



THE HELLENIC CENTRE

Hellenic legacy of 15 years in central London

This year the Hellenic Centre is celebrating its 15th anniversary of continuous cultural activity.

Commencing its operations in 1994, thanks to the vision and donations of notable individuals and organizations, the Centre has since established close working relationships with the Church and with the governments of both Greece and Cyprus: The Archbishop of Thyateira, the Ambassador of the Hellenic Republic and the High Commissioner for the Republic of Cyprus have been among its patrons from the start. Both the governing bodies, the Hellenic Community Trust Council and the Executive Board, are run by dedicated volunteers serving the common cause. Mr. Costas Kleanthous and Mr. Stamos Falafios, who recently succeeded Mrs. Koula Lemos, preside over these bodies respectively. As Mrs. Agatha Kalisperas, the director of the Centre for the last 12 years, has pointed out, the Hellenic Centre's success is due to team work.

The imposing five-storey building, located in Paddington Street, Marylebone, has become the nexus of Greek and Cypriot civilizations in London. Within it, the Centre aims to promote the understanding of both the ancient and the modern Hellenic world, by highlighting their culture, heritage and traditions, and by fostering links between the Greek and non-Greek communities in the UK. To this end, the Hellenic Centre provides a home for various Hellenic societies and activities in London. It organizes various exhibitions, educational programmes, dance and music performances, as well as a plethora of talks with lecturers renowned in their field.

However, when its hectic cultural programme allows it, the facilities of the Hellenic Centre are made available to corporations, or private customers who are interested in holding meetings, presentations, or even social events. The Centre is fully equipped technologically and has the specialized staff to offer high quality services. Furthermore, by making these spaces and services available, Mrs. Agatha Kalisperas explains that *"we create an added value to the existing cultural one of the Hellenic Centre. We have the opportunity to reach quite diverse groups of people, who visit us for the first time in order to participate to a business meeting or a conference. Their presence has positive results both for our culture mission and our viability as a not-for-profit organization."*

For the past ten years, since 1999, the Hellenic Centre has also been a Modern Greek Language learning institution. The courses, provided by experienced professional philologists, teachers and linguists, are aimed at adults who wish to learn Greek as a foreign language at a beginner's, intermediate or advanced level. The Hellenic Centre provides a syllabus for every level, whose tuition has been so formed as to follow those of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. Moreover, since 2003, the Centre offers preparation courses for the Certificate of Attainment in Modern Greek, awarded by the Centre for the Greek Language, the official institution of the Greek Ministry of National Education and Religions. Last year the



Within the scope of its activities, The Hellenic Centre has presented exhibitions of photography, painting, sculpture, embroideries, byzantine treasures and drawings in co-operation with a number of distinguished institutions. Furthermore, showing its support to artists whose work is linked to the Hellenic culture, the Centre has hosted events such as the London Greek Film Festival, the Greek Cultural Festival of Youth Arts, theatrical performances, programmes for the young visitors, as well as numerous book presentations and poetry evenings. Moreover, throughout its 15 years of existence, the Hellenic Centre has accommodated well-known exponents of Greek music, such as Alkinoos Ioannidis, Nena Venetsanou, D. Savvopoulos, D. Samiou, M. Plessas, as well as The Hellenic Concert Series with the participation of the Dorian Ensemble, the Oxford Philomusica, the Medici Quartet, the BT Scottish Ensemble with Clio Gould, as well as with Julian Loyd Webber. In addition, it has supported performances of folk music of various cultures and traditional Greek dances performed by the Lykion ton Hellinidon.

Hellenic Centre also introduced a certificate of attendance for its students which is awarded at the end of the academic year.

In summary, within a period of 15 years since its inception, the Hellenic Centre has managed to become one of the highest caliber cultural institutions in Marylebone and the wider area of London. In addition, it is recognized as a venue for business and corporate, as well as private, events and a place where hundreds of students every year learn the Greek language. It has surmounted numerous obstacles that have emerged in its path and the secret ingredient for this tremendously demanding work lies in the dedication of its people: As Mrs. Kalisperas points out *"we thank every single person for their help and support. The governing bodies, the donors, the members, the public, the associates, the volunteers, and last but certainly not least, the members of the staff, who contribute to the well being of the Hellenic Centre every day."*

(The Hellenic Centre, 16-18 Paddington Street, Marylebone, tel. 020 7487 5060 - www.helleniccentre.org)