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was coming into the world. He was in the world,  
and the world was made through him. . ."*

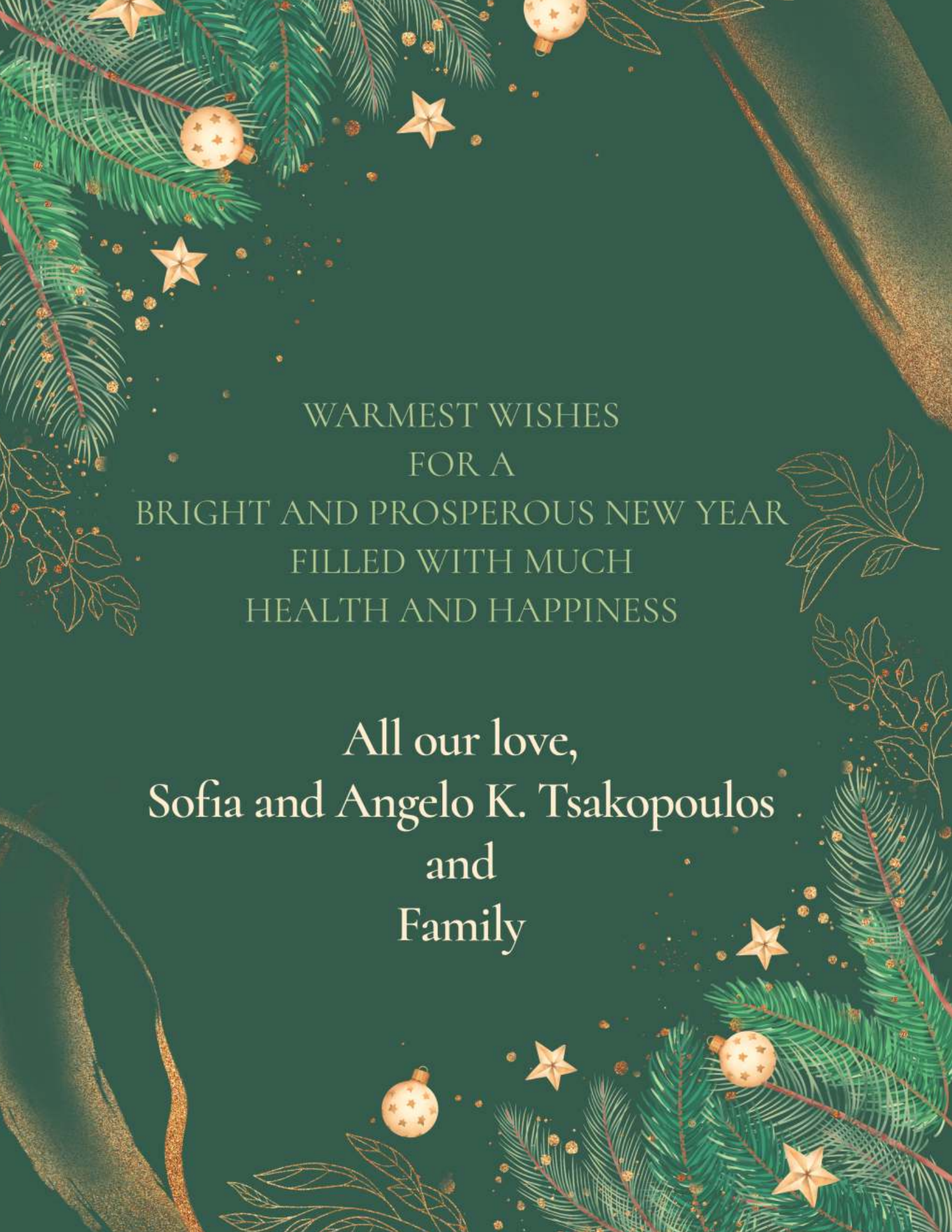
*John 1:9-10*

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FILLED WITH MUCH  
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All our love,  
Sofia and Angelo K. Tsakopoulos  
and  
Family



# REJOICE

WISHING YOU *peace, hope, and joy*  
THIS CHRISTMAS AND A NEW YEAR FILLED WITH BLESSINGS OF  
*good health and happiness*



*Celebrating 20 Years*

**Promoting Hellenism, supporting the Greek Orthodox faith and celebrating excellence in education for future generations.**

In 2024, FAITH celebrated its twentieth anniversary of advancing educational and cultural initiatives throughout the Hellenic-American and Greek Orthodox community. Over the last two decades, the generosity and support of our Founders enabled FAITH to proudly award over 2,000 grants and scholarships to aspiring young leaders and make landmark contributions to programs that have shaped our community.

This year, we awarded 179 FAITH Scholarships for Academic Excellence, with 94 awarded to outstanding high school seniors who demonstrated exceptional academic achievement, community leadership, and commitment to volunteerism and an additional 85 FAITH Scholarships for Excellence in STEM to university students maintaining excellence in STEM fields, academics, and community involvement. These young leaders join a network of over 900 FAITH Scholar alumni. We also awarded 18 scholarship awards to the national finalists of the St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival and a series of grants in partnership with the Fulbright Foundation of Greece to support Greek graduate students and PhD candidates to study in the United States. FAITH also sponsored the first ever English language translation and distribution of the I.M. Phountoules multi-volume series, "Answers to Liturgical Questions."

As we celebrate this anniversary, we are grateful for our Founders' vision, generosity, and commitment. We look ahead to a new decade of supporting the future leaders and extraordinary young people within the Hellenic-American and Greek Orthodox community and empowering them to reach their full potential.

For more information, visit: [thefaithendowment.org](http://thefaithendowment.org) or contact [info@thefaithendowment.org](mailto:info@thefaithendowment.org)  
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"FAITH: An Endowment for Orthodoxy and Hellenism" is an independent 501(c)(3) organization that supports the development of educational, cultural, and scholarship programs that promote Hellenism, an understanding of the Greek Orthodox faith, and the relationship of the two to America's history and multicultural landscape for young people.





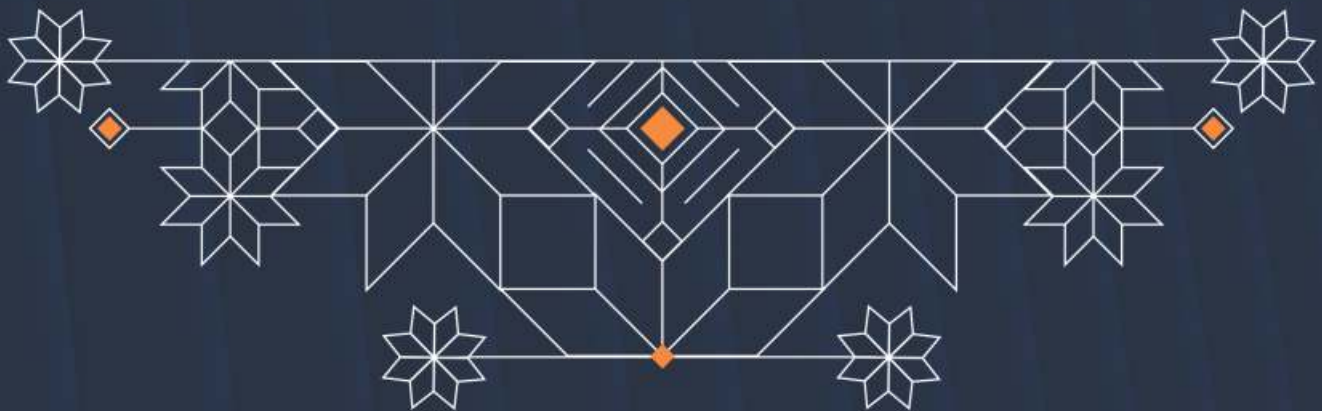
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*The Behrakis Family*





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and  
a Prosperous New Year!*

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The Hellenic American Association for Professionals in Finance, Inc. (H.A.B.A.) is one of the premier Greek-American organizations in the New York metropolitan area. HABA is a not-for-profit organization established in 1982 to promote the professional and educational interest of Greek-Americans in the banking and finance industries. Its current active membership consists of over 200 professionals representing more than 50 institutions across the financial spectrum.

Since its inception, HABA has strived to serve the professional and educational interests of Greek-American financial professionals through the sponsoring of lectures, seminars, cocktail receptions with guest speakers and other events. Over the past years, HABA has had many distinguished speakers and lecturers.





*Merry Christmas  
&  
Happy New Year*

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*AHI is a non-profit Greek American public policy center and think tank that works to strengthen relations between the United States and Greece and Cyprus, and within the Greek American community.*



*Wishing all our friends a  
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Happy New Year 2025*



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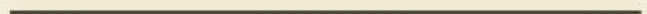
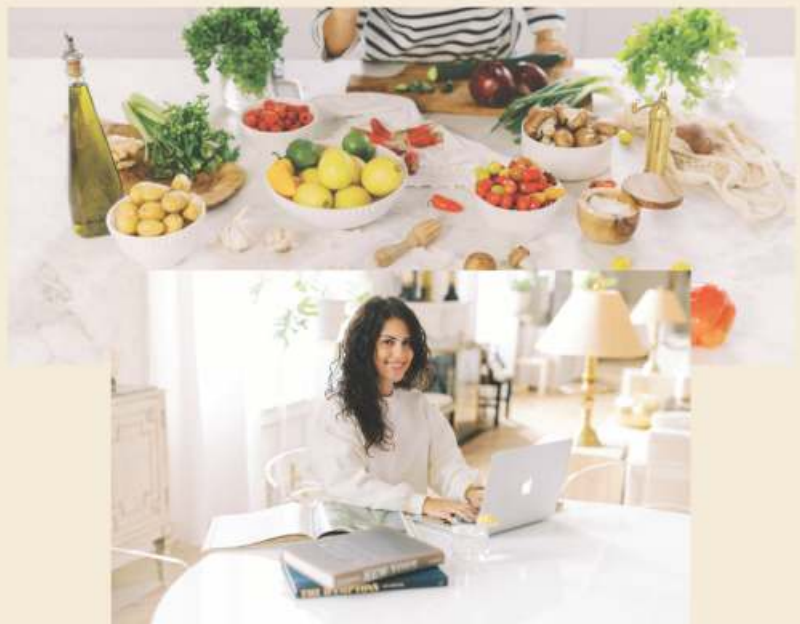
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February 4, 2025      5:30pm – 6:30pm

##### Grades K-8 Open House Dates

February 6, 2025      5:30pm – 6:30pm  
March 6, 2025      5:30pm – 6:30pm

#### Hellenic Classical Charter Schools Staten Island

##### Pre-K Open House Dates

February 3, 2024      5:30pm – 6:30pm

##### Grades K-7 Open House Dates

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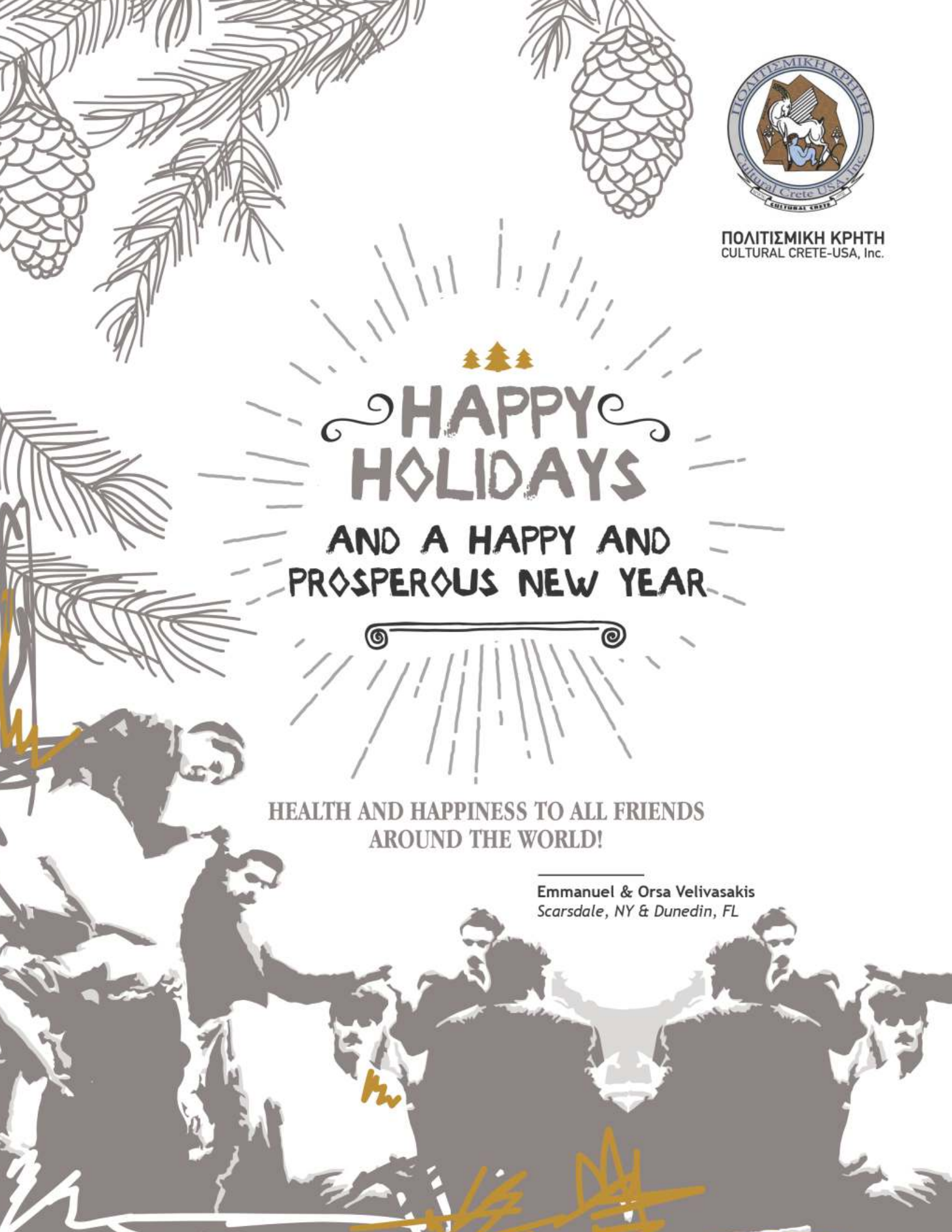
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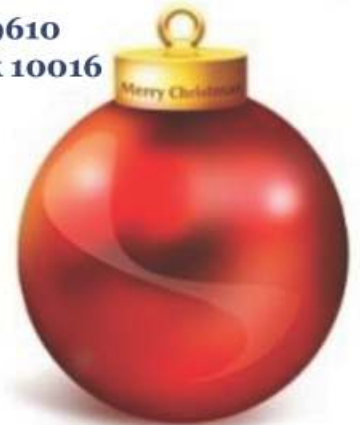
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Demetrios Rhopotis  
Dimitri Michalakis  
Kyprianos Bazanikas

Publishing Committee Chairman  
Demetrios Rhopotis  
(718) 554-0308  
dondemetrio@neomagazine.com

Director of Operations  
Kyprianos Bazanikas  
info@neomagazine.com

Marketing & Advertising  
Director  
Tommy Harmantzis  
(347) 613-4163  
th@radione.us

ATHENS - GREECE  
Public Relations &  
Marketing Director  
Rita Despotidis  
rdespotis@gmail.com

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info@neomagazine.com

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FROM THE EDITOR



## THE RED PARROT FOR CHRISTMAS

When I was a kid and lived in Greece, around Christmas one year we went to the street with all stores in Athens to look at all the decorations out in the street and in all the windows.

And what I remember most is that someone we went with, the owner of the lumber mill next door to our house in Peristeri, and a distant cousin, a man with a pencil mustache and twinkling eyes, Yannis Michalakis, reached into his pocket and bought me a red plastic parrot with a yellow beak.

“Make sure he doesn’t talk too much in your ear,” he said to me with a wink of his twinkling eyes.

I smelled the parrot, and it didn’t smell like a bird, it smelled like plastic: but I felt for sure he was alive, and I made him chirp a lot, although I knew plastic birds didn’t chirp, especially parrots: the parrots I saw sitting on their perch and walking back and forth at the Papagalos coffee shops squawked their heads off.

But I treasured my plastic parrot, even though it smelled like plastic, and talked to it, because scary things were going to happen to me. That’s why we were in Athens, me and my yiayia.

We were taking the Queen Frederica to go to America, and then to Canada, to join my parents, who I hadn’t seen since I was a baby: they were the people who sent me clothes in the mail and their photograph smiling at me in the

square box of the snapshot. I was now going to leave my yiayia and join my family, because I was old enough, and they wanted me there. I had been left behind for mysterious reasons.

Only I wanted to go back to Chios, where I lived with Papou and Yiayia, on their farm in Kofinas, where the bees buzzed, and the donkey tied under the tree brayed on the hill, and the sun traveled over the cement of the taratsa, until it went down completely and then the moon went up, and then you could smell all the flowers in the square oil tins that my yiayia kept them in.

“When we go there,” my yiayia tried to reassure me, while her dentures moved, only her teeth looked perfect, “your parents and your little sister will love you, and they will give you things, and I will send you flowers from Chios in the envelope.” “They’ll be dead,” I said. “Not these flowers,” she said. “They’ll still smell and remind you.”

She did send me flowers from Chios, and they did smell, but they were also brown and wilted. Only they made me feel better, and that Christmas I had my parrot to talk to, and brought him to America and Canada, where he was soon replaced by flashier toys and I lost him, but that one Christmas he brought me hope in a scary world.

I hope you enjoyed your Christmas and hope it brought you the warmth of family and the comfort of faith.

DIMITRI C. MICHALAKIS

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Editor in Chief:  
Dimitri C. Michalakis  
info@neomagazine.com

Western Region Desk  
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Alexander Mizan  
director@americanhellenic.org

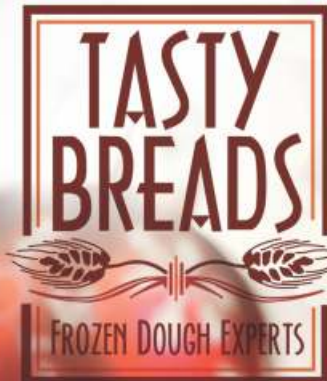
Florida Desk,  
Laura Neroulis Bisiotis  
laura@lorapr.com

Baltimore Desk  
Georgia Vavas  
gvavas@comcast.net

Photo/Fashion  
New York: ETA Press  
fpapagermanos@yahoo.com  
Los Angeles: Nick Dimitrokalis  
(951) 764-5737  
photobynikos@hotmail.com

Graphic Design  
NEOgraphix.us  
Adrian Salsescu

Athens Desk  
Konstantinos Rhopotis  
(01130) 210 51 42 446  
(01130) 6937 02 39 94  
k.rhopotis@neomagazine.com



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# ALPHA OMEGA COUNCIL HOSTED 2024 HONORS GALA



**2024 Lifetime Achievement Award Recipient Nicholas Larigakis, Pres. & CEO of American Hellenic Institute with Alpha Omega Council President Harry J. Vlachos Esq. and Master of Ceremonies Cathy Papoulias-Sakellaris (photo: Areti Bratsis)**

Alpha Omega Council hosted the 2024 Honors Gala, its premiere event & primary fundraiser, at the InterContinental Boston. Nearly 300 guests were invited to enjoy dinner & drinks, experience live music and dancing, and witness the awards presentation. Nicholas R. Larigakis was Honored as 2024 Lifetime Achievement Award Recipient, Loren J. Samons II was presented the 2024 Philhellene Award, Anthe Mitrakos was presented the 2024 Emerging Leader Award.

The event began with welcome remarks by Honors Gala Chairman Paul Tsitsopoulos, followed by an invocation by Chancellor of the Metropolis Rev. Theodore J. Barbas, and additional welcome remarks by Master of Ceremonies Cathy Papoulias-Sakellaris, who is the spouse of last year's 2023 Lifetime Achievement Honoree, George P. Sakellaris. The National Anthems of the Hellenic Republic & United States were offered by Melodia Collection, which continued into remarks by Symeon Tegos, Consul General of Greece in Boston.

Recently-appointed Alpha Omega Council President Harry J. Vlachos, Esq. offered remarks and recognized the Peter Agris Memorial Journalism Scholarship recipients, who were recognized in memory of Alpha Omega Council's late founder. Recipients included young Greek American aspiring journalists, such as Nicholas Antonakas, Mariana Apostolatos, Ileana Exaras, Katherine Dorothy Manatos, Anastasia Petridis and Eleni Tecos.

Each year, Alpha Omega Council recognizes outstanding individuals who have excelled in their accomplishments from the worlds of government, business, philanthropy, and the arts and sciences. These men and women are honored at the Annual Honors Gala through

the presentation of three exceptional awards including the Lifetime Achievement Award, Philhellene Award, and Emerging Leader Award.

Alpha Omega Council President Harry J. Vlachos, Esq. announced the recipients of these awards sharing, "The three honorees chosen for our Honors Gala this year represent a distinguished tradition that reaches back to the founding of the Alpha Omega Council 48 years ago.

This organization, now comprised of 103 dedicated members, is on the cusp of celebrating a half-century of excellence."

Recipients included:

- 2024 Lifetime Achievement Award: The 2024 Alpha Omega Council Lifetime Achievement Award Honoree was Nicholas R. Larigakis, the President and CEO of American Hellenic Institute (AHI). Mr. Larigakis was recognized for his nearly 40 years of leadership of AHI and his continued dedication and excellence in educating, promoting, and strengthening relations between the United States and Greece and Cyprus.
- 2024 Philhellene Award: The 2024 Philhellene Award was presented to Loren J. Samons II, Professor of Classical Studies at Boston University. Tribute was paid to Prof. Samons for his decades of leadership as an internationally-recognized scholar and expert on ancient Greek history and literature, Hellenic culture, and classical studies, as well as for his passion for Athenian democracy.
- 2024 Emerging Leader Award: The 2024 Emerging Leader Award was presented to Anthe Mitrakos, a journalist, communications professional, entrepreneur, and advocate for Hellenic culture, history and art. Mitrakos is also a past recipient of the Peter Agris Memorial Journalism Scholarship in 2008.

Leon Andris, Board Member of the American Hellenic Institute, introduced the 2024 Lifetime Achievement award to leader Nicholas Larigakis. All recipients provided

remarks in honor of their awards. Closing remarks were offered by Costa Speliakos, Vice President, Alpha Omega Council and the benediction was given by Rev. Theodore J. Barbas, Chancellor of the Metropolis. The evening concluded with a celebration by live Greek music and dancing featuring Georgios Karatzas and Athenian Entertainment Orchestra.

During last year's successful 2023 Honors Gala, the 2023 Lifetime Achievement Honoree was George P. Sakellaris, the President, CEO, and chairman of Ameresco, Inc.; the 2023 Philhellene Award was presented to Carolyn B. Maloney, former US Representative from the State of New York and co-founder of the Congressional Hellenic Caucus; and the 2023 Emerging Leader Award was presented to Dr. Vanessa Farsadaki, a preminent leader in Space Medicine, a medical doctor.

Alpha Omega Council is a non-profit philanthropic organization, based in Boston, Massachusetts, and, its mission is to promote patriotism to the United States and to cultivate the ideals of Hellenism, by supporting various scholarly, athletic, medical, charitable, scientific, literary, religious and educational activities throughout New England and the United States. The Alpha Omega Council is comprised of Americans of Hellenic ancestry in Business, Education, Academia, Medicine, Law, Politics, Science and other fields. Since its inception, the Alpha Omega Council has contributed or pledged over \$3,000,000 to various philanthropic causes, not including



**Remarks by 2024 Philhellene Award Recipient Prof. Loren J. Samons II, Scholar of Classics (photo: Areti Bratsis)**

the annual Peter Agris Memorial Journalism Scholarship Award. It also hosts various annual fundraising events including the Boston Marathon Wreath Ceremony, Greek Heritage Night, Golf Classic, Honors Gala and more. For more information on Alpha Omega Council, their website is [alphaomegacouncil.org](http://alphaomegacouncil.org).





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# The AHEPA Gold Coast Chapter 456 Christmas Gala



*Gus Constantine, President, Paul Macropoulos, Vice President, Michael Georges, Secretary, Gus Rogdakis, Event Chairman, Mario Harris, Golf Chairman*

*The AHEPA Gold Coast Chapter 456 held its annual Christmas party where members and friends came together to spend a celebratory evening, opening the Holiday Season.*







# ΚΑΛΑ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥΓΕΝΝΑ!!!

Merry Christmas to all Greek Americans and all Greeks around the world!

We wish you a peaceful, blessed Christmas and Happy New Year 2025!

Christmas is a celebration that brings people together to help one another praise the birth of Jesus Christ and to be true Christians and good citizens of humanity to our brothers and sisters.

We must all remember how blessed we are and to help others throughout the new year!

As immigrants we know how difficult it has been, therefore my motto is:

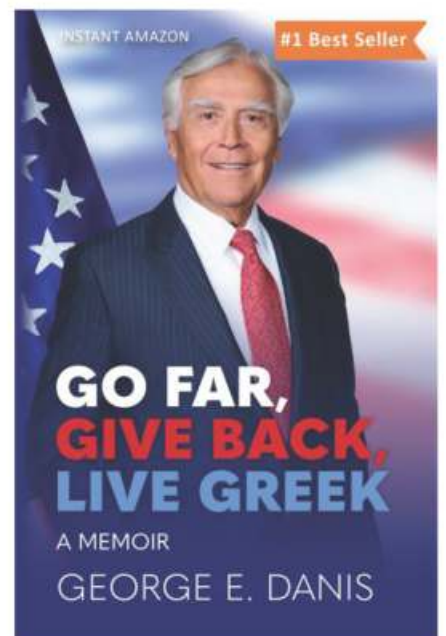
***Go Far, Give Back, and Live Greek!***

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all!

Warmest Regards,



George E. Danis





# IAKOVOS: THE ONE AND ONLY

*A Reflection by the Reverend Father Alexander Karloutsos  
Protopresbyter of the Ecumenical Throne*



Archbishop Iakovos, the one and only, was an extraordinary and visionary Hierarch who changed the face of Orthodox Christianity in America and impacted my life in ways I could have never predicted. I offer this reflection in tribute to this amazing and transforming Archbishop who will never be forgotten.

I was the son of a humble priest; by the time I arrived at Holy Cross Seminary, Archbishop Iakovos was already a monumental figure. It was 1962, and although he had been Archbishop of North and South America for just three years, his decades of ministry within the Archdiocese, and particularly as the Dean of the Boston Cathedral of the Annunciation, were already the stuff of legend. Just his manner, the way he talked and reached out to you, created a sense of awe and wonder. When you saw Iakovos, you saw a Towering Mountain endowed with spine and with spirit.

As is typical of seminarians, we disagreed with our Archbishop on some things, but when he marched with Martin Luther King Jr. at Selma, we were exceedingly proud. His stance against the Vietnam War, made us rejoice in this modern day prophet and peacemaker. And then there were the inaugurations of presidents: Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon. Archbishop Iakovos took our faith into the public square, and he took our culture and traditions to the highest levels of American life and society.

At my graduation from Holy Cross in 1969, the Archbishop was very enthusiastic about me, especially my valedictory address. The Seminary faculty, however, were not and they would not approve my ordination. Even though I was the valedictorian, they wanted me to return for another interview to approve my path to the priesthood. These were the days of graduating senior interviews for ordination and they wanted to put me through a second interview, because they felt I was too strident in my responses. But I think the problem was that I was too honest. They wanted slavish obeisance and that was simply not going to happen. I'm not ashamed to say that I was very upset, affronted and hurt.

In the meantime, my wife, Xanthi, was pregnant, and I was worried about what would come next (or not!). So I called the Archdiocese, asking for the Archbishop's office, and who answers the phone? A fellow named George Tournas, now, Metropolitan Methodios of Boston. He was filling in at the Archbishop's office and he was very close to the Archbishop. I explained the whole situation to him, and he said, "Alex, this is ridiculous. Don't worry about it. Let me speak to the Archbishop." The next day, I received a phone call from George and he told me that the Archbishop would like to speak with me. I was a little flabbergasted, but I look back on it now and see the beginning of my deep, personal relationship with Archbishop Iakovos. The Archbishop told me that I need not go back to Seminary. He recognized something genuine in me – that I wanted to serve the Church, but not without a spine. I believe spine and spirit go together, just as I had witnessed in Archbishop Iakovos from the very beginning.

Right away, His Eminence fixed the date of my Diaconal ordination for September 6, 1970 and arranged for Archbishop Evgenios I of Crete to be the celebrant. Five days later, on September the 11th (a day – thirty-one years later – that would have tremendous significance for my life and ministry), Archbishop Iakovos ordained me a Priest at the Seminary. The fact that I was ordained by Archbishop Iakovos was a great honor for me, which I treasure to this very day. Then I began my ministry in Chicago, where I served four years under Father Byron Papanikolaou. He is the one who laid the foundation within me to become the clergyman that I became, to truly serve Christ and His Church.

Then, in 1974 Archbishop Iakovos brought me to the Archdiocese to be the Director of Youth Ministry. I always felt very blessed just to be in his presence, to work with him. And he

was very compassionate to me. He loved my wife Xanthi and my family, and he showed it by acts of extraordinary kindness and generosity.

Living in the New York region, where rents were sky-high for the times, we were struggling as a family. I confided my predicament to the Archbishop's secretary, a close confidante, Felia Samios. She told me if I really wanted to stay at the Archdiocese, I should own my own home. She advised me to speak directly to the Archbishop. I went in to see His Eminence, and enumerated all the reasons I needed to buy a home. And then what he did was amazing. He told me that he was proud and confident of my ministry, and that he would cosign a loan so I could buy a house. As I look back on that magnanimous act of benevolence, I am truly moved, and I will always be grateful.

Over the years, I worked very hard to bring Archbishop Iakovos the honor and dignity that he so very much deserved. His exceptional ecumenical leadership placed him at a level of public consciousness that was unprecedented for an American Orthodox Prelate. With a Committee we arranged for His Eminence to receive the Presidential Medal of freedom from President Jimmy Carter. For His Eminence's 20th Anniversary as Archbishop in 1979, I arranged for the participation in the ceremonies of Coretta Scot King, Governor Mario Cuomo, David Hartmann of Good Morning America, former UN Ambassador Andrew Young, and the then President of Notre Dame, Fr. Theodore Hesburgh, one of the most influential American Roman Catholic personalities of the 20th Century. In 1984, for his 25th Anniversary, I brought President Jimmy Carter to the Divine Liturgy, and arranged for President Ronald Reagan to call in at the Gala Luncheon to congratulate him on his 25th Anniversary as the Greek Orthodox Primate of America.

I'm on record about how my evolving friendship with the future Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew caused strain to my relationship with Archbishop Iakovos. (<https://www.orthodoxhistory.org/2024/08/27/karloutsos-and-the-rise-of-bartholomew/>)

Nevertheless, I was devoted to him and in 1986, I arranged for Archbishop Iakovos to be the sole religious personage at the official rededication of the Statue of Liberty for its 100th Anniversary. I am happy that in 2006, when the 100-year time capsule is opened, Archbishop Iakovos will be remembered as the preeminent leader he was. I am particularly proud that the Bell Tower at the



Camp David Chapel is named for him. I led a fundraising program at Camp David and feel very happy knowing that the Bell Tower, named after Archbishop Iakovos, beckons by its bell welcomes every President of the United States to worship and pray at that most famous of presidential retreats.

Archbishop Iakovos retired in 1996, on his 85th Birthday, and the next year in 1997, his godson, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, came to the United States on what was to be an extensive Apostolic pilgrimage throughout the country. His All Holiness wanted to meet privately with Archbishop Iakovos, and I was tasked with effecting that meeting, which turned out to be a private dinner. After the Patriarchal Visit, I received a phone call from Paulette Poulos, who had been the Archbishop's secretary and confidante, and she conveyed to me his desire to meet with me at his residence in Rye, NY. So I went to Rye, and we had a very honest discussion. He told me that what I had accomplished for the Church in America, for the Patriarchate, what I did in Washington with the President of the United States, the Gold Medal of Congress, and all the different tributes that happened in that 1997 Apostolic Visit were just simply beyond his comprehension. He was very kind to me and repeated what he used to tell me when he first brought me to the Archdiocese - that I had a gift that very few people have. He said to me, "What is the greatest gift?" And I replied that the greatest gift for me is love.

Then he said to me, "No, the greatest gift a human being has is imagination, and you have that in abundance."

That was the way it was between us. Archbishop Iakovos and I always had these intimate moments of connection. We would always talk as father and son, in many ways. That's why our estrangement had been so painful. So when we began a process of reconciliation, I expressed my love and respect for him, and I asked for his forgiveness. I said clearly that I apologized for things I did that I did not know would hurt him; but that I would not apologize to him for things I did, knowing that I would hurt him. As Ecumenical Patriarch counseled me, "above all is the Church." But I also told him of the pain that I had experienced during the internal exile that he forced upon me, when I was deeply hurt by many of his own circle who cast many aspersions upon me and my name. I remember a very heartfelt conversation, and then at that point, he embraced me. We really forgave each other, and it was the beginning of our mutual healing.

And then, during the tumultuous years of Archbishop Spyridon, my beloved father-in-law, Klearhos Karavellas, fell asleep in the Lord. Of his own accord, Archbishop Iakovos came and presided at his funeral. This was enormously meaningful to Presvytera Xanthi, to me, and to my family. By this time, I had taken the Dormition Parish in the Hamptons

under my pastoral care, and was out of Archdiocese politics. And it occurred to me that Archbishop Iakovos had never visited this parish. The church was growing and wanted these good people to experience his incredible presence and pastoral love. So I said, let me ask him to come to our parish.

So I called up Paulette Poulos who was still serving the Archbishop as his secretary and told her that I would like Archbishop Iakovos to come to my parish. I emphasized that my parishioners had never felt this love, and it would be healing for this community to have the great Archbishop come. Paulette showed her love for the Church and arranged for Archbishop Iakovos to come. Paulette and I share a strong commitment to serve the Church and Community. Like me, she believes in the power of love and not the love of power. People called her to stop the visit, but she stood steadfast in the service of love, forgiveness and reconciliation. It was a wonderful day! Later, the Archbishop was very decent and came to my own father's burial, just two years before the Archbishop himself passed away.

In the end, I am so grateful that I was ordained by him, inspired by him, and I fully know that I could not be Father Alex, without the one and only, Archbishop Iakovos.

May his memory be eternal!



**Καλά Χριστούγεννα και  
Ευτυχισμένο το Νέο Έτος!**

**George Likourezos, Esq.**



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**E-mail: [Glikourezos@CarterDeLuca.com](mailto:Glikourezos@CarterDeLuca.com)**

**[www.CarterDeLuca.com](http://www.CarterDeLuca.com)**



# Christmas in Athens!

## Christmas Market



The Christmas atmosphere is not limited to the streets around Syntagma Square. Residents and visitors alike flock daily to the Christmas village that has been set up on the Pedion Areos, the city's largest park. An ice rink, carousel, elves and Santas have transformed the park into a fairytale setting that attracts thousands of children and adults every day. From 10.00 in the morning until 22.00 every day and on public holidays, with free entrance, the open-air stands offer Christmas decorations, books, handmade jewellery, gifts, glassware, perfumes, clothes for the whole family, shoes, overalls and sweatshirts, linen and curtains, small tools, telephones and food such as cheese, sausages, legumes and pasta from Greek producers. There is also the traditional sweet melomakarona and kourabiedes, the halva of Farsala and many other sweets.



"Our Christmas Village will become Attica's signature holiday landmark," said Attica Governor Nikos Hardalias at a press conference on Thursday, December 5th.

By Kelly Fanarioti

Athens kicked off the holiday season on 28 November with a dazzling Christmas tree lighting ceremony in Syntagma Square, across from the parliament building. The 20-meter fir tree which came from Taxiarchis, Halkidiki is dressed with 20,000 LED lights and decorated from recycled plastic to symbolize sustainability. Athens Mayor Haris Doukas illuminated the Christmas tree during an event featuring Christmas melodies performed by Nefeli Fasouli and the Athens Big Band. The festive events of the municipality of Athens that will last until the beginning of 2025 include open-air screenings and drive-in cinemas in the most beautiful parts of the city, concerts and performances in squares, streets, museums, theatres and cultural centers of the municipality

"I wish this Christmas to be full of light, joy, health and solidarity. May we have a wonderful time with our loved ones and help those in need as much as we can. Our thoughts

are with the Greeks living abroad and we look forward to welcoming them all year round to experience the magic, hospitality and experiences of our city. Athens is a big hug for everyone. Happy Birthday to all the world!", the Mayor Haris Doukas told to NEO magazine.

It is worth mentioning that this year, for the first time, the celebrations for the change of the year will take place in two places in Athens, in Syntagma Square and in Pedion to Areos. The festive program on both occasions will include concerts with well-known singers and bands.





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*Congratulations  
to our nephew  
John Kuris!*

**Good luck with all your  
future endeavors.**

**Thank you NEO magazine.**

**Libby and Mike Angeliades**





WEST PALM BEACH



# CONGRATULATIONS JOHN KURIS

THANKS NEO MAGAZINE



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EXPERIENCE  
THE TASTE  
OF GREEK SUMMER





# The Man with the Plan: Mapping the Road to Financial Success with **John Kuris**

by Athena After

Financial planning, for many of us, can be a daunting task. There are so many options amongst stocks, funds, and a myriad of other investment targets. And then comes the challenge of balancing our portfolios for short-term and long-term goals such as retirement. This is where financial advisors come in. They become our trusted partners in helping us meet our life's goals and managing our wealth.

John Kuris is at the forefront of financial planning, with offices in both Boca Raton, FL and NYC. As Vice President for Investments and Financial Advising at Janney Montgomery Scott, a leading wealth management and investment firm in New York, he leads a team that's at the cutting edge of investment success for his clients. NEO sat down with Kuris to talk about his distinguished career in the field.



*John with his parents, George and Kathryn*

**Let's start from the beginning. Are you from New York? How did you come into the world of finance? Was it always your career goal?**

I am from NY, born and raised in Astoria, Queens, to first generation Greek-Americans parents. My Grand-Parents emigrated here from Chios, Kalymnos and the Peloponnese and settled in both Brooklyn and Astoria. That's where my values and aspirations were shaped. My parents, George and Kathryn taught my brother Paul and sister Desiree that we were not born better than anyone, but could change the course of not only our lives but the lives of those around us with our actions, faith and determination. Those shared values incredibly enough are what led me to my incredible wife of 30 years Sonia. We now split our time between NJ and Florida. My journey into the world of finance started while I was in H.S. I attended Long Island City H.S. I would ride the train daily from the Ditmars Blvd. station to Queensboro Plaza. It was during that short train ride that I was introduced to the Wall Street Journal. There was something about the paper and the people that read it (perhaps it was their suits and their seriousness) that made this 16-year old not only dream but believe he could have a





*John at the NY stock exchange*

successful career on Wall Street. So every morning on my way to school, I would stop at the news stand by the Ditmars station and buy the Wall Street Journal. I wanted to know what were they thinking and what drove them. From there, it was on to St John's University where I received my degree in Finance. It was at St. John's where my passion was put into action. I realized that if I were to be successful and make this dream of mine work, I needed practical experience. I remember distinctly a conversation with my father in which he explained to me that we were fortunate to live in a city that not only offers it all but gives you every opportunity succeed. If you look across the East River, you will see an island where every major company from every industry is not only represented but more than likely headquartered. If you wish to pursue a career on Wall St. (finance jobs all over the world are referred to as jobs on Wall St.) you go there and get a job. My first job was with a company called Oppenheimer during my sophomore and junior years. After that, I joined Bear Stearns, so I can say confidently that yes, it has always been my career goal.

**How long have you been at Janney? Did you work at other firms before you arrived there?**

I am headed into my 25th year at Janney Montgomery Scott, and I feel so blessed to be aligned with a company with roots tracing back to 1832. I have lived my, or should I say "our" shared principal of "Putting Clients First". It sounds simple, but when you have a process that revolves around the individuality of clients, outcomes follow.

**We're in a transitional time, with a new President taking office in January. Do you foresee any shifts in the markets, both short term and long term?**

Markets are like the climate. They are in a constant state of change. That being said, changes in residents and presidential races create more angst than anything else for investors. One of my core beliefs is that an investor should not let their emotions or political biases dictate their investment decisions. Markets and businesses at their core are survivors, and they manage pretty effectively to adapt to their new environments and with what seems like advancements in technology on an almost a daily basis. The line between long and short term market shifts seems to be blurred. For that reason, it is more important today than ever to have an investment strategy in place that you can remain confident in that appropriately reflects your objectives.

**Are you noticing any general trends in the financial world right now? New investment strategies? How do you feel about new markets such as crypto?**

We live in a world of constant innovation, but the more things change it still seems the more they stay the

same. The idea of diversification or "not putting all your eggs in one basket" still applies. Making certain the investments you own are best in class, understanding what you are investing in, and how and why it fits into your investment plan, still applies. There are, however, transformative periods and investments that have had significant impact on not only investments but how we live. Technology investments and their impact on society and the wealth they helped to create come to mind. Today we hear a lot about the impact the blockchain and various crypto currencies may have on the future. It remains to be seen, but one thing remains certain "the more things change the more they stay the same."

**For many people investment and retirement strategies can be overwhelming and complex since there are so many options, nuances, tax strategies, etc. How do you ease them into it and demystify the whole thing?**

The process of investing is understandably daunting and confusing. There are so, so many Investment solutions. From Stocks to Bonds to Mutual Funds, to ETF's, Annuities, Hedge Funds, Private Equity. The list goes on and on. Where does an investor start and what do you do after that? When do I start planning for retirement? Am I saving enough to retire? What about taxes? All fair questions, and the



*John and his wife Sonia in Paris*



financial services industry, with all the acronyms and jargon, has not made it any easier in my opinion. These are all issues that I try to simplify with clients. My objective with all investors is to create a process that is clear and that they can understand and have confidence in. It is an essential part of a successful client/advisor relationship. It means sometimes needing to understand their fears and aspirations, even though they don't say it. So the investment philosophy for each client is based on their individual objectives. I believe that all portfolios need a certain synergy. They must pull in one direction, and that direction is to benefit the investor. In other words, the right hand needs to know what the left hand is doing. All parts of your portfolio should be in communication with one another. I cannot stress this enough. I would also contend that taxable portfolios should have a degree of tax-management associated with them. Taxes are an erosion on return and if we can implement an investing plan that takes into consideration tax sensitivity and manage investments appropriately we can improve returns and enhance wealth. To sum this up, it all goes back to process - to have a process in place that establishes the appropriate investment strategy, be it for taxable accounts or retirement accounts, and make certain it is dynamic represents the investor's objective, and have an effective way to track how the investor is doing relative to their goals. To me goals are the byproduct of a great process.

**When establishing a personal relationship with a new client, how do you maintain it over the long term?**

Maintaining long term relationships as with any business is key. Priority one: do your job and do it well. Take NO short cuts and make certain nothing falls through the cracks. If those things get done, success for the investor is likely to follow. Once again process equals goals. The fun part is that clients become friends. You go through life with them. They confide in you and trust you. We cry and laugh, and experience every emotion. That is the most humbling and rewarding part of this journey for me.

**What's the part of your job that you enjoy the most?**

The relationship between client and advisor is a rewarding experience. I am a people person, and the people I am helping are people that put their trust in me and they become family, and it is very rewarding to help them plan their financial future for generations to come.

**When not at work how do you love spending your time?**

I split my time between Florida and NY/New Jersey. I love to travel and spend time with family family and friends. I am an avid sports fan and love going to ball games. My wife and I are big METS fans.

**As Greek-American do you spend time and get involved in the community?**

The Greek community is near and dear to my heart, and I always welcome opportunities to get involved and to give.

**Any words of advice for high-school and college students who aspire to embark on careers in finance?**

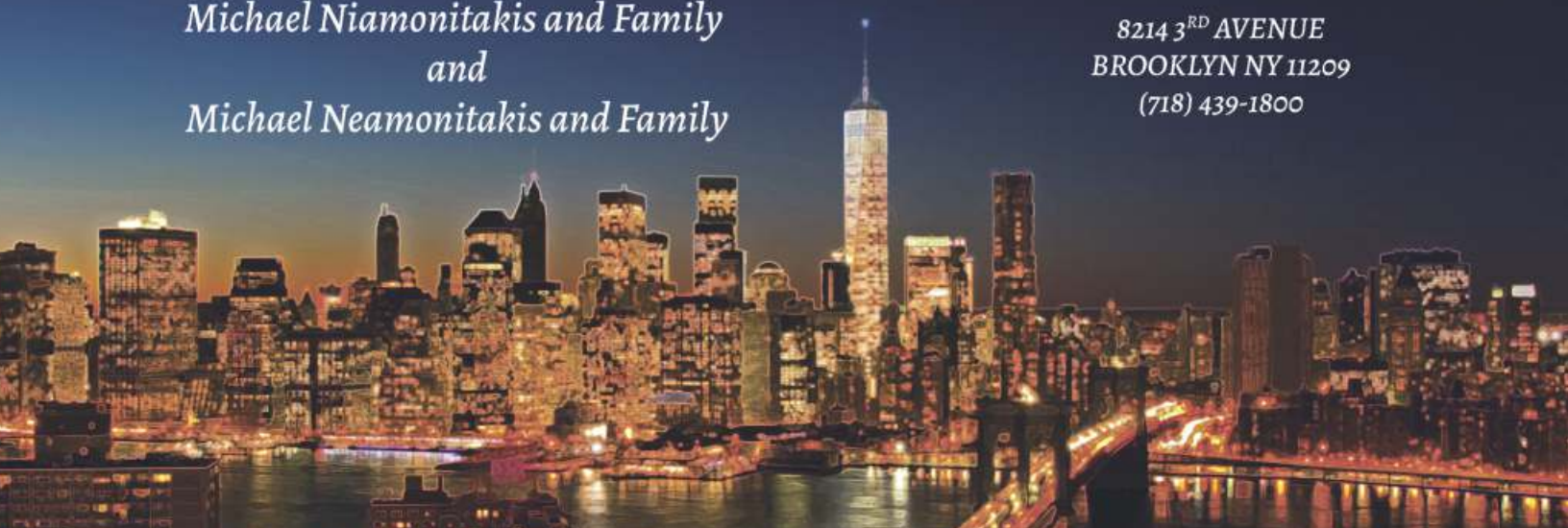
As for high school and college students, I'd encourage them to pursue a career in finance. Unlike the 1980's and 1990's, there is a shortage of talent entering the business, and the opportunity is only getting bigger. The greatest transfer of wealth will be upon them.

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**Janney Montgomery Scott LLC**

2385 NW Executive Center Dr. Ste 200, Boca Raton, FL 33431  
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# ODISHO'S ODYSSEY

by Dean Kalimniou\*

Even before I reach Odisho's front door, my ears are assailed by the sound of Giorgos Dalaras' voice emanating from beyond threshold: «Εντάξει, περιμένε ρε φίλε, σου ανοίγω τώρα.» Then, the sound of shuffling and a heavy voice struggles to be heard over the music: «Μες το μαχαλά, πέφτει κουμπουριά...» aspi-rating the s.

As the door opens, Odisho's broad white grin is blinding. He bears in his hand a bottle of ouzo. «Χρόνια πολλά βρε φίλε! Έλα να πιεις ούζο.» Being led down the hallway and into the dining room, I note the conspicuously mounted Greek souvenir plates, the statues of the Greek gods on the buffet and a bouzouki hanging nonchalantly next to an unremarkable print of a non-descript blue and white church on some non-descript Greek island, all of which populates many a Greek home in Melbourne and which should not cause the eyebrow to be raised here, save that Odisho is manifestly not Greek, but Assyrian.

Every year, close to Christmas, Odisho and his nostalgic Assyrian friends, who lived in Greece in the late seventies and early eighties, prior to their emigration to Australia, get together to have a pre-Christmas dinner. The sole purpose of that dinner is to reminisce about a Greece that is inextricably linked to their lost youth. They mouth Greek phrases and speak to each other in nineteenth century Greek, all the while drinking ouzo and playing the music that was popular in Greece during the time of their sojourn there, in order to evoke that era. My sporadic presence at these Poseidonian rituals, in some bizarre way, legitimizes them, for as a speaker of broken Assyrian, and as a Greek-Australian who did not experience Greece in the period in which my convivial diners were there present, I lend the solemn proceedings, a modicum of ersatz authenticity.

Tonight is different from other nights, however, because as Yiannis Parios' «Να μ' αγαπάς τώρα,» is allowed to play out its final grace notes, Odisho finally reveals to us how he got to Greece in the first place, in time to celebrate his first Christmas there:

"It was 1976. I wanted to leave Iraq to go to Greece, and I was a student. I went to the passport office and in those days, the forms were so complicated, that there were professional scribes with typewriters set up outside the office to assist people with their applications. I approached one and he asked me:

"What do you do?"

"I'm a student," I responded.

"That's not good. They will never let you out if you are a student," he shook his head knowledgeably. "Do you do anything else? What else can I write?"

"I don't know, you are the professional. You write whatever you think is necessary," I replied, in turn.

"Ah, see that's better," the colonel beamed. "Now when you go abroad, the foreigners will have respect for you and for Iraq. Who would respect a country full of the unemployed? Bon Voyage."

As it turns out, I did not make it to Greece at that time. In those days, visas were issued on the day of travel by the Greek embassy and a series of mishaps intervened that resulted in me missing my flight. At the commencement of the Iran-Iraq War, travel restrictions were instituted and I could not get out. As things worsened in the country, I left Iraq illegally



He wrote something on the form and told me to take it in to the passport office, where I would be interviewed. For some time I waited in the office, until an army colonel marched up to me briskly.

"Follow me, young man," he ordered.

I stood to attention and saluted him, as was the custom and gave him my papers. He pored over them diligently, his brow growing increasingly furrowed as he scanned down the page. Suddenly, he stopped.

"What is this? You are unemployed?" he asked.

"No, sir, I am a student," I responded, still standing to attention.

"A student, do you say? Then why have you written that you are unemployed?"

"I...."

"Go and tell the idiot who helped you fill out this form to change this to 'worker' and come back here at once," he barked.

I did as I was told and returned a half an hour later, submitting the amended documents to the colonel.

through Turkey and stayed in Istanbul. From there I tried on seven separate occasions to cross into Greece over the Thracian border, but each time, we would be caught either by Greek or Turkish border guards. However, you will find my last attempt interesting.

It was Christmas Eve. We three, [he points to another two of our fellow diners] had just crossed the border just after midnight and as the people smugglers had taught us, we were inflating a rubber dinghy which we were going to us to cross a river. We managed to get all of our party across safely when the guards found us. They took us to an outpost. On the way, they questioned us about our nationality and our religious affiliations. I pulled out my cross and showed it to them. "Jesus, Christmas," I told him.

Taking me aside, one the guards whispered: "Look, I recognize you. You've tried to come this way before. I'm sorry but I have to take you to my commanding officer. Just be wary of one thing. If he asks you where you came from, do NOT, under any circumstances say Istanbul. You say Κωνσταντινούπολη. Can you say it? Say it with me slowly. Make sure you don't forget. It's important."



When we arrived at the outpost, there was no one on duty. Instead, we could hear the radio blaring and a lot of voices sing-ing. The guards were having a Christmas party and were blind drunk. We were taken before the commanding officer, a squat, bald man with a thin moustache. Teary eyed, cheeks flushed crimson with alcohol, he shouted:

“What animals are these?”

He staggered off his chair, and poked his swollen face into mine. Reeling even closer towards me, he coughed:

“Where did you come from?”

“I...iii”

“Λέγε. Where did you come from?”

“Ist...”

I had a mental blank. I could not remember how to pronounce the word the guard had told me and was terrified we would be beaten and sent back.

“Tell me now you animal,” the commanding officer screamed.

“K,, Kostadinopoli,” I stammered, finally.

“Of course you did palikari,” he crowed triumphantly. “You came from our city but those filthy Turks have taken it from us. But the time will come when the city will be ours

and the Turks will be sent back to the Red Apple Tree...” He walked away, only to turn back and command indifferently: “Let them go. It’s Christ-mas. Χρόνια πολλά. Ο Θεός μαζίσας.” That was the first time in my life that I could celebrate Christmas openly. I was alone, but ecstatic.

I celebrated six wonderful Christmases in Aegaleo, and was the last of my friends to leave Greece. When I arrived at Melbourne Airport, just before Christmas, they all came to greet me, all of these guys sitting around the table here today. But what type of welcome do you think I received? As soon as I walked through the doors, they started yelling at me: “What are you doing? Are you crazy? Go back! Greece is far better.” And it is true. There is no place like Greece. The years we spent there are golden.”

We listen to some of Mitropanos’ early songs and they ask me whether I am familiar with the type of music a certain group of Greek musicians used to play at the Retreat Hotel in Melbourne, years ago. I gasp. “You mean Apodimi Compania? How do you know them?” Odisho and his band of Greek nostalgics then re-flect upon how important the rebetiko outfit “Apodimi Compania” was in making them feel at home and adjust to their new life in Melbourne. Week after week, they would visit the Retreat Hotel, listen to Apodimi play and contextualise their own experience of double ξενιτιά. I extract an early Apodimi Compania CD from my car and

begin to play it. I am unsurprised to note that they know all the words by heart. For this is Apodimi’s greatest achievement: to manage to touch the hearts of all who heard them, regardless of ethnicity and to help them find, in their interpretation of rebetika, a common human denominator.

As his friends attempt to execute a rather wobbly zeimbekiko to the strains of a karsilama, I help Odisho to wash the dishes. One slips out of his hands and smashes on the tiles below. Immediately, the dancers whoop: «Γούρι!» One of the revelers, looking dis-tracted for a moment as if he had lost his car keys, tentatively offered: «Σπάσ’τα! Σπάσ’τα!» When I nodded, he beamed at the affirmation.

It was only when Thanos Petrelis’ «Η Ελλάδα είναι μόνο μία. Καλά Χριστούγεννα. Και του χρόνου στην Ελλάδα» Odisho sighed. «Αχ βρε φίλε» made itself manifest upon Odisho’s play list that I determined it was an opportune time to leave. I farewelled the party in Assyri-an, and they responded to me in Greek. «Θυμίζεις κάτι από Ελλάδα» And we both turned away, so that his tears could not be seen.

\*) Dean Kalimniou (Kostas Kalymnios) is an attorney, poet, author and journalist based in Melbourne Australia. He has published 7 poetry collections in Greek and has recently released his bi-lingual children’s book: “Soumela and the Magic Kemenche.” He is also the Secretary of the Panepirotic Federation of Australia.



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# ANNUNCIATION GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH NEW YORK CITY CELEBRATED EMERALD 20<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL STEWARDSHIP & MISTLETOE GALAS

*20th Annual Annunciation NYC Mistletoe Gala*



Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church New York City held its Emerald 20th Annual Stewardship and Mistletoe Galas at the Harvard Club of New York City in Midtown Manhattan, returning celebrating an enormous 20th anniversary.

The vibrant event, hosted by the Annunciation Parish, welcomed over 700 Greek-Americans, who celebrated Christmas spirit, danced to the sounds of Dean Vali Orchestra of Bounce Music and DJ Bobby Karounos of Spartan Sounds, and supported the iconic Upper West Side Greek Orthodox Church and its ministries. The Stewardship Gala was home to a seated dinner, which hosted notable clergy members and Hellenic organizations. The Mistletoe Gala featured an open bar & buffet, as well as a sea of youth who mingled and delighted amongst the festive décor of the private social club. The Harvard Club was glowing with holiday decor and the iconic Christmas tree was decorated and shining brightly.

The Stewardship Gala began with welcome remarks by President of Annunciation Parish Council George J. Kostas, Archbishop Elpidophoros, Archon Nick Sakellariadis, and Parish Priest of Annunciation Father Sotirios Michalatos, who also shared additional remarks.

"God has given each of you your own special talents," said Fr. Sotirios Michalatos, Parish Priest of Annunciation Greek Orthodox

Church NYC. "As we enter into the Christmas season and start of our New Year, consider what talents and treasures you can offer to help those around you and your Church."

*20th Annual Annunciation NYC Stewardship Gala*



Notable attendees included Archbishop Elpidophoros; District Chancellor Protoperbyter of the Ecumenical Throne, Father Elias Villis; V. Rev. Father Chrysostomos Gilbert; and Gala Chairwoman for 20 consecutive years

Kassandra Romas. Also present showing their support were numerous young professionals, parish youth groups and other organizations promoting Hellenism, including United Greeks of America, National Hellenic Student Association of America, Hellenic Medical Society, and more.

The mission of this year's Gala was to celebrate a Parish with 132 years of community and history, as well as raise awareness and funds for major repairs and maintenance through the Gala. Attendees at the Gala were asked to support this cause through the purchase of raffle tickets, the bidding of the grand prize emerald necklace, and/or by a direct donation towards the building restoration fund.

In celebration of the Emerald 20th Anniversary, a custom-made 3.6 carat Colombian Emerald pendant (retailed at \$9,000) was auctioned prior to the Gala and the winner was announced the following day during Fellowship hour after the Divine Liturgy.

Next year's 21st Annual Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church NYC Stewardship & Mistletoe Galas 2024 is confirmed for Saturday, December 6, 2025 at the Harvard Club of New York City.

Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church New York City is located on Manhattan's Upper West Side at West End Avenue and 91st Street. For more information on Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church New York City, their website is [annunciation-nyc.org](http://annunciation-nyc.org)





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# Greek Singer Alkyone Takes Flight on Her First US Tour

by Marie Lolis

This past fall, up-and-coming Greek singer-songwriter and musician Alkyone took audiences along for an ethereal journey during her U.S. debut tour *Dream Whispers*, sharing a tapestry of myths and folklore through her music.

Performing sold-out shows at the University of Pennsylvania, New York's Heritage Museum of Epirus and a well-received concert at Princeton University, Alkyone drew in listeners for her powerful and unique compositions of Greek folk music and her own original music from her album "Exit Sign".

"I always try to [sing] songs that matter to me personally, because I feel every word that I sing, and so I feel like I'm a storyteller. It's almost like sharing a fairy tale like my grandmother used to do," she said.



Alkyone, the stage name of Maria Zlatani, hails from Edessa, Greece. Her name entwined with both her love for birds and the myth of Alkyone — a representation of hope and love within the turbulence of a storm.

"The name is a tribute to a dream I often had in the past, in which I was a bird because I was flying, and it was one of the best dreams I ever had. The freedom and the sense of peace and calmness in it was so vivid that I wanted, even for the slightest moment, to allow myself and be imaginative, while singing. So I searched for many names of birds, but I wanted it to be connected with a deeper meaning," she explained.

Inspired by movies such as "Lord of the Rings", Alkyone's music encapsulates both

supernatural and cathartic elements. She blurs the lines between indie-pop and folk music to create fantastical and vivid pieces with her evocative vocals.

During her concert, the songs she sang carried a thread of a story. While giving new breath to traditional Greek folk music, such as "Apano Stin Triantafyllia", "Ti kala to leei t'aidoni" and "Nanourisma", the songs seamlessly tied with her powerful English songs "Genesis" and "Oh, Mother" — granting listeners a chance to fly through a picturesque world of lullabies and dreams.

"It's not about giving you the exact image and the exact thing that I think about, because I need a listener to have their own space to think about their own stuff and their space in their minds...I feel like I'm inviting them, in that sense of a way, in a small world that we can all be part of," Alkyone said.

In 2022, Alkyone uploaded a stunning rendition of the traditional Epirotiko song "Xenitemena mou poulia". The song, which grapples with mourning relatives immigrating far from their homeland, resonated with hundreds of thousands of listeners globally.

"I think many people, especially young people, have turned to traditional music here in Greece, and I feel so happy about it. But no one expected it to go viral, so when it did, I think it was because it was a very dear song, and that its subject still applies today because many people leave their homeland for a better place. So I got messages from all over the world, from people who are young people, who were like, 'I'm in Germany, working and or I study here. And that song made me cry, because I remembered my mom and dad or my grandmother singing in the kitchen,' that was so touching," she explained.

Alkyone's musical beginnings started at a young age. While listening to classical music her father played on the piano and soundtracks to movies, such as Franco Zeffirelli's "Romeo and Juliet", she came to realize she wanted to learn this for herself.

"He [My father] translated his love for music. Later on, I had piano lessons, and my teacher was one of those teachers that poured all her passions for music right into me. Music became more than a way to express myself. It became a way to learn how to survive in the world and find my ground whenever I had to. So it's like a land of peace," she explained.

For Alkyone, sharing this peace with listeners has given her purpose. While studying at a

conservatoire, Alkyone received a degree in Special Education and is a teacher for special needs children. Now currently pursuing a masters in music therapy, she understands what power music has beyond herself.

"It allows you to find many things that you have in you and you didn't know about yourself. And through this and through music therapy, music works in a completely different way. It's not about me, it's not about the music, it's about the person I have in the room with me. And it works in the most amazing way," she said.

"[Music] allows us to communicate with each other. The effects on this person or a group of people, is huge in a way I cannot express. That makes me feel like I have purpose and I can do something good with something that I very much love. I think it's a very good feeling to have, to feel useful for someone else. It allows you to get out of your ego and feel like a part of something else. That's why I love it."

Alkyone reminisced about a time where she found herself at a musical therapy session for those addicted to drugs and the profound impact it had on her.

"It didn't matter if they were in tune or if they were if they knew the song. It didn't matter if I played the piano well, all that mattered at that moment was that we were all present, and we were sharing something that had a meaning for all of us. The way we all sang together had such an impact for me and for them as well. I think I'm going to remember this my whole life," she said.

As for future plans, Alkyone has two albums on the way and hopes she can share more opportunities to connect with audiences everywhere. "It's called 'Small Philosophies,' and it has a completely different vibe from 'Exit Sign,' but I think it's more diary-like and more personal and unapologetic. And I think the songs sound a bit more cheerful and pop," she explained. Alkyone also mentioned recording an album with traditional songs as well. "They're very different projects, but I like to think that they're both parts of the same world."

Through music, Alkyone invites listeners into this world with their hearts open and their defenses down — allowing a space to connect and to be together. "I think it's all about sharing. I think I will be listening to music for as long as my ears can listen. I don't think I will be able to make music forever, but I want to believe that I will be better at communicating with other people, and I think the most important thing is [for] people to learn to be better and to love better."





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# Mnemosyni's Musings...

You've heard of Mnemosyni, the Greek goddess of memory. Mythology buffs will know that she's also the goddess of storytelling—and mother of the Muses! So, it's only fitting to name a literary column in her honor. Here, you'll learn about authors, poets, books, and all things "Greek" literary.

by Maria A. Karamitsos

## New Anthology Brings Contemporary Greek Fiction to English-Speaking Audiences

While Greece is home to many talented authors of contemporary fiction, few have found their way to English-speaking audiences. Now, thanks to a new anthology called *New Greek Voices: The Best Short Fiction from Greece* (Tiber & Hudson Publications, October 2024), works of modern Greek fiction are finally accessible.



Editor Helen Mitsios had long considered a Greek collection. "I faced a lot of headwind with this project. There was so little Greek fiction in translation that publishers didn't want to take a chance, even though I know that sounds counter intuitive." But this was too important to

give up. "The richness of Greek culture and literary tradition isn't something that stopped in the 20th century. That level of excellence, expression, and creativity is alive and well. It didn't stop with Kazantzakis, Cavafy, and other great writers. It's still thriving."

She looked far and wide in her search for the best Greek translators, refusing to believe that a shortage of good translators would keep Greek fiction in relative obscurity. "I couldn't give up on finding translators who would do the stories justice. And I almost took it as a challenge to give these outstanding Greek writers the finest translations and the attention they deserve."

The search led her to some dead ends. Until one day while browsing in an Athens bookstore, she found one. After, she reached out to the Classics Department at the University of Oxford. She got a quick answer—a Greek professor was enthusiastic about the rare opportunity of doing literary translations. And it grew from there. Ultimately, she selected four translators: Hellen Kalogeropoulos, Hannah Kent, Rosemary Tzanaki, and Panayiotis Xenophonotos.

To bring the collection together, Mitsios researched and read. "There's a certain

level of excellence I always look for, and stories that move me emotionally. Hemingway talked about the one true sentence. I look for that one true story." Ultimately, 15 short stories made it into the collection, written by some of Greece's top-selling authors. Several of them are translated into other languages including German and French, but for others this is their first publication in English. "They're all thrilled to be a part of this and to reach new audiences."

Authors included in *New Greek Voices* are Ioanna Bourazopoulou, Yiannis Efstathiadis, Maria Fakinou, Alexandra K\*, Angela Kastrinaki, Tefros Michaelides, Amanda Michalopoulou, Maria Mitsora, Yannis Palavos, Vasiliki Petsa, Gianni Skaragas, Ersi Sotiropoulos, Soti Triantafyllou, Thanassis Valtinos, and Zyranna Zateli. Surely, we'll hear more from these exceptional writers.

Skaragas, a renowned novelist, screenwriter, and playwright—some will know him by his play, "Lady of Ro" that has been staged in several U.S. cities—wrote the introduction. "He was with me through all the ups and downs of the project. Gianni's writing is like being in the presence of an illuminated manuscript. He's one of the most brilliant, gifted writers I've ever come across. He was a great sounding board."

A professor in the languages and literature department at Touro University in New York, Mitsios is also a writer and poet, and she is the art & style editor for *Wonderlust* magazine. She has edited several anthologies, work she said she "fell into." Of her anthologies, perhaps the most notable is *New Japanese Voices: The Best Contemporary Fiction from Japan* (Atlantic Monthly Press, 1994), which was the internationally acclaimed Haruki Murakami's introduction to the English-speaking world.

"I was obsessed with Japanese culture and

writing for many years," said Mitsios. "I read everything I could find in English translation. At the time everything available was the older generation like Mishima, Kawabata, Tanizaki. I was curious about who the contemporary writers were, and it led me to doing the book."

Among her other anthologies are *Out of the Blue: New Short Fiction from Iceland* (University of Minnesota Press, 2017) and *Beneath the Ice: Contemporary Icelandic Poetry* (Talisman House, Publishers, 2014).



image by Tony Winters

Pulitzer Prize-winning author Jeffrey Eugenides offered high praise for *New Greek Voices*. "Readers of English already owe Helen Mitsios a great debt of gratitude. She, after all, was the person who introduced Haruki Murakami and Banana Yoshimoto to an English-speaking audience in her anthology *New Japanese Voices*. She did the same thing for

Icelandic writers...and now, with *New Greek Voices*, she's done it again, assembling the best and most important Greek writers in a single edition. Anyone interested in staying abreast of the world of contemporary international fiction, where much of the best writing is happening these days, will find this volume essential reading."

*New Greek Voices* is available around the world on Amazon and wherever books are sold.

See you next time for more of *Mnemosyni's Musings*

\*) Maria A. Karamitsos is a journalist, author, and poet. She's the founder & former publisher/editor of *WindyCity Greek* magazine and former associate editor & senior writer for *The Greek Star* newspaper. Maria also contributes to *Greek City Times* and *TripFiction*. Her work has been published in *The Magic of Us-A Moms Who Write Poetry Anthology*, *The Pen Poetry Magazine*, *Voices of Hellenism Literary Journal*, *Highland Park Poetry*, *Recipes & Roots*, *GreekCircle* magazine, *The National Herald*, *GreekReporter*, *Harlots Sauce Radio*, *Women Who Write*, *KPHTH* magazine, and more. Maria has contributed to two books: *Greektown Chicago: Its History, Its Recipes* and *The Chicago Area Ethnic Handbook*. She's currently editing her debut novel. [mariakaramitsos.com](http://mariakaramitsos.com).



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by Marie Lolis

## Living the Sweet Life at Omonia Café - Meet Pastry Chef

# Peter Arvanitis

After wiping the foggy glass to ensure customers could see the pastries at his father's cafe as a child, the now 21-year-old Peter Arvanitis can show off his own pastries as pastry chef at the iconic Omonia Cafe, blending tradition with innovation as he shapes its sweet future.

Since 1977, Omonia Cafe in Astoria, New York has remained a delicious fixture of the community, with it expanding to Brooklyn and Manhattan locations. Peter, the youngest son of owner John Arvanitis, is determined to take Omonia Cafe to the next level by using what he's learned at prestigious culinary school and from his family to satisfy customers.

"It's my job to push the boundaries, keep us moving forward, and to make sure that the quality is always on point, freshness is always on point. It's all about the ingredients," Arvanitis explained.

"I feel like each bite should be an experience. It should be something that makes you feel something, either its nostalgia or it reminds you of your grandmother, your childhood, or something you never had before."

After arriving from Greece with \$70 in his pocket, Arvanitis' father worked as a hot dog vendor with his own push cart. Through his hard work he saved enough to open a pizzeria and then found the location where Omonia Cafe stands today. The younger Arvanitis hopes to continue growing Omonia Cafe, taking on what he sees as the old school Greek struggle tied to the trendy European mindset.

"Watching his sacrifice over the years is, I'd say, inspiring, and watching my mother sacrifice alongside him. I wouldn't have the privilege to be in a position so quickly, I wouldn't be able to come into a brand that's had success over the years, and it's something that I can also call my own as well," he said. "I'd say, [it] gives me the power to do what I do. It eliminates that voice in your head that might

want to make you cut a corner, or go the cheap route."

He did not always see himself pursuing cooking, even once considering becoming a priest. Yet as a teenager, he practiced cooking steaks and found that he not only enjoyed cooking, but felt confident that he had what it takes to be a professional.

"I knew that I would end up in the family business in one way or another, as my other two siblings did. [They] just happened to be in front of the house, not back of the house. My sister manages Amylos on 34th Street. My brother has SLDR, so they're all involved in business in some way," he explained. "Omonia needs help, that's what I thought, and it needs someone who can take it forward."

Arvanitis studied at the world-renowned Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, New York. He then applied what he learned at Ourse Athens, a high-end French-Greek bakery based in Athens, Greece, under the guidance of Michelin-starred pastry chef Spyros Padiaditakis.

"There were only five or six pastries in the display, that was it, and they were changing every season. Everything was always different, and the menu would change, and the attention to detail was top of the line," he said.

Eventually, Arvanitis made his way back to Omonia and within the last year and a half, he has brought an emphasis for quality and modernity. "We have to pay respect to our heritage, to our Greek heritage, but we have to use French techniques and we have to elevate things a bit," Arvanitis explained.

With an emphasis on fresh, in-season ingredients, Arvanitis focuses on quality and customer experience. Instead of relying on extracts and pastes, he prefers to work with whole ingredients, such as vanilla beans and hazelnuts, to create flavorful and delicious treats. Additionally, he offers accommodating options for those with dietary restrictions and allergies.

"I would say that Omonia should be changing, and it should always be changing. Meaning, if you find something here and during the Christmas season, you might not necessarily find it in the summer season," he said.

Arvanitis hopes that the creation of a commissary kitchen would streamline Omonia Cafe's goods and allow them to be produced under his leadership — guaranteeing every bite would be tied to his name. The space will give him and other bakers more of an opportunity to innovate with new pastries, mousses, caramels and flavor combinations that are all made from scratch.

"We have bakers here, bakers next door, bakers in Brooklyn. So my goal now is to build the kitchen where we can sort of organize ourselves under my lead and make sure that everyone is on the same page in terms of what we're selling. We got to cut the menu down a little bit... We have to condense. We have to make sure that everything is in tip top shape," Arvanitis explained. "The kitchen here will give me the tools that I need to be able to do that, and the control that I need so that I can make sure every Omonia customer is having the same experience."

When he isn't baking, Arvanitis uses his hands for a different craft — ceramics. Before the oven, Arvanitis used the kiln to create abstract pottery. "I feel like pottery has helped me in my baking, in terms of not only hand skills, but a lot of techniques. Funny enough, with some of the same techniques, glazing something or maybe rolling things out evenly to shape cookies, [or] when we would roll things down in pottery to make handles and stuff... I feel like pottery actually has helped me in my path, in baking as well, propelled me a bit forward," he said.

Forward thinking is what Arvanitis sees for Omonia Cafe. While progress may not be linear, the steps he plans to take will hopefully expand Omonia, but most importantly, make his family proud. "I'm happy to say that when people taste my things, they come back and they want more. So that's what it's about at the end of the day... My dad's always swiping on his phone trying to find a picture of me with my chef's hat. He finds it funny, [the photo] from my graduation at the culinary school. And he's like, 'He made this. He made this.' So it's about making him proud too. It's that that drives me more than anything else," he said. "The opportunity we've been given is too rare, and we have to respect that."







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# The Chestnut Man

(Christmas Night, 1950)

By Jim Terezakis

Cold and misty, bright white snowflakes, crowns, symphonies of car horns, December 24th brought its usual confusion of bustling throngs to Rockefeller Center.

Children's choir sang their traditional carols while their angelic red cheeks spat wild most into the air.

The Chestnut Man stood stoically and observed. Having arrived from his native Crete five years ago, it seemed that this winter was particularly harsh.

Standing alone in the cold winter, half geared, half confused, he marvelled at the throngs of people cuddling the 90 foot evergreen spruce. Brightly lit, with thousands of lights he stared at it in awe. "What a wonderful gesture to mankind."

His hands, rough brown yellow from the coals, his face weather beaten, moustaki frozen and skin like an urban fisherman. Eyes deep, misty blue and bloodshot, lakers of old clothes that he bought from the Chinamen, scarves with small holes, cleverly wrapped from ear to neck. His thoughts, like always, ran wild but especially tonight. The carols made him particularly sensitive and reflective. Visions of his native Crete danced wildly. His youth, festivities and tragedies ran with clever mandinades. Visions of the war years, the war had been especially rough. He lost Kostaki, his beloved brother in Albania, his aunt and father, Ste Katoxi, as well as two cousins to German hit squads. He was unmarried, but his life dictated that he would pick up all the pieces and beget a new clan.

His mind was saying,  
"Kriti ta Palikaria sou  
Kai yiadi ta xopizes  
Kai e Xenetia ta xepete  
Ke se ta laktharezes"

Ax mano mou, ta panageria, the lamb on the spit, flavored with lemon and garlic, kuria Froson kalitsionia, the stove oven, baked breads, jugs of wine and cheese, his mother and younger brother busy preparing dishes with wines and live, his uncle Leftheri's Palikaria, who came once a year from Psiloriti,

boots polished, pressed knickers, hand gus neatly packed, these giants of men, Palikaria, men who feasted on Psiloriti's oxygen and deserted on its sunset.

"Hey Mister, how much for these chestnuts?"

"Ten for a dollar."

"Give me then. Make sure they're plenty hot."

The chestnut man quickly came back to earth. Only a customer could bring him back from his private odyssey. Only a customer could give him the temporary reality that he needed to wipe out his tears.

"Merry Christmas," the boy shouted.

"Merry Christmas," the Chestnut Man responded.

Someday, he thought, I shall own a house and beget children. America is a good country, strange and silly but good.

Suddenly a line of tourists quickly rushed the Chestnut Man. These tourists quickly bought and were consuming all his stock of hot chestnuts, hot pretzels and soda. Showing his swiftness and entrepreneurial prowess, he soon forgot the cold and hurried the orders as the tourists boarded their buses. Bidding him farewell, shouting Merry Christmas, they quickly departed in their polished Greyhound, pouring exhaust into the midnight air.

The Chestnut Man, never being too greedy, was grateful that one bus was able to buy all his stock. He soon crossed himself, whispered, "Doxa to Theo," and began loading his cart for his voyage to Eighth Avenue. Eighth Avenue had a small warehouse where other carts found their way. Pushing this heavy metal cart, in the cold New York air, was not new to him. As he passed the homeless, they stood and waited for his excess chestnuts and soggy warm pretzels. The whores greeted him with smiles. The streets were his universe. There he saw life, made money, reflected, remembered and philosophically observed, sometimes stoically, sometimes in utter bewilderment

and enchantment. Dropping off his cart at the warehouse, he quickly proceeded to walk to Kuria Maria Tenement House on 49th Street and Eighth Avenue. That was his home. There he lived a spartan existence, pressing lightly on the earth. The staircase was dusty and squeaked. The hall lamps were dim as you walked up the stairs. Opening his apartment door, his home quickly felt to him, like the palace of Knossos. An old bed, one sofa and some used furniture were scattered cleverly around to disguise any holes in the wall. His apartment was clean and stood for the proudest of Hellenes.

Photographs of his father, dressed in Cretan war attire, as well as photographs of his mother, adorned his living room, making the pain chips, as well as the warped, damp walls, erase themselves from his reality.

Icons of Jesus and the Virgin Mary, red eggs and palms from last year's Easter services decorated his bedroom.

The Chestnut Man brought his night earnings and cleverly put them in a shoe box. He patiently and ritualistically unwrapped himself of layers of old clothes. Walking to the sink, he opened the hot water faucet and waited patiently. The water spat hot steam before letting a cascade of hot water run through its pipes. He quietly removed his clothes, stripping down to his Long Johns, crossed himself.

"Doxa to Theo, praise be to God."

The Chestnut Man now tired fell into bed, and staring at the ceiling his thoughts raced. He lost family and friends fighting in Albania and Crete, Monolis, Kosta, and Leftheris. But he will endure, he was given this chance.

Now edgy he tried to shut his eyes, but saw Marianna his secret love. A love that was never consummated, due to too much interference. His heart spoke quietly.

"I love you," and with that the Chestnut Man fell silently asleep.





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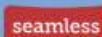
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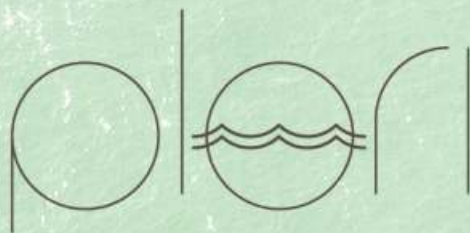
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# Merry Christmas & Happy New Year!

Once more we are blessed to close this holiday issue and open the Christmas, New Year and Epiphany Season. For some of us it was easier than for others, but it's good that we made it healthy and whole. Regarding NEO, your support and generosity this time has humbled us. We thank you wholeheartedly and we wish you the best. We are climbing our 20th consecutive year of publication and the odds are more than favorable. Our community deserves and needs this magazine, beautiful, independent and steering clear from the misery surrounding many of our organizations and entities. We are much bigger than that and we will remain so, as long as you allow it. Once more, have a beautiful Christmas and a happy and healthy New Year with the people you love!

by **Demetrios Rhompotis**  
dondemetrio@neomagazine.com



*Celebrating Christmas with friends somewhere in Long Island, NY.*

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# “Tokyo” Ursula Corbero in “The Day of the Jackal”

by Markos Papadatos

Spanish actress Ursula Corbero chatted with Markos Papadatos about starring in the new upcoming series “The Day of the Jackal,” which premiered on November 14th on Peacock. Theodore Roosevelt once said: “Keep your eyes on the stars, and your feet on the ground.” This quote applies to Ursula.

The synopsis is: A ruthless assassin, the Jackal (Eddie Redmayne) makes his living carrying

out hits for the highest fee. Following his latest kill, he meets his match in a tenacious British intelligence officer (Lashana Lynch) who starts to track down the Jackal in a thrilling cat-and-mouse chase across Europe, leaving destruction in its wake.

On being a part of “The Day of the Jackal,” she remarked, “It was a long journey. I enjoyed it so much. I remember the first day I met Eddie Redmayne and Brian Kirk when we were doing our first rehearsals, and I noticed something was good. I felt confident with them and also, they really wanted me to feel like I was a very special part of the project. They wanted my thoughts and input on what I thought about the whole show, and not just character,” she noted. “Working with them was an amazing experience, to be honest,” she exclaimed. “We suffered, of course, because shootings are tough sometimes, but we also had fun. I was very happy with it.”

On playing Nuria, she said, “To be honest, I was a little bit worried in the beginning because I had the feeling that my character was too needy, but then I realized that was the most important thing about the character. I think Nuria has a very important arc throughout the season. In the beginning, she is very pleasant and a little bit needy, and she is not ambitious. Then, I think, she starts to find herself, and the new Nuria is stronger, and it’s about survival. It was different... I think Nuria has a very nice arc through the season,” she elaborated. “I’ve worked so hard to achieve that ‘badass’ vibe that Nuria has. I felt that was important.”

On the lessons learned with the screenplay, she expressed, “I fell in love with the story. I must admit that I had never heard about the ‘Jackal’ before, and they told me that there were previous versions of it,” she said. “Even though I didn’t know it, it was very new to me. I think the ‘Jackal’ in this version is very human: he has two parallel lives and different worlds which revolve around his job, his secret life, and then, his personal life. So, I thought that was cool because I don’t think we are used to seeing these kinds of humanized characters in this kind of genre,” she acknowledged.

“I loved it, even though I wasn’t very sure about my character; I had some doubts about her. It was very important to me to make sure that there an evolution of Nuria,” she added.

On working opposite Eddie Redmayne (who plays the Jackal), she exclaimed, “Oh my God. Eddie is the best! He is so sweet, so talented, he is generous, and he has everything.”

She also complimented Redmayne’s Tony-nominated performance as the Emcee in the musical “Cabaret at the Kit Kat Club” on Broadway. “I went and saw Eddie in ‘Cabaret’ this past June, and he did an amazing job; he is very talented,” she said. “Also, I was so shocked because his character in ‘Cabaret’ has nothing to do with his character in ‘The Day of the Jackal,’ so I thought ‘okay, this is a completely different person.’ I enjoyed it so much,” she elaborated.

If Corbero were to have any superpower in her life, it would be knowledge of “martial arts.”

“I don’t know why but I think martial arts are good for you mentally and physically. That way you, don’t need anyone to protect you and you can protect yourself so that would be dope,” she exclaimed.

On the title of the current chapter of her life, she said with a sweet laugh, “A messy life but a fun one.”

For young and emerging actors, she encouraged them to be patient, to work hard, and to be consistent, as well as to be nice. “Don’t give up; trust yourself, that’s the most important thing,” she underscored. “Even though there will be people that will tell you that ‘you can’t do this,’ or ‘you are not strong enough’ and ‘you are not talented enough.’ The most important thing is to trust yourself and don’t give a s\*\*t about what other people think about you,” she elaborated.

Regarding her definition of the word success, Corbero said, “To do what you want. Freedom, perhaps, and enjoying what you do. That would be success for me.”

For fans and viewers, she stated about “The Day of the Jackal,” “This series is thrilling. It’s a captivating show. It will keep you at the edge of your seat. I think that’s what we want from shows, right? We want more and more. That happened to me when I first watched it. I instantly became a fan of the show. I think it’s important to be surrounded by a good team,” she admitted. “I felt like we were all going together in the same direction, and that’s important. I also felt very free and listened to; that’s very important too. I felt very proud to be a part of it because I wanted more,” she concluded.



PHOTO: Courtesy of Peacock







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Happy New Year!

*Καλά Χριστούγεννα  
- Χρόνια Πολλά!*

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