

BIOGRAPHY – DEMETRIOS C. PAPPAS

The musical career of Demetrios C. Pappas began much like career choir experiences of many other church musicians. Jimmy learned Byzantine chant from his father Constantine Pappas from a very early age. As Protopsalti at the St. Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church in Astoria, Constantine Pappas gathered his sons around him at the psaltiri and taught them how to read and chant from Byzantine notation.

Jimmy began a cantorial society known as Romanos O Melodos which Jimmy continued to direct for years, performing and teaching after his father retired, thereby preserving our Byzantine musical heritage for the next generation. In addition, Constantine Pappas had formed a choir of mixed voices at St. Demetrios in Astoria. It was one of the first choirs in America which combined the voices of over 40 men and women who sang during the Divine Liturgy each Sunday.

After attending New York City's specialized High School of Music and Art, Jimmy earned his BA from Columbia University and his Master's Degree in Music in 1959 from Columbia University's Teacher's College. With his experience, education and knowledge, he transcribed Byzantine music into Western notation, publishing several works over the years. His greatest achievement is The Greek Orthodox Hymnal, a near 400-page volume of music, including three settings of the Divine Liturgy, hymns of the Feast Days of our Church and the Services of our Sacraments. This hymnal, which when published was the first of its kind, is used in many churches throughout the United States. A copy of The Greek Orthodox Hymnal is housed at the Lincoln Center Music Library. The Direct Archdiocesan Federation of Church Musicians used Jimmy's Liturgical settings from the hymnal for many of its annual conferences, most recently at its 30th Annual Conference in November 2014.

During World War II Jimmy served our nation in the United States Army as a sergeant. En route to Japan he and his fellow soldiers were informed that the U.S. would be dropping the atomic bomb and that they should not expect to return home to their loved ones. Nevertheless, the soldiers arrived in Japan after the bombing and remained to assist in the post-war efforts. Without a Greek Orthodox church to attend, Jimmy went to services at a local Christian church where he sang praises to God and joined in fellowship with the local priest and congregation every Sunday. Upon his return to the States, Jimmy became the choir director at St. Eleftherios in Manhattan.

He started a choir at Zoodohos Peghe in the Bronx in 1948 and also formed the very popular GOYA Chorale in the parish. During the 1960's he was the choir director at St. Paul's in Hempstead and then at the Transfiguration of Christ in Corona. In 1979 Jimmy became the choir director at St. Demetrios in Jamaica. Jimmy served as choir director of the Holy Resurrection Church in Glen Cove, now in Brookville, from 1999 to 2010.



Over the past 60+ years Jimmy has taught music at the Theological School at Holy Cross, in many of our parochial schools in the metropolitan area and at St. Basil's Academy. For many years he was asked to lead choir members from churches in New Jersey to sing in Asbury Park for the celebration of the Divine Liturgy on the Feast Day of the Elevation of the Holy Cross. With unparalleled energy, well over the course of 30 years, Jimmy formed groups of male singers for purposes of chanting vesper services at churches in our area. He has conducted combined choirs at three Clergy-Laity National Conferences and has participated in countless others.

Jimmy's family, including his daughters, Leah and Christina, his brother Nicholas and his sister Sophia, as well as many nieces and cousins, sang and played the organ under his direction in his various choirs over the years. They joined their communities' choirs where they settled to raise their families continuing the tradition passed on to them. Indeed, Jimmy passed on the rich legacy of our sacred Byzantine hymnology not just to his family, choir members and students but to countless members of our congregations all over the country. His efforts have enlightened, inspired and encouraged young and old alike to join their church choirs extending a sphere of influence beyond his own humble realization.

In addition to his untiring efforts and devotion to our Orthodox hymnology, Jimmy was a member of the highly esteemed Collegiate Chorale for over 13 years singing under the direction of the legendary Robert Shaw in many prestigious concert halls including Town Hall and Carnegie Hall performing the choral works of some of the greatest composers of all time.

In 1980, the National Forum of Greek Orthodox Church Musicians recognized Jimmy for his outstanding contributions to church music in the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America when he was presented with the prestigious Saint Romanos the Melodist Medallion. He was awarded the Educator Through the Arts Award by the Hellenic American Educational Association in 1997 and the Patriarch Athenagoras I Medallion by the National Forum of Greek Orthodox Church Musicians in 2002 for distinguished service to his Metropolis. He received the Archbishop's Years of Service Award which is bestowed upon church musicians who have served as choir directors for 25 years or more, and in 1998 he was honored for more than 50 years of service as a choir director at the Clergy-Laity Congress Reception.

In furtherance of supporting our area choirs, Jimmy was instrumental in the formation of the "QLI". From 1984 to 1985 a handful of choir directors met to outline the mission of the Queens and Long Island choirs as a local choir federation and to begin the process of drafting a constitution to form an alliance that continues to thrive today as the Direct Archdiocesan District Federation of Greek Orthodox Church Musicians.

The Greek Orthodox Church of The Holy Resurrection in Brookville, NY honored Jimmy on May 8, 2010 with a gala concert featuring his beautiful choral arrangements of Byzantine hymns and popular Greek songs performed by choir members from the Federation and the greater New York area. Since 2011, Jimmy sang with the Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church Choir in Hicksville, NY where his daughter Leah is choir director.

In October 2012, the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America awarded Jimmy the Archdiocesan Medal of Saint Paul. His Grace Bishop Sevastianos of Zela, on behalf of His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios of America, presented the Medal to him during the 28th Annual Federation Conference at the Cathedral of Saint Paul in Hempstead, NY,

In grateful appreciation of Jimmy's contributions to the Liturgical Music of our Holy Orthodox Church in America, the Federation officially renamed its scholarship award *The Demetrios C. Pappas Educational Scholarship* by unanimous vote at its 30th Annual Federation Conference the weekend of November 1 and 2, 2014 at the Greek Orthodox Church of Zoodohos Peghe in the Bronx, NY.

Not only did Jimmy work tirelessly making outstanding contributions to our church music, he has also kept many Greeks and Greek Americans alike, connected to the popular and folk music of Greece. He recorded authentic Greek music using traditional Greek instruments and vocals in his series of *YA'SSOU!* record albums. For decades, Jimmy preserved and taught the songs cherished by Greek grandparents and parents, heard at Greek dances, festivals, parties and family celebrations, popular not only here but in Greek communities all over the world. The Amphion Choir, formed by Jimmy in 1957, recorded the *YA'SSOU!* records in the 1950's and 1960's. He taught these beautiful, nostalgic songs to choir members over the years organizing concerts in many parishes, in the Bronx, Astoria, Corona, Jamaica and Hicksville, to name a few. In his home, with family and friends, there was always singing around the piano.

Jimmy Pappas kept the legacy of the music of our faith and our native Greece alive in many hearts. He quietly built a framework to ensure the endurance of our unique musical heritage so that we may, through music, lift up our spirits and our minds. As he wrote in his foreword to the Greek Orthodox Hymnal, "Our choirs aid the entire congregation in the perpetuation of our faith which teaches us the way to live." It is in knowing how to live according to God's will that, whether we chant hymns or sing songs, we must dedicate our works to Him asking for His blessing everywhere we go and in everything that we do.

In working to preserve Greek Orthodox music in America, Jimmy gave many a "voice" to connect our faith and our heritage enabling those who have known him, through the grace of God, to instill the love of our religious hymns and folk songs in the hearts of our children and grandchildren. He achieved, through his example, that praise and thanksgiving through music in a glorious assembly is attainable in the parishes throughout America and that "it is good to sing and hymn to God".

Jimmy Pappas offered his "voice" humbly to God and His church working with great effort and devotion in the preservation of our sacred hymns for over seven decades. He lived by the words of the psalmist, "I will sing praises to the Lord as long as I live," and he did until he fell asleep in the Lord on Sunday, March 8, 2015, following a morning of raising his beautiful tenor voice in song along with the Holy Trinity Church choir members and spending an afternoon with his beloved family.

Jimmy will be sorely missed by all who knew, respected and loved him. May his memory and his music be eternal.