

A Tribute to a Mother's Memory

Angeliki (Angela) Evangelinos, Professor Emerita of Economics and Business at Monroe Community College, has endowed the Calliope Papala Politou Student Prize in memory of her mother for the benefit of U-M undergraduate concentrators in Modern Greek.

The late Calliope Papala Politou (1912-1980) was never far from Professor Evangelinos's thoughts when she began auditing Modern Greek language classes at U-M after her retirement. Her mother had taught her to read and write Greek. She set aside her desire to continue that learning during her 40-year academic career. Now in the U-M classroom, Professor Evangelinos observed the efforts of students with little to no background in Greek working to master it as a field of study. She witnessed how the Program, in her words, "brings the Greek language, art, music, history, and culture to life." She found herself "wishing that my mother could have lived to witness the teaching of Modern Greek studies at this great American university."

The life of Calliope Politou was full of sharp turns. She was born into a prosperous family in Chios. Her grandfather Captain Miltiades Papalopoulos was a ship owner whose nine vessels ferried goods throughout the Mediterranean. Her father had holdings in Constantinople and Piraeus. She attended a private girls' school. She visited Paris for exposure to French culture. After the sudden death of her father, however, her mother yielded control of the family's assets to a male relative. He arranged for Calliope to marry a Greek-American entrepreneur, unaware that the future groom's boasting of financial success was a well-staged act. In 1929, at the age of 17, Calliope passed through Ellis Island carrying just ten of her favorite books, a gold ring that was her father's, and an icon of St. Nicholas. When she arrived in Clarksburg, West Virginia, she found not the promised riches but a three-room bungalow in the shadow of the Phillips Sheet and Tin Plate Company.

As if the strain of her suddenly changed circumstances was not enough, six months later her husband died. Her one cousin in the U.S. would not loan her money to return to her mother. So the local Greek Orthodox priest found her a new husband, Mihalios Evangelinos, aged 39, a founder of the local church, whose labor in the steel mills had provided dowries for six sisters. Two months after her first husband's funeral and nine months after their marriage, Calliope Politou Vanezi, became Calliope Evangelinos.

Mihalios Evangelinos made plans with Calliope to return to Greece to tend a citrus orchard on their native Chios. But several medical emergencies put the couple's dreams on hold, and soon they found themselves raising a family in America. They traded in their dream of a citrus orchard for a farm near Steubenville, Ohio. Living now in a big old farmhouse with no running water near a wooded lot that needed clearing, they entered the small American farmer's life of hard work and short-term borrowing. Their six children helped plant, water, hoe and harvest tomatoes, their cash crop.



Calliope Papala Politou (1912-1980) will be remembered with an annual Modern Greek senior concentrator award.

Greek was the home language, at Calliope's insistence. She became teacher to her children, as there were no Greek schools in the area. Indeed she was passionate about giving her children every educational opportunity. For Greek she created learning structures from meager resources. A Greek primer with "Taki" and "Eleni" led her immigrant children through the Greek alphabet. Her ten books from Greece held more advanced lessons on patriotic subjects. A fire burning the family home in 1992 destroyed them, but Professor Evangelinos recalls "Το λάβαρο ΤΟΥ '21" (The banner of 1821), a historical novel on the Greek War of Independence and Victor Hugo's *L'enfant*, a Pihellenic poem.

Remembering the challenges Calliope faced, recognizing her passion for Greek, and observing how the Modern Greek Program and C. P. Cavafy Professorship contribute to Greek learning, Professor Evangelinos has endowed the Calliope Papala Politou Prize for the best student concentrators in Modern Greek as a living tribute to her mother. Student support is her philanthropic priority, as she received scholarship support as a student.

It is her sincere wish that worthy recipients will actively keep Greek learning alive for generations to come.

“CONVERSATIONS ON CULTURE”

PEER TEACHING VIA VIDEOCONFERENCING

by Dr. Despina Margomenou, Ph.D., Lecturer III in Modern Greek Program

From its inception, the U-M Modern Greek Program has combined language instruction with culture immersion; our courses, the focus on public outreach, our study abroad and internship programs attest to this. Furthermore, we always seek new ways to engage our students in the learning process using the latest methods and technologies in language pedagogy.

“Conversations on Culture” is a pioneering program that combines multidimensional task based peer teaching with videoconferencing. It is a collaborative project with the U-Thessaloniki Center for Foreign Language Teaching in Greece through my colleague, Dr. Anna Maria Hatzitheodorou, who teaches English to Greek students. “Conversations on Culture” received a grant for global teaching initiatives from the U-M Office of the Vice Provost for International Affairs, LSA Instructional Support Services, and LSA Language Resource Center. In the Spring term of 2012, I attended intensive training on videoconferencing and other new instructional technologies. The pilot was

completed in Winter 2012, and we implemented all that we learned, including the technical training, to now fully incorporate this method as a regular three week component of the classes for Intermediate Modern Greek (MG 201 and 202) in Fall 2012 and Winter 2013.

“Conversations on Culture” brings together U-Thessaloniki students in Greece learning English with U-M students learning Modern Greek. Interactions take place via Skype in class, and are oral, although students also exchange written tasks before, during, and after these face-to-face encounters. In the videoconferencing sessions, students explore cultural topics in comparative ways as instructors/culture specialists using their native language, and as investigators/interviewers in the foreign language they are learning. After an icebreaker session where they get to know each other, they explore common stereotypes: for instance, what comes to mind when you think of “family” or “democracy,” “freedom” and “minorities”?

Common topics are predetermined by Dr. Hatzitheodorou and me so that we may fully integrate them in our respective course curricula. Moreover they are planned so that students’ language skills build gradually along with their ability to investigate specific phenomena from another culture and explain phenomena of their own culture. From simple terms we move to asking students to complete statements such as, “for me the best teacher/student/police officer/politician is one that...,” to placing them in everyday situations and asking them to describe their reactions. For example, “how would you react if you saw a mother slapping her child at a grocery store, or if a police officer stopped you in the street without reason asking for your ID?” Given the recent U.S. Presidential elections, much of the conversations focused on explaining how the American government works. Equally significant was the topic of the crisis and student protests in Greece; how students there have “found their own power.” There was of course a great deal of vernacular culture involved. U-M students note that they learned the meaning and different uses of «χαλαρά», an expression “that best describes life in Thessaloniki”; in turn they explained different American reality celebrities like Snooki and Honey Boo Boo!

At the end, students evaluate their performance for both what they learned and what they managed to teach about themselves and their way of life. Our students on both sides have been very excited about this program and very supportive of it. I should note that the U-Thessaloniki students are all volunteers: they do this as something extra that they immensely enjoy and learn from. In their thoughtful evaluations students gave immense feedback and insights. They admit that they were excited and nervous beforehand, but the actual experience is fulfilling, it is “real communication,” and at the end of the project they feel much more confident about their language skills than when they first started. This is in fact true. Student overall performance consistently improves over the three weeks of “Conversations on Culture.” In other words, the long-term effects of the project are as significant as the excitement of the brief three-week, face-to-face encounters of our students with their overseas partners.

We hope to continue this trans-Atlantic peer-teaching program in the years to come and perhaps even extend it beyond the Intermediate Modern Greek level. We are grateful to everyone involved: the U-M units that contributed to the funding, the Learning Resource Center for ongoing technical support, and most of all, the students here and in Greece for rendering this experience so rich, lively, and fulfilling.



A REALIZATION THROUGH IMPROVISATION

by Alekos Syropoulos

Improvisation fascinated me from a very young age. There was something about spontaneous creation, with or without hesitation, that resonated with me. I was intimidated by the process but enthralled by the raw, unequivocal nature of expression that each individual brings to an improvisational event. Every player's personality is visible through sound, approach to improvisation, and musical communication. I thought this highly individualistic characteristic of jazz was special. The music can set you free while it also brings you closer to yourself and the other musicians you play with.

As jazz penetrated my soul and began to take over my life, I started studying the music more religiously by transcribing solos by famous jazz musicians such as Miles Davis, Sonny Rollins, Cannonball Adderly, Sonny Stitt, etc. I took private lessons, attended local jam sessions, admired famous jazz musicians at festivals, attended summer programs, and played in competitions. All for what though? For a while, I just went with the flow because I enjoyed playing the saxophone in the jazz setting and it was fun. Later on in high school I realized that I had developed a true passion for the music and that I was playing it for the love of the music. Jazz isn't an art form that often grants a passageway to musical stardom, and I came to grips with that, because playing jazz had become a necessity. There was a selfless hope that people would appreciate a musician's sense of creativity and originality for what it was and become inspired in some way.

In my recent years as a musician, composer, and an undergraduate student at U-M, pursuing a BFA in jazz studies and a Minor in Modern Greek, I've started to clearly see different ways of translating my original ideas into relatable mediums. Improvisation is a highly intricate, unattached form of composition. I soon realized that it is very present in so many other musical genres outside jazz, the biggest label for improvisation. My Greek conscience was staring me right in the face.

I knew there was potential for me to reveal the very Greek elements that had long, sub-consciously influenced my musical identity

the moment my colleague, Ellie Ganelin, informed me that I had the opportunity to play a piece for the Kerrytown Concert House Greek Chamber Concert with pianist and composer Michael Malis, then an undergraduate in the Music School studying under jazz pianist Geri Allen. This was the starting point for my creative collaboration with Michael, a fellow Greek American.

In the concert we featured our arrangement of Manos Hadjidakis's piece, *Gioconda's Smile*. After that Michael and I started composing music that was inspired by traditional Greek music, Rebetika, and other orchestral music forms by composers Manos Hadjidakis and Mikis Theodorakis. We wanted to somehow translate some of the sounds, rhythms, scales, and harmonies from Greek music into a fresh new sound that takes form from our experience as jazz musicians. The music can be characterized as a fusion in some capacity, but more importantly it is really just two Greek-Americans making music.

One of the first pieces I composed, *Pathos*, combined very distinct features of Greek music and jazz using three instruments: piano, saxophone, and percussion. The drone in the beginning set up by the piano gave me as the saxophonist freedom to improvise modally around the tonal center, thus creating fluctuations of tension and release. This type of improvising mimicked the style of playing employed by the clarino, a classic Greek instrument used in a variety of contexts. The goal for me was to capture the sound of that instrument and translate it through the saxophone. This process metaphorically represents part of the big picture goal, how we extract elements of the traditional music and add our spice to it, Syropoulos and Malis style.

After composing, performing, and listening to all my music – and not just my project with Michael Malis – I realize that my Greek heritage has a deep, untouchable effect on my sound. It may be obvious at times, or discrete many other times, but in all, the influence is present. No matter what kind of music I create or become a part of, Greece will always be safely rested in my back pocket – an inspiration, a reference, and a part of me.

Alekos Syropoulos was a semi-finalist in the 2012 North American Saxophone Alliance Jazz Solo Competition. With Michael Malis he won the Arthur and Mary Platsis Student Prize for work on the Greek Legacy. Alekos leads the band Syropoulos Rex, and is continuing his Greek-jazz fusion project with Michael Malis. He is pursuing a BFA in Jazz Studies in the Music School and a Minor in Modern Greek.



Pianist, Michael Malis takes a solo with alto saxophonist, Alekos Syropoulos. Photo courtesy of Costas Sirdenis.

LSA Translation Theme Semester and the Contest, "It's GRΣΣK to me!"

The Modern Greek Program participated in the LSA fall "Translation Theme Semester" by incorporating into its classes reflection on the practice and study of translation, broadly defined to include movement across languages and across different media. It also invited undergraduate students to submit work for a contest entitled "It's GRΣΣK to me!"

The contest gave students the opportunity to discover, capture, reflect on, and even create English translations (interlinear: alphabet to alphabet; inter-lingual language to language; or inter-medial language to another medium) that assimilate a feature of Greek into English or purposely leave that feature to reveal another level of significance. Students enrolled in Modern Greek classes made a series of submissions, then submitted a final piece for the competition in the form of an image, text, film, or sound clip with an explanation. There were 58 final submissions, many of them prize-worthy. Five finalists received prizes at the LSA Translation Theme Semester award ceremony. They were:

David Catalan, "Touch of Spice," a translation from Greek to English and from film to text of a scene in which a grandfather presents the principles of gastronomy through astronomy;

Sundai Johnson, "Where," a poem on (not) seeing the Acropolis reflecting on travelers' troubled response to the famous Greek site;

Abbey Roggenbuck, "Meditation on Ruins," an essay and photograph juxtaposing the Phaistos disk from the prehistoric site in Crete with a tire in the industrial ruins of Detroit and reflecting on the meaning of ruins;

Nicole Sappingfield, "Agora at Thessaloniki," a prose poem bridging the distance between ancient and present life as experienced by the father and daughter at the site of the "Agora" or "Dikastirion" in Thessaloniki;

Dimitris Roumanis, "The Pyrgo of Elia," a travel essay on a medieval tower full of holes.

Celebrating the "2013 Cavafy Year"

UNESCO and the Greek Ministry of Culture have declared 2013 a year to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the birth of Constantine P. Cavafy (April 29, 1863 - April 29, 1933), calling him "one of the greatest modern poets." Born in the then thriving Greek community of Alexandria, Egypt, Cavafy depicted the Hellenistic and Roman worlds of the Eastern Mediterranean in an innovative way paving new paths for European poetry and establishing modern Greek poetry on the international scene. His fame continues to inspire new work. According to one source, fifty new titles and 21 translations, 10 of them into English, were added to the Cavafy bibliography between 2001-2010.

The U-M Modern Greek Program and C. P. Cavafy Professorship endowed by the Foundation for Modern Greek Studies with funding from hundreds of donors is announcing events in celebration of this 2013 Cavafy Year:

•"Cavafy's Debt" by Professor Stathis Gourgouris (Columbia University) will be the 11th Dimitri and Irmgard Pallas Lecture **February 25, at 4pm in the U-M Classics Library, 2175 Angell Hall.** The talk will be an examination of poetic indebtedness: What do societies owe to their poets? What does it mean for societies to lay claim to poets? What do poets owe to their language? Why is Greece indebted to Cavafy?

•"A Date with Cavafy" on **April 29**, the day of Cavafy's birthday (1863) AND death (1933), will be an "open mike" event in which faculty, students, artists, and community members offer readings and testimonies of the poet. It will take place in the **Gallery, Room 100, Hatcher Graduate Library 913 S. University Avenue Ann Arbor at 4pm.** It is open to everyone who wishes to participate or simply attend.

•Performances of "C. P. Cavafy in Poetry: A Recital of Songs and Reflections," an event premiering at U-M that took place at six American campuses last April, are now being planned in other American and European venues this year under the title "2013 Year of C.P. Cavafy."



Look for additions to the Modern Greek website's "Cavafy Forum" on **April 29!**
www.lsa.umich.edu/modgreek/windowtogreekculture/cpavafyforum

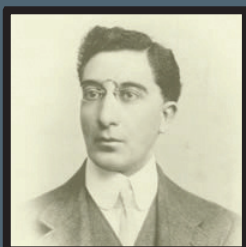
New publications will be appearing throughout the year. "Τα ποιήματα είναι σαν παρτιτούρες" (His Poems are like Musical Scores) by Professor Vassilis Lambropoulos and Dr. Pantelis Polychronidis (BHMA 12/30/12) explores the musical settings of Cavafy's poetry (www.tovima.gr/books-ideas/article/?aid=490584 and pdf available on website).

Other Events Happening this Winter:

Student Ethics Bowl: Archaeological Dilemmas. Students in Modern Greek 350 debate about Greek heritage and the ethics of museum and archaeological practice. This event is open to the public. **Kelsey Museum of Archaeology, April 15, 2013, 2:30-4pm, Room TBA.**

For more on Modern Greek's events, visit our web site: www.lsa.umich.edu/modgreek

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