

The Greek Community of Tarpon Springs Music and Dance

Music

Greece has produced a rich variety of traditional, popular, and art music. Traditional music has been influenced by Byzantium, Turkey, and the Balkans. There are two types of traditional music that share many influences and elements: classical (Byzantine chanting) and folk, which includes both rural and urban traditions. Folk songs often concern daily life, the life cycle (lullabies, love, marriage, laments), the annual cycle (New Year, Carnival, Easter, Christmas), or travel to foreign lands.

Folk music varies between Greek regions in terms of style, rhythm, and instrumentation. There are many differences between the music of the Greek mainland and the islands. Music in mainland Greece often possesses unrhymed verses, musical scales without semitones, and 3/4 or 7/8 rhythms. The standard mainland musical group includes the clarinet, violin, Greek lute, *santouri* [san-DOO-ree] (a type of hammered dulcimer), tambourine, and/or timbale (single-headed cylindrical drum). In the islands and on the coasts there are often musical scales with semitones, rhymed verses, and two-beat and nine-beat dance rhythms. Island ensembles often include violin, lute, and santouri—and sometimes the *lyra* [LIR-ah] (rustic three-string violin) or *tsabouna* [tsa-BOO-na] (island bagpipe made of goatskin).

In Greece, westernized song and music developed in the 19th and 20th centuries. Orchestral art music based on folk melodies and rhythms was produced by famous composers in the mid-twentieth century. Today's popular music contains influences from Europe and America, while Greek rock often synthesizes western rock with Greek folk or Middle Eastern music.

The Greek community has always maintained musical traditions performed by individuals and groups in homes, church, and social organizations. In 1939 and 1940, scholars from the Works Progress Administration's Joint Committee on Folk Arts made 60 sound recordings in Tarpon Springs that preserved the musicians and music of that era. They can be heard at: <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/florida/>. Today, music and dance are still embedded in a wide range of community events. Musicians perform regional, popular and rural, old and new music.

Dance

Greek Tarponites participate in social dancing at community events and demonstrate regional dances at festivals or competitions. Many enjoy the dances of the Dodecanese islands. Since the music of the islands tends to be faster than other regions, the dances usually consist of quick, light steps.

There are endless variations on basic Greek dances, but they often follow a similar structure. Musicians follow the lead dancer, and their playing accents the dance movements. In curved line dances, the lead dancer improvises on the basic steps with flips, whirls, and slaps to the shoe. A handkerchief sometimes allows the second dancer to assist the leader in improvisations, while the third dancer performs the regular steps and provides a model for the line. Finally, the last dancer places the left hand in the small of the back and maintains the curve by continually moving slightly backwards.

Suggested Activities

1. Have students research Greek instruments that are not well known, such as the *bouzouki* [boo-ZOO-kee], *tsabouna*, *laouto* [lah-OO-toe] (Greek lute), *lyra*, or *santouri*.
2. Listen to examples of Greek music, such as church music, *nisiotika* [nee-see-OH-tee-kah], *rembetika* [rem-BEH-tee-ka], Greek pop music, Greek rock and roll.
3. Have class learn a simple Greek dance.