

AHEPA's James Plevritis Evzone Chapter #405



Invites you to a Unique Cultural
"Greek Movie Night"

Presenting the Award Winner Movie

"REBETIKO"

Produced: 1983

Drama and Historic Fiction

2.5 hours

The story is based on the life of the Rebetiko singer **Marika Ninou** and her relation with the famous composer **Vassilis Tsitsanis**. It presents the Rebetiko song as it entangles with the political instability of the entire Greek nation starting from the Asia Minor Disaster in 1922, the World War II and Nazi occupation in 1940, the tragic Civil War in 1948, to the even more economic instability of the 1950's.

Music by the famous composer **Stavros Xarhakos**

Saturday, March 21st, 2015

7:00 PM

Holy Trinity Church – 10 Mill Road, New Rochelle, NY 10804

Reception with Hors d'oeuvres and wine will follow the movie

Donation \$15

Payable to: AHEPA Evzone Chapter #405 (501c10)

**Donations deductible to the extent permitted by law
Portion of profits support the AHEPA Scholarship Fund**

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"Rebetiko" Synopsis

The time depicted in this film, covers a period in Athens from about 1922 -1958. This was a time of tremendous transition and instability for the entire Greek nation. The film begins with a montage of the Asia Minor Disaster which resulted in a population exchange, that increased the population in Greece by approximately 25%, almost overnight, in 1923 with most of them ending up in Athens. It was in these overcrowded and economically and spiritually destitute conditions during the 1930's, that the Rembetiko genre of music reached its height in popularity. After that, came a World War and Nazi occupation in 1940, and then a tragic Civil War in 1948. Then even more economic and political instability thru-out the 1950's.

In "Rembetiko" the movie, veteran Director Costas Ferris, uses these historical events, by either showing or suggesting them, to recreate a background of a social order that always seems to be on the edge of chaos and collapse. Scenery, costumes, period piece trivia etc. are all well executed and are quite successful in recreating a realistic and believable visual context for the period. Winner of the prestigious Silver Bear Award in 1984, and without question, one of the most absorbing and provocative films ever to come out of the Hellenic Republic, this is a story that works on many levels, from the superficially romantic and absurd to the exceedingly tragic and disturbingly profound. Some of the events portrayed, are based upon the actual life experience of Marika Ninou, a young female singer of rebetika, and the relation she had with the famous rebetiko composer Vassilis Tsitsanis.

In Greece, Rembetiko had always been known as the music of the outcasts. Even the dance that is normally associated with it, (Zeimbekiko), occasionally looks like some kind of ritualistic act of defiance, to those ancient Greek deities, who for their own amusement, are constantly interfering with all our lives, creating Tragedy, Comedy, Pathos and Irony. It had traditionally been associated with Greek refugees from the west coast of Anatolia who had become dispossessed and were now confined to living their lives under the lower step of the Greek urban social order, engaged in a life style that was considered borderline at best, in more ways than one.

The film follows the life experiences of the primary character, also named Marika, from the day of her unwanted birth and exceedingly difficult childhood, to her rise and eventual decline, as a popular Rebetisa, while still only in her mid thirties. She is essentially a very complex character, who is driven by a blind ambition to succeed in her singing career, while simultaneously being sustained through every ordeal in her life, by nothing more, then an enormous strength of character along with an equally strong determination and will to survive. However, in her quest to the top, she becomes increasingly self-centered, detached and alienated, as both personal relationships and the overwhelming external events surrounding and affecting her life, spin quickly out of control. Nevertheless, finding a deep rooted empathy came easy for her and naturally. In the beginning of the film, Marika is a young woman in search of artistic recognition for her music. By the end of the film, (in a final scene, that can only best be described as quintessentially Greek), she is, in a very curious and symbolic way, redeemed by it.

The glorious and haunting original Rembetiko compositions of Stavros Xarhakos, permeate the entire production. It is a very powerful film with a lot of suspense!

Plot

This musical drama sweeps through a turbulent 40 years in popular singer Marika's life starting with the singer's birth in Smyrna, Turkey in 1917. Marika was deported to Greece along with all the other Greeks in Smyrna when she was seven years old, and a few years later, her parents started a career as a musician and a singer in a nightclub/bar. In the short space of one decade, Marika witnesses her father murder her mother, runs away from home, has a baby, and comes back to the nightclub to sing in an act with a childhood friend Yiorgos and a bouzouki player and composer, Babis. Success finally comes at the expense of the suicide of another female singer at the club (named Rosa), but then Marika's childhood friend is exiled for political reasons, and she and Babis leave for other venues. Although Ninou carries a torch for Babis, their relationship never seems to work out, and after many years and World War II go by, she sends her daughter away to a convent school and goes on a tour in America. She then returns to Greece to find herself supplanted by a younger singer named Matina who has caught the attention of Babis. Marika eventually dies in an accident during Mardi Gras and is buried by the people she sang with as they sing in her memory at the cemetery.

There have been hypotheses that the story is based on the life of Marika Ninou with Babis playing the part of Vasilis Tsitsanis.

Awards

Rembetiko was nominated for the Golden Bear award at the 34th Berlin International Film Festival in 1984, and won the Silver Bear. Sotiria Leonardou won the prize for "Best Actress" at the 1983 Thessaloniki Film Festival for her portrayal of Ninou and the film itself tied for "Best Picture", and won three other awards as well (two "Best Supporting Actor" prizes, and one for music).