



**CRETAN MUSIC & GREEK CULTURE**  
THROUGH A **DOCUMENTARY** AND **LESSON PLANS**  
FOR CHILDREN, TEENAGERS AND ADULTS



# A FAMILY AFFAIR

## THE DOCUMENTARY

A FAMILY AFFAIR is a celebration of a Greek family bound together by their shared love for the music of their homeland. The film follows three generations of musicians of the Xylouris family, who uphold and pass on the vibrant tradition of Cretan music, performing ceaselessly to followers across the world.

From the famous lyra-player Psarantonis – brother of legendary singer Nikos Xylouris - to his son, the lute player and singer George Xylouris (nicknamed Psarogiorgis) and his three children, Nikos, Antonis and Apollonia who study in Australia, the film discovers the electrifying power of their music and the sacred ties that bind it. It ultimately helps us discover how familial bonds and culture can help us celebrate our difference and shared experiences as global citizens across the world.

## LESSON PLANS

The following lesson plans are suitable for pupils from the 5th grade of Primary School, for High School students as well as adults. Participants do not need to be fluent Greek speakers but have to be able to read and write basic Greek.

### The lesson plans aim to help participants:

- get acquainted with Greek history, culture and society
- become more familiarised with the Greek language and Cretan dialect
- stimulate the mind and the senses to different forms of verbal and non-verbal communication through music and dance
- exchange views about identity and sense of belonging to a family, community or homeland

**Structure:** The lesson plans require that all participants have seen the documentary 'A Family Affair'.

They are composed of two parts, **MUSIC** and **FAMILY & IDENTITY**, each requiring a minimum of one hour.

Educators can select and adjust the plans according to their particular skills and those of the participants.

MUSIC is suitable for children from 5<sup>th</sup> grade onwards

FAMILY & IDENTITY is appropriate for High School students and adults.

**Extra material:** For students and adults who have intermediate and higher oral and written Greek language skills, educators may use **ANNEX / LANGUAGE**.

## PART 1 / MUSIC

The film opens a window into the world of Cretan music and culture. It is about a family of Greek musicians which, for several generations, has been intimately connected to Cretan traditional music and values. The Xylouris family hails from the village of Anogia, at the Rethymno Prefecture. The great musical tradition of that region is due to its geographical position as well as to its rich mythology and history. Therefore, in the film, the main musical snapshots concern the Cretan timbre that stems from its highest mountain, Psiloritis.

The musical tradition of Crete is one of the most active and vibrant traditions to be found in the world today. Located in the eastern Mediterranean, the island of Crete is a connecting link between East and West. As a crossroads amongst three continents, Europe, Africa and Asia, it has embraced -and yet accepts- many influences. Cretan music was an indispensable part of life in antiquity, the Byzantine times as well as the periods of Venetian, the Arab and Ottoman rule. Music in Crete is yet today an important element of everyday life, an amalgam of mythologies and histories, continually developing and adapting to current realities, while simultaneously struggling not to lose its ties with its roots.

The established trademark of Cretan music is the *lyra*, a pear-shaped, three-stringed bowed instrument. Next to the *lyra* player are men who play the *laouta*, large-bodied lutes with four double strings, a very low tuning, played with long plectrums, originally made from the feathers of a type of buzzard commonly found on Crete. The *laouto*, like most lutes found in the eastern Mediterranean, is clearly related to the very old Arabian oud.

Although the *lyra* is the dominant instrument, the violin is also performed at several parts of Crete, as well as other instruments, such as the mandolin and the *askomandoura* (bagpipe).

Like much of Greek folk music, Cretan music is closely related to dance, a central activity at Cretan feasts that can be of two broad categories, *dragging* (*syrtó*) and *leaping* (*pidichtó*).

Following the family for two years, the film captures the Xylouris' unique bond to Cretan music, and gives evidence of the active role still assumed by musicians in Cretan society today, experiencing and evolving an age-long tradition. They are respectable musicians from the village of Anogia, but also have become full-time professionals touring the world and engaging in a fight for the survival and the passing on of their homeland's music within and without Greece.

## 1A

### DISCUSSION OF IDEAS/ ACTIVITIES

After we have watched the whole film we discuss the following:

- What is and what is not music?
- What is traditional music?
- Can we live without music?
- Which words could we describe music with?
- How do we converse when playing music or dancing?
- How do we communicate while listening to music or dancing?
- What is the role of music toward the shaping of one's character?
- Do Cretans have a special relationship with music?
- What is the relationship between music and technology?

## 1B

### MANTINADES

In this section, we explore the traditional Cretan couplet, the so-called *mantinada*, by recognizing its raw materials. To achieve this, we complete and create our own *mantinades*, we identify their subjects, we emphasize the triangle that exists in the traditional Cretan music sound-lyrics-dance and we sing *mantinades*.

*Mantinades* are improvised, fifteen-syllable rhyming couplets, each divided into an eight- followed by a seven-syllable part (where the fourteenth syllable must be stressed and the fifteenth unstressed).

*Mantinades* are an integral part of daily life of the musical tradition of oral composition-in-performance. They are created on spot and are both recited and sung to the accompaniment of musical instruments. The verses touch on every aspect of life: their content can be taken from tradition, but can also be religious, historical or erotic.

*Mantinades* originated as love songs in medieval Cretan poetry and were introduced to Crete during the Venetian occupation of the island (1204-1670). At least part of the inspiration for this practice of composing and memorising texts in the form of rhyming couplets, derives from the popularity of Erotokritos, one of the most important works of Cretan literature, written by Vitsentzos Kornaros in the early 17th century. The poem consists of approximately 10,000 fifteen-syllable rhymed verses in the local dialect. It remains popular because it has been set to music and all Cretan musicians include excerpts to their repertory.

- Watch 'A Family Affair' excerpts of George Xylouris performing a famous *mantinada* during a wedding procession in Anogia (13:14) and reading *mantinades* inscribed on one of the tombstones in the Anogia cemetery (44:48).

Then discuss these two different uses of *mantinades* in Crete today. Why do you believe they are embedded in daily life?

- Read the following *mantinades* and discuss the questions below.

*Χίλια καλώς ορίσατε, χίλια και δυο χιλιάδες  
Ο κάμπος με τα λούλουδα και με τις πρασινάδες!*

*Σγουρό βασιλικάκι μου εκείά που στέκεις στάσου  
Να παίρνει ο κόσμος μυρωδιές από την εδικιά σου!*

*Μαδάρες μου Χανιώτικες, κορφή του Ψηλορείτη  
Και Λασιθιώτικα βουνά, γεια σου παντέρμη Κρήτη!*

*Τα κρητικά τα χώματα με τη βελόνα αν σκάψεις  
Αίμα παλικαριών θα βρεις, κόκκαλα θα ξεθάψεις!*

*Καυγάδες με το γιασεμί έβαλε πάλι ο κρίνος  
Ζηλεύγει του τις μυρωδιές για δε μυρίζει εκείνος.*

*Ποτέ δεν πρέπει τα κλαδιά τις ρίζες να ξεχνούνε,  
Γιατί αυτές αν μαραθούν κι εκείνα θα χαθούνε!*

*Η μαντινάδα η καλή δε χτίζεται όπως λάχει  
Πέτρα και χώμα και νερό της Κρήτης πρέπει να'χει!*

*Πουλί που είναι δυνατό και νταγιαντά τον πόνο  
Μπορεί στα ύψη και πετά με μια φτερούγα μόνο!*

*Η Κρήτη πάντα διαφορά έχει απ' άλλους τόπους  
Γιατί έχει ευαίσθητη καρδιά και κουζουλούς ανθρώπους!*

*Η παγκοσμιοποίηση την Κρήτη δεν την πιάνει,  
Γιατί σε κάθε εποχή νέα φυντάνια βγάνει!*

*Ως είν' το ρόγδι σόγιεμο και σφικταγκαλιασμένο  
Έτσι να'ναι τ' αντρόγυνο σφικτοροδοπλεγμένο!*

*Στέκω και συλλογίζομαι και απορώ ακόμα,  
Γιατί η καρδιά να μη γερνά αφού γερνά το σώμα;*

*Κάστρο με τα μπεντένια σου, Ρέθεμνος με τις ελιές σου  
Χανιά με τους μπαξέδες σου και με τις κοπελιές σου!*

*Ήθελα να'μουνα χοχλιός, να'ρθω στη γειτονιά σου  
Να γράφω με το σάλιο μου στις πέτρες τ' όνομά σου!*

*Και του καιρού χαιράμενοι και γλυκοσαλισμένοι  
Απ' άδικο κι από κακό να'στε ξεμιστεμένοι!*

*Όσο η Κρήτη τραγουδεί και το χορό θα στένει,  
Με μαντινάδες και χορούς ποτέ της δεν πεθαίνει!*

- a) How many verses does each *mantinada* consist of?  
b) How many syllables does each one of its verses consist of?

- c) Do the verses rhyme?
- d) What is the intonation of the verses? Are they composed on the so-called iambic meter, namely, an unaccented syllable followed by an accented syllable?
- e) What does each *mantinada* refer to? In others words, what topics does it deal with?
- f) Which *mantinada* do you favour the most and why?

- Which word would you choose in order to complete the following *mantinades*?

Ως έχεις την υπομονή, έχει και την ελπίδα  
Με τον καιρό το γιασεμί αθεί και βγάνει - - - - ! φύλλα

Είμαι μαχαίρι κρητικό, δώρο τιμής κι ανδρείας  
Μα είμαι και ενθύμιο παντοτινής - - - - ! φιλίας

Εγώ παρέα με παπά και με γιατρό δεν κάνω  
Ο ένας θέλει να πονώ κι ο άλλος να - - - - ! πεθάνω

Την πεθερά μου έβαλα ψηλά στον Ψηλορείτη  
να τηνε βλέπουν οι οχτροί να μην πατούν στην - - - - ! Κρήτη

Ήθελα και να κάτεχα ωσάν το συναξάρι,  
Πώς είναι η θάλασσα αλμυρή κι ανάλατο το - - - - ; ψάρι

Ο Κρητικός στην ξενιτιά πόσα λεφτά δεν δίδει  
Να΄βρει χοχλιούς μπουμπουριστούς να φάει με το ---- ! ξύδι

Το κάστανο θέλει κρασί και το καρύδι μέλι  
Και το κοπέλι κοπελιά κι η κοπελιά ---- ! κοπέλι

Η λευτεριά είν' ένας καρπός που με νερό δεν πιάνει  
Μόνο με αίμα θρέφεται βλαστούς και ρίζες ---- ! κάνει

- Let's now pretend we are Cretans and try out singing those *mantinades*.
- Could you create our own *mantinada*? Send us your *mantinada* text and video of yourself performing it ([info@anemon.gr](mailto:info@anemon.gr)).

The best videos will be posted on the "A Family Affair" facebook page.

## RIZITIKA - “SONGS OF THE FOOTHILLS”

The *rizitika* songs were created by the inhabitants of western Crete who dwell in the White Mountains (Lefka Ori or Madares) shepherds' lands. Their name derives from the Greek word “riza”, which means root - thus, *rizitika* are the “songs of the foothills”. As such, the *rizitika* are the basis of Cretan culture and carry on the traditions, beliefs and legends of the Cretan land.

These traditional songs do not use rhyming verses and are extremely brief and lyrically concentrated. The average length of a rizitiko song is about ten lines.

The theme of the *rizitika* songs differs. They may refer to death and the underworld, speak of friendship, hospitality and love, zeal for freedom, admiration of the brave, pastoral life, family ties, evoke the preparation for political rebellion, resistance to oppressors or belong to the heroic song genre. Most importantly, they make symbolic use of nature images, which convey meanings of independency and freedom in an allegoric, yet obscure to an outsider way.

Their roots can be traced back to ancient Greek times and Byzantium. That singing tradition was passed on during the Venetian domination. Most of the *rizitika* songs we know today were revived during the Ottoman rule and, more recently, the German Occupation (1941-1944). Since those times, old *rizitika* songs have been recycled and several have been sung by popular singers and become genuinely popular songs.

“When will the sky be clear” is one of the most famous *rizitika* songs in Greece. It became famous across Greece, when it was sung and recorded by Nikos Xylouris, during the Dictatorship (1967-74). The song, known to all Cretans, dates to the Venetian Occupation and was originally about the vendetta between two powerful Cretan families. It then became popular during the Ottoman rule, as a rallying cry for revolt.

Today, “When Will the Sky Be Clear” has become like a second anthem to the Greeks. It has been associated with modern Greek historical events, such as anti-junta student demonstrations in 1973 and the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974, but can also be heard at Greek stadiums during soccer or basketball games or during pre-election campaigns.

- ▶ Listen to “Πότε θα κάνει ξαστεριά / When will the Sky be Clear?” sung by Nikos Xylouris (search for one of the various videos posted on the internet).
  - a) Discuss the lyrics and meaning of the song.
  - b) The class learns to sing the song. For those who read notes/play an instrument, a musical sheet is also provided.

*Words and musical sheet on the page below →*

Πότε θα κάνει ξαστεριά  
When will the Sky be Clear?

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LYRICS

Πότε θα κάνει ξαστεριά	When will the sky be clear	Pote tha kani xasteria
Πότε θα κάνει ξαστεριά, πότε θα φλεβαρίσει,	When will the sky be clear, when will it be February,	Pote tha kani xasteria, pote tha flevarisi
να πάρω το ντουφέκι μου, την έμορφη πατρόνα,	so that I can grab my gun, the beautiful cartridge belt,	na paro to ntoufeki mou, tin emorfi patrona,
να κατεβώ στον Ομαλό*, στη στράτα τω Μουσούρω*,	and walk down to Omalos, on the Mousouros road,	na katevo ston Omalo, sti strata to Mousouro,
να κάνω μάνες δίχως γιους, γυναίκες δίχως άντρες,	to deprive mothers of their sons, and wives of their husbands,	na kano manes dihos yius, yinekes dihos andres,
να κάνω και μωρά παιδιά, να κλαιν' δίχως μανάδες,	to make babies cry without mothers,	na kano ke mora pedia na klen' dihos manades,
να κλαιν' τη νύχτα για νερό, και την αυγή για γάλα, και τ' αποξημερώματα για τη γλυκειά τους τη μάννα...	to cry for water at night, and for milk in the early morning, and, when the sun rises, for their poor mother...	na klen' ti nihta yia nero, ke tin avyi yia yala, ke t' apoximeromata yia ti ylikia tous mana...

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\*Ομαλός: the Omalos Plateau, south of Chania

\*Μουσούρω: a village near Omalos, in the region of Chania, western Crete



Πότε θα κάνει ξαστεριά  
When will the Sky be Clear?

LYRICS / MUSICAL SHEET

$\text{♩} = 100$

The musical score is written in a single system with five staves. The first staff is the melody in G major, 2/4 time, with a tempo of 100. It features chords F, C, and G. The second staff continues the melody with chords F, C, Gm, and Gm. The third staff continues with chords Gm(C), C, F, C, F, Bb, Bb, F, and C. The fourth staff continues with chords F, C, F, F, C, and F, ending with a 'Fine' box. The fifth staff continues with chords C, F, F, C, and F, ending with a double bar line and a repeat sign. The lyrics are written below the notes, with some words underlined. The piece concludes with the word 'Να..'.

Πό - τες θα  
πά - ρω

κα, πό - τες θα κά - νει ξα - στε - ριά\_ εχ πό - τες θα φλε -  
το, να πά - ρω το\_ ντου - φέ - κι μου εχ την ό - μορ - φη\_

- βα - ρί - σει πό - τες θα\_ φλε - βα - ρί - σει να πά - ρω  
πα - τρώ - να την ό - μορ - φη πα - τρώ - να\_ να κα - τε

το\_ να πά - ρω\_ το\_ ντου - φέ - κι μου  
βώ\_ να κα - τε - βώ\_ στον\_ Ο - μα - λό

Να..

## PART 2 / FAMILY & IDENTITY

### 2A

Watch the end of the film 'A Family Affair' (1:15:57). The family performs in Melbourne and then the children return to Crete after a long absence. They express their feelings about their homeland.

- ▶ Discuss the following questions:
  - a) In the film, what are the children's feelings for Crete? Have these changed during their absence in Australia?
  - b) What is the identity of Nick, Antonis and Apollonia? Is it possible to have multiple identities? What determines their identity? Music, language, house, family, friends?
  - c) Can you show on the map where you are from?
  - d) How does the resident of a mainland vary from an islander?
  - e) What does a trip offer? How does it affect the way you consider your own homeland?
  - f) What is the importance of Ithaca for Odysseus?

### 2B

The Cretan Nikos Kazantzakis (1883-1957) is world-known, one of the most translated Greek authors. He became famous mostly because of the cinematic adaptations of his works "Christ Recrucified", "Zorba the Greek" and the "Last Temptation of Christ".

- ▶ Read the excerpt from an interview with Nikos Kazantzakis at the French Radio (Paris) on May 6, 1955:

*Όσο πιο μακριά είμαστε από την πατρίδα μας, τόσο περισσότερο τη σκεφτόμαστε και τόσο περισσότερο, την αγαπάμε. Όταν βρίσκομαι στην Ελλάδα βλέπω τις μικρότητες, τις ίντριγκες, τις ανοησίες, τις ανεπάρκειες των αρχηγών, τη μιζέρια του λαού. Όμως από μακριά δεν βλέπουμε τόσο ευδιάκριτα την ασκήμια και έχουμε περισσότερη ελευθερία να πλάσουμε μια εικόνα της πατρίδας αντάξια ενός ολοκληρωτικού έρωτα. Να γιατί δουλεύω καλύτερα και αγαπώ καλύτερα την Ελλάδα όταν βρίσκομαι στο εξωτερικό. Μακριά της καταφέρνω να συλλάβω καλύτερα την ουσία της και την αποστολή της στον κόσμο, και συνακόλουθα τη δική μου ταπεινή αποστολή. Κάτι ιδιαίτερο συμβαίνει στους Έλληνες που ζουν στο*

εξωτερικό. Γίνονται καλύτεροι. Έχουν την περηφάνεια της φυλής τους, νιώθουν ότι όντας Έλληνες έχουν την ευθύνη να είναι αντάξιοι των προγόνων τους. Η πεποίθησή τους, ότι κατάγονται από τον Πλάτωνα και τον Περικλή, μπορεί ίσως να είναι μια ουτοπία, μια αυθυποβολή χιλιετιών, όμως αυτή η αυθυποβολή, γενόμενη πίστη, ασκεί μια γόνιμη επίδραση στη νεοελληνική ψυχή. Χάρη σ' αυτή την ουτοπία επέζησαν οι Έλληνες. Μετά από τόσους αιώνες εισβολών, σφαγών, λιμών, θα έπρεπε να έχουν εξαφανιστεί. Όμως η ουτοπία, που έγινε πίστη, δεν τους αφήνει να πεθάνουν. Η Ελλάδα επιζεί ακόμα, επιζεί νομίζω μέσα από διαδοχικά θαύματα.

<http://www.historical-museum.gr/webapps/kazantzakis-pages/gr/life/talkforgreece.php>

► Discuss the following:

- a) Could you present on Nikos Kazantzakis's life and works upon looking further at the following web pages?  
<http://www.historical-museum.gr/webapps/kazantzakis-pages>  
<http://www.kazantzaki.gr>
- b) Comment on his opinion in terms of his homeland, Greece, and Hellenism in general.
- c) Is what he is talking about relevant to "A Family Affair"?
- d) Did you ever have a relevant experience or emotion?

2C

Watch the *mantinada* read by Cretan Muslim Ali Oney in Ayvali, Turkey, 2010. (T.C. 4:00): [http://www.twiceastranger.net/site/video/?video\\_id=4](http://www.twiceastranger.net/site/video/?video_id=4)

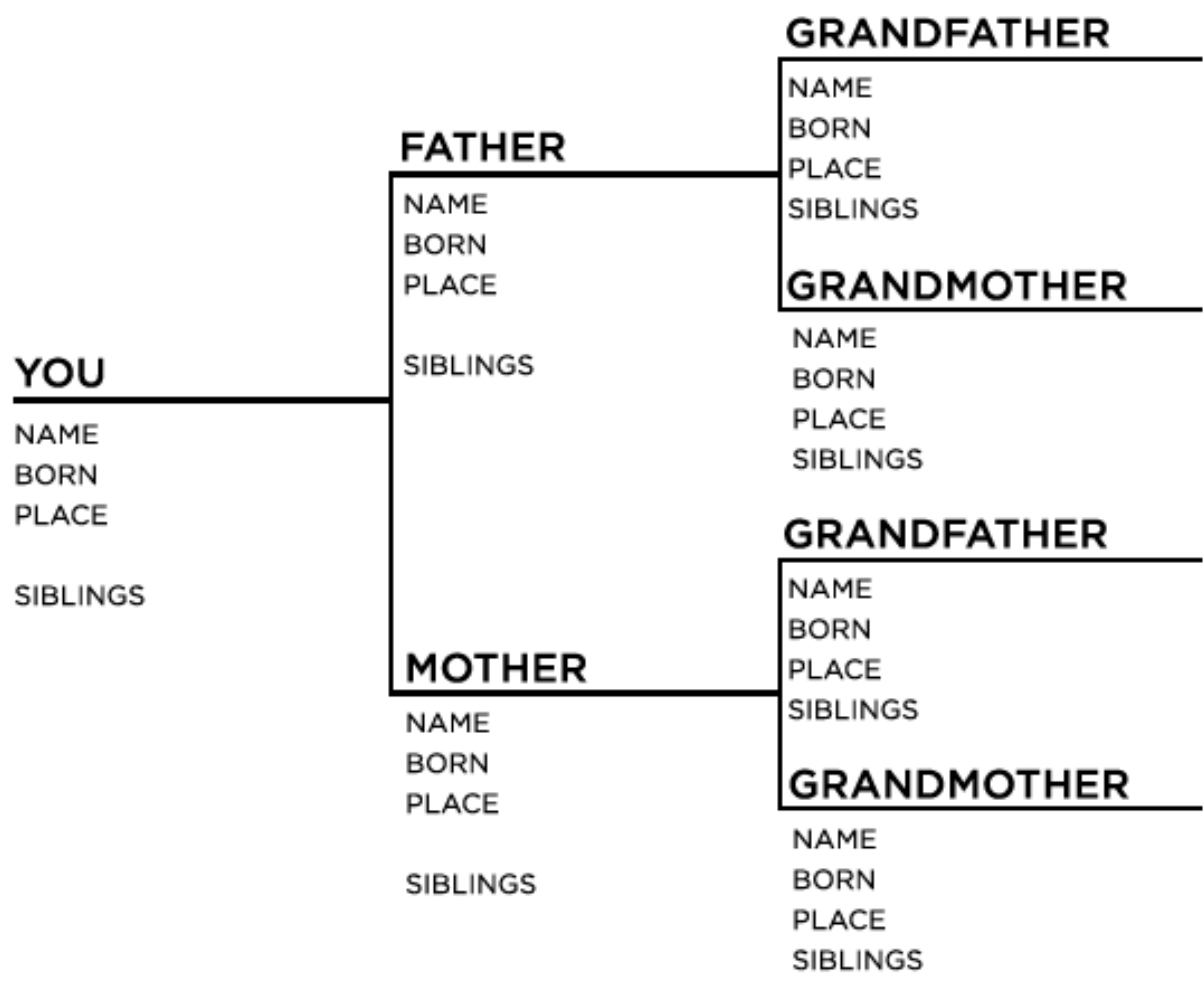
The video is part of the project **Twice A Stranger**, which explores population exchange and expulsion, as well as the significance of home and identity. It is about the experience of Greeks and Turks who lost their homes in the population exchange in 1922-3, in the Pontus, Macedonia, Crete and Capadoccia.

► Discuss the following:

- a) Why you think the Muslim Cretans - forced to leave Crete in 1922 - brought with them *mantinades* to Turkey? How does this express their attachment to the island?
- b) Why would they have written Cretan *mantinades* in Arabic?
- c) How could *mantinades* have been a common denominator between the Orthodox and Muslim communities of Crete before 1922?
- d) Where is our home? What sounds, images, tastes, smells or other experiences does it carry?
- e) How does the natural and social environment affect our character?

► Create a family tree and discuss the origins of your family and whether/how this has affected your identity.

*Sample family tree on the page below →*



*Feel free to go three or four generations back and add other biographical information if it seems important to you.*

# CONTRIBUTORS

## Creation of educational programme

**MARIA HNARAKI**, a professor of anthropology, folklore and ethnomusicology and an accomplished scholar in the field, has extensively researched cultural identity expressions, traditions and customs, such as music and dance events in the Mediterranean, as well as investigated topics in nissology, experiential learning and hybrid educational environments. She favors investigating who people are and how they behave through the arts they create and the customs they observe, coming to the conclusion that “we are all amalgams of many influences and that the same things happen all over the world in different ways.”

Hnaraki holds a Diploma of Arts in Music Studies from the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens-Greece (1996), an M.A. in Folklore and Ethnomusicology (1999) and a Ph. D. in Folklore and Ethnomusicology from Indiana University in Bloomington (2002). Additionally, she has a Piano Soloist Diploma from the Hellenic Conservatory of Athens (1997) and degrees in Theory, Pedagogy and Music Education from the National Conservatory of Athens, while she has also received numerous awards, honors and fellowships.

Until recently, Hnaraki was the Founding Director of Greek Studies and an Associate Teaching Professor at Drexel University, Philadelphia. Her wide-ranging circle of activities include, among others, presentations in international conferences on several topics such as contemporary Greek society and its diasporas, cultural identities in the Mediterranean, learning pedagogy, cultural aspects of the Greek language, literature and the other arts, music and dance, publications of book reviews and articles in journals and periodicals, translations, instruction of folk songs and dances, co-organization and performance in music and dance ensembles as well as coordination of various events such as lectures, concerts, theatrical performances, movie showings, and Mediterranean Diet symposia.

While at Cornell University, Hnaraki founded a study abroad program in Crete-Greece which she has been expanding and enriching since then. At Drexel University, she has created more than 30 university courses, several of which are unique in the USA, with the educational purpose of implementing an integral, holistic, interdisciplinary, academic approach to the Greek and Mediterranean reality.

Hnaraki is the author of “‘Sing In Me, Muse, and Through Me Tell the Story’: Greek Culture Performed” (2013) and “Cretan Music: Unraveling Ariadne’s Thread” (2007), which has received the “Young Academic Writer and Researcher” prize from the Pancretan Association.

## Producer

**ANEMON PRODUCTIONS** is a non-profit organisation based in the centre of Athens, which supports the creation and dissemination of innovative documentary, web and educational projects, aiming to inform and inspire action within and without of Greece.

Anemon believes that film and other media can bear witness to the challenges faced by individuals, families and communities in a unique way, and that well-structured media campaigns can help to shift public opinion, inspire concrete action and draw attention to innovative solutions.

Anemon also works to foster strategic alliances between filmmakers, artists, activists, educators and community organisations.

The educational programme's main implementation is due to the generous support of "Cultural Crete-USA, Inc."



The programme was created with additional philanthropic funds via a crowd funding campaign on Kickstarter.

[www.afamilyaffair.gr](http://www.afamilyaffair.gr)

For additional information about A FAMILY AFFAIR and other Greek documentaries, please contact Elektra Peppas at [info@anemon.gr](mailto:info@anemon.gr)

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