THE MANY TRADITIONS OF GREEK MUSIC

Dino X. Pappas: The Golden Greek of Detroit

By Steve Frangos

Dino Pappas is far from a recluse collector. The "Golden Greek of Detroit" is what The Detroit Free Press calls Dino whenever it runs a story on him and his collection. Dino has lectured for community group, private clubs, and academic audiences in California, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, and Utah. As a guest speaker Dino has, appeared on numerous radio programs, all around the country, lecturing with extensive musical examples. At the request of local scholars Dino prepared a taped lecture with music to accompany the National Endowment of the Humanities exhibition *The Greek American Family: Continuity Through Change* when it toured to Wayne State University in 1983. Dino has compiled a discography entitled, *Greek and Turkish Commercial Recordings in America: 1900 to 1956*. This discography is the result of five years' worth of investigations and cross-referencing. Negotiations with publishers are now underway to have this discography published.

Scholars have long respected Dino's expertise and so recordings of interviews with Dino, lectures, and re-recordings of 78rpm records from his collection are maintained in five locations: Rapids Public Library; the Greek Collection the Wayne State Ethnic Archives, the of the Archives of the West at the Grand Marriot Library in Salt Lake City and two of Indiana University's archives the Uralic-Altaic Archives of Traditional Music.

But who is Dino Pappas? Dino once wrote out the following auto biography:

My name is Constantinos X. Papakonstaninou or better known Dino Pappas. I was born in Detroit, Michigan. August 1, 1931, of Greek immigrant parents. My father came to the United States, in approximately 1905, from the Roumeli region of Greece. My mother came to the United States from Constantinople, Turkey, but of Greek parents, in 1921...

My interest in Greek and Turkish music came at an early age. I used to love playing the records and look back and see the enjoyment on people's faces as they either sang along or danced to the music. I made myself a vow, at an early age, that I would always try to collect something new and different constantly. My collection is quite extensive...

I am a retired Detroit policeman. I retired in 1974 of a duty-connected disability. This gave me more time to seriously devote to my collection.

Because of my little bits of knowledge and through listening to the songs, I have been able to follow Greek American history through the recordings. I had the honor also of taking part in the making of the Hollywood movie, "The Postman Always Rings Twice," with Jack Nicholson and Jessica Lang. The Greek records played in the movies are out of my collection.

Photo: Andrew T. Kopan record collection at Indiana University (Bloomington) Archive of Traditional Music.

Dino's "little bits of knowledge and through listening to the songs" has him constantly sought out by Balkan music lovers and scholars all over the world. Dino always has someone staying over at the house. Most of the time is spent down in the basement listening to music. Musicians, scholars, Greek community groups, movie producers, (folklore and dance clubs regularly contact Dino to learn about modern Greek and Balkan music. Dino's accessibility, and his generous nature, have led to this seemingly endless stream of visitors. It is these contacts, over the past ten years, that have established Dino's reputation in Greece and the United States as a leading authority on modern Greek and Turkish recorded music.

Various people have contacted Dino for information and music aimed at producing re-released albums on Greek and Turkish music. *Greek Oriental: Smyrneic-Rebetic Songs and Dances The Golden Years: 1927-1937* (Folklyric Records 9033) by Martin Swartz, the linguist cites Dino in the credits. Dino chafls somewhat at being cited just as another name in the list of credits. Aside from the time he spent visiting with Dr. Swartz in California, the two men spoke frequently for several months over the telephone. On one occasion Dino spoke to Dr. Swartz three times, in one day, going over details in the liner notes. James Palis, the producer of *To Elliniko Laiko Tragoudi Stin Ameriki 1917-1938 (Greek Folk Songs in America 1917-1938)* spent days in Dino's basement listening, often for the first time, to the earliest commercial records of Greek music available in America.

A number of individuals have encouraged Dino to work on his own re-release album. Ilhan Boegoz, (who has deposited several tapes drawn from Dino's collection into the Indiana University Uralic-Altaic Studies Archives) has urged Dino to work on a re-release album of Turkish music recorded in America. Thomas Jacobson, the Classical archaeologist and long time afficionado of Greek jazz is another who has suggested that Dino re-release an album devoted to modern jazz recorded by Greek musicians.

Steve Demarkopoulos, the noted Greek lexicographer has a running conversation with Dino. In his academic writings as well as his immensely popular syndicated newspaper column "Do You Speak Greek?" Dr. Demarkopoulos has documented, with considerable help from Dino, the appearance of "Gringlish" on the early 78rpm records. Gringlish or Greenglish (indicating a 'green horn' a term applied to many immigrant Greeks in the early 1900's) is a merger of Greek and English words that follows Greek grammatical forms "Gringlish, like all patois, thrives because either there is no exact counterpart in the standard language or the counterpart is too complicated for the Greek-American to remember or too cumbersome to bother to reproduce (Demakopoulos 1979)." The use of Gringlish is not only quite widespread among Greek American communities but some witnesses believe its use is increasing.

Many musicians and several academics have asked Dino for specific re-recordings on technical aspects of Greek and Turkish music. One example is Michael G. Kaloyanides, the ethnomusicologist who asked for a whole series of cassettes with musical examples of Turkish modes, called *makams*. Dino spent days with his collection gathering and then sending that information to Dr. Kaloyanides. Richard K. Spottswood author of the discography, *Ethnic Music on Record. A Discography of Commercial Ethnic Recordings Produced in the United States 1894 to 1942* was another visitor to Dino's basement Mr. Spottswood spent many days with Dino in extended conversation about Greek records released in America

Dino, undoubtedly stimulated by

Photo: Atlas General Catalogue, 1927-1928, courtesy of Helen Zeese Papanikolas.

all this interchange with musicians, scholars, and other collectors, has co-authored with Helen Zeese Papanikolas, one of the foremost Greek American historians, two articles on "Greenglish" heard on commercial records (1988a and 1988b). Steeped as he is in the Greek language, Dino has a strong interest in oral traditions other than music. This has lead to an as-yet-to-be-published article, again written with Helen Papanikolas, entitled *Proverbs and Sayings In Greek Immigrant America.*

While a host of other names could be included, perhaps the most important recent event has been with Fotios K. Litsas, the Byzantine and Modern Greek scholar. As part of the twelve hour series on Greeks in America Dr. Litsas made a special trip to Michigan with his video crew to interview Dino on the history of Greek and Turkish music recorded in America for this National Greek Television and Eurovision-sponsored documentary.

In the most profound sense Dino Pappas is a tradition-bearer for an entire body of music. Given his vast cross-referencing of data Dino's ability to recognize performers on records when credits do not appear is not an ability to be taken lightly. Born into this musical tradition and an avid collector for nearly half a century, whenever Dino discusses Greek and Turkish music and musicians he demonstrates his observations by simply reaching out and putting the record on the phonograph. This method is frequently the way Dino conducts telephone consultations with musicians and scholars. Specific musical examples are played so the person on the telephone can "hear" what Dino ng.

Dino's experiences with Greek and Turkish music are not restricted to commercial recordings. Dino's mother used to sing him to sleep as a small child with, what for years he thought was simply the Greek lullaby, *Paramana Kouna Kouna (Rock The Cradle).* Informal gatherings in the living room or kitchen were scenes where his mother and aunts would sing songs they learned growing up in Constantinople. Dino would come home to find his father and a group of men laughing and singing the kleftika, e.g. the mountain freedom songs of the Roumeli region of Greece around the kitchen table.

Even the presence of mechanical music was not something new to his family. Dino recalls that "Mom said they had a Victrola *me houni* (with a horn)" so he asked "was it a disc with a horn?" "No", she said "Makerades" (spools). "She also said they would put a piece of foil over the cylinder...and recorded their own (songs)." In Constantinople, before 1921, Dino's mother and her sisters would gather around the cylinder machine. One aunt would play the mandolin, another took a spoon and a plate to keep time as they all sang into the horn. These "home-made" cylinders would last two or three re-playings.

Sometimes Dino refers to his family as "glenjedes" or "party people" for their obvious love of music, dance and commensality. Dino recalls that in his youth "some homes were like museums" with dust on the victrolas. Victrolas in these homes were status symbols, nothing else. This was certainly not the case in Dino's home. The first record Dino was ever given was on his ninth birthday as a present. Dino still has his parents' 1925 Brunswick Victrola with the family's original record collection inside. The loss of the Depression placed many once prosperous immigrants, such as Dino's father, back into poverty again.

The way I remember... my dad had lost everything...we were actually on welfare when I was a kid. My aunts would come over. My mother's sisters. We'd sit in the kitchen. A pot of coffee would go on. If there was something to snack on maybe some Greek bread...a little feta...some kaseri...halva...or something. Then'd sit and talk. They'd tell stories about Turkey. And my Dad would tell stories about Greece. My Uncle Paul would tell stories about the island of Kos 'cause that's where he was from. They'd compare stories about when they were young. We kids would sit and listen...or they'd say "ah, den vazoume kanya plaka. ("ah, why don't we put on a record?") Let's go and dance." You have to remember we lived in flats. You dance hasapiko and it sounded like the whole house was caving in. But we managed to enjoy ourselves. No T.V.s. If we had money we bought a radio. All we really had were those old crank up Victrolas (side A #2634)."