



Interview by: Steffie Arsenis



Georgio's Guide to Culture & the Klarino



What does it mean to you to uphold Greek tradition and culture here in Australia?

Australia is a multicultural country. The nation is not defined by one specific culture and so we are urged to embrace and continue with our cultural inheritance. Henceforth it is imperative that we as Greeks sustain our culture and our Greek Orthodox religion, as without these, we have no basis for our personal identity and we are empty people.

What elements inspire you to keep Greek culture, tradition and language dominant in your life?

It is simple. I have been raised Greek. All four of my grandparents migrated to Australia from Greece. They have been a major influence throughout my life, along with my parents, as they all raised me as a Hellene. My Yiayades would cook me traditional village Greek food since I was a baby. My Pappou and I would listen to Greek folk music (Δημοτικά τραγούδια) ever since I can remember. My Mum and Dad ensured that no one in the family speak a word of English to me before I was five years old so that I learn the Greek language well before I got to school. My Dad taught me about the ancient glorious past of Greece and also about the Orthodox faith. As children, my brother and I found unsurpassable fun and laughter from singing crude Greek songs, and using crude Greek language with our uncle. So to conclude my answer, it is only normal that I continue life as a Greek.

For how long have you been playing

It has been almost five years since Georgio Svolos started playing the Klarino. This instrument is a major part of his identity. Georgio evaluates the essence of culture and the importance of the role it has in his life. For Georgio, the Klarino is not only a way of expressing himself but it holds ties to his memories and upbringing. It keeps him keep in touch with his Greek heritage. It is his nostalgia.

the Klarino? Does playing the Klarino make you feel closer to your Greek heritage? If so, in what way?

I started playing the Klarino in 2013. I actually started playing while my Pappou was suffering from dementia and was nearing his end. Klarino sounds dominate in Folk Greek music and reminds me of my childhood with my Pappou. We would always listen to it and dance, even once on Burwood road! Every time we would have a family occasion, the traditional Greek folk music was blasting through our speakers. In this way, to this day, whenever I play, I am reminded of my Pappou, and hence I feel closer to my Greek heritage.

Who is your favourite musician? Have any musicians in particular inspired you to play

this instrument?

I don't really have a favourite musician. There are many great Greek klarino players who have played in the past, and who play today. Though, there are two musicians who I have a special bond with. One is Vasilis Soukas, a klarino player of old times, and a favourite of my Pappou, and also Filio Pyr-gaki, a folk singer who I went to see in 2008 at Belmore Sports ground, and then later on last year in 2016 at Neo Roino near Nafplio.

Is playing the clarinet part of your future dream career and success?

I plan to play the klarino out at live events till I am an old man. It is not a full time career but rather a way in which I express myself, and help other people express themselves.