

# The Lost Apollo Music Company

By Steve Frangos

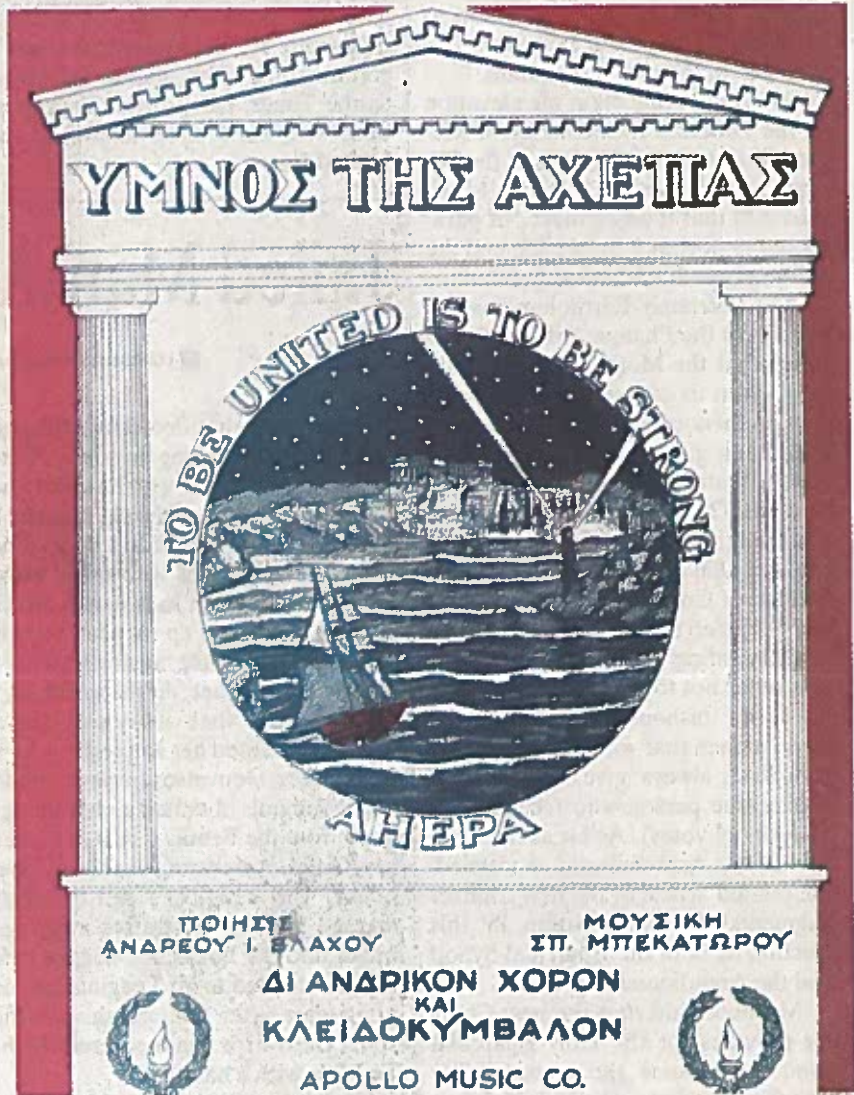
Special to The National Herald

I know absolutely nothing about the Apollo Music Company. Yet I have heard the music this company released all my life. My mother plays the piano. My father was once an accomplished concert violinist. In fact my parents met, after World War II, in the choir at St. George Greek Orthodox Church in Chicago. Still, all I do know about the Apollo Music Company is that my family and many other Greek-American families' own seemingly endless copies of sheet music issued by this one publishing house.

The complex array of themes and genres of songs found on Apollo Music Company sheet music offers us numerous insights into our collective music heritage in North America. But is also a shame to publicly acknowledge how much of our collective cultural history is now, seemingly, lost forever. I cannot find any printed references on this obviously extremely popular publishing company. The very existence of so much sheet music and its presence in so many homes all across the country can only mean that this single company provided music that a wide variety of Greek-Americans found enjoyable.

What I will attempt here is to provide some sense of the range of topics and themes seen when looking at a selection of this company's catalog of music.

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The cover of the hymn of the AHEPA published by the Apollo Music Company in New York.

# The Lost Apollo Music Company

■ continued from page 1

Given what is printed on the covers of the sheet music this company was located at 301 West 41st Street in New York City. That is the only address I have ever seen. At the foot of some of their pieces of sheet music besides the New York City address you can see printed "Athens, Greece." But I have no idea what that means precisely. Maybe there was an office in Athens, perhaps some of the sheet music was first printed there and imported here. Then, again, a number of the sheet music pieces have the announcement, "Made and Printed in U.S.A." on them.

After a while, one can see on the covers of individual songs announcements such as "Two New Apollo Records by CRIONAS!" and "Trade-Mark: Musophone" so perhaps the company was sold at some point. It also says occasionally, "Music Publishers Since 1920." The cost of these individual pieces of sheet music ranged between \$.20 and \$.25. I can't figure out how they numbered their sheet music. Especially since some of the copyright dates (all in Roman numerals) note the 1920s and that these songs follow in numerical order those with much later copyright dates.

Apollo Music Company cover art varied over the years. Yet the majority of examples of sheet music, I have seen from this company, have a standardized cover. This cover shows, along the border, a climbing rose on a trellis with a vase on the right side. The song's title is in a square in the center of the sheet. The specific number of the song is in the upper left hand corner. The back page, most often, has the title APOLLO EDITIONS at the top of the page and then a long list of songs you can order. Some of the sheet music pieces have, just under the title of the individual song, a title such as "Songs of Greece," "Famous Radio Songs," "Greek American Songs," or "PanHellenic Songs."

Certainly the majority of these songs are meant for nothing more than personal as well as family entertainment. Other songs such as Venizelos (No. 660), Hymnos tis Kritis (No. 564) with its photograph of Haralambos Bougiukalos (1865-1908), Hymnos tis Neas Geneas (subtitled the Greek-American Hymn) (No. 679) and certainly the Hymnos tis GAPA (No. 766) and Hymnos tis AHEPAS (No. 765) are meant to be sung at gatherings or in public performance.

Some of this Apollo Music Company sheet music may alert us to yet unexplored and completely unknown areas of Greek artistic accomplishments in North America. The best example, I can think of for this possibility, is E Kontessina (No. 606). On the cover one sees reference to the Londos Film Company.

From an old dinner dance book I once saw at the Hellenic Museum in Chicago the Londos Film Company once hosted a dance in the late 1920s. Could this mean there was a Greek film company in the United States?

## ΝΑ ΤΟ ΠΑΛΙΟ ΜΟΥ ΟΝΕΙΡΟ MY OLD DREAM

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722	ΣΙΟΜΑ ΜΕ ΣΤΟΜΑ, To A Kiss Divine	Wales	Hellasoulas
744	THE MERMAID, Nigarda Tini Vialou, Song		Sakellariou
758	CARYPATIA, To Kardis Mia Etsi Paterno, Song		Kabbias
837	ALE KALIVASTRA, Sing of The Puffed Foot		Sakellariou
893	SCHUBERT SPRENGEL, With Greek Words		Schubert
926	LIBERTY SONG, The United Nations' Hymn		Haykas
924	THE MARINES' HYMN, Greek and English Words		Haykas
928	ΑΡΧ ΟΡΙΟΝ ΤΕΠΟ, Greek and English Words		Makarios
929	DOWN AT LONELY ISLAND, Kaiti Soti Yialo, Greek and English Words		Makarios
932	Ο ΠΕΦΚΟΣ (The Old Pine Tree) — SIA YANNINA, Songs		Makarios
934	MOTHER'S SONG, ΓΕ ΜΑΝΝΑ		Zaltas
944	BY THE BLOSSOMING ALMOND TREE, Lovely Serenade (G. E.)		Makarios
941	SANTA CLAUS, (In All The Year Our Happiest Time)		Haykas
940	I LOVE YOU TRULY, With All My Heart, Dec.		Hellasoulas
947	ZANOU MBA, Hymns of Aedy, Feb. 1920		Haykas
945	ARABIAN SERENADE, (Mistress) Greek and English Words		Sakellariou
943	CONFESION (Lamentation) "If Your Love Is True"		Samaras
946	THE CANARY SONG, To Kanarioi		Sakellariou
925	IF I ONLY HAD THE MONEY MY DARLING		Zaltas
757	SINGING LOVE BIRDS, Kiklidite Drea Mia Poulaki		Platanos

(Continued on Last Page) Printed in U.S.A. Price 25¢ Per Copy

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Other songs were taken from popular commercial records of the day such as Kakougra Pethera (No. 616) and O Yeros (No. 687). Printed on the inside of O Yeros it is said to be a comic song credited to Marika Papagika as singer, Markos Sifnaós as arranger, and that it is exclusively available from Apollo. The copyright date is 1925.

Some songs are given in quarter page segments on the backs of selected sheet music pieces. I imagine to get you to buy the full original. One such fragment caught my eye. It's on the last page of Amerikana (No. 559) it is called Misiriotissa-Arabian Serenade (No. 583) and is credited in words and music to George Buyukas. But it is not the internationally famous Misirlou composed by Nickolas E. Roubanis in either the sense of lyrics or music.

For those of you unfamiliar with Misirlou it was composed and copyrighted by Nickolas E. Roubanis and, by 1947 certainly, became an international musical sensation. Recorded versions of this song easily number into the hundreds. It was recently heard all around the United States, once again, as the opening music for the blockbuster movie Pulp Fiction (1994).

Without going into great detail, during the 1960s, an instrumental version of Roubanis's, Misirlou, became the anthem for the California Surfing scene. The Beach Boys did a cover version of Misirlou on their album Surfin' USA.

The printed lyrics for Misiriotissa-Arabian Serenade in Greek or English are nothing whatsoever like Roubanis's song. They actually don't agree if you know both Greek and English. Here are the opening Greek lyrics:

*Misiriotissa mou,  
Dos mou tin hara mou,  
Ki ela gia na vris,  
mazi mou, tin zoe.*

Now, here are the English lyrics that appear under those above. I'll extend it past what I see above in Greek so you can get more of the feeling for this song:

*Soft the moonlight falling,  
While the Sheik is calling,  
To his pretty sweetheart on the desert's end.  
As in solemn prayer,  
He, the great and mighty,  
Became full of piety,  
And he hopes to win her with his song.*

Other songs are very odd mergers of Greek and American traditions such as Santa Claus (No. 581) that is, I guess, supposed to be a fusion of this American Christmas figure with the traditional kalanda song Aghios Vasilios. Then, again, some songs are just American popular songs with Greek and English lyrics such as Stephen Foster's, Old Folks At Home, as O Ksenitemenos (No. 609) and Foster's other popular song Spiti Mou Glika/Home Sweet Home (No. 608).

Then, there, is a song like, Manna kai Yios/Mother and Son (No. 630), whose popularity I cannot gauge. Copyrighted in 1931, the song is said to be based on a poem by the very famous poet George Drosinis and translated by Professor John T. Fotos of Purdue University. The music is credited to S. Samaras.

The translator's note states:

"This poem dramatizes a weird village superstition, that, "if a priest performs a marriage ceremony immediately on returning from a burial, either the bride or groom is doomed to die within a year." In order to save her son from such a fate, the mother slays the bride."

Who bought songs like this, would you?

Whatever the case may be with the popularity of individual songs the sheer volume of published music by the Apollo Music Company of New York City make it the premier music company in the history of Greek music in the United States. It is a tragedy of the very first order that more about the history of this company is not known.

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577	MILONAS, Oriental Song.....	Nozaris
578	XEIASI ME Please Forget Me, Tango.....	Glaoukdis
579	MAHITSA, Fox Trot (Greek and English).....	Sakellarios
580	PHS GYKO KRASI, Tango.....	Katrisanos
581	SANTA CLAUS (Agios Vasilis) In Greek and English.....	Liapis
582	FALLING IN LOVE, Tango-Serenade in Greek - English.....	Jannakis
583	ARABIAN SERENADE ("Little Desert Flower") In Greek and English.....	Haroulis
586	UNCLE JOHN, Humorous Song, In Greek and English.....	Epitropakis
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591	THE MIDNIGHT TANGO.....	Naltas
608	HOME SWEET HOME, In Greek and English.....	Bishop
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