



It all sounds Greek to me!

'Grapevine' Summer 2000

An article by Hazel Young

I'm in love with Greek music! I was already hooked on the wonderful music of favourite Greek dances: '*Khassapikos*', '*Syrtos*', '*Tsamikos*', '*Poginisios*', '*Beratis*' and many more. Then I went to Greece and started to explore Greek music in more depth. Unlike popular music in the USA and the UK (where there is a vast gulf between mainstream pop and folk music), Greek popular music remains close to its traditional roots. And its great music to dance to as well!

But where do you start if you're not familiar with the Greek language? I offer a brief introduction, not only as a guide to yummy music for listening to (I often play Greek music as dancers arrive at my weekly group) but also because I believe it is so important for dance leaders and enthusiasts to seek out the original recordings to ensure dancers always dance to the purest music sources!

One of the biggest stars in Greece is **George Dalaras**: a prolific innovator with a fabulous voice. Dalaras started as a rebetiko singer and has produced 50 albums in his long career. As an introduction I recommend a compilation CD *A Portrait* (Hemisphere 7243/8/59597/2/1) which is easy to obtain in the UK. It includes a track called '*Issoun Theos*', which many of us know because of Lesley Laslett's beautiful dance. Dalaras is also the source for a great Stefan Freedman dance called '*Zante*'. The music comes from an early Dalaras CD called *Sta Psila Ta Parathiria* (Minos 7243/4/80166/2/1; the track title is '*Mi Mou Thimones Matia Mou*'). It's a real showcase for that stunning voice.

Another of my favourite singers is **Eleftheria Arvanitaki** (try saying her name after a few ouzos!). Some of her albums are more pop, but an album called *The Bodies and the Knives* (Polydor 527.059-2) which is a Greek/Armenian collaboration, is a gem. The title track '*Ta Kormia Kai Ta Maharia*' is great for dancing a lively '*Ketri Ketri*' style cocek or a '*Rumelaj*'. On her latest live in concert CD *Ektos Programmatos* (Mercury 538659-2) she also includes favourite traditional songs such as '*Mes Tou Aegeou Ta Nera*' (dance '*Issos*' to this) and a lovely version of '*Djivaeri*' which is a familiar tune I have often danced a slow '*Syrtos*' to.

Yiannis Parios made two incredibly successful CDs of island songs - *Songs of the Islands* (Minos MCD 430/1) and *Ta Nissiotika 2* (Minos MCD 1017/8) - which are the source of a number of familiar Greek tunes we dance to. One of the most popular tunes in Greece for the ubiquitous '*Kalamatianos*' is '*Thalassaki Mou*', and the Parios version is definitive. These two CDs are packed with familiar Greek tunes, including the favourite dances '*Thalassa*', '*Ikariotiko*' and '*Syrtos*' (tracks such as '*I Bratsera*' and '*Ligaria*'). I particularly recommend these two CDs for dance leaders: they are essentially Greek without being tourist bouzouki music fodder.

Happy shopping, happy listening and happy dancing !!!
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