

WHO IS ELENI KELAKOS? A BIOGRAPHY

Six feet of presence, power and passion, nationally touring singer and songwriter, Eleni Kelakos, takes her live performance to heights rarely matched in the folk world— thanks to the combination of an extensive background as a professional actress, and a deep, and abiding love for the act of performing itself.

The daughter of a career foreign service officer, and self-described “Embassy Brat,” Eleni spent the first fifteen years of her life living and traveling throughout Europe and the Middle East-- an enriching, fascinating but peripatetic lifestyle. The one constant on which Eleni could rely as she moved from post to post, and country to country, was the stage. Bitten hard by the bug at 11, after singing solo in a variety show at summer camp in Israel, Eleni subsequently performed in school and community musicals, dramatic plays, choirs, and folk-rock bands. The stage became as comfortable as her living room, prompting her eventual choice to graduate with a double major in both Theatre and Semiotics from Brown University. For many years, Eleni worked as an actress in New York City and Los Angeles, in theatre (The Guthrie Theatre, La Mama ETC.), film (Bill and Ted’s Bogus Journey, The Suicide Club) and television (Beverly Hills 90210), developing further ease and command on stages both large and small. A guitarist and songwriter since her early teens, Eleni turned to her acoustic guitar for solace after her first marriage crumbled. A mad profusion of songs tumbled insistently out of her, and a new career was born.

Since her debut CD, I WILL FLY, was released in 1998 to excellent reviews and considerable airplay on folk, acoustic and women’s music stations across the nation, Eleni has moved seamlessly from acting to a touring career that runs the gamut from small, intimate concert series, to such large venues as the Kennedy Center and the Kerrville Folk Festival (where she was twice a finalist in the New Folk songwriting competition, in both 2000 and 2001). Her second CD, the all-acoustic TO THE BONE, made the lists of Top CDs/Top Songs/Top Artists compiled for the Folk DJ poll in 2000. About TO THE BONE, WFTM DJ, Rich Warren, wrote “[Kelakos sets an example for a generation of mature singer-songwriters with this superbly polished and executed recording.](#)” (Sing Out! Vol. 44, #4). Her third CD, WHERE I COME FROM, was released in early 2004.

Though her recorded work has received much airplay and commendation, it is on the live stage that Eleni truly fires on all cylinders. To coin a theatrical term, Eleni is a “triple threat:” **She sings**, lushly and commandingly, in a supple voice described by Music Reviews Quarterly as having “...[an almost shocking clarity, unlike any singer since Joan Baez](#)”, and that Independent Songwriter Magazine describes as “one of the most powerful and dynamic voices in the indie world today”; **She write**, “[songs of poetic grace and moral clarity](#)” (Santa Cruz Sentinel), and an unforgettable narrative spin, that have admitted her into the most prestigious of songwriting competitions; and **she performs**—like gangbusters—with punch and power. Her personal warmth and enthusiasm are contagious. Her way with a funny tale borders on stand-up. The stories she spins, leading from one well-crafted song into the next, are as captivating and entertaining as the songs themselves; and the songs hit the heart or the funny bone with unerring accuracy, often touching on troubling subject matter, like ageism, or gang violence, with a shattering, thought-provoking truthfulness. An evening with Eleni is an exhilarating, entertaining, intimate, cathartic experience, rich with tears and laughter. She leaves her audience filled with hope, and with a heightened awareness of the wonderful details that make us human, and that bind us all, joyously, one to the other.

Eleni’s charismatic and positive personality, and the thought-provoking nature of her songs, has made her a sought-after performer not only in concert series, festival and college settings, but within the healing arts and personal-growth communities. A strong believer in the power of personal choice and in the willingness to strive for the best that is within us, Eleni has created The Tallest Poppy project -- a one-woman theatre piece with music, with related interactive workshops and teaching tools based on the themes of self-empowerment and self-realization at the core of her popular song, “The Tallest Poppy.” The Tallest Poppy project has both an adult and teen/youth component, and is available for bookings in high schools, colleges, retreats and adult concert environments.

EEK! RECORDS, P.O. BOX 3827, ANN ARBOR, MI 48106-3827
E-MAIL: ELENI@ELENIKELAKOS.COM • 734-622-0522
WWW.ELENIKELAKOS.COM
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