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The Newsletter for friends and members of OHFS  
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## Orpheus Turns 20!

### A Look Back Over Two Decades of Dance, Song and Community

A large assortment of emotions pours out when you try to put 20 years with the Orpheus Hellenic Folklore Society (OHFS) in perspective. When this group was established, we knew it had to be something different. It had to be an entity that would identify with the entire Greek-American community and its mission would clearly guide its every step. Some of the means to accomplish the above were already available; Greek Americans of all ages and ability seem to love to dance and that was evident at the numerous dinner dances, church festivals, family and social gatherings. The next step was to garner that energy and channel it into an effort

that would take it to the next level. That, in a way, was a scary thought since, in the city of Chicago and the nearby suburbs, there was not an established Greek folk and cultural organization that realized all the potential that the populous Greek community had to offer. New ground had to be covered and the greatest task ahead was to make the conviction that this initiative would be a serious one. And one more thing: it would be run and organized by young adults, who would be in tune with the times and employ methods that would enable it to survive and prosper well into the future.

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December 1989: Orpheus Dance Troupe's first performance. Top right is Nikos Kourtis, the troupe's first instructor.



*Festival of Greek Music and Dance 2003: Easter Customs and Traditions.*



*Soldier Field: Opening Ceremonies of the World Cup of Soccer, Chicago 1994.*

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At the same time, dance, songs and music were elements that would enable all the participants to demonstrate the fruits of their work to wider audiences. That way, a sense of pride and accomplishment would be acquired so that this effort would not be spent merely for internal satisfaction. The exposure to both Greek and non-Greek audiences has been invaluable. There is no greater sense of pride in representing the Hellenic community among the numerous ethnic groups that make up this country. That was accomplished via the cultural

treasures that our ancestors bestowed upon us. Those very folk traditions enabled us, hundreds of years later, in a land thousand of miles away, to play the same role that they did back in the motherland. Song, dance, and music were meant to be enjoyed by all and inspire a deep sense of community spirit. Twenty years later, we can claim that this community spirit has been alive through the hundreds of children and young adults that have all been part of the Orpheus programs who still, to this date, promote and demonstrate those traditions.

It is tempting to boast about the accomplishments and progress of the past 20 years. The original vision and dream has indeed become a reality. One can just browse through the Picture Gallery link of the OHFS web site to get a glimpse of what has been achieved. It is very rewarding to see over 100 children fill the Youth program to capacity every year. Seeing these young faces, full of enthusiasm and energy is very inspiring. The Orpheus Music Group, under the guidance of Eve Monzingo and George Lawler, has made leaps of progress in the last couple of years and this dedicated and talented group of musicians is a true delight. The adult group of the Orpheus Dance Troupe continues to be in the forefront by participating in numerous events every year representing the Hellenic community. The three live concerts, the three trips to Greece, the FDF competition, the 1994 World Cup of Soccer, several dance conferences in the US, Canada and Greece and the numerous media appearances are just a few examples. The collaboration with the Hellenic Choir, and its director Eftihia Papageorgiou, has been especially successful.

The personal friendships that have developed over the last 20 years are priceless and many of them have become life long ones. How would one summarize the rewards and successes over two whole decades? It all comes down to the effect that OHFS has had on everyone's life that was part of it. No matter if it was for a few months or for 20 years, if that stay affected the way they reflect on Hellenism and their Hellenic roots, then there is no need to look any further; Mission Accomplished!

We hope to see you all on Saturday, April 25, 2009 as we come together as a community to celebrate one of its success stories...past, present and future. ☐

# Orpheus Celebrates Youth Group End of Year 2007 and Kicks Off New Year 2008-2009

One hundred dancers, 15 musicians! That sounds like a very exciting combination. That was the case as the members of the Orpheus Youth Group offered excitement and exhibited great potential during the End of Year celebration event that took place at the end of May.

All four youth groups performed folk dances and songs and were accompanied by the Orpheus Music Group. In addition, the program included speeches from a handful of graduates who reflected on their experience with Orpheus during the past 4-5 years. Their remarks are always touching and funny. Their reflections have become one of the program's highlights. All graduates received their certificates of completion of the Youth program. This certificate entitles them to continue on to the adult group.

The Dina Sianis Merit awards were also presented to two exemplary youth graduates by Dr. George Sianis, the husband of the late Dina Sianis. This year's recipients were Louisa Dimopoulos and Marinos Phylis. In her speech, Louisa recalled how anxious she was to join Orpheus and what the experience has meant to her. Louisa noted, "I would like to thank my wonderful teachers for illustrating the art of dance that, because of you, I have come to love very much. Thank you again for the many unforgettable memories you have shared with me, and the numerous opportunities you gave me to perform with the group throughout Chicago."

This year's event featured the Orpheus Music Group, which accompanied the youth groups in several dances and songs. The music group was joined by its instructors, Eve Monzingo and George Lawler, as well as other guest musicians. The result was truly amazing as the music filled the entire hall. The progress that the

music program has made this past year has been impressive and has exceeded everyone's expectations. The audience was treated to a unique experience as the elements of dance, live music and song came together as one.

All the instructors, parents and children should be proud of the accomplishments of the Orpheus Youth Group. Those 100-plus kids gave their best and exhibited, with pride

and determination, their Hellenic culture and roots. In her speech, youth member Deanna comments, "Each and every year I have enjoyed learning these great, new and exciting dances. After our performances each year I would become more excited about the following year, because the older groups were always performing the more complicated dances and I couldn't wait to join them." Similarly, youth member John stated, "The  
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Youth members and instructors at the Glenview practice facility are ready to tackle some brand new dances this year.



Youth members at the Northbrook location pose for a group photo at the start of the 2008-2009 year.

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people here make an environment that is just incredible... we all work together to perfect all the moves and steps that are thrown at us, and, at the same time, we are able to have fun along the way, with a kind of family relationship.”

It is very satisfying to see this program reach its capacity every year. It has become very vital for the preservation and promotion of Hellenic culture and the cultivation of a Hellenic consciousness among today's generations of the Greek-American youth. That becomes evident when kids transform the dance, music and song material taught during the practice sessions into presentations that relive the spirit of those traditions—not as an element that belongs to the past, but as an element that offers inspiration for the present and the future.

The Orpheus Youth program already kicked off the new 2008-2009 year. Many new faces have joined its ranks and among the events planned for this year is Orpheus' 20th Year Anniversary, which is going to be



Louisa Dimopoulos and Marinos Phylis, this year's recipients of the Dina Sianis Merit Award, pictured with Youth Group Coordinator, Bessie Grosso, Dr. Sianis and Yannis Economou, OHFS Director.

celebrated with a special performance on Saturday April 25, 2009 at the North Shore Center for the Performing Arts in Skokie, a spectacular venue. We are looking forward to the Youth Group

making the community proud with its continued progress.

Have a wonderful year!! ☐

## spotlight

on Orpheus  
youth  
dancer...



Antonís

**Hometown:** Chicago, Northwest suburbs

**Parents/Family From:** My dad is from Chicago and my mom is from Tripoli in Greece. All of my grandparents are from Greece though.

**Occupation:** Student

**Time Dancing with Orpheus Group:** This is my fifth year dancing with Orpheus. This is my second year as a member of the Orpheus music group.

**Thoughts on Dancing:** Dancing is a lot of fun. You get to make new friends, have a good time, and help preserve the Greek heritage.

**Favorite Dance:** Pentozalis from Crete

## Orpheus Hosts

### Anna Mavrou Workshops

In May, the Orpheus Hellenic Folklore Society had the pleasure of welcoming Lykeio of Ellinidon Dance Group instructor, Anna Mavrou to Chicago. OHFS first met Anna while visiting Kalamata, Greece in the summer of 2007. While in Kalamata, Anna was graciously able to arrange some workshop sessions for Orpheus youth and adult members, while she was in the midst of preparing for a major performance with the Lykeio group. In these workshop sessions, Anna demonstrated dances from the Peloponnese region as well as some material from the island of Kalymnos. In an effort to make the workshop sessions even more authentic and effective, Anna brought with her a traditional bridal costume from Kalymnos, and adult group member Jaime was lucky enough to model it for the rest of the OHFS members.

“Our collaboration with the Lykeio Chapter in Kalamata and their dance instructors during the dance workshops, dinners, and casual dancing felt like being with long lost friends who shared the same passion for Hellenic



Orpheus adult group members practicing some songs and dances from Kalymnos with guest instructor Anna Mavrou (far left).

culture. It was a warm partnership where both benefited in meaningful ways”, said Yannis Economou. Several months later, OHFS was able to rekindle that friendship, this time at the practice facility in Northbrook.

Originally from Kalymnos, Anna demonstrated songs and dances from this island as well as other islands of the Dodecanese to several OHFS adult members, during her visit. With her remarkably unique and beautiful voice, Anna presented two traditional songs from Kalymnos: Giala and Thimariotikos. Some of the

dances Anna shared with the troupe were Issos, Sousta, Thimariotikos, Zerbodexos and the lively Ntirlantanta. No doubt, some of the material proved to be quite challenging, but Orpheus is working diligently to master these dances and present some of them in various performances, as well as the upcoming 20th Anniversary event in April of 2009 (visit [www.ohfs.org](http://www.ohfs.org) for more information on the event). Orpheus thanks Anna Mavrou for sharing with us her vast knowledge of Greek songs, dances and traditions and looks forward to a continued friendship and collaboration. ☐

**Most Vivid OHFS Memory:** My most vivid and favorite memory is the Vasilopita event last year. Everybody had so much fun and when it was time to go, I didn't want to leave.

**Favorite Greek Dish:** Lamb

**Favorite Place in Greece:** Prosimni (village near Argos). I spend my summer vacations there. I have a lot of friends there and a lot of fond memories.

**Hobbies/Sports/Other Interests:** I am currently on my school's soccer team and in my free time I play the clarinet.

**Nobody knows I:** I am a chanter at church. I've been taking Byzantine music lessons for five years. I've received my first level degree in Greece for Byzantine music and hope to get the next level this summer.

**Best childhood memory:** My best childhood memory is when my family went on a trip to Hawaii.

**Someone I'd like to meet:** I wish I could go back in time to meet my great-grandparents that are not alive.

**Favorite building/spot in Chicago:** My favorite spot is along the lakefront.

**I'm currently looking for/forward to:** Driving! I'll be sixteen in 2 years.

**Prized possession:** My collection of model cars.

**Where I heard about Orpheus Dance Troupe:** The first time I heard about it was when my parents were talking about it one day. I told them it sounded like fun and they said they would enroll me. ☐

# Good Friends + Cold Frappe + Greece Perfect Summer

By Bessie Grosso

So you think you've seen it all? I thought so, until I visited the Herodio Theater in Athens, Greece this past summer. The theater is, in my opinion, one, if not the most, impressive and significant theaters in the world—nothing measures up to it or compares!

While in Greece, my daughter Catherine and I attended one of the events of the Athens Festival that featured the Lyceum of Ellinidon of Athens folk dance group. It was definitely a night to remember, full of drums, toubelekia and rhythm. The theater is part of the Acropolis, with an incredible view of the Parthenon behind you. We had the chance to attend a practice session at a nearby school and catch up with our dance friends of many years, Hara Deligiannis and her son Rafael. Hara, one of the directors of the Lyceum, and Rafael treated us to a special coffee reunion as we updated each other with the latest news in our lives. On July 17, the day of the general dress rehearsal, special guest passes were

waiting for Catherine and me outside the Herodio Theater. One of our favorite friends, Panayis, greeted us with a big hug, and, of course, we took a picture with him in the theater. Panayis is a member of the Lyceum of Ellinidon of Athens as well as an Orpheus alumnus!

The next day, it was performance day. It was in the mid 80s with no breeze, but we were treated to a show that took our breath away. Walking to this theater, one feels the presence of thousands of years of past performers and guests, and here we were, sharing in the experience. We sat 4th row center in a sold out performance. The evening started with the entire cast of performers focusing on rhythms. The daouli, a large drum that is hit with a large stick on one side and a smaller one in the other hand, starts the program with a "boom boom boom" beat, followed by an army of toubelekia. Then the lights turned on, revealing women holding shot glasses and clanking them to the beat, accompanied by the sounds of the defi in many different sizes. Soon, the song, "*Ena Nero Kira Vaggelio*" began resonating in the theater. The costumes were just exquisite and the music was outstanding. Wow—what a magnificent performance! Afterwards, it was out to dinner with our friends, Anna, Pavlo, Roula, and Vasiliki, from Kalamata. We met Anna for the first time in the

summer of 2007 when Orpheus performed in Kalamata. Earlier this year, Orpheus had the pleasure of reuniting with Anna in Chicago as she was invited to be a guest instructor and lead a few workshops for Orpheus members. I would like to thank Anna and her husband Pavlo for showing us an amazing time this past summer.

Kalamata was very different this year. I felt Orpheus' presence from last year and everyone there was still amazed at our performance. Angeliki Mitrou, City of Kalamata Manager of Cultural Affairs Department (DEPAK), took time out of her busy day to sit down with me as we exchanged our thoughts and reflections about last summer. Then she and I were off to see the Mayor of Kalamata, Mr. Panayiotis Nikas, who graciously made time to see us and sent his best to all of us back in Chicago. As we reminisced about Orpheus' 2007 visit to Kalamata, the Mayor commented, "You are always welcome in Kalamata and we look forward to your group coming again and showing us the love and spirit of the Greeks in the US!"

How do you go back to Finikounda, after going there with over 200 people, and not feel like there is something missing? The townspeople remembered me from our trip last year, and it was free coffees wherever I went, not to mention everyone thanking me for coming. I heard the same questions and comments from everyone: "Where are all of those beautiful dancers?", "You were the biggest and best event that has ever taken place here!", "Please come again!" I was able to enjoy some down-time with friends and relatives at the beach, particularly my cousins, Aggy and Effie. We enjoyed a beautiful dinner next to the famous Kastro in Methoni, one of our tour destinations from last year. We also dropped in on the Mayor of Methoni, Mr. Michelis, and gave him a small token of our appreciation for his hospitality and warm welcome during Orpheus' 2007 trip. Everywhere I went I kept remembering last summer and still thinking how great it was. ☐



Herod Theater, Athens Festival 2008: The Lykeio of Athens Folk Dance Troupe at the conclusion of its performance. At the center is Lefteris Drandakis, the group's artistic director





Orpheus participated in the season opener of 'Tiny Great Performances' at the DuPage Children's Museum, which introduces young children to the magic of live performances. Pictured here, Ethel encourages two eager little dancers.



Orpheus members helped man the phones for Chicago's PBS station, Channel 11, during the show 'Journey: Greek American Dream'.



During Memorial Day weekend, the Orpheus dance group re-visited the community of the Assumption Church in St. Louis during their Greek Festival. A visit to St. Louis would not be complete without a visit to the Gateway Arch.



Savina Yannatou, accompanied by members of Primavera en Salonico, performed at the Old Town School of Folk Music during the 2008 Chicago World Music Festival. Kostas, Bessie and Yannis with Savina after the concert.



Elpida, Tina, Katerina and Andonis were some of the performers at the Parthenon Restaurant's 40th Anniversary celebration.



Orpheus members gather for a group picture, with the Sears Tower as a background, at this year's Greektown Festival.

# performance schedule

## "Introduction to Greece" class

Tuesday, November 11  
University of Illinois at Chicago  
Chicago, IL  
12:30 p.m.

## 75th McDonald's Thanksgiving Parade

Friday, November 27  
State Street  
Chicago, IL  
8:30 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

## Christmas Around the World

Sunday, December 14  
Museum of Science and Industry  
5700 South Lake Shore Drive  
Chicago, IL  
4:00 p.m.

## Orpheus Vasilopita Celebration

January 31, Saturday 2009  
St. John The Baptist Church  
Des Plaines, IL  
6:00 p.m.

## General Rehearsal,

### Orpheus 20th Year Anniversary

Monday, April 20, 2009  
North Shore Center for the Performing Arts  
Skokie, IL  
6:00 p.m.

### Orpheus 20th Year Anniversary

Saturday, April 25, 2009  
North Shore Center for the Performing Arts  
Skokie, IL  
7:00 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:

Session I: 5:30 p.m. - 6:30 p.m.  
Session II: 6:30 p.m. - 7:30 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 Winter issue of *Lyra* will be accepted until January 15, 2009. 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.