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The Newsletter for friends and members of OHFS
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Orpheus Celebrates 20 Years of Memories, Song and Dance

Music, dancing, singing, acting and a little bit of drama is what audience members experienced at the Orpheus Hellenic Folklore Society's 20th anniversary celebration this past April. Special guest singers, dancers and musicians, from the US and Greece, joined the OHFS adult and youth group dancers and music ensemble on stage at Skokie's North Shore Center for the Performing Arts Theater. By the end of the night, almost 200 performers and musicians had taken the stage, singing, dancing and playing their hearts out, earning a standing ovation from the audience. Over

the years, the group has presented many complex performances, incorporating a multitude of dancers and musicians and complicated material. This performance was, by far, Orpheus' most ambitious, significant and successful undertaking to date. "The success was due in large part to the organization of the talents of our members, both youth and adults, our supporters, our guest performers, our choral director, stage manager, and the technical crew at the North Shore Center for the Performing Arts", notes Marianna Gudmundsson, *Continued on page 2*



Anna Mavrou and John Peppes, performing Karsilamas from Kalymnos. Anna and John, who both have ties to the island of Kalymnos, were two of the guest performers at OHFS 20th anniversary event.

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OHFS Artistic Director. “More importantly, it was the shared endeavor to put together our love for music, song and dance that made all of these talents shine”.

All three of the youth groups, wearing a variety of colorful, ethnic costumes, performed dances from mainland Greece. Over the past several months, the dancers had been diligently reviewing new material and perfecting the dances they were already familiar with. Their hard work was evident when they took over the stage, executing dances that were spirited and full of enthusiasm. The live music provided by the Orpheus music ensemble, led by instructors Eve Monzigo, George Lawler and Jim Stoyhoff, gave the dancers that unmistakable “kefi” as they danced and sang their way around the stage.

OHFS was pleased to welcome several guest dancers and musicians, as they took part in this milestone performance. The guest performers featured: Anna Mavrou, a native of the island of Kalymnos and member of the Lykeion Dance Group of Kalamata, Messinia; John Peppes, member of Kyklos Dance Troupe from Detroit, Michigan; Panayiotis League, musician from Boston, Massachusetts; Beth Cohen, musician from Boston, Massachusetts and members of the Chicago-based band, Lamajamal.

The adult group presented a suite of dances from the island of Kalymnos, including “*Sousta*”, “*Mihanikos*” and the lively, “*Dirlandada*”. The sponge diving industry was hugely responsible for the island’s prosperity and the livelihood of its residents. However, sponge diving was a very dangerous trade to be in. More often than not, the men would return home with a paralytic condition known as the “bends” or they would fall victim to the sea and not return at all. To highlight this important part of Kalymnos’ history, a funeral scene was re-enacted, complete with the chanting of a traditional “*moiroloji*” (lamentation) for the deceased.

Members of the Chicago Hellenic Choir joined OHFS in a choral presentation under the direction of Eftihia Papageorgiou. Appropriately enough, the opening number was the song, “*As Arhisoun oi Horoi*”, (“Let the dancing begin”), marking the start of the dancing and celebration. This was a slight modification of the actual song, “*As Kratisoun oi Horoi*”, (“Let the dancing continue”), which was the last song of the night, symbolically encouraging the continuation of the Greek song and dance tradition for a multitude of years to come.

In between the singing and dancing, the audience was treated to a “trip-down-memory-lane” style video montage. It included reflections and interviews with past and present members and instructors, as well as highlights of past performances and memorable events. The audience got the chance to step back in time and hear about some unforgettable, funny and moving memories and, at the same time, gain an understanding and some insight into what being a part of Orpheus means to its members—past and present; young and old. OHFS Director, Yannis Economou states, “Even, from the very beginning, when the ‘*Xristos Anesti*’ hymn was sung so elaborately, the audience members felt that they

were up for a special treat. And indeed, they were not disappointed!”

Before the show, guests had the opportunity to view a variety of exhibits in the theater lobby, such as a shoe exhibit, featuring an array of retired dancing shoes as well as traditional, regional Greek dancing shoes that are part of the troupe’s extensive costume collection. Additionally, there was a t-shirt exhibit where several Orpheus members were able to artistically express what being a part of Orpheus means to them.

After the performance, comments from the audience came pouring in and the feedback was overwhelmingly positive! Economou observes, “The Greek American community should be very proud of this remarkable event. Beside the artistic success, that pride should lie in the fact that this presentation exhibited the effort, talent and soul of members of the community itself who wanted to demonstrate their connection with their Hellenic heritage in an unselfish and uncompromising way. It is indeed true that good people will produce good results. And, we could not have hoped for a better demonstration of this fact!”

Arguably, 20 years is a relatively long time for an organization to endure. Not only has the Orpheus Hellenic Folklore Society endured the test of time, but it has flourished and grown significantly! What started as a social gathering with a handful of young adults, eventually developed into a solid, impressive 150+ member organization. An organization whose mission is to serve the Greek-American community by preserving and perpetuating the rich history and traditions of Greece, setting goals and steadily achieving and surpassing them. Looking ahead to the future of OHFS, Gudmundsson speculates, “The next 20 years hold unknown challenges and even more experiences that will serve to perpetuate the development of the youth group, music group, instruction at all levels, and the preservation of our Greek culture and traditions”.

Please visit www.ohfs.org to see more photos of the event and order the DVD of the event. ☐



Members of the Orpheus Youth Group I singing ‘*Xenitemeno Mou Pouli*’ from the region of Thrace.

The Reviews Are In!

Below is some of the feedback and reactions from audience members and those who were involved with the production of Orpheus' 20th anniversary event.



Boston musicians, Beth Cohen and Panayiotis League, wowed the audience with their exceptional musical skills. OHFS was proud to, once again, partner with such talented musicians.

I did want to see you all afterwards and congratulate everyone on a fantastic event. It brought back lots of memories and tears to my eyes. I was overwhelmed with emotion at one point (at many points, actually) that I thought I was the only one clapping the loudest and moving with the beat. Everything from the chorus to the kids playing all the instruments, the youth and adult dancers it was just incredible!!! It was a great event Yanni, congratulations to all of you! You don't know how proud I am of everyone there at Orpheus. Bravo, and here's to another 20 years!!!

Kelly Apostolopoulos
Orpheus Alumnus

Hi Yanni, I hope you're recovering well from that great effort... It was well worth it—the performance was wonderful—so many facets to it... As I told you over the weekend, I was so impressed by the many musicians of all ages! I've never seen that anywhere else... It was fantastic to perform with Anna and Panayotis and John, and playing for your group was very exciting - the mutual energy exchange was very inspiring. And of course all of the kindness and generosity shown to us was very wonderful. So thank all of you for so much. Please say hi to everyone from me and thanks again.

Beth Cohen
Guest musician

*“I was overwhelmed
with emotion...”*

You already know how much I value Orpheus' work. I knew also that there was some "singing" and some instruments, but I could have never imagined that level of quality and repertoire. The performance was absolutely stunning. The number of young kids that joined the group! Unbelievable! Congratulations! Along with the congratulations, at this point, I do have a question for Orpheus: what's next? My best wishes to the group.

Veni Friga
Hellenic Link Midwest

Just wanted to let you know that we really enjoyed the performance this past Saturday. It is incredible what you and your directors have been able to accomplish over the last 20 years. My son, who is just starting to dance with the intermediate group, especially enjoyed the performance of the dances from Kalymnos and the live musicians. In fact, as soon as I got to my car in the parking lot, I was on the phone to my parents letting them know what an exciting evening it was. I wish you all the best and many more years. Again, please thank all of your directors and dancers for a wonderful evening!

Gregory Kontos
Director, Apollo Dance Group

I just want to say congratulations on 20 years of Orpheus. The production was outstanding and very inspiring. Everyone in the Lamajamal group had a great time. Orpheus' role in the Greek community is immeasurable and it serves as a model of excellence for other cultural community groups.

Ronnie Malley
Guest musician

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“I will never forget it!”

I cannot thank you enough for the wonderful hospitality and friendship that you, Kosta and the entire Orpheus group showed me over the last few days. Many times long weekends tend to wear you out and you look forward to going home. In this case, I must honestly say that I was sad to leave. I feel I have made friends for life.

I am honored to have been able to celebrate Orpheus' great achievement with everyone. I hope that I contributed to the overall success of the program and your mission. Please pass on a sincere thank you and hello to the entire group for me; Christina, Tina, Bessie, Marianna, Nina, Presvytera Stephanie, Jimmy, and the many others...I am sure I am forgetting names.

I look forward to hopefully collaborating with Orpheus in the future.

John Peppes
Guest dancer



Members of the Chicago Hellenic Choir joined OHFS in performing such songs as "As Kratisoun oi Horoi" as well as a medley of contemporary and traditional Greek songs.

Thank you again, very much for inviting me to your 20th Celebration. It was wonderful, very enjoyable and entertaining. I will never forget it!!!! My cousin (Maria) and I had a good time. God bless you with the energy and passion in the next 20 years that led you to this monumental 20th year.

John Petenes

Please visit www.ohfs.org for more reviews and comments. ☐

“... outstanding and very inspiring.”

spotlight

on Orpheus dancer...



Nikos
Bokas

Hometown: Born and raised in Philadelphia, attending college and graduate school there; moved to Wisconsin to attend UW Law School. Milwaukee is now my home.

Parents/Family From: Father: village of Lia, Epiros, the same village that Eleni Gatzoyiannis (subject of the book "Eleni") lived in, and her son, the author Nicholas Gage, lived in. Our family remained close to Nicholas Gage, who actually worked together with my father and me in a family business. Mother: village of Avgerinos, Prefecture of Kozani, Macedonia, Greece.

Time Dancing with Orpheus Group: Two years—starting the 3rd year in August.

7th Annual Midwest Fiddle Championship

The Orpheus Hellenic Folklore Society was invited to participate in the 7th Annual Midwest Fiddle Championship during the 2009 Chicago Folk & Roots Festival organized by the Old Town School of Folk Music. The invitational contest features five bands, with each band being lead by one or more fiddlers.

The last couple of years, a few dancers also accompanied the presentation of each band since, according to the chairperson of the event, Paul Tyler, 'the fiddle music is best expressed when also accompanied by dancers'. What a great idea!

The 'fiddler' section of the Orpheus music group was in full force at the event comprising of Angelo, Danielle and Izaki (the 2006 winner of the Junior Fiddle competition). In addition, Orpheus music directors, Eve Monzingo (dulcimer) and George Lawler (percussion) accompanied the fiddlers. The presentation included a suite of dances from the Greek islands, Ikaria, Chios, Limnos and Kalymnos.



Orpheus music group fiddlers Angelo, Izaki and Danielle accompanying the Orpheus dance group during the 7th Midwest Fiddle Championship.

This year's lineup included five bands representing a wide spectrum of music and dance styles, including swing and tap, Celtic, Mexican, and American old-time and clogging. Orpheus came away with a third place finish with the top honors going to Los Pichardos from Mexico.

All participants had a great time sharing their music and dance traditions and the Orpheus Hellenic Folklore Society was very proud to be among the bands selected to be part of such a prestigious event.

Visit www.ohfs.org to see a video clip of the presentation along with photos from the event. 📺

Thoughts on Dancing: I feel like I am dancing with my family and ancestors—my cultural roots! It is a most positive social and physical activity for me. Greek folk dancing is like a nurturing oasis, an island or refuge from all the vicissitudes of life.

Favorite Dance: No one favorite, but I am most drawn to Epirotic, Aegean and Ionian island dances.

Most Vivid OHFS Memory: The performance celebrating the 20th anniversary, of course!

Favorite Greek Dish: Briami and spanakorizo.

Favorite Place in Greece: I like the Thessio part of Athens, the Ionian islands, and the Epiros coastline.

Hobbies/Sports/Other Interests: I like reading history, philosophy, law, politics, and international

relations. Favorite writer is Thomas Paine, favorite book "The Age of Reason".

Nobody knows I: In 1969 I enlisted as an 18 year old in the U.S. Marines and volunteered to serve as a combat Marine in Vietnam, and did so.

Best childhood memory: Dancing in our home with my parents and their Greek immigrant friends during name day celebrations.

Someone I'd like to meet: Nelson Mandela is the person I would be most honored to meet.

Prized possession: My organized video collection of Greek dance lessons taught by our wonderful Orpheus teaching staff. 📺

Orpheus Celebrates Youth Group End of the Year

by Estelle Pappas

On Sunday, May 31, the annual Orpheus Youth group's End of the Year event took place. This year, four graduates spoke to the families of Orpheus, reflecting on their past years in the Orpheus youth group. Many spoke about memorable moments, such as the trip to Greece and the 20th Anniversary celebration. Others spoke about the fantastic venues that we danced at, such as the Museum of Science and Industry and the Greek American Rehabilitation and Care Center. But most importantly, they spoke about the friendships that Orpheus has brought into their lives.

The graduates this year were: Pamela Alimissis, Antonios Anagnostopoulos, Angelo Angelos, Paige Arvanitis, Katerina Beniaris, Konstandinos Denekos, Stefanos Dolomas, Paul Grosso, Valerie Nikolas, and Estelle Pappas. Also, in keeping with tradition, the Dina Sianis Merit awards were presented to one female and one male graduate. Sofia Sianis, daughter of the late Dina Sianis, was on hand to present the awards to this year's recipients, Paige Arvanitis and Paul Grosso. In addition, all of the Orpheus music group members were recognized for their dedication to the group and for a great first full year, and were presented with certificates from their instructors, George Lawler and Eve Monzingo.

This year's event was different than others since it was held at Giordano's Pizzeria in Morton Grove. The Mavrakis family hosted the event, the first one since the remodeling of their restaurant, and made sure their establishment was ready in time for the event. Kostas Economou and Bessie Grosso presented Ted and Carol Mavrakis with a memento gift



A certificate was given to all members of the Orpheus junior music groups from their instructors, George Lawler and Eve Monzingo.

from the Orpheus Youth group. After a delicious meal, the guests made sure to save room to sample some dessert! There were two delectable, enormous cakes: one to celebrate the 10 year anniversary of the Youth group and the other to celebrate the 20 year anniversary of the Orpheus dance group. In addition, several of the youth member's parents brought sweets and fruit for everyone to enjoy. After such a filling meal, the only thing left to do was dance all those calories off! Members of the Orpheus music group started doing what they

do best, and in no time, the middle of the restaurant had transformed into a very crowded dance floor.

The food was great and everyone had an amazing time! Thank you to the Mavrakis family for hosting this special event. And thank you Orpheus for four fantastic years! I look forward to participating in the adult group next year.

Please visit www.ohfs.org to see more photos from the event. ☐



Sofia Sianis (second from left), presented the 2009 Dina Sianis Merit Award to Paige Arvanitis and Paul Grosso.



The Orpheus Youth group performed at the Greek American Nursing Center commemorating Greek Independence Day. At the end of the program, residents of the center joined the dance line with members of the Orpheus youth group.



The Honorable Ambassador of Greece, Mr. Petrovas and his wife, pictured with members of the Orpheus dance group, during the General Consulate's Greek Independence Day reception at the Chicago Cultural Center.



Orpheus members adopted the "show must go on" attitude, braving the elements along the Greek-American parade route.



Orpheus participated in the 19th annual Skokie Festival of Cultures. For the last 18 years, Orpheus has taken part in this multi-ethnic festival.



Members of the Chicago Hellenic Choir and Orpheus once again joined forces during the Chicago Hellenic Choir's Spring Recital under the direction of Eftihia Papageorgiou.



The Orpheus Youth group, along with the Orpheus music group, took part in the 2nd annual Family Fun and Music Festival, organized by the Midwest Young Artists music school. Here, members of the Orpheus music group are pictured in front of MYA's exquisite rehearsal facility at Fort Sheridan.

performance schedule

Taste of Greece 2009

Sunday, August 30
Greek Town on Halsted Street
Chicago, IL
8:00 p.m.

Come visit our booth
August 29, 30 Saturday-Sunday

North Shore Greek Festival

Saturday, September 5
Hellenic American Academy
1085 Lake Cook Road
Deerfield, IL 60015
7:00 & 8:00 p.m.

Christmas Around the World

Sunday, December 13
Museum of Science and Industry
5700 South Lake Shore Drive
Chicago, IL
4:00 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 October 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.

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