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The Greatest Generation

I had dinner with friends recently, who were much younger than me, but we talked about a common experience: Their parents had come to America and worked very hard, my parents had come to America fifty years ago and done the same; they appreciated their parents and their grit and sacrifice, I include my parents in the Greatest Generation that Tom Brokaw talked about and that was certainly braver than our own. And yet my friends had a communication problem with their parents (nothing serious, just the usual generation gap, immigration-style). And here I am middle-aged and unless I assure my parents when I visit that I will get a real job someday and with benefits, they still won't believe I'm really grown up (which means, sad to say, they never will).

They are fearful of our career choices, for sure (How much money does it make? You're going to do what in television? How long are you going to keep going to graduate school?). But they might be even more fearful that the ties that bound us to them and our heritage are slipping. How many of us speak Greek? How many of us send our kids, or will send them, to Greek school? How many of us go to church, except for weddings and funerals and Easter? (As our priest reminds us every Easter while we hide behind our candles on the steps of the church). How many of us go to Greece regularly, will ever visit the native village, will be content now with marriage only to a Greek and have many Greek children that will all go to Greek school and speak Greek and visit the relatives every summer in Greece?

More than you think, Baba and Mama. Kids are going to Greece to visit, and discovering the chorio and loving it, and loving the music, and loving the food, and taking Greek studies in college, if not Greek school. And they are packing all the new Greek restaurants and clubs that are sprouting everywhere in America where they can share the buzz with all the other kids (of all ages) who are discovering that being Greek is cool, hip and a unique birthright we got from, who else? The Greatest Generation.

Dimitri C. Michalakis

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Toscanini called it the hardest job in the world. But after twenty years and over 1,000 performances as conductor and music director of The Little Orchestra Society at Lincoln Center, Dino Anagnost is not a bit winded.

"I'm an energetic person," he explains one evening between engagements in a resonant baritone (he trained as a singer). "But because the job is demanding, and because of the many things we do, it gives me inspiration and energy."

For the Society alone he conducts as many as three concerts a week, over 75 a year, but he wears many hats: he's also dean of music at the Cathedral of the Holy Trinity in Manhattan and an adjunct professor at Columbia University.

"Stamina," he says is what it takes. "It's a multifaceted job."

Especially being music director of the Little Orchestra with the big heart. Since his appointment in 1979, Anagnost has carried on the mandate of the group not only to revive the small ensemble of the early classical period, but also to "wrest the contemporary concert repertoire from the rut of established stereotypes with premieres of important new music and restorations of long-neglected masterpieces."

"The Little Orchestra Society has a very distinct profile in New York and we have a very loyal audience," he says. "We service another clientele of people."

Last year Society audiences heard off-the-beaten-repertoire from Debussy and Ravel; the revival of a 260-year-old Vivaldi opera; and the perennial-favorite concert series for kids, Lolli-Pops (for ages 3-5) and Happy Concerts (ages 6-12), which won the George Foster Peabody Award and whose recordings were nominated for a Grammy.

"We share our excitement about the music with the children," says Anagnost, who often dresses as the ringmaster or a candyman for a children's concert. "I think a child comes

Dino Anagnost:

The Maestro of the New York music scene

by Dimitri C. Michalakis

unprejudiced to a concert and it's up to us to show them the way and involve them. I love the phrase, 'Involving them with our concerts.'"

And he says kids are very often the ones who make their parents regular concert goers.

"I have people in the audience that are bringing their kids, who say, 'I never had anything like this,' he relates. "I never went to the concerts when I was a child.' So what is nice about our programs for the children is that the parents are learning along with the kids."

Through its Chance for Children program,

the Society also brings great music to inner-city schools and minority youngsters. Students at Roosevelt High liked the programs so much that they bought tickets to the concerts.

"We have now created a new generation of concert goers," Anagnost exults.

To make the experience even more accessible for kids (typical childrens' concert series have included "Beethoven at Bat" and "Symphonosaurus Rex"), the Society features celebrity narrators, including Irene Pappas, Glenn Close, Lynn Redgrave and Claire Bloom.





“The idea is even with our adult concerts, I like to give the audience plateaus of listening,” says Anagnost. “If you give them interesting guidelines, they can appreciate it much, much more.”

As for his association with the Holy Trinity cathedral, it began 23 years ago with what has since become a traditional Candlelight Holiday Concert (done this year with the Metropolitan Singers and The Greek Choral Society), and through the Great Music under a Byzantine Dome series he initiated, has featured Byzantine music in concert with some of the most striking pieces of the modern repertoire.

“We have a lot of outsiders come because our church is so beautiful,” he says. “And they’re getting their musical education through the concert series at the Cathedral.”

Greeks, as well, especially professionals, who are a small but steady part of the audience in the concert hall.

“The tendency is to be well-schooled in our folk music and not in our classical music,” says Anagnost. “But don’t forget that

Theodorakis has also written an opera and has written for the ballet. We did his Third Symphony as an American premiere and he called me and he was thrilled. He said, ‘I wish we had more Greeks out there doing the symphonic stuff.’”

In fact, there are: Anagnost says during his first year at Juilliard he was the only Greek, but now there are several promising performers in piano and opera.

He himself began taking lessons at six in Manchester, New Hampshire when his parents bought a piano (“My grandmother had a piano, and my parents say as a little boy I used to sit at the piano and just bang.”) He got waylaid by baseball at nine, but when his parents threatened to get rid of the piano he went back to it at 13, added cello at 17, clarinet at 19, and voice at 20.

“I wanted to sing,” he admits.

But while at Juilliard, he heard the Little Orchestra Society needed a choral director, “because there was a Greek chorus, and I trained the Greek chorus at Juilliard, and then they kept me on,” he remembers.

He went from choral director, to assistant conductor, to associate conductor, then finally music director.

“I wanted to conduct,” he says. “I really wanted to conduct, and that’s where I put all my efforts.”

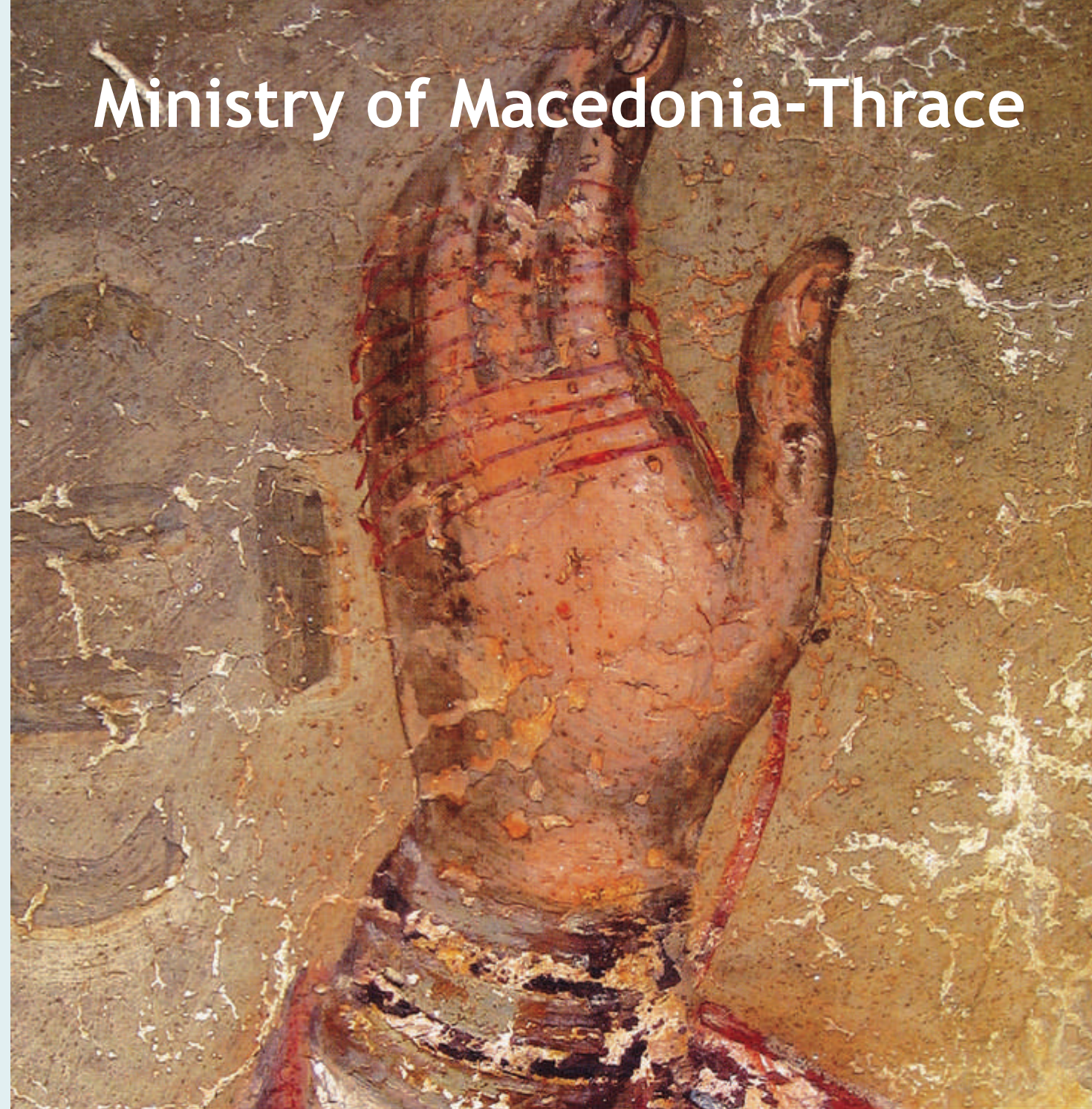
His concert schedule now lasts from September to June, and there’s been talk of a concert in Greece, at the Megaron in Athens.

“It’s difficult to get away because of our different series,” he says. “We’re really working all the time. But I would love to go over and do some work. We’ve been invited, but I just haven’t had the time to do it.”

He does visit Greece often (his parents are from Macedonia) during his infrequent breaks and his summers off, and he’s been “all over Greece, as a tourist.”

“I’m American-born but when you go back, you just feel it’s your roots,” he explains. “There’s an energy that I get from going back there, a wonderful energy. It’s just a wonderful country.”

Ministry of Macedonia-Thrace



“Taking into consideration the importance of preserving our cultural legacy, we are undertaking the initiative to create an “historical-archaeological-religious path” (monopati is the word in Greek) that will run across northern Greece, starting from Thrace and going all the way to western Macedonia.”

George Kalantzis,
Minister of Macedonia-Thrace

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Cooking Like Yiayia - The Island Way



On Cyprus, they make sausages with grape-must. On Santorini, they turn paximadia into a sweet by flavoring them with dried grapes or honey. On Skopelos, they fashion pies out of leeks and fennel.

"Island cooking is a very frugal cuisine and makes good use of everything that can be produced on the islands," says acclaimed food writer Aglaia Kremezi in her lavish new book, dazzling with photographs and recipes collected from the islands' cooks themselves, *THE FOODS OF THE GREEK ISLANDS* (Houghton Mifflin, 298 pages, \$35). "The cooks are very ingenious in creating all kinds of dishes with the seasonal ingredients they have on hand. And nothing is wasted."

Pumpkin, for example, is used throughout in recipes savory and sweet—on Sifnos, it is mixed with almond into a cake excellent with coffee or tea. On Syros, a poor man's chaviari is made mostly with olives, black and green. And patties throughout the islands come in every variation, for example, with tomatoes on Santorini and fennel on Chios.

Yet while the ingredients are homegrown, the dishes they produce are anything but rudimentary and the pride of island cooks is often as fastidious as a Parisian chef's. When the author baked a stuffed pasta called latzania on the island of Astypalaia in the Dodecanese and presented it proudly to her hostess, the good lady wrinkled her nose. "Well, I suppose you can't do better with the summer cheese," she sniffed.

But for the most part, islanders were invariably generous with their cooking secrets.

"Not only were they generous, but they were thrilled that somebody was really interested in the food that they were cooking," says

Kremezi, 53, who was born in Athens, but has a house in Kea and has visited the islands since she was a little girl. "I think some of these recipes are on the verge of extinction now that many women in Greece work, and the next generation is not that interested in keeping the recipes."

Which would be more than a culinary shame, because the recipes also are a distillation of island history and reflect the myriad character of the 170-plus islands that adorn the Greek mainland.

The seven Ionian Islands, for example, variously ruled by the Venetians, French, and English, understandably have a more sumptuous and cosmopolitan cuisine. Corfu retains not only Venetian words in its dialect but flavors in its cooking, some of it now forgotten even in Italy. There is a stuffato stew made with quince, vegetables, and meat or poultry and a sofrito flavored with garlic, parsley and vinegar.

The Aegean Islands are similarly bicultural, especially the big islands of Chios and Lesbos, which were centers of trade and commerce for centuries.

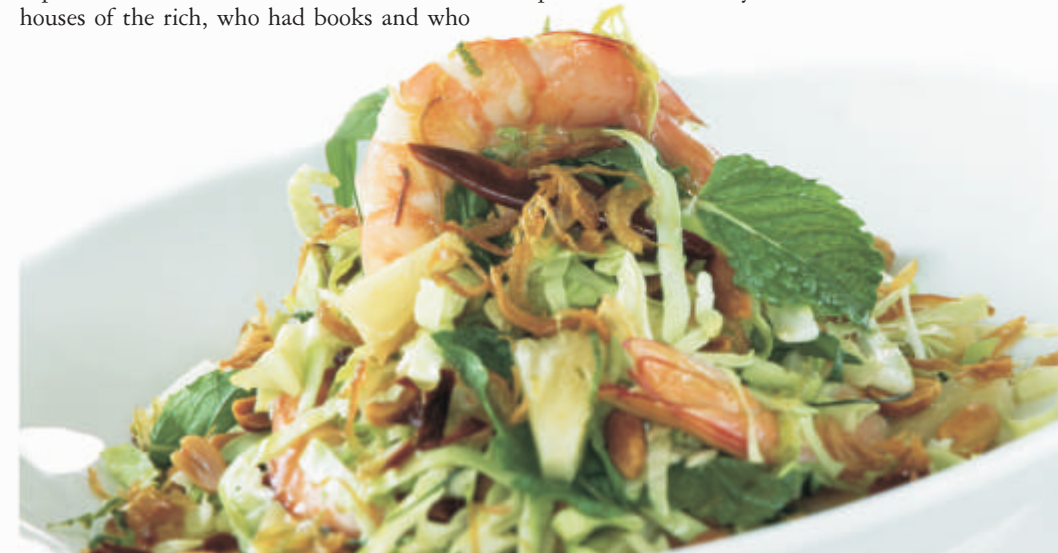
"In Chios, as in some of the other islands, like Corfu, there are two distinct traditions," explains Kremezi. "The tradition in the houses of the rich, who had books and who

were merchants or were in shipping. And then there is the tradition of plain cooking in the villages, which is also very interesting. And sometimes the two intermingle."

Lesbos is famous for its poets, olive trees, and ouzo (Elytis and Sappho were natives and eleven million olive trees carpet the island) just as Chios is famous for its poet (the island claims a Homer's rock), sweet mastic which once beguiled the sultan and his harem, and its own ouzo.

But Greeks are Greeks and islanders fiercely proud despite their common history, as Kremezi found out when she ordered Mini, a Lesbos' ouzo in Chios. "Are you from Lesbos?" came the scornful response. "Obviously you know nothing about ouzo."

And then there are the Cyclades, once considered barely habitable, even by Greeks, and where the cuisine was correspondingly spare. In Santorini (where parcels of volcanic cliff now fetch Park Avenue prices), the baking of paximadia became a high art because there was little else available. The dried bread, usually made from barley, was baked only three times a year because the island barely had wood to fire the ovens and the paximadia were easily stored for later use.





"So they had to bake breads that they dried and then they dipped in water and ate with chick peas and the fava and the various beans that are the staple of the islands," says Kremezi.

Similarly, the wonderful cheeses of the Cyclades were the product of the goats kept by the islanders because they were the few animals that could survive on the once-barren outposts.

"And then the cooking of the Dodecanese is much more spicy,"

Kremezi reports, shifting outposts and traditions, and recalling the day on Karpathos when the daughter of the local priest at Olympos showed her the art of mixing spices: "Every woman in the village has a bowl filled with an aromatic blend of coarsely crushed coriander seeds--grown and dried in the village--and ground all-spice berries, cinnamon, cloves, cumin and black pepper. Each cook has her own special proportions...making the mixture hotter with a generous amount of pepper or more fragrant with cinnamon and cloves."

The common thread, of course, among all the islands is the cooking for church holidays and celebrations, such as Easter, preceded by the 40 days of abstinence during Lent that produces some inspired recipes: Lenten grape leaves stuffed with rice; pasta with olive oil, onions and spices; tomato and onion flatbread; zucchini or chickpea fritters.

And while many traditions have influenced the islands, they in turn have affected mainland Greece as well.

"My research shows that the actual food of the mainland, especially the food of Athens and the urban food of Athens, started from the islands," says Kremezi. "Because the islands were more cosmopolitan and much more advanced long before Athens became the capital. The cooking of Corfu, for example, was a basis for the urban cooking of Athens."

Island cooking is now making inroads into America as well, in acclaimed restaurants like Molyvos in New York City, where Kremezi helped develop the menu. Molyvos, of course, is a city in Lesbos and the Livanos family which hails from the island and runs the restaurant, first made a pilgrimage to Lesbos and other parts of Greece with Kremezi and senior cooking staff, including executive chef Jim Botsacos. On his return Botsacos refined some of the island recipes and his mastic ice cream has become a runaway hit on the island of Manhattan.

"I have chosen recipes that are very easy to reproduce with ingredients readily available all over the United States," says Kremezi. "And I advise people to go and shop for vegetables and fruits and greens at the farmer's market, so that they can get more flavorful, seasoned produce. But I have also made compensations."

You might miss the vine-ripened tomatoes of Ithaca when making chicken stuffed with tomatoes, feta cheese, and garlic, but, says Kremezi, "if you use the tomatoes that you find in the supermarket, I have added sun-dried tomatoes that deepen the flavor and then you can make the dish all year round."

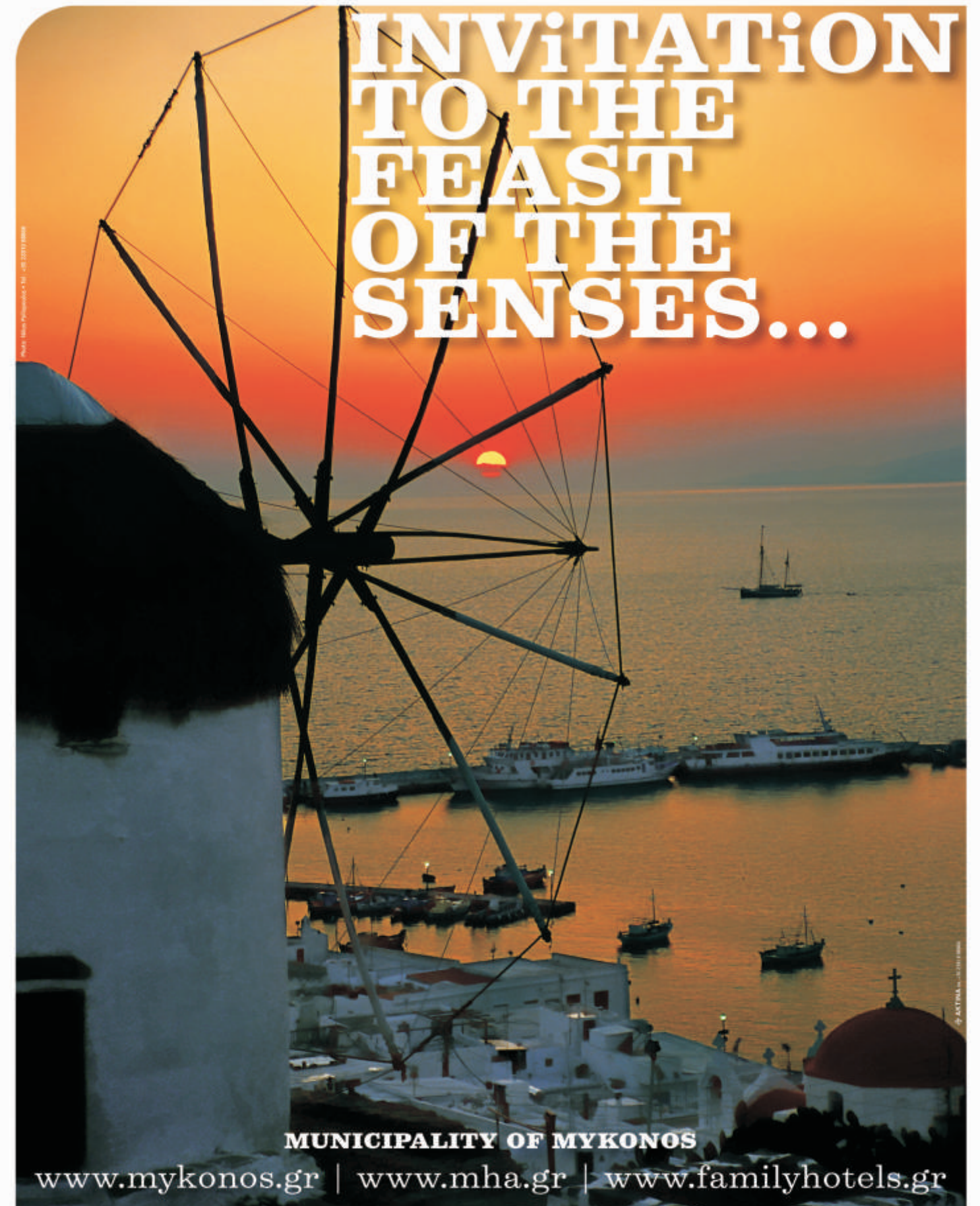
A writer and photojournalist in Greece for publications like *Tahidromos* and *Elefthero Tipia*, Kremezi has also contributed here to *Gourmet* and the *Los Angeles Times Syndicate*. She earned her culinary stripes here in 1993 with a previous volume on *THE FOODS OF GREECE*, which won a Julia Child award.

Like most Greek women, she admits she got her start in cooking by watching the master chefs in her own family. "I learned to cook from my mother, my grandmother and my aunt," she says. "Even before going to school, I remember shelling peas in the large kitchen of my grandfather's old house, which had a wood-burning cooking stove with a large hood over it."

Her grandfather, Nikitas Patiniotis, was often a poor shopper of produce ("loving and compassionate, he often went as far as to buy the worst, almost rotten vegetables from the green grocer who passed each day with his mule") but he also tutored her patiently on the plants in his garden. In her near-decade of research for this book, Kremezi found the same wisdom and mystical union with the earth in the islanders who shared with her their treasure of recipes.

"In Italy there are written recipes, in Greece we don't have that," she says. "Most of the old recipes survive from mother to daughter. I hope that with those listed in this book, and notes I have on others, I've preserved recipes that are almost forgotten."

INVITATION TO THE FEAST OF THE SENSES...



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MOBSTERS AND LAWBREAKERS TOOK IT ON "THE CHIN" FROM FORMER PROSECUTOR GEORGE STAMBOULIDIS

By Dimitri C. Michalakis

For thirty years, New York mobster Vincent "the Chin" Gigante had stayed out of jail by feigning mental illness and shuffling through New York in his pajamas. "He claimed that he was mentally incompetent to stand trial because he was a paranoid schizophrenic," says George Stamboulidis, the U.S. attorney who finally put "the Chin" behind bars. "He had invested a lot of years into that phony, crazy act."

"The Chin" periodically checked himself into St. Vincent's Psychiatric Ward for what friends euphemistically called "tune ups," had doctors prescribe him psychiatric drugs like Thorazine to create a paper trail and generally mumbled incoherently on the phone when he thought he was being bugged. "The reason he got the nickname Chin is because he didn't want people to use his real name, Vincent," says Stamboulidis, twelve years after he prosecuted the case still mildly-amused at the antics of "the Chin." "But then he didn't want his nickname overheard on tapes and he told his 'family' and friends to point to their chin when referring to him. And that's what they did. We had all these tapes where people are saying, 'This guy' and 'That guy' and you don't know what they're talking about, but if you were in the same room you could see them pointing at their chins."

Eventually, Stamboulidis got Gigante in the replacement windows caper (where the Chin got a piece of every window replaced in New York City high-rises) and he was indicted, stood trial (showing up in a wheelchair and a cane and feigning tremors in what turned out to be the wrong leg, until Stamboulidis pointed out the error) and he went to jail,

where he died last year serving out a fourteen year sentence. "I got a call from a reporter who told me, do you have any comment?" says Stamboulidis. "I said, about what? Vincent Gigante died in a federal prison today. And my reaction was, he's faking. Only he wasn't faking it this time."

Stamboulidis, 44, left the Justice Department after 13 years in 2001 to become a partner in the litigation group at Baker Hostetler in New York and head their white collar defense and corporate investigations group. "I do some of the same work and have some of the same psychic income when I represent corporations which are victimized. I represent employees and officers of corporations, investors who get victimized by unscrupulous stock brokers and others, and sometimes I do represent those who are alleged to have committed crimes as well. My years as a prosecutor and my years of cutting my teeth on difficult issues and cases have given me the skill set to succeed as a defense attorney."

One of the most extraordinary cases he prosecuted for the government was the 2000 indictment against former Los Alamos nuclear scientist Wen Ho Lee for improperly handling classified information. Classified secrets could not be presented as evidence or mentioned unless mentioned in code, according to the Classified Information Procedures Act (CIPA). "So for example," says Stamboulidis, "if you're trying a case on what our nuclear designs are like and what our bomb codes are about and how someone would build a nuke you can't present your evidence in open court so everyone can hear it."



You have to come up with a substitution that CIPA allows you and that the parties would know, and you'd let the jurors know, but the public wouldn't know it. You can't have spies from some other country sitting in the gallery of the courtroom and essentially taking notes on how to make nukes."

The case of Lee was sometimes criticized as an example of prosecutorial overkill, but Stamboulidis defends it: "I don't think Wen Ho Lee was a scapegoat. He was charged, and thoroughly charged, I would say, with mishandling classified information, which included bomb codes and bomb designs. And that's serious stuff: we're not talking about losing a can of beans or a widget, it's protected for a reason and everybody who works with it knows that."

After he left the Justice Department, Stamboulidis was named an outside independent monitor for Merrill Lynch in the wake of the Enron case. The firm had been accused of manipulating profit statements for Enron, or what Stamboulidis calls "accounting gymnastics."

"Justice really started seriously looking into corporate America and really wanting to make examples," he says. "And that's still the environment that we live in where it's open season on corporate America, at least from the perspective of the Department of Justice and the FCC and other regulatory agencies and other prosecutors."

Is he now defending corporate America as zealously as he once prosecuted it? "It's a little bit of overkill," he argues. "Prosecutors are turning standard and somewhat innocuous business practices into criminal behavior. In other incidents, obviously, there were crimes committed, as the people who pled guilty in Enron make clear. The accounting fraud cases against corporate America are going to continue. It's happening in just about any industry and I'm certain that corporate America has gotten the message."

When he worked as a prosecutor putting mobsters in jail did he ever get "the message" to back off? "There were threats," he concedes. "But to tell you the truth, I never took it personally. I wasn't so worried about mobsters killing me as I was about becoming the victim of a random street crime. I worked in tough neighborhoods, at all hours. And I also prosecuted tax protestors and sometimes they could be even more dangerous than Cosa Nostra hitmen. If you're ever in a courtroom where there's a tax protestor case, generally you see more armed federal agents and more high-powered weapons than you would if there was a mobster in the courtroom. You're dealing with people who are not stable. Wise guys are generally predictable."

If they were to whack me, so to speak, they knew there would be ten more of me to take my place. Generally when mobsters want to end a case, killing the prosecutor is not a cost effective way to do it."

Besides, Stamboulidis was famous for the tenacity even mobsters would fear. "If you were going to take the stand and commit perjury and lie and I was going to cross examine you, I'd say you'd be quite nervous,"



he says, calmly. He says he likes to practice law by the motto he once saw on a plaque on his father's desk: "It said, 'What you might like to believe is the truth may not be the truth.' And then it said, 'Don't stretch it to be the truth.' As a prosecutor that's good advice. A prosecutor has a duty to uphold the truth and justice. And that's why I really love my job now, because as a defense attorney I get to point out to jurors when a prosecutor just wants to win and forgets what was on that plaque in my dad's office."



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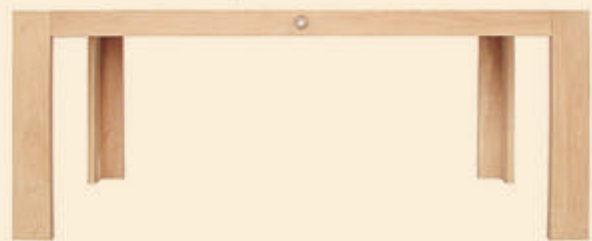
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If you're a thirty-something urbanite with a sense of design, but no practical skills (or patience) and a limited budget, what furniture do you buy?

"I just couldn't find anything," says John Christakos, a sculptor and MBA, of his erstwhile furniture woes. "So I always found myself building my own stuff."

That is until with college chums Maurice Blanks and Charlie Lazor, who are both architects, in 1994 he launched a furniture business with a contemporary flair called Blu Dot ("It lent itself to a good logo," he admits of the name), whose accessories are practically ready to use when unpacked from their distinctive flat, perforated boxes (or hung on the wall as two-dimensional art). And its ready-to-assemble furniture is now sold in stories nationwide and around the world (including Germany, France and the UK) and was also featured on TV on ER and Joey and Chandler's apartment in Friends.

"A lot of time we are the affordable choice in a high-end design store," says Christakos, speaking from company headquarters in Minneapolis, where he moved to get a job and stayed to build furniture. "So if somebody comes in and gets cold feet about the price of an Italian or German imported piece, they bring them over to Blu Dot."

The company's line of products is made of material as varied as tubular steel, sandblasted glass and Baltic birch. And since previewing its first line in New York in 1997, Blu Dot has numerous awards including

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After watching the second and third graders of Three Hierarchs Parochial School in Brooklyn, New York perform skits in self-imagery in the parish social center ("Tell me, John, do you like girls?" "No," John grumbles), Principal James Yeannakopoulos gives a whirlwind tour of the school's first two floors. It includes a mural of student drawings on the events of 1821 posted on the basement walls ("I love this, I'm trying to build a gallery of the kids' artwork"), a glimpse into the computer room ("We're not hooked onto the Internet and we don't have CD-ROMS," the teacher admits apologetically), and through a cloud of incense a snatch heard of the "paraklisi" being given in the church by Reverend Nikodom Gromoff, the church's associate pastor, who is Russian.

"He's wonderful, he also does my religious instruction for the upper grades," says Yeannakopoulos, back in his small, cramped



Parochial day school students who took part in the annual Archdiocesan District Spelling Bee Contest (English)-- Mrs. Maria Makedon, Coordinator

The new face of Greek education in America



office decorated with posters of the Greek islands and of icons. "My own feeling," he adds, "is that we are now becoming--and what schools across the nation too are becoming--is an orthodox rather than a strictly Greek Orthodox parochial school. We (in Brooklyn) are catering to the needs of the Orthodox community which is Russian,

Serbian, Ukrainian, Moldavian. That is the situation here."

Seventy percent of the school's 140 kids are Russian (one boy using the principal's phone spoke in Russian) and for years there's been a sign in the schoolyard advertising the school in Russian.

"At all of our schools we now have non-Greeks," admits Maria Makedon of the Archdiocese's Department of Greek Education based in New York. "In the Bronx, for example, we have students from the Muslim population that lives in the area."

In Manhattan there are Hispanics attending the C. Goulandris-T. Tsolainos school of St. Spyridon and Chinese at The Cathedral School; in Flushing, Queens there are Polish and Russian students enrolled in the William Spyropoulos Day School of St. Nicholas. At the Annunciation Orthodox School in Houston, Texas, only a third of the approximately 600 students are Greek and the Florida parochial schools have scheduled Greek only as an after school activity.

"In Texas and California these are not 'Greek' schools," she says. "They are parochial schools, we can say, Orthodox parochial schools."

Not all of the estimated 27 parochial day schools in the United States serving close to 6,600 students, and almost 314 Greek afternoon schools with 20,000 kids, have such a student ratio of non-Greeks (Koraes in Chicago had only two Serbian Orthodox out of a student body of 230). But many of the schools, while clinging to a standard one hour per-day per-grade class in Greek, are now coping with a mixed-ethnic and sometimes mixed-religious population.

"I think what's happening to Three Hierarchs is what's going to happen to the schools generally speaking," says Yeannakopoulos. "I think the salvation is if we become as all-inclusive as the Catholic schools, as far as ethnic groups go."

But with diminishing enrollment and funds can the schools adapt fast enough (and will traditionalists allow them) before the students and the money runs out? Several of the day schools are running deficits or have to supplement tuitions with money raised from special events and from the parish church (struggling to maintain its own foothold, and for the Archdiocese in America whose entire \$12 million budget last year was roughly equivalent to the operating budget of the combined 27 schools). So school budgets are skimpy and operating costs kept to a minimum.

"But there's a price to pay for that," says Yeannakopoulos, "and that's in the way of salaries." The 78-year-old Yeannakopoulos has a master's degree from Harvard and is a retired public school superintendent but didn't end his retirement for the money. "I could never afford this job if this was my sole means of income," he admits, with a sheepish smile. "I have a really strong commitment to my heritage. And what I'm doing here is really a memorial to my parents. Most of the schools couldn't afford my background."

But with all their ills, and often despite them, the schools have produced some remarkable results, as the Rassias Commission report confirmed a few years ago: "We were impressed by the warm, caring environment created by the faculty administration in some of the schools we visited, by the excellent rapport between students and teachers, the exceptionally good behavior of the children, and by the intelligent answers given to our questions..."



Students participating in the Greek Independence Day Parade on Fifth Avenue, NYC

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Chicago parochial schools, to cite one major chain in the parochial system, continue to produce outstanding students "Koraes and Socrates produce students that rank very high in the high schools they attend," says Dr. Andrew Kopan, who taught education at DePaul University and was principal of Koraes for 15 years. "They're always in honors, because we have a selective clientele of students that come from homes that believe in education. And our schools are associated closely with the church and parish and there's supervision and proper deportment because of the nature of the school and the study habits."

And at the college level, Greek studies are proliferating: there are at least 36 programs across the country, including at Harvard, Columbia and Princeton, sometimes established with money raised from the Greek community, as was done at Stockton State in 1995.

"According to U.S. statistics, the two most educated ethnic groups are the Jewish and the Greek," says Dr. Speros Vryonis, Jr. of the Vryonis Center in California. "And they have the highest average per capita income. Now those didn't come out of nothing. It was as if the Greek immigrant was made for America and vice versa."



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Pioneering Greek Education in Montreal

by Dimitri C. Michalakis



Queen Elizabeth visited Canada in 1960, and so did a young man and recent graduate of Columbia University's Teacher's College in New York, who was being interviewed for the post of principal of Socrates Canadian School of the Holy Trinity community. The interview took place in an old three-story building on Sherbrooke Street that had stood since 1912 as the rectory of the church and was now being used as the school, the first Greek day school in North America and the only Greek day school in Canada at the time.

"It looked old and narrow and I wondered why I had come here," says Dr. Constantine Michalakis, now in his eighties, then 38, a veteran of the Greek civil war and a recent doctoral graduate of Columbia, who had been recommended to the community by Archbishop Iakovos.

Conducting the interview in the first floor office of the school was Spiros Kolivas, a former wrestler who had made his fortune running the café atop the city's Mount Royal and was nicknamed "Khrushchev" for his resemblance to the Russian leader. Around the table sat the fourteen members of the board of trustee, all early immigrants, all self-made men now wealthy through investments in nightclubs, restaurants, food markets, and most of them uneducated.

"And they saw a young man with an education and probably thought, 'Who can trust you?'" recalls Michalakis. "They peppered me with questions. What do you want to do with the school? What do you want to do that for? If you're so qualified, what are you doing here?"

"I wondered that myself," Michalakis now says, the memory still vivid. "After that first day, I walked out to Sherbrooke Street to grab a cab to my hotel, and it was raining hard and there were no taxis available and nobody had offered me a ride, and I said to myself again, What am I doing here?"

He was called back the next day and his conditions reviewed. He wanted the school used only as a school (the board of trustees used it for meetings) and he wanted the right to hire qualified teachers, not the usual ladies moonlighting as Greek teachers. The board decided to deliberate longer and Michalakis went next door to have a kataifi (Sherbrooke then was full of Greek shops). He was called back to the meeting by Aristotle Mavros, a transplanted Egyptian Greek, who spoke several languages and he remembers "dressed like an ambassador." The board had made a decision.

"We like you," Kolivas told Michalakis. "We'll hire you for \$300 a month."

But Michalakis' optimism quickly faded as the school year began: "The old immigrants who ran the school did it only for the prestige of the community having a school. Their kids were grown and didn't attend the school, anyway. The new immigrants whose kids did attend were very poor and struggling to survive."

That first school day in September, Michalakis arrived by bus from his home in the Park Extension neighborhood (he had brought his family meanwhile from New York) and he was the first that morning in the old building: "There was no custodian, the place was very cold, and I went around switching on the lights."

Then the teachers arrived, and since there was no faculty lounge, they went directly to their classrooms. Mrs. Wilson, who taught the two first grades, was very old and went up the stairs to her classroom only once and down again the end of the day. The remaining grades ran till sixth and were taught by the school's eight teachers, including two Greek teachers, Mrs. Apostolidou from Salonika, who towered over the kids, and Mrs. Kontzias, a recent widow. After Michalakis toured the school that first day to see that the kids were seated and the teachers present, he returned to his office (the former first floor office of the board of trustees) and rang the bell by hand to start the first day of classes.

"The ten kids of the sixth grade sat on the other side of the partition that separated my office from their class," he remembers. "There was no yard for recess, and the kids ate their lunch at their desks." One little boy brought a daily lunch of a crust of bread dipped in oil. "These people were very poor," says Michalakis. "Desperately poor." Of the 260 kids that first year, many were late with the \$2-3 a month tuition. "What do you want me to do?" one parent late with his payment told Michalakis. "Feed my family or pay you?"

Michalakis stayed for two years, then moved to Chicago. He left behind a school with a new name, Socrates Hellenic Canadian School, and the hope that a new and proper school be built.

It was, a few years later, in the suburban parish of St. George.

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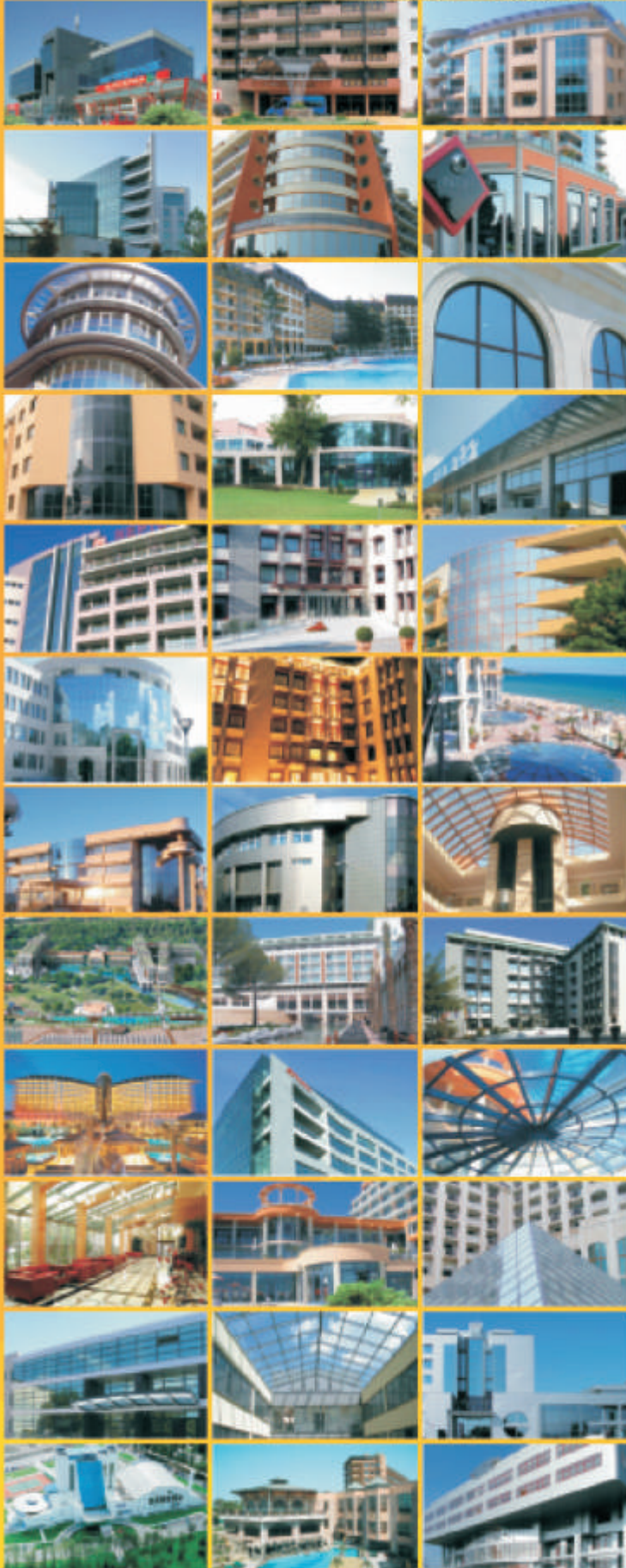


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First woman organist at 'hippest church in Christendom'



"It's very different from the Greek church, we're pretty unusual," says Dorothy Papadakos, the first woman organist at New York's St. John the Divine, the largest Gothic cathedral in the world. "I like to call St. John the hippest church in Christendom."

And then she laughs with typical abandon and mentions the procession of animals--real animals, elephants and horses and monkeys, parading down the aisle--for the ceremony honoring St. Francis; the visiting artists playing African drums and Indian flutes; the showing on Halloween of Lon Chaney's silent-screen classic *The Phantom of the Opera* to organ accompaniment; and her own improvisations on the vintage-1910 Aeolian-Skinner, including her welcome to the Cathedral's new dean named Harry, from Georgia, with a rendition of *Georgia On My Mind* and *I'm Just Wild About Harry*.

"It's irreverent in a holistic and adventurous way," says the ebullient 40-year-old, who in 1989 became the first woman in the Cathedral's history to fill the post. "It's all in how you look at it. It's fun, you know? I've tried to get organs to be hip and fun and relevant again. That seems to be what my niche is in the organ world in America."

Which extends not just to her cathedral improvisations, but her four CDs (released on the Pro Organo label), including her first, *Dorothy Over The Rainbow*, which featured an original composition dedicated to naval

friend Paul called, "O Pavlos Stin Thalassa," on percussion, violin and organ.

"The organ got very uptight and very stuffed-shirt and it got really anal," she explains, at least until she came along. "But it's so much fun, it's so much fun!"

And she spreads her joy everywhere besides the Cathedral: she plays regularly with Dino Anagnost and The Little Orchestra (they hope someday to do a concert together at the Megaron in Greece); she's done Buddhist funerals and Jewish weddings (her second CD, *I Do, Me Too*, was a collection of interfaith wedding music); and right now she's composing a musical.

She credits her "big Greek feet" with giving her the span to hit thirds on the foot pedals with one foot (she's six feet tall), but otherwise says size doesn't really matter in making a great organist. "It takes a while to learn how to do it," she says, "but it's so much fun."

The fun for her began in Reno, Nevada, where she began learning jazz piano at nine, then came to live with her father Peter in New York (she was baptized Greek Orthodox and re-baptized Episcopalian after her parents' divorce: "I'm a double-dip," she laughs). After studies at Barnard, a friend told her St. John's was looking for an organist, and she got the job doing a concert series for kids. Then she heard Paul Halley, the Cathedral's senior organist and a world-class improviser, and she wrote him a letter begging for a chance to study with him.

"And he said, 'Come on up; I don't really teach students improvisation, but I'd love to hear what you're doing,'" she remembers. She did, he loved it ("Yep, yep," he said, "I'll work with you"), and she studied with him for almost three years before he took a sabbatical that became permanent, and she was offered the job at 28.

When she's not performing, she travels the world (she circled the globe along the equator and studied indigenous music along the way), and often visits Greece to see her aunt Rica Diallina, the actress, who was a house in Porto Hydra, her cousin Demetra in Eraklion, or

her other cousin, Louis Manikas, an opera singer based in Stuttgart.

PROFILE

Her jazz piano teacher in Nevada was a former cabaret player named Loren McNabb: "And after each of my piano lessons, I'd say, 'Oh, Mr. McNabb, please, would you play me something by Duke Ellington or Cole Porter?'" The jazz dazzled her more than Mozart and Bach, and then, when McNabb died, she found a second mentor in the organist at church, who switched her back to Bach again.

CREDO

"It's getting people turned on to the instrument again. It's also about people realizing that the organ has enormous potential."

She calls her vintage Aeolian-Skinner organ, "the Rolls Royce of American pipe organs."

"What I love about playing here is that the Cathedral really nurtures my creativity: I can do pretty much anything I want and they trust me to have good taste. I mean, sometimes, I've played New York, New York on a Sunday morning, or Summertime."

"The tragedy is that I never got to learn Greek. You know how most Greek kids get to Greek school?...So, I don't really speak the language fluently at all."

Her father Peter was a Spartan immigrant who became a helicopter designer: "Dad was a real pioneer. He perfected the technology to make the first coaxial helicopter fly, with two sets of blades, and he did it remote-controlled, which no one had ever done before. It was really technology ahead of its time."

She says her father was also a pioneer because, despite being a protective Greek father, he let her grow up her way: "We sure locked horns. But in the end, I was very much like him and he was very supportive of me going out to find my dreams."



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