

March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2006



ΛΑΟΓΡΑΦΙΚΟΣ ΟΜΙΛΟΣ ΕΛΛΗΝΩΝ ΑΜΕΡΙΚΗΣ  
GREEK-AMERICAN FOLKLORE SOCIETY

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Phone: (718) 956-3544, Fax: (718) 726-3554  
www.gafs.org

**GAFS NEWSLETTER**

«So the well educated man will be able both to sing  
and dance well.»

~PLATO~

*GAFS HISTORY*

The **Greek-American Folklore Society** is dedicated to the study, preservation and instruction of the history and traditions of Hellenic folk culture. We share our work with the public through stage re-enactments of traditional Greek customs, songs and dances, as well as through lectures, exhibits and workshops. The primary focus is on Demotic folk songs and dances, as these reveal both the spirit and materiality of their respective cultures of origin. In the lyrics, music and ritualized motion of Greek folk traditions, we see reflections of a people's history, spirituality and world-view. We discern aesthetic ideals, which defined Greek communities of past generations. We give special attention to old Greek communities lost or otherwise forgotten in the Balkans.

GAFS was founded in 1983 by Apostolos "Paul" Ginis as a non-profit organization. Perhaps one of Mr. Ginis's most notable achievements is that he inspired many of his pupils to become actively involved in preserving and teaching our folk arts. Some of his pupils have gone on to found their own folklore groups, others learned how to play traditional instruments and/or sing while others still became interested in making costumes etc.

After his death, Paul's achievements and dreams were left in the hands of his sister, Vaia Alaganis. To this day, she continues, GAFS and lives on her brother's dream.

The Greek American Folklore Society offers instruction in folk dancing for dancers of all ages, abilities and levels, including special classes for children. GAFS frequently offers lectures,

presentations, costume exhibitions, festivals and special events, such as wedding re-enactments, for the general public. In addition, it organizes special workshops and seminars in which acclaimed folklorists and teachers are invited from Greece and North America to present their work and pass on their knowledge and expertise to folklore enthusiasts.

## *Upcoming GAFS Performances in March*

**“Thessalian Society’s Annual Dance” Saturday, March 4, 2006-** GAFS will be showcasing dances from Thessaly, in their authentic “Karagouna” costumes.

**“Douglaston Manor” Sunday, March 5, 2006**

**“Αγιοι Αναργιρι Αρτοκλασια” Sunday, March 12, 2006-** Every year the church of “St. Anargiri” honors GAFS by inviting them to their Αρτοκλασια, where GAFS also performs various dances from all over Greece. As a result of the snowstorm, the Αρτοκλασια was cancelled and is now rescheduled for Sunday (Κυριακη της Ορθοδοξιας).

**“European Folk Festival” Sunday, March 19, 2006-** The Slavic Heritage Council of America, Inc. presents the European Folk Festival. It will feature various ethnic groups, including but not limited to the Bulgarian Folk Dance Group, the Croatian Dance Group, Macedonian Folk Dance Ensemble and our very own, Greek American Folklore Society. The Event will be held at The Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT) located on 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue/ 27<sup>th</sup> Street, New York City. Tickets in advance are \$25. Tickets for children, senior citizens and students are \$20.

The Onassis Center is currently holding an exhibition entitled **“From the Byzantium to Modern Greece: Hellenic Art in Adversity, 1453 – 1830.”** The exhibition features pieces from the Benaki Museum of Greece. There are more than 137 works, which include woodcarvings, metalwork, embroidery, costumes, jewelry, and pottery. The artwork timelines the history of Greece from the fall of the Byzantium in 1453, to the founding of modern Greece in 1830. The exhibition is being held till May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2006 (Admission is free). The Onassis Center is located in the Olympic Tower in Manhattan, on Fifth Avenue between 51<sup>st</sup> and 52<sup>nd</sup> Streets.

The **Hellenic Cultural Center Theatre** is presenting the play, **“O Tsigounaros”** (The Miseror). A theatrical adaptation by Loukas N. Skipitaris, based on the movie "I'll Make you a Queen" by A. Sakkelarios and H. Giannakopoulos, describes the life of Manolis Tsigounis, who is a tightwad who hates to spend or give money. He convinces his wife to write to her uncle in America that, although recently married, has become a widow, in order for her to continue receiving her monthly allowance from her Greek American relative. When the uncle unexpectedly arrives, the amusing comedy develops into irresistible humor.

The **Hellenic Cultural Center** is located on Newtown Avenue, and Crescent Street, Astoria, New York. Performances will start February 17 and last until March 19, 2006. Performances are Fridays and Saturdays at 8:00 pm, as well as Sunday’s from 2:30pm to 7:30 for five weekends.

The **“Apology of Socrates,”** directed by Lukas Skipitaris, covers Socrates’ defense in the Athenian court and his rebuttal to a guilty verdict and a death sentence. The performance transports

## *Current Events*

the viewer from ancient to contemporary time, thus reaffirming the relevance of Socrates' thoughts in today's society. Performances will be held in February at Columbia University.

## *The Tradition of Apokries in Greece*

**Apokries** in Greece is what is known as the Carnival or Mardi Gras in the United States. This festival is an Ancient tradition, believed to be a holiday in tribute to Dionysos, the God of Wine and Feast. Today, Apokries is the three-week period before the Greek Orthodox Lent. The word "Apokries" means saying fairwell to meat. This year Apokries began on February 12<sup>th</sup>, and is ending on March 5<sup>th</sup>. Every region of Greece celebrates Apokries with their own customs and traditions. Yet there are three constants throughout the country. Τσικνοπεμπτη ("Τσικνα" is the smell of burning meat), which is celebrated the second Thursday of Αποκριες, and is the last week of eating meat until Easter. Τυροφαγισ is the last day of Αποκριες, and it is the last day that the Greek Orthodox church permits weddings till the period of Lent is over. Superstition states that it is bad luck to get married on this day. The infamous Carnival parades are held on this last day of Αποκριες. The Monday that follows is called "Καθαρα Δευτερα," (Clean Monday) and marks the first day of Lent.

## *Special Thanks*

GAFS would like to thank everyone who attended and contributed to the fundraiser/ βασιλοπιτα on January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2006 for Jim Tashi. Your help was greatly appreciated by both GAFS and Jim!

GAFS would also like to thank everyone who attended the Αποκριατικο Γλεντι on March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2006.

## *News*

**Marriage:** GAFS would like to wish the newlyweds Robin Moreno- Tsantes and Damian Tsantes a life full of happiness and love! Best wishes for your wedding.

**Get Well Soon:** We wish Effie and Mr. Elias to get well as soon as possible. We wish to see them very soon at dance!

## *Fund Drive*

Since GAFS is a non-profit organization surviving on its members, your help is always appreciated! We would like to create a fund drive, possibly raising some money to purchase a greatly needed **computer**, to make you, our members, more easily accessible and to help GAFS with organization and production. Any kind of donation is greatly appreciated!

\*All donations are tax deductible.

## *"Σιφνος"*

**Each month we will be featuring a different region of Greece. We want our readers to understand that we incorporate into our dance program, every region of Greece.**

Sifnos is a small Greek island located in the southern cluster of the Cycladian islands, situated in the Aegean Sea. The inhabitants of the island still keep up many of their traditions, thus folklore still lives and thrives in the island of Sifnos. Many of the traditions such as *the burning of Judas* (during the Easter period and the Lent game *tsounia*, are all special customs characteristic to the island of Sifnos. *Kyr-Vorias* (Mr. North Wind) is a dance unique to Sifnos, which is danced on the last Sunday of the

Carnival to thank God for the end of winter. *Lolopanigiro* or *Crazy Feast*, is celebrated in February, and is a holiday that stems from paganistic times. All these traditions are said to have ancient roots, which have not been erased or forgotten.

The traditional wedding of Sifnos, begins two days before the actual ceremony. The *tacimia* (pairs) of musical instruments are played for two days, and two nights, while the *pasteli* (a delicacy) is offered to all who attend. A bride's dance is conducted, where all the guests take a turn in the front of the circle. During the two days leading up to the ceremony, the guests recite their wedding wishes in the form of a poem. These poems are heard by all who attend.

Dances of Sifnos include *Sifneikos*, *Ballos*, *Kyr-Vorias* and *Sirtos*. The music can be characterized as island music using string instruments such as the violin, and *laouto*.

## Members

President- Dora Themelis

Vice President- Helen Papageorge

Secretary- Anastasia Tsantes

Director/ Treasurer- Vaia Alagiannis

Newsletter- Despina Hotzoglou

Maria Stavrakis

## Class Schedule

**Beginner's Group:** Tuesday's 7:00 p.m. – 10:00 p.m.

**Performing Group:** Wednesday's 8:00p.m. – 10:00 p.m.

**Children's Group:** Saturday's 2:30p.m. – 3:00p.m.  
and 3:30p.m. –4:30p.m.

### Tuition:

Adults: Memberships are a one-time \$50 fee  
\$40 per month  
\$12 per lesson  
Children: Memberships are a one-time \$40 fee  
\$20 per month

***We want your contributions! If you have any stories, comments or opinions as to how dance has affected you or any kind of stories you would like to share, please email us!***

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