

FOTIA

IRINI LANTIS

Aims to keep Greek dancing alive and burning

Interview: ANNA ARSENIS



First, tell us a little bit about yourself.

I am studying Bachelor of Laws and Bachelor of Medical Science degrees at The University of Technology Sydney. I am in my third year of a five year course. I am 20 years old.

I have a strong commitment to keeping my cultural identity alive and relevant. I believe Greek dancing and the Greek language are two very significant ways of keeping it alive.

I became President of the UTS Hellenic Society in 2008 in the hope of continuing the promotion of Hellenism with my fellow university students. We achieve this through hosting functions and events that celebrate who we are with paqos, kardia and of course with KEFI. We also need to continue to have Modern Greek as a language offered at universities and vehemently oppose the closure of the University of NSW Modern Greek Department as it will erode our opportunities to obtain knowledge and formal qualifications in our most prized aspect of our identity, our language.

I also joined the SAE Youth Oceania - World Council of Hellenes Abroad (SAE) in 2008 and was elected Education Officer on the first New South Wales Youth Network



Presiding Board.

Another form of expression I have found as an outlet for my culture is through acting. I am currently vice president of the 'Takeaway Theatre Company'. I performed in a retrospective play about the history of the Greek Australian theatre company that has brought so much enjoyment and thought to audiences in Sydney for many years.

My greatest passion above all has always been Greek dancing. Greek dancing is the ultimate form of expression

for me. Dancing according to Plato was the "instinctive desire to explain word by gestures of the entire body". When I dance I feel I am singing, talking, questioning and feeling everything about me that is Greek, it is an exhilarating expression of my identity.

I started my Dance performance group in late 2006 called FOTIA, to represent the fire and passion I have for Greek Dance. It then developed into a dance school due to the numerous requests by our audiences to learn to dance and perform with us. I have amazing sponsors and supporters in the Cypriot Community of the Cyprus Hellenic Club at Brighton Le Sands. I am the choreographer

and head instructor and I also perform. My brother Michael Lantis helps me run the school by teaching and performing for me.

What was the most satisfying moment in your life?
Getting into Law School has been the most satisfying moment in my life to date, followed closely by the opening of my dance school FOTIA Dancers.

Who influenced you to become a dance teacher?

My giagia Irini inspired me to love Greek dancing and to be a dance teacher. From a young child I often watched Greek TV with her and whenever there were Greek Dances she would explain where they were from and the name and history of the dance as well as comment on the details of the costumes. She even made me a Kalymnian Kavathi when I was three.

She bought me many videos back from her trips to Greece

about Greek Dances.

An influence of mine is Dora Stratou, I love the precision and technique of the dancers. I am also a great admirer of her attention to historical detail in how the dances are performed, the costumes and the instruments.

I started Greek dancing when I was three at my local dance school, as well as many years of Ballet, Tap and more recently Salsa.

List five adjectives that accurately describe yourself.

Exuberant, Passionate, Innovative, Sincere, Exacting

Describe your experiences.



Some of our performances include:

"ZAMBETOLOGIES" - Out of The Blue Productions - Muse Events

SUNRISE Channel 7 Performance

REMBETIKA- A Night of Greek Blues.- Factory Theatre- Out of The Blue Production- Muse Events

OUZO 88 - NEO-TAVERNA , Wollomooloo Restaurant Launch. 'A Taste of Greece'

Kogarah Council Bedrace Charity Event

Greek Australian Professionals Association- GAPA Function

Greek Orthodox Archdio-

cese -St George Monastery Springwood Charity Dinner

Greek Festival 2008 & 2009 - Darling Harbour

Variety the Children's Charity -The SPARTAN'S Car 800

Saint George Church Rose Bay- Ladies Auxiliary

NUGAS CONVENTION- National Union Of Greek Australia Students Ball 2008 Melbourne

AUSTRALIA DAY CELEBRATIONS 2009 Carrs Park Kogarah Council

HELLENIC WRITERS & ARTISTS ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA

Cancer Council Relay for Life

George Tserdanis Radio Program 'GREEKS TODAY, Salt & Pepper, Celebrates 20 years Constant Presence On Air. 2008.

Tell us about your experiences dancing with students at different age levels.

I teach students from the age of 5 through to adults. I have classes just for ladies, private lessons and I choreograph and teach the Cyprus Hellenic Debutants. I most look forward to my first class on a Monday night with my y-

oungest group and chuckle as they run to me at the beginning of class requesting what dances they want to do in the lesson with an earnestness and eagerness that I love!

The young adults class is always exciting and expanding and turns into a social gathering after class. I am amazed at how many young people want to learn to dance Greek and to perform on a regular basis.

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