

## 23RD ANNUAL HELLENIC DANCE FESTIVAL CELEBRATED IN ORLANDO

ORLANDO, Fla. - A record 4,000 participants gathered Jan. 11-15 at the Caribe Royale Resort in Orlando to attend the 23rd Hellenic Dance Festival (HDF). The Metropolis of Atlanta-sponsored event hosted record numbers from across its Metropolis and beyond. Participants included 68 dance groups representing parishes from Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Colorado, Virginia, Illinois, Maryland, New York, Kansas, and Nebraska. HDF also welcomed for the first time groups from Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, Thessaloniki, Greece, and the Hellenic Roots of the Greek School of Plato in Brooklyn, New York. The weekend was highlighted by the attendance and participation of His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America. The 2024 event was the first in HDF history to include an additional full day of competition.

"This year's weekend theme 'Imagine' was more meaningful than ever as we welcomed record numbers and planned for an extra day in our event," said Rev. Father Sampson Kasapakis, Hellenic Dance Festival Chairman. "The joyful participation of so many reinforced the true purpose of the Hellenic Dance Festival and strengthened the bonds of our Orthodox family through culture and faith."

HDF is organized by an executive committee and a 20-person festival implementation team. The event aims to bring together Orthodox families through dance, music, and fellowship to perpetuate the rich Hellenic Orthodox tradition. The weekend theme "IMAGINE" was woven into an expanded offering of spiritual and cultural workshops throughout the event. Attendees also participated in service projects to benefit Nemour's Children's Health and the International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC).

In addition to full days of competition on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, attendees participated in an opening ceremony on Thursday evening with remarks by Fr. Sampson offering the extended blessings of His Eminence Metropolitan Alexios and His Grace Bishop Sevastianos. An Agiasmos service was celebrated by clergy from around the Metropolis Atlanta and Archdiocese of America to begin the weekend's festivities. On Sunday morning, the entire Metropolis family gathered to celebrate a Hierarchical Divine Liturgy with His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America. At the end of the Divine Liturgy, His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros elevated Fr. Sampson to the office of Ekonomos of the Archdiocese of America. The weekend culminated on Sunday evening with a red carpet-themed awards ceremony, which was followed by socializing and dancing. A special presentation highlighting the 2023 HDF Odyssey trip to Greece included participation by all 21 Odyssey dancers. It culminated with the announcement that the Odyssey Program will move to an every two year cycle, with the next trip being planned for early 2025 for adult dance directors. Live music for the weekend's glendia were provided by folk musicians from across the U.S. as well as from Thessaloniki, Crete, and Ioannina, Greece.

The event was enhanced by a prestigious panel of dance and costume judges from the U.S. and Greece representing decades of Greek folk dance research and teaching. At Sunday's awards banquet, medals were awarded for dance, choral performance, costumes, and folk expression in each of eight competitive categories. Platinum (first place) medal winners included: **Primary Category:** *Archangelos Eftyhia*, Archangel Michael Church, Port Washington, New York, **Advanced Primary Category:** *Troupe Levendopaida*, Saint George, Greenville, South Carolina, **Junior Category:** *Parea*, Holy Trinity, Charlotte, North Carolina, **Advanced Junior Category:** *Meraki*, St. George, Knoxville, Tennessee, **Intermediate Category:** *Elpida*, Holy Trinity, Charlotte, North Carolina, **Advanced Intermediate Category:** *Anemos*, St. John the Baptist, Omaha, Nebraska, **Senior Category:** *Filodoxia*, Holy Trinity, Charlotte, North Carolina, **Advanced Senior Category:** *Orpheus Hellenic Folklore Society*, Metropolis of Chicago. The annual Metropolitan Alexios Philotimo Award was given to the parish of the Assumption in Scottsdale, Arizona, and the Director's Award was presented to Anthony Platis of the Orpheus Hellenic Folklore Society in Chicago.

The 2025 Hellenic Dance Festival will be held in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, and the 25th Anniversary event will be held in New Orleans, Louisiana in 2026. Interested in learning more about HDF? Visit [www.HellenicDanceFestival.com](http://www.HellenicDanceFestival.com).

### ABOUT HDF

The Hellenic Dance Festival, based on the vision and dream of His Eminence Metropolitan Alexios, began in 2000. Traveling to various cities throughout the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Atlanta, the Hellenic Dance Festival has grown into a true family event. Held annually on MLK Jr. weekend, it allows participants to join together as brothers and sisters in Christ. Our religion, our Greek language, and our culture help us maintain our identity as Hellenes. The need for our communities to perpetuate our culture, along with the philosophy of ancient Greece and the Olympic spirit of "a healthy mind in a healthy body" were instrumental in the vision of His Eminence Metropolitan Alexios to establish the Hellenic Dance Festival.



The 2024 HDF Executive Committee and Festival Implementation Team





Father Kyriakos Hambos organizes volunteers for the 2024 HDF Community Service Projects. Photo credit Paula Detweiler











**His Eminence Archbishop Elpidoforos and Rev. Father Sampson Kasapakis congratulating 'Kyklos' from Thessaloniki, Greece after their performance.**



**Dancing at the Saturday evening glendi with music by Kompania Verdi from Ioannina, Greece.**