

AGAPW Honors Greek-American Oscar-Winning Actress Olympia Dukakis

By Constantine S. Sirigos
TNH Staff Writer

NEW YORK – Oscar and Golden Globe Award winning actress Olympia Dukakis had her breakthrough performance in the hit movie *Moonstruck* when she was in her 50s. That's when she became a household name – she got her star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame last year – but she never forgot where she came from, and she appreciates opportunities to share her experiences with young Greek-Americans.

On April 22 the guests of the Association of Greek American Professional Women (AGAPW) so enjoyed the company of the down-to-earth star that they did not want to leave. Dukakis was the featured speaker at AGAPW's Conversation with Women Leaders Series.

AGAPW's founder and president, Dr. Olga Alexakos, welcomed the guests and introduced the moderator, Stavroula Toska, who is currently producing a documentary focusing on the innocent women, sent to concentration camps during and after the Greek civil war. The endeavor was inspired by a book given to her by Dukakis, *Greek Women in Resistance* by Eleni Fournou.

During her frank exchange with Toska, Dukakis, a passionate Hellenic, proud of her mother's roots in Mani and her father's origins in Asia Minor via Lesvos, admitted, however, that there was a time in her youth when she distanced herself from the community.

Like many of the gifted women her generation, she did not like what she was hearing from priests and other Greeks about the role of women and the life she could expect to lead.

Her mild-mannered and well-educated father Constantine was a progressive soul and



Among the guests at the World Bar at Trump Plaza, across the street from the UN, were Vasilios Philippou, Cyprus' Consul General, Judge Harriet George, and Penelope Tsillas. RIGHT: The speakers at Conversation with Women Leaders presentation were: (L-R) Stavroula Toska, film maker, Olympia Dukakis and Olga Alexakos, founder and president of AGAPW.

was sympathetic, but she was also inspired by the Maniati fire of her mother Alexandra, whose family had modest origins – her relatives barely going beyond the 5th grade – but were very enterprising and successful in America.

"I was a combination of my parents, and I did not want to be defined the way other Greek women were defined...I saw what the boys were getting and what the girls were getting and I wanted nothing to do with it," she said.

Dukakis loved sports – she deeply appreciates her mother making her the fencing suit they could not afford to buy – which provided an outlet for the competitiveness that is critical for an actor. "I wanted to win. Winning was not a bad word for me."

As soon as Dukakis enters a

room, people's immediate impression is that they are in the presence of a winner, and someone who cares, qualities reflected in her Yugoslav-American husband, Louis Zorich. Through the ups and downs of Dukakis's long career in film and theater – her BS from Boston University was in physical therapy – he provided moral support.

Born and raised in Lowell, MA, she embraced New York as soon as she arrived. Her first roommate was actress Linda Lavin.

After she and Zorich had three children, they moved to New Jersey, where they co-founded the Whole Theatre Company in Montclair. The pair is lauded as master co-interpreters of Anton Chekhov's plays.

Dukakis is a talented charac-



ter actress who has portrayed women of many ethnic groups, but when she once asked *Moonstruck's* director, Norman Jewison, who first saw her in Mike Nichols production of *Social Security*, why he picked her to be Cher's mother, and he said it was for her timing. Timing was of the essence in the classic film

comedy.

Toska asked Dukakis what she looked for when choosing roles. "I want a character that starts somewhere, goes through something, and goes somewhere," she said. She quickly quipped with a smile, "unless they offer a lot of money."

TNH asked the actress who

is also a devotee of poet Constantine Cavafy if it is the journey that intrigues her, ala his beloved poem *Ithaka*, and she replied: "Yes!"

During the Q & A Dukakis was asked if she would welcome film and stage roles that help promote Greece and "tell the story of Greece," and what it is going through. She responded without hesitation: "Sure! - if someone comes up with it."

Dukakis shared her biggest concern about modern theater, the tendency to make the play all about the director's vision. "Young actors stand around waiting to be told what to do," she bemoaned, adding that they are discouraged from even speaking with the authors. "I've been a director, so I shoot off my mouth once in a while," she said.

When the topic of the lack of movie roles for older women came up, she was pragmatic, noting that the most important demographic for movie theater attendance is young men. "It's not that Hollywood does not care about women, it's that they care about money."

She spends a lot of time thinking about social issues, however. An ardent liberal and Democrat, Dukakis is a strong supporter of women's rights and environment causes. She is very close to her cousin Michael Dukakis, and is still amazed that 1988 was the year he won the Democratic presidential nomination and she gained her Oscar for *Moonstruck*.

Her long list of achievements prompted the question of what she still looks forward to doing. "I've never jumped out of an airplane!"

Among the advice she offered to the women, and the handful of men present, is to take time to read plays. "Pick a playwright, sit down and read all his plays."

Tax Lien on Old St. Nicholas Site is Reportedly Resolved

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noted that construction vehicles are already using the structure.

Per the agreement between the PA and the Church (St. Nicholas and the Archdiocese of America), the NY-NJ agency has already built and is paying for the \$20 million platform above the VSC. The Church is responsible for the construction and costs of the sanctuary.

Other important issues have been resolved or are on the verge of resolution, Demos said, including obtaining all the relevant permits.

The Turner Construction Company has been hired as the general contractor after their construction manager, Gorton & Partners, solicited bids from three or four builders and Demos said that Turner is now in the process of receiving bids from the sub-contractors.

Once all the contracts are signed, the architects will pro-

duce the drawings from which the contractors will work.

Nicholas P. Koutsomitris, Principal of Koutsomitris Architects, PC, is the architect of record, and he is responsible for the overall project. Santiago Calatrava is the design architect. The latter will continue to work on the project since he is often on site for the completion of the PATH station which he also designed.

The Calatrava name guarantees press coverage, but not only for his spectacular creations. Weiss also noted that "as Post colleague Steve Cuozzo previously reported, the church has hired notoriously over-budget architect Santiago Calatrava to design the new church," and quoted Fr. Karloutsos that "I believe we have the appropriate team, and we are working harmoniously and responsibly."

Demos told TNH that Turner Construction and Koutsomitris, along with structural engineer

Emmanuel Velivasakis of international firm Thorton-Tomasetti, who has worked with Koutsomitris on the project for many years, will work to keep the project on time and under cost.

Demos said the team looks at the materials that will be used and if what is suggested, such as marble, costs too much, it will be replaced.

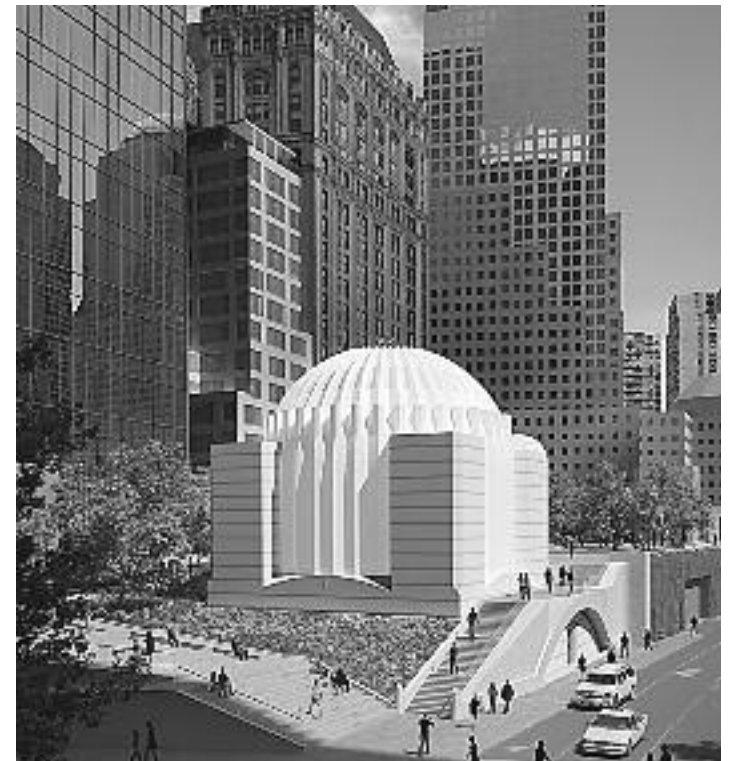
The construction will be governed by the rules of the Port Authority, which is an independent agency, and not under New York City law, according to Demos. "They have their own building code and we have to comply with that."

TNH has previously reported on another issue, the fact that 130 Liberty Street is owned not by the PA but by the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation (LMDC). The agreement to turn it over to the PA was not finalized when the PA and Church came to their final agreement in 2011, which was signed in

the presence of New York's Governor Andrew Cuomo.

Demos said the LMDC has now taken care of their part of the transfer and have given the PA the required 90 day notice. He said that there will soon be an official meeting to approve the transfer and the PA will then prepare the final paperwork for the Church in the coming weeks. "We have completed all our comments on all the documents and they are sitting with the Port Authority lawyers. I imagine they will close the LMDC matter first then come back to us."

TNH has also reported that under that agreement, the Port Authority will own the land and will lease it to the archdiocese for 99 years at a nominal \$1 per year, but the Archdiocese has the option to buy it outright, for a nominal price of \$1. It is expected that it will exercise that option when construction is completed.



Construction on the new Church of St. Nicholas designed by Santiago Calatrava may begin as early as July, 2014. A June blessing service for the site is now being discussed.

Wife and Sister of Ex-CIA Operative Kiriakou Share Experience with TNH

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She stepped aside, her maternal instincts causing her to clutch her eight week-old son as about 12 federal agents invaded the home the couple had built for their family in Arlington, VA, a pleasant Washington, DC suburb.

Their finances shattered by legal bills and Kiriakou's inability to earn an income, they are tenants in a modest house near the one they hope to save by renting it to others.

"They labeled every room with a number, started taking pictures and asked where John's electronics were. I pointed them in the direction of our home office and everyone scrambled upstairs."

Their other children were at school. "I remember being very thankful about that," she said. They were there for several hours and eventually hauled away her husband's computer, his iPad and his mother's computer.

When Heather protested that every single photo of their life together and of their family was on the computers, they said blithely, "oh you'll get it back one day." She did, but "only af-



The Federal Correctional Institution in Loretto, PA where, John Kiriakou has been imprisoned for the last 15 months for what he calls payback for his statements about waterboarding. As of May 1, John Kiriakou will be eligible to be transferred to a halfway house close to his wife and 5 children.

ter fighting and fighting and fighting."

After Kiriakou raced home that night, they didn't have to say a word, knowing from the looks on their faces that something terrible was going on.

Tina was listening quietly to the story of her brother's nightmare, but could not hold back any longer. "The sad thing is they don't just try to see if you've done something and then prosecute, they want to ruin you and crush you down to nothing," she said.

Then she turned to her sister-in-law and said, "By Heather's strong will alone, she has kept everything afloat...they had to go on welfare and they want to break you so hard that they want you just to give up from exhaustion."

"It's heartbreaking when you find out what our government

does to people." She and her husband, Spiro Moulis, who was with her in New York, have made the 12-hour drive from Manchester, NH to the prison twice. She bursts into tears of sadness "and of relief...that I could see with my own eyes that he is ok."

"Fortunately," Heather noted, "John has been trained to survive and adapt to very horrible environment. He says 'I've served my country in a lot worse places,' and Tina added "that's what he said from the beginning. He said 'don't worry about me; worry about my family, the kids, that's the saddest part. The kids are growing up without the father.'"

Kiriakou and his sister were born in Sharon, PA. They have a brother, Emmanuel, who lives in Los Angeles and their parents were educators. Heather is Kiri-



akou's second wife, and all together he has five children.

Heather also has a small town background, born and raised in Oxford, OH. She dreamed of going to Washington, DC to study foreign affairs, which she did as an undergraduate and graduate student at Georgetown's School of Foreign Service.

She also proudly served her country working for the U.S. Government.

DAY OF ACTION: MAY 9

Kiriakou is striving to be released to a halfway house near his wife and children as soon as

possible. He is first eligible to be released on May 1, 2014, but has been told it will happen no earlier than February 3, 2015, just three months before the end of his sentence.

Kiriakou had hoped for nine months and was promised six by the warden as part of a deal for him to stop publishing his Letters from Loretto, his communications that range from a description of life in prison to social commentary that have been published in newspapers and online.

There is "Day of Action" planned for May 9 on Capitol

to convey to Greek-Americans she said, "just how proud John is of his heritage and his hopes that people he doesn't even know will support him and his family as he gets through this and back on his feet. He has no doubts that as he moves forward to recover his life that he will make Greek-Americans proud."

People can also help Kiriakou's family financially. There are still crushing legal bills to be paid. Donors can visit defendjohnk.com, where money can be donated through the Government Account Project.

They can also buy his book *The Reluctant Spy*, that tells of his career in government service. "I will mail the book to them and John will send a personal letter of thanks and gratitude," Heather said.

Tina said that "John gets about 40 letters per week and writes back to every single person. Those letters are every bit as important as the donations or buying a book...the words of kindness inspire him to keep going and keep getting up every day."

She and her husband are active in the small Church of St. Nicholas in Manchester, and Tina told TNH of a lady in her 80s who attends the Greek Orthodox Church in Canonsburg, PA. "Every Sunday she lights a candle for John at church and sends him the bulletin. One of the hardest things for John in prison is that he doesn't get to go to church each Sunday, and he's always gone every Sunday. He is not allowed to have communion, or an icon. All these things have hurt him to the core."

Asked what she would like

CORRECTION

In last week's edition, page 9, in the article "National Hellenic Museum in Chicago Presents Raus: Get Outa Here! Play," it was incorrectly written that the play would be performed on "Sunday, Apr. 25." The correct date is Sunday, Apr. 27.