenic accents: mini-tsarouchia, and petite “Amalia” and “Tsolia” dolls.

All three of the Youth groups and the Adult group, showcasing a variety of traditional costumes, took part in this familiar holiday performance. The hour-long show featured songs and dances from the Greek islands and mainland. The program opened with

the Youth and Adult groups singing “Saranta Meres, Saranta Nihtes”, traditional Christmas carols (kalanta) from the region of Thraki. Afterwards, Youth group members took turns announcing the dances, in Greek and English, pointing out the area where each dance is from with the help of the ever-present map of Greece. The Youth group performed such dances as, “Kynigitos”, “Tremouliastos” and “Fourolana”, while the Adult group concentrated on dances from Macedonia, such as “Baedouskino”, “Patrounino” and “Moulaevo”.

Another exciting element to this performance was the Orpheus music group, under the direction of instructors Eve Monzingo and George Lawler, accompanying the dancers with live music. The Orpheus singing group, led by instructor Presvytera Stefanie Malamis, provided the lyrics and melody to several songs, lending energy and “kefi” to the Youth groups as they executed the dances.

Much work and effort went into preparing for this performance months in advance, especially since there were so many individuals taking part. Singing practices, dancing practices, program outlines, logistics and costume organization were some of the elements that proved to be a bit challenging for all involved. Why undertake such a large, complex presentation during the busy holiday season? Simply put: Because the rewards are definitely worth the effort. The holidays are a time of celebrating with family and friends. This is one of the few events where all three of the Youth groups and the Adult group get the opportunity to perform as an “Orpheus family unit” for our respective friends and family. And soon, the memory of this performance will slowly fade, making way for new memories in 2010. Here’s to another year of dancing, singing, memorable performances, crooked belts and flying bobby pins!

For information on ordering photos and DVD from the event, please visit our website at www.ohfs.org. ☐

Christmas Traditions

Christmas is perhaps the most universal of holidays. It is celebrated all over the world by many different cultures, ethnicities and religions. Children of all ages eagerly wait for their respective version of Santa Claus to bring them gifts and other goodies. Young and old enjoy the feasts, sights and sounds that this holiday offers. Age old customs and traditions are observed and new memories are made with each passing year's celebration of Christmas.

In the Greek Orthodox Church, Christmas is a great and significant holiday, second only to Easter. There are many unique Greek cultural and religious traditions, thousands of years old, centering around Christmas, that still survive today in various forms around Greece and Greek communities around the world. These traditions span a rather wide time frame, from the beginning of lent until Epiphany.

One of the more familiar customs is that of the Christmas and New Year's carols called "kalanda". Children visit



Orpheus members singing Christmas and New Year's carols to patrons of the Greek Town restaurants in 2008.

neighborhood homes offering good wishes to the residents. Before the singing starts, the carolers ask, "Na ta poume?" asking permission to sing their carols. Once the people reply, "Pes'te ta!" the children launch into energetic songs accompanied by the tingling of a triangle or jingling bells. Their audience, in turn, will show their appreciation to the carolers by passing out sweets or money.

The Greek Orthodox Church dictates a period of 40 days of fasting before Christmas. The end of the fast, on Christmas day, makes the Christmas feast that much more special and enjoyable. Friends and family members gather around dinner tables that are overflowing with roasted meats, wine, sweet breads and all sorts of appetizing dishes. If there is any

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spotlight

on Orpheus dancer...



Vicky

Hometown: Northwest Chicago suburbs.

Parents/Family From: My dad was born in Iraklio, Crete and my mom was born in Tripoli, Arkadia.

Time Dancing with Orpheus Group: This is my third year with the Orpheus Group.

Thoughts on Dancing: It's entertaining and it's fun to be creative and expressive while you dance.

Favorite Dance: Dimitroula because it's an all girls dance and it's very graceful.

Most Vivid OHFS Memory: My favorite memory from one of our dance performances was Orpheus' 20th anniversary

Orpheus Performs Live on National TV

by Angelo Angelos

For the last three years, Orpheus has been invited to perform in the Thanksgiving Day parade downtown Chicago. But this year, for the first time we were invited to do a special performance on live TV before the parade began.

The parade was tons of fun for everybody. We all showed up in our ethnic costumes and prepared to dance Koulouriastos for the live TV performance. The men were all in Tsoliades costumes, and the women were in Gida, Rhodes and Corfu costumes. The whole morning it was pouring

rain, but as we were walking towards “center stage” the rain miraculously stopped! We went to the performance area and danced Koulouriastos fantastic as we always do. The street was wet and slippery, but we didn’t let that stop us. Our performance looked great on TV and we had many compliments from peers who saw us representing the Hellenic community in Chicago the best way that anybody can: through dance!



Orpheus youth and adult members parading down State street, followed closely by the Bullwinkle the Moose balloon.

After the performance we walked to the spot we were assigned for the parade. The energy of the dancers and the people around us was great. Many of the surrounding parade participants came and danced with us during the time before we marched, even without knowing the dance; they were just having fun and embracing our great music. We had a blast leading the crowds in exclaiming “OPA!” as we danced Kalamatiano, Enteka, and Mantilatos through downtown Chicago. It was a great experience, and I can’t wait until next year when we get to do it again, showing Chicago and all of America how we do things —Greek style! ☒

because it was a celebration to 20 years of music, song, and dance. It was one of the most important and most enjoyable performances I think that Orpheus has performed.

Favorite Greek Dish: Pastisio.

Favorite Place in Greece: I have only been to Athens, Greece.

Hobbies/Sports/Other Interests: My favorite sport to play would have to be soccer. I have also played the piano since 1st grade.

Nobody knows I: Played the oboe for two years.

Best childhood memory: The first Christmas in our new house.

The perfect weekend would be: Stay home and have a barbeque with my whole family and play Monopoly.

Someone I'd like to meet: Diane Sawyer.

Favorite spot in Chicago: Navy Pier.

I am currently looking forward to: Graduating 8th grade and going on to Freshman year in high school.

I stay home to watch: Full House on ABC Family.

Prized possession: My medals I earned at my piano contests when I was about 7 to 10 years old.

Where I heard about Orpheus Dance Troupe: My family/cousin who also attends the Orpheus Dance Troupe. ☒

Let's Get Technical

When was the last time you Twittered? How many times have you checked Facebook today? (It's OK—we do it too!) It's no secret that we live in an age where it's become pretty difficult to escape the siren call of modern technology and its increasingly growing popularity. Technology is constantly evolving and the latest, coolest technology can become "old news" in the blink of an eye. In keeping with the times, the Orpheus Hellenic Folklore Society is excited to announce that now there are more ways to keep in touch with the dance group and stay informed about events, performances and other Orpheus related news.

As most of you are aware, we have created a new OHFS fan page on Facebook. For those of you who aren't yet fans, you can join by looking us up on Facebook and clicking on the "Become a Fan" button at the top of the page. Another way to join is to visit our website (www.ohfs.org) and click the "Become a Fan" button on our home page. Once you become a Facebook fan, you will instantly receive the latest Orpheus related updates, you can check out photos and links from performanc-

es and events, and you can RSVP to upcoming OHFS events, which Facebook then puts on your calendar and sends you reminders as the event approaches. Furthermore, fans can interact with the Facebook page and post comments and reactions to the information listed on the page.



A glimpse of the Orpheus fan page on Facebook.

We are also very excited to announce that our Lyra newsletter will be coming to you electronically in the very near future! Our next two issues of the Lyra newsletter will be issued both in hard copy and electronically. However, we will be phasing out the hard copy of the newsletter and distributing it strictly via e-mail, in the latter part of 2010. Please contact us with your e-mail address to make sure you receive the electronic version of the newsletter. For those of you who

prefer to receive a hard copy, please contact us at orpheus@ohfs.org or call 847-729-3406. Besides the cost-effective and environmentally friendly benefits, distributing our newsletter electronically offers the ability to streamline the process, reach a larger audience and get our newsletter to you quicker and easier!

Our website has also undergone some changes recently. We have added a "Join our Mailing List" button, which enables you to add your e-mail address to our mailing list to receive our electronic newsletter, e-mail updates and more (OHFS respects e-mail privacy and does not share e-mail addresses with other parties). In addition to our photo gallery, we have added a video gallery, where you can view video clips of Orpheus related events. The website now also offers the popular PayPal feature. PayPal is a secure and quick way to electronically pay your registration/membership fees and purchase Orpheus clothing items, DVDs, photos, and other memorabilia.

We hope you will take advantage of and enjoy all the new features and abilities we are bringing to you. As always, you can contact us with any questions or concerns via e-mail at Orpheus@ohfs.org. ☐

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room left after such a huge feast, one might enjoy the traditional sweets of Christmas such as koulourakia, melomakarona and kourambiedes.

No matter what's on your Christmas wish list, Agios Vasilis is the man in charge of delivering it! Agios Vasilis has figured prominently in Greek Christmas traditions for centuries as the bearer of gifts. But unlike Santa Claus, Agios Vasilis delivers presents on his feast day, January 1st, which is also a special day for those named "Vasilis" or "Vassiliki". Officially recognized by the Church as St. Basil the Great, he was a 4th century bishop of Caesarea, Cappadocia, Asia Minor, which is modern-day Turkey. Among his many contributions to

the Orthodox Church, St. Basil is best known for caring and providing for the poor, which contributed to the evolution of his image into a modern-day gift giver.

If you visit a Greek home on St. Basil's Day, or New Year's Day, you can bet that you will get to sample a piece of Vasilopita—a special sweet bread or cake that is baked with a coin inside. The Vasilopita is cut up in pieces and distributed to family and friends and whoever ends up with the piece of Vasilopita with the coin in it is said to have good luck in the coming year. Vasilopita celebrations can occur throughout the month of January and are common in church gatherings, places of work, schools and other organizations.

If random things seem to go wrong for you in the days following Christmas, just blame the *kallikantzaroi*! These mischief-making goblins supposedly live in the center of the Earth, and appear during the 12-day period from Christmas to the Epiphany (January 6). They were regarded by Greek villagers as a nuisance as they would play tricks on people and animals. Popular methods of keeping the *kallikantzaroi* away included keeping the hearth burning during the 12-day period and sprinkling holy water around one's home.

So, next time someone wishes you "*Kala Hristougenna*" or "*Kales Giortes*" remember that they are packing an entire range of ethnic celebration and ancient traditions into those two little words. ☐



Orpheus members performing at the "Taste of Greece" fest in Chicago's Greek Town.



Orpheus members, friends and family rang in the new year at Jimmy's Restaurant with non-stop dancing.



The Orpheus delegation in front of the Hellenic Christmas Tree during the Christmas Around the World Reception at the Museum of Science and Industry.



Orpheus had the pleasure of welcoming to practice three visiting musicians from Greece. The guest musicians were in Chicago accompanying folk singer Panayiotis Lalezas in a concert appearance.

performance schedule

Orpheus Youth Group

Friday, January 29
International Fair
Hoffman Elementary School
2000 Harrison St.
Glenview, IL
7:30 p.m.

Orpheus Vasilopita Celebration

Saturday, January 30
St. John The Baptist
Greek Orthodox Church
2350 Dempster St.
Des Plaines, IL
6:00 p.m.

Orpheus Music Group

Sunday, March 7
Chicago Children's Museum
at Navy Pier
700 E. Grand Ave.
Chicago, IL
3:00 p.m.

Kalavrita Society Dinner Dance

Saturday, March 13
Meridian Banquets
1701 Algonquin Rd
Rolling Meadows, IL
8:00 p.m.

Chiotan Society "Karies" Dinner Dance

Sunday, April 18
Chateau Ritz Banquet Hall
9100 N. Milwaukee Ave.
Niles, IL

Greek American Parade

Sunday, April 25
Greek Town - Halsted Street
(between Randolph and Van Buren)
Chicago, IL
2:00 p.m.

Orpheus Youth

End of the Year Event
Sunday, May 16
St. John The Baptist
Greek Orthodox Church
2350 Dempster St.
Des Plaines, IL
3:00 p.m.

Performance schedule and times are subject to change. For the latest information visit <http://www.ohfs.org>.

practice schedule

Orpheus Adult Group

Beginner/Intermediate:

6:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.

Intermediate/Advanced:

7:30 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

Every Thursday at:

St. John Lutheran Church
3020 Milwaukee Ave.
Northbrook, IL
*(one mile north from the
intersection of Lake/Euclid
and Milwaukee Ave.)*

Orpheus Youth Group: *(September through May)*

Every Thursday at:

5:30 p.m. - 6:30 p.m.
St. John Lutheran Church
3020 Milwaukee Ave.
Northbrook, IL

Every Saturday at:

2:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.
New Church
Multipurpose Room
74 Park Dr., Glenview, IL
(one block west of Shermer/Glenview Rds)

Youth Group: Members ages 10-14 (Northbrook and Glenview locations).

Beginners: Members with little or no previous dance experience.

Intermediate: Dancers who have shown progress in the beginners' class 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 CD of the music used for performances, in order to practice on one's own and become accustomed to the music. Please provide Yannis or Kostas Economou with a blank CD.

Submissions for the Spring issue of *Lyra* will be accepted until March 15, 2010. 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.

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