

THE 2009 CHRISTMAS CONCERT BY SOPHIA HASKAS' HELLENIC DANCING SCHOOLS

From Macedonia to Crete & from Epirus to Cyprus, this was a perfect Hellenic Musical Odyssey!!!

If the Greek community in the Antipodes stays strong by passing its Greek cultural and musical "foot-prints" to the new generations, this is due to people and active community members like Sophia Haskas, a Sydney Greek teacher of pan-Hellenic dances who has been striving for over 40 years to ensure the preservation of Macedonian, Peloponnesian, Thessalian, Cretan, Aegean, Thracian and Cyprian music is alive and passed on to the next generations of the Greek-Australian community.

This year's excellent four hour concert took place last Sunday afternoon 22 November in Maroubra's South Juniors' Club Auditorium, an air-conditioned oasis from the searing heat outside of 41oC, with a packed and cheering audience. Her two major Hellenic Dancing Schools at the Greek Orthodox Church-Community of "All Saints" Belmore and at the Greek Orthodox Church-Community of "St Spyridon" Kingsford combined to provide a Greek Christmas mega event.

most known being the "kalamatiano" dance.

From here, Epirus region had its honour with the presentation of well known slower Epirotan songs.

The homeland of our Macedonian king, Alexander the Great was a very important "musical pause", as the children performed Western and Central Macedonian dances, such as Florinian, Kastorian and Thessalonian

for the audience to delve into Hellenic history reminding them of the Macedonian king's efforts to spread the Hellenic culture and civilization to the rest of the ancient world. The first segment closed off with lively Thracian music and Pontian songs and the dancers donning traditional flower embraced Thracian attire and "stern" black coloured Pontian costumes.

The 2009 Christmas concert came to a close with a "true-ble" Greek extravaganza! It included a solo comedy sketch play with Evangelos Houliaras, the "Ah koritsi mou" song by young Kostas Moutopoulos and then a pot-pouri a greek "glendi" of modern Greece, including zebekika dances, syrtaki dances and of course, as the grande finale, the famous "Zorba the Greek" which had everyone tapping and clapping to its fast tune.

It should be noted that everyone in the audience continued clapping her hundreds of children for their excellent pan-Hellenic presentations of dances.

Ms Sophia Haskas in her speeches, both opening and closing, thanked everyone for their support for her Greek Dancing Schools, mostly the parents and grandparents for their invaluable efforts to maintain the Greek spirit alive amongst the new Greek-Australian generations. She thanked

her own helpers, dancing instructors and her husband Emmanuel for his continued patience over the years. At the end, she presented gifts for those children who had been dancing Hellenic dances for over 10 years, thus recognizing their efforts and their love towards their Greek heritage through music. In addition, her husband, Emmanuel did not "escape" her speech, as she expressed her gratitude towards him for tolerating her with her dedication to the community.

The Masters of Ceremonies were Dimitrios Kametopoulos and Evangelos Koulos who both praised and applauded the children for their dedication to Greek dancing and music as well as all to the other supporters and stakeholders in this mega event. The closing of the concert filled with well wishes for Christmas, the most celebrated festivity of Christendom for children, and wishes for the New Year, 2010.

Dimitrios Kametopoulos



The second segment included a Hellenic musical Odyssey through the Aegean and Ionian islands, including Crete, Lemnos, Kythera, Naxos, Paros, Rhodes (Sophia Haskas' ori-



tunes with the characteristic Macedonian "gaida" instrument and clarinet. The visual slide with the Alexander the Great statue on the port of the Macedonian capital city, Thessaloniki, was prominent and allowed

gins), Kalymnos and Karpathos islands, all the Cyclades in the Aegean Sea and Cephallonia from the Ionian Sea. The contrasts between continental Greece and island Greece are well known and this is also evident in the dances and the tunes.



Her concert was divided into three major segments encapsulating the musical essence of Greece and her various regions. An innovation of this year's 2009 Christmas concert was the presentation of accompanying visual slides (multimedia presentation) with various tourist sites of Greece and of her regions. All her children wore traditional costumes representing the different areas of Greece.

The first stop was the middle region of Thessaly with characteristic "Karagouna" dance. After a quick stop in the Attica area with a Megarian dance, Sophia Haskas' dancers took the audience to southern Greece and to pure Peloponnesian sounds, the