

TO BHMA

International edition

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TO BHMA International edition

We Are Greek Warriors: The Women We Didn't Know Existed

By Maria Paravantes

Spies, messengers, fighters, and sponsors—women played all these roles during the Greek Revolution, a war that ended four centuries of Ottoman oppression and reshaped Greece's future.

And yet their stories are rarely taught in schools, and their instrumental contributions to this war remain largely overlooked.

This is finally beginning to change.

On the occasion of Women's History Month, *TO BHMA International Edition* spoke with Angie Xidias, who is boldly introducing the world to the daring women who took part in the Greek War of Independence.

Please turn to Page 4

TO BHMA International edition

Vangelis Chronis: Once Upon a Time...

By Panos Kougias

Once upon a time, in the garden of earthly delights, God decided to sow poetry. And it took root firmly in a corner of the world called Greece.

It blossomed and blossomed, and people enjoyed its flowers for decades; indeed, in some of those decades, they wrote golden history.

Until the end of the century, when its blooms ceased to inspire people.

Please turn to Page 8



Desmond Child and all participating artists take a bow on Desmond Child's benefit concert for the return of the Parthenon Marbles.

THOMAS DUSALANSKY/NDP PHOTO AGENCY

TO BHMA International edition

Desmond Child: Where Rock Meets The (Parthenon) Marbles

By George Gilson

Desmond Child has a love affair with Greece. He loves its culture, its history and its

people, and for nearly two decades he has been visiting the country with his husband Curtis. They stay mostly on their beloved Folegandros island.

He has collaborated

with major Greek artists like the popular composer Foivos, who was instrumental in organising the 2022 Parthenon Sculptures reunification benefit concert, aptly entitled "Desmond Child

Rocks the Parthenon", with singers like Alice Cooper, Bonnie Tyler, The Rasmus and famed Greek pop singer Sakis Rouvas.

That smash concert has now become a documentary,

and Child recently attended the Thessaloniki Documentary Festival for the world premiere.

An international tour of the film is in the works.

Please turn to Page 6

The Quiet American: How Pope Leo Is Pushing Back Against Trump

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

By Marcus Walker and Elizabeth Bernstein

VATICAN CITY—"War is back in vogue." So said Pope Leo XIV to ambassadors from around the world in a marbled hall above the main entrance to St. Peter's Basilica in January. He didn't name names, or have to. President Trump

was flexing America's military might in Venezuela and the Caribbean, threatening to take over the Danish territory of Greenland, and assembling an armada for a looming war with Iran. Russia's invasion of Ukraine was grinding on.

The way Pope Leo saw it, powers were seeking to impose dominion through arms and undermining the taboo since World War II on changing borders by force.

"This gravely threatens the rule of law," he said, "which is the foundation of all peaceful civil coexistence."

His words were the latest salvo in a growing effort to insert himself into a world of spiraling conflicts. The 70-year-old pope, born as Robert Prevost in Chicago and known for most of his life as "Bob," has had a quiet start to his pontificate.

Please turn to Page 2



Pope Leo XIV arrives in audience with journalists and media workers.

ERICE ROBERTO SUTTER/STOCK

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One with the future

Continued from Page One

But with the world facing crisis after crisis, the first-ever American pope is stepping up his efforts at moral suasion in defense of a fading international order that the American president, among other leaders, is rapidly dismantling.

The papacy has always been political. But now, some of the biggest challenges to its vision of society are coming from the U.S.—just as the 1.4 billion-strong Catholic Church is led by an American for the first time in its 2,000-year history.

The Midwestern pontiff brings a deeper understanding of American society and politics than any previous pope. That means his critiques can't be dismissed by U.S. politicians as easily as a foreign pope's would be, say senior church officials.

Complicating his task is the fact that millions of American Catholics voted for Trump. However, the conservative advocacy group CatholicVote, which helped mobilize support for Trump, is now warning that "widespread mistrust" among Catholics over his hard-line immigration tactics could cost the Republicans some of those gains.

Leo doesn't want to be the anti-Trump, senior Vatican officials say. Rather, the pope is advocating positively for a world that reflects Catholic teaching.

But the contrast of style and substance between the world's two most prominent Americans—one a brash billionaire businessman who speaks in superlatives, the other a former missionary who spent years helping the needy in Peru—is too glaring to miss.

"They're offering very different images of America. But they're both authentic representations of who we are," said Elise Ann Allen, author of "Pope Leo XIV," a new biography, and a writer for the Catholic news website Crux.

The cardinals who gathered in the Sistine Chapel last May elected Leo in the hope that he would restore tranquility to the global Catholic Church, after turbulent years under the charismatic but at times polarizing Pope Francis, who unleashed bitter debates between progressive and conservative Catholics about doctrine, morality and the direction of the church. In Leo, they saw both clarity and a consensus-builder.

"I think the cardinals were looking for three things," said Alistair Dutton, secretary-general of Caritas Internationalis, the global confederation of Catholic humanitarian organizations. "They wanted continuity with Pope Francis. They wanted the unifying, conciliatory spirit of Pope



PETER RINDIUS FOR WSJ

The Quiet American: How Pope Leo Is Pushing Back Against Trump

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Can the low-key pontiff from Chicago make a difference in an era of raw power politics?

Leo. But they also wanted a strong pope who could stand toe-to-toe with the big men of history of today, which includes the new American administration, but not only."

Leo and Trump have yet to meet or speak with each other directly. A meeting might not happen for a while. Leo declined, at least for this year, an invitation to visit the U.S. that Vice President JD Vance gave him in Rome last May.

Leo has already managed to tone down the tensions within the global Catholic Church by continuing to champion the poor and the marginalized, while also af-

firming traditional Catholic teaching on divisive issues such as same-sex marriage and female priests. The combination has helped Leo to bring the bulk of the Catholic hierarchy and faithful on board.

The global stage presents a different challenge. His low-key approach, say some papal observers, has made it harder for him to make himself heard in a wider world that's being shaken up by populism, strongman leaders and raw power politics.

Googling the Pope

When white smoke rose over the Sistine Chapel last May

and Leo's election was announced to the crowds in St. Peter's Square, many people's reaction was puzzlement as they quickly googled him on their smartphones.

Prevost was little known to the wider public except in Peru, where he was greatly admired during his more than 20 years as a missionary and bishop. Even in his native Chicago, he was a hometown hero most of the city had only recently heard of.

The U.S. once had a complicated relationship with the papacy. When John F. Kennedy ran for president in 1960, he had to reassure voters that his allegiance lay

with America and he would accept no instructions from Rome.

Such doubts have largely been overcome over the past 60 years as Catholics have contributed prominently to American society and culture, said Archbishop Paul Coakley of Oklahoma City, president of the conference of U.S. bishops. "The fact that we now have an American pope is the icing on the cake," he said. "For many people, it demonstrates that you can be a good Catholic and a good American."

For the global church, too, Leo's election "con-

firmed the American Catholic community at the heart of the Catholic family," said Archbishop Paul Gallagher, the Vatican's Secretary for Relations with States in an interview.

Rarely if ever have as many Catholics filled leading positions in American public life—from Vance and Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who are seen as Trump's two most likely Republican successors, to some of the GOP House leadership and most of the Supreme Court.

Still, the election of an American pope was a surprise, since many prelates—including Prevost himself—believed that the college of cardinals wouldn't hand the papacy to the U.S., on top of all the superpower's other clout.

Curiosity about Leo's background and biography quickly turned him into one of the world's most famous people. Soon, everyone in Chicago knew he was a White Sox fan. Americans learned that his melting-pot family history included French, Italian, Spanish and mixed-race Louisiana Creole roots. Users of Duolingo noticed that Leo, already a polyglot, was using the app in the small hours to study German.

Leo's humility quickly helped make him internationally popular. A survey across 61 countries published by Gallup International in January found that Leo has easily the highest approval rating of any global leader.

Kevin Hayes, a retired architect and member of Resurrection Parish in suburban Pittsburgh, said he was delighted to see an American pontiff. "I now have somebody who's making statements from the Vatican who understands American culture and politics," he said. "It's not only the pope talking to you, but it's an American talking to you with moral authority."

Clash over ICE

Leo didn't want to get involved in politics, he told his biographer Allen. "That's not what the church is about. But I'm not afraid to raise issues that I think are gospel issues, that hopefully people on both sides of the aisle, as we say, will be able to listen to."

Tensions over immigration made it hard to stay out.

Trump's team has been sparring with the Vatican over its immigration policies ever since it took office in early 2025. Vance and Rubio politely debated the matter with Leo in a visit to Rome soon after his election last May.

The rift deepened as the administration's immigration crackdown escalated over the summer. Raids by U.S. Immigration and Cus-



President Trump boards Air Force One.

KYLE COOPER/REUTERS



Pope Leo XIV waves as he leads the Angelus prayer from a window of the Apostolic Palace at the Vatican, March 22, 2026.

MATTEO PERINIS/ECI/VATICAN

toms Enforcement led to the detention of tens of thousands of immigrants and clashes between protesters and law enforcement amid an atmosphere of civil strife in several U.S. cities. ICE's tactics caused widespread anger among Catholic Latinos as they saw friends, neighbors and relatives rounded up.

For years, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops had been known for vigorous disagreements between its conservative majority and progressives aligned with Pope Francis. On immigration, however, the administration's actions led to a rare unity. An overwhelming majority of the bishops voted for a declaration in November that denounced a "climate of fear" and condemned "the indiscriminate mass deportation of people."

"Someone who says I'm against abortion but I'm in

agreement with the inhuman treatment of immigrants in the United States, I don't know if that's pro-life," Leo told reporters at the scenic papal retreat of Castel Gandolfo outside Rome. Politicians who claim to support Catholic teaching need to realize it comes as a package, he said. He was echoing an argument by a former archbishop of Chicago, Joseph Bernardin, who said respect for life was a "seamless garment" that covers all the ways in which human life can be protected or violated.

The White House quickly responded to Leo, rejecting the allegation that illegal immigrants were being treated inhumanely.

"The Catholic Church is wrong," White House border czar Tom Homan, who is Catholic, told reporters. "I think they need to spend time fixing the Catholic Church."

But the church's pushback against ICE resonated deep into mainstream America, said Father Robert Sirico, a Catholic priest and co-founder of the Acton Institute for the Study of Religion and Liberty in Grand Rapids, Mich. "Speaking as an American conservative, a lot of Americans—including those who are concerned about immigration—think ICE have gone too far," he said. "The Catholic Church in particular has a strong immigrant base. I think Pope Leo had to take a stand on that."

Not everyone is happy about it. Josh Mercer, a Catholic from Petoskey, Mich., who is also an executive at CatholicVote, said he wants "more clarity from the pope" that church teaching allows a country to uphold its immigration rules. "It gets to the question: If a country has the right to control its borders, then what level of

immigration enforcement is acceptable?"

The bishops are continuing the fight. In February they filed an amicus brief with the Supreme Court, asking it to halt what they called Trump's "immoral" order to end birthright citizenship.

War and order

Contesting the use of military force by the U.S. and other powers such as Russia is proving even more difficult for the Vatican, one of the world's tiniest states. The growing resort to warfare is squeezing the space for papal envoys' efforts at quiet mediation.

In the Middle East, the Vatican said Pope Leo had turned down Trump's invitation to join his Board of Peace last month, even as an observer. The United Nations should be the forum for managing international crises, the Vatican said. The White House called the deci-

sion "deeply unfortunate."

On Venezuela, Pope Leo and his top aide, Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin tried at Christmas to persuade the Trump administration to pursue a peaceful solution, such as arranging Venezuelan leader Nicolás Maduro's departure and exile. Russia had offered Maduro asylum, according to three officials familiar with the U.S.-Vatican conversation, which was first reported by the Washington Post.

Only days later, Trump seized Maduro by force.

Now there is Cuba. The Vatican is trying to encourage a diplomatic solution between the U.S. and the island, where it's worried about worsening humanitarian consequences from the U.S.'s oil blockade. Washington and Havana have opened talks, but Trump stepped up his threats to overthrow Cuba's leaders on

Monday, saying he expected to have the "honor" of "taking Cuba in some form."

With the Iran war escalating, Pope Leo has called for an immediate cease-fire to end what he calls the "atrocious violence." U.S. cardinals have criticized the White House over its justifications for the war, as well as its social-media posts that mix war footage with action movies and videogames.

As wars multiply, Pope Leo's aides aren't despairing about the possibilities of diplomacy. Some believe its day might return.

"The preferred option at the moment seems to be the gun, not the pen," said Gallagher, the pope's foreign minister. "We're a bit skeptical that people are going to achieve their goals pursuing their militaristic policies. Things don't seem to ever work out the way that leaders imagined."



Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Vice President JD Vance, who are both Catholic, met with the pope at the Vatican last May.

SIMONE RISOLUT/AP

We Are Greek Warriors: The Women We Didn't Know Existed

To mark Women's History Month, *TO BHMA International Edition* speaks with the creator of the #WeAreGreekWarriors show, which brings to light the overlooked heroines of Greece's 1821 Revolution

Continued from Page One

At the Hellenic Museum of Michigan, the exhibition #WeAreGreekWarriors, on view through May 17, offers a much needed introduction to these overlooked figures. Featuring works by artist Ramona Pintea, the show was co-organized by One Bean Marketing, the National Hellenic Society, and the Detroit Cultural Center.

From question to movement

"The show was inevitable," explains Xidias, a first-generation Greek American living in New York and the founder of One Bean Marketing, the company behind a growing international effort to bring these women into focus through research, storytelling, and now art.

For Xidias, the idea began with a simple question. "Every year, as Greek Independence Day approached, I found myself asking: Where were the women in all this?"

The familiar narrative of the Greek Revolution, dominated by figures like Kolokotronis, left little room for anyone else. Even among Greeks, knowledge of female contributions rarely extends beyond Laskarina Bouboulina or Manto Mavrogenous.

But as Xidias began researching, a broader picture emerged.

"Women were financing ships, organizing resistance, preserving culture. They were leading in ways that were essential to the Revolution."

In 2023, drawing on her background in marketing, she launched the #WeAreGreekWarriors campaign on social media to bring these stories to the public.

The response was immediate and positive.

"Many people, including Greeks, were surprised by how many women played critical roles in the 1821 Revolution," she says.

That digital momentum has since taken physical form in Detroit, where the exhibition brings his-

tory and contemporary art together, allowing these women to be seen and honored, and inspiring new generations.

Rewriting the narrative

Over the last few years, and particularly during the bicentennial of the Greek War of Independence in 2021, several initiatives have commemorated the significant role of Greek women.

Still, Xidias argues, the work is far from complete. "Abroad, and even in Greece, very few know of

Greek female freedom fighters other than Bouboulina, perhaps Manto Mavrogenous or the Souliot Women (who committed mass suicide rather than surrendering themselves to the Turks)."

"The fight for freedom took many forms and these women were leaders, architects of change. These women were not exceptions, they were integral," she tells *TO BHMA International Edition*.

"Every one of these women deserves to have her story told. Their right-

ful place in history is beside the heroes we already celebrate, and we should all know their names like we do Bouboulina's."

She goes on to note that ongoing research for the #WeAreGreekWarriors campaign continues to uncover new figures whose stories will be added to the show and the historical record.

Girls take heed

The #WeAreGreekWarriors campaign, which is part of the #WeAreGreek campaign that first gained

traction in 2021, continues to resonate, particularly among younger generations of the Greek diaspora.

"Of course, I want second-, third-, and fourth-generation Greek girls to see themselves reflected in these stories," Xidias says. "But I also want all women to feel inspired by them, no matter their background. Women's empowerment is not cultural, it is universal."

She believes much more has to be done to change the historical narrative and to include women. Storytelling across mediums

is integral to shifting perceptions. "We need more of these stories to be told in film, music, theater. We need to say their names."

"When we tell these stories collectively, a much larger and more powerful picture emerges."

In the early 19th century, women lived within strict legal and social constraints. They could not vote, often could not own property independently, and were defined largely through family ties. And yet, many stepped into leadership roles. Their legacy, Xidias insists, is rooted not in status, but in action.

"If this exhibition helps women recognize their own power, then we've done what we set out to do."

Reimagining the heroines

At the heart of the exhibition is the work of Ramona Pintea, a Surrey-based artist known for her bold, expressive portraits. Working primarily in oils, Pintea blends abstract and figurative elements to explore identity and self-discovery. Her work is defined by its intensity of color and emotional immediacy. For #WeAreGreekWarriors, she brings that same visual language to the women of 1821.

"Ramona has humanized these figures," says Xidias. "She presents them not as distant icons, but as real women, with families, emotions, and courage."

The collaboration was intentional. A Romanian artist interpreting Greek heroines introduces another layer of connection, particularly through figures like Rallou Karatza, a Greek woman who lived in Bucharest, Pintea's home city, she explains.

"There's something powerful about women telling the stories of other women. It brings a different kind of truth."

Beyond the exhibition

Since its launch, the campaign has reached audiences well beyond the United States, attracting international attention and engagement. That momentum ul-

LASKARINA BOUBOULINA
HEROINE OF THE GREEK WAR OF INDEPENDENCE 1821

LEGEND ADMIRAL
COMMANDER OF THE FIRST WAR SHIP AGAMEMNON FEARLESS LEADER
NEGOTIATOR
FREEDOM FIGHTER RESISTANT
WOMAN REVOLUTIONARY
DEFIANT COURAGEOUS
MOTHER WIDOW

#WeAreGreekWarriors
Ζήτω η Ελλάδα!

ONE BEAN MARKETING

MESOLONGITISSES
HEROINES OF THE GREEK WAR OF INDEPENDENCE 1821

RESISTANCE POWERFUL WOMEN
BRAVE DEFENDERS MOTIVATORS TO FIGHT UNTIL THE END
LEGENDS DEFIANT COURAGEOUS
TRANSPORTERS & BUILDERS OF FORTS NURSES
REVOLUTIONARIES

#WeAreGreekWarriors
Ζήτω η Ελλάδα!

ONE BEAN MARKETING

MANTO MAVROGENOUS
HEROINE OF THE GREEK WAR OF INDEPENDENCE 1821

COMMANDER LIEUTENANT GENERAL
DEFIANT BRAVE
CAMPAIGNER POWERFUL WOMAN
LEADER REVOLUTIONARY
REINFORCER FINANCIER
EXPEDITIONIST

"THE GREEKS, BORN TO BE LIBERAL, WILL OWE THEIR INDEPENDENCE ONLY TO THEMSELVES"

#WeAreGreekWarriors
Ζήτω η Ελλάδα!

ONE BEAN MARKETING

RALLOU KARATZA
HEROINE OF THE GREEK WAR OF INDEPENDENCE 1821

PIONEER PRINCESS
LEGEND LEADER
TRANSLATOR DIRECTOR
WOMAN REVOLUTIONARY
PRODUCED KEY INFLUENTIAL PLAYS FOR THE GREEK INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT
INFLUENCER ACTOR

#WeAreGreekWarriors
Ζήτω η Ελλάδα!

ONE BEAN MARKETING

timately helped bring the project to the Hellenic Museum of Michigan.

In Detroit, the show expands beyond visual art. A parallel program of panels, film screenings, lectures, and workshops invites audiences to engage with the material from multiple perspectives.

"The arts are one of the most powerful communication tools we have," Xidias tells *TO BHMA International Edition*. "Each format offers a new way of understanding."

She also points to the broader historical context: the support of philhellene women in the United States during the Revolution, and the connections drawn by scholars such as Dr. Mau-

reen Santelli between those efforts and the early women's suffrage movement.

What comes next

Plans are already underway to take the exhibition to other cities, including Washington, Los Angeles, and Miami, with ambitions to expand internationally through new partnerships.

For Xidias, collaboration remains central not only to the project's growth, but also to her company's philosophy. Inspired by the Greek proverb, "bean by bean, the sack surely fills", her approach is grounded in the belief that meaningful change happens gradually, step by step and story by story.



The Hellenic Museum of Michigan.

"Supporting institutions like the Hellenic Museum of Michigan is critical. They provide a platform for ideas that celebrate our cultural heritage and strengthen our identity. When we come together, our voices grow stronger and our history is heard."

For Xidias, the most rewarding part of the venture has been the response from audiences. "When people tell me how they feel after seeing the campaign; how they've discovered a renewed sense of connection and pride in these women, that's what stays with me." In the end, it is these personal connections that ensure their stories are not only remembered, but carried forward.

TO BHMA *International edition*

Desmond Child: Where Rock Meets The (Parthenon) Marbles

The legendary songwriter and producer has begun a campaign for their return, and a new documentary about his smash 2022 benefit concert at the Herodion will be screened internationally

Continued from Page One

In a no-holds-barred, exclusive interview with *TO BHMA International Edition*, Child explains why he is so passionate about the return of the Parthenon Sculptures and discusses a string of other issues: Growing up poor in a project in Miami - where a music professor who was a Holocaust survivor took him under her wing, taught him for free as long as he didn't drink, smoke or use drugs and helped him fly -, feeling lonely and different as a child "perhaps because I was born gay... I saw the world in a special way", the decisive influence in his life of his adored Cuban mother, from an artistic family, his anger over the now prevalent discrimination against Latinos in America ("we're not just vermin, or gangsters and rapists and murderers"), and his huge admiration for Bad Bunny (who he would be thrilled and honoured to write a song with) and the enormous sym-

Alice Cooper singing in the new documentary on Desmond Child's benefit concert for the return of the Parthenon Marbles.



bolism of his Super Bowl half-time performance.

Were you excited about the Thessaloniki Documentary Film Festival world premiere screening of the documentary Desmond Child Rocks the Parthenon, on your smash 2022 Herodes Atticus theatre (right under the Acropolis) benefit concert for the return of the Parthenon sculptures?

I was very excited particularly because I hadn't actually seen the entire film put together. We were rushing and everybody was in their corner doing their thing - I was working on the sound and our director and editor were doing the last-minute edits.

It would be great to have it screened in London, right where the Marbles are.

I totally agree. I think it's very important for people all around the world, but particularly in Great Britain, to understand the seriousness of the situation. I always bring up the case of Stonehenge, what would happen if they woke up one day and somebody took them away? Then somebody else says they were just sitting there and we just took them, and then the British spent 200 years fighting it.

Why do you feel so strongly? Do you feel a sort of mystical energy when you visit the temple?

Well, absolutely. When we visited the temple at sunrise and did some filming when there was nobody there, just seeing the sun rising was amazing. As far as the concert is concerned, just being on the stage at the Herodion is very moving, because it's been there nearly 2,000 years, and also some of the greats of all time, like Maria Callas, performed there. You feel the history is alive while being at a sacred place like that.

As for the provenance, if you will, of the sculptures themselves, there really hadn't been any valid paperwork or contract before their removal. They said, well the country was occupied. But remember when the Nazis occupied let's say Paris, they decided to take some artworks back home, with the idea that we've occupied so we can take it. We have spent 75 years trying to bring them back to the original owners and to the countries where the artworks were 'You don't go and take a temple apart and take the pieces away'

There's something else that I came to understand. Each piece of the Parthenon is not an independent artwork unto itself. The artwork is the complete set. That's the artwork. So you



Desmond Child in the 2026 documentary on his major benefit concert ("Desmond Child Rocks the Parthenon") for the return of the Parthenon Marbles to Greece.



Spiros Lambrou's 30 voice children's choir performing at Desmond Child's benefit concert for the return of the Parthenon Marbles.

can't compare it to let's say the Winged Victory in The Louvre Museum. That's an individual, single piece of art. That is an important concept to understand.

Beyond that, there is the spiritual aspect of it. You don't go and take a temple apart and take the pieces away. It's a sacred and holy place. If you think of all of those reasons, that's why all the pieces should be back. And guess what? It's not that long of a flight [to Athens] from many parts of the world, and particularly from Great Britain.

So, if they love the Sculptures so much, come and visit and spend some time in

Greece. Who doesn't want to do that?

The Parthenon was a creation of the golden age of Athens and its democracy. How do you see democracy faring in America and around the world today?

Well, I can't really speak to that because I'm not educated enough. 'I'm a musician and I can't speak in grand gestures about democracy. I know that people on both sides of the equation feel very differently about this, and they're moving away from each other. I would like democracy to include more dialogue. Explain to me exactly

why you feel the way you feel. That to me is what democracy should be about.

MUSIC AND LIFE AND DNA

You've written so many songs that have been loved by hundreds of millions of people. It would seem that you have an incredibly deep, core inspiration as an artist. One wonders where does this inner fire come from? Is it from God, nature granting you talent, or something else? I think it's probably that, and then circumstances. My mother was a song writer and my



ANDREAS NIKOLAES/INPHO PHOTO AGENCY



THOMAS DASKALAKIS/INPHO PHOTO AGENCY

great grandfather was a poet. My father was an actor in high school and college. So, I came from an artistic background and I got some really great DNA from my mother and father. Ever since I was a little kid, I was able to sit at a piano just improvising. Even if I did not know how to speak yet music was in my spirit. All that drove me to want to be the best that I could possibly be. I came from very poor circumstances, and I wanted to take care of my mother so that she could have a beautiful life.

Since you touched on the spirit, do you believe in God or a higher power?

There are multiple galaxies, by the trillions, right? I just think it's something beyond comprehension. Why? We want to create a being like us. We want to create God in our own image.

Are there artists that you worked with and something just clicked to form a deep spiritual bond? I know you felt such I bond with the singer Laura Nyro, though I don't know if you ever met her.

Yes, I did meet her and in fact I was the lead-in act for her at the Algonquin [Hotel, NYC]. I sang one of her songs, "The Man who Sends Me Home". It was a thrill to not only get to meet her and spend time with her, but to sing one of her songs.

Are there other artists that you have developed a special spiritual bond with?

I would say Laura Nyro first [pronounced NEER-oh], and Nyro [one of his twin sons with his husband Curtis Shaw] is named after her. I have that, but I would also say - and had the chance to have dinner once with her - Joni Mitchell. She's the real deal, and her integrity is beyond words. I just love her! These are my idols, who I did not actually collaborate with.

I have formed very strong bonds with Jon Bon Jovi, Richie Sambora, Steven Tyler, Joe Perry, Alice Cooper, Joan Jett, Paul Stanley of Kiss. There's a camaraderie of beautiful feel-

ings coming through writing and you can feel that energy.

Tell us a bit about your artistic process, which I understand includes talking to artists before writing and delving into their inner being.

I think of myself as having a sort of empathy. I talk to the artists. Sometimes when you don't know somebody that well you find them opening their heart. They'll confess what they haven't confided to their best friends. Those things make their way into the song.

Has your enormous success over 40 plus years changed or shaped your character differently from the younger Desmond, and what was

Desmond like as a child?
I was a very lonely child, though I had a younger brother. I felt different than most of the other children, I can attribute that perhaps to the fact that I was born gay. I think that already makes me different. I think I saw the world with different eyes. I saw the world in a kind of special way. It's not just about sex. It's just a completely different point of view. I think already that makes me different. I see the world through different eyes and feeling about oneself. I think that contributed to how it jumped out, because a lot of my friends from high school that weren't normal children, a lot of them got into drugs and other problems and they died young.

A MENTOR CHANGED HIS LIFE

I was lucky enough to meet a singing teacher who was a Holocaust survivor, named Marie-Louise Leets. She was a professor at the University of Miami. A lot of high school friends went to her privately, and she just took me under her wing. She said I'll teach you for free as long as you don't smoke, don't drink, and don't take drugs. I made that vow and I kept it, so I was able to stay out of trouble, and to really concentrate on developing my talent. She taught me so much. Having a mentor like that is very important. She was a private teacher, because the education system doesn't pay people of that calibre enough to go into public schools. Education just doesn't seem to be a priority. I think that being different from the norm, let's say - whether sexual orientation or gender identification, or your race or your ethnic origin - all these things are very rich elements to create with, because the norm sometimes can be very unimaginative.

Your mom was a beautiful Cuban poet and songwriter named Elena Casals. What life lessons did she teach you that you still carry?

She had a tremendous amount of charm, and that opened a lot of doors for her. But she

was such a dreamer that she wasn't really able to capitalise on all of that beauty and talent.

After I did the concert "Desmond Child Rocks the Parthenon" and I was leaving Athens to go back to the US and was looking down at the city, it dawned on me that I had a parallel story.

My mother knew a sculptress named Lee Burham. She did a bas relief, 4" thick and 4.5ft tall, made out of Brazilian walnut. It was the only good thing that we owned. My mother bought it from her. At that time, in 1954, she paid her about \$600 for it, and that is thousands of dollars today. It was the one thing that we had when we lived in poverty in the projects of Miami, called Liberty City. One day when I was 10-years-old, I came home from school and it was gone. She had sold it. We were so poor. It just disappeared, and after pining and pining for it I was able to find it and buy it back for \$35,000.

I didn't really realise why the Parthenon Sculptures touched me so deeply, and it's because I experienced the same thing happen.

You created a "Latin Songwriters Hall of Fame". What was your take on Bad Bunny's performance at the Super Bowl? Do you think he has the type of talent that can withstand the test of time, and would you work with him on a song?

Gosh, if I were lucky enough to work with him that would be awesome. I think that he is a genius. The way that he put together that half-time show was needed and was a very important moment. We Latinos have been demonised and criminalised, and he showed the beauty of our culture and recreated a village, with for example a little boy getting a haircut. Every corner had some kind of village life, and then the excitement and the joy of the community, of all the people that were on that field, with the flags of all the Latino countries. He was showing the world that

we have worth, and that we have joy, and we have a lot to give, and we're not just vermin, or gangsters and rapists and murderers as we've been characterised. I think that is very important. People criticised him for singing in Spanish, but the fact is that I can speak perfect Spanish, and I didn't understand a word he said, because he sings in a kind of urban dialect. But the vibe, his sound, aah, is just amazing. When I first produced "Livin' La Vida Loca" with Draco Rosa, and "The Cup of Life", also for Ricky Martin, we were at the turn of the century. Our sound really took hold. Technologically, we were the first song to reach #1, that was done completely digitally.

The head of the record company said, "Okay now, can we write the song in English?" We answered, "But it is in English. It only has three Spanish words!"

Now, Bad Bunny Takes that mantle and pushes it even further. He's one of the biggest-selling artists of all time, and he sings exclusively in Spanish, and maybe a few English words.

Many believe it is really a tragedy that our country, which was built by immigrants - at the base of the Statue of Liberty you read poet Emma Lazarus's verse "Give me your tired, your poor/Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free..." - has turned into a 'fortress America, intent upon just excluding. How do you view that?

I don't know how to explain it, but I wrote a song [music and lyrics] for Barbra Streisand called "Lady Liberty". I included words from that verse, and it's one of the greatest performances of Barbra Streisand. She sang it with all her heart, because it was a love song to liberty. She is a patriot, and she very much believes in democracy and fairness, and it stands for all of us.

America has 'plenty of room for people coming and bringing all the riches that they bring.

Desmond Child and all the artist singing in the new documentary on Desmond Child's benefit concert for the return of the Parthenon Marbles.



ANDREAS NIKOLAES/INPHO PHOTO AGENCY

Continued from Page One

Then a pilgrim appeared. He had set out from far away, from the other side of the country, walking barefoot through the Forest of Haindou and swimming in the cold waters of the Livaditis Waterfall, with only his words as a lifeline. When he arrived, just before the close of the twentieth century, in 1999, he delivered his words and asked if he could gather flowers. Poetry, in return, gifted him bouquets from its gardens, which to this day it plucks petal by petal, with extraordinary care.

Years later, after so many petals had been spread along his path like a trail for future pilgrims—or even tourist-readers—we reach last Saturday. On World Poetry Day, this pilgrim was honored for the entirety of his work in a hall of Ianos bookstore, surrounded by pilgrims and visitors alike.

And if you are reading this text as a fairy tale or parable, dear reader, it is because our pilgrim, no iconography would have allowed it. That is why I had to borrow his language and speak through it, when pilgrims bloom, reminding us of the true value of poetry.

The event in the packed hall felt like a grand celebration. Poets, writers, musicians, and journalists came together on World Poetry Day for an evening meant to remind us that poetry is not merely a pleasure, but above all a bridge connecting art, life, and our personal journeys.

In many of your collections, memory appears as a central axis. What is memory to you?

You know very well that, if we are able to manage, to a certain degree, our relationships with others, or the feelings that arise within us through these relationships, memory, for any human being—even for one who has lived a life not at all intense acquires dimensions that are difficult, if not impossible, to manage. To such an extent that one might say memory acquires an autonomous presence, so that precisely because of its uncontrollable nature, in regard to the moment it emerges within us, it is transformed into a driving, creative force—perhaps the most decisive among those available to human beings. Therefore, any attempt to “classify” it so that it may be characterized as a “place of return,” or a “springboard,” or a “voyage toward the future,” rather weakens it, since ultimately it can only be understood as a synthesis of these very essential



Vaggelis Chronis (left) with Stavros Xarchakos, at an event for World Poetry Day in Ianos bookstore, March 21, 2026.

Vangelis Chronis: Once Upon a Time...

...an evening of poetry, light and intellectual conversation

characteristics you mention, as well as many others.

Time also runs strongly through your poetry—at times as an ally, and at others as a force that transforms everything. How do you yourself converse with time?

Without any kind of arrogance, allow me to say—or rather to observe—that even if one were to confine oneself solely to the titles, to all the titles, of my individual poetry books, there would emerge, I would say, if not a vivid, then certainly a very intense sense of my relationship with time—the manner in which I converse with it. For example, I would mention not the poetry books *Symmachos Chronos* or *Neoi ston Adi*, as one might expect, since their titles refer directly—if I may use the term to a novel perception of time, but rather the book *Ta Agalmata kai oi Psyches*. Would it ever be possible to separate the notion of the “statue” and the notion of the “soul” from the notion of time, when both seem to

stabilize it, despite the terrifying fluidity that time itself possesses as a concept? It is, in any case, extremely strange, yet equally fascinating, that just as one may converse with time using such elevated notions as those of the “statue” and the “soul,” one may equally appropriate it and make it one’s own through words of far more limited scope, almost everyday in nature. I imagine—and hope—that this second version is perceived in my poems just as much as the one rendered through words of a purely intellectual order.

The body often appears in your poems as a bearer of experiences and emotions. Do you believe the body can function as a “second narrator” of life?

The “body” remains, under all conditions and in all eras, “the first narrator of life,” while the poet exists and can only exist as the translator of this narration, even if it has been produced through their own body. One might

say that our “body” produces, unbeknownst to us, stories, so that our need to understand them transforms us automatically into narrators of a story that acquires value precisely because, while it concerns ourselves, it may also concern all others. A wondrous conjunction of life and art, which has the additional advantage that art does not constitute merely a source of pleasure, but also a regulating factor of life itself.

Loneliness is another strong element in your work. What does it mean for you and your poetry?

To be honest, I accept the term “loneliness,” in relation to my poetry, because I recognize that the freedom to which the reader is entitled may lead them to conclusions that the poet himself did not have in mind when writing those particular poems. Therefore, if there exists a kind of loneliness—and fortunately it does—it concerns the time during which a poem is written—a time

that may be very long—or the time during which the poem is processed within the poet’s mind, a time without paper and pencil, which would be impossible to share with anyone else. A time that, even within the most devout atmosphere, could not exist as a confessed experience and therefore could not be transmitted. The success of a poem lies precisely in the moment when this non-transmissible time—through the immediate communication of two people—is revealed, in its full extent, to the reader across the poems.

In several of your poems, one can discern an element rooted in antiquity, whether in statues or historical figures. What does this relationship with antiquity mean to you?

Much has been said—and in many cases aptly—about both the knowledge of antiquity that characterizes my poems and the affinity for antiquity that distinguishes me as an individ-

ual. For one to attempt to analyze these two qualities, even as a Greek, would be like attempting to turn the self-evident into the incomprehensible. There is, however, one difference with regard to my poems. My relationship with antiquity is not so much characterized by a nostalgic return to our distant past, because the present seems to me (to us) unbearable or so trivial that it is not worth living. My relationship with the past is primarily connected to the prospects that this past creates for later centuries and, consequently, for our own time, so that the better we know it, the more we are able to broaden the purposes of our existence. We observe the notion of the “thread,” as you formulated it in your very first question, perpetuating itself beneficially in all areas of our lives, whether we strengthen this “thread” or attempt, in many ways that need not be enumerated, to weaken it.

Very often, when reading your poems, I have the sense that your poetic style is followed by an intense philosophical tone. Is poetry, ultimately, for you a means of self-knowledge?

In relation to the dense meaning implied in your question, I would like to say that the “philosophical tone” of my poems coincides in many respects with the “poetic style”; they are not two concepts in which one differs from the other. As you know very well, nothing in poetry happens “by design”; that is, an intention, however conscious, operates beyond our control in regard to its results. And woe betide if, despite this decisive “beyond our control” in poetry—which, as it varies, also determines a poet’s talent—poetry, as each of us writes it, did not also function as a condition of self-knowledge, something that no other “means,” among those devised by the human intellect, can secure to such a high degree.