
This is an electronic reprint of the original article.
This reprint may differ from the original in pagination and typographic detail.

Papantoniou, Ioanna; Pantouvaki, Sofia

Folk costume as theatrical costume

Published in:
Studies in Costume and Performance

DOI:
[10.1386/scp_00060_1](https://doi.org/10.1386/scp_00060_1)

Published: 01/05/2022

Document Version
Peer-reviewed accepted author manuscript, also known as Final accepted manuscript or Post-print

Please cite the original version:
Papantoniou, I., & Pantouvaki, S. (2022). Folk costume as theatrical costume. *Studies in Costume and Performance*, 7(1), 55-66. https://doi.org/10.1386/scp_00060_1

This material is protected by copyright and other intellectual property rights, and duplication or sale of all or part of any of the repository collections is not permitted, except that material may be duplicated by you for your research use or educational purposes in electronic or print form. You must obtain permission for any other use. Electronic or print copies may not be offered, whether for sale or otherwise to anyone who is not an authorised user.

This is the final accepted version of the article:

Papantoniou, Ioanna and Sofia Pantouvaki (2022). 'Folk costume as theatrical costume', *Studies in Costume and Performance*, Vol. 7, Issue 1, May 2022, pp. 55-66. https://doi.org/10.1386/scp_00060_1

DOCUMENT

Ioanna Papantoniou

Peloponnesian Folklore Foundation

Sofia Pantouvaki

Aalto University

Title

Folk Costume as Theatrical Costume

Abstract

This essay introduces an unpublished talk by Greek stage designer Ioanna Papantoniou (b.1936) entitled 'Local Costume in a Theatrical Performance', originally presented at the First Panhellenic Meeting of Ephors (Curators) and Dance Teachers at the Lyceum Club of Greek Women in Athens, in November 1990. Prior to and alongside her professional design career in the field of theatre, Papantoniou was actively engaged as a researcher in ethnography studies on Greek local costumes and folk dances. Driven by her passion for the study of Greek local dress combined with her professional experience as a stage designer, Papantoniou has given several talks on the connections between theatrical performance and folk traditions, as well as on the interrelationship between folk dress and theatrical costume on stage and in festivities. In this talk she conflates folk costume and folk dance as a form of performance and discusses how these two elements become an artistic creation when it comes to staged performances outside their original setting in a village. Thus, she draws a line between the 'authentic' and the staged performance, the latter of which is what she considers contemporary folk dancing in reproduced folk costume to be. The published text is based on a transcript of the talk, translated into English, and further edited by costume designer and scholar Sofia Pantouvaki, who also provides an introduction and numerous annotations to make the talk accessible by an international audience.

Keywords

local costume, folk dance, Lyceum Club of Greek Women, ethnography, tradition, theatrical performance

Introduction: the twofold identity of Ioanna Papantoniou

The speaker presented in this document is Greek stage designer Ioanna Papantoniou,¹ who has been one of the first female professionals in the field of performance design in Greece,² active for over four decades (1971- 2015).³ A lover of theatre, dance and cinema since a young age, Papantoniou studied set and costume design at Wimbledon School of Art in London as a mature student in her thirties (1967-1970). Since then, she has designed for many significant Greek theatre companies, including the National Theatre of Greece,⁴ the National Theatre of Northern Greece,⁵ Karolos Koun's Art Theatre,⁶ and the Paxinou-Minotis theatre group,⁷ as well as independent productions.

However, prior to her professional design career in the field of theatre, Papantoniou was actively engaged as a researcher in ethnography studies. For several years⁸ she was a dancer of Greek folk dances at the Lyceum Club of Greek Women in Athens,⁹ where she focused her studies and research on Greek local costumes and folk dances. In the 110 years of its existence, the Lyceum Club of Greek Women has played an active and important role in the preservation and presentation of Greek cultural traditions and folk customs (Lyceum Club of Greek Women 2022a). From 1956 until 1976, Papantoniou was engaged in field research employing ethnographic methods for the study of Greek local costumes, publishing numerous books and articles on the subject.¹⁰

¹ With the term 'stage designer', which she prefers to use to define her professional identity, Papantoniou refers to the design of both sets and costumes for the stage.

² Ioanna Papantoniou was also the first female stage designer to design for the National Theatre's *Orestes* (1971) at the Ancient Theatre of Epidaurus, breaking a 39-year continuum of male designers since the launch of the Epidaurus Festival in 1950.

³ Her first professional design was for Mayakovsky's play *The Bedbug*, presented by Alexis Solomos' 'Proscenium' [*Proskenio*] Theatre (1971). One of her last design collaborations was with the Greek National Theatre for the production *The Semolina Boy (O Simigdalenios)*, directed by Lydia Koniordou (2015).

⁴ Based in Athens.

⁵ Based in Thessaloniki.

⁶ Karolos Koun (1908-1987) was a prominent Greek theatre director, known and awarded internationally for his innovative staging of ancient Greek plays, especially Aristophanes' political comedies. He founded the experimental Art Theatre (Theatro Technis) in 1942, through which he introduced international playwrights such as Bertolt Brecht, Luigi Pirandello, Jean Genet, Federico García Lorca, Samuel Beckett, Arthur Miller and Eugène Ionesco to Greek audiences.

⁷ Katina Paxinou (1900-1973) was a Greek stage and film actress, who worked extensively with her second husband, prominent actor and stage director Alexis Minotis (1900-1990). After co-performing in many productions at the National Theatre of Greece, Paxinou and Minotis formed their own theatre group in 1968, where they staged independent productions (N.M. 2020).

⁸ From the mid-1950s to the mid-1970s.

⁹ The Lyceum Club of Greek Women (Lykeion ton Hellenidon) is a volunteer organization founded in 1911 by Callirrhoe Siganou-Parren, a pioneer of the feminist movement in Greece. Best known for its activities in the field of Greek folk dancing, the Lyceum Club has had significant contribution to folklore studies as well as to adult education for women (Lyceum Club of Greek Women 2022a).

¹⁰ Her most important monographs focus on the history of dress, on folklore, and on local costumes, indicatively: *Greek Costumes - Women's Costumes* (1973), *Greek Costumes - Men's Costumes* (1974), *Greek Costumes* (1981/1991), *Macedonian Costumes* (1992), *Greek Regional Costumes* (1996) published by the Peloponnesian Folklore Foundation, Nafplion. Also, *Greek Costumes – The Collection of the Lyceum Club of Greek Women in*

In 1974, Papantoniou founded the Peloponnesian Folklore Foundation (PFF),¹¹ a non-profit private cultural institution and museum based in her hometown, Nafplion. Aligned with her personal interests and expertise, the museum hosts 50.000 artifacts that cover all areas of study relating to folk and modern culture: among these, the largest collection of fashion and dress in Greece today, consisting of historical men's and women's garments from Greece and the Western world, local costumes, iconic fashion items, as well as theatrical and dance costumes (Politou 2010; Pantouvaki 2019).

The Lyceum Club of Greek Women in Athens also hosts a large collection of authentic regional costumes, gathered since its founding year, and continuously enriched with authentic costumes donated from various parts of Greece.¹² During the first years of the Lyceum Club's activity, the collection was widely used to meet the needs of its folk-dance group, which performed in numerous events. However, 'the urgent need to characterize these costumes as museum objects' (Macha-Bizoumi 2003: 180) and to no longer use them as theatrical costumes was soon realized (Lyceum Club of Greek Women 2022b).¹³ This led to the establishment of the Museum of the History of the Greek Costume, which was inaugurated in 1988 by the then Minister of Culture Melina Mercouri. The Museum, prepared by curator Alexandra Wassenhoven and costume expert Ioanna Papantoniou (Macha-Bizoumi 2011), remains a part of the Lyceum Club of Greek Women to date.

From 1994 onwards¹⁴ Ioanna Papantoniou served as scientific advisor and supervisor for the management of the historical costume collection of the Lyceum Club of Greek Women in Athens and later on, as Ephor (Curator) of its Wardrobe Section (1997- 2000). Under Papantoniou's expert guidance, the Lyceum Club's rich costume collection was systematically reorganized and presented in periodic thematic exhibitions accompanied by accurate historical documentation. Her main goal was to gradually turn the museum into a centre of excellence for the study of Greek folk costume (Macha-Bizoumi 2003). During her term of service, Papantoniou and her team not only recognized, classified and catalogued numerous items, but also identified the oldest authentic local costumes as museum objects and separated them from later created copies. This resulted in a separation of the collection into two parts: the historical museum collection, part of the Museum of the History of the Greek Costume; and the costume 'stock', part of the Wardrobe Section and actively used by the Lyceum Club's Dance Group in their public performances. The Museum's collection today comprises more than 25,000 authentic garments and accessories and 2,500 complete ensembles. Papantoniou's two-fold expertise in theatre and in folklore research was of great importance in determining the difference between an authentic folk costume of museum value and a theatrical costume to be used in a performance. In addition, her knowledge of dress history and hands-on

Kalamata (1991) published by Ekdotike Athinon and *Greek Dress – From Ancient Times to the Early 20th Century* (2000) by the Commercial Bank of Greece.

¹¹ The Peloponnesian Folklore Foundation has become an 'influential force in the arts and culture' (Foundation for Hellenic Culture 2003) in Greece and abroad, winning the 1981 European Museum of the Year main award and maintaining close collaboration with numerous institutions globally.

¹² Ioanna Papantoniou has herself been a Donor of the Lyceum Club of Greek Women in Athens (see: <https://lykeionellinidon.com/en/dorees/>, accessed 28 February 2022).

¹³ This took place, first, at the initiative of Alexandra Wassenhoven, who was Ephor (Curator) of the Wardrobe Section of the Lyceum Club of Greek Women in Athens for 37 years, and eventually under the supervision of Ioanna Papantoniou.

¹⁴ As noted on the Lyceum Club's website (2022b: n.p.), Papantoniou was 'the one who inspired the Museum and made it a living organization, setting up in 1994 the first working group with Xenia Politou and Vassilis Zidianakis, and the historian Nadia Macha-Bizoumi since 1997'.

understanding of pattern, cut, materials and decorative techniques, rooted in her costume design background, combined with the in-situ empirical examination of original garments, provided her with tools for in-depth research of folk dress. This is of significant value for Greek costume studies and is key to understanding the context of the talk presented in this Document.

Ioanna Papantoniou has led important initiatives for the development of dress and costume scholarship in Greece. In 1989, the Minister of Culture Melina Mercouri assigned to Papantoniou and the Peloponnesian Folklore Foundation the National Costume Archive. In 2003, Papantoniou founded the Hellenic Costume Society (HCS),¹⁵ a scholarly society for the study of dress, fashion, textiles and costume in Greece and beyond. The Hellenic Costume Society was originally thought as an extension of the National Costume Archive founded with the aim of establishing a Costume Culture Museum in Greece. The Society co-organized exhibitions, international conferences, series of talks and masterclasses, and publications in collaboration with an interdisciplinary team of scholars and practitioners that constitute the Society's membership and with various institutions.

The document presented in this essay is a sample of Ioanna Papantoniou's work and conceptual frame from the 1990s. It is a hitherto unpublished record of her talk entitled 'Local Costume in a Theatrical Performance',¹⁶ presented at the First Panhellenic Meeting of Ephors (Curators) and Dance Teachers at the Lyceum Club of Greek Women in Athens, in November 1990. Driven by her passion for the study of Greek folk dress combined with her professional experience as a stage designer, Papantoniou has given several talks on the connections between theatrical performance and folk traditions, as well as on the interrelationship between folk dress and theatrical costume on stage and in festivities.

In this talk she conflates folk costume and folk dance as a form of performance and discusses how these two elements are an integral part of the real, 'authentic' life in a village, their original setting, but that they become an artistic creation when it comes to staged performances elsewhere. She is clear in drawing a line between the 'authentic' and the staged performance, the latter of which is what she considers contemporary folk dancing in reproduced folk costume to be. In the discussion that follows the talk, Papantoniou goes on to offer her views in further detail and to advise an audience of Greek folk dance teachers; she expresses her critical remarks and exchanges ideas on the connections between dance, body movement/body posture, and costume.

Given that Papantoniou, an articulate speaker, spoke without a written manuscript – a habit she's kept throughout her career – the text that is published here is based on a transcript of the talk. The original Greek transcript was checked and improved by the speaker, and then translated into English and further edited by costume designer and scholar Sofia Pantouvaki. Pantouvaki has also provided this introduction and has prepared annotations to make the talk accessible by an international audience. It is relevant for this work to note that Pantouvaki has also been actively involved with the activities of the Lyceum Club of Greek Women in Athens for several decades,¹⁷ where she met with Ioanna Papantoniou. The two have collaborated in various

¹⁵ The Hellenic Costume Society brings together everyone involved with costume in Greece. Its interests are diverse and include Greek regional costumes, historical clothing, theatre costumes, fabrics, manufacturing and decoration techniques, fashion and contemporary creation (see: http://www.costume.gr/en_index.html, accessed 26 February 2022).

¹⁶ Original title in Greek: 'Η φορεσιά σε μια θεατρική παράσταση'.

¹⁷ Having performed as a dancer from a very young age, dressed in reproduced folk costumes and, later on, having researched on the topic of Greek folk costume on a scholarly level, some of the commentary provided in this document is based on this experience.

projects within the Peloponnesian Folklore Foundation, the Hellenic Costume Society, and beyond.

The Talk: *Local Costume in a Theatrical Performance*

Ioanna Papantoniou: First, we must clarify the difference between a *stage presentation of Greek dances* and a *theatrical performance* with elements from tradition.¹⁸ In the first case the costume is the special local costume,¹⁹ folk, peasant or urban. [Whilst] in the theatrical performance we have ensembles inspired by Greek local costumes that operate within theatrical aesthetics. We have seen performances based on Greek local costume, for example, tragedies and comedies [designed] by great artists, such as Tsarouchis,²⁰ Fotopoulos,²¹ Ziakas.²² Especially the latter, in Sophocles' *Electra* produced by the Thessalian Theatre and directed by Costas Tsianos,²³ presented the *Karagouna costume*²⁴ with a really zealous inspiration that expresses exactly what I mean.

We have seen local costumes in the theatre and in *ethografias*²⁵ where there is an attempt to present the authentic folk costume with a kind of realism, for example, the wear and tear of time in relation to the roles and the atmosphere of the play. [Karolos] Koun²⁶ was particularly concerned with the notion of 'Greekness' in modern Greek theatrical dramaturgy and in ancient Greek drama. There is much to be learned from the wisdom of costume designers and directors in their meticulous observation of the subject.

¹⁸ The emphasis is by Papantoniou in the original Greek language transcript of the talk, in both cases.

¹⁹ The term 'costume' in the context of folk dress, in this document, refers to a combination of garments and accessories as a unified sartorial ensemble. Ioanna Papantoniou prefers using the term 'local costume' to define such an ensemble which varied from one region to another, even from one village to another within the same region. In keeping with her deep knowledge of this topic she avoids using the term 'folk costume' which she finds a generalized term.

²⁰ Yannis Tsarouchis (1910-1989) was a Greek modernist painter, set and costume designer.

²¹ Dionysis Fotopoulos (1943-) is a Greek scenographer (set and costume designer) who designed extensively productions of ancient drama on stage and screen.

²² Yorgos Ziakas (1940-) is a Greek painter and scenographer (set and costume designer) and Professor at the School of Fine Arts in Athens (1985-2006). He designed several productions of ancient drama. A founding member and Artistic Director (1999-2003) of the Thessalian Theatre, he was also a dancer of Greek folk dances and knowledgeable about Greek folk dress, which he sometimes used as inspiration for the costumes he designed (Pantouvaki 2020).

²³ Costas Tsianos (1942-), is a Greek actor, director, choreographer and playwright, most known for his work at the National Theatre of Greece and the Thessalian Theatre in his hometown, Larissa, where he worked for approximately 30 years. Tsianos was a dancer of Greek folk dances and often used elements of folk culture in his stagings of ancient drama and global dramaturgy (Pantouvaki 2020).

²⁴ The *Karagouna costume* is the local costume worn in the villages of the plain of Thessaly in central Greece.

²⁵ The term *ethografia* defines a theatrical genre in Greek modern dramaturgy of the first half of the twentieth century that describes plays of morals and manners. The English translation used here is based on the one proposed by theatre scholar Iliia Lakidou (2018). This genre was rooted in Greek literature of the period of 1880-1930 and refers to the faithful depiction of the life, morals and manners of a particular group, often limited to the life of rural populations.

²⁶ Theatre director Karolos Koun (mentioned also in the introduction of this document) was a pioneer in the use of the folk element as a means of expression in the theatre. Prior to founding the Art Theatre, he had created the Popular Stage (1934-1936) with the intention 'to deal with folk expressions in shaping the stage of his way' (Mavromoustakos 2008: 23-24).

Observation is important for those involved in art. What one must understand in each local costume is the essence of its creation: why it was made the way it was made, where it started, how it evolved and why, what were the reasons that shaped it in its final composition and form.

There are historical, geographical, social and other reasons that contribute to the creation of a local costume of a specific period of time. Costume, like dance, changes over time and these changes are crucial. So, when an entity wants to organize a performance and decides to use a folk costume, they should keep in mind why they choose the specific costume and its variants.

Usually in the theatre the responsibilities of the director, the choreographer, the costume designer, the lighting or the sound designer are divided. After all, the theatrical space is a place of cooperation and the first thing that a theatre person learns is to collaborate harmoniously with everyone. If people do not work together, there can be no harmonious result. The same is valid for the performances of 'folkloric' interest, where the role of the director- 'god' who knows everything should disappear at some point and there should be many different experts, who will all together contribute to the result.

Let's now look at folk or popular/traditional dances. Their location is the village, where this function [the folk dancing] is not a show, but a spontaneous participation. People who dance for example in the square, dance for a special purpose (a wedding, baptism, festival, etc.). [There,] we have a function that is not a performance and the costume that is worn is appropriate to the time of the event, such as the local costume of the 18th century, the 19th, the end of the 19th, the beginning of the 20th, and so on; in its local variants, depending on the role of each member of the community, for example, married, engaged, child, etc. When a [dance] group, which we will call a 'theatrical troupe', decides that it has reached such a point of maturity that it can present a significant dance spectacle to the public - whether it is performed on a sports field, in a square, on a festival stage and even more in the theatre - then they 'stage' a production.

The laws of the performance, however, are very different from the spontaneity of the dancers in the village square. The Teacher-Director-Costume Designer has to organize a spectacle. From being a teacher, one must become a director and a costume designer. This presupposes training and continuous involvement with the subject, to the extent that they are considered expert. The teacher should have the maturity that they will acquire through many years of meticulous observation of the village, and perhaps they should have a long-term relationship with a single dance group. Thus, the dancer who is promoted to be a teacher must also have the ability to imitate and teach each dance in the local style. In addition to the fact that their dancers will learn the steps and the movement, they must also learn the local style, thus approaching the actor's space.²⁷

Learning the dances, the 'rehearsal' that is, is as important as the performance. Unfortunately, in most [dance] clubs today, but also in our years in high school, the rehearsal was done with the clothes we were wearing at that time. But at least the shoes should be the ones with which each dance is danced. The garment worn for the rehearsal should be restrictive, so that wearing the costume of the performance afterwards, the dancer will not have the feeling that they are entering a 'shell' that does not belong to them. This 'shell' once worked on people dancing. I have never seen such capable dancers impress me with their skill to say 'Pity! The costume weighs on them. Let us make them lighter!' On the contrary, most dancers are

²⁷ In this phrasing, Papantoniou parallels the contemporary dancer of folk dances to a performer/actor, rather than a representative or imitator of the authentic villager who first danced this type of dances.

mediocre to bad and by wearing light costumes they reveal their dancing poverty. In other words, they lose the theatrical feeling that would be given to them by a proper costume, and they are left with only the supposedly dancing agility or lissomness that only impresses their family members and friends, who come to admire them when they dance.

The difficulties are known in the teaching of dances and in the selection and manufacture of costumes. The right costume can help by 'impressing' in a thin dance performance. The person who decides to deal with local costume should not forget:

- its aesthetics
- the essential knowledge about it,²⁸ and
- its evolution

so that they can make the right choices. Probably the type of costume should be close to the time of the [ethnographic] recording of the dance. That is, if we have decided to present dances as they were danced in the early 20th century, the ideal is to use costumes of the early 20th century. If we suddenly decide to present 17th century costumes, the director-teacher-costume designer must create a sense of kinetic education of that time.²⁹

The length, the volume, the width of the costume, the position of the waist, the weight on the shoulders is all very important. The costume determines the movement, the shoe dictates how to press the foot.

If a teacher-director-costume designer wants to present a program, they first decide what that will be, how long it will last, whether one or more folk costumes will be worn, where each one comes from, whether the specific costume will serve an area or more. For example: if the costume of Menidi is chosen,³⁰ will it serve only the dances of Menidi or those of the entire Attica, maybe even those of Boeotia and Thessaly as well?

Next, it must be decided how to combine men's costume with women's costume. It is puerile that the women's costume might come from Attica and the men's costume from Macedonia. If there is no Attica men's costume [in the possession of the group], then it is better not to do the program based on Attica dances. The choice, then, must be made modestly, with what the dance group has available.

Choosing the costume locally, chronologically and with whatever peculiarities we would like to present, we ask a very basic question, which one observes in the dance groups: 'Can the costumes be completely uniform?'- since in no village, in no place did all the women wear exactly the same clothes, such as green dresses, red aprons with the same roses, black identical shoes, all blue scarves, etc. We have seen the absolute uniformity in foreign dance groups, which have influenced our own groups. These foreign dance groups have caused panic to the Greek ones that 'the others' are better than us. No one thought about why others are better than us because they happened to be born for example in Yugoslavia where many people dance simultaneously, jump high and run; and worse those who happened to be born in Cyprus where only two people dance and no one else.³¹

²⁸ She refers to the importance of studying the historical, economic, cultural and social context of a local costume's creation.

²⁹ Here, Papantoniou is concerned with the most precise historical recreation of certain dances, accompanied by the correct costume types in the frame of a performance.

³⁰ Menidi is a suburb of Athens, today part of the municipality of Acharnes within the region of Attica.

³¹ This is criticism towards those easily impressed by foreign dance groups.

It is important to present one's place with respect and pride. What matters is the work one has done on what one presents. We were suddenly surprised to see the whole of Cyprus present dances that were once danced by only two, with hundreds of dancers, doing exactly the same leaps or turns in perfect synchronization. This spectacle, even for the spectator engaged in dancing, is profoundly boring. We have seen it in a perfectly modern presentation by 'Radio City girls'³² in New York, USA, but also in Moiseyev³³ in the Soviet Union. In the composition of a program one solution would be the rhythmic alternation in music and dance and a corresponding rhythmic alternation in costumes. A voluminous multicoloured local costume, such as the one from Skopelos island,³⁴ alternates with a strict, straight dark-colour one, such as [the one from] Yidás.³⁵ This is how the music changes as well, from light to heavy. In one dance we have only one couple and in another one a hundred people. It is boring for a hundred people who wear the same clothes to dance continuously for a long time.

The combinations in the program can also be important, as well as in the same 'act'. A few questions could be posed in relation to this: Will many kinds of costumes appear [on stage]? How will they be combined with each other? Man-woman, 2 men-1 woman, 3 men-1 woman? Could one, for example, take into account what happens in the village? How do they dance in the village, in what order do the married, the unmarried, the women, the men, etc. [dance]? Provoking fascination is legitimate since we are talking about a theatrical performance. One brings onstage impressive colours or emphasizes a custom or a detail and of course I do not mean the well-known spectacle of the dancer dusting his *tsarouchi* tassel³⁶ on the *tsamikos* dance.³⁷ Theatrical effect is what comes out of substance presented in moderation. It can be the custom itself or an element used in it, an accessory for example – which is what in the theatre we call the 'properties' or 'props' (a cane, an apple tree that they hold at the wedding). Aesthetics and effects are directly related to the audience. The public needs great respect. The aim is to offer these aesthetics and effects to the broad audience as seriously as to an audience of harsh critics. The aesthetics transmitted to the audience can be nothing less than important.

Q&A Session: Responses to audience's questions

Ioanna Papantoniou's talk was followed by a Q&A session with the audience, which, as we see below, largely consisted of individuals involved as volunteers in diverse

³² She refers to the long lines of dancing girls on stage at Radio City Music Hall in New York, moving together perfectly synchronized to the music.

³³ Papantoniou here refers to The Moiseyev Dance Ensemble, which is considered by some to be Russia's greatest theatrical folk dance company.

³⁴ The women's costume from the island of Skopelos consists of a long, richly pleated outer sleeveless dress and four underdresses that together give a rich volume to the ensemble.

³⁵ Yidás is the principal village of the region known as Roumlouki in Western Macedonia in Greece; its women's bridal costume consists of a white shirt, a black coat-dress and a dark-blue sleeved cotton coat, open in front.

³⁶ *Tsarouchia* (plural) are the best-known traditional shoes in Greece; made of leather, in their most developed form, they have large pompoms and soles studded with nails (Papantoniou 1996).

³⁷ A dance that follows a strict and slow tempo not emphasising on the steps, but more on the virtuoso improvisations of the dancer; it was danced almost exclusively by men in many areas of continental Greece.

*positions and sections of the Lyceum Club of Greek Women in various parts of Greece.*³⁸

Question by Victoria Karelia, President of the Lyceum Club of Greek Women of Kalamata: Ms. Papantoniou, the costume and the shoe are very important for the children to experience. But what is ideal for children learning [to dance]³⁹?

Ioanna Papantoniou: My opinion is that children should rehearse with the shoes they are going to dance with, or something similar. Girls should wear a long skirt and not trousers, meaning an outfit that gives them the feeling that they are wearing a local costume. We notice - and this is serious - that women have started dancing like men and little girls like little boys. But a woman's movement is completely different.⁴⁰ I consider it wrong, even as a retrospective self-criticism, that even in my years we considered women who had a masculine temperament to be good dancers.

I have noticed that even today women, who may feel considered as inferior to men, forget the essence of tradition,⁴¹ and go out and dance like them. Maybe it matters if they have been taught the dance by a man or a woman. Then two things may happen: either they are too tight [in their dancing manner], or they are aggressively liberated. The psychology in the village is not the same [as in a big city of today] and we must look at this issue realistically and not from a feminist perspective. Needless to say, I hate seeing girls dressed in men's clothes!⁴²

The role of the hairstyle and the scarf is [equally] important. There is a phenomenon of girls not wanting to wear a scarf. If the dancers do not want to wear a scarf, it means that they do not want to wear a local costume and [then,] there is no reason to wear it. They can all make a uniform dress and go out to dance. But a performance has other requirements, and it does not only entail dancing skills, since we are always talking about [creating] a performance. When one dances for fun, one can do whatever one wants; and if at the [local] festivity women have started dancing wearing trousers, they will [dance] with trousers. Tradition is not imposed; from tradition the people choose and keep what suits them, so it evolves. People in the early 19th century did not dance the same dances as today. Those dances that survived were certainly performed in a different way. First the dancers' physique has changed – then, they worked in the fields. The image given by a male dancer who has held a shovel, when he extends his hand [while dancing], a hand which is full of

³⁸ The Lyceum Club of Greek Women today has 50 branches all over Greece and 16 Bureaus abroad (Lyceum Club of Greek Women 2022a).

³⁹ This question is of wide importance in the context of the Lyceum Club of Greek Women as its branches offer courses of Greek folk dancing to children, youth and adults. As stated in the Lyceum Club's website, in Athens alone, more than 2,500 children and young people between the ages of 6 and 18 are 'given the opportunity to become acquainted with and participate in the national dance tradition as it is preserved in the Greek countryside' (Lyceum Club of Greek Women 2022a). These courses have been at the core of the Lyceum Club's activities since its early years and have created a vast community even among contemporary youth, as folk dancing is present in contemporary celebrations in Greece both in private homes and in public, still today.

⁴⁰ Here, Papantoniou refers to gender in relation to the style, cut and the weight of the local costume of a time, worn in a certain area and for a certain dance. The feeling of wearing a folk costume – represented for example by a long skirt, as suggested by Papantoniou – sets a physical frame for a dance experience that intends to recreate as truthfully as possible the aesthetic style of the dance.

⁴¹ By 'essence of tradition' Papantoniou reminds that tradition was born within a certain historical, economic, social, and moral context of a time, thus a complex and interlinked set of manners and beliefs.

⁴² She means while dancing traditional dances.

muscles and calluses, with a palm that does not close from the swelling, is completely different from the image of the lily fingers of the 'couch dancers'.⁴³

In movement today we observe refined and lush moves and gestures, and we should accept them as an evolution of Greek dancing through dance groups and various made-up cultural institutions. The tradition continues, the dances are altered. Children who have been taught the dances in dance groups impose their style on the festivity. Also, the music is altered when music from all regions of Greece is 'performed' by the same orchestra. Recorded music is preferable in a performance to this levelling observed in the companies [the music bands].

Question by Irene Loutzaki (PhD), social anthropologist and [then] lecturer in Anthropology of Dance, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens:

A question was raised on the subject of the tread on the 'heels' in dance. The heel is not a specific point of the foot. It's an area on the foot and it depends on how you press it. Today's people do not need to wear clothing to have the right weight. So, it was the posture of their body⁴⁴ that was right, it was the centre of gravity that fell right on their feet. The costume simply covered the body.

Ioanna Papantoniou: As for the heels, those of us who have been to the villages have not only seen [the local dancers] step on the heel, on the contrary they danced all over the sole. The thick shoes did not bend on the soles, a fact that played a decisive role. Of course, the body shape is important and one more reason, when the dancer wears the local costume, to create another feeling. The modern dancer is not used to wearing even the everyday costume of the village, nor do they have the physique of the villager. But I think they can imitate all that when it comes to a performance.

Question by Chrysoula Theofanopoulou, Curator of Branches from the central Lyceum Club of Greek Women in Athens:

From my own years, I remember Sakellariou⁴⁵ who wanted the female dancer to be feminine. I saw women dancing syrtaki in [Lyceum Club's] branches, and while the branch had male dancers who knew how to dance the *syrtaki*, they presented girls with blue skirts and white shirts.⁴⁶ Do you find it right?

Ioanna Papantoniou: I disagree with the blue skirts and white blouses. These dances are also danced by women today. If one wants to show [the syrtaki] today in a performance, they must use modern clothes. Today, *tsifteteli* – a male, Turkish dance – has become a 'tradition', just as rock music has also become a tradition. I also find traditional the tango, the swing, or the foxtrot in another generation. Sakellariou used to teach the tango, the quadrille, and waltz. If you ever want to

⁴³ The expression 'couch dancers' here refers to male dancers of today who live in cities and work in jobs involving less demanding physical labour, thus described as 'lily-handed' (with delicate hands).

⁴⁴ 'Their' refers to the dancers of past times.

⁴⁵ Charalambos Sakellariou was a dancer teacher at the Lyceum Club of Greek Women in Athens, hired in 1913 and who remained in this position with breaks until 1956.

⁴⁶ The *syrtaki* or *sirtaki* is a popular dance created by choreographer Giorgos Provias for the internationally acclaimed film *Zorba the Greek* (1964). It is based on steps from traditional dances such as the *hasapiko* (in its slow part) and the *hasaposerviko* (in its fast part) and is usually performed by male dancers, similarly to the *hasapiko*. This question poses criticism on the fact that various dance groups, among which branches of the Lyceum Club of Greek Women – which is considered an institution that preserves traditions in the most 'authentic' ways – may present this dance as part of their folk dance programme, performed by female dancers.

present the quadrille [on stage], then after undertaking research in dress history, you will decide what to wear based on what, for example, the Athenians wore in the appropriate case. If I, as a costume designer, was assigned to dress an ensemble in a variety show where the syrtaki would be danced, I would find a garment that I'd like – blue jeans and a T-shirt, for example. How does a woman go to dance? She dresses somehow, she puts something on; the costume designer can organize what she puts on in a 'theatrical costume'. Everything in a spectacle depends on the kind of spectacle one wants to present. If one wants to make a performance based on tradition, I do not see why they might not present, for example, the *zeibekiko*⁴⁷ by women, dressed in clothing specially studied by a sociologist of dress, who will find the right combination of costumes that represent the philosophy of the people who danced the particular dance.⁴⁸ Each generation is shocked by the next one, but folk culture is not something static. If you look at the Athenians, you see that they have made certain choices, they keep certain customs that are also evolving, or they reject others, because they are not urban, that is, they are rural. We cannot say to the people 'you will wear the *Karagouna*⁴⁹ and get on the trolleybus!'. It is not possible, it is not realistic.

Question by Rhea Tseliou, President of the Lyceum Club of Greek Women of Rhodos: We show our children the waltz, and at a conference held in Larissa, it was said by a speaker, university professor, that, in his opinion, waltz and tango should be established as folk dances. What is your opinion?

Ioanna Papantoniou: Time distance plays a role. Of course, this has nothing to do with clothing. My opinion is 'yes'. At least the polka should be included in folk dances. The polka has been imprinted in people's memories as a local dance. In Crete, in Kea⁵⁰ it is a dance that was danced and is still danced a great deal. Why would a dance with an oriental influence be considered more Greek than one that has a western influence? I do not understand why everything that comes from the East is considered traditional and everything that comes from the West is considered a foreign body? How about the local costume of Skopelos, Anogia, Skiathos, Chios?⁵¹ Why did we suddenly decide that the East 'suits' to us, while the West does not? Since half of us are in the West. We had the rule of the Latins⁵² for more years than the Turks.⁵³ We first had the Romans; then Byzantium, which was of Roman origins, that 'looked' to the East creating a strange tradition. We had the Venetians, other Latin populations⁵⁴ and many others. Observe, for example, the phraseology on the various islands. Recently in Italy, using the Latin I had learnt at school and the phraseology of the [Greek] islands, without knowing the language, I spoke Italian effortlessly; the language was so familiar to me.

⁴⁷ Another Greek folk dance for male dancers.

⁴⁸ In these ideas, Papantoniou clearly distinguishes the making of a new performance as an artistic creation, that may be based on historical research but is not restricted by it.

⁴⁹ The *Karagouna* costume, see footnote 24.

⁵⁰ Greek islands in the Aegean Sea.

⁵¹ Skopelos, Skiathos and Chios are islands in the northern part of the Aegean Sea, Anogia is a village in Crete.

⁵² This refers to a period in Greek history after the Fourth Crusade (1204) during which a number of French and Italian states were established on the territory of the dissolved Byzantine Empire. In most areas, this period lasted up to the 14th to 17th centuries, coming to an end with the Ottoman conquest, while in the Ionian islands (such as Corfu) Venetian rule lasted until the turn of the 19th century.

⁵³ 'Turks' here refers to the Ottoman rule in Greece, which lasted from the mid-15th century until the Greek War of Independence in 1821 in many areas of the Hellenic world.

⁵⁴ For example, Genoese.

Question by Giorgos Antonopoulos, dance teacher at the Papagou branch (Athens) and the Lyceum Club of Greek Women of Halkida: I would like to raise the issue of children's costumes in performances and I would also like to hear your opinion on the strictness of the dance-costume relationship in a children's performance.

Ioanna Papantoniou: Children are a special case. The children in the village did not wear the costumes of the adults. We do not know if there were children's costumes in some villages. The depictions of children in local costumes in Art are misleading. In general, if we look at the history of dress, children in the cities wore about the same clothing as the adults. But the same did not happen in the villages. In the villages, the children, who were considered completely insignificant until their adulthood, wore whatever was casual in the family. When they got married at 13 to 14 years old, as often happened, they changed. In the time frame of a research we've undertaken, we saw that the children wore 'cast-offs', garments left in the house, and in special cases only, in some areas they would wear simplified miniatures of the adults' costumes. This in Sarakatsani,⁵⁵ in the area of Florina, and elsewhere.

Let's take a look at 'fashion', which has a completely different meaning, that is, it has nothing to do with local costume. Fashion becomes - or may at some point become - local costume. But it is wrong to make this a rule. One finds their grandmother's dress, which is just a fashion case, and turns the case into a rule, that is, creates a non-existent local costume. It would be a big mistake if, after 20 years, and because I wear a long, black and loose dress, my great-grandchildren might say: 'In Athens they wore black, loose and wide dresses' and present onstage a dance group all dressed in such black dresses!⁵⁶

Children, therefore, except in areas where there are folk costume miniatures, should not wear adults' costumes. Normally, when they are very young, they wear some little shirts and later '*alatzadakia*'.⁵⁷ I am therefore of the opinion that at least in the islands and in the Attica and Boeotia Prefecture, where we do not locate children's costumes, it would not be wrong [for children] to wear something like the Peloponnesian or the Megarian skirt with a checked pattern *polka*⁵⁸ and with a very simple or no headband. Children's costumes, where they exist, such as in Karpathos or Florina, must be worn in a childish way. There is no worse spectacle than a small child that looks like an adult.

As for the costume-dance relationship in children's groups, I think we can be more flexible. When children dance, the soul of the spectator rejoices, unless we are referring to a professional children's dance group, which has other demands and then children lose their spontaneity and look talented or even professional.

Question by Eleni Hatzopoulou, President of the Lyceum Club of Greek Women of Megara: I would like to refer to the uniformity of the costumes in a performance.

⁵⁵ The Sarakatsani are an ethnic Greek population who were traditionally shepherds scattered throughout a wide area ranging from Asia Minor and Northeast Greece through the mountains in continental Greece down to the Peloponnese. Today, almost all Sarakatsani have abandoned their nomadic way of life and live in urban centres, yet maintaining their distinct cultural heritage in various celebrations.

⁵⁶ In her talks, Papantoniou would often use such humorous examples to make her point.

⁵⁷ Small-size shirts made of striped or checked multicoloured cotton material (Papantoniou 1996).

⁵⁸ Type of jacket with sleeves.

For years now, all dance groups have been ordering 6 or 8 pieces of the same costumes. Is this wrong?

Ioanna Papantoniou: This is wrong in my opinion. In no village is there costume uniformity, which is anyway also boring. If the performance is not based on truth, it cannot, I think, be right and beautiful. This is my personal opinion, but the final choice is yours.

Epilogue to the Talk

Revisiting this talk decades later for this publication, Ioanna Papantoniou notes that, after over-30 years since the original presentation of these ideas, her opinion has not changed. On the contrary, the activities of local cultural associations in the villages has made field research on local costume and dance impossible because of their interventions to how local customs and manners are presented.

The value of this essay is of a dual nature: first, to provide insights on the interrelationships between local costume and folk dance as a form of performance, based on the case of Greece; and secondly, to introduce this topic to an international readership, inviting further discussion, especially given that the topic might be pertinent to other countries and regions in Europe and beyond. However, although this talk is presented here as a historical document, the topic it addresses remains relevant to contemporary popular culture in Greece and in many other countries and nations to-date.

References

Foundation for Hellenic Culture (2003), *Women Creators in the Theater: Theoni Vachliotis Aldredge – Ioanna Papantoniou*, exhibition catalogue, New York: Foundation for Hellenic Culture.

Lakidou, Iliia (2018), 'State ideology and the Greek theatre during the 1950s: The drama of morals and manners (*ethographia*) as a national artistic movement', in A. Altouva and K. Diamantakou (eds), *Θέατρο και Δημοκρατία [Theatre and Democracy]*, Proceedings of 5th Panhellenic Theatre Studies Conference, vol. B, Athens, 5-8 November 2014, Athens: National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, pp. 15-24.

Lyceum Club of Greek Women (2022a), 'About us', *Lyceum Club of Greek Women*, <https://lykeionellinidon.com/en/about-us/>. Accessed 20 February 2022.

Lyceum Club of Greek Women (2022b), 'Μουσείο Ιστορίας της Ελληνικής Ενδυμασίας' ['Museum of the History of the Greek Costume'], *Lyceum Club of Greek Women*, <https://lykeionellinidon.com/en/istoriko-mousiou/>. Accessed 24 February 2022.

M., N. (2020), 'Katina Paxinou, a Greek stage legend', *Greek News Agenda*, 16 December, <https://greeknewsagenda.gr/topics/culture-society/7367-paxinou>. Accessed 14 February 2022.

Macha-Bizoumi, Nadia (2003), 'Μουσείο Ιστορίας της Ελληνικής Ενδυμασίας: Το παρελθόν, το παρόν και το μέλλον του' ['Museum of the History of the Greek Costume: Its Past, Present and Future'], *Εθνογραφικά [Ethnografika]*, vol. 12-13, 'Museums and Folk Culture', Nafplion: Peloponnesian Folklore Foundation, pp. 177-188.

Macha-Bizoumi, Nadia (2011), 'Η συμβολή της Ιωάννας Παπαντωνίου στη δημιουργία και στην εξέλιξη του Μουσείου Ιστορίας της Ελληνικής Ενδυμασίας' ['The Contribution of Ioanna Papantoniou to the Creation and Development of the Museum of the History of the Greek Costume'], *Τ' Ανάβλεμμα [T' Anavlemma]*, vol. 23, 'Tribute to the 100-year anniversary of the Lyseum Club of Greek Women', October, pp. 16-19.

Mavromoustakos, Platon (2008), 'Ο Κάρολος Κουν και το Θέατρο Τέχνης' ['Karolos Koun and the Art Theatre'], in P. Mavromoustakos (ed), *Κάρολος Κουν - Οι παραστάσεις [Karolos Koun – The Performances]*, Athens: Benaki Museum, pp. 17-37.

Pantouvaki, Sofia (2019), "'A Touch of Green with an Emerald Hue": A Multimodal Research Methodology for the Study of Costume', in: *Dance, Body, Costume*, H. Walsdorf and P. Dotlačilová (eds) Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, pp. 41-76.

Pantouvaki, Sofia (2020), 'Folk Dress as an Expressive Means in Contemporary Greek Theatre Costume Design', in: J. L. Druessedow (ed), *The Museum as a Cultural Hub: The Future of Tradition. Proceedings of the ICOM Costume Committee Annual Meeting, Kyoto, Japan, 1-7 September 2019*, ICOM Costume Committee, online, <http://costume.mini.icom.museum/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2020/08/15.-Folk-Dress-as-an-Expressive-Means-in-Contemporary-Greek-Theatre-Costume-Design-by-Dr.-Sofia-Pantouvaki.pdf>. Accessed 26 February 2022.

Papantoniou, Ioanna (1973), *Greek Costumes - Women's Costumes*, Nafplion: Peloponnesian Folklore Foundation.

Papantoniou, Ioanna (1974), *Greek Costumes - Men's Costumes*, Nafplion: Peloponnesian Folklore Foundation.

Papantoniou, Ioanna (1981/1991), *Greek Costumes*, Nafplion: Peloponnesian Folklore Foundation.

Papantoniou, Ioanna (1991), *Greek Costumes – The Collection of the Lyceum Club of Greek Women in Kalamata*, Athens: Ekdotike Athinon.

Papantoniou, Ioanna (1992), *Macedonian Costumes*, Nafplion: Peloponnesian Folklore Foundation.

Papantoniou, Ioanna (1996), *Greek Regional Costumes*, Nafplion: Peloponnesian Folklore Foundation.

Papantoniou, Ioanna (2000), *Greek Dress – From Ancient Times to the Early 20th Century*, Athens: Commercial Bank of Greece.

Politou, Xenia (2010), 'From Designer to Customer and from Wardrobe to Museum', in I. Papantoniou (ed), *Endyesthai (To Dress)*, exhibition catalogue, Nafplion: Peloponnesian Folklore Foundation, pp. 29-37.

Contributor details

Ioanna Papantoniou is a stage designer, Honorary Doctor of the Department of History and Archaeology, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. She has designed for leading directors in Greek state theatres as well as with independent companies. She has been honoured by the Academy of Athens for services to scholarship and theatre (1981). Papantoniou has taught at the Theatre Studies Departments of the Universities of Athens, Patras and the Peloponnese. She was honoured by the Academy of Athens (1981), with the Gold Cross of the Order of the Phoenix by the President of the Greek Democracy Kostas Stefanopoulos (2000), with the Panos Aravantinos Award of the Centre for Study and Research in Greek Theatre (2004) and the Lifetime Achievement Award of the European Museum Academy (2013).

Email: pff@otenet.gr

Address: Peloponnesian Folklore Foundation, Vas. Alexandrou 1, 21100 Nafplion, Greece

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5018-8457>

Sofia Pantouvaki is a scenographer and Professor of Costume Design at Aalto University, Finland. She is an awarded practising designer with over 90 design credits in major European venues and curator of international projects, including the Finnish Student exhibit (Gold Medal at PQ2015). Pantouvaki is Chair of *Critical Costume*, OISTAT Executive Committee member and Vice-Head for Research of the OISTAT Costume Sub-commission, and a founding Editor of the international peer-reviewed journal *Studies in Costume and Performance*. She led the research project 'Costume Methodologies' funded by the Academy of Finland (2014-2018) and is lead editor of *Performance Costume: New Perspectives and Methods* (2021)..

Email: sofia.pantouvaki@aalto.fi

Address: Department of Film, TV and Scenography, P.O. Box 31000, FI-00076 AALTO, Finland

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1205-3818>