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The Newsletter for friends and members of OHFS
Vol. 12, Issue No. 1, Winter 2006



Tarpon Springs Marks Centennial Epiphany Celebration

This year marked the 100th year anniversary of St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church in Tarpon Springs, Florida. It also marked the centennial anniversary of the Epiphany ceremony which now takes place at Spring Bayou. Local teenage boys, ages 16-18, dive for the honor of retrieving the fallen cross in its waters.

His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew was present for this historic occasion and presided over many of the ceremonies and events that took place that weekend. Accompanying him were His Eminence Archbishop of America Demetrios and all the Metropolitan from the United States, including His Eminence Metropolitan Iakovos of

Chicago and His Eminence Metropolitan Nikitas of Hong Kong, who is a native of Tarpon Springs. Metropolitan Nikitas is also the brother of John Lulias, the chairman of the annual Winter Dance Conference, which took place in Tarpon Springs during the same period.

The Winter Dance Conference includes a series of workshops on Greek folk traditions in the areas of dance, music and costumes. The workshops are conducted by renowned instructors from Greece, the U.S. and Canada. This year, registration reached capacity as over 250 participants visited this historic Greek community. Conference members, apart from attending all day workshops and

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Members of participating Winter Dance Conference dance groups pose for a picture at St. Nicholas Community Center moments before the procession for the Centennial Epiphany Celebration begins.

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enjoying folk music and dance during the evening events, participated in many activities surrounding the Epiphany centennial celebrations. Among the participating groups was the Orpheus Dance Troupe of Chicago. On Epiphany day, dance groups, dressed in folk costumes, marched down the streets of Tarpon Springs along with marching bands and other groups. They all converged at Spring Bayou, where the official ceremony took place.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, the dance groups performed Greek folk dances for all the guests at the Sponge Docks in Tarpon Springs. The tradition of sponge diving was brought to this area by early 20th century Greek immigrants who were primarily from the island of Kalymnos, where they were known for their sponge diving trade.

The day following the Epiphany ceremony, international recording star Mario Frangoulis gave a concert honoring His All Holiness Bartholomew. Specifically, Mario Frangoulis remarked that it was an honor to perform for the Ecumenical Patriarch because he is a symbol of love to our community. The concert also benefited St. Nicholas Orthodox Parochial School in Tarpon Springs. The event took place at the Sun Bowl arena of the University of South Florida in Tampa, Florida. It featured the Orlando Philharmonic Orchestra under the direction of Andrew Lane, soprano Deborah Meyers, the Archdiocesan Metropolitan Youth Choir under the direction of Maria Koleva and the dancers from the Winter Dance Conference. The dancers performed Zorba the Greek and a typical Syrto dance, dressed in full costume attire, adding a special flavor to the concert.

For additional pictures from the Epiphany and Winter Dance Conference events visit the web site of the Orpheus Hellenic Folklore Society, at www.ohfs.org. ☐



Members of the Orpheus dance group helped jump start the music and dancing while waiting for the Epiphany procession to begin. It was a brisk and clear day that warmed up with singing and dancing.



Members of the Orpheus Dance Troupe of Chicago pictured with His Eminence Metropolitan Iakovos of Chicago, during the 100th Epiphany celebration at Tarpon Springs, Florida.



Members of the Orpheus Dance Troupe, Bessie, Catherine and Christina Grosso pictured with international recording star Mario Frangoulis, at the conclusion of his concert, honoring His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew and benefiting the parochial school of St. Nicholas Church in Tarpon Springs. The Mario Frangoulis concert included the participation of over 200 dancers in folk costume, who participated at the annual Winter Dance Conference.



The Orpheus dance group performed a suite of dances from the region of Thrace at the Sponge Docks. About 12 groups from the U.S. and Canada had the opportunity to showcase Greek folk dances.

Island of Thassos

The island of Thassos could easily be a subject for trivia enthusiasts, with questions such as, Which is the most northern island of Greece? or Which is the only island that belongs to the region of Macedonia?

Thassos is an island bearing a rich history since antiquity. It is said that traces of human civilization were present as early as 3,000 B.C. At one point, around 500 B.C, when the island and its colonies were major commercial centers, it may have had over 60,000 residents. The shape of the island is almost circular, with a perimeter covering about 65 miles. The interior of the island is very mountainous, while the coastal areas offer some breathtaking sights and beaches.

Currently the permanent population of Thassos is around 15,000. Most residents work in the tourist industry, which has been rapidly developing since 1960. Unfortunately, rapid tourist development has altered the traditional elements of the island with regards to its architecture, occupations and other customs. These changes are especially apparent along the coastal areas, which attract the majority of the tourists. Some mountainous villages, however, still maintain their original settings and are a pleasure to visit.

Presently, local dances and songs are no longer performed at feasts, *panegyria*, public or private social functions. In his book, *Folk Songs of Thassos*, Giorgios Avgoustidis states that the 1980s marked the end of hearing local songs at public occasions. The end of the island's folk era was not anticipated even a couple of decades prior to that. The local songs are not even heard at weddings, *glentia*, clubs, coffee shops or homes in Thassos. An

event that makes it more obvious that these songs are not part of every day life is when young men join the Greek army for their mandatory military duty. In the old days, all the young men, prior to their departure, would gather and sing their local songs, accompanied by the popular accordion player, Mitsaras. In present-day Thassos, one does not even realize when someone leaves the village to join the army. One reason that Mr. Avgoustidis provides for this change in custom is the rapid development of tourism that has encouraged locals to be more interested in western European trends rather than local ones.

Nevertheless, there are a few exceptions where one might experience a few folk traditions, such as the carnival events that a local cultural organization may sponsor. In addition, the custom *Gia vrex Aprilim* (Για Βρεξ Απριλι Μ) still takes place the Tuesday after Easter in the area of Kalyvia, located adjacent to the town of Limenaria. There are

many songs that have come to the island from neighboring areas, such as Macedonia, Thrace, Asia Minor and other islands of the northeastern Aegean Sea, which have been adopted and established as part of the local tradition. One example is *Vre Kehagia Perifane* (Βρε Κεχαγια Περιφανε), which is mostly identified with the island of Limnos, and is danced as a couples dance. In Thassos it is danced as a Kalamatianos. The main meter that is dominant in the songs from Thassos are, 2/4, 4/4, and 7/8, 8/8 and 9/8.

Due to its proximity to Macedonia, the Macedonian bagpipe (γκαιντα) was said to be one of the main folk instruments of the island, but that is not the case anymore. Sometimes, two violin players may accompany the local songs, where their parallel execution closely imitates the sound of the Macedonian bagpipe. Now, there are very few local musicians left and even they have abandoned the authentic folk instruments. They now

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Scene from a wedding (1950s) in the city of Limenaria, Thassos. The musicians are Thrasivoulos Mistiroudis-violin, Dimitris Hatzis (Mitsaras)-accordion and Stratos Arhontidis-guitar.

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prefer to play more popular instruments like the bouzouki, guitar and sometimes the clarinet, as more moneymaking opportunities are presented to them, especially during the summer months when the tourist season is at its peak. Other instruments, in addition to the violin, used in the recordings of the local songs are the lute (laouto), accordion, santouri (dulcimer), toubeleki (percussion), guitar, clarinet, taboura and others.

In terms of the island's dance repertoire, Ms. Roula Loukoumi, a native of Thassos, has produced and sang in two albums with folk material from Thassos. The style is unique. The main component of the dances is what is called *Varys Syrtos*, (Βάρυς Σύρτος). These dances vary from the traditional island Syrto dances, as they are danced using *Sta Tria* step structure or have their own steps. Although they may not possess some of the fast paced rhythms found in the dances of other northern Aegean islands, they present the dancer with the challenge of executing their characteristic deliberate style. Some of the most popular dances from the island of Thassos are: *Ahi-Vahi*, *Ola ta Poulakia*, *Ola ta Melahrina*, *Hrysos Aetos*, *Mazou ta Peristeria sou*, *Prasino Dentri*, *Lagadi Xerolagado*, and various songs are performed in the typical Kalamatiano step.

It is becoming more challenging to find the appropriate sources from which to learn these dances. With the passing of older generations, it is up to all of us to keep our Greek folk traditions alive and seek opportunities to document regional music and dances. ☐



The famous accordion player Dimitros Hatzis (better known as Mitsaras). He lived his entire life in the city of Limenaria (1926-1999). At the age of four he lost his eyesight due to typhoid fever. He started playing accordion at the age of 15 and he was one of the most beloved musicians throughout the island of Thassos (Source: [Folk Songs of Thassos](#) by Georgios Avgoustidis).

spotlight

on Orpheus
Youth
dancer...



Christina Grosso

Hometown: Chicago, Illinois

Parents and Family From: My mom's family is from Messinia, Greece. Yiayia is from Lahanatha (near Methoni), and Pappou is from Starasa (outside of Koroni). My dad is from Chicago, but my grandfather is from outside of Bari, Italy.

Time dancing with OHFS: I have been officially with OHFS for 5 years, but, unofficially, I have grown up in Orpheus since I was 4 years old.

Thoughts on dancing: One of the things that plays a big part in my life is dancing, especially Greek dancing. I love to dance!!!

My favorite dance is: Baidouska because it is a very high energy dance. I also love learning new dances of any kind.

Orpheus Benefit A Big Success!

On Saturday November 6th the Chateau Ritz Banquet Hall was filled to capacity as close to 700 guests attended at the Benefit organized by the Orpheus Hellenic Folklore Society. The evening included music, dance and choral presentations by the Orpheus

Youth and Adult dance groups as well as the Orpheus Music Group. A silent auction complimented the activities as guests browsed through a wide variety of items. A special program book was issued for that night, which included highlights of the history of

the Orpheus Dance Troupe over the last 17 years, as well as announcements and greetings from businesses and individual donors. All proceeds will support the programs of the Orpheus Hellenic Folklore Society. Visit www.ohfs.org to view a retrospective video clip that was prepared by Alex Kapotas and Voula Drougas, the program book and additional pictures. Many thanks to all the individuals that helped make this event such a success! ☐



The Orpheus music group, joined by clarinetist Jim Stoyhoff, accompanied the adult and youth groups during their dance presentations.



Guests had a chance to bid on auction items that included an array of items from musical instruments to Christmas decorations and much more!

My favorite place in Greece: The beaches in Finikouda, Messinia. I can walk around and everyone knows me. I get a lot of free ice-cream!

Most vivid OHFS moment: Boca Raton Winter Dance Conference, hanging out at the pool. I loved dancing and singing in the water. I also loved walking around the sponge docks and dancing in Tarpon Springs with Mario Frangoulis.

Favorite Greek dish: Saganaki, I love when they light it on fire and we always scream, Opa! Anything my Yiayia cooks is the best!!!

Hobbies/sports/other interests: Dancing, shopping, Greek drama, soccer (I play defensive midfielder), music (I have been playing the violin since I was 4) and singing in both Greek and English.

Best childhood memory: I love going to my yiayia and pappou's cottage and hanging out with my cousins.

Dream vacation: I would like to go to Italy to find my dad's family.

Someone I would like to meet: Adam Broady from the OC.

I am currently looking forward to: The Folk Dance and Choral Festival in San Diego..

Favorite spot in Chicago: Navy Pier, going on the rides.

I stay home to watch: The OC.

My most prized possession is: My family and friends.

Where I heard about Orpheus: It has always been there for me!!!! ☐

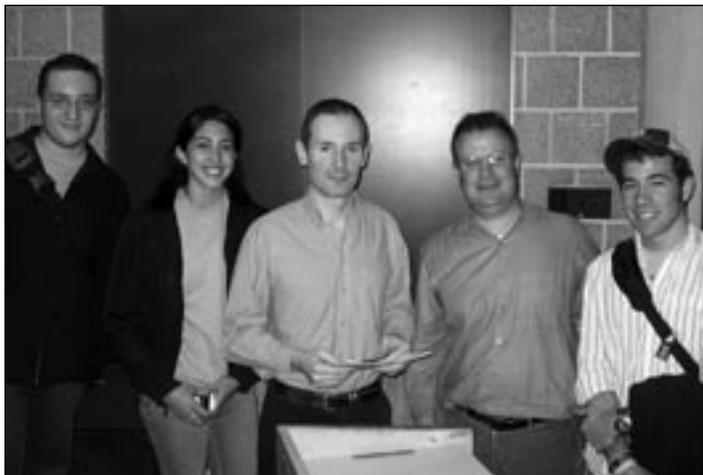
photo gallery



Yannis and Kostas Economou with recording artist Alkinoos Ioannidis and violinist Miltos Papastamou. The Alkinoos Ioannidis concert was part of the 2005 Chicago World Music Festival. Miltos was a high school classmate of Yannis and Kostas in Greece.



Orpheus members in front of the Orpheus Dance Group booth during the 2005 Greek Town Festival.



Yannis Economou with Professor Pietro Bortone (center) and students at the University of Illinois of Chicago. Yannis was a guest lecturer at Professor Bortone's class: "Introduction to Greece". He presented information on Greek folk dance traditions. Professor Bortone is the Director of Modern Greek Studies at the University of Illinois at Chicago.



Orpheus members presented a suite of dances at the Naperville Public Library accompanied by members of the Orpheus music ensemble. At the conclusion of the presentation members of the audience joined Orpheus for an impromptu Greek dance lesson.



Chicago Mayor Richard Daley with Yannis Economou, Bessie Grosso and members of the Orpheus Youth Group at the Hellenic Museum Groundbreaking Ceremony on Halsted Street.



Chicago Mayor Richard Daley, Orpheus youth member Paul, Hellenic Museum President John Marks and Athens Mayor Dora Bakogianni at the Hellenic Museum Groundbreaking Ceremony.



The Orpheus youth group pose for a picture after their presentation at the Christmas Around the World festivities at the Museum of Science and Industry.



Orpheus members with the Channel 7 Morning News team and Alexa Ganakos author of the book [GreekTown Chicago: Its History and its Recipes](#) (fourth from right). Orpheus members had a chance to demonstrate several Greek folk dances during the news program.



Orpheus members made an appearance on the WGN Ch. 9 Morning News at Venus Restaurant in Greek Town. Members are pictured with WGN reporter Anna Belaval (center) and Hellenic Museum representative Toni Callas.



Father John Rallis, Pastor of St. John Church, with Yanni Economou, Marianna Damianides and Alex Kapotas during the blessing of the Vasilopites.



Homemade Vasilopites that were prepared for the night. Members and friends of the Orpheus Hellenic Folklore Society gathered to celebrate the annual Vasilopita event, an evening that featured a presentation of several choral pieces under the direction of Eftihia Papageorgiou, music by the Orpheus music ensemble and plenty of dancing.

performance schedule

Greek Orthodox Folk Dance and Choral Festival

San Diego, CA
Thursday-Sunday, February 16-19

Orpheus Music Ensemble Balkan Spring Festival

University of Chicago
International House
1414 E. 59th street
Chicago, IL
Friday, March 17
8:00 p.m.

Greek Consul General Reception Greek Independence Day

78 E. Washington
Chicago, IL
Wednesday, March 22
5:30 p.m.

Greek American Parade

Greek Town, Halsted St.
Chicago, IL
Sunday, April 2
2:30 p.m.

Skokie Festival of Cultures

Oakton Park
4701 West Oakton Street
Skokie, IL
Saturday, May 20
5:00 p.m.

Orpheus Youth Group End of the Year

St. John The Baptist Church
2350 Dempster Ave.
Des Plaines, IL
Sunday, May 21
2:00 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:

Every Thursday at:

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

Every Saturday at:

1:30 p.m. - 2:30 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 April 15, 2006. 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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