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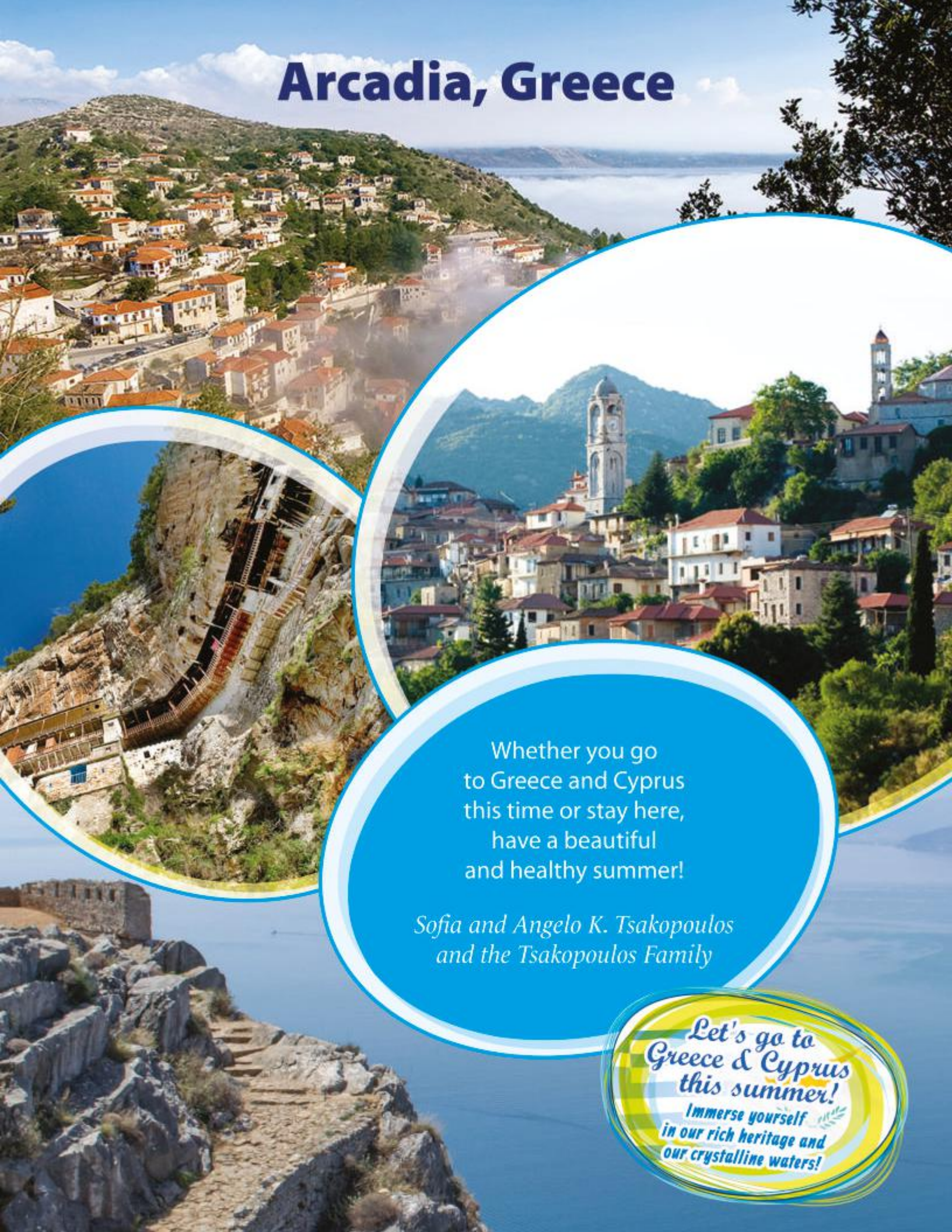
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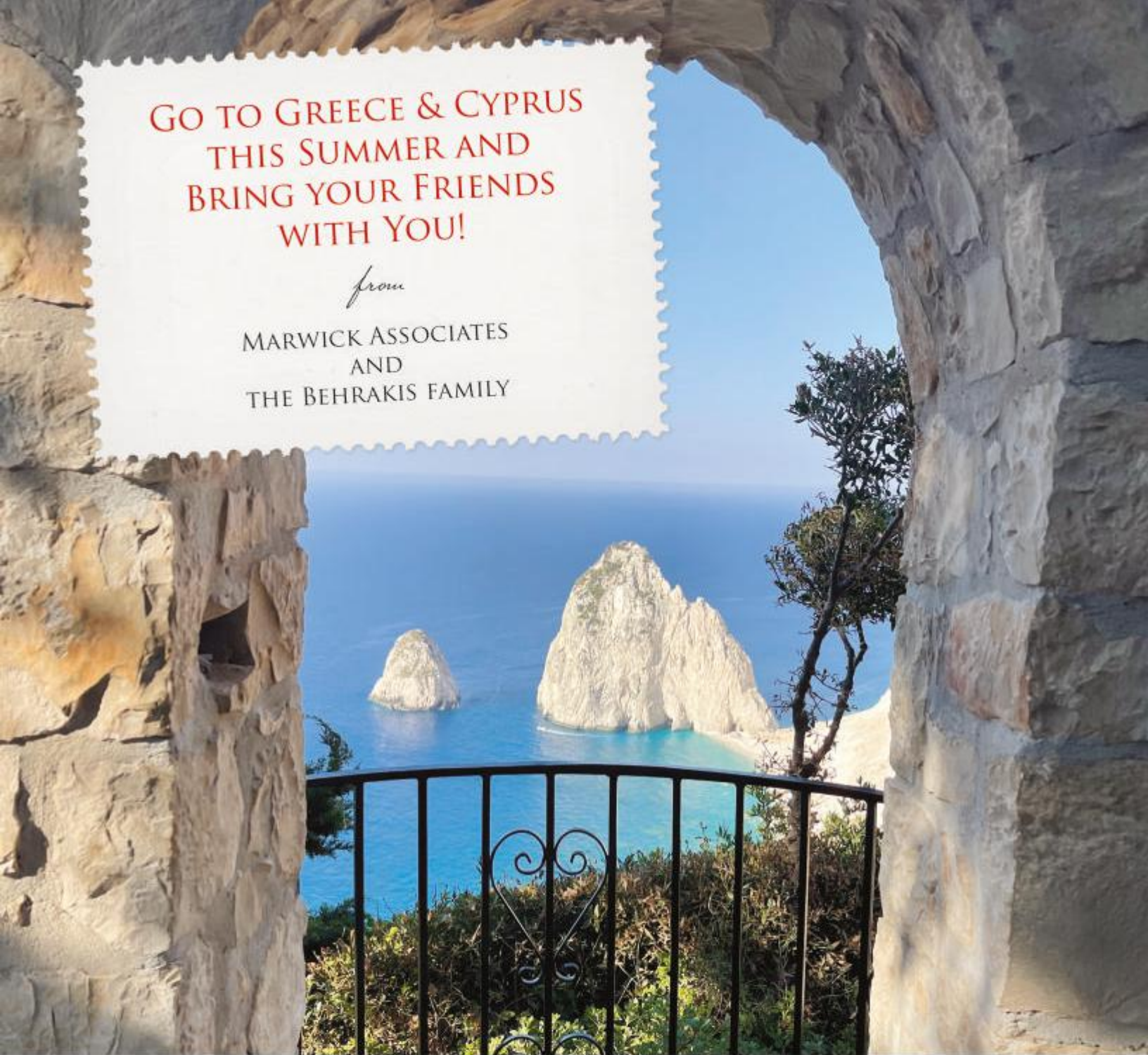
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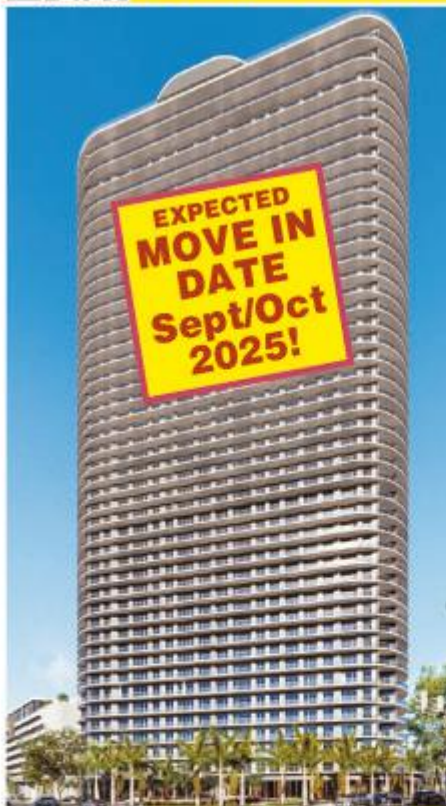
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## The colors of our eternal homeland

When I was a kid, I lived on Chios island until I was about seven, and then I returned again a few years later to visit, and I remember the green that flooded the windows of the old Chevy cab that whisked us to the suburb of Kofinas, from all olive trees spilling over on the road, and fig trees, and all the flowers and plants on everybody's terrace and stoop.

And when the old cab, trailing dust, whisked us finally to my yiayia's house, with its blue walls, and green door and shutters, and silver door knocker of an Egyptian pharaoh (I don't know where that came from), I remember stepping onto my yiayia's taratsa, and being smothered in all her flowers in their shiny-yellow oil tin cans with all that writing on them, next to the well that watered them, and whitewashed blue.

When I was a kid, I thought our neighbors had the most beautiful gardens in the world, and later in the day, when it got cool, and half their garden was shade, and the other half was sun, I would often wander over to play with the kids there who were my playmates. But mostly I was astonished by the veritable world of color that was their own yiayia's garden, Kyria Oreanthi, who was aptly-named. When she would clack out in her slippers to water all her flowers and plants and the perfume filled the air, it was like smelling the perfumed air of Paradise itself.

And as a kid, when we took the bus to go up to the chorio, I remember the branches of the

pine tree lining the road switching on the windows as we made hair-raising turns, and the smell they released like a thousand Christmas trees. A stop along the way was by the villages of Afrodisia and Haladra, where the shade of trees by the mountain spring along the road by Haladra was like losing yourself in a cave, and the water tasted like it was made of ice.

When we got to Kourounia, our village, I remember the grapes hanging from the trestle of her taratsa, and bumping your head, and the fig tree in front of my papou's store, where the figs were as big as boxing glove and when you bit into them you tasted all the crystalline sugar in their seeds.

Unfortunately, from the reports of relatives, all these have been endangered by the runaway wildfires that consumed Chios recently and I don't know what still stands. But I'm sure the color has faded from the summer flowers, and the green from the pine and olive and olive trees—who knows if my papou's fig tree in the chorio or my yiayia's in Kofinas (where I used to carve my name) are still there—or the eternally-beautiful gardens of Kyria Oreanthi.

To imagine them gone would be like losing a part of myself, and for others as well who have emigrated from there, but still consider Greece our eternal homeland. We only pray that the many churches of our homeland, with their blue domes like a Greek sky and their whitewashed walls like Aegean sea foam, will eternally protect them.

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# CAPTAIN MARIANTHI KASDAGLI

## Charting her own course at sea



by Kelly Fanarioti

In a world where saltwater and steel have long been considered the domain of men, Marianthi Kasdagli has charted her own course and thrived. From a young age, the pull of the sea was undeniable, offering both a sense of freedom and a promising future. With a deep-rooted sense of duty and maturity beyond her years, she made a bold choice: to pursue a life in maritime professions.

Coming from a large working-class family with four children, she was the eldest — a role that naturally instilled in her responsibility, resilience, and drive. For her, the sea wasn't just a dream; it was a path toward stability, independence, and a life on her own terms.

Kasdagli described her profession as one shaped by constant demands, from the unpredictability of the sea to the weight of responsibility she carries daily. As the captain of a luxury yacht, she is not only tasked with navigating complex maritime conditions, but also with ensuring the safety and satisfaction of everyone on board. “The weather can change in minutes, and you have to be ready for anything — from mechanical issues to last-minute changes in plans,” she says.

She passed the national entrance exams and was accepted into the Merchant Marine Academy. Initially drawn to the shipping industry, she later found her niche in yachting. As she explains to NEO, she now serves as a Captain aboard a 42-metre vessel, bearing

responsibility for millions of dollars in assets — and, most importantly, for human lives. She approaches her work with a strong sense of responsibility, which is why she always keeps a Plan B in mind. “I experience constructive stress — it doesn't paralyze me,” she says. “This job isn't about physical strength, as some people mistakenly believe. It's about crisis management and decision-making under pressure. There were many times when I had to surpass my own limits and go beyond what I thought I was capable of.”

Early in her career, she encountered strong doubt and resistance simply because she was a woman. As she recalls, some of her male colleagues made comments suggesting she wouldn't succeed because of her gender. Kasdagli proved them wrong and managed not only to stand as an equal, but also to distinguish herself in a male-dominated and demanding field, earning the respect of both her colleagues and her clients. Through perseverance, hard work, and dedication to her role, she demonstrated that competence has no gender.

Her days are long, and no two are ever the same. During trips, she remains constantly vigilant — monitoring weather conditions, coordinating with her crew, and making sure the guests enjoy a seamless experience. Every detail matters, from safely anchoring the vessel to solving technical issues discreetly. “Even when something goes wrong, the goal is



for guests to never notice. That means working quietly and efficiently in the background,” she explains.

The young captain, who has been at sea since the age of 18, deeply loves her work. She has traveled to many countries and has even spent up to nine consecutive months on board while working on commercial ships. This demanding lifestyle has given her independence, but it has also come at a cost. She has had to sacrifice time with her family, childhood friends, and the warmth of her mother's home-cooked meals.

“I truly love what I do, even though by nature it is exhausting and emotionally draining. One day, I would like to start a family of my own. If I meet the right person and that happens, I know I won't be able to sustain this lifestyle.”

In recent years, Marianthi has launched her own company, called “Lady Captain Yacht.” The business acts as an intermediary for luxury yacht rentals, offering short-term bookings even online. “This venture is still in its early stages, but it's something I really want to grow. It's not easy to be a captain and run your own business at the same time — but I'm a strong person, and I don't give up easily.”

Her vision for the future is clear. She hopes to continue expanding her business while inspiring more women to enter the maritime world. “It can be tough, and there are still obstacles to overcome,” she admits. “But if you love the sea and you're willing to work hard, there's a place for you here — regardless of gender.”







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# Top American foreign policy leaders meet with leading Cypriots/Hellenes at the 40<sup>th</sup> Annual PSEKA Cyprus Conference



For the 40th Annual PSEKA Cyprus Conference, PSEKA brought together in Washington, DC Greek American leaders from AHEPA, AHI, Cyprus-US Chamber of Commerce, FCAO, the Chios Federations of America and Canada and others to hear from 35 of our country's most significant members of Congress and Senators, as well as high level officials in the Trump Administration. It was a critical opportunity to share with these policymakers key issues of concern to the Hellenic community and to honor some of those who have been longtime supporters on our issues.



*Vice Chair Issa being presented the Sarbanes Freedom Award*

Less than one month after Michael Rigas was confirmed by the US Senate to assume the prestigious position of Deputy Secretary of State in the Trump Administration, he met with top officials of the Republic of Cyprus and with Greek American leaders from across America and abroad at the 40th Annual PSEKA Cyprus Conference. In his position, Rigas serves under the Secretary of State who is the highest ranking Cabinet member and fourth in line for presidential succession.

Serious issues relating to Cyprus were addressed in the gathering where Secretary Rigas was presented the Athens/Livanos Award. This award is presented to an individual who, like Andrew Athens and George P. Livanos "has utilized ancient Hellenic values to realize extraordinary achievement in modern society while contributing to the improvement of our civilization." Accompanying Secretary Rigas for the award presentation were other State Department officials Josh Huck, Deputy Assistant Secretary; Shane Siegel, Acting Deputy in Charge at the US Embassy in Cyprus; and Marlene Stearns, Cyprus Desk Officer.

Other Administration officials who participated in some of the Conference meetings included, John Gountanis, Deputy Undersecretary of the Department of Homeland Security and Yuri Kim, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Europe and Eurasian Affairs.

Participating in these meetings were also the Deputy Minister to Cyprus president, Irene Piki; Cyprus

Government Spokesman Konstantinos Letymbiotis who travelled from Cyprus to join the conference; and the Ambassadors of Cyprus and Greece, the Evangelos Savva and Ekaterina Nassika, respectively.

In addition to meeting with and honoring Secretary Rigas, the group of Hellenic leaders

traveled to the US Capitol building where Republican and Democrats leading the US Congress showed their support for Cyprus and Hellenic issues. The Republican Leader of the US House of Representatives, Steve Scalise, the Democratic Leader of the US Senate, Chuck Schumer, and the Democratic Leader of the House, Hakeem Jeffries spent considerable time with those attending the PSEKA conference discussing issues of importance to the Cypriot and Greek



*Andrew Kravets addresses our group*

communities.

Republican and Democratic members of the Senate Foreign Relations and House Foreign Affairs Committees also met with PSEKA Conference attendees. They included the Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Jim Risch (R-ID), Senator Chris Van Hollen (D-MD) and Senator Chris Coons (D-DE). Senator Coons also was presented the Paraskevaides/Mouyiaris Award as an individual who, like Nikos Mouyiaris and George Paraskevaides, "has utilized ancient Hellenic values to contribute to the nations and people of Cyprus and America and to Hellenism in the modern world."



*PSEKA President Philip Christopher, asking Secretary Rigas about a Cyprus issue*

Conference attendees heard from the Ranking Member on the House Foreign Affairs Committee Gregory Meeks (D-NY) and had the opportunity to honor the Vice Chair on the





*Hellenic Leaders with Speaker Emerita Pelosi*

House Foreign Affairs Committee Darrell Issa (R-CA) with the Sarbanes Freedom Award which recognizes those whose efforts "have contributed to the removal of the barbed wire which has divided the nation of Cyprus for over 50 years."

Leaders in the Cyprus community also recognized Andreas Kramvis with the Paraskevaides/Mouyiaris Award for his dedication to Cypriot issues. Kramvis served as CEO of a number of large multinational businesses in the Industrial, Electronics, Chemical and Oil Sectors. He retired from Honeywell International as Vice Chairman and is known for effecting major company turnarounds and for introducing leading edge technologies. The Andreas & Shirley Kramvis Foundation, established in 2018, supports principally Greek and Cyprus philanthropic causes on an annual basis including the Athens Foodbank, Orphanages in Greece, the Cyprus Children's Fund, the Cyprus Anti-Cancer Society and the Karaiskakion Foundation in Cyprus.



*Philip Christopher introduces Vice Chair Issa of the House Foreign Affairs Committee*

Conference attendees heard from many other members of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, in addition to Congressmen Meeks and Issa, including Gabe Amo (D-RI), Brad Schneider (D-IL), Julie Johnson (D-TX), Thomas Kean, Jr. (R-NJ), Sarah McBride (D-DE), Brad Sherman (D-CA), Chris Smith (R-NJ) and Greek American members Dina Titus (D-NV) and Nicole Malliotakis (R-NY).

The PSEKA Cyprus Conference was an opportunity to honor other critical

policymakers including: Senator Lisa Blunt-Rochester (D-DE) who was presented with the James Williams Award, named for an African American from Baltimore, MD who went to Greece in 1821 to fight alongside Hellenes in the Greek War of Independence. Senator Elissa Slotkin (D-MI), a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, who was honored with the Frizis Award, named after Mordechai Frizis, the Jewish Greek hero who was the first high ranking Greek military officer to give his life in defense of freedom against the Axis Powers in 1940

Two key members of the important Senate Armed Services Committee addressed the group, including the Ranking Member Jack Reed (D-RI) and senior Senator Richard Blumenthal (D-CT)

The historic figure of Speaker Emerita Nancy Pelosi who throughout her career supported Cyprus, Greece and the Ecumenical Patriarchate also attended the PSEKA Conference where she received the Sarbanes Lifetime Achievement Award. In addition to her unwavering, decades-long support for Cyprus, Pelosi enabled, for the first time in history, a Prime Minister of Greece to address a joint session of the US Congress.

Other Members of the House who expressed their strong support for Cyprus and for a just Cyprus settlement include Greek American Representatives Gus Bilirakis (R-FL), Chris Pappas (D-NH), Maggie Goodlander (D-NH) and Mike Haridopolos (R-FL), as well as Congressmen Dan Goldman (D-NY), Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ), Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA), Seth Magaziner (D-RI), Robert Menendez, Jr. (D-NJ), Jamie Raskin (D-MD), Pat Ryan (D-NY), Jim Himes (D-CT), and Tom Suozzi (D-NY).

Another consequential member of the US State Department, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Josh Huck, was honored by the group and will soon be stationed in Athens as the second highest ranking official in the US Embassy. Huck was presented the Conalis-Kontou Award for his significant contributions behind the

scenes for Cyprus-US and Greece-US bilateral relations.

Andreas Papaevripides, retiring president of POMAK, was also recognized for his contributions to addressing issues of importance to Cyprus. Philip Christopher, president of PSEKA-Justice for Cyprus Committee presented him with the Paraskevaides/Mouyiaris Award.

The Conference concluded with a stimulating panel discussion on American investment in Cyprus. Panelists included Demetrios Comodromos, president of the Cyprus-US Chamber of Commerce; Andreas Kramvis; Chad Wolf, Executive Vice President, Chief Strategy Officer and Chair of Center for Homeland Security and Immigration at the America First Policy Institute; and Aristos Constantine, Cyprus Trade Representative.

As in previous PSEKA Conferences the Ambassador of Cyprus Evangelos Savva hosted an evening welcoming reception for the conference attendees at his historic personal residence in Washington. The residence was once owned, during the Administration of President John F. Kennedy, by one of America's most famous stars and close friend to the President, Frank Sinatra.

This was the 40th PSEKA Cyprus Conference in Washington, DC, sponsored by PSEKA - Justice for Cyprus Committee chaired by Philip Christopher, with support from AHEPA and Supreme President Savas Tsivicos; the American Hellenic Institute, headed by Nick Larigakis; the Cyprus-US Chamber of Commerce, led by Demetrios Comodromos; the Chion Federation led by Mark Marinakis, and FCAO.



*Secretary Riggs with Athens Livanos Award*



*Hellenic leaders with Ranking Member Meeks*



# Voice And Vision: Grigoris Maninakis, 50 Years Of Greek Music In America

by Athena Efter

Greek-born vocalist and musician Grigoris Maninakis has the distinction of being at the forefront of the Greek music scene in New York City for over 50 years. His promotion of and performances of Classical, Rebetiko, and "Entekhno" Greek music has also brought him to audiences all over the US and the world. He has worked with luminaries such as Mikis Theodorakis and Yiannis Glezos and co-founded the pioneering musical group, the Mikrokosmos Ensemble. He co-produced and performed in the groundbreaking, best-selling album "Cafe Aman Amerika." Maninakis was also a key figure in the renaissance, really the "Golden Age" of live Entekhno performance in New York, from the 70s to the 90s, as co-owner of the Mikrokosmos club in Astoria. But, Maninakis hasn't stopped there. He continues to perform and educates audiences all over about the rich cultural heritage of 20th century Greek music. And to that end he's working on a new book that will cover the subject.



"Mikrokosmos Boite" at the same place. Elly Paspalas and

I were the original singers of Mikrokosmos which - even today- is a point of reference for many Greek Americans of my generation. The

Greek American media covered Mikrokosmos extensively while frequently publishing letters from fans of the boite. The most moving and flattering letter I recall is one that characterized Mikrokosmos as "I A Σ Κ Λ Η Π Ι Ε Ι Ο Ν Ψ Υ Χ Α Γ Ω Γ ι s a s o A E S C U L A P I A N C E N T E R O F E N T E R T A I N M E N T".

Despite its success, the refusal of the owner to renew our lease, my partner's decision to move to another state, and with my full time position at the university, I did not have the time to manage the every day operations, and Mikrokosmos had to close its doors in 1984.

The same year Vaggelis Fampas and Julie Ziavras opened the "Akroama" boite in Newtown Rd, in Astoria while in 1986, Mikrokosmos #2 was opened by my friend Leonidas Halikiopoulos a few blocks from the original/first one. Both of these boites - Akroama and Mikrokosmos #2 - while well organized ended operations by the 1990-91.

"Thiasos" was the last "boite style" Greek music club in New York, and the only one that operated in Manhattan, from its opening - late '80s /early '90s - to its closing in 2003, not being able to sustain the operating costs of a Manhattan club and its almost futile (wrong in my opinion) decision in early 2000, to compete with modern style pop music Greek night clubs. Thiasos closed its doors in 2003.

**In the Spring of 1974, nearly six months after the Polytechnic uprising, you became part of Theodorakis' newly formed Greek Popular Chorus Of New York. Was that your first time meeting the great composer? What was that experience like? How long did that Chorus last?**

The Greek Popular Chorus of New York was founded in the spring of 1974. For me, it was the catalyst that got me involved in singing for the next 50+ years.

In early spring of 1974, the word was spread by several anti-junta organizations and through the Greek-American media that Melina Merkouri, Jules Dassin and Mikis Theodorakis were in New York inviting everyone to the well-known "Paradise" Greek restaurant in Times Square, in reference to a potential project of a documentary film about the November 1973 student uprising at the Polytechnic.

To a crowd of mostly young Greek-American men and women (and several non-Greeks) Theodorakis announced that he wanted to organize the Choir to participate in an anti-junta documentary called "The Rehearsal", to be produced and directed by Melina Merkouri and Jules Dassin. Later we also learned that besides Melina Merkouri, several other actors and personalities would appear as themselves in the film, informing the world about the dictatorship in Greece. They were Olympia Doukakis, Lillian Herman, Sir Lawrence Olivier, Maximilian Schell, and Arthur Miller.

The idea was applauded by all, and thus, the Greek Popular Chorus was established with 50 of the participants signing up as the original "founding" members. Included was the well-known young composer Yiannis Glezos who was pursuing studies in New York at the time.

Rehearsals of the songs for the film stated right away and continued for several days with Theodorakis, conducting with Glezos on the piano that had been brought into the hall.

It is hard to describe the emotional state of all of us during that period. My personal feelings, can best be described by this characteristic incident.

At some point, Jules Dassin approached me and asked me to portray a police officer of the Junta for a scene in the film. Surprised and shocked, I politely refused for I COULD NOT bring myself to represent a Junta character,



even though I knew it was only for the purpose of the documentary.

Besides its participation in the documentary, the Chorus gave its first public recital on April 14th 1974 at the ELLINIS Greek movie theater on Broadway in Astoria (to a full house-standing room only anti-junta crowd) under the direction of Mikis Theodorakis.

NEO sat down to talk with Maninakis about his remarkable journey and his continued travels in the world of Greek music.

**I moved to New York in the early 90s. I remember going to the "boites" like Thiasos which were jam-packed every weekend. And I would hear the great stories about the Mikrokosmos club and Akroama. It was such a great time for anyone who loved Rebetiko and Entekhno and anything that wasn't simply "Laiko." But, sadly, it just doesn't happen any more. At least on a "regular destination" basis. Why do you think that scene sort of died out?**

The New York "boite era" lasted for more than one quarter of a Century (26 years) and involved five boites in total. Historically this is about the average "duration" of every "music and song" trend in Greece. This is not to say that the cost of operating a boite style music club and various other reasons were not factors in eventually ending the boite era in New York, as we knew and enjoyed it in the 80s and 90s.

To put this in context, the boite era started in 1977 with "Lazos Boite" (35-06 Ditmars Blvd in Astoria) established by guitarist/singer Serafim Lazos. In 1981 I bought the rights from Lazos with my friend Stavros Spandonidis and we established the



Shortly after that Mikis returned to Europe – I think Paris- and the Chorus continued to perform in New York, Boston and Pennsylvania under the direction of Yiannis Glezos . By that time, Elly Paspalas and myself were established as the soloists of the chorus. As such, we started to gain sufficient recognition as singers in the Greek American community.

When Glezos returned to Greece in 1975, 18 year old Elly Paspalas – a voice student at the Manhattan School of Music – took over the direction, continuing the Choir's progressive performances with concert tributes, at various venues, including Carnegie Recital Hall and university campuses.

In conclusion, it would take many pages to enumerate in detail the cultural activities and contributions of the Greek Popular Chorus, from its establishment in 1974 to its end in 1978.

**How would you summarize it in general terms?**

The Greek Popular Chorus was a dynamic progressive and democratic minded group of Greek, Greek-American, and American young men and women with cultural and anti-junta political, non-partisan orientation. After the Polytechnic uprising and the Turkish invasion of Cyprus, the Chorus organized and /or participated in concerts against the military Junta and in support of the struggle of the Cypriot people against Turkey.

As such, the Chorus also contributed greatly to the Cultural upgrading of the Greek-American Community that led to the New York BOITE ERA of the 80s and 90s.

**In the mid 1990s you were a big part of releasing the pivotal album/CD “Cafe Aman Amerika” a unique collection of songs of the early 20th century Greek-American diaspora that were rarely heard before. What was that experience like? Was there a big interest, at the time, from academia revealing these unique treasures in American history?**

At the risk of sounding somewhat “self applauding”, I must say that, in many ways, the “Cafe Aman America” album was one of the most significant and ambitious Greek-American produced music projects in the second half of the 20th Century. The visionary idea belongs to the late Michael Adam (1957-2023) – at that time a friend, journalist, and colleague radio producer at Cosmos FM -91.5 FM in New York. Briefly, the rest of the story goes like this...

Dino Pappas, a retired Greek-American police officer in Detroit had a vast collection – nearly ten thousand tapes and records – with songs composed and recorded by the Greek immigrants in America in the 1920s, '30s. and '40s. Keenly aware of their historical value and significance, he did not want them lost and

wasted, and contacted Michael Adams for ideas. Michael was so impressed that he called me at the Cosmos FM studios to listen to some of the tapes Pappas had provided to him.

Despite the survival problems faced by these early immigrants, their songs, with humor, satire, and unique creativity, demonstrated a remarkable sensitivity and awareness of historic world events, as well as their personal day to day struggles and experiences - The Great Depression, the Prohibition Era, nostalgia of the homeland, working conditions, gambling etc.



My immediate instinctive and enthusiastic reaction was “Michael we must record and revive this treasure of songs”. He replied with the smile “Why do you think I called you here”? That was the defining moment that the “Cafe Aman America” album idea was born.

Our next step was to find and organize a group of musicians that could carry out the project. By the fall of 1994, through Michel's efforts and my connections with musician colleagues, we had more than a dozen talented and experienced first and second generation Greek, Cypriot and USA born musicians join the group. At the same time, Michael Adams - as Executive Producer - had succeeded in securing the financial backing of New Jersey based Music World Productions, a Greek-American owned production company. The band worked tirelessly rehearsing and recording - sometimes until the early morning hours - and finally the CAFÉ AMAN AMERIKA album, as we know it today, was released in May of 1995.

The album contained 14 carefully selected songs with the most “GRINGLISH” (Hellenized words of the English language used by the immigrants) to portray the life of the immigrants at the time.

A most representative example is the song, “GIATI GLYKO MOU SWEETHERAT”. One specific line of the lyrics is very characteristic: “να με πηλώνεις τόσο sweetheart Ααααχ για τί γλυκό μου right. αυτά δεν είναι (honest to God) ανεστε γκοντ (strike) να σου ζητάω έ να φιλάκι και να μου λες πως έχεις σπράκι bla ck and white στο ξαναλέω date every nig ht Να βγαίνεις hard”.

Although the group did not appear much in the United States, it was invited and had several acclaimed performances in Greece and Europe. From July to October 1997, the

performances of CAFÉ AMAN AMERIKA included concerts in Thessaloniki, the Herodion and Lecabettus theaters in Athens, as well as the concert halls of Utrecht, Holland and Brussels, Belgium.

Recently on April 5, 2025, honoring the 30th year of the Café Aman Amerika album, I had the opportunity - in cooperation with the St. Constantine and Helen Greek Community of Jackson Heights - to organize a sold out concert presenting the same songs in Astoria, with the participation of two of the original members of the group Glafkos Kontemeniotis and Lefteris Bournias.

**What's unique about your bio - that many folks might not know - is that you're trained engineer and a Professor Emeritus of Engineering at SUNY. Was music always part of your life? Did you formally train in it? At what point did you realize that you could do this as a parallel career?**

Regrettably, except for some introductory lessons in Byzantine music and a small number of private voice lessons in the '80s, I never had any formal musical training. Today, I deeply regret not learning a musical instrument and not mastering Byzantine music at its fullest.

In retrospect, recalling my youth, I can say that music was always finding a way to be in my life. For example, I fondly remember my first grade teacher on the island of Chios playing the violin and asking me to sing in front of the of the class.

Later, in the mid '50s, when we had to move to the island of Lemnos - at that time we had no radio at home and television was not yet around on the island - I was learning songs by listening to the ones played during the intermission at a nearby open space and summer movie theater near my house, by opening the windows.

My public singing started with the Greek Popular Chorus in 1974 and later, much more so, as a singer at the various Boites of New York, the Cafe Aman America orchestra, and my own band “Mikrokosmos Ensemble”, which I formed in the late '90s, performing in concerts and Greek Community social events in various venues including many universities all over the country.

Perhaps what is least known about me is that I have a degree in Physics from Adelphi University. I studied there for 4 years with a soccer scholarship, and completed two graduate degrees in Electrical Engineering at Columbia University in NYC by 1972. In the same year, I started my professional engineering career at a Long Island firm in charge of a design group, and, in 1979, I made perhaps the most important and critical personal decision that defined my career and my life to date.



You see, with a 9 to 5 job in the industry, it was impossible to pursue any kind of a career and my interests in music. Thus, in September 1979, I accepted a full-time position in the Engineering Faculty at the State University of New York (Farmingdale Campus) at a 50% reduction of my salary at the engineering firm. Not even for one second have I ever regretted my decision!!

My 41 years at the State University (I took retirement in 2020) - besides the challenge, the rewards, the satisfaction in teaching young people, the experience from serving as Chairman of the Department, and, for a short period, as Dean of the School of Engineering Technology - gave me enough free time to actively pursue in parallel my music interests. All that, in addition to more than 30 years of Byzantine chanting to date, in the Greek Orthodox communities of Astoria and Jackson Heights.

**You still perform as part of the Mikrokosmos Ensemble, which is a wonderful thing for Greek music fans. Are there any performances or shows over the years that have stood out to you as special? Collaborations with other musicians?**

In the fall of 1997, when I returned to New York after the Café Aman America concerts in Greece and Europe, I felt that it was time for me to be open to and pursue additional options in my music career. The owners of "Thiasos", at the time the only remaining "boite style" music Greek club in New York, wanted me to sing there on a regular basis, but I offered to only be available on week days, not on the weekends. My plan was to compete in the music entertainment market, with my own "Mikrokosmos Ensemble" in a twofold direction: Doing concerts - always my most preferred activity - and being available to Greek-American communities for various social events, such as weddings, christenings, dinner dances, festivals, etc. throughout the country.

To date my musical endeavors with "Mikrokosmos Ensemble" have been the most rewarding in terms of artistic creativity, as well as support and acceptance by the public.

Of the many musical presentations/projects one of them stands out and makes me particularly proud. In 1998, I initiated a concert cultural event entitled "From Erotokritos to Axion Esti- From Kornaros to Elytis", presenting the poetry of several well-known Greek poets, including two Nobel Laureates, Kornaros, Fereos, Gatsos, Varnalis, Seferis, Ritsos and Elytis, set to music by world-renowned Greek composers. Besides the songs, the performance includes relevant narrative in and recitation of specific poems in both Greek and English. The sold out premiere of this event was sponsored by "Hephaestus", the Lemnian Philanthropic Association of America and took place in 1998 at the Chian House in Astoria.

Since then we presented it at several US universities - Princeton, Yale, Cornell, Rutgers, Stonybrook, Carnegie Mellon, University of St. Louis - as well as at the International Poetry Forum in Pittsburgh, The Gennadius Library in Athens, on Lemnos island in Greece, in New York City Libraries, and at Greek-American Schools in New York.

**Who are your favorite composers whose work you most love to perform?**

We are very fortunate as Greeks to have many great composers in all styles of music to select from for a performance. Over the years, I have organized and sung in many concert tributes to composers, singers, lyricists and poets, as well as various kinds of song styles and historic occasions. In all cases, when deciding which songs to perform in a concert or to include in the repertoire of a music event, the problem I struggle with is never which songs to "select", but rather which songs to "leave out", as the good choices have always been more than was needed. There are, however, some composers and songs that fit my voice better and style of singing, and I have chosen to perform them more often than others, such as songs by composers Kougioumtzis, Loizos, Zambetas, Xarhakos, Theodorakis, Hatzidakis, as well as many Rebetika composers such as Vamvakaris, Tsitsanis, Mitsakis, Skarvelis, Tountas, and others.

**Do you agree that the age of digital streaming is hugely beneficial for access to "non-Laiko" genres? People can go on Spotify or Apple Music and discover Savvopoulos or Malamas, the early Rebetika works, the classic composers and so many more.**

I believe it is beneficial, yet not being familiar with the specifics of Spotify, I do not have a substantive personal/empirical opinion about it. However, I routinely use youtube to search for various songs for my performances and/or my weekly "Greek Spin" radio show on WNYE- COSMOS 91.5FM every Monday from at 7 to 8pm.

**In looking at the Diaspora in particular, how can we preserve interest in this musical tradition as newer generations become more disconnected from the language and many of the cultural traditions of the Motherland, including music?**

This is the million-dollar question that addresses a real and concerning problem for the Diaspora. Specifically, as far as our musical tradition is concerned, I believe that the key to approaching a solution is by seeking, encouraging, and most importantly achieving direct and active participation of our youth in events that promote and maintain our cultural heritage. In other words, give our youth a real productive role in the various aspects of performing and organizing of these cultural events. Don't just offer them a chance to attend an event, concert, play, etc.), but give them the opportunity to be part of it. Those who have

talent can sing, others can be playing an instrument in the band, be the narrators, recite some lyrics or poetry, create the advertising material, manage the sound, the stage, etc. They will enjoy it and get a sense of "ownership" of it. Being directly involved, they will improve their Greek language skills, their understanding of the meaning of the words so they can interpret them accordingly when they sing or recite them, while inevitably learning the history behind the music. In a way - with my very limited resources - I have implemented this idea in my concerts for at least the last fifteen years, and I know it works.

As Greeks, we have been uniquely blessed with the kind of music tradition that is directly related to our history. Excluding the strictly commercial mass produced pop for the bright light night clubs, invariably behind every other kind of Greek song and musical work created by our composers, there is an historic event, an historic personality, a hero, often a world renowned poet or writer.

Here is some food for thought. Why don't we introduce in the schools of our Greek-American communities a "must take all" course of History Through Music, including performing production management by students? Naturally it will require, vision and a genuine desire, motivation, and commitment from community leaders, parents, teachers, and putting our \$\$ where our self-evident cultural goals are. We know that our Greek-American community has strong financial potential and enough billionaires to implement such a project, in a holistic and sustained fashion, by skillful and knowledgeable professionals.

Dum spiro spero - I As long as Όσο αναπνέω ελπίζω - can breathe I hope.

**To add to your accomplishments, you are now working on a book about that music scene of the 70s and 80s? What can we look forward to?**

I have started this personal project in the fall of 2020. My goal is to describe, through first-hand personal experiences, an era that influenced and enriched the cultural life of the Greek-American community, from the 1970s to today.

The era of the Greek Popular Chorus of New York, The History of the New York Greek Boites, The "Café Aman Amerika" orchestra, and the "Mikrokosmos" band stories, as well other aspects as my personal musical journey in America.

I feel I owe this to myself and all others - friends, colleagues and others I did not get to know- who were part of this journey, and no one would have otherwise written something about.

Hopefully I will be able to finish it by the end of next year.





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με υπερηφάνεια ανακοινώνει ότι η πλειοψηφία των αποφοίτων του έγιναν δεκτοί από τα σχολεία της προτίμησής τους.

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**Συγχαρητήρια στην Διεύθυνση και στο Διοικητικό Συμβούλιο του Σχολείου,  
τους εκπαιδευτικούς και τους γονείς!  
Και εις ανώτερα!!!**

***Congratulations to the School Administration, School Board,  
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Saint Joseph by the Sea  
St. Saviour High School  
Xavier High School  
Moore Catholic High School  
St. Edmunds Preparatory  
Saint Joseph Hill  
Xaverian High School

### PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS

Abraham Lincoln Veterinary Science  
Brooklyn College Academy  
Brooklyn Collegiate Brooklyn HS of the Arts  
City Polytechnic  
HS of Engineering, Architecture & Tech  
Cyberarts Studio High School  
East Brunswick High School  
Magnet School Edward R. Murrow  
Fort Hamilton Honors  
Fort Hamilton Jeffrey Dance  
Fort Hamilton Dramatic Arts Academy  
Fort Hamilton Vocal Music  
Fort Hamilton Zoned  
High School of Economics  
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New Utrecht Honors  
New Utrecht Zone  
Park Slope Collegiate  
HS of Telecommunication  
Tottenville High School  
University Neighborhood  
Urban Assembly School of  
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Poly Prep



# The Crimson Teardrops of Hagia Sophia

by James Terezakis

The sun was setting in the west, casting its shadow on the Theodosian Walls. Built by the Emperor Theodosius in the 5th century, they stood for over 1,000 years, stretching three and half miles long. There was an outer wall, a moat, and then an inner wall, 39 feet high, designed with a combination of 244 towers and 61 gates. These fortifications resisted 23 armies and 17 sieges. In the course of a millennium, they served as a barrier, protecting Europe from countless enemies. Exhausted, the Byzantine army stood silent observing the carnage on the battlefield. Hundreds lay dead. The elite Janissaries were busy taking the dead for proper Muslim burials. Emperor Constantine stood quietly observing this ritual, dressed in full military attire, sporting metal breastplates and metal leg guards with a kettle helmet, sword and knife. Standing next to him, the general in command of the city, Giustiniani Longo.

Giustiniani Longo had come from Chios with 700 Chiotti soldiers and some Genoese officers. Having fought valiantly for 57 days, repelling countless attacks. Having attacked the Turks, and their 70 cannons breaking out of St. Romanus Gate, attacking Orban's cannon. This cannon was 27 feet long, weighing 19 tons, shooting 1,200 pound cannonballs seven times a day. Emperor Constantine turned to Giustiniani Longo, "We have done a masterful job defending our great city against 100,000 Turks."

"Yes, Emperor. And our citizen volunteer force of 25,000 old men, women, and children have done a splendid job repairing the wall and feeding our army." Just then, the Grand Duke appeared, Lucas Notaras. He bent in front of the Emperor, addressing him "Basileus Sebastos." "Any word from the Pope in Rome?" asked Emperor Constantine.

"No, young Sebastos," replied Lucas Notaras.

"I don't understand too well," replied the Emperor, "The states of Venice, Florence, and Genoa, all have armies of 25,000 plus sailors' and reserves. They have had two months to help us and the Pope refuses to help. They were always jealous of our currency and banking system. They sent us a handful of volunteers, 700 Greeks from Chios, led by Genoese officers, 1,500 Cretan warriors and sailors, some Sicilians, and Catalans."

Notaras interrupted, "Sebastos, your coach has arrived with some personal guards. The Emperor and his Duke boarded the coach, took the Mese Road to Pantokrator Monastery, the most modern hospital. This 50+ bed hospital and medical school and library incorporated all the Greco-Roman medical knowledge as well as the knowledge of Alexandria. The hospital was fully functional with a nursing home, outpatient clinic, and a philanthropic wing to help feed and clothe the poor. The Emperor walked in, his entourage behind him. Shouts were heard, "Sevastatos!"



A couple of mortally wounded young soldiers reached out their hands. The Emperor approached gently, put his hand on their forehead, "Yes, my son."

"When I enter Paradise, will I see my mother?"

"Yes, my son. Paradise holds many gifts for us."

Emperor Constantine turned and said, "You have wounded here." The monk quickly responded, "Much blood has been spilled in the defense of Christendom." Lucas Notaras bowed and turned his head. "Basilues, we must go to Hagia Sophia."

The Emperor and Lucas Notaras crossed themselves and boarded the Royal Coach, taking the main road—the "Mese." They rode to the Imperial Gate at Hagia Sophia. The Imperial Gate, standing 23 feet high, was the exclusive entrance of the royal family. The Imperial are, with its shiny bronze doors. Hagia Sophia, the oldest and greatest

cathedral in all of the world. Over a thousand years old, it was 270 feet long and 240 feet wide, standing 180 feet from the ground. Its circular dome was 40 feet wide with 40 windows. Designed by Isidore of Miletus and built by Emperor Justinian. Sporting 104 marble columns taken from the temple of Artemis in Ephesus.

In the South Gallery, a huge mosaic of Christ, flanked by the Virgin Mary, and John the Baptist. The seraphim mosaic represents the six winged angels protecting God's throne.

Emperor Constantine walked slowly to the altar. On one side, the Patriarch Athanasius, and on the other side, the Roman Catholic archbishop, Isiore of Kiev.

This day, he decides to receive communion from Isidore of Kiev, cementing his loyalty to both churches. The parishioners signed themselves, "Doxa to Theo."

The rumors started spreading. The Theodosian Walls were badly falling. The city would fall. The 25 Psalti and 150 Anagnstsal, their voices,

angelic, were singing the divine liturgy of St. John Chrystosome. Their heavenly harmonies were competing with the screams and crying of the elderly infirmed, and children. Many had gone downstairs to the vaults and tunnels, hiding, expecting the worst.

Emperor Constantine, now at the front, seeing Giustiniani Longo, mortally wounded, and his men, panicking, was told there was break in the wall and some traitor had left the "Kreoporta" open, he took his most loyal warriors, took off his royal attire and charged to his death.

The Ottomans ran wild. Blood everywhere. Bodies on the main roads. The choir sang louder. All the locked gates were being hammered open. The great saints of the past were visible at the altar, as Hagia Sophia embraced its Christian lambs and cried crimson teardrops.





## **Congratulations to Michael Gerazounis & Peter Gerazounis**

We are all proud of their achievements  
and we are wishing them happiness and success  
in all their future endeavors

The Gerazounis family has been instrumental in the  
Panchiaki Korais Society and the Chios community in  
USA. We are extremely honored to have Peter serve as  
the President of the society for the last 6 years,  
following on the steps of our past president and his  
late father Stelios Gerazounis.

**Wishing you the best as you continue  
making an impact in your field and in our community!**

**The Panchiaki Korais Society Inc**

**Tel: (718) 224-4846**

**Email: [info@koraisny.org](mailto:info@koraisny.org)**

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A photograph of two men, Peter Gerazounis and Michael Gerazounis, standing in front of a city skyline at night. Peter is on the left, bald with a goatee, wearing a dark suit and light blue shirt. Michael is on the right, with short dark hair, wearing a dark suit and light blue shirt. The background shows a dense city skyline with many lit-up buildings under a dark blue sky.

# The Brothers Gerazounis

## Engineering the Lifeblood of Buildings

**by Dimitri C. Michalakakis**

There are thousands of buildings in every city that need heating, ventilation, air conditioning, plumbing, electricity, fire protection, security, communications, often involving miles of ducts, pipes, wires—and among the largest and most respected firms responsible for the design of the lifeblood of every building is MG Engineering, a private firm based in New York City, but working in over 30 states and Washington D.C.

“We design everything that lives and breathes inside a building,” says Peter Gerazounis, a senior principal of the firm, together with his

brother Michael, the CEO and founding partner 34 years ago. “That includes HVAC, electrical, plumbing, fire protection, life safety systems, and lighting. Our services don’t end with the design – we offer construction administration, sustainability consulting, commissioning and inspections as well.”

Their sister company, MGE Unified Technologies, provides design of low-voltage systems, including IT infrastructure, security, audiovisual, and communication systems. Together, they set a standard that’s made them industry leaders.

“We Engineer Success” isn’t just a tagline—it’s MG Engineering’s trademarked pledge that their design work, culture, and client approach are all built to consistently achieve outstanding, measurable results. “To our clients, it means delivering high-quality engineering designs on time and under budget,” says Peter. “For contractors, architects, and other consultants, it’s about collaboration and reliability—knowing we’ll help solve problems, not create them.” But just as important “creating a workplace where our people—who make it all happen—feel a sense of pride in their work, see clear pathways for career growth, and feel truly at home.”





Michael ringing the opening bell at the NYSE on behalf of the American Heart Association

Among the thousands of projects delivered in the company's history, their portfolio spans a wide range of sectors, and their work has taken them variously from the Bronx Zoo, to New York University, from the Museum of the City of New York, to St. Nicholas Church at Ground Zero, to the offices of Patek Phillipe, and Roc Nation, and Doctors Without Borders.



Peter on 5th Avenue celebrating Greek Independence

Looking out his office window, Michael points out one of the firm's newer projects under construction at 989 Sixth Avenue, and growing at a rate of almost two floors per week, so this residential multi-family condominium will soon top out at 70 stories. And they're making their mark on the Miami skyline as well. The Waldorf Astoria Hotel and Residences is a 100-story, 1.4 million square foot project and when complete will be the city's first "supertall" tower.

But construction isn't limited to new buildings. Most construction actually happens in existing buildings. The average lifespan of a typical office space is about 10 years. That means a typical high-rise building can easily have 5 to 10 projects going on in any year. And their infrastructure often needs to be refreshed or upgraded.

"The beauty of a city like New York, especially for our profession, is the sheer volume of commercial real estate and the steady stream of work it generates," Michael points out. "With the scale, height, and complexity of these buildings, there's a constant demand for skilled professionals to deliver innovative, code-compliant designs."

"The value of what we design can reach up to 50% of any project's budget so that's a pretty

significant scope of work," says Peter. "Electrical, ductwork and piping distribution in hi-rise buildings has serious implications, not just for comfort and function but for life safety purposes. For instance, the fire protection systems must be designed to deliver critical water flow and pressure to allow the fire department to connect its hoses and fight fires."

Not to mention fire alarm systems whose proper operation is essential in high rise buildings. "And it's not always about just alarms going off and flashing," he says. "It's also communication, so if there is some event in the building, the fire warden can notify people in an organized fashion and provide instructions if they need to exit people from the building or they need to stay in place and not panic."

"Every project is different," says Peter, "and if we drive through Manhattan and look up at the skyline, we can probably say we worked in this building, we worked in that building, and there's a story behind every building."

To deliver best-in-class service across a wide range of project types, MG Engineering is structured into specialized teams of up to 15 professionals who move together from project to project. Some teams concentrate on corporate interiors, retail, restaurants, and commercial office buildings, while others



His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros conferring the Offikion of Archon Eftaxias upon Peter

focus on large-scale developments. One dedicated team specializes in healthcare, central plants, and educational facilities. "Each team operates with the capabilities of a small to mid-sized engineering firm," notes Peter. "They build strong working relationships and a sense of camaraderie—offering the close-knit feel of a family, where no one feels like just a number, all while being supported by the full strength of the firm."

"On large-scale projects, our design phase typically takes 10 to 12 months," he explains. "From there, the project moves into bidding and then into construction, which for a high-rise can easily span 30 to 36 months." He contrasts that with the firm's agility on fast-track jobs: "We might get a call this afternoon letting us know drawings are coming Friday, the survey happens Monday, and our full design is due within two to three weeks. The entire project—from bidding to construction to closeout—could be completed in just four to five months." MG Engineering takes great pride in having the resources, flexibility, and experience to successfully execute projects of any scale or timeline.

The rebuilding of St. Nicholas Church and National Shrine at Ground Zero was a years-long journey—both to initiate and to complete—but Michael took great pride in the firm's contributions to this landmark project.



Michael and Peter





Michael and Peter standing in front of the MG Engineering headquarters on 32nd Street



Christopher, Peter, Michael, Steven and Michael Steven

Collaborating with an architect like Santiago Calatrava presents unique engineering challenges in bringing his bold aesthetic vision to life. “Even to a trained eye, when you look around and can’t see where the heating or air conditioning is coming from—and you don’t hear it—but it’s there, seamlessly working in the background, it’s a very rewarding feeling,” he says.

Michael and Peter grew up in Woodside, Queens, sons of Stelios Gerazounis, a chemist with the EPA and an immigrant from Chios, and Magdaline, from neighboring Mytilene. Stelios had come to the U.S. through a student sponsorship by the Panchiaki Korais Society, passing through Ellis Island and determined to build a life in a new world. That legacy clearly took hold.

Michael studied at the Polytechnic Institute of New York (now NYU Tandon), and Peter followed at The Cooper Union. Both brothers excelled in math and science—and though Peter once dreamed of being an architect, he admits, “I didn’t have the artistic talent like my brother. So, I applied my love of math and science into building systems instead.”

Early in his career, Michael was mentored by George and Evans Lizardos, another pair of Greek-American engineering brothers, who gave him his first opportunity and where he learned the importance of not only technical knowledge but also business acumen and relationships.

In 1991, a driven 27-year-old Michael, along with a group of like-minded colleagues,



MG Engineering family following a recent Town Hall



St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church, New York, NY

launched MG Engineering—a fledgling startup that seized every opportunity that came its way. Peter joined the firm shortly after its founding, but soon moved on to gain experience elsewhere. “Actually, I was the first employee laid off,” Peter recalls with a smile. “They were just getting started and could barely pay themselves.” He considers it both a badge of honor and a pivotal moment in his career.

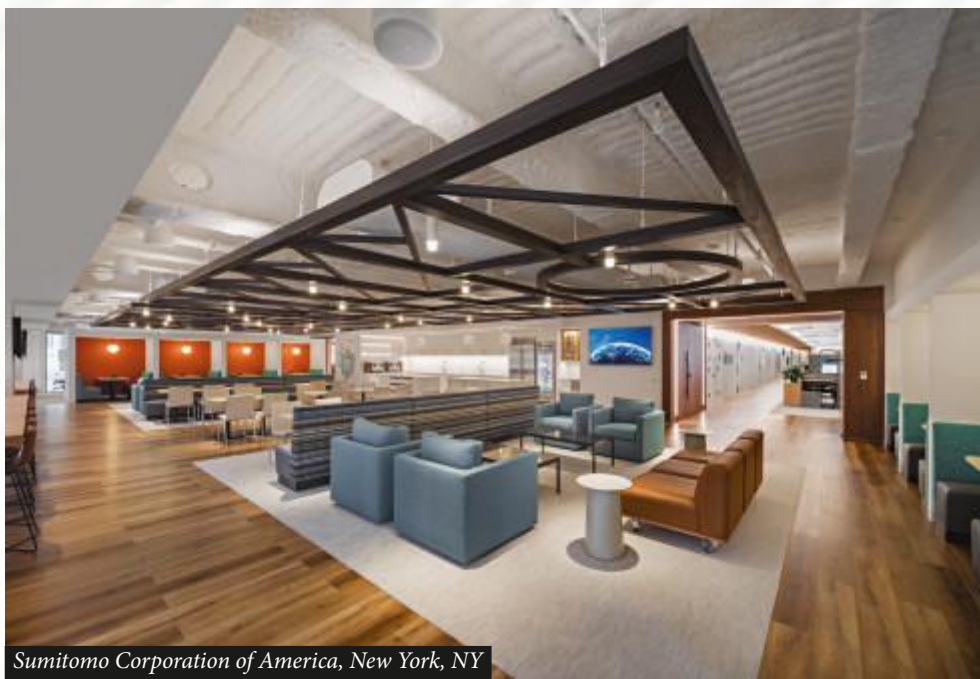
Peter returned in 1993 with valuable skills in computer-aided design and operations strategy, which helped MG Engineering become more efficient and competitive. It wasn’t long before he became a partner. “Michael and the other partners were out hustling for business,” Peter says. “I was the in-house guy—producing, standardizing, streamlining. Thirty years later, I’m still doing that.”

As MG Engineering grew, the senior partnership team that included Michael Marino and Bruce Jaffe, transformed the young firm into an established force in New York’s competitive engineering landscape.





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Today, Michael and Peter are joined by a seasoned group of principals and associate principals who continue to shape the firm's growth and reputation. Following in their footsteps is the next generation—Michael's son, Michael Steven, and Peter's sons, Steven and Christopher—all Lehigh University graduates are now actively building their careers within the company.

"They chose this path on their own, and it's incredibly heartwarming to work alongside your sons," Peter says. "We're spread across three floors—I'm on 12, Steven's on 11, and Chris is on 13—so we might cross paths at the coffee machine, but they each work on separate teams and are carving out their own distinct careers. I keep an eye on them, offer a bit of guidance now and then, but they're doing very well on their own."

While MG Engineering continues expanding its geographic footprint—especially in Florida and the Mid-Atlantic—Michael and Peter remain deeply involved in philanthropy and community service.

Throughout his career, Michael has supported many organizations close to his heart

including The Diabetes Research Institute, Saint Francis Food Pantries, the Torch Foundation, and was the inaugural honoree of the "Hard Hats with Heart" gala, raising over \$250,000 for the American Heart Association.

Peter's civic involvement is a full-time job in itself. He is an active member of the Advisory Board of the Center for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies at Queens College, involved in the organizing of the Annual Greek Independence

parade, serves on the Parish Council of Archangel Michael Church in Port Washington (another MG Engineering design), is a Founder of the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew Foundation, a member of Leadership 100, and was invested as an Archon of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in 2024.

Since 2019 he has been President of the Panchiaki Korais Society, the very organization that brought his father to America. Under Peter's leadership, the society has given away over \$125,000 in scholarships and donations just this past year, including \$30,000 in grants to parishes with Greek language programs, scholarships to 25 students, contributions to Chios' institutions including the nursing home, the historic Korais Library, the Chios Philharmonic Society and the construction of a greenhouse for adults with

disabilities on the island.

"Our faith is the cornerstone of our heritage," he says. "And while our identity as Greek-Americans can't be taken from us, we can easily lose it if we're not careful. One of the greatest gifts I can give my children is what my father tried to give me: a deep love and understanding of who I am and where I came from."

"It's nice that the kids crack eggs at Easter and feel Greek, but if you ever lose the connection with our faith, language and history it's hard to ever to ever get it back. Perhaps it is inevitable, but I'd rather not have it be on my watch."

And despite the passing of decades, both brothers still carry the same energy that fueled MG Engineering in its earliest days.

"We still feel young," Michael says with a grin. "And the best chapters are yet to be written."



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# The Hellenic Initiative Summer Youth Academy Empowers Underprivileged Children Through Sports

This past May, neighborhoods across the Attica region were energized by the arrival of the THI Summer Youth Academy, the basketball camp for underprivileged youth organized by The Hellenic Initiative (THI). With the support of local municipalities and community organizations, families were informed about the upcoming camp, organized by THI in collaboration with Eurohoops.

As part of the Academy's expanded outreach efforts this year, the initiative was named the Giant Heart Roadshow—a dynamic, on-the-ground activation sponsored by Novibet. The Roadshow brought the spirit and message of the Academy directly into the communities, generating excitement and strong participation at the local level.

A custom-wrapped van featuring a mobile basketball hoop the neighborhoods of Tavros, Moschato, Nea Smyrni, Ilion, Marousi and Kifisia, offering children a chance to shoot hoops and learn about the Academy. Parents were introduced to the Academy's vision, which emphasizes not only basketball but also games and workshops designed to build confidence, character, and practical life skills.



Observers at the event for THI's Summer Youth Academy organized by Novibet's The Giant Heart Roadshow saw some dazzling basketball play, prompting thoughts of how many of the Academy's participants are future NBA or European stars

The main camp will take place at Leonteios School in the Athens neighborhood of Patissia, running from June 30 to July 25, 2025. Participation is free, and no prior basketball experience is required. The school's high-quality facilities will be transformed into a dynamic, inclusive space for sports, learning, and creativity. The program consists of two two-week sessions (Monday to Friday, 9:00 AM – 4:00 PM), with over 100 children participating in total.



Lina Koromantzou, Novibet's Senior Corporate Responsibility & Communications Specialist, at left, and Michael Prinztos, Greece, Country Head for THI, at right, present a child with a gift as part of the Roadshow's PlayStation giveaway initiative

"The Giant Heart Roadshow brings the values of the THI Summer Youth Academy to the neighborhoods of Attica. We give children the space to dream, play, and grow. We are proud to be part of it," said Konstantinos Papaloukas, Eurohoops Head of Strategy.

The Roadshow concluded on May 31 with a festive gathering of children, parents, and even delighted grandparents at the athletic fields and courts adjacent to the Workers' Housing facility of the Municipality of Kifissia—one of several locations renovated by Novibet in recent years as part of its Giant Heart initiative.

Families and neighbors watched enthusiastic children 'Dare to Dream' about their basketball future in Kifissia on May 31



Christoforos Bozatzidis, Chief Marketing Officer at Novibet, stated: "Supporting the THI Summer Youth Academy marks another important step in the journey of Giant Heart. Sports are a powerful driver of inclusion and empowerment, especially for children who don't start on a level playing field. We are proud to stand by their side, giving them the opportunity to grow, be inspired, and shape their future."

Founded in 2012, THI is the only global non-profit organization that unites Greeks around the world around philanthropy and investing in the future of Greece. Since its founding, THI has raised more than \$38 million and has grown to be the largest Greek Diaspora organization in the world.

George P. Stamas, THI Board President, noted: "THI has learned

that success in building a New Greece is facilitated by connecting directly with the people of Greece – including the children who will be the main beneficiaries of our efforts.

The Giant Heart Roadshow van brought the portable basket – and neighborhood children brought their game to the outreach event for THI's Summer Youth Academy



We are delighted to be part of outreach efforts like the Roadshow that tell young people: Dare to Dream."

Nikos Stathopoulos, THI Board Member and Chairman of the THI Summer Youth Academy, added: "The 2025 Academy builds on our belief that every child deserves access to opportunity, inspiration, and a supportive community. This year, we're going bigger—reaching more kids, expanding our impact, and inviting everyone to be part of this movement for change."

For more informations THI's website is [thehellenicinitiative.org](http://thehellenicinitiative.org)

Bird's eye view of one of the numerous sports courts renovated by Novibet for municipalities in the Attica region







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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

## A Lifechanging Search for a Greek Pirate on Hydra



### Memoir details Author Shelley Dark's quest to uncover the past

Australian Author Shelley Dark has been a teacher, a mother, a garden designer, and a self-proclaimed "beach wanderer with an iPhone". After her marriage to her husband John, she became a cattle rancher. But she hadn't anticipated becoming a writer. But the fates—and DNA—had other ideas.

The first time anyone mentioned the word "writer" to her, came after she and her husband had traded Queensland's Granite Belt for the Sunshine Coast.

"I became 'Instagram tragic,'" she said, with her signature wit. She loved capturing images of the dawn and posted them on social media. The she posted them with increasingly longer captions. When her followers told her she should write a book, she didn't give it any credence. Until more recently.

Twenty years ago, their son had been filming a TV show near the Snowy Mountains of Australia, where an infamous Greek pirate from Hydra—Ghikas Voulgaris—had been a landowner. Someone from the local historical society brought this news to his attention. At the first opportunity, he went home with startling news: John was descended from the pirate. He asked, 'Are we Greek, Dad?'

Until that point, John had no idea he was Greek. "If anyone knew, they kept it to themselves. Ghikas had been quietly erased, most likely because of the convict past—things were different in those days, and it was probably considered a stain. Far more desirable for your ancestor to have been a free settler. So when our son (who was in his twenties at the time) shared the news, it was the first time any of us had heard about it."

"John was skeptical, but I was hooked from that second. I started digging. I went full-on forensic detective." Her interest grew as she learned that in 1829, Voulgaris, her husband's great-great-grandfather, was one of only seven Greek pirates who narrowly escaped the gallows to become one of Australia's first Greek convicts, and the only one to leave descendants. Dark devoured books about Greece, read death certificates and trial records. Then she enlisted the assistance of a genealogist from Athens. "I was intrigued not only by the fact that we had a pirate in the family, but also a vastly wealthy ship owning family, at a time when Hydra was the center of Greek naval power."

Questions swirled in her head. "I started to wonder if criminal blood ran through my children's veins. I had so many questions, more specifically I was drawn to the mystery of it. Why had he been erased from the family history?" She was determined to uncover the truth.

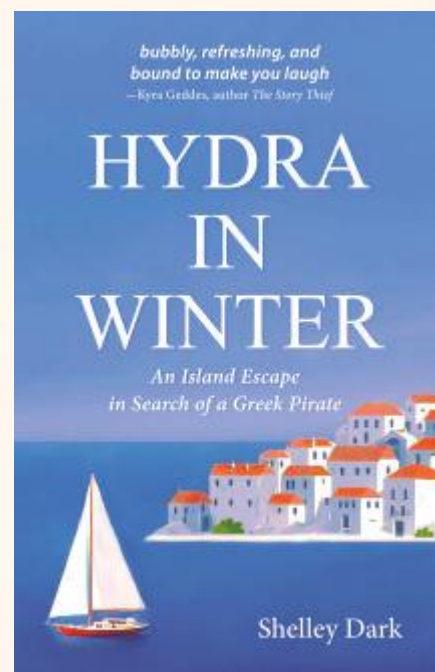
Then at Christmas that year, her family gifted her a plane ticket to Greece, and she set out solo on a mission to find out what happened on Hydra.

She'd never been to Greece or Hydra, and didn't speak Greek, but Dark was not about to let that deter her. Though she enjoyed traveling with her husband and friends, this was a different experience. "When you travel with someone, you share it. But when you're alone, you absorb. You notice things. Talk to

strangers. You follow your instincts," she added. "Honestly, I didn't travel alone. Ghikas was with me every step of the way."

In the span of her two-week stay, everything changed. "People on Hydra had head whispers about the pirates but no one knew the details. They were as intrigued—and as clueless about them—as me." She said the locals were "cautious but kind" and gracious. "Once they saw I was there to listen, they welcomed me. They cooked for me, guided me, and the archivists were extremely helpful."

Soon, Dark found herself slowing into the island's rhythm. It was winter, and in the off-season, the island wasn't crowded. She leaned into the storied island's vibe and let it transform her. There, as she meandered the twisted lanes, she found a new path in life—likely captured by the spell that inspired by the island's legendary writers, like Leonard Cohen and Charmian Clift. She said the story came about rather quickly, culminating years of research, writing in volunteer positions, and even photography. "Once I



started writing, I couldn't stop." She added that upon retirement, she'd felt like she'd lost her identity. But "writing gave me purpose, community, and an unexpected third act."

Hydra in Winter: An Island Escape in Search of a Greek Pirate (Shelley Dark)



Publications, November 2024) is a travel memoir about that research trip. Her journals and notes chronicle her quest, revealing a whimsical, light-hearted style that captures the heart of her readers. Through her beautiful prose and vivid descriptions, we follow her steps through Hydra.

She recently launched the book at Melbourne's Hellenic Museum and has been invited to speak at festivals and libraries. "People write to me saying it made them laugh, cry, phone their grandmother, or book a trip." You may discover that you to pack your bags, too.

Hydra in Winter dominated the #1 spot in at least one Amazon Australia category, and sometimes all—Travel Writing, Humor Essays, Solo Travel, or Travel Tips—from December 2024 through March 2025. It was also nominated as a Notable Book for 2025 by one of Australia's top literary critics, Samuel Bernard, in Australia's national newspaper, The Weekend Australian.

Dark said that after all the research, and subsequent trips to Malta and Ireland (where Ghikas' wife hailed), she

ultimately couldn't connect all the dots, and there wasn't enough information for a biography. So after six years of digging, questioning, studying writing craft, drafting and editing, she's written a historical novel based on the pirate's life and misdeeds, called Son of Hydra. "It took a lot longer, but I had to get it right."

The novel opens after the start of the Greek War of Independence, when Ghikas is a naive 15-year-old. "He made a mistake that cost him everything, is tried for piracy in Malta, held in Portsmouth hulk." Ghikas was exiled to a penal colony in faraway Australia and likely performed hard labor. "In New South Wales, no one knows who he is or cares. But that's when his real story begins." She said it's about "hubris, exile, loss of identity, patriarchal society, survival, male friendships, and a fierce Irish orphan named Mary, who shows him that wealth and power are not the same thing as love."

The novel is slated for release this fall. Dark continues to write. "Mary's also tapping her foot, waiting for her turn. It's in the works. "And more memoirs. And naturally, The Cream Bum Lover's Guide to Australia," she said with a chuckle.

Hydra in Winter: An Island Escape in Search of a Greek Pirate is available in Greece at Hydra Historical Museum Archive and elsewhere on all platforms. Don't miss it.

Happy reading! 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 1st novel. mariakaramitsos.com*



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# FLYING NORTH FOR WINTER

by Dean Kalimniou

A chilling, fell wind sweeps across the ashen paving stones. Pedestrians raise their collars and clutch at their jackets in order to entrap the last vestige of warmth within them. It is so cold that the smell of the hecatombs of meat sizzling within the restaurants flanking the square barely keeps pace with the speed of travel of the sound of piped Greek music permeating their walls, instead, expiring at their threshold.

It is June in Melbourne and the sky is grey. During this month, Greek Melbournians dispense with their usual greeting customs. There is no «Πότε θα πάτε κάτω» whereas Peloponnesians will betray their place of origin by asking instead, «Πότε θα πάτε απάνω». Most of them will ask «Τι κανονίσατε;» or «Πόσο φεύγετε;» to be offered. Instead, in the month of June, Greek Melbournians of a certain age greet each other urgently with a question: «Χάλαου,» or even a «Χαβαγιού λαβ; Γκουντ;» to be heard among them when they meet each other. There is no «τι κάνετε;» or «Γεια σας,» providing an interesting commentary on their conception of their geographic position.



A statue of Icarus which used to stand in Melbourne Airport

«Την άλλη εβδομάδα,» «αυτό το ονίκεντ,» χαρτιά,» they shrug their shoulders in sympathy, as for each of them, those terrible words have their own personal meaning and it is partially for the sake of those dreaded «τα χαρτιά» comes to pass. Upon hearing the words «να τ'ακτοποιήσω τα χαρτιά,» are some of the most common responses and then they all make plans to meet each other, somewhere, if possible, but only after an important event, referred to with furrowed brow as «be these tax returns, gifts of land in specie, powers of attorney or innumerable other incomprehensible forms, that they are attempting their flight in the first place.

On the odd occasion, their interlocutor will answer their question with a disconsolate: «Such uttered blasphemies barely rate a response and it is customary to back away from the ranter slowly while muttering: «ΚΔεν πά

ω εγώ σ'αυτή τη σκατόχωρα.» Once in a while, especially in my neck of the woods, the questioner will be assailed with the response: «Νταζιμάτα. Καλά νά'στε.» Only just managing to suppress the expression of incredulous horror that invariably floods their faces, the original questioners provide the response that independently of their leaders' will. The coffee as once generally employed only when hearing and cake shops, the clubhouses and the nightclubs of Greek Melbourne are brimming with life again. Asked how they fared in the Motherland, the elderly shake their heads and launch into detailed analyses of all the bureaucratic faults of the state of Greece, the degeneration in the moral fibre of its citizens, and most notably, the absence of a "system." They also seem to be bemused by modern Greek summer holiday customs, whereby modern Greeks, while on vacation, dispense with ordinary greetings and instead ask each other: «Αλληνες.» Έτους «δώνουμε ξερά καρδιά» κι αυτοί το μόνο που μας ρωτάνε είναι: «Έρθες; Πότε φεύγεις;» Άχρηστοι άνθρωποι (this is a Greek-Australian verb that denotes the act of barbequeing) Τι να πεις για αυτούς τους αχάϊρους; Όταν έρχονται εδώ τους μπαμψάκιζουμε, attaching special significance to the exact amount of times one has immersed themselves within the briny waters of the Aegean. But most of all, they rail against what they perceive to be a lack of reciprocity in hospitality. As one elderly returnee once remarked to me: «Πόσα μπάνια έκανες φέτος;», Of course, the fact that said gentleman was attempting for the fifth time to obtain what he believed to be an equitable division of his family's agricultural property, may account for the somewhat chilly reception he may have received.

Come July, the morning frost broods upon the roof tiles of Melbournians like a burgeoning tax debt. In the great meeting places of the Greeks, our compatriots are thin on the ground. During this month, Greek Melbournians dispense with their usual greeting customs. There is no «They then regaled each other with stories of the woe of unrequited exile: So and so couldn't leave because at the last minute they discovered they had a heart condition, someone else couldn't leave because the money they had earmarked for their travel had to be transformed into an emergency loan for their children, someone else had a death in the family ... They shake their heads sadly and intone in unison, both in consolation and pious hope: «Καλά, ακόμα εδώ είσαι;» «Δεν έφυγες ακόμα;» «Τι περιμένεις;» to be offered. Instead, in the month of July Greek Melbournians of a certain age greet each other anxiously with the question: «Χάλαου,» or even a «Χαβαγιού λαβ; Γκουντ;» to be heard among them when they meet each other. There is no «τι κάνετε;» or «Γεια σας,» Δεν πειράζει...Του χρόνου πια, του χρόνου.....».

Such customs do not pass the second generation by, except that it is those who have left us who continue to taunt us, via the social media, posting impossibly impeccably constructed scenes of luxurious languor amidst deep blue seas and pebbled beaches, or photographs of Wellness Centres purveying «Ancient Greek Massage» captioned thusly: «Omg. Santorini is to DIE for. I can't believe you're not here.» Here the customary response in this instance, is an optional choice between: «You deserve it koukla/koukle» or, «Omg. Zileuwbad.»

I once considered forging a new custom by posting by way of response, a photograph of me standing in line at my grandmother's local IKA in Pallene, waiting to collect her pension but she has now migrated to places celestial and eternal and all my thoughts of flight are now invariably connected with an understanding that I no longer have a home to go to. I thus execrate and excoriate Santorini and all its ersatz connotations, massages and mud-masks included, out of the vilest of motives: sour grapes.

Come September, and the organized Greek community of Melbourne slowly thaws and emerges from its hibernation, as all of its presidents return one by one to resume control of their organizations' affairs, for the thought that these could run independently of their leaders' will. The coffee shops, the clubhouses and the nightclubs of Greek Melbourne are brimming with life again. Asked how they fared in the Motherland, the elderly shake their heads and launch into detailed analyses of all the bureaucratic faults of the state of Greece, the degeneration in the moral fibre of its citizens, and most notably, the absence of a "system." They also seem to be bemused by modern Greek summer holiday customs, whereby modern Greeks, while on vacation, dispense with ordinary greetings and instead ask each other: «Αλληνες.» Έτους «δώνουμε ξερά καρδιά» κι αυτοί το μόνο που μας ρωτάνε είναι: «Έρθες; Πότε φεύγεις;» Άχρηστοι άνθρωποι (this is a Greek-Australian verb that denotes the act of barbequeing) Τι να πεις για αυτούς τους αχάϊρους; Όταν έρχονται εδώ τους μπαμψάκιζουμε, attaching special significance to the exact amount of times one has immersed themselves within the briny waters of the Aegean. But most of all, they rail against what they perceive to be a lack of reciprocity in hospitality. As one elderly returnee once remarked to me: «Πόσα μπάνια έκανες φέτος;», Of course, the fact that said gentleman was attempting for the fifth time to obtain what he believed to be an equitable division of his family's agricultural property, may account for the somewhat chilly reception he may have received.

Scathing assessment of Greece and Greeks notwithstanding, the aforementioned gentleman's ire invariably begins to wane towards the end of the Australian Summer, (at which time he is secretly researching the cost of tickets to Greece) to be completely dissipated at the coming of Autumn at which time he, like so many others of his ilk, develops vacation negativity amnesia and having once more been lured by the call of the homeland, attends his local travel agent to once more enact his escape from his exile. From this moment on, until the month of June, it is customary for him to greet all those that he meets with these words: Τό 'κλεισα το «τικέτο». Σε τρεις μήνες φεύγω.»

This then is the month of the Greek Melbournians as antipodean migratory birds, flying north for the Winter. Whether we remain in exile awaiting our Winter of discontent to be made glorious Summer, or not, one thing is certain. Our antipodean hypostasis, is one of constant physical and mental travel between our place of abode and our place of origin. And each voyage, is one of return.



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technique, timing—reflects that heritage.

This summer, a beloved tradition from the Greek islands is crossing the Atlantic and landing in the historic heart of America’s capital. On July 20—National Ice Cream Day—Yala Greek Ice Cream will open its doors in Georgetown, Washington, D.C., becoming the first shop in the United States to serve truly authentic Greek ice cream.

Made with farm-fresh milk and cream and sourced from both Greek producers and the best local farms, Yala’s ice cream is rich, creamy, and intensely flavorful. It’s the kind of ice cream you find on summer nights in a Greek island square—simple, bold, and unforgettable.



Customers can enjoy their scoops in waffle cones, pints, or cups with toppings like Greek honey, cherry and apricot spoon sweets, Mediterranean chocolate, and traditional Greek biscuit crumbs.

Located at 3143 N St NW in Georgetown, Yala Greek opens with a week-long celebration, welcoming D.C. locals, tourists, and Greek-Americans alike to experience a true taste of Greece. For Chrys Kefalas and his team, this is about more than just dessert—it’s about honoring the past, embracing heritage, and sharing the sweetness of Greek culture with a new generation.

From Rhodes to Washington, a new chapter of Greek tradition is being written—one delicious scoop at a time.

Follow the journey at [yalagreekicecream.com](http://yalagreekicecream.com) or on Instagram and TikTok @yalagreekicecream.

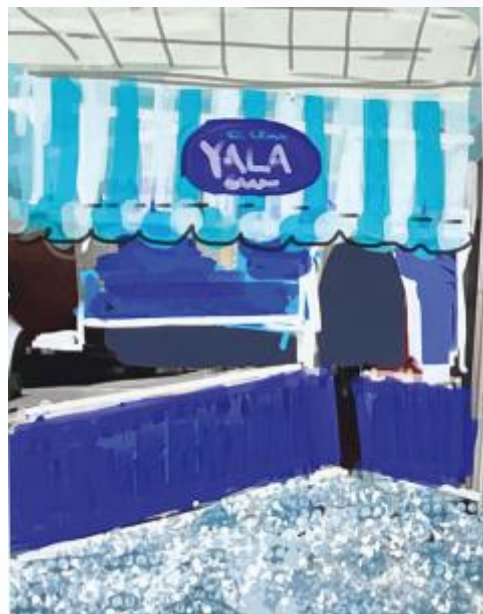


Yala’s menu will feature classic American flavors like cookies and cream and mint chip, but the heart of the shop is undeniably Greek. Highlights include:

- Pistachio Odyssey – A nod to Aegean pistachios
- Yia Mas – Creamy Greek yogurt with wild cherries
- Kataifi – Inspired by traditional baklava with crunchy phyllo
- Yia Yia’s Karamela – Burnt caramel finished with Greek sea salt
- Greek Blue, Summer – A swirl of blueberries, lemon curd, and Papou’s Promise vanilla
- American Dream – A transatlantic blend of Greek vanilla and Choco-Yala with rich chocolate crunch and ribbons of white chocolate

For founder Chrys Kefalas, a proud Greek-American and well-known Washingtonian, Yala is more than a business—it’s a deeply personal tribute to his roots and to his grandfather (Papou), who immigrated to the U.S. from Greece in the 1960s and ran a restaurant in Baltimore for many years. It was there that Chrys learned about hospitality, resilience, and the enduring spirit of *filoxenia*.

“This is our legacy,” says Kefalas. “Just as Greek yogurt revolutionized American grocery stores, I believe Greek ice cream will redefine how people experience dessert. But above all,





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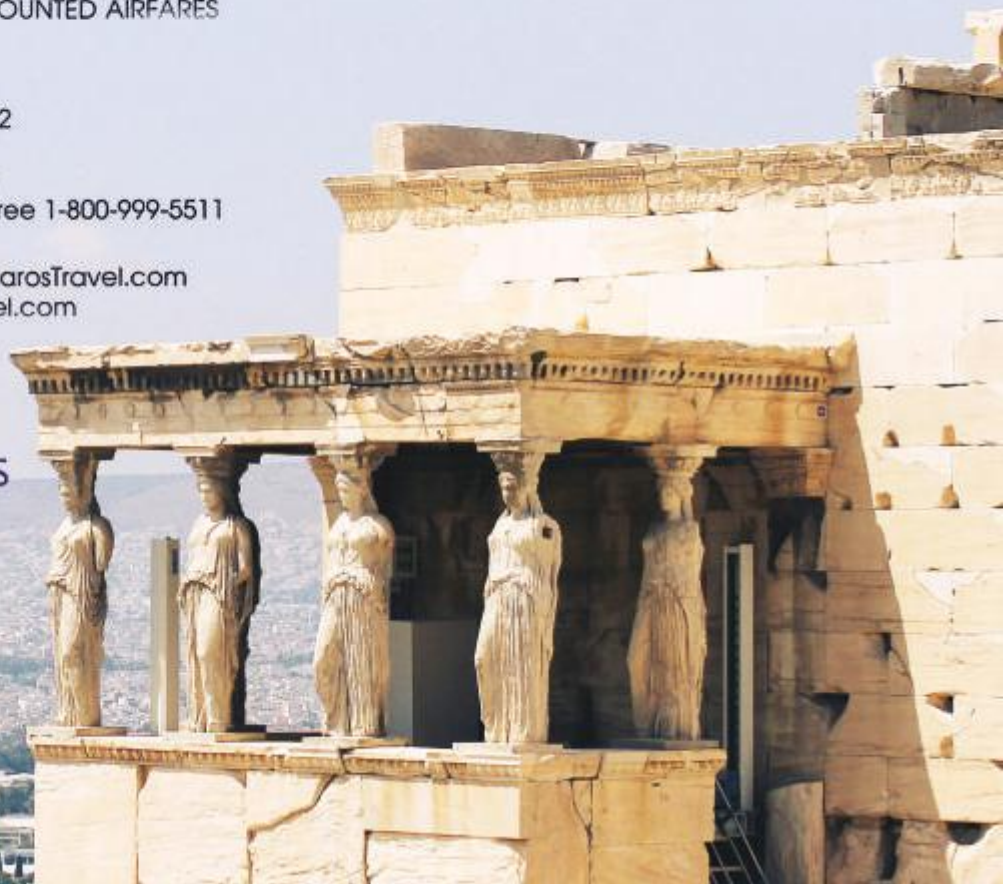
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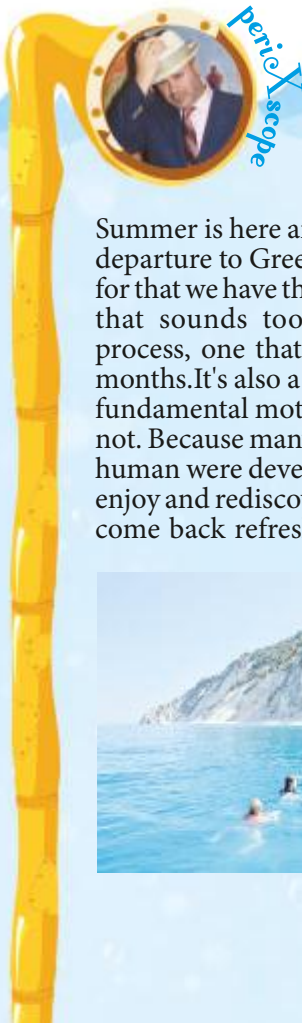
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# Happy (Greek) Summer to all!

Summer is here and we are all waiting for the day of our departure to Greece and Cyprus. It's not just a vacation, for that we have the Caribbean, it's a kind of rebirth and if that sounds too dramatic, let's say a rejuvenation process, one that will keep us running for another 11 months. It's also a reconnection with our roots, with our fundamental motherland, whether we are born there or not. Because many if not most of the things that make us human were developed there. So you all have a nice trip, enjoy and rediscover your real humanity while there and come back refreshed and better! You deserve that and



our country, the US, deserves it too. The world is in a bad shape again, wars, genocides, famines and hatred are in the forefront again. Now, more than ever perhaps, it's Hellenism that will come to the rescue!

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

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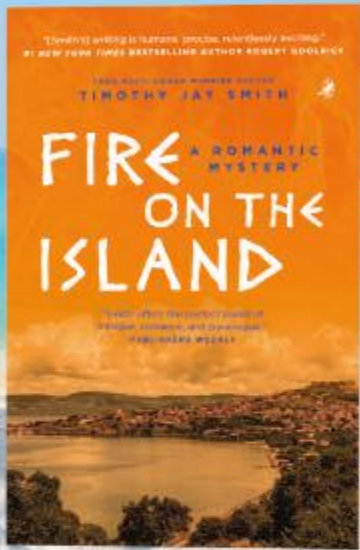
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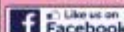
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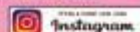
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# Oscar nominee Lorraine Bracco of 'Goodfellas' is having 'More Fun' than ever before

by Markos Papadatos



Academy Award nominee Lorraine Bracco ("Goodfellas") chatted about starring in the new Netflix film "Nonnas," which debuted at No. 1. In "Nonnas," after the loss of his mother, Joe Scaravella (played by Vince Vaughn) risks everything to honor her by opening an Italian restaurant with a group of local grandmothers as the chefs. This movie is based on a true story.

## Bracco on 'Nonnas'

On her new movie "Nonnas," Bracco said, "it was great fun to make. We all got along. We all had a lot of laughs together. Vince, God bless him, was a saint with all of us, old ladies." On Mother's Day weekend, Netflix audiences skipped the prix fix brunch and went straight to the Sunday ragù, making the Vince Vaughn-led "Nonnas" —the most-watched English film of the week with 15.3 million views. "They just told us it's the No. 1 Netflix movie in the world. How cool is that?," Bracco exclaimed.

## Playing Roberta in 'Nonnas'

On her character Roberta, Bracco said with a sweet laugh, "I enjoy that she was a sourpuss. I thought this role was a lot of fun to play, and that she really didn't get along with everybody, so I liked that. You never meet my kids in this movie, but you never know what is going to happen," she added.

## Working with the cast of actors

On working with the cast, Bracco said, "I loved

working with Susan Sarandon; she's a great broad. Susan really is... she is smart, beautiful, and loving. She is really a great woman. Talia Shire was magnificent, and so was Brenda Vaccaro. It was an incredible cast of women, and all of us together have an incredible body of work," she noted.

"The boys loved that, and they wanted to hear stories about all the movies that we made, and the actors and directors that we worked with. The boys were a lot of fun with us," she admitted.

On working with Joe Manganiello, she exclaimed, "Joe is a great guy, and also he is very handsome."

"Also, Vince Vaughn is a great guy... he is delicious," she added.

On the lessons learned from this screenplay, Bracco said, "This screenplay taught me that I do know how to cook, and that still pleases me."

## Bracco on Joanne Trattoria at the Upper West Side

Most recently, Bracco did a media segment (that aired on Access Hollywood, hosted by Mario Lopez) with Joe Manganiello at Joanne Trattoria at the Upper West Side of New York, which is owned by Joe Germanotta, Lady Gaga's father. "It was fun," Bracco exclaimed about Joanne Trattoria. "Lady Gaga's dad, Joe, is very fun. Joe is very nice and he's a lot of fun. He made us all kinds of food: pasta, pizza, and eggplant meatballs, which I loved. The table was full! Joe had everything for us. It was very nice that they let us in," she added.

On her future "I have a couple of things in the fire. Nothing is settled or confirmed yet. I am not worried. Projects come in left and right now."

On the title of the current chapter of her life, she revealed, "More Fun." On the best thing about being her age at this stage of her life, she said with a sweet laugh, "I get up every morning."

On her daily motivations, she disclosed, "I'm good, I'm healthy, I'm happy, and my garden is looking great. I am going to plant my vegetables soon, so I'm very happy because there are all good things in my life," she said.

## Advice for young and emerging actors

For young and aspiring actors, Bracco said, "Trust yourselves and believe in yourselves. Keep going even if it's hard."

## Best thing about being her age

On the best thing about being her age at this stage of her life, Bracco shared, "I own myself completely. Also, being able to get up every morning," she added.

On her favorite mottos to live by, she said, "Be good, be kind, spread joy." "Those are the things I live for now," she admitted.

On the greatest lesson that the acting profession has taught her, Bracco remarked, "I believe in myself, I've been lucky. I've gotten great roles from 'Goodfellas' to 'The Sopranos' to 'Nonnas.' That's three totally different characters that I was lucky enough to create. Acting has given me freedom, a good life, humility, and time to share with my kids. Acting has been very good to me," she acknowledged.

## 25+ years of 'The Sopranos'

Speaking of "The Sopranos," last summer, the show celebrated its 25th anniversary. "I can't believe it," she noted. "Wow! I really can't believe it. To this day, people are still calling me 'Doc' after playing Dr. Jennifer Melfi."

Bracco had great words about her "Sopranos" co-star Kathrine Narducci. "I love Kathrine. She is a good girl and she is beautiful," she said.

## Key to longevity in the entertainment business

On the key to longevity in the entertainment industry, Bracco responded, "I don't know. That's a good question. I guess being good in any of the roles that you take. People recognize that."



If she were to look back in a rear-view mirror over the last three decades, she reflected, "I see a lot of learning experiences, both good and bad. One of the things that was really hard for me was losing my parents. I have grandchildren now, so God works his ways," she added.

Regarding her definition of the word success, Bracco said, "Success means freedom to travel and do what I want to do when I want to do it."

For her fans and supporters, Bracco said, "I've been so lucky to have great fans. It has been an incredible journey. I can't believe it. I love that the fans like what I do, and they relate to the choices I've made. It's really nice; I've been lucky."

For fans and viewers, she concluded about this film, "When people watch 'Nonnas,' I hope they walk away happy and hungry. What is great about it is that every culture can relate to this story."

"Nonnas" is available to stream on Netflix.

To learn more about Lorraine Bracco, follow her on Instagram.



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