



What is your philosophy of dancing?

Greek Dance is a great way of celebrating being Greek and an amazing way of having fun. I believe Greek dance is still alive as it transcends through all generations. We are passing down the dances of our ancestors and uniting as young Greek Australians in an unspoken bond formed by holding hands when the music begins.

I like sharing my passion for our culture and think that despite the metamorphosis of our culture, dancing is something enjoyable and fun that will be able to transcend time and adapt well.

My aim is to keep Greek dancing relevant and traditional and inject a surge of modern flare to keep it alive and burning, thus the name FOTIA. It gives me great pleasure and a sense of achievement knowing that I am passing on my fire for Greek

Dance to others, particularly the young.

In what ways do you encourage creativity while dancing?

FOTIA utilizes innovative music and creative modern routines, while still maintaining the traditional which is the basis for everything we do.

Many of my dancers come to me asking to dance to a particular song by a particular artist. I encourage a love of Greek music and allow students to express their interests in class. We have even adapted a few Greek Dances to some popular Western/English music to demonstrate the fusion we feel as Greek-Australians. FOTIA has an excellent DJ Georgio, who compiles some unique Greek music for FOTIA which creates quite an impact.

I choreograph all my modern dances with input from my three teachers. This allows for more creativity and involvement and ownership of the dances that my students love.

Do you make learning fun for

students? How?

I have fun teaching so somehow it flows on to my students and my students have fun. The dances are traditional with a modern edge in keeping with what Greece has to offer today whilst celebrating our glorious past. My student's enjoy the modern Greek music which is popular so I capture their interest with Kokkinou and Petrelis and then include the traditional which they then realize is incredible.

Tell us about your discipline philosophy.

I am firm and focused and listen to the student's ideas and make it a collaborative effort as much as possible while still maintaining focus.

In your opinion, what are the biggest challenges that dancers face today?

I believe Greek Dancing faces numerous challenges one of which is being relevant and appealing to the 3rd and 4th generations of Greeks in Australia and shedding the negative perception children and parents have due to past experiences.

What part of this job scares you?

No part of this scares me, except for the occasional n-

erves before a performance by my students but the pride and exhilaration I feel during the performance and after compensates for any nerves I might feel.

What do you like to do when you're not dancing?

I love watching old movies, having barbeques at my house, going to the beach, to the gym, above all I love to spend time with my family and my friends.

What is the first thing you teach beginners?

I try to teach a love for the music, traditional and current. Get them to feel and move to the rhythm of the music first and then we do the mechanics of the steps.

What are your future plans?

I'd love to take my students around Australia to perform and ultimately to Greece and Cyprus. That would be incredible!

Have you been to Greece?

Yes, 4 times and I plan to go again next year and collect more outfits, music and resources.

Do you teach 'theory' behind each dance?

I teach the history behind



the dances and where they come from and how they still have meaning in our lives.

What books are you currently reading?

For pleasure I am reading the play "Whose life is it anyway?" by Brian Clarke, however the bulk of my reading consists of Law textbooks.

Tell us a few things about your dance school.

My dance school FOTIA GREEK DANCERS @ Cyprus Hellene Club at Brighton Le Sands hopes to promote the love of our Greek culture and the expression of it through dance.

I started my dance performance group as soon as I fin-

ished year 12. The original dancers were Harry Mavrolefteros, Tania Roussakis, Panayioti Mavrolefteros and Michael Lantis. They are still with me and they help me teach all my classes and we perform every Saturday night. We are booked more than 6 months in advance and we love every minute of each performance as much as if it were our first.

Michael, my brother, is an astounding dancer with power and passion that leaves our audiences in awe. Panayioti has a grace and style that is incredible, Tania has great technical skill that is invaluable and Harry has amazing agility and strength in all his movements and is a pleasure to watch as he captivates the audience. My professional performance group has now expanded to 14 performers and the dance school has 6 classes for every level and different age groups. I am amazed at the amount of young boys who join my school. They love the masculinity of Greek Dance and all the kicks and powerful movements that exhibit their prowess as dancers with strength and passion.

FOTIA Greek Dancers is based at the Cyprus Hellene Club @ C-side

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A brief testimonial by my original dancers and now teachers...

"No one shares this most passionate aspect of our culture with more flare than FOTIA. For almost three years now Irini Lantis has led the FOTIA dancers onto many a dance floor, in front of people from all ages, nationalities, and walks of life. The dances are fiery, the costumes striking, and the music overwhelming. But above all it is inspiring to look around the dance floor and see the joy in the faces of the now dancing audience (often non Greeks) sharing in this most passionate and dear element of our culture.

They say the flame of a bright candle will light many others, and I speak on behalf of all of us dancers when I say it has been and is an honour to share this fire on the dance floor in our time with FOTIA."

Harry Mavrolefteros, Instructor and Performer with FOTIA

"It is often hard to have time for, or even remember, our heritage and our traditions as modern Greek Australians. FOTIA led by Irini Lantis is a perfect way to learn how to Greek dance and remember the traditions that our parents and grandparents taught us and enriched our lives with. Putting together modern style dancing and costumes with traditional dancing steps and music, FOTIA is the perfect blend of tradition in our busy lives. Personally, I have enjoyed dancing more and more with FOTIA with every new dance. It is hard to explain how satisfying it is to perform with FOTIA and be part of such a social, vibrant, and caring group of dancers. AND we're all really hot and its really fun.. just try it!!"

Panayioti Mavrolefteros, Performer with FOTIA