

Historian of Greek Music Pouliopoulos

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CHICAGO- For Meletios Pouliopoulos, Modern Greek music encompasses nearly limitless possibilities and meanings. Listening to him speak about Greek music, one is immediately taken into the most all-encompassing perspective one could imagine. It's not that his basic knowledge of music spans the decades or that his running accounts compare what was produced in Greece with what was performed, recorded and released here, but that the fabric of all his stories inevitably weaves in the personal lives of those who made that music as

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well as those who danced and sang to it.

Teasing apart what Pouliopoulos is doing is harder than it seems. He is one of those workaholic Greeks who always begins his conversations telling you what he needs to be doing rather than what he has so far accomplished. True, his core goal is always the same, which is nothing less than saving the fullest imaginable expression of modern Greek music and passing on that darkly beautiful, complex, and rich tradition to as many others as possible.

But, you see, Pouliopoulos is talented and, as the modern saying goes, he can multitask. Depending on the situation, he can become a historian able to delve into any level of detail on the history of Greek music since the very early 1900s. Or he can move on to the issues and problems that musical archivists, technical sound experts, and other preservationists face on a daily basis. And then there are his growing public lectures and radio programs, during which he often intentionally steps back and allows the music and musicians to work their wonders once again.

For 30 years, Pouliopoulos in his role as "Greek music historian" has documented and archived thousands of recordings, including 78rpm records, field tapes, and interviews. His efforts have gone well beyond just finding and collecting the latest record. Greek musicians, their families, club owners, dancers, record producers, fans, and assorted others have all welcomed his visit to share and record their memories. This attention to historical detail has resulted in a large record collection to be sure, but it also includes unreleased music tapes, recordings of live performances, home-recordings, exceedingly rare interviews, and a whole



Meletios Pouliopoulos, Greek music historian, weaves personal stories into discussions on modern Greek music.

battery of other documentation all offering insights into the historical development of Greek music.

Music is also a fundamental part of Pouliopoulos' own past. As a youth, he studied viola for four years, traveled with a quartet, and was first viola in the New Hampshire Youth Symphony Orchestra. He went on to study mandolin and guitar with virtuoso Anastasios Hatzigogas. For over 30 years, Pouliopoulos has performed as a Greek-American disc jockey and Master of Ceremonies for special events, dances, and festivals in New York and New England. As he laughingly recalls, he has even played "name that Greek tune!" At any number of these festivals or dances, he has had someone come up and say "I can't remember this Greek song but it goes

like this" and they sing or hum a small phrase. That he is usually able to identify these songs may not seem like a major accomplishment, but it does reconnect a Greek music fan with this musical tradition one recalled song at a time.

Another recent example of how Pouliopoulos is bringing past music and traditions back to light, was his recent discovery and presentation to AHEPA leadership of the "AHEPA March." This work was recorded in New York in 1927 on Columbia Records, and was used as a professional in the early days of the AHEPA.

It goes a long way in explaining Pouliopoulos' technical abilities and basic business savvy to note that he was employed by Verizon Communications for 23 years. As Staff Director of eCom

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dedicated Historian of Greek Music



merce Strategic Planning, he developed and administered a \$34 million annual budget and managed a national staff. Prior to his work in Strategic Planning, he spent two years as an International Consultant in Wireless and the Internet, working in Athens and Mexico City. In 2006, he retired from the corporate world to focus his work in Greek music research and archiving. Since, then he has been on what you could call "a musical roll."

In 2008, Pouliopoulos expanded his consulting and

launched Ypogeio Productions, offering consulting services for programming, archiving, and documenting Greek music. Between 2008 and 2012, he directed three legal projects concerning the music industry at the University Of New Hampshire School of Law's legal clinic. Two studies examined the music copyright issues. One study concerned a non-profit organization to preserve and archive Greek music.

Since 2009, Pouliopoulos has researched, produced, and hosted a monthly Boston radio program "For the Record: The History of Greek Music." Given the technology of the age, this program streams to a worldwide audience over the Internet. Since 2010,

Pouliopoulos has co-produced a radio program featuring Greek musicians and their music. "Live and Unplugged" on Grecian Echoes, Greek Radio Boston.

It has become the most successful radio program in the station's 67 year history.

Pouliopoulos records and produces videos of the shows, and makes excerpts available through the Ypogeio Productions' YouTube channel. One of the unexpected side-effects of these radio programs is that young Greek musicians have been coming to Pouliopoulos to find out more about the music he plays. Such requests not only delight him, they serve as proof that what he has devoted his life to is working.

Pouliopoulos, who never seems to stop working, served in 2012 as consultant on music

history and copyright to Carol Coronis for the production of her compact disk, *Girl from Thessaly*. Then, beginning in 2013 and continuing into 2014, he is serving as consultant for a legal case in Greece involving history and copyright issues of traditional Greek and Turkish music. In 2013, Pouliopoulos, together with Tina Bucuvalas and Zane Soffos, co-produced the CD, *The Bouzouki of George Soffos*, which condensed 40 years of history and recordings by the bouzouki virtuoso. This is the kind of project Pouliopoulos would love to make into an ongoing series of re-releases.

At the moment Pouliopoulos is a visiting researcher of Greek music at Harvard, where he consults on Greek music programming and legal issues.

In the spring of 2014, Pouliopoulos will be delivering three lectures on the history of Greek Music at the Greek Institute of Cambridge, MA. The series, entitled, "Preserving the Past", will focus on three separate topics; "The History of Greek Music Recorded in America," "Music and Culture from the Brick Bottom District" of Somerville, MA - a suburb of Boston, and "Greek Music in the Crossover of Greek, Armenian, and Turkish Peoples." The Brick Bottom district was formerly a neighborhood peopled by Greek immigrants from Asia Minor.

It is difficult to think of anyone who approaches Meletios Pouliopoulos' knowledge as a historian and preservationist in the realm of Modern Greek music since the early 1900s. The only real question, now, is how can the Greek community, at large, help this dedicated individual achieve all his goals on behalf of our music?

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