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HELLENIC FOLKLORE
SOCIETY

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The Newsletter for friends and members of OHFS
Vol. 13, Issue No. 1, Summer 2007



Destination Kalamata: Orpheus Takes Greece by Storm... Again!

Question: Where can one go to swim in the blue waters of the Mediterranean, enjoy a tasty honey and sesame pasteli and frolic among the olive trees?

lime green attire, enjoying everything Kalamata and the surrounding towns have to offer.

Answer: The beautiful city of Kalamata, Greece!

Kalamata is home to some of the most stunning beaches, magnificent scenery, and centuries old traditions and history. Soon it will be filled with almost two hundred Orpheans and their families, proudly wearing their specially designed

The last time Orpheus made the journey to Greece was in 1997. That summer, the troupe participated in the 51st Pan-Macedonian Convention of the U.S. and Canada. A few months later, Orpheus returned to Greece, representing the U.S. at the First Festival of Greek Artists Abroad at the annual Athens Festival. Highlights from these trips included visiting various museums and archeological
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Near Kalamata lie the ruins of the ancient city of Ithomi (Messini) which have proven to be one of the most significant archeological sites in Greece. This view of the stadium is one of the many projects underway.

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sites, a reception at the Governor's mansion in Thessaloniki, and the rare opportunity to perform at the Odeon of Herodes Atticus Theater.

This summer, Orpheus looks forward to surpassing those experiences as many of its members and their families make their way back to Greece. This time the destination will be Kalamata, the capital city of Messinia, located in the southern part of the Peloponnese. "Kalamata was chosen as the destination for our trip because many of our members are from that Kalamata and the Peloponnese. This offers the opportunity for many of our members to participate and for their relatives to attend the performances", says Orpheus president Yannis Economou. The itinerary includes performances in the town of Finikounda, ancient Messini and at the famous Kastro Amphitheater in Kalamata, as well as dance workshops with the Kalamata Branch of the Lykeion Dance Group.



The porous limestone mountains of the southern Peloponnese formed the spectacular caves of Diros, which are filled with stalagmites and stalactites.

Orpheus is excited to have choral instructor Eftihia Papageorgiou and members of her Chicago Hellenic Choir joining us on this trip. For over two years, Orpheus has been working with Eftihia, practicing and presenting a variety of traditional and modern Greek songs, adding another dimension to the dance troupe. Under Eftihia's direction, the troupe will perform selections such as "Thalassaki Mou", "Ston Afro Tis Thalassas", "Gerakina" and Orpheus' signature piece, "Tora Pou Pas Stin

Ksenitia". Yannis Economou observes, "The collaboration for the trip to Greece comes at a good time as it will enhance our presentations there... Eftihia has added many interesting elements to the folk songs that we are presenting during our program."

Of course hard work merits some much deserved play time, and there are plenty of adventures waiting for Orpheus members and their families. The city of Kalamata offers endless opportunities for shopping, dining, a hopping night life and some guaranteed fun in the sun. The excursion agenda includes visits to natural wonder sites, archaeological sites and, of course, fabulous beaches.

Ancient Messini, near the town of Mavrommati, is another important archeological discovery as Spartans, Athenians and Romans left their mark on this fallen city. In addition to the theater, stadium, agora and the Arcadian Double Gate, scientists tell us there is still much more to Messini. It is an archaeological work in progress, as excavators are still uncovering sculptures, inscriptions and pottery, learning more and more about the lives of our ancestors.

A few hours drive into Mani, the Diros Caves are a stunning and geologically significant natural wonder. The Paleolithic and Neolithic artifacts found in the caves led scientists to believe the caves were one of the earliest inhabited places in Greece. The awesome, endless rows of stalagmites and stalactites adorning the caves in the underground waterways are something few people get to experience.

Also in Mani, along the foothills of Taygetos Mountain are the beaches of Stoupa. Known for sandy beaches and clear waters, Stoupa is a favorite destination for natives and foreigners alike. Besides swimming, visitors can go boating, fishing, hiking, shopping, or simply dine and relax with friends while enjoying the incredible sunset.



The crystal clear beach in the village of Stoupa, in Messinian Mani is one of many award winning beaches in the area.

Principal Instructor Kostas Economou comments on the significance of this trip: "Going to perform in Greece is like 'completing the cycle' of what Orpheus' mission and goal is. All of us feel a special pride that we will have the chance to showcase Hellenic traditions in our homeland." He continues, "Hopefully it will instill in all of us a sense of pride, achievement, and camaraderie. It will bring us closer to our traditions and customs, and provide us with strength to continue with the same zeal in the years to come."

Performing in Greece means something different to all involved. Arguably, the most resonant theme is the sense of immense pride the performers and their families are experiencing. Youth Group Coordinator VA Grosso and her family will be performing in Finikounda, near her mother's home town of Lahanatha. Like many of our ancestors, Bessie's mother left Greece decades ago and made the long, difficult journey to Chicago in search of a better life for her and her family. Now history comes "full circle" as Bessie and her family will be back performing in the region her mother once called home. "I am going to dance like never before and be proud of who I am and proud of everyone coming. Meet me in Kalamata on July 23rd and don't forget your *fousta*, shoes, and of course your bathing suit... I don't think Kalamata will ever forget us!" ☐

Orpheus Youth Group: Passing on the Torch of Tradition and Culture



Members of the Orpheus Youth group pose for a group picture at the conclusion of the End of the Year Celebration.

The Orpheus Hellenic Folklore Society's end of the year youth event demonstrated once again that traditions of Greek song and dance are flourishing in the Chicagoland area. As guest speaker Dr. Angelyn K. Balodimas-Bartolomei, associate professor in the School of Education at North Park University, vividly described the historical background of Greek dance through the ages, she noted "...dancing is divine in nature and is the gift of the gods...given to some select mortals, who in turn taught their dancing to fellow men and women". Indeed, these gifts have been passed down through all levels of OHFS' youth group.

One of the highlights at this year's performance was the use of live music played by youth members. Using the *toumbeleki* and violins, Paul Grosso, Izaki Metropoulos, and Katerina Economou performed "Mes tou Aigaiou ta Nisia" (Issios from Kalymnos) and "Ksekina Mia Psaropoula," a Kalamatiano in the island style *syrtos*. This new element of live music, along with choral instruction, will continue to be developed within the youth group, thus propagating yet another cultural tradition valued by the ancient Greeks.

Youth from three levels of experience performed dances from Chios, Thraki, and Northern Greece. Opening the celebration, accompanied by Izaki on violin and Paul on *toumbeleki*, the youngest group danced and sang "Ksenitemeno mou Pouli," an immigration-themed folk song. Next, they traveled to the eastern Aegean, stopping by the island of Chios, known for its epic poets. Youth members skillfully demonstrated their knowledge of Greece's geography as each dance was introduced. Keeping the history and dances alive and well, members performed *Pyrgousikos* from Chios and Thracian dances *Xysyrtos*, *Dentritsi*, and *Mantilatou*.

Following the fresh talents of the youngest dancers, the intermediate group brought family and friends back to Northern Greece, performing dances from Macedonia, Epiros, and Thraki. Raikos, Dimitroula, and Kori Eleni challenged performers with rare time signatures and step variations from Macedonia, as did Karsilamas, a dance performed in couples, from Thrace, and *Zagorisios*, a popular dance from Epiros.

Proud to introduce the highest level of youth accomplishment, 27 youth, including 10 graduates who already

augment the adult group in community performances, presented a Thracian suite including *Sygathistos Syrtos*, *Mantilatou*, *Koulourias*, and *Sihtir Havasi*. With the quick tempos and energetic leaders in each of these dances, the audience responded with equal enthusiasm and pride.

Throughout the event, youth members reflected on their own personal discovery of Greek music and dance traditions (speeches may be found at ohfs.org in their entirety.) From the first *Palamakia* danced, to the more complicated *Pentozalis*, Connie discovered that Greek dance not only allows self-expression, but also strengthens her bond to the Greek community. Connie has danced and performed with the youth for the past 5 years and is graduating to the adult group.

Another five-year veteran and graduate, Zacharias, stated, "I suddenly realized that I had left the minors and joined the pros. I realized that there is more to Greek dancing than Kalamatiano." Performing for others is one thing, but Zach reflected on his love of Greek dance for its own exhilaration. He shared, "I will never forget the first *Vasilopita* party where my friends and I danced together for hours, not for an audience, but for ourselves."

Katerina expressed gratitude toward her instructors and friends for sharing themselves and their culture. She will also be joining the adult group and shared, "I am ecstatic to begin the adult group, knowing that it will be just as wonderful as the youth group. It has been a large stepping stone in my life, and I will never forget what I've learned and who I've met."

Finally, although Alexander has been performing in the community for some time, this year he achieved a level of dance skill and expression that moved him to the front of the robust *Orpheus Tsamiko*. He devel-

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oped not only an individual style, but also a greater connection to his Orpheus friends. The assertion of an identity that is both unique and cultural, is the odyssey of every young Greek-American, whether the dancer joins the line at the end, the middle, or performs *tsalimia* at the front.

Similar to the Orpheus youth reflections, Dr. Balodimas-Bartolomei's professional observations of both Greek and non-Greek cultures described dance as a celebration which allows one to express their feelings and traditions. She noted that "...it is good for both the body and mind (the same thing that our Greek philosophers believed); children need to learn ethnic dances so they won't forget our culture; they will learn who they are and where they came from." She further emphasized that their "participation ensures that our beautiful Greek dancing and traditions will continue to be passed on to other generations." Indeed, this is the torch of tradition and culture that is being passed on to each youth member while they are a part of the Orpheus Hellenic Folklore Society.

The event concluded with the presentation of the "Dina Sianis Merit



Dr. George Sianis presented the "Dina Sianis Merit Awards" to three youth students, Eleni Pantelias, Alexander Benziger and Zachary Demertzis. Also pictured, Yannis Economou (left) and Bessie Grosso (right).

Awards". This was the second year awards were given to several graduating youth members that exhibited an extraordinary sense of dedication during their years with the youth group. The awards honor the late Mrs. Dina Sianis who was a cherished and enthusiastic supporter of Hellenic culture, especially in the folk arts and crafts. She was involved in many causes, but one of her favorites was assisting the Orpheus Dance

Troupe. Members of the Sianis family attended the event and Dr. George Sianis presented the awards and congratulated the recipients as well as all of the youth members.

The Orpheus Youth Group concluded the 2006-07 year with another successful event and demonstrated their great potential for the future as guardians of Hellenic culture. Congratulations! ☐

spotlight

on Orpheus
dancer...



Nina Katsinis

Hometown:
Glenview, IL

Parents/Family From:
My mother was born and raised in Zimbabwe, though her parents came from Athens, Greece, and my father and his family are from Tripoli, Greece.

Time Dancing with Orpheus:
I've been dancing with Orpheus for about 4 years.

Thoughts on Dancing:
I believe that dancing is an expression of a person's innermost thoughts. It is a way for people to convey through movement what they cannot convey through words. Orpheus is a very unique group where we are given the opportunity to express our deep love and respect for our culture and country through a variety of dances. It is a very gratifying feeling.

Orpheus joins the Chicago Hellenic Choir in Spring Recital

For the second year in a row, members of Orpheus performed with the Chicago Hellenic Choir during their Spring Recital at Northside College Preparatory High School in Chicago. Under the direction of Eftihia Papageorgiou, members sang popular works of Mikis Theodorakis and Manos Hatzidakis, two of Greece's greatest modern composers whose works are considered classics in Greece. The repertoire included "Tora Pou Pas Stin Ksenitia" (Now that you Leave for a Foreign Land), "Odos Oneiron" (Street of Dreams), and other famous contemporary pieces. The acoustics of the beautiful auditorium were remarkable and the audience was appreciative.

During the intense practices for the recital, some of the singers seemed more familiar with the Greek language than others. Due to regional dialects, even "old-country" veterans came across a few expressions they had never heard before. Beginning Greek singers tried, through many repetitions, to begin lyrics with "ks" and "ts" sounds, which are virtually unheard of at the beginning of English words. For some members,

having Hellenic roots seem to provide new and challenging situations which always prove to be worthwhile no matter how difficult. One thing is certain: it's never too early or too late to appreciate the gifts of the Muses!

Ms. Papageorgiou established the Chicago Hellenic Choir in 2004. It is a program offered by the Odeion School of Music. The Chicago Hellenic Choir consists of a junior group, a youth group, and an adult group. The choir

performs its repertoire at two annual recitals, a winter and spring recital, during which the different groups perform both individually and jointly.

The opportunity for both groups to sing together again will present itself this summer in Greece. Over 80 members with their families from both Orpheus and the Chicago Hellenic Choir will embark on a weeklong tour of Messinia. The Spring Recital served as a good practice run for the program in Greece. Both folk and modern songs have been added to the already impressive program, which is sure to please everyone. ☐



Choral director Eftihia Papageorgiou (center) with Sophia, Marianna, Felicia and Bessie.

Favorite Dance:

I really cannot choose one dance because I love them all, but if I had to choose I would have to pick Ikariotikos because it is such a lively dance.

Most Vivid OHFS Memory:

My most vivid memory with Orpheus was when the group participated in the Folk Dance Festival in San Diego, California in February of 2006. While we were backstage waiting to enter for our performance, we put our hands together in a huddle and whispered 'good luck' to each another. Although this moment does not involve any singing or dancing, it has been instilled in me because of the immense amount of love and support I felt from the group at that moment. This same feeling is always present in the Orpheus group and it is what makes dancing here such an enjoyable experience.

Favorite Greek Dish:

Spanakopita

Favorite Place in Greece:

Since I have never visited Greece, I cannot choose a favorite place just yet. This will be my first summer in Greece and I am very excited because I have heard wonderful things about how beautiful Greece really is!

Hobbies/Sports/Other Interests:

I enjoy singing, playing the piano, and volleyball

Nobody knows I:

Love playing volleyball

Best childhood memory:

My favorite childhood memory would have to be going to my grandma's house after Easter every year and having the whole family together. ☐

Youth Group Musicians Take the Stage

If voice is the soul of music, its heart is musical accompaniment. This year musicians have begun giving a live vibe to Orpheus youth performances. Under the direction of adult members and other volunteers skilled with instruments, the youth group musicians have been practicing a variety of Greek folk songs and dances in order to convey an authentic experience not only to the audience but the dancers as well. They have been studying especially hard these last few weeks since they will complement the series of performances in Greece this summer. The ensemble consists of Katerina, Christina and Izaki on the violin while Paul keeps the beat on the *toumbeleki*.

Katerina is eleven years old and has been studying violin for seven years. Her father, Yiannis, is one of the lead dance instructors of Orpheus. Her father's family is from Thessaloniki and Athens while her mother's family is from Cuba. She speaks English, Greek and Spanish. Katerina visits Greece every year, where she spends time on the islands of Paros and Thasos.

Izaki is also eleven and has been playing since he was five. His *yiayia* is from Neda in Messenia and his *papou* is from Vasta in Arkadia. Izaki especially enjoys playing *Ikariotikos*

on the violin. He also studies American fiddle and Western classical violin; he has been practicing "Swinging Fiddles" and Vivaldi's "Four Seasons." His trills and ornamentation add maturity and depth to his performance. His favorite pieces are from the Greek islands because of their flow and speed. Izaki says, "I really liked how it sounded. This year I started listening to that really fast Greek music." He also digs deep into the strings for *Pentozalis* and a *Sousta* from Rhodes.

Christina, sixteen has been playing the violin since she was 4. She also plays the piano and sings. Christina says, "It's fun to try different songs you thought you couldn't play" such as the theme to *Star Wars* and Cretan music.

Christina's brother Paul, fourteen, plays *toumbeleki*, *bouzouki*, and violin. This trip to Kalamata is in essence a return "home" for Paul since most of his maternal family is from Messinia. Paul's mother Bessie is also a dance teacher for Orpheus. This is Paul's seventh journey to Greece.

Having live musical accompaniment not only provides a new appreciation of the culture, it also makes the dances and songs more enjoyable and meaningful. ☐



Paul, Katerina, Izaki and Christina accompany the dancers at the St. George festival.

Teen Odysseys

The definition of "odyssey" given in the dictionary is "an intellectual or spiritual wandering or quest." Many Orpheans will be doing just that this summer as they journey to Kalamata to visit their parents' homes to strengthen their roots by practicing the Greek language and participating in folk dances and songs. Several sets of teenage siblings are among these travelers.



Jamie and Connie.

Connie and Jamie's family is from the village Kerasea just outside Tripolis. They learned Greek at the Athena Greek School and from their parents. The sisters look forward to seeing their cousins in Glyfada and Tripolis, where they enjoy strolling the *platia* to shop, eat ice cream and drink coffee. This will be their third journey, and they are looking forward to seeing the Kalamata Branch of the Lykeion Dance Group and learning dances from them. From past odysseys, Jamie's favorite site was Agamemnon's Tomb in Mycenae.

Dean and his sister Vicky have graduated to the adult performing group. Their father is from Kalavrita and their mother from Argos. Dean is looking forward to seeing his cousins. He attended Athena and the Hellenic American Academy, where he learned Greek. Dean says, "It's important to know where you're from, to know about yourself and who you are." He wants to see the Parthenon

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and theaters but is looking forward to exploring how modern Kalavrita has become. "At night everyone is out eating at the local restaurants and walking up and down the streets with their friends," Dean says. He has been dancing with Orpheus for five years, and his favorite dance is Tsestos. Vicky's favorite dance is Ikariotikos, and her favorite song is "Tora Pou Pas Stin Ksenitia" in which she sings alto. "It's our signature song," she says, and she enjoys how the the soprano and alto parts come together.

Peter and Spiros's parents are from Ahladokambos and Ayios Vassillis near Tripolis. The boys speak Greek at home and started dancing in Greek school at St. John the Baptist church in Des Plaines. Peter is front man in the adult group's Tsamiko, and "Enas Aetos" (An Eagle) is his favorite Tsamiko. Peter says,



Peter and Spiro.

"We're looking forward to the trip to Greece because the trip is going to be amazing, but you can't enjoy it without the surroundings: the people from Orpheus will make it a trip you will never forget. I'm looking forward to the *paniyiria* afterward, swimming at the beach, hanging with my friends and doing what we love to do." His favorite historical site is Thermopylae.

Catherine and Christina, whose grandmother is from Lahanada near Finikouda, Messinia, look forward to parasailing, enjoying authentic Greek cooking, shopping, going out at night, getting a tan, and making new friends. Catherine's favorite historical site is Knossos, the Minoan civilization in ancient Crete. Catherine and Christina love the Cretan dance Pentozalis.

This is the second trip to Greece for Felicia and her sister Maria. Felicia wants to site-see the villages, especially Perdikovrisi near Tripolis.

Everyone's odyssey will be different and personal, as they fulfill their quests in their own way. The end result is always the same: a greater knowledge and understanding of our rich culture and heritage. Of course, it goes without saying, all are looking forward to making their dancing debut in Greece. Good luck and break a leg! ☐

Happy 18th Birthday Orpheus!

If the Orpheus Dance Troupe was a person, then it would be eligible to vote! Yes, Orpheus turned 18 years old this past May! During its "infancy" and "toddler years", Orpheus faced a tremendous challenge as it began to establish itself as a new and upcoming cultural program within the Hellenic community. Since that time, Orpheus matured into a flourishing organization that has been recognized for its quality, commitment and character. As Orpheus members gathered to blow out the candles that were placed on a delicious birthday cake, it was almost impossible not to think of all the accomplishments that have been attained over the last 18 years. But as Orpheus approaches its "adult" years, the challenges remain the same. What does the future hold and how can Orpheus plan for long-term growth and survival? Maintaining and promoting the strengths of the group and strategizing for the next 18 years remains an exciting challenge.



Orpheus celebrated its 18th birthday during a practice session last May.

It has been very rewarding to see so many Greek American youngsters join the group and watch their appreciation and attitude grow in a positive way, with respect to their Hellenic culture. A new window of opportunity to look at the land of their parents and grandparents is offered to them, and they like what they see! The days where parents had to drag their youngsters to participate in Greek-related activities are long gone, and now the dance floor

instantly fills with youth, dancing to the sounds of Pyrgousikos, Pentozalis, Pousnitsa and Mantilatos. Somehow the map of Greece no longer looks the same! A different sense of familiarity and belonging has appeared through the myriad of dances that are learned from each region of Greece. There is no better way to celebrate a birthday, other than taking a group trip to Greece! Happy Birthday Orpheus! ☐

performance schedule

Village of Glenview 4th of July Parade

Downtown Glenview
Glenview, IL
Wednesday, July 4
11:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Passport to the World

Chicago Children's Museum
700 E Grand Ave
Chicago, IL
Saturday, July 14
1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Orpheus Trip to Kalamata, Greece

July 23-30
Performance schedule:
Wednesday, July 25, Finikounda
Thursday, July 26, Ancient Messini
Saturday, July 28, Kastro Amphitheatre, Kalamata
9:00 p.m.

Greek Town Festival

Halsted Street
Chicago, IL
Saturday-Sunday, August 26-27
Come visit our booth:
Saturday-Sunday
4:00 p.m. - 11:00 p.m.
Performance: Sunday, 8:00 p.m.

North Shore Greek Festival

Hellenic American Academy
1085 Lake Cook Road
Deerfield, IL
Sunday, September 2
8:00 p.m.

Christmas Around the World Festival

Museum of Science & Industry
Saturday, December 8
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 Fall issue of *Lyra* will be accepted until September 15, 2007. 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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