

"REBETIKI ISTORIA" COMES TO ANN ARBOR!

by YONASTAMATIS

This is a tale of discovery of the finest *rebetika* musicians in Athens and an invitation to attend their first and only U.S. appearance on Saturday, April 25, 2009 at the Stamps Auditorium in the new Walgreen Drama Center on U-M's North Campus here in Ann Arbor.

After settling into my Athens apartment last June, I rushed off to the Metropolis music store in Omonia Square. I had just arrived in Greece in order to start my dissertation research on contemporary *rebetika* performance, and I was eager to find recordings by current *rebetika* musicians. Upon my arrival, I knew quite a bit about the history of the music: *Rebetika* was a genre of urban popular song that had formed in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century in the major cities of Greece, Asia Minor and the United States; its basic instrumentation included the bouzouki (a six-stringed lute), baglama (a miniature bouzouki), guitar and voice; its lyrics were intensely sad, concerning the hardships of everyday life of the urban proletariat; throughout the twentieth century, numerous governments and dictatorial regimes in Greece censored and banned the music for not adhering to various Westernizing visions for the nation. I also knew that I had fallen in love with the music and that it had provided the focus of my academic and extracurricular life since I had discovered it three years earlier. Now I hoped to learn about the current state of *rebetika* performance in Greece: Do Greeks still perform *rebetika* and if so, does anyone still play the music in its original style?

Scanning the shelves of the Metropolis music store, I finally decided upon three different contemporary recordings of perhaps the most famous *rebetiko* song of all time, "*Synnefiasmeni Kyriaki*" (Cloudy Sunday) by Vasilis Tsitsanis. Tsitsanis wrote the song during the 1940s as a commentary on the German Occupation of Greece in World War II. The plethora of recordings of the song did not surprise me. What did surprise me however was how different these recordings were from each other: aside from the song lyrics and the basic tune, they had few features in common! And none of them

reminded me of the original version I knew so well, recorded in 1948 by the two greatest *rebetiko* singers of all time, Prodromos Tsaousakis and Sotiria Bellou. With a sinking heart, I spent the rest of the summer combing the city for *rebetika* performed in the original style.

Frustrated and disappointed and about to give up hope, my luck suddenly changed in mid-September, when a friend, U-M Lecturer in Modern Greek Panagiotis Pafllis, recommended I visit *Rebetiki Istoria* [*Rebetika* History], the oldest and best-known *rebetika* establishment in Athens and home to some of the greatest *rebetika* musicians of all time, including Sotiria Bellou, Takis Binis, and the bouzouki great, Stelios Soulyioutzis. Only here would I find live *rebetika* performed in the musical form's original style.

I visited the very next day, and I could not contain my excitement: The performers in *Rebetiki Istoria* not only adhere strictly to early-style *rebetika* but maintain an atmosphere inside the establishment loyal to the original *rebetiko* culture. In fact, the owner and lead singer Pavlos Vasileiou is so devoted to this original culture and music that he refuses to sing in any other *rebetika* establishment in Greece! In addition, despite endless requests from major record labels, he will not make his own recordings out of respect for the original proponents of the genre. Vasileiou is arguably the best living *rebetika* singer and his fellow musicians are highly respected throughout Greece, sought after not only for their stunning musicianship and technical ability, but also for their esoteric knowledge of the *rebetiko* culture and repertoire. It goes without saying that it is an extremely rare opportunity to hear *rebetika* musicians of this caliber perform outside of *Rebetiki Istoria*, let alone in the United States.

In its first U.S. appearance, we are lucky to host *Rebetiki Istoria* at U-M. The concert program will include some well-known *rebetika* songs, including "*Synnefiasmeni*

Kyriaki" (Cloudy Sunday) by Vasilis Tsitsanis and "*Frankosyriani*" (Franco-Syrian girl) by Markos Vamvakaris, as well as a selection of extremely unusual and difficult *rebetika* songs rarely performed today, including "*Tis Arizonas ta vouna*" (The Mountains of Arizona) by Giorgos Katsaros and "*Ta mallia mou ginan griza*" (My Hair has Turned Gray) by Babis Bakalis. I will preface the concert with a short commentary on the history of *rebetika* and on *Rebetiki Istoria*, including my experience performing violin and tzoura (small-sized bouzouki) with the group for a full eight-month season.

Mark your calendars
for a FREE concert

"Rebetiki Istoria"
Sat., April 25, 2009
at 8pm

Stamps Auditorium
Walgreen Drama Center
1226 Murfin Ave
North Campus, U-M

This is an evening
not to be missed!

Sponsored by the Tsangadas Fund

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Yona Stamatis is a Ph.D. Candidate in Ethnomusicology in U-M's School of Music, Theatre & Dance writing a dissertation on "The Quarrel of the Moderns and the Moderns: A Reconsideration of Greek Modernity through Contemporary Rebetika Performance."





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A Note from the Coordinator

ARTEMISLEONTIS

How do we U-M Modern Greek faculty spend our time outside the classroom? After we have taught, advised, supervised, recommended, organized, and professed, we shore up the precious remainder of our time for research. Here's a brief summary of our professional and research activities in 2007-2008.

Vassilis Lambropoulos serves on the editorial and advisory boards of five scholarly journals representing three continents: *The Journal of Modern Greek Studies* and *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* (both American); *Gramma: A Journal of Theory & Criticism*; *Historein: A Review of the Past* (both Greek); and *Thesis Eleven* (Australian). He was reelected Vice President of the Executive Board of the Modern Greek Studies Association. He is writing a book on hubris. His articles of 2007-8 are:

"Stumbling over the 'Boundary Stone of Greek Philosophy': Two Centuries of Translating the Anaximander Fragment," in *Justice in Particular: Festschrift in Honour of Professor P. J. Kozyris*, ed. Anastasia Grammaticaki-Alexiou (Ant. N. Sakkoulas).

"Governance, Hubris, and Justice in Modern Tragedy," *Thesis Eleven* 93 (May 2008).

"What Happened to Theory?" U-M Humanities Institute website https://www.lsa.umich.edu/UofM/Content/humin/document/High_Theory.pdf.

"The Rehearsal of Antiquity in Post-modern Greek Fiction," in *A Singular Antiquity: Archaeology and Hellenic Identity in Twentieth-Century Greece*, eds. Dimitris Plantzos and Dimitris Damaskos (Benaki Museum).

Artemis Leontis serves on the Editorial Board of the *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*. With Elsa Amanatidou and George Syrimis, she co-organized the "Modern Greek Language Teaching Workshop" at the Yale University Center for Language Study (November 2008).

She has completed the book *Culture and Customs of Greece*, forthcoming in the series, "Culture and Customs of Europe", (Greenwood Press, Spring 2009). This one-stop reference book weaves vignettes of contemporary Greek life into its examination of geography, demographics, history, religion, society, leisure, food, language, literature, music, dance, festivals, media, theatre, cinema, modern art, and architecture. In 2008 Leontis published three articles:

"Greek American Identity: What Women's Handwork Tells Us," in *Hellenisms: Perceptions of Greek Ethnicity from Antiquity to Modern Times*, ed. Katerina Zacharia (Ashgate).

"Eva Palmer's Distinctive Journey," in *Women Writing Greece: Essays on Hellenism, Orientalism, and Travel*,



eds. Vassiliki Kolocotroni and Efferpi Mitsi (Rodopi).

"An American in Paris, a Parsi in Athens," in *Singular Antiquity: Archaeology and Hellenic Identity in Twentieth-Century Greece*, eds. Dimitris Plantzos and Dimitris Damaskos (Benaki Museum).

Beyond teaching six language courses in Modern Greek, **Panagiotis Pafilis**, who is also Research Fellow in the U-M School of Natural Resources and Environment, researches lizards of the family Lacertidae on small, rocky islets of the Mediterranean. Many endemic lizard species exist in the Aegean, thanks to the impressive number of islands and astonishing variety of habitats. Among the traits Pafilis studies is caudal autotomy: lizards' ability to shed their tail deliberately so as to escape a predator's attack. Because the shed tail thrashes vigorously (the motion is fueled by anaerobic metabolism) for prolonged period, it also distracts the predator. Pafilis's research group has discovered that island populations show different levels of tail shedding, depending on predation pressure. Tail regeneration is also contingent on the same pressure. Lizards have the capacity to regain a fully functional tail in a few weeks, but the exact time varies. By measuring the time of regeneration, the group has discovered that under circumstances of high predation lizards accelerate tissue repair. Pafilis and his colleagues' molecular analysis of lizard DNA aims to clarify the evolutionary story of Aegean lizards.

Pafilis co-organized with Prof. E. Valakos (University of Athens) the 6th International Symposium on the Lacertids of the Mediterranean Basin (June 2008, Lesvos) and presented a total of 16 scientific collaborative contributions in international and national meetings.

In 2008 he co-authored with E.D. Valakos, K. Sotiropoulos, P. Lymberakis, P. Marangou, J. Fofopoulos the book, *Reptiles and Amphibians of Greece* (Frankfurt am Mainz: Chimaira Publications). He also published four co-authored papers in international scientific journals:

"Post autotomy tail activity in Balearic wall lizard, *Podarcis lilfordi*," *Naturwissenschaften* 95 (3): 217-221.

"Restriction of caudal autotomy during life in Balkan green lizard (*Lacerta trilineata*)," *Journal of Natural History* 42 (5-8): 409-419.

"Physiology of original and regenerated tails in Cycladian Wall Lizard (*Podarcis erhardii*)," *Copeia* (3): 504-509.

"Identification of polymorphic microsatellite loci in *Podarcis gaigeae* and *Podarcis hispanica* (Squamata: Lacertidae) and assessment of their utility in three other *Podarcis* species," *Molecular Ecology Resources* 8: 1367-1370.

My Greece

by SCOTT BRENTON



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Scott Brenton is pursuing a B.A. in the Program in the Environment and in Spanish and a Minor in Modern Greek.

My great grandfather, Louis Zapantis, came to the United States from Cephalonia looking for work at the age of 19. He spent the rest of his life running restaurants in a very Greek area of New York, where my grandmother was raised and learned her father's native language. By the time she grew up and had children of her own, however, she forgot the language of her ancestors, and was strangely able to understand it only in her dreams. As my great grandfather was the only Greek immigrant and last full-blooded Greek in my family tree, virtually all cultural ties to his island home disappeared within two generations, long before I was born.

I grew up disconnected from any ethnic background or homeland, knowing only that my ancestors had produced an Irish, Scottish, English, French, and Greek mutt in this melting pot we call America. My first real encounter with anything Greek can be attributed to my neighbors, whose families are from Chios and Cyprus. It always intrigued me to observe their seemingly over-exaggerated sense of identity and unity with other Greeks, or to hear their conversations continuously shifting from English to Greek and back again.

My freshman year of college I had to make a choice: what did I want to learn as my next language? I had already learned Spanish quite well and wanted to take on a third. Being somewhat of a linguist at heart, I have always had a desire to learn as many languages as possible. I believe that thought processes are largely dominated by our internal dialogue, which is nearly impossible to escape from yet so important in our everyday survival. The ability to speak any language is a gateway to an expansion of the mind's capacity to express itself and perceive the surrounding world. I wanted to learn a language to which I could trace some of my own roots, and so decided to learn Modern Greek.

Stepping off the airplane onto Cretan ground to a view of the Aegean in the spring of 2008 was one of the most relieving, reviving experiences I have ever had. The trip to Greece could not have come at a better time for me. This was the beginning of three beautiful summer months of catching bats in the mountains, swimming in the sea, conducting field research in protected marine and geological parks, and wandering the islands in search of what I had not yet realized was my own lost identity.

Over the course of the summer, I participated in the internship that had brought me to Greece. I spent a good portion of my evenings searching for bats, exploring just a minuscule fraction of the over five thousand caves that exist in the mountains and gorges of Crete. My research was volunteer work for a man writing his PhD thesis on echolocation calls of Cretan bat species for the University of Crete Natural History Museum. The goal was to use a device to record the ultrasounds of bat echolocation calls in Crete in order to construct a call library. This databank could later be used for species identification, habitat management and conservation purposes. The internship gave me an opportunity to gain first-hand experience in my own field of ecology while at the same time expanding my linguistic capabilities to a much greater extent than I could have imagined. I learned to communicate in Greek not just on everyday matters but also in the specialized language of my field of study. More than this, I learned to perceive the world differently.

As the intense Mediterranean sun sets over the Aegean and the rocky landscape of the Greek countryside fades to shades of purple, the exotic beauty of the region illustrates why Greece has been able to evoke spiritual and artistic rebirth in people all over the world throughout history. To me,

Greece exists not only as an image of that timeless natural beauty, but as a state of mind. Why must we spend our lives bustling about, constantly in a hurry and anxious about all of the things that must get done and all of the places we need to be, while others are content sitting at a kafeneio for five hours playing with a komboloi? Why has it become so hard to enjoy the simplest of pleasures, to fully appreciate how amazing a mediocre beer can taste after a relaxing bath in crystal blue water? Greece has given me the most relaxing days I have ever known in my life by far, and to be able to relive that experience daily through an adjustment in my own mentality has been one of the most important lessons I have ever learned.

ACKNOWLEDGING OUR DONORS

- Drs. Anthony and Joyce Kales – Endowment Gift
- Foundation for Modern Greek Studies – Annual Gift
- Greek Ministry of Culture – Annual Gift & Gift in Kind
- Irene and Thomas Christy – Annual Gift
- Dr. Dimitri and Irma Pallas – Annual Gift
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ALUMNI

Peter Hasiakos (2007 BA Physics, Modern Greek Minor)

"After graduating in 2007, I pursued a year-long M.A. in Education with Certification from the Secondary MAC Program in the U-M School of Education. I started working this fall as a Physics Teacher at the Oak Park & River Forest High School (suburb of Chicago IL)."

Erin Mays (2002 BA History, Modern Greek Minor)

"I've just returned home to Chicago to serve as Public Relations Manager of Central Region for Grubb & Ellis Company, a leading commercial real estate services and investment firm. Prior to this role, I was the Marketing Manager in the Company's Detroit office. I was one of the first two students to graduate with a Modern Greek Minor, and with support from the Program, interned in the Public Affairs Section of the U.S. Embassy in Nicosia, Cyprus, where my career in public relations began."

Jimmy Roumanis (2003 BA Economics, Modern Greek Minor)

"I joined Colliers International Commercial Real Estate in Boise, Idaho in November 2007. I specialize in land acquisition and sales: site selection, land consulting, contract negotiations, Buyer Representation, Seller Representation, and Development services."

Niki Serras (2006 BA Modern Greek)

"After working and studying in Athens, Greece for 1 1/2 years I returned home on Thanksgiving 2007 and am currently employed at the University of Michigan Depression Center, where I am Project Coordinator for an initiative to develop a National Network of Depression Centers."

AFFILIATED FACULTY AWARDS

Traianos Gagos, U-M Professor of Papyrology and Greek, has received the 2008 University Librarian Achievement Award. As Archivist of the Papyrology Collection at the University Library, one of the largest collections of ancient papyri in the world, Professor Gagos has greatly expanded the Collection's value as a resource for U-M and beyond by making the collection available for use in teaching and research locally, nationally, and internationally. He has also broken new ground in the use of information technologies for the study of ancient documents. Thanks to Professor Gagos's ongoing efforts, U-M is one of the best places in the world to study ancient papyri. In the international community of papyrologists, Professor Gagos is known as a leader and outstanding scholar.

STUDENT AWARDS

Nelly Papalambros – Modern Greek Program Scholarship– Kales and Foundation for Modern Greek Studies Fund

Study abroad in Greece at the College Year in Athens Program for the Winter Semester 2009
Courses of Study: Greek culture and politics

Yona Stamatis – Modern Greek Program Scholarship – Kales Fund
Hydra Rebetiko Conference – October 16 - 19, 2008

Natalie Bakopoulos – Modern Greek Program Scholarship – Kales Fund
Study abroad in Athens – Immersion Modern Greek Language Course

MODERN GREEK Program • Winter 2009 Events

For more on these events, visit our web site: www.lsa.umich.edu/modgreek

January 27, 2009 • 4pm • 2175 Angell Hall: Mediterranean Modernisms: Towards a New Mediterranean Identity
Professor Marinos Pourgouris, Brown University, Comparative Literature

Co-sponsored by Comparative Literature

February 10, 2009 • 7pm

Modern Languages Building
Lecture Room 1

812 East Washington
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First Time Godfather

Film Screening
& Q&A Session
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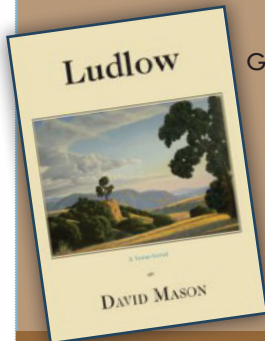


Suitable for all ages

Κ. Π. ΚΑΒΑΦΗ

March 19, 2009 • 5pm

Residential College Auditorium, E. Quad
701 E. University, Central Campus, U-M



Ludlow

Greek miners struggle
in Colorado in
the 1910s

Author Reading
and Signing by

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LIVE IN ANN ARBOR
FROM ATHENS

REBETIKI ISTORIA

A concert of urban popular Greek songs

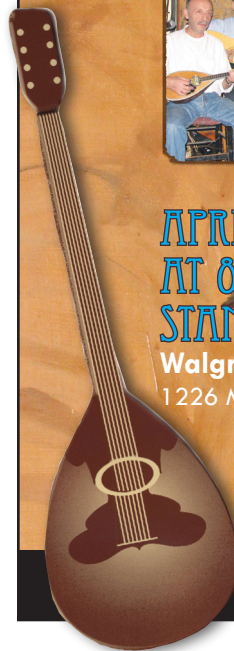


APRIL 25, 2009

AT 8PM
STAMPS AUDITORIUM

Walgreen Drama Center
1226 Murfin Ave, North Campus, U-M

**FREE & OPEN
TO THE PUBLIC**



Κ. Π. ΚΑΒΑΦΗ
PROFESSORSHIP IN MODERN GREEK
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7th Annual Dimitris & Irma Pallas Modern Greek Lecture Painting and Politics in Romantic Hellenism Dr. Fani-Maria Tsigakou

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March 31, 2009 • 7PM
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