

Sydney: “Crete and Pontus - Two Aspects of Modern Greek Culture through their Traditional Songs”



The Consulate General of Greece in Sydney, in collaboration with the “Pontoxeneteas” Association of New South Wales and the Cretan Association of Sydney and New South Wales, proudly presented on October 15th an event dedicated to two emblematic aspects of Modern Greek culture, Crete and Pontus, through their traditional songs and music. The event was attended by numerous Greek-Australians, as well as representatives of the Greek Orthodox Community of New South Wales, the Holy Archdiocese of Australia and other associations of Sydney’s Greek community.

Keynote speaker was Dr. Alfred Vincent, Honorary Associate at the University of Sydney, who explored the historical context that shaped the particular traditions of these two frontier societies of the Greek world, with an emphasis on their similarities and “meeting points” from a linguistic, cultural and musical point of view.

In the context of his talk, he elaborated on the shared features found in the traditional songs and music of these two emblematic regions of the modern Greek

culture, Crete and Pontus, namely the use of the fifteen-syllable verse and their thematic correlations. Key examples are the mythical character of Digenis Akrita, the disasters suffered by the two regions over the centuries, the longing for the homeland, crypto-Christianity during the Ottoman period, as well as lyrical themes such as marriage, the love of life, etc.

The talk was followed by traditional music, highlighting the common elements of the two traditions and “illustrating” acoustically this special “meeting” between Crete and Pontus. A special message was also addressed by the Director of the Museum of Greek Folk Musical Instruments “Phoivos Anogianakis”-Ethnomusicology Center, Ms Vassiliki Polyzoi, mentioning: “In the thirty years of the Museum’s operation, both emblematic musical traditions have been consistently presented as part of the Hellenism’s intangible cultural heritage. We wish the event best of success, in hope that this initiative continues to include other, equally rich musical Greek traditions and travels to other, equally dynamic Greek communities in Australia.”



In his concluding remarks, the Consul General of Greece in Sydney, Mr. Yannis Mallikourtis, congratulated the keynote speaker, noting the importance of preserving the Greek language by the Greeks in the diaspora. The historical memory and continuity safeguarded through the traditional songs and music indicates the importance of the Greek language as a factor of cohesion and identity

for the Greeks abroad – he stressed out.

About the Speaker: Dr. Alfred Vincent taught for 25 years at the University of Sydney, specializing in Modern Greek Studies. His scholarly interests include the history, society, language and literature of Crete under Venetian rule (1211-1669); comedy in Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries; Greek music; the works of Nikos Kazantzakis. He continues in retirement to research on the society and culture of the Greek world.



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