

**Hellenic Dance Festival**  
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## 24TH ANNUAL HELLENIC DANCE FESTIVAL CELEBRATED IN WINSTON-SALEM, NC

WINSTON-SALEM, N.C. - Over 3500 participants gathered Jan. 16-20 at the Benton Convention Center in Winston-Salem to attend the 24th Hellenic Dance Festival (HDF). The Metropolis of Atlanta-sponsored event hosted participants from across its Metropolis and beyond. Participants included 60 dance groups along with representatives from Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, Illinois, Maryland, New York, Nebraska, and Louisiana. The weekend was highlighted by the attendance and participation of His Eminence Metropolitan Sevastianos of Atlanta.

“Our event theme, ‘Agapi,’ was all-encompassing and felt truly aligned with the foundation of our program - love for our faith, love for our culture, and love for each other,” said Rev. Father Sampson Kasapakis, Hellenic Dance Festival Chairman. “We are grateful to Metropolitan Alexios for his vision in establishing our beautiful festival 25 years ago.”

HDF is organized by its Executive Committee and Management Team. The event aims to bring together Orthodox families through dance, music, and fellowship to perpetuate the rich Hellenic Orthodox tradition. The weekend theme “Agapi” was woven into an expanded offering of spiritual and cultural workshops that included instrument and vocal workshops, mental health talks, and practical advice about incorporating scripture into everyday life. Attendees also participated in a service project to benefit Feed My Starving Children, during which they packed over 103,000 meals to be distributed to children in need.

In addition to full days of competition on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, attendees participated in an opening ceremony on Thursday evening with remarks by Fr. Sampson and the blessings of His Eminence Metropolitan Sevastianos. An Agiasmos service was celebrated by clergy from around the Metropolis Atlanta to begin the weekend's festivities. On Sunday morning, the entire Metropolis family gathered to celebrate a Divine Liturgy. The weekend culminated on Sunday evening with a red carpet-themed awards ceremony, which was followed by socializing and dancing. Live music for the weekend's glendia was provided by folk musicians from across the U.S. as well as from Thessaloniki, Crete, and Ioannina, Greece. A special presentation highlighting the upcoming, first-ever HDF Directors' Odyssey trip to Greece included an announcement of the 17 scholarship recipients, who will travel to northern Greece in February to experience Apokries traditions of the area.

The event was enhanced by a prestigious panel of dance and costume judges from the U.S. and Greece representing decades of Greek folk dance research and teaching. At Sunday's awards banquet, medals were awarded for dance, choral performance, costumes, and folk expression in each of eight competitive categories. Platinum (first place) medal winners included: **Primary Category:** *Thriamvos*, Holy Trinity, Charlotte, North Carolina, **Advanced Primary Category:** *Eklektoi*, Holy Trinity, Charlotte, North Carolina, **Junior Category:** *Troupe Levendopaida*, St. George, Greenville, South Carolina, **Advanced Junior Category:** *Meraki*, St. George, Knoxville, Tennessee, **Intermediate Category:** *Oi Dopyoi*, Annunciation, Winston-Salem, North Carolina, **Advanced Intermediate Category:** *Enotita*, Sts. Constantine and Helen, Newport News, Virginia, **Senior Category:** *Afieroma*, St. Elizabeth the Wonderworker, Gainesville, Florida, **Advanced Senior Category:** *Bonentis*, St. George Society of the Carolinas. The annual Metropolitan Alexios Philotimo Award was given to the parish of Annunciation in Winston-Salem, and the Director's Award was presented to Staci Lagoutaris of St. John the Divine in Jacksonville, Florida. A special achievement award was given to John Kargiannis of Charlotte in recognition of his many years of technical support to the HDF and for building the HDF Portal.

The 25th Anniversary Hellenic Dance Festival will be held in New Orleans, Louisiana in 2026, and a regular program of workshops and HDFForum seminars will be held throughout 2025. Interested in learning more about HDF? Visit [www.HellenicDanceFestival.com](http://www.HellenicDanceFestival.com).

### ABOUT HDF

The Hellenic Dance Festival, based on the vision and dream of His Eminence Metropolitan Alexios, began in 2000. Traveling to various cities throughout the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Atlanta, the Hellenic Dance Festival has grown into a true family event. Held annually on MLK Jr. weekend, it allows participants to join together as brothers and sisters in Christ. Our religion, our Greek language, and our culture help us maintain our identity as Hellenes. The need for our communities to perpetuate our culture, along with the philosophy of ancient Greece and the Olympic spirit of "a healthy mind in a healthy body" were instrumental in the vision of His Eminence Metropolitan Alexios to establish the Hellenic Dance Festival.