

OYO's Hot Greek Odyssey: Bliss in Shades of Blue

By Barbara Stack

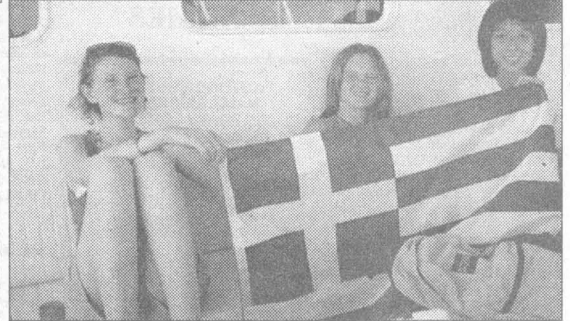
Departing from SFO June 19, passports in hand, the Oakland Youth Orchestra headed for their own "Greek Odyssey" this summer.

Even with a return trip to the East Bay to retrieve a forgotten retainer, musicians, instruments, and more, 77 OYO members toured, gave five concerts under the baton of Maestro Michael Morgan, and were delivered back to their families in fine shape and filled with pride, new understandings, and happy memories.

In order for us to meet our promise that, "everyone goes," the OYO support organization engaged in serious fundraising, raising \$53,572 in scholarships. Additional funds were raised for expenses for instrument shipping and rental, insurance, and music.

Under the leadership of OYO Board President Maurice Arnold, and with the help of Oakland Mayor Ron Delums and John Protopappas, the Oakland Port Commission, and many generous and hard working people of the Bay Area, we succeeded in meeting the challenge!

Oakland Youth Orchestra



Photos by Joerg Ahrens.

has a long tradition of International Tours, beginning in 1972, and including Scotland, Italy and Switzerland, the Caribbean, England, Jordan, Austria and Germany, Europe, Asia, Latin America and Cuba, Italy, and Australia and New Zealand in 2004. Tours are deeply educational-challenging, exciting, and a huge equalizer of life experience.

Even though a bass violin arrived with the neck unglued and the group's tuba didn't arrive at all, after reaching Athens, OYO flew to Crete in three separate groups.

The evening of June 21, the opening concert at St. Marcus Basilica in Heraklion was "standing-room-only" crowd with a standing ovation to welcome the orchestra. At this concert composer Elinor Armer also appeared to hear the performance of her wonderful "Call of the West," and to share in the ovations and great joy of enjoying OYO on Greek soil.

A second, smaller concert the next night at Teatro Kipou in Chania, capped a day of sightseeing, lectures, and a visit to the Arkadi Monastery. Delphi was the next concert venue, where once the concert was underway the town square filled with people. The mayor of Delphi welcomed the group.

Lectures on the Parthenon and Greek history, and disco

dancing in the evening, made it possible for the youth to experience Greek culture across the ages.

Concerts were given in the town square in Delphi where the orchestra was joined by the Philadelphia Boys Choir, in Athens at the American College and many rehearsals, meals, and tours later, OYO gave its final concert in Corinth at the Arhaeo Odion.

With a farewell dinner in Athens, the group departed with indelible impressions of the Greek people and their country, of the hard work of chaperones and staff, and enriched by their experiences.

Missing only a few cameras and lighter by many euros, OYO completed an artistically, culturally, and musically successful tour of Greece.