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The Newsletter for friends and members of OHFS
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Palmos Greek Folk Dance Conference: The Greek Islands Come to New York

This past November, the lower level of the LaGuardia Airport hotel in Astoria, New York was alive with the sounds and dances of the Greek islands. The Traditional Movement Hellenic Folklore Society of New York sponsored the first annual "Palmos" Greek folk dance conference and Orpheus members were in attendance. The three day conference

included dance workshops held at the hotel, and a dinner dance at the beautiful church of St. Nicholas in Flushing, NY.

The dance workshops featured instructors Joe Graziosi (Boston), Vasilis Contos (California) and Kiriaki Spanou (Greece). The focus of the workshops was island
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Group picture of the participants on the last day of the conference

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dances, specifically from the islands of Paros, Andros, Sifnos, Naxos, Samos, Amorgos and Kithnos.

Island dances are always popular with dancers and spectators, mostly because of the high energy of the dances and the music. Also,

most island dances are performed in couples, offering a fun deviation from the traditional line dances of mainland Greece.

There was a strong turnout as conference participants came from all over the United States and Canada. During the breaks, lunches and



Singer Kiriaki Spanou and musician Nikos Oikonomidis performing an island medley during the glendi at St. Nicholas church in Flushing, NY



Instructor Vasilis Contos (center) pictured with Orpheus members and other conference participants at the 1st annual "Palmos" Greek folk dance conference

Saturday night "glendi", there were plenty of opportunities to re-connect with old friends, such as Nikos Oikonomidis, who was in Chicago in 2002 for a concert organized by Orpheus, as well as several chances to make new friends with fellow dance enthusiasts. The Saturday night glendi was very successful to say the least! The guests were treated to plenty of delicious food, drinks and a variety of desserts. The highlight of the evening was the excellent music ensemble that played practically non-stop all night! Band members included Panagiotis Vergos, Argyris Psathas, Yiannis Themelis, as well as the well-known island musician, Nikos Oikonomidis and Kiriaki Spanou on vocals.

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, 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.

It would have been unforgivable to leave New York without experiencing as much of the city as possible. Highlights included a trip to Times Square, the Rockefeller Center, the Brooklyn Bridge and the Museum of Modern Art.

All in all, it was a weekend full of great music, dancing, sightseeing and great *parea*, not to be forgotten any time soon. Congratulations to the organizers of the Palmos dance conference. *Kai tou xronou!*

For pictures and video from this event, please visit our website, www.ohfs.org, or find us on Facebook. 

White Sox “Greek Heritage Night” Event

By Jillian Economy

On July 24th, the Chicago White Sox held its greatest event of the year at U.S. Cellular Field. This event, otherwise known as Greek Heritage Night, was an evening to remember. Orpheus Hellenic Folklore Society's Nea Genia had the honor of performing twice that evening.

The first performance of the night was outside of Gate 5. Nea Genia rocked the stage—literally. The stage was a bit wobbly, to say the least, but it was totally worth it. White Sox fans stopped dead in their tracks in order to watch Nea Genia perform various Greek folk dances. Observing the fans' reactions was definitely the most memorable part of the Gate 5 performance. Some fans were extremely enthusiastic and embraced their inner Greekness while watching the performance.

After the Gate 5 performance, Nea Genia was guided through the backstage area to a conference room. The conference room was adorned with wall-sized photos of U.S. Cellular Field and the Chicago White Sox players. After gawking at the impressiveness of the backstage area, it was finally time for the field performance.

One must remember that the theme of the evening was Greek Heritage Night. Greeks are notoriously known for operating on “Greek time,” so you can only imagine how full the stands were at the beginning of the pre-game. Nevertheless, the performance on the baseball field was the highlight of the evening. Nea Genia members got a taste of stardom during the performance, as multiple cameramen were videotaping the dancers and projecting their images onto the Jumbotron. Dancing on the field was absolutely incredible. The performance went by in the blink of an eye, and the members of Nea Genia held hands and bowed proudly.

After a quick wardrobe change, Nea Genia and the rest of the Orpheus family sat together and watched the Sox destroy the Minnesota Twins. Orpheus members proudly waved the Greek flag and cheered the Sox onto victory. Nea Genia's on-field performance was even replayed on the Jumbotron during the baseball game. Greek Heritage night was also a healthy reminder that all Greeks are connected in some way, shape or form. One could not walk ten feet without

running into an old friend from Greek School or a fellow churchgoer.

An inexplicable energy radiated throughout the stadium on that night. This specific White Sox game brought everyone closer together, because it reminded us to be proud of our Greek heritage and embrace our roots. Greek Heritage night was truly unforgettable, and we can only hope that it will become an Orpheus tradition. ☐



Nea Genia appearing larger than life on the U.S. Cellular Field Jumbotron



Group shot of Nea Genia performers at the Gate 5 stage at U.S. Cellular Field

Adventures of Orpheus 2012

Looking back, 2012 was a very busy year for Orpheus. There were workshops, dance conferences, parades and dozens of performances but this year Orpheus members and their families had several chances to come together in a more informal, laid back environment thanks to the efforts of the Orpheus Booster Club (OBC).

The OBC consists of individuals interested in supporting Orpheus behind the scenes providing assistance with organizing and executing various social events, fundraising, costume collection maintenance, performances and much more. The OBC puts much effort and energy into organizing Orpheus family events such as the annual Vasilopita celebration, New Year's Eve party, bowling outing and youth group end of the year event. This year, there were a few more brand new social events to add to the list.

In June, over 100 Orpheus members, their friends and families gathered together at Roosevelt Park in Glenview, IL for the first annual Orpheus Family Picnic. The competition got a little



Orpheus members and their families enjoying a train ride through the grounds at the St. Iakovos Retreat Center in Kansasville, WI

intense at times during the volleyball, basketball and tug of war games and egg races. Several people took turns at the grill serving up plenty of barbecue to go along with all the other delicious dishes at the buffet. It was day of great food, great fun and great para and in short, a great success!

A few weeks later, the Orpheus crowd gathered once again at Toyota Park to watch the Chicago Fire face off against

the Los Angeles Galaxy. Even though the Fire did not win that match, it was a fun time nonetheless and a great opportunity to come together once more in yet another way.

The month of July brought the most exciting event of the summer: performing at US Cellular Field during the Chicago White Sox Greek Heritage Night. The Orpheus Nea Genia group performed before the game and

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spotlight on youth dancer...

Paraskevi
(Vivi)



Hometown: Chicago, IL

Parents/Family from: My mom is from Argos, Greece and my dad is from Sparti but born in Chicago, IL.

Time dancing with Orpheus: 4 years.

Thoughts on dancing: I love dancing because it allows me to learn more about the Greek culture. It makes me feel happy and lively and I can express joy through the dance. Also I love listening to the different styles of Greek music and I enjoy signing along.

Favorite dance: My two favorite dances are Koulouriasstos and Syrtos Karistias.

Most vivid Orpheus memory: My most vivid memory was my very first day at Orpheus when

Summer Dancing and Fun, Thanks to My Orpheus Connections

By Bessie Grosso

It's summer 2012 and the tension is growing. People are wondering about the future of Greece. Will visiting Greece be different this year? Do you go? I also pondered these questions, asking myself if I wanted to go and visit friends, family and the beautiful beaches. The answer for me is always the same: pack your bags and run as fast as you can!

I had a great time again visiting Athens, yet it was quieter. The soccer games were still going strong and coffee houses were filled. This year, the Lyceum of Spata had a unique performance in the school yard. Even with budget cuts, they still managed to put on a wonderful performance. That evening, it was out with the friends from the Lyceum to celebrate the feast day of Saints Petros and Pavlos, which included a lot of eating, dancing and singing until late into the night. Not necessarily a sign of a struggling Greece but rather, its people enjoying life and having a good time together doing what they love best: dancing, singing and trying to bring some happiness to difficult times.

On to my home town in Messinia. Agis Tsakalagos and Effie Robakis greeted me with a big hug and asked about their Orpheus friends in Chicago. They cannot forget the great time they had when they visited here last winter dancing and experiencing Chicago with everyone at Orpheus. Can you ever forget Agis' impressive Tsamikos dance, with his kicks and moves to Jim Stoyanoff's clarino?

This year, my once in a lifetime moment back in Finnikounda in 2007 with Orpheus was repeated. I never imagined I would be making that famous walk into town getting ready to perform in my home town. My son Paul and I were invited to dance with the new dance group that Agis has organized in Finnikounda. We took that magical walk through the center of town not with my Orpheus friends but with my cousins and friends of Finnikounda. I have to admit the entire time I thought about everyone in Orpheus and wished they were

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Agis Tsakalagos, Paul Grosso and Kostas Tsakalagos during a performance in Finnikounda

I had no idea what to expect and I met Kosta and Yanni and they looked so much alike and talked the same that I was afraid I would not be able to tell them apart.

Favorite Greek dish: I have so many, but my three favorites are Spanakopita, Pastichio and Souvlakia.

Favorite place in Greece: I have never been there before, but I hear that Thessaloniki is beautiful! I would love to visit soon.

Hobbies: I am a swimmer on the Maine East High School swim team and I love competing. My favorite strokes are freestyle and breaststroke. I love to write in my free time and I want to be a young author. I also love anything associated with theater.

Nobody knows I: That I hate birds!

Best childhood memory: My first swim lesson. I was so afraid

to get in the water that my mom had to push me to begin my first swim lesson. From then on... I loved to swim.

The perfect weekend would be: Sleep in, shop, see my favorite band, and go to a Blackhawks game with family.

Someone I'd like to meet: The cast of *Pretty Little Liars*, my favorite TV show, and Robert Frost because he is my favorite author.

Favorite spot in Chicago: Botanic Gardens because it is so pretty and I love taking pictures there.

Currently looking forward to: Auditioning for the Spring musical and thinking of an idea to start my own book.

Prize possession: My iPod touch.

Where I heard about Orpheus dance troupe: My sister's godmother referred us. ☺

Orpheus Family Cookbook

As many of you may know, the Orpheus Booster Club is gathering recipes for an Orpheus Family Cookbook. We would love for everyone to be a part of this wonderful fundraising opportunity by sharing their family's favorite recipes. We are asking each family to submit three or four recipes by January 26. These recipes can be Greek, American, or any other origin.

You may submit your recipes online by going to the Orpheus Website www.ohfs.org and clicking on Cookbook, or you may submit your recipe forms in person at either the Thursday or Saturday practices. You will receive a raffle ticket for each recipe submitted and be eligible to win a prize at the Orpheus Vasilopita event. 📧

"Adventures" continued from page 4

several members stayed to watch the White Sox declare victory over the Minnesota Twins.

Sunday, September 23 was a beautiful day to take a drive up to the St. Iakovos Retreat Center in Kansasville, WI. Orpheus members and their families made the trip to Wisconsin to participate in the first annual Orpheus Fall Kick-off. It was a day filled with lots of activities such as a train ride, hiking, hay ride, bonfire and, of course, smores.

The feedback from these events was overwhelmingly positive. We can't wait to see what the OBC has planned for everyone next!

The OBC currently has over 30 volunteers and participation is open to everyone. The club usually meets every third Saturday of the month at 10:00 a.m. at Papagalino Cafe at 9014 North Milwaukee Avenue, Niles, IL.

For more information about the Orpheus Booster Club, please email us at obc@ohfs.org 📧



A favorite Greek dish, spanakopita, will be one of the featured items in the upcoming Orpheus Family Cookbook



Orpheus Booster Club members gathered together for an afternoon of cooking to share their favorite recipes for the Orpheus Family Cookbook

"Summer Dancing" continued from page 5

with me again. We practiced together and once you dance together with someone, well, let's say you have a special bond that connects you in a different way.

Agis presented me with my own traditional costume from Mani as a thank you for his trip to Chicago this past winter. Agis didn't hesitate to put together a dance seminar for the students of the Pan Messinan Federation University Program in

Kalamata. More bonds and more friends. Anna Mavrou lives in Kalamata with her family and is always extending her filoxenia and invited me to the Kalamata dance festival at the Kastro theater. Each time I visit the Kastro, I remember all my Orpheus friends and the great time we had in 2007. I also had a chance to see members from the Lyceum. Each time the list grows and the connection is greater. I wish Greece only the best and I can't wait to go this summer again. I hope I do get to dance again. 📧

picture gallery



Orpheus Nea Genia members performing at the 58th Annual Chian Convention at the Marriott Hotel



Orpheus members marching in front of the famous Chicago Theater on State Street during the McDonald's Thanksgiving Parade



Orpheus members performed at Father Tilemahos Alikakos' birthday celebration at St. Spyridon Greek Orthodox church



Group shot of the Saturday afternoon Glenview branch of the 2012 - 2013 OHFS youth group



Group shot of the Thursday afternoon Northbrook branch of the 2012 - 2013 OHFS youth group



Passing out copies of the Lyra newsletter to visitors of the Orpheus booth in Greektown during the Taste of Greece Festival

performance schedule

Performance schedule and times are subject to change. For the latest information visit www.ohfs.org

Orpheus Vasilopita Celebration

St. John the Baptist Church
2350 E. Dempster Street
Des Plaines, IL
Saturday, January 26
6:00 p.m.

Global Dance Party

Old Town School of Folk Music
4445 N. Lincoln Ave.
Chicago, IL
Friday, February 22
8:30 p.m.

Coming Together in Skokie

Greek Culture & Heritage
Skokie Public Library
Skokie, IL
Sunday, March 10
3:00 p.m.

Orpheus Youth

End of Year Event
St. John the Baptist Church
2350 E. Dempster Street
Des Plaines, IL
Sunday, May 19
3:00 p.m.

Coming Together in Skokie

Greek Culture & Heritage
Niles West High School
5701 Oakton Street
Skokie, IL
Sunday, January 27
3:00 p.m.

Karies Chios Society Dinner Dance

Chateau Ritz Banquets
9100 N. Milwaukee Ave.
Niles, IL
Sunday, February 24
8:00 p.m.

Neighborhoods of the World Festival

Navy Pier – Crystal Gardens
600 E. Grand Avenue
Chicago, IL
Sunday, April 7
12:00 – 5:00 p.m.

practice schedule

Orpheus Adult Group

Thursdays:

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

Beginner/Intermediate:

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

Intermediate/Advanced:

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

Orpheus Nea Genia Group

Thursdays:

6:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.
St. John Lutheran Church
3020 Milwaukee Ave.
Northbrook, IL

Orpheus Youth Group: (Sept - May)

Thursdays:

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

Saturdays:

2:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.
New Church
Multipurpose Room
74 Park Dr., Glenview, IL

Submissions for the Spring issue of Lyra will be accepted until March 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 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.