

Miller remembers his roots

World famous director George Miller looks to help Greek church

Seventeen years ago, Hollywood director George Miller donated \$50,000 to help restore a Greek Orthodox church in Mitata, a small village on the Greek island of Kythera. Not only was the island the birthplace of his father James, it was where his family called home for generations before his father left for Australia at age 9.

In early January, the island was rocked by a tremor measuring 6.9 on the Richter scale. While it didn't completely destroy the church, the restorations, which were also funded by Sydney-siders Matina and Manuel Samios, were almost completely undone.

Miller – most famous for such films as the *Mad Max* trilogy, *Babe*, and the recently released animated mega-hit *Happy Feet* – said he was shocked by news of this unfortunate “act of God”.

“I’ve only seen pictures, but the church up there on the escarpment way up in the hills of Kythera is the centre of the town. It’s like the beacon of the town and the square around it,” he explained. “And the square, you’ve seen part of that slide away, and the church, it seems damaged beyond repair.”

“It’s very sad because it’s taken the heart of a village out, which has been there many centuries. The church has been there since the 19th century, I think. My father was born a few hundred metres from the church. And my great-great-grandfather was the founding priest, Papa Yianni.”

Although he and his siblings – twin John and younger brothers Chris and Bill – never visited Kythera all at the same time, Miller said his memories of the church are deeply connected with the relationship between the foursome and their father.

“The first thing he always did when he went back to



George Miller holds the Award for Animated Feature Film at the British Academy Awards (BAFTA). Photo: AP Photo/Matt Dunham.

the island is he went up to the church tower,” Miller remembered. “We all took him up to the bell tower and he rang the bells and that was what he always did when he went back to the island.”

Miller said his father, who served in the Australian Air Force before dying in June 1997, was a major inspiration behind his filmmaking success – as was his Greek heritage.

“I don’t think it’s any accident I’m a storyteller,” he

said. “What I found when I went back to that island was everyone’s a storyteller. Everyone sits around telling each other stories of the deep past as if it was yesterday. There were just stories that went back centuries.”

Miller lamented how these qualities were not evident in Australia’s younger culture, with the exception of its Aboriginal history. But like the Aborigines, Miller said the Greeks in Kythera demonstrated an understanding of

their land through storytelling. But the similarities didn’t end there.

“Rural Queensland was exactly like the summer on the island of Kythera,” Miller explained. “The same heat haze, the same cicadas, the same brown grass, the same intense light. I could never figure out why my father loved Queensland so much because he left [Greece] when he was a boy; he basically left his parents when he was a

nine-year-old boy.

“I realised what he’d done was replicate the kind of life he had on the island, in Chinchilla, Queensland. It was very, very familiar, just physically when I went back there [to Kythera] it reminded me so much of where we grew up.”

To help Miller restore the church to its former glory, Fairfax cartoonist Rocco Fazzari, who has a deep affinity with the island of Kythera, has donated 15 Lim-

ited Edition replicas of a cartoon entitled *George Miller Happy Feet* to generate funds for Ayia Triatha restoration.

Happy Feet recently edged out box-office juggernauts *Cars* and *Flushed Away* to win the 2006 BAFTA for best-animated feature film.

For more information on how you can get one of these drawings signed by both the artist and the world-famous director, visit www.kythera-family.net.

The beauty of poetry

ALIA PAPAGEORGIOU

POETRY and writing have been part of Eleftheria’s life since she was a mere twelve years old, now still at the tender age of 23 her poetry career seems to be taking off.

Chosen for two of her works in a collection named *The Best Poems & Poets of 2005* by the International Library of Poetry, she has entered 36 poems to the same organisation and continues to write daily, aspiring to a professional writing and editing course and future.

“I found the competition by chance and decided to

enter, and was surprised to be included in their book, I was also invited to the annual convention they hold in Las Vegas but would have to pay my own way there and that wasn’t possible at this time, I really do want to be a writer, it’s my lifelong passion, I’m always writing.”

Poetry is a unique form of expression that has survived the simplification of our language and the way we communicate, especially in the world of short text messages and emails that seem to be nurturing a new version of English.

Eleftheria sees no other

future for herself outside of writing. She has begun a creative writers course in Sandringham last week under the auspices of a fellow poetess, and her place of work allows her to be surrounded by books as she is employed by a library.

“I love writing and can see myself doing nothing else, I can’t wait to develop my skills and go on to novels, creative writing, every type possible,” she shared with *Neos Kosmos English Edition*.

Poetry (from the Greek *poiesis*, a “making” or “creating”) is a form of verbal art in which language is used for its aesthetic and evoca-

tive qualities in addition to its real meaning. Poetry may be written independently, as discrete poems, or may occur in conjunction with other arts, as in poetic drama, hymns or lyrics.

Poetry, and discussions of it, have a long history. Early attempts to define poetry, such as Aristotle’s *Poetics*, focused on the uses of speech in rhetoric, drama, song and comedy. Later attempts concentrated on features such as repetition and rhyme, and emphasised the aesthetics which distinguish poetry from prose. From the mid-20th century, poetry has sometimes been more

loosely defined as a fundamental creative act using language. Clearly poetry is not a simple phenomenon to define, especially given the existence of numerous examples of poetic prose and of prosaic works.

The example given here is one “I completed last year at 22, it’s the loneliness I felt walking the streets of Melbourne, sometimes you can be among so many people and still be alone,” shared the poetess.

*I no longer see beauty
Only hope in my heart
I walk the streets broken
Knowing it’s too late to start*

*They stop and stare
Watchin my insecurity
They will never know what’s going
On inside of me
The pain I feel and memories lost
Life’s going backwards
And I just can’t stop
Where did that beauty go?
Went so fast
Yet coming back so slow
Scared feeling things I already know
Where could I go
Now that I’m grown?
I see beauty no more*

Eleftheria