



Celebrating Apokries with the National Hellenic Museum

By Elaine Poulos Karamatskos

“Apokries”, a festive celebration preceding the solemn period of the Great Lent. And what a celebration it was for the Orpheus Adult Dance Troupe! Orpheus dancers delighted the attendees of the “Apokriatiko Glendi”, the 2013 theme of the Hellenic Museum’s Ambrosia Gala Ball, held at the Palmer House Grand Ballroom, Saturday, March 2, with their traditional costumes, their playful Mardi Gras costumes, and their very colorful traditional dances.

Cocktail Hour was a time for “fun & games” with the Orpheus dancers dressed in Mardi Gras costumes, teasing and tormenting the attendees with their mischievous playfulness and merry-making. A joyful sight to be seen!

The culmination of the Orpheus Dance Troupe’s participation was a flamboyant presentation of the dance, “Gaitanaki” (Maypole Dance). The Orpheus dancers wove their way around the Gaitanaki with their colorful ribbons, dressed in traditional costumes and wearing masquerade masks, while the dance was projected above with the Gaitanaki being performed in Greece. The Orpheus Dancers truly



Orpheus members ready to perform the Gaitanaki dance at the beginning of the presentation.

brought a sense of the “Greek Spirit” to the festivity with their lively dancing and their enthusiasm.

The Orpheus Hellenic Folklore Society has collaborated with the Hellenic Museum during several projects in the past, so it is always exciting to receive an invitation for a new joint venture. Orpheus’ past relationship with the Hellenic Museum spans a period well over 20 years, back when the Museum was located on Franklin Street. A few relocations later, the National Hellenic Museum now boasts an impressive new permanent home in the heart of Chicago’s Greek Town.

This time around, the project involved a carnival themed presentation at the Museum’s Annual

Gala event. The Museum’s president, Ms. Connie Mourtopalas, had very specific ideas in recreating certain carnival folk customs from various parts of Greece. One was the Koudounatoi (bell bearers) from the
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Group shot of the performers after the Apokries presentation.


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island of Skyros and the Gaitanaki (maypole) dance that is performed in several Greek regions. After a few weeks of research and planning, the stage was set for the execution of those ideas. Indeed, that presentation would be a bold statement during a black tie event, as revelers in various carnival costumes would also complement the folk performers. Staff from the Museum was able to track down, assemble and provide many of the accessories required. The Orpheus members, from their end, went hard at work researching and making their costumes, as well as looking into resources for the proper execution of all the various components of the performance. This presentation energized Orpheus to the point where even several of its alumni came out of “retirement” to be part of the fun and excitement! It is very fulfilling to explore the vast world of Greek folk traditions, where the depth and variety of customs for all types of occasions are without any bounds.



Revelers mingled with guests during the cocktail hour.

We would like to extend our gratitude to the staff of the National Hellenic Museum for their support and trust throughout this project. It is very rewarding for institutions like the Hellenic Museum to seek collabo-

rations with Orpheus in initiatives that require a higher level of expertise, quality and commitment. For pictures and video clips of the carnival presentation, please visit our website, www.ohfs.org or find us on Facebook. 

Dance Workshops with Dr. Christos Papakostas

This past May, Orpheus welcomed Dr. Christos Papakostas from Epirus, Greece. During his trip to Chicago, Christo had a packed schedule which included several workshops and a lecture/workshop presentation at the National Hellenic Museum. The workshops, which were also open to the public, spanned a series of five days and included material from Macedonia, Thessaly, Epiros and Monastiraki, Anatoliki Romilia. Christo is originally from Larisa, Thessaly and has a diverse background which includes folklorist, choreographer and dance instructor. Christo presented songs and dances to the Orpheus Nea Genia group and the adult group, and did a great job providing background information and insight regarding the customs and traditions of the areas we were focusing on. In addition to the Orpheus participation, we also welcomed members from other dance groups such as Ellas Dancers of Chicago; Paul Collins, Director at Ethnic Dance Chicago and other folk dance enthusiasts from Indiana and New York.

Christo also presented a lecture on the art of Greek folk dancing at the National Hellenic Museum in Chicago's Greektown. In his presentation, he touched on many themes including perceptions, attitudes and opinions about dance; the different ways in which dance has historically fit in to people's daily lives; the various rules involved in Greek folk dancing and the evolution of Greek folk dance over the years. After the lecture, there was an open workshop for all who were in attendance.



Christo demonstrating dances to the Orpheus Nea Genia group.



Christo also taught the Orpheus adult group folk songs to go along with the dances he demonstrated.

All of the workshop sessions were informative, interesting and entertaining as those who participated can certainly attest to. The material presented will be a valuable addition to Orpheus' ever-expanding repertoire! This was Christo's second time presenting a series of workshops for Orpheus members. We thank

Christo for sharing his extensive knowledge and expertise with Orpheus and we look forward to more collaborations in the future.

To see pictures from the workshops, please visit our website, www.ohfs.org or find us on Facebook. 📷

A Day of Greek Culture at Navy Pier

Anyone looking for a little piece of Greece on Sunday, April 7, certainly found it at Navy Pier. It was standing room only in the magnificent Crystal Gardens venue during the third annual "Neighborhoods of the World" event. Neighborhoods of the World is a performance series which highlights and celebrates the diverse ethnic neighborhoods of Chicago over the course of several weeks in the spring. Participating cultures included India, Philippines, China, Italy, Mexico, Africa, Lithuania and Greece. Each Sunday was dedicated to highlighting and celebrating a

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Orpheus adult group members performing dances from mainland Greece.



Orpheus adult and Nea Genia members entertaining the crowd at Navy Pier.

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specific culture. Performers put on elaborate shows, introducing the audience to live music, dance, cuisine and art from their respective cultures.

The Consulate General of Greece in Chicago collaborated with the National Hellenic Museum to present the five hour event called, "A Greek Journey in the Windy City". The event, which was free and open to the public, included a variety of performers and vendors with many different things for the audience to explore and enjoy. Orpheus members, dressed in colorful traditional Greek costumes, presented a variety of dances from the islands and mainland Greece. The Orpheus "Nea Genia" dance group and members of the Orpheus youth group also performed a suite of dances from the island of Chios. The Orpheus Music Group accompanied the dancers with live music, and played several other sets throughout the afternoon. Musical selections included songs from Macedonia, Epiros, Thrace and the island of Chios. The program ended with a bouzouki set, featuring such dances as Karsilamas, Zeibekikos and Hasapikos. Also participating were the Cretan and Pontian dance groups of Chicago.

Audience members also had a chance to get their "Greek groove on" on the dance floor. No costumes or special training was needed for people to let loose and move to the sounds of the santouri, laouto, toum-beleki, daouli, clarinet and defi.

The feedback from audience participants and Orpheus members was overwhelmingly positive. Everyone who was there was able to experience an afternoon of great music, dancing, food and para in one of the city's most stunning venues.

For photos and videos from this event, please visit our website, www.ohfs.org or find us on Facebook. 📷

spotlight on KATERINA RALLIS



Hometown: Arlington Heights, IL.

Parents/Family From: Loaded

Question: My maternal Yiayia's family was from Mitilini while my maternal Pappou's family was from Sparti.

My father's grandmother was from

Belgium while her husband, my father's grandfather was from Syros.

Both of my paternal Pappou's parents were from Mitilini.

Time Dancing with Orpheus Group: 2004-2012... 8 YEARS!!!

Thoughts on Dancing: *It's just amazing. I feel connected to my heritage and my ancestors when I dance. Dancing has truly become a very important part of my life and I can't imagine who I would be without it!!! It is a way to express oneself as well as a way to express the love one has for their own roots.*

Favorite Dance: *Ikariotikos & Maleviziotikos.*

Most Vivid OHFS Memory: *Between being in youth group, singing in music group, laughing during practice, performing in so many places, running up and down Halsted screaming, and now teaching the kiddos in youth group, I can't really pick the most vivid memory. It's just one big montage with Thracian music playing in the background!*

Favorite Greek Dish: *Arni Kokkinisto.*

Favorite Place in Greece: *Tinos - My Yiayia Kleo spends her summers here, as does her sister, Thea Barbara. If you ever go, walk up the beautiful pathway to the famous Panagia's church at the top of the island! It's beautiful!*

Hobbies/Sports/Other Interests: *I was very involved in my theatre program at Elmhurst, as well as our Improv Group. I direct the Jr. Choir at my home parish and chant with the girls in the group every Sunday morning. I also teach dance at Pythagoras Greek School. I have participated in several mission trips and really enjoy doing this work, as well as traveling!*

Best childhood memory: *Month long road trips across the country!*

The perfect weekend would be: *Finding insanely cheap tickets to Boston, to visit my sister and friends out there, and then finding an incredibly cheap ticket to Guatemala to spend time with the children at the Hogar Rafael Ayau who I miss so much!*

Someone I'd like to meet: *Jimmy Stewart or Julie Andrews.*

Prized possession: *My books! I have a full bookshelf of children's books and a whole bookshelf of my own personal books.*

Where I heard about Orpheus: *My big sister Elpida, who was a member for a few years and absolutely loved coming to dance every week. 📷*

Orpheus Youth Group Marks the End of Another Exciting Year

For over a decade, the Orpheus Hellenic Folklore Society has been showcasing the talent of the energetic and dedicated members of its Youth Group in the annual End of the Year Event. It is a chance for the Greek-American youth of the Chicagoland area to demonstrate their accomplishments and hard work throughout the year as members of the Orpheus dance group. Wearing traditional costumes from various parts of Greece, the children sing and dance in the folk traditions of their ancestors and even throw in a little geography lesson as they explain the origins of the dances.

On Sunday, May 19, friends and family of the Orpheus Hellenic Folklore Society's youth group gathered at St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church in Des Plaines, IL to celebrate the end to yet another

successful year. Highlights included island and mainland dances and songs; live music courtesy of the Orpheus Music Ensemble; presentation of graduation certificates and the Dina Sianis merit awards; and speeches by graduating members of the Youth Group. After the performances, everyone lingered in the church hall, mixing and mingling and enjoying the buffet of treats and refreshments.

The performers took the stage and gave animated and lively performances, accompanied by the Orpheus Music Group. Throughout the year, the youth dancers and musicians perform at various venues such as the Greek American Rehabilitation & Care Centre, Navy Pier, Skokie Festival of Cultures, Greek-American and Thanksgiving Day parades and the annual "Christmas Around the World" festival at the Museum of Science and Industry. The End of the Year event is a culmination and demonstration of the kids' hard work and dedication, and is perhaps, the most anticipated performance by children and parents alike.

Anna Maria Harisiadis and Christina Kokoris were this year's recipients of the Dina Sianis Merit Award. The award recognizes the recipients' achievements and dedication in perpetuating the folk song and dance traditions of their ancestors. Additionally, graduation certificates were presented to several members of the Youth Group who are ready to move forward and transition into the Nea Genia group.

Throughout the event, some of the graduating Youth members had the opportunity to give short speeches, recounting their experience with the dance troupe and to offer their thoughts on what it meant for them to participate in the Orpheus Youth Group. A common theme among the sentiments expressed was the kids' gratefulness and fulfillment in being able to learn more about their heritage and background and furthermore, being able to perpetuate our rich Greek culture and traditions through their singing and dancing. We are very proud to have these young members continue their participation and learn as they grow with the Nea Genia group, and eventually, the Adult Group.

The goal of the OHFS youth group program is to expose and promote the Greek folk song and dance tradition to the younger generations. Practice is held Thursday evenings at St. John Lutheran Church in Northbrook and Saturday afternoons at New Church in Glenview. The youth program is open to youngsters between the ages of 9 and 15, and no prior dance experience is necessary. Registration is currently open for the 2013-2014 year. Sign up and be a part of another exciting year as Orpheus celebrates its 25th anniversary in 2014!

For more information about the Orpheus Youth Group, Music Group, or other inquiries, please visit our website at www.ohfs.org. ☐



Youth group members demonstrating the fruits of their labors.



Hellenic pride was everywhere at the Greek American parade, especially on the Orpheus float where youngsters proudly waved their Greek flags.



Orpheus Music Group performed during a workshop at the Old Town School of Folk Music.



Orpheus youth group members performed for the residents of the Greek American Rehabilitation and Care Centre.



After the performance, youth group members got the chance to meet the residents of the Centre and present them with flowers.



Orpheus Adult and Nea Genia members performed at the Skokie Festival of Cultures. Orpheus has been performing at this event for almost 20 years.



Nea Genia members performing the dance, Pyrgousikos, during the Skokie Festival of Cultures.

performance schedule

CHICAGO SUMMERDANCE

Grant Park, Spirit of Music Garden
601 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago, IL
Thursday, July 11
6:30 - 7:30 p.m. Dance lesson.
7:30 - 9:30 p.m. Live music by the Orpheus music ensemble.

NORTH SHORE GREEK FESTIVAL

Hellenic American Academy
1085 Lake Cook Rd., Deerfield, IL
Sunday, September 1 8:00 p.m.

MCDONALD'S THANKSGIVING PARADE

State St. (Congress to Randolph), Chicago, IL
Thursday, November 28 8 - 11:00 a.m.

CHRISTMAS AROUND THE WORLD

Museum of Science and Industry
5700 South Lake Shore Drive, Chicago, IL
Sunday, December 15 4:30 p.m.

ORPHEUS VASILOPITA CELEBRATION

St. John the Baptist Church
2350 E. Dempster St., Des Plaines, IL
Saturday, February 1, 2014 6:00 p.m.

practice schedule

ORPHEUS YOUTH GROUP:

5:30 - 6:30 p.m. (ages 9-15)

ORPHEUS NEA GENIA GROUP:

6:30 - 7:30 p.m. (ages 16-18)

ORPHEUS ADULT GROUP

Beginner/Intermediate: 6:30 - 7:30 p.m.
Intermediate/Advanced: 7:30 - 9:00 p.m.

ORPHEUS MUSIC GROUP:

Junior: 6:30-7:30 p.m.
Senior: 7:30-9:00 p.m.

THURSDAYS:

St. John Lutheran Church
3020 Milwaukee Ave.
Northbrook, IL

ORPHEUS YOUTH GROUP:

2:00 - 3:00 p.m. (ages 9-15)

SATURDAYS:

New Church
(Multipurpose Room)
74 Park Dr., Glenview, IL

Schedules and times are subject to change. For the latest information please visit www.ohfs.org

Yannis Economou, Director/President
Kostas Economou, Instructor
Marianna Gudmundsson, Artistic Director/Vice President
Bessie Kouchoukos-Grosso, Youth Group Coordinator

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*The OHFS is a tax-exempt
not-for-profit organization.*

Submissions for the Fall issue of Lyra will be accepted until September 15, 2013. 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 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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