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COMMENTS



CORRECTION

Dr. Constantinos Sofocleous is Assistant Professor in Interventional Radiology at Cornell University, not Columbia as it was mistakenly mentioned in NEO's October issue.

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NEO

FROM THE EDITOR

The acoustics of the night

Our story in this issue about the acoustics at the ancient theater of Epidaurus reminds me of my experience several years ago with ancient theater—long-range.

I wasn't in a theater, but in those prehistoric days we had just bought a newfangled VCR and I had taped a broadcast of one of the ancient tragedies on Channel 13: I believe it was Aeschylus' the Eumenides. I used to get up very early in those days, practically in the middle of the night to do my writing, and then I would do some calisthenics to loosen up and start my day and I would watch what the wonder of my new VCR had taped for me.

One night it was the Eumenides and as I stretched and did my regulation number of sit-ups and push-ups on the empty living room carpet, with my family sleeping in the next room, and the night enveloping the world outside, I listened to the terrible words of unremitting passion and grief penned thousands of years ago when man seemed to stand alone against the universe and I marveled at the courage of those Greeks who had defied the fate of all the other ancient people and had stood proudly alone announcing their individuality and their individual grief--as though it were new-born.

But at the same time, with the darkness shrouding the world around me, I felt the naked chill of these words, which expressed in such polished verse the sheer animal cry of fear and unbearable agony we all must face when the terrible hour befalls us. Because while we carefully build our perfect little world, and we think it so safe from all the dangers that lurk out in the darkness, and we try to insulate it from the chance of fate, the fate that lurks out there for all of us and will visit us one day, regardless of how good or pious we've been, those words that were penned thousands of years ago might suddenly ring very true and be the only adequate expression of our disillusionment and grief.

The ancient Greeks were wonderful about discovering what made us all joyously human—their thought was like a new Spring. But they weren't foolish enough to imagine their bravado could change the face of the world or the fate of man, no matter how wonderful he and she might be. And so they gave us an expression for our joy, and an even deeper expression for our sorrow, and in the night of our unsettled dreams, their words will always ring true and seem like an uneasy premonition.

I put away that tape after that night, and it's now lost in the stacks of videos and newfangled DVD's piled up everywhere in the house (I have two teenagers). But that night still haunts me, and the words I recorded so imperfectly on my old television set (with the rabbit ears) I know will revisit me some day.



Dimitri C. Michalakis

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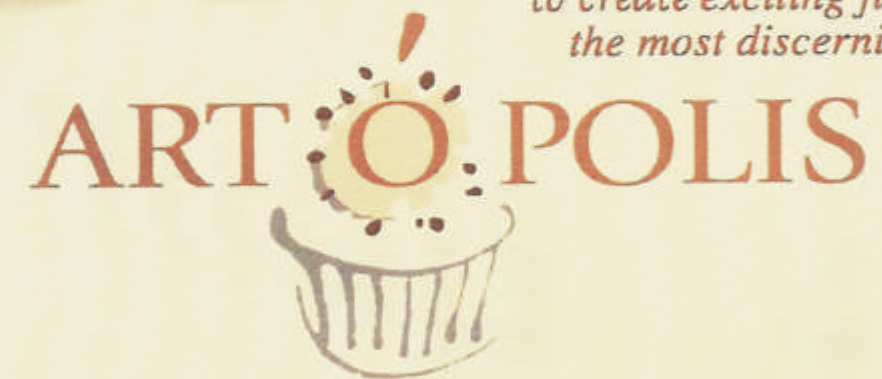
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Photos Left to Right: Rev. Dr. Demetrios Constantelos, President Herman Saatkamp, Senator Paul Sarbanes, and Prof. Tom Papademetriou



this day and age, should be given the chance. It is the duty of our society to educate its people for the health of the society. Senator Sarbanes remarks were greatly appreciated and enjoyed by the audience.

The chairman of the event, and Master of Ceremonies was Prof. Tom Papademetriou, who holds the Georgiou Endowed Professorship of Modern Greek history. Papademetriou also serves as the Executive Director of the Interdisciplinary Center of Hellenic Studies at Stockton. "While today's program is a departure from the many Ancient Greek cultural events we have offered in the past, this one is quite appropriate as it displays the diachronic range of the Greek spirit from Antiquity to the modern times," he said.

Stockton College Celebrates "Greek American Dream"

Whether you are from Europe, Africa, or Asia, the experience of immigrating to America marks a dramatic rupture from the way of life in the Old World. On October 7, 2007, the Hellenic Studies program at Richard Stockton College of New Jersey celebrated the particular Greek immigration experience with guest speaker, retired US Senator Paul S. Sarbanes (D-MD 1977-2007), and the showing of the film, *The Journey: The Greek American Dream*. The event, organized by The Friends of Hellenic Studies, was attended by over 200 students, community members and supporters.

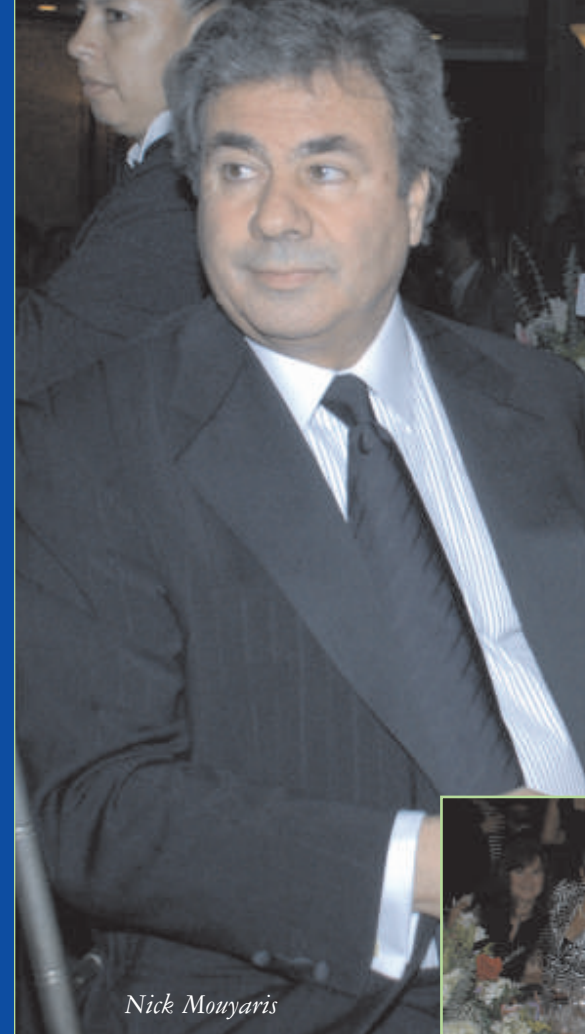
The film, written, directed and produced by Maria Iliou in collaboration with Haverford College historian Professor Alexander Kitroeff, an expert in Hellenic diaspora history, tells the story of the Greek immigration to America from 1890 to 1980. Interviews with prominent Greek Americans included Senator Sarbanes, writers George Pelecanos and Elias Kulukundis, poet Olga Broumas, film critic/historian Dan

Georgakas, Ellis Island Archivist George Tselos, Hellenic Studies professors Martha Klironomos and Artemis Leontis, and Father Bob Stephanopoulos complement the photographic and filmic archival footage. Senator Sarbanes responded to the film by discussing his own family's experience as immigrants and his life as a Greek-American in public service. He recounted how he had been born on Maryland's Eastern Shore to Greek immigrants, Spyros and Matina Sarbanes, who had emigrated from Laconia, Greece.

Sarbanes identified four values that mark Greek immigrants and led them to success in the United States: family, faith, hard work and education. He expounded on each, offering examples of how these impacted his own life. He went on to discuss the importance of education, and how important it is to support programs such as the exceptional Stockton Hellenic Studies program. He also noted that it is essential that anyone who wishes to attend college, in

The Provost Dr. David Carr, and President, Dr. Herman Saatkamp offered greetings, highlighting the College's commitment to educating young people and the value of Hellenic Studies to a liberal arts education. President Saatkamp also received several donations that day, one for \$10,000 from Dr. Peter Yiannos of Wilmington, DE on behalf of the Tri-State American Foundation for Greek Language and Culture (AFGLC) to support the Interdisciplinary Center for Hellenic Studies. Dr. Yiannos, with his wife Stella, previously personally donated \$100,000 for the Peter & Stella Yiannos Endowed Professorship in Greek Language and Literature. Other benefactors who were present were Dean and Zoe Pappas (The Clement and Helen Pappas Endowed Professorship in Byzantine Civilization and Religion), Mr. Constantine Georgiou (The Constantine and Georgian Georgiou Endowed Professorship in Greek History), and Mr. Petros Tsantes (The Petros and Despoina Tsantes Endowed Professorship of Ancient Greek Philosophy in honor of Katerina Batouyios). Yiannos explained the AFGLC itself sponsored the fifth endowment, but "we are still looking for a Nouno!"

Six \$1,000 scholarships that were awarded to students who excelled in Hellenic Studies were announced. The scholarships are named



Nick Mouyaris



Cyprus Federation President Peter Papanikolaou presents the Justice for Cyprus Award to Nick Mouyaris



Greek superstar singer George Dalaras with Philip Christopher



From left, PSEKA President Philip Christopher, Consul General of Greece Ekaterine Boura, Permanent Representative of Cyprus to the UN Andreas Mavrogiannis, Permanent Representative of Greece to the UN Ioannis Mourikis, US Congressman Robert Andrews, Nick Mouyaris, Peter Papanikolaou, Consul General of Cyprus Andreas Panayotou, Vicar Sevastianos, Ambassador of Cyprus Andreas Kakouris and Andy Manatos



From right, Marathon Bank's Executive Vice President Nick Koutsis, CEO Paul Stathouloupoulos, entrepreneur George Butsikaris and wife Yvette, Marathon's Senior Vice President Zoe Koutsoupakis and Vicky Giannopoulos



Carol Mouyaris

Nick Mouyaris honored

Nikos Mouyaris has been a very active leader in the Greek American community and yet a very private person, avoiding the limelight. This year, however, he made headlines not once, but twice. First he stunned Washington last May, when during the annual PSEKA conference, he proposed the creation of a central organization that would promote Greek-American causes and he coupled his idea with a pledge of two million dollars of his own money in order to streamline its materialization.

The second time was this past October, when he was honored with the "Justice for Cyprus Award", the highest honor of the Cyprus Federation of America, during a testimonial dinner in which Members of US Congress Ireana Ros Lehtinen and Robert E. Andrews were also recognized "having demonstrated steadfast dedication and unparalleled commitment to the Cyprus cause," in the words of Peter Papanikolaou, president of the Cyprus Federation of America.

Receiving the award, Mouyaris took the opportunity to remind everyone of "our responsibility to protect our heritage and the territorial integrity of Greece and Cyprus." He also invited all the Hellenes in America to unite, despite their political or ideological differences and to help collect the necessary ten million dollars in order to start the organization-umbrella that he proposed to coordinate the community effort. "We have already 2.5 million," he said. "Our cause is just."

The "Justice for Cyprus Award" is presented to those who have been exemplary leaders and outspoken advocates of the just and noble cause for the liberation of Cyprus from the Turkish occupation forces and the restoration of the human rights of the Cypriot people. The trophy, which is the work of world renowned Greek-Cypriot sculptor Nikolaos Kotziamanis, depicts a winged "Nike" or "Victory" holding two wreaths to crown the victors.

"Through his involvement in PSEKA and the Coordinated Efforts of Hellenes, he (Nikos Mouyaris) has been at the forefront of efforts to inform the wider American public of the need to end the Turkish occupation of Cyprus," declared President Tassos Papadopoulos in his message for the occasion.

Nikos Mouyaris was born in Athienou, Cyprus. After graduating from high school, he went to England, before he got a student visa to come to the US. He received his Bachelor of Science in Chemistry from St. John's University and a Master of Science from Rutgers University. He then started a cosmetic manufacturing company in New York City with \$6,000 that he borrowed from his brother, Apostolos. Today Mana Products is a very successful enterprise that employs over 600 people. In addition to this company, he has interests in real estate, as well as other businesses. He is married to Carol and they have two adult children, Alexis and Ariana



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Eleni Giokas, Aris Melissaratos, Constantinos G. Alexandris, Consul, Embassy of Greece, Kostas Alexakis, Gayle Economos, Marina Pirpiris



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George Moniodis, Paul Kotrotsios of Hellenic News of America, Kostas Alexakis, Congressman Dutch Ruppersberger, US Maryland, Renee Samuels



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Nancy Bukar, Brenda Sue Thorton and Kathy Wills

Aris Melissaratos hosts Aegean Evening for Sister City Committee

"Aegean Evening," a festive Greek-themed 25th Anniversary party & fundraiser for the Baltimore-Piraeus Sister City Committee was hosted recently by Honorary Chair Aris Melissaratos at his Glyndon, Maryland estate to raise funds for a number of Committee causes, including the Johns Hopkins Children's Center on Cooley's Anemia, otherwise called thalassemia, a potentially fatal congenital blood disorder which mainly affects Mediterranean peoples such as Greeks, Italians, Africans.



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Aris Melissaratos, Vasi Karas, Anne Nelson, Gayle Economos, Georgia Vavas, George Lintzeris, Eleni Peltsemes



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Spero and Athan Demetrides

Besides the fabulous Greek cuisine & drinks provided by the Hazelwood Inn, and live Greek music by Odyssey, a superb Silent Auction included a week at a Greek island home; antique Persian runner rug; reception & private tour of the Walters Art Museum by director Dr. Gary Vikan; a week at a condo in Ocean City, MD; a Kate Spade purse; Bluefishing Day for six days on a chartered yacht in Ocean City; jewelry; clothing and much more.



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Committee members Georgia Vavas, Georgette Stavrakas, Diane Homberg, Sabine Albersmeier



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Committee members Georgia Vavas, Aris Melissaratos, Gayle Economos, Vasi Karas, Spyros Stavrakas

The Baltimore-Piraeus Sister City Committee is an all-volunteer, citizen diplomacy network under the Office of the Mayor dedicated to promoting strong cultural & economic exchanges between the two port cities. Aris Melissaratos, former Secretary of the Maryland Department of Business & Economic Development, was extremely happy at the turnout and speaking to NEO considered it "his pleasure to be able to help. Since I bought this place a couple of years ago, it has become the venue for many such events. Tomorrow, for example, another reception will take place here for the American Heart Association!"

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Athenagoras Award bestowed on Archbishop Demetrios



The Archbishops present Archbishop Demetrios the Athenagoras Award. From left also are the Archon's National Commander Anthony Limberakis, Member of the European Parliament Anthony Trakatellis, Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, the Roman Catholic Archbishop Emeritus of Washington DC and Deputy Secretary of State John D. Negroponte.

Archbishop Demetrios of America joined a prestigious group of internationally renowned personalities, such as Jimmy Carter and Mikhail Gorbachev, by receiving this year's Athenagoras Human Rights Award, the highest distinction of the Order of St. Andrew the Apostle, at their Annual Banquet held recently in New York. National Vice Commander Nicholas J. Bouras presented the award to his Eminence, while the more than 600 participants exclaimed "Axios!"

Deputy Secretary of State John D. Negroponte, Ambassadors Alexandros Mallias and Andreas Kakouris of Greece and Cyprus respectively, members of the Order of Archons, and National Commander Anthony Limberakis were among the official guests who addressed the event and praised the Archbishop's ministry. His Eminence "exemplifies the very elements that constitute the Athenagoras Human Rights Award – humanity, humility, holiness, compassion and

leadership," Dr. Limberakis stated. Metropolitan Nicholas of Amissos represented SCOBA (Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in America,) while some of the warmest remarks were offered by Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, the Roman Catholic Archbishop Emeritus of Washington DC and a friend of the Archbishop's. "You don't know how lucky you are to have Archbishop Demetrios as your spiritual leader," he pointed.



Andrew Athens



George Marcus, Chairman of Marcus & Millichap, center, with friends



Rev. Alex Karloutsos with Presvytera Xantse and James Poll



Dr. Constantine Papadakis, President of Drexel University



AHI's Chairman Nick Larigakis with Republican Candidate and frontrunner Dean Scontras from Maine's 1st Congressional District

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Anthony Trakatellis, member and former Vice President of the European Parliament and the Archbishop's brother, also addressed the event, offering a more human rendering to his biography. Congressman Zack Space was the toastmaster.

At the end of ceremony the class of 2007 of the candidates for Investiture in the Order was presented.

The Athenagoras Human Rights Award was established in 1986 by the National Council of the Order of St. Andrew and is presented every year at the Annual Banquet to a person or organization which has consistently exemplified by action, purpose and dedication concern for the basic human rights and religious freedom of all people. The Award was named after one of the great Church leaders of the 20th Century, the late Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, Athenagoras I, who had also served as Archbishop of North and South America from 1931 to 1948.

This year also marks the 40th anniversary of the Archbishop Demetrios' elevation to the Episcopacy, with special recognitions and honors by U.S. Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi and a special tribute by President George W. Bush at the White House. "Your presence soothes my soul," President Bush stated in saluting the occasion.

Archbishop Demetrios of America was born in Thessaloniki, Greece, and upon graduation from high school, he enrolled at the University of Athens School of Theology. He was ordained deacon in 1960, a priest in 1964 and three years later as titular Bishop of Vresthena, assisting the Archbishop of Athens.

From 1965 to 1971, on scholarship from Harvard graduate School of Arts and Sciences, he studied New Testament and Christian Origins and was awarded a PhD "with distinction". Today he is considered an international authority on the Scriptures and in 1977 he earned a ThD in Theology from the University of Athens.

From 1983 to 1993 he served as the Distinguished Professor of Biblical Studies and Christian Origins at Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology in Brookline, MA. He also taught at Harvard Divinity School as a Visiting Professor of New Testament during the academic years of 1984 to 1985 and from 1988 to 1989. A prolific writer, he is the author of six major books.

He was elected Archbishop of America on August 19, 1999, by the Holy and Sacred Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. His leadership of compassion and service was repeatedly demonstrated, especially after the September 11 terrorist attack in New York.



Archon Nicholas J. Bouras, the Order's National Vice Commander



Deputy Secretary of State John D. Negroponte addressing the event



US Congressman Zack Space (left) with the Archon's National Commander Anthony Limberakis



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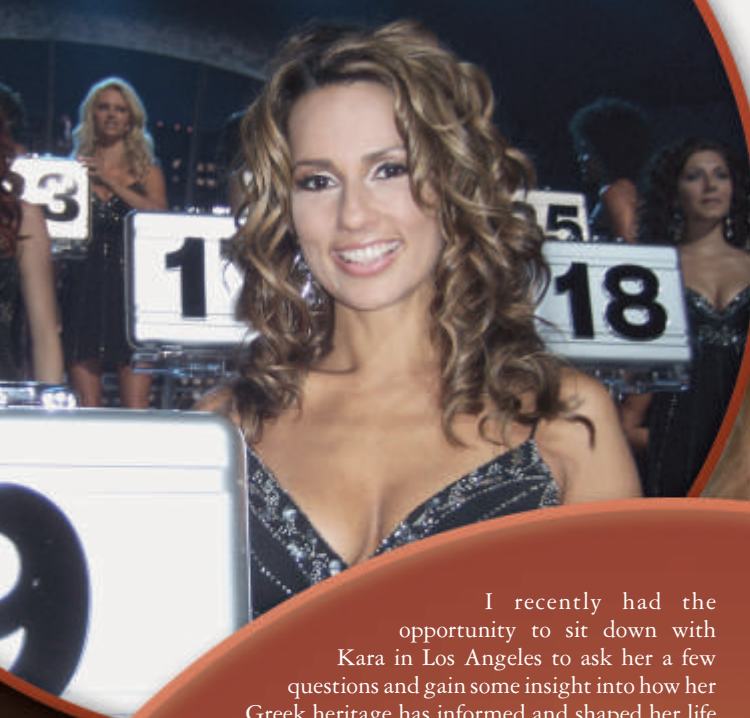
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Spending time with model and actress **Patricia Kara:** *a very good deal*

by Ken Kassakhian



Upon its initial airing in 2005, NBC's Deal or No Deal became a television phenomenon, and since day one the gorgeous Patricia Kara has been making contestant's dreams come true as briefcase model #9. In addition to Deal or No Deal, Patricia, who was born and raised in Chicago, has worked as a special correspondent on Extra, hosted numerous shows and events, and starred in hit shows such as NBC's Las Vegas, All of Us, Passions, Mad TV, The Young and the Restless and Beverly Hills 90210. She has appeared in dozens of commercials and modeled for major magazines from Cosmopolitan to Forbes. Patricia also devotes an immense amount of time and energy to charitable causes including the Make A Wish Foundation, the Elizabeth Glazer Pediatric AIDS Foundation, the Salvation Army, the American Heart Association, and Read Across America among many others.



I recently had the opportunity to sit down with Kara in Los Angeles to ask her a few questions and gain some insight into how her Greek heritage has informed and shaped her life and career.

How did you get started in the entertainment business?

My sister Joanna is the reason I got into the business. She is a hair dresser, and my organizer, my stage mom, and accountant- she is my everything basically. We started as a team doing everything.

Where is your family originally from?

My family is from the Peloponnese. My mother is from Paleochori and my father is from Ayios Vasilis. They're two towns one mountain over from each other. My mom currently lives in Athens in Peristeri. I'm the only American in my family, born and raised in Chicago. My oldest sister is an elementary school teacher in Greece and my older sister Joanna is a stylist in Chicago.

Were any relatives involved in the entertainment industry?

Recently my mother was telling me that my uncle John used to do theater in their chorio. It was cool to learn about someone else in my family who did something different, off the beaten path.

What does being Greek mean to you?

Everything about me is Greek. I try to keep up with my Greek heritage as much as I can. It was a bit easier in Chicago because everyone speaks Greek; it's different in LA but the community is growing. I speak Greek fluently, but I try to keep up and I don't ever want to let that go. That's a bigger part of me more than anything else. I think there's so much passion in being Greek.

What do you think it is about the Greeks as a people that makes them passionate?

It's innate. It's not something you can explain. It's something that just is. It's an internal thing. You're born with it. It is very much about being in the moment with everything in life. It's something that comes alive in everything we do from our work, our dancing, our relationships; there is a certain energy we all have that is unexplainable.

When you go to Greece do you feel you connect with that charge, that energy?

Yes! Every time, I go to Greece. When you're in Greece you feel so alive, you feel like you're being your true self. Coming back, I feel sometimes you have to put up a guard because people aren't so free and easy going here sometimes. And with all my work, with everything I do, my focus is at some point to be able to be based in Greece 3-4 months out of the year. And to be here too! Get the best of both worlds!

How do the Greek communities in LA and Chicago differ?

Chicago has a bigger Greek community. It's harder here because everybody is so spread out. In the past few years, we've been coming together more often. Anytime there is a Greek festival or event, I try to be a part of it. The last couple of years, I've seen things change here a lot. There's talk of more Greek schools, I go to Tuesday night Greek dancing classes taught by a man who teaches old village dances that we didn't even have in Chicago and I thought the LA Greek festival this past summer was great! There are more people here getting involved with the churches and festivals and entertainment groups coming together. A lot of people especially appreciated the LA Greek festival that brought a lot of filmmakers from Greece to honor their work and connect them with folks here. I'm excited to see Greece and Hollywood brought together on this scale.

What was your favorite film at the Los Angeles Greek Festival?

OPA! with Matthew Modine. It was about a stiff American archeologist who shows up on an island to dig at a site that sits beneath a house that belongs to a woman. He falls in love with her throughout the movie and she teaches him to see beyond his blinders and enjoy the Greek way of life as their two worlds collide. He ends up saving her place and learns to relax and really enjoy life.





How often do you get to go back to Greece? Where do you go when you visit?

I love Athens of course. I visit Peristeri to see the family. When we go to Athens, my sister knows the best places to go to: all the best restaurants and bars down by the beach. My sister was a teacher in Santorini for a few years so I got to spend a lot of time there too. I also love Mykonos.

Who are your favorite Greek musical artists?

Anna Vissi, Rokkos, and Vandi. I love the classical music too- the bouzoukia. I love it when you're able to do the traditional Greek

dances. In my car and in my house, I have Greek music on all the time. If I'm having a good day or bad day, I play Greek music to make it that much better. One of my favorite CDs is of zembetiko and the tsifteteli.

I learned all my dancing from my sisters- all those Greek weddings in Chicago.

What would you do if you chose the suitcase with the million dollars?

That one is easy. It would go to my family. We'd rebuild our family home in Peristeri. That's just the way my family is.

Ken Kassakbian is a writer in Los Angeles where he also directs a non-profit focused on increasing awareness about issues that affect the Greek American community.

Helena Gregorian, a published photographer and graphic artist, resides in Los Angeles.



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THE MYSTERY OF MODERN ACOUSTIC IN ANCIENT GREEK THEATRE SOLVED

The secret was in the seats

By Stefan Anitei

The ancient Greeks were placing the last few stones on the magnificent theater at Epidaurus in the fourth century B.C. In the ancient Greece, it was one of the wonders of its time.

Unwittingly, the ancient builders made a sophisticated acoustic filter that enabled audiences in the backrow to hear music and voices with amazing clarity, thousands of years before modern acoustic could do this.

The ancient Greeks tried to replicate the Epidaurus' design, but without much success.

A team at the Georgia Institute of Technology have found the factor missed by the ancients while looking for reproducing of this acoustic marvel: its seats, not its slope, or the wind.

The rows of limestone seats at Epidaurus made an efficient acoustics filter that eliminated low-frequency background noises like the murmur of the public and reflected the high-frequency noises of the actors off the seats and back toward the seated spectators.

This way, the performer's voice was reaching the back rows of the theater.

Some theories assumed that site's wind, which blows primarily from the stage to the audience, would have been the cause, while others thought that masks could have acted as primitive loudspeakers or that the rhythm of Greek speech had something to do with it.

There were also assumptions that the slope of the seat rows could have been implied in the acoustic. But acoustician and ultrasonics expert Nico Declercq suspected that the theater's corrugated limestone structure was filtering the sound waves at certain frequencies.

"When I first tackled this problem, I thought that the effect of the splendid acoustics was due to surface waves climbing the theater with almost no damping," Declercq said.

"While the voices of the performers were being carried, I didn't anticipate that the low frequencies of speech were also filtered out to some extent."

But when his team tested with ultrasonic waves and numerical simulations of the theater's acoustics, the researchers discovered that frequencies up to 500 Hz were retained while frequencies above 500 Hz were reflected, a similar effect to the ridged acoustics padding on the walls of a parking garage.

"So, how did the audience hear the lower frequencies of an actor's voice if they were being suppressed with other background low frequencies? There's a simple answer," said Declercq.

The human brain can figure out the missing frequencies through a phenomenon called virtual pitch which enables us to appreciate the incomplete sound coming from small loudspeakers (in a laptop or a telephone), even if the low (bass) frequencies are not emitted by a small speaker.

"The Greeks' misunderstanding about the role the limestone seats played in Epidaurus' acoustics likely kept them from being able to duplicate the effect. Later theaters included different bench and seat materials, including wood, which may have played a large role in the gradual abandonment of Epidaurus' design over the years by the Greeks and Romans," said Declercq.



Athens Mayor honours Queen Sophia of Spain



Athens Mayor Nikitas Kaklamanis awarded the City of Athens Gold Medal of Merit to the Greek-born Queen Sophia of Spain, acknowledging her humanitarian work, contribution to, and support of Greek art and culture. "Your Majesty should be aware we are touched by the fact that you do not forget your birthplace, neither our language, nor our culture. And that Your Majesty spares no effort in seeking reasons to emphasize our common cultural heritage and to reinforce the ties between our two nations," declared Mayor Kaklamanis. "Your Majesty may be Queen to the Spanish people but allow me to say that the Greek people consider you Ambassador of Greek cultural ideals."

Upon receiving the medal, the city's highest distinction, the Greek-born and raised

Sophia, daughter of the late King Paul of Hellenes, called it "a distinction that my Athenian heart will always cherish." She then went on to offer her "sincere condolences to all the victims, their families, their friends and compatriots" of last August's devastating fires.

Recalling her life in Athens, Queen Sophia said her first memories were there. "The light, Attica's blue sky, the atmosphere, the buzz of the people in the neighborhoods, the open-air markets, accompany me wherever I go... And it is not only my first memories that will always link me to Athens, but also some of the most felicitous and decisive moments in my life, as it was here that my wedding ceremony with the King of Spain was held."



House of Hope on the Hill

By Heidi Brown

Vyacheslav, the boxer, who has scars on his face and stocky, muscular arms. "I want to keep talking."

Bantle says he first sought help for alcoholism in 1968, attending a two-week treatment program. But he avoided the necessary group meetings and fell back into drinking excessively. One morning ten years later, now chief executive of UST, he woke up so hungover that he took a drink. That shook him up enough that he began attending AA meetings at Greenwich Hospital in Connecticut and now considers himself a recovering alcoholic.

He got a taste of alcoholism treatment in Russia on his first trip there in 1988. He visited a 3,500-patient addiction-treatment center in Moscow and was horrified. People were treated like prisoners, he says, forced to work for free for an auto factory. They received bizarre treatments such as blood transfusions, all the while living behind barred windows. "It was ghastly--really slavery," Bantle says.

In the old Soviet Union one-third of premature deaths were alcohol-related. But AA was unofficially banned: It was defined as a religious sect, since it requires members to believe in a higher power that heals. Western medical literature was mostly unavailable, and the idea of self-help didn't exist in a regime where educated higher-ups knew best.

The transition to a free market hasn't squelched Russians' taste for vodka. While statistics on alcoholism's prevalence are hard to come by, there are a few indicators. Russian male life expectancy, at 59, is the lowest of any developed country. A study published recently in the *Lancet* found nearly half of premature male deaths in one Russian city were attributed to habitual binge drinking and consuming "nonbeverage alcohol" such as cognac. "Russia is drowning in alcoholism," despairs Svetlana Moseeva, the director of House of Hope.

Doctors in Russia still don't endorse AA. Instead, "narcologists" in expensive private clinics administer quasimedical treatments such as a detox drip of saline and vitamins, and a hypnosis system developed in the Crimea in the mid-20th century. Also used are aversion therapy--which trains the patient to become nauseous in the presence of alcohol--and antabuse, a drug that causes

headaches, nausea and even death if alcohol is consumed while taking it. Both are used in the West but are considered insufficient without therapy and supervision.

Bantle's first step was to try to introduce AA to Russians through educational conferences he organized there and in the U.S. He also paid to bring hundreds of Russian officials, doctors and artists over for free treatment at U.S. clinics. But the Russians, he says, saw the trips as a free vacation and spent much of their time drinking. It was also costly, and donations from UST dried up by 1996. He then decided to establish a permanent aa center in Russia.

A psychiatrist named Evgeny Zubkov, who was a visiting professor at New York University, became Bantle's Russian point man. Politically connected and known in the artistic community of St. Petersburg, Zubkov helped Bantle buy a house for \$25,000 in 1997 in the tiny settlement of Pericula, outside of St. Petersburg.

Renovation headaches in America pale next to Bantle's travails. A Russian contractor hired to restore the house embezzled \$17,000 of the \$25,000 he was paid, and that first winter in the house "everyone almost froze to death," growls Bantle, still livid. Later, sanitation inspectors briefly shut down the house, claiming overcrowding. Fire inspectors wanted the small chapel next to the house moved. "They heard we were supported by an American and thought we would pay anything to deal with it," Zubkov scoffs.

Even the mob wanted in on the action. Gangsters drove up in a huge Mercedes and demanded \$10,000 monthly protection payments. The staff showed them the house's \$6,500 monthly budget. "Then they realized what we were about," recalls Zubkov. "They gave us \$1,000 and sent one of their own to get treated." In 2000 sanitation authorities returned, insisting the wells provided insufficient water. So Bantle ponied up \$140,000 to lay pipe and bring water from the village to the home. Now the water pressure is nearly nonexistent, he says, thanks to new developments tapping into the pipe.

At the home recently, overlooking a serene valley, patients stand outside, smoking and chatting quietly, when they are not in intensive classes, group therapy or individual counseling. Homemade meals are served in a cozy dining room with handwrought wooden benches. The 20 staffers include a doctor and two nurses, as well as social workers and counselors--almost all with histories of alcoholism. It's a tough disease. The house doesn't keep recidivism rates, but AA generally has at best a 25% success rate.

Bantle continues to provide half of the home's \$125,000-a-year budget, but the staff worries about what will happen after he's gone. Plus, a recent strengthening of the ruble is making his dollars count less. After decades of communism Russians don't give much to charity (the lack of tax writeoffs for donations doesn't help). Zubkov persuaded a Kremlin official to donate \$100,000 of his and other officials' money. St. Petersburg Governor Valentina Matvienko, a friend of Putin's and a potential candidate for president in 2008, recently agreed to put some municipal funds toward renovating the house.



Philanthropist
Louis Bantle



Dr. Eugene Zubkov with Archbishop Demetrios of America

Bantle has spent \$2.5 million over the years on the home. His son and daughter oversee a foundation he endowed with \$10 million that could take over a good portion of the house's expenses after he dies, he says.

There is a clear dependence on the grandfatherly American at the home. Photos of him are everywhere. "Everyone looks on him as a paternal figure--it's almost mystical," says Zubkov.

This story was first published in *Forbes* magazine.



Igor B., a Russian married father of two, could drink for a month straight but wanted to quit. Repeated injections of a powerful antialcohol drug at a Russian clinic didn't help. Vyacheslav O., a former boxer from St. Petersburg, got detox treatments in eight different hospitals in as many cities. Not much good there, either. When he didn't drink, he did heroin.

Russia remains an alcohol-sodden country, its common treatments too often ineffective or downright bizarre. But now Alcoholics Anonymous, the 12-step meetings program that sprang up in America in 1935, is taking root in Russia, with 300 groups across the country. And behind the spread of AA in Russia is an American, Louis Bantle, 79, who

grappled with alcoholism while chief executive of U.S. Tobacco (now UST) from 1973 to 1993.

Ten years ago, overriding Russian resistance, he established a 30-bed center called House of Hope on the Hill, situated in a rural setting 45 minutes outside of St. Petersburg. It is today Russia's only free alcoholism-treatment center that uses the principles of AA in a 28-day program. As patients finished and went home, they started up AA meetings in their own towns. The center has treated 2,500 people from 110 cities across the country and some former Soviet states. When visited this summer, Igor and Vyacheslav were nearing the end of their stay. "Every day I uncover something new about myself," says

The cars of our dreams

They were part of our American dream

by Dimitri C. Michalakís

My uncle owned all the cars I ever wanted. In the early 1960s when he still had hair, combed into a pompadour, he visited us in Montreal in a two-toned Chevy that he parked in our driveway, and we all ran out to gawk at the very first car in our family. We even got to jump on the seats with the leather stitch and fiddle with the lids of the chrome ashtrays that kept flipping open and shut, the height of elegance.

I sat in the back when Thio took us for a ride and I flapped open the ashtray lids while we drove around the suburbs, past all the houses with their swimming pools and manicured lawns, the very picture of the Canadian dream. My family and I used to stroll through those neighborhoods, so new they still had piles of red dirt from the excavations, and the adults would talk and gawk at the lucky Canadians in their Bermuda shorts mowing their lawns or adjusting their sprinklers or putting away their kids' bikes in their two-car garages, and who studiously avoiding looking back at us, the straggle of foreigners eyeing them in their perfect world like street urchins peeking through the windows of a perfect home.

Not that I cared, I was a kid then, and all I wanted to do was climb every mound of red dirt to show these Canadians how nimble I was, because I came from Greece and I was a practiced climber of mountains and hills.

But when Thio Stelio visited with his two-toned Chevy, though it was probably five or six years old then, it was still a car and it spoiled us because now we could zip through the Canadian suburbs and make the homeowners with the garden shears pause and take notice, since we had a car like them, until they realized that it was only those foreigners driving an old wreck and with their noses pressed against the glass.

Then Thio Stelio drove his Chevy back to New York where he lived, and we went back to walking and gawking at the swimming pools and taking the bus while I dreamed of my family owning a car, any car, but preferably one as sumptuous as the black Chrysler New Yorker parked at the bus stop downtown under the marguerite of Charlton Heston in *The Ten Commandments*. The car was always there, with its vast chrome bumpers flashing in the sun and its seats looking so inviting as we boarded the bus for the weary trek home.

On holidays, we might visit New York and see the new car Thio Stelio drove, he never seemed to drive the same car for very long. One summer he was driving a huge old Chevy, or Pontiac, or Buick, it doesn't matter, it was huge, about ten or fifteen years old, with the gears on the wheel, and the wheel as big as a hula hoop, with the latticework of a horn that he used to blast and sounded like a brass band. That was the horn of a real koursa, like the ones that used to clear the streets of urchins back in Greece and then roar by leaving a trail of musky exhaust smoke and the licorice smell of hot rubber tires.

Thio had picked up the old Chevy, or Pontiac, or Buick second hand and was using it as his truck while he did some work on a house, perhaps the first house he ever owned, and I remember how I sat in the car by myself while he worked in the house, and it had a tape recorder and I would click the buttons and listen to the music, probably Kazantzidis, probably Perpiniadis, groaning about the familiar sorrows of xenitia.

My uncle also drove a truck for a while and delivered bananas in Brooklyn for Thio George Sideratos, who owned the tiny banana store. The truck had doors that were never

shut and Thio swung in and out of them like a monkey from his perch, or rattled around the back and came out with a stalk of bananas on his shoulder which he delivered to stores and vendors on the avenues of Brooklyn with all the dash and gallantry of a young cavalier. I wanted to be just like him and deliver bananas on the avenue, and comb my hair in a pompadour, and drive a truck with doors that never closed, and wink at the single girls we passed, the ones on Fifth Avenue with the pretty ribbons in their hair, who I would never have the nerve to look at, if I wasn't with Thio Stelio, and we were young and single and driving his hot rod of a banana truck that backfired on cue and got their attention.

We moved to Chicago and one day my father came home with a white 1960 Chevy Impala with a red stripe and a red leather interior and a red steering wheel with grips and I remember every morning how his ring from Columbia Teacher's College would click on the steering wheel as he finished warming the engine and steered the car into traffic. The car was often laid up, I remember whole mornings spent trying to start it and gagging on gas fumes. But when it drove it was beautiful, our first car, and it had a red dashboard with round gauges like a submarine and a radio that played Paul Anka

and the Everly Brothers, which we listened to just like all those American kids we passed hunkered over the jukebox in the soda shop.

When our car didn't work, Mr. Sakellariou, whose ring would click on the steering wheel as well, might pick us up in his beautiful two-toned cream and cafe latte Pontiac Bonneville with the exhaust that sounded like a tiger's purr and the white wall tires as white as powdered donuts. Mr. Sakellariou always used his ash tray, tapping ash into the tray on a dashboard that was a blaze of chrome, and adjusting the knobs of the radio which looked as shiny and gaudy and as numerous as the buttons of a jukebox.

Someday, I thought, if we worked hard and lived right we might step up to a Pontiac like Mr. Sakellariou, or an Oldsmobile Rocket 88 like Mrs. Prevolos, or a two-door Thunderbird with a red interior like Rich, our landlord. But I never imagined we would ever be rich enough to own a Cadillac, which had fins like a Saturn rocket, and the bumper of the Queen Mary, and once pulverized a Volkswagen that ran into it on our corner. A Cadillac was the great American dream.

When we lived in Chicago, we often took the Greyhound to New York to visit relatives on

holidays. I stayed up watching the driver, of course, and wanting to be just like him when I grew up, commanding the American highway between Chicago and Cincinnati and Pittsburgh and Newark and New York in my double-decker Greyhound Scenicruiser with the white dog running on the side.

We usually stayed at Thio Stelio's when we came to New York, his house in Bay Ridge and the street clogged with traffic heading to the pier for the Staten Island Ferry. When Thio got married he started losing his hair and eventually he got a station wagon, a 1964 burgundy Chevy Impala with seats that were permanently white from the sacks of flour that he carried to the donuts shops he owned, first in Brooklyn, and then on Long Island.

I remember one morning at the crack of dawn driving on the empty stretch of the Belt Parkway to his luncheonette and donut shop in Hicksville and then being treated to a breakfast of pancakes and a grilled hamburger for lunch. And I remember him taking me once to pick up a relative or friend arriving on the Queen Frederika, which we found berthed and looming huge and white at one of the docks in Manhattan.



But most of all, I remember Thio packing all of us in his station wagon, the young bucks tumbling in the cargo hold, and driving us to the beach in Riis Park, with the tape recorder blasting Panos Gavalas, Marinella, Yiota Lidia, and Thio blowing his horn at the pretty girls, while we wallowed on our elbows in the cargo hold and sang our lungs out.

Thio was still fun, even though he was shedding hair like a dog, and he wore shoes caked with grease from work, and he was getting a belly, and he always had to go to bed early because he had to get up in the middle of the night to make the donuts, and he now drove a station wagon, but it was a station wagon he drove with the aplomb of a convertible.

And then one day when we returned to Chicago, we walked into a Mercury showroom. A Mercury wasn't a Buick, but it was a sort of Oldsmobile and it did cost \$5,000 in the mid 1960s. So we bought it and for a while we lived the American dream in

our Mercury, driving from Chicago to New York every holiday and summer, staying overnight at the "town of motels", Breezewood, Pennsylvania, wondering on every trip if Indiana really had no snakes, as my father claimed, arriving in New York to stay with Thio Stelio in Brooklyn and watch the snarl of cars nosing up the street to the Staten Island Ferry. And then driving back again and staying in Breezewood, or any other roadside motel with a pink vacancy sign, stopping along the way at the Howard Johnson's, before we reached Gary, Indiana and we knew we were practically home.

The big event every year in Chicago was the picnic where they drew the raffle for the Cadillac that had been parked for months on the curb outside the church. We would leave church on Sunday and there at the bottom of the steps would be the answer to many prayers, a Cadillac with a chrome grill like a pipe organ and fins like a jet, with seats as creamy as tapioca, and with a steering wheel surprisingly small for such a huge car but

glamorously done in Cadillac's distinctive two-tone black-and-white.

We bought our one or two tickets and for weeks I imagined our family being handed the keys at the picnic and our driving home the car, while my father's ring clicked on the two-toned wheel, and I wallowed in the creamy seats stitched with the Cadillac emblem. But, of course, the shopkeeper who bought half the roll of tickets every year usually won, and then life would return to its petty pace, and I would forget about the Cadillac for a while and settle for our Mercury.

Until the year rolled around, and the tickets were on sale again, and a new Cadillac with longer fins and bigger bumpers was parked on the curb outside the church, and then I and others would start spinning out our fantasies about the great American dream.

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(left to right) Prof. Santirocco, Prof. Sorabji, Pres. Papadopoulos



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(left to right) Prof. Richard Sorabji, John Catsimatidis, Pres. Papadopoulos



Professor Matthew S. Santirocco, Dean of the College of Arts and Science at NYU



John Catsimatides, Ambassador Alexandros Mallias (the Greek Ambassador in Washington), Professor Richard Sorabji, Foreign Minister of Cyprus, Erato Kozakou-Marcoullis, His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios, Andrew A. Manatos, Catherine Boura, Consul General of Greece in NY.

New York University inaugurated its Cyprus Chair in the History of Theory and Justice recently with a lecture on “What Zeno of Cyrus Started: Why Stoic Thinking on Justice is Important” by Richard Sorabji, Global Distinguished Professor, New York University. The event, co-sponsored by the Cyprus Foundation of America at NYU’s Eisner and Lubin Auditorium, was attended by Cyprus President Tassos Papadopoulos.

“The establishment of the Cyprus Global Distinguished Professorship on History and

Theory of Justice is an important development for Cyprus, as well as one having strong symbolic connotations. It reflects both our heritage and our contemporary quest,” said Papadopoulos.

Sorabji is assuming the Cyprus chair and Papadopoulos noted his extensive contributions in the field. An emeritus professor of philosophy at King’s College London, Sorabji has authored *Emotion and Peace of Mind: From Stoic Agitation to Christian Temptation*, *Self: Ancient and Modern Insights about Individuality, Life,*

and *Death*, and *Aristotle on Memory*, among other publications.

The Cyprus president also praised Dr. Phillip Mitsis for suggesting the idea of the chair and Dr. John Brademas, NYU president emeritus, for establishing strong links between the university and Cyprus.

Papadopoulos said Cyprus is establishing a number of links with U.S. universities in various fields, including public health, energy, the environment and education.

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY ESTABLISHES CYPRUS CHAIR

The 2007 United Hellenic Voters of America Gala



From left, John Manos, 2007 Most Distinguished Greek-American in the field of Business and past UHVA president; UHVA National President Nick Pappas; UHVA Supreme Chairman Dr. Dimitrios Kyriazopoulos; Chris Tomaras, 2007 Greek-American Hall of Fame inductee and 2007 Most Distinguished Greek-American; UHVA Supreme Board Member Judge George Bakalis (seated); U.S. Congressman Peter Roskam (Sixth Congressional District of Illinois) (seated).

At a gala event attended by a number of US Representatives, high level officials and local political figures together with a crowd of other distinguished guests from the Chicago area, the United Hellenic Voters of America (UHVA) celebrated the 33rd anniversary of its successful career.

The dinner event offered the opportunity for two US Congressmen to be recognized by being honored for their work and contribution to the Hellenic Community in their respective Districts. Congressman Dan Lipinski (D), Third District of Illinois, accepted the award with remarks that contained a pledge for his continued support of the issues related to Greek-Americans in his District. Congressman Peter Roskam (R), a junior congressman from the Sixth District of Illinois, commended the organization for its significance in support of his election and pledged to work closely with it in the future addressing its issues of concern.

UHVA also recognized the invaluable work of Addison, IL Mayor Larry Hartwig as a true friend of the organization and exceptional civic leader, as was inscribed on the plaque received by the Mayor.

Two other honorees also received awards: Rev. Andrew Karamitos, a Greek priest serving at St. Sophia Greek Orthodox Church in Elgin, IL for his exemplary work as a clergyman in the Greek Community, and John Manos, an accomplished businessman and president of the BankFinancial Corp., who is noted for his work as an Executive Board member of the UHVA since 1984 and his contributions to a number of local and national organizations. The highest honor of UHVA was offered to Chris P. Tomaras as "The Most Distinguished Greek American for the year 2007" and his induction in the "Greek-American Hall of Fame."

UHVA was founded in 1974 by Dr. Dimitrios Kyriazopoulos in order to promote political values among its members - people of Hellenic descent - to encourage and support them to participate in political affairs of their communities, to endorse and actively support candidates for election and/or appointed officials and to promote a determined, committed and effective voice in government. The organization has chapters and thousands of members in several states.

AHI Hosts Toronto Blue Jays for Business Networking Breakfast

Team Representatives Offer Inside Look into a Major League Baseball Team



AHI BREAKFAST (L-R) Alex Anthopoulos, AHI Executive Director Nick Larigakis and George Poulis

On September 26, 2007, the American Hellenic Institute (AHI) hosted representatives from the Toronto Blue Jays baseball club at a business networking breakfast to offer a behind the scenes look into the workings of a Major League baseball team. Panel speakers included George Poulis, Head Trainer for the team, and Alex Anthopoulos, Vice President for Baseball Operations and Assistant General Manager. The event, which was held at the Capital Hilton, welcomed around 50 attendees, each of whom was given two free tickets to the evening's baseball game at Camden Yards between the Blue Jays and the Baltimore Orioles, courtesy of the Baltimore Orioles baseball club. Poulis provided an overview of what his work as the team's trainer involves on a day-to-day basis, from the most routine parts to the most challenging, including any surprise eventualities such as injuries. He emphasized the importance of being prepared to respond quickly to any situation. He also discussed the important influence that his Hellenic heritage has played throughout his life.

Similarly, Anthopoulos brought the audience through his career progression, highlighting his initial inspiration for entering the world of Major League baseball. From an initial internship with the Montreal Expos, to scouting for the team, to his current management role with the Toronto Blue Jays, his perseverance and passion for the game has been his source of motivation. Anthopoulos also noted that a major highlight of his career was serving as an advance scout for the Greek National Baseball Team for the Athens 2004 Olympics.

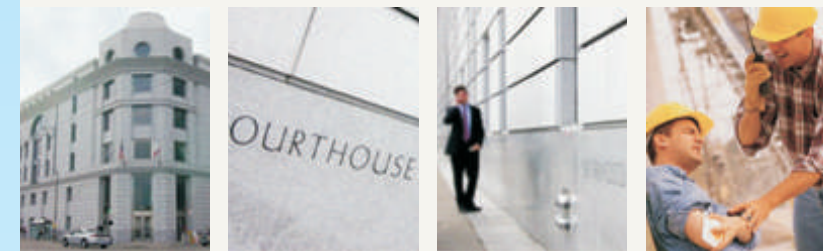
"This was an exciting and informative event today, and we truly appreciate the time, insights and effort put forward by George and Alex to make this a very personal and memorable event for all of our members and guests attending," said AHI Executive Director Nick Larigakis. "I also want to extend a special thanks on behalf of AHI to the Baltimore Orioles and to the team's owner Peter Angelos and his son Lou for supporting this event and helping to make it possible," he also said.

George Poulis joined the Blue Jays training staff prior to the 2000 season and was named Head Trainer in 2003. Prior to joining the Blue Jays, he was an athletic trainer in the San Diego Padres' Minor League system for 10 years. Poulis got his first experience with professional sports in 1986 as an athletic training intern for the NFL's Cleveland Browns Football Club. A Cleveland native, Poulis earned his undergraduate degree from Baldwin-Wallace College in Berea, Ohio, earned his master's degree from the University of Alabama, and is a member of the National Athletic Trainers Association. He worked his way up through the Padres' Minor League system with stops in Waterloo, Iowa (Class A); Wichita, Kan.; Memphis, Tenn.; Mobile, Ala. (Class AA); and Las Vegas (Class AAA). At the conclusion of the 1998 Minor League season, Poulis assisted the San Diego Padres' during the playoffs and World Series.

Alex Anthopoulos most recently was the Assistant to the General Manager, being appointed following the 2005 season. The Montreal, Quebec native joined the Blue Jay family following the 2003 season as Scouting Coordinator, after three years with the Montreal Expo organization. He was a Coordinator of Scouting Operations with the Expos in 2002, being promoted from his role as Assistant in International Scouting following the 2001 season. The Expos expanded his duties in 2003 adding the title of Scouting Supervisor for Canada. Anthopoulos majored in Economics at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario before moving into the baseball world in 2000. The Greek descendant has lent his services to the Greek National team for the 2003 European Championships along with serving as an advance scout for Greece in the 2004 Summer Olympics.

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TWO PLAYS AND A ...TRAGEDY!

These past two months have been very "theatrical" to Greek Americans who happened to live in New York. The National Theater of Greece was here, managing to Electrify the audience to the extent of ...Electrocution, in a series of performances that unfortunately weren't ...Steinless! If I have you lost already, give me a minute to explain myself.

Greece's state-sponsored troupe presented Sophocles' "Electra," directed by Peter Stein, the acclaimed German theater and opera director who made his New York debut. The plot has Orestes, son of Agamemnon, returning in secret to Mycenae with his Tutor and his faithful friend, Pylades, in order to punish Clytemnestra and her paramour, Aegisthus, who have murdered his father. At the end Orestes accomplishes his mission, to the delight of Electra, who during the play goes out of her way in mourning her dead father and calling to heaven for the punishment of his murderers.

I don't have enough space to go into details, but after seeing the play I was left with the same sensation one has after watching a horror movie on TV. I don't know if it were because Halloween was in the offing, otherwise I can't see how Mr. Stein had Orestes come out of the palace with a dripping blood dagger and then Clytemnestra – the majestic, otherwise, Karyofyllia Karambeti - wrapped in a white shirt which, when uncovered, revealed her body soaked in blood again! I wouldn't have minded if this production was German, British or who knows what else, but supposedly the National Theater of Greece has an identity of its own when it comes to aesthetics, that leaves no space for—ketchup--and other effects of the kind. Unlike soccer, where Mr. Stein's compatriot Otto Rehagel led the National Team of Greece to perform miracles, drama is Greek-born and it can't be treated in a Mel Gibson "Apokalypto" style by Greece's National Theater. Don't get me wrong, I am fully pro-experiment, but this theater has, I repeat, a precious identity that giants like Koun, Roderes and Co sweated a lot to establish!

Besides the blood-stained scenes, though, there were other things that made me uncomfortable, to put it gently. Orestes – played by Apostolis Totsikas – wasn't convincing at all. First of all, in front of the well-built Aegisthus – Lazaros Georgakopoulos – whose selection of clothing made him appear like a crypto-gay from a Nazi special force, Orestes seemed tiny, weak and too childish to be taken seriously. Not only couldn't he have killed anybody, but it looked as if Aegisthus would kick his ass any moment now! Totsikas, a capable young actor otherwise, doesn't have the Al Pacino spark!

On a more positive note, Stefania Goulioti as Electra was excellent – where would this young girl draw such remarkable strength and maturity from! – veteran Yannis Fertis as Tutor managed to make an impression in a minor role – but again, nothing is minor in the classical

drama - and the chorus was wonderful, with the exception of the other horrific part, when they jumped over Clytemnestra's dead body in a scene the again reminded of "Apokalypto"!

No doubt Peter Stein is a genius and he knows classical theater very well – at the age of 11 he translated "Philoktetes" from Ancient Greek into German. Also, his idea to try new and inexperienced actors – supported by two or three veterans – was brave and refreshing. I wish he would have treated the performance with more seriousness, though, and in the same "scientific" way by which he approached the translation, as he explained during a conference at the Greek Press Office.

And because, as in ancient times, a tragedy has to be followed by a comedy, the Greek Cultural Center in Astoria, New York, came up with "The Frogs" by Aristophanes in which Dionysus (Evangelos Alexiou) - the god of theater - disappointed with the state of theater in Athens, sets out to visit the Underworld to bring back the great tragic poet Euripides. Dionysus, disguised as Heracles, together with his funny and cunning servant Xanthias, have a series of comic adventures.

Directed by Magdalena Zira - young but very experienced, with Oxford credentials – and a cast of well-placed and trained actors, this performance was a refreshing surprise that proves that art can still be found in little ...venues, such as the Center's little theater. Moreover, listening to the way Aristophanes treats two of the greatest-ever drama representatives, Euripides and Aeschylus, one is reminded that criticism and, yes, iconoclasm are a necessary component in every society that wants to be considered civilized and its people real citizens (imagine how Aristophanes would

have treated Mr. Stein's Electra!). A must-see play; performances are given Fridays and Saturdays at 8PM, Sundays at 2:30PM & 7:30PM, for five weekends. For more information call (718) 726-7329.

Fortunately, after ...Electrocution, I had the chance to see another comedy, modern this time, which reminded me of a Greece that we came to know as children through the black-and-white movies of the long gone Greek cinema. In celebration of the 100th year of the birth of D. Psathas, THEATRON staged a theatrical adaptation by Loukas N. Skipitaris assisted by Stelios Manolakakis, of one of the most highly-acclaimed comedies, "Etairia Thavmaton / The Miracle Co." Somewhere in today's Greek countryside, a celibate and God-fearing young man, Ilarios (Manos Pantelides), owns a field that, unbeknownst to him, has oil. Gus, a Greek-American, and Kosmas (Demetris Bonaros, a very talented actor who carried the night – at least in the performance I attended,) an Athenian, concoct a plan to swindle Ilarios out of his field by creating fake miracles, which they tell him are the deeds of a pseudo-saint who was said to have lived and died in that field.

It's a beautiful play that produces good laughs and is a steal at its \$20 ticket price. As in the case of "The Frogs," Theatron too confirms in action the existence of talent in our surroundings that can perform real miracles (not like those by Kosmas) if opportunity is given. Support the Greek theater in New York in order to see one day locally-themed plays, too, making unnecessary another trip by Dionysus to the Underworld to resuscitate another classic like, why not, ...Psathas! Performances will continue until November 11. For more information call (718) 721-7610.

EVANGELOS ALEXIOU AS DIONYSUS
PHOTO: ALEXANDROS GIANNAKIS III



Film epic helps put Greek cinema back in the frame

A Touch of Spice knocks US blockbusters off top of bill

Fiachra Gibbons, arts correspondent in Salonika, Guardian

They cringed at My Big Fat Greek Wedding, quietly fumed at Captain Corelli's Mandolin, and have grown heartily sick of the theme tune from Zorba, but after decades starved of a major international hit, Greek cinema is finally celebrating a film of its own which looks set to be a world beater.

A Touch of Spice, a bitter-sweet epic about the travails of the embattled Greek minority in Istanbul, has knocked American blockbusters such as Pirates of the Caribbean from the top of the box office in Athens.

In a little over a fortnight it has sold 700,000 tickets, putting it on course to be the biggest Greek film of all time, and forcing Hollywood to sit up and take notice of a film being billed as the Mediterranean answer to Like Water For Chocolate.

Like the Mexican cult hit, A Touch of Spice is about cooking and family, but packs a historical and emotional punch that leaves you weak at the knees.

Even in Greece, the story of the 30,000 Greeks who were in effect deported from Istanbul in 1964 is something of an untold story. Which is why director Tassos Boulmetis, whose family was uprooted from the city that was its home for countless generations, decided to tell their story after making a painful return to his childhood home.

Made partly in Turkey, and starring one of its best-known actors, the film is also being seen as a part of the slow and uneasy rapprochement between the two enemies who have spent most of the last 80 years perched on the precipice of war.

The film confronts prejudice in both countries. Boulmetis, whose family was thrown out of the city Greeks still call Constantinople when he was seven, claimed: "We left Turkey as Greeks and we were greeted here as Turks. We were caught in the middle, confused and ill at ease in a homeland that wasn't really our home."

Unwelcome among Greek officialdom as the country plunged into military dictatorship, in the film the family clings to the traditions and most of all the cooking of the old Byzantine capital, now home to fewer than 2,000 Greeks.

The son, based on Boulmetis himself, finds himself a job as a cook in a brothel when his family bans him from the kitchen in an attempt to turn him into a "proper Greek".

"It took me a long time to realise it but I did not really feel whole until I went back to Istanbul. Going back changed my life," he said. "As a seven year old I spoke fluent Turkish, but in the trauma of leaving I lost it. I went to our old house in Kadikoy on the Asian shore of the Bosphorus. But I couldn't bring myself to ring the bell. Just going back changed my life."

But one of his actors, Tassos Bandis, another Istanbul Greek who plays his grandfather in the film, did take that step, and was welcomed into his old house for dinner.

Boulmetis said some nationalists were furious with him for "going easy" on the Turks. "They say they are animals. That we should have shown them that way... My own father is still angry about what happened, but I can't be. The

film will be shown in Turkey in March and I want them to feel what we felt and not see themselves as cartoon monsters."

The success of A Touch of Spice comes as Greek film, so long the whipping boy of European cinema, is on something of a roll, with a new generation of directors taking a cleaver to that most revered of Greek sacred cows, the family.

None more so than in Matchbox, in which a grasping, foul-mouthed clan tear themselves and their friends' lives apart in the maddening heat of an Athenian summer. While the film has been cheered as a revolution in Greek film-making at the Salonika film festival, and an antidote to the schmaltz of My Big Fat Greek Wedding, middle-aged audiences have been choking on their souvlaki and one critic was so incensed he refused to review it.

Its young Cypriot director, Yannis Economidis, who has been compared to a younger Mike Leigh on speed, makes no apology for his liberal and imaginative use of the Greek swear word malaka. "Let's face it, the characters in the film are malakas," he said. "They are low-class dogs, and I say that with love. If it was set in Sweden it would be all meaningful silences. But here life is straight and brutal and more honest."

"To me it is a political film - the last 20 years of Greek democracy is all there inside this flat, the racism, sexism, chauvinism and materialism.

"People laugh at me when I say it, but to me it is a film about love. It is about a man who loves his woman and he is suffering for it."



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