

with us. This doesn't happen anymore. These days a band has to be paid to do a rehearsal with you. In those days they weren't interested in getting paid. The band Nea Asteria (New Stars) which was one of the best and made up of young guys, used to come to all of our dances and would rehearse with the girls. I used to teach them songs by singing to them and they'd pick them up on their instruments. They had an accordion, violin, guitar, bass viol and a lute. I also remember an elderly man who used to play the santouri very well and he was very good at playing the sousta.

In those days it was very difficult to find costumes although some people had brought costumes with them, as I had with my grandmother's from Kastelorizo. So we ended up making our own costumes, like the Simian ones which were simple. The Kastelorizian costumes were very difficult to make, almost impossible. A lot of women living here had brought their Kastelorizian costumes with them. We made Rhodian costumes much later. A woman who came from the village of Embonas in Rhodes, made "Embonian" costumes. Later on we made the Evzonas, vraka and amalia costumes.

In those days there wasn't much dancing, nor many dance groups. Apart from my groups I don't remember any others in the years 1957 to 1959. In that period I used to teach dance wherever they needed me. I taught dance to the Rhodians, Simians, Kastelorizians, Kytherians, Koans, and also at the Greek School of St Sophia. I never asked for money, it was done selflessly. I didn't believe in getting paid for teaching dance. I never imagined that one day it would become a business as it is today.

From that period on, I got involved in the Greek theatre and although I was very young, I performed in a religious play Ora the haritos (Time of Grace) in 1958. My first theatre role in a play with older people was in Favlos Kiklos (Vicious Circle) which was performed at the Lawson Theatre where Greek films were screened in those days. Amongst the many actors were Yiorgos Kazouris, Kikis Efthimiou, Petros Printezis and many others who later continued with the theatre.

In the years 1958 to 1960 I took accordion lessons with Mr Krouklidis. At that time we lived in Redfern where the houses were cheap and a lot of

Greeks were buying into the area.

In 1961, I got engaged and later married my husband Manolis Haskas whom I knew from Rhodes. We had been neighbours



ΕΛΛΗΝΕΣ ΣΥΛΛΟΓΗ ΚΑΙ ΠΕΡΙΧΩΡΩΝ
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few Greeks. There was no Greek school or church. So I got the children together and taught them Greek and mainly Greek dancing.

Finally at the end of 1964 we moved back to Sydney. At that time I discovered the existence of the Lyceum of Greek Women. Although they say it was one of the oldest organisations, I can't recall it earlier. In 1965

Holy Trinity. The Panagia (Greek Church of Assumption) was built during that period.

In 1964 there were even bouzouki nightclubs, like "Athens in Redfern", "Patris" and "Riviera" to name a few. All the associations held dances regularly. There were even singers from Greece, which never happened before 1961.

When we came to Sydney in 1964 I lived in the Greek Community of Belmore for two years, where my artistic activities really began. I played in the Belmore Greek Community Theatre where Nikos Christopoulos and Vangelis Papadopoulos were directors. We staged a lot of plays. Apart from Greek community theatre, I've also acted in films and television programs which were related to migrants. My first film "A pig in a poke" was in 1974. This was followed by "Oracle" in 1976. In 1978 I played in the film "Caddie" in which all the actors from the Belmore Theatre Troupe took part. I also

the Lyceum established a dance group and I was invited to teach island dances.

From that time on, I started to get involved with the theatre and dance. I realised that the Greek Community was growing and

took part in the films "Cathy's Child" in 1978, "Dancing" 1982, "Earthlink" 1983, "Silent City" 1984, "the Girl from Steel City" in 1986, and the "Last Crop".

Throughout all these years I continued to teach dance. In the beginning, I started with the Rhodian dance group which I performed with everywhere. In 1973 I decided to start my own dance school, because I saw that other girls who had come to Australia after me and weren't even from Greece, had already opened their own schools. I was left behind because I thought you had to have some kind of certificate or diploma to be allowed to start a school. So I opened my first school at the Community of Belmore. At one

time I had almost three hundred pupils. Later, I opened another school at St Spyridon in Kingsford. The numbers of pupils there reached almost two hundred. Later, in 1974, I opened my very own school which is called "Sophia Haskas" Dance School.

My dance groups have appeared in hundreds of shows, in Greek and Australian celebrations, in the folkloric festival at the Opera House and at a lot of Greek Association dances. Every year we hold a dance and all the profits go towards charities. At the end of each year we also organise a concert with Greek dances, songs and sketches put on by our pupils. Over a thousand people come and watch it. For the last six years I have also been the organiser of the artistic program for the 25th March Anniversary in which a lot of good dance groups take part.

better when I returned to Sydney at the end of 1964. There were more churches and Greek schools. When I first came there was only St Sophia and