

«*ZEFKIN*»

by  
Dimitris Arvanitis

*Documentary 75'*

*5 VIOLINS in IKARIA*



# «ZEFKIN»

## *Logline*

*Through the eyes and music of five violinists, the documentary follows the four seasons of Ikaria, exploring its landscapes, traditions, and festivals, and revealing how culture, community, and celebration sustain the islanders' remarkable longevity.*

«*ZEFKIN*»**W**hat is the purpose of this documentary?

The purpose of this documentary is to capture and celebrate the rich musical and cultural heritage of Ikaria, with a special focus on its violinists. Through the lives, stories, and music of six unique musicians, the film explores not only their personal journeys but also the broader traditions, mentality, and customs of the island.

By presenting the musicians across the four seasons, the documentary conveys the rhythms of Ikarian life—from the quiet melancholy of autumn to the wildness of winter, the anticipation of spring, and the exuberance of summer festivals. It aims to show how music is intertwined with daily life, social cohesion, and community celebration on the island.

A central theme is the unique relationship between space, festivity, and longevity. The Ikarian landscape—its mountains, ravines, and secluded villages—shapes not only daily life but also the ways in which communities gather to celebrate. Festivals and communal gatherings, accompanied by music, dance, and shared joy, foster social bonds and a sense of well-being, contributing to the remarkable longevity for which Ikaria is renowned.

The film also preserves the historical memory of Ikaria, highlighting its isolation, resilience, and unique culture, as told by its oldest living violinist, Lefteris “Skatzakas” Poulis. At the same time, it showcases the continuity and evolution of Ikarian music through younger generations and the diaspora.

Ultimately, the documentary seeks to offer audiences an immersive experience—through music, landscapes, festivals, and personal stories—revealing the essence of Ikaria and its people, and celebrating the timeless joy, creativity, pride, and vitality that define this singular island.

## *Key axes of the Script*



The documentary unfolds across the four seasons of the year. It begins with the melancholy of autumn, darkens in the wild Ikarian winter, softens with the expectation of spring, and culminates in the revelry of summer festivals.



The camera follows the five different personas of the violinists across the full spectrum of their activities, so that the human-centered axis may lead us to an understanding of their personalities, as well as the uniqueness radiated by the Ikarian mentality, customs, and traditions.



We have assigned each of our violinists five different landscapes that emphasize the uniqueness and complexity of the island. The choice was made according to their temperament, with the aim of filming six improvisational video clips. Each musician will compose an original violin piece for the chosen landscape. This same composition, once arranged, will later accompany the interview he gives.



The interviews of the five violinists will be part of the filming taking place throughout the year, so that their lives are gradually captured from autumn through summer, when their lives change with the festivals. The camera will follow the events and the people surrounding them, to ensure realism and highlight the essence of the artist.



## *Key axes of the Script*



The historical part, necessary due to the island's significant differences compared to the other Aegean islands, will have a presence in the documentary. The usual approach with references and archival photographs will be minimal and essential.



The musical part will be presented by the most authoritative connoisseur of Ikarian music, Vangelis Fampas. His many years of experience and studies on the music of Ikaria, along with his vast résumé, make him unique and irreplaceable in this subject.



Four elderly locals, as well as four young people, will also speak in between about the old and contemporary festivals and their experiences.



The great event that will close (or, depending on editing, perhaps open) the documentary is the biggest festival of Ikaria in Langada. There, we have arranged for all the violinists participating in the documentary to gather, and for the first time in Ikaria, to all play the Ikariotikos together—something that has never happened before.

## Where does the name "*Zevkin*" come from?»

In Ikaria, the word "*Zefkia*" carries with it more than just the meaning of a feast. It evokes the joy of gathering—whether small or grand—the laughter, the dancing, the sheer act of merrymaking. These feasts can stretch through the night, filled with local flavors, flowing wine, and music that never ceases.

On this island, good company and wine are found with ease. Often, the simplest welcome blossoms into an impromptu "*Zevki*".

The renowned "*Pramnian wine*" gives life to the *Zevki*, which may endure an entire day, or spill from dusk into dawn and beyond.

Ikarians call themselves "*Zevkalides*"—true merrymakers—when the *zevki* carries on until sunrise, as they drink slowly, sustaining the rhythm of celebration. They become revelers when joy pushes them past their limits. And yet, the beating heart of every Ikarian feast lies with the violin players—their bow on the strings guiding the night, breathing soul into the revelry.



# *Where does it take place?*

## *IKARIA*

It is one of the no well known (yet) islands of the Aegean.

I will not elaborate on the morphology of the land, which in any case is unique: mountainous, verdant, with no straight road longer than 100 meters, and in winter, you can find more than twenty waterfalls, two lakes, and anything else the soul desires.

I will speak mainly about the mentality of the inhabitants, which is unlike that of the other islands of the Aegean.

The reasons are many, but the most important is the history of isolation of this small, proud island.

Around the 16th century, when piracy in the Aegean was at its height, the Doges asked the inhabitants of Ikaria, for their protection, to move to Samos. The people refused. They left their villages, which were visible from the sea, and built new ones in inaccessible mountain ravines. The new houses were one-roofed with a stone wall in front to conceal them. They killed their dogs so they would not bark, learned to make charcoal so that no smoke from chimneys would be visible, and hid their livestock in stables.

Along with this, they changed their way of life. They would wake up (and still do) late in the morning, at the hour when the pirates returned to their lairs. They went to the fields in the afternoon and did housework during the night.

This played a decisive role in shaping a completely peculiar culture, which governs the customs, traditions, and mentality of the inhabitants. Out of this dark past, lasting for centuries, everyday life on the island became characterized by a need to preserve personal space—concealment, caution, and ultimately anxiety about the unpredictable



# IKARIA

Despite the sparse population and the rugged, mountainous terrain of the island, social cohesion was—and still is—strong. The inhabitants renewed their connections at two- and three-day festivals, through the shared sense of rhythm and Ikarian wine.

In 1912, Ikaria was liberated from the Turks and acquired its own flag and its own Republic. It was called the “Free State of Ikaria.” The inhabitants showed reluctance to unite with mother Greece, as isolationism was in their DNA. Thus, the Greek navy landed in Ikaria, ostensibly to celebrate the liberation of the island, but in reality to seize it and abolish the peculiar, Lilliputian Republic.

Ikaria was used as a place of exile, from Byzantine times up until after the Second World War (1938–1954), when new exiles arrived. The Ikarians supported them and ultimately benefited from the culture of the newcomers. This was aided by the timeless respect of the locals toward all the persecuted.

These conditions composed what is commonly called the “Classless Culture of the Ikarians.”

Their peculiar perception of social stratification remains unchanged even today and is visible to every traveler and scholar of this singular yet proud rock.

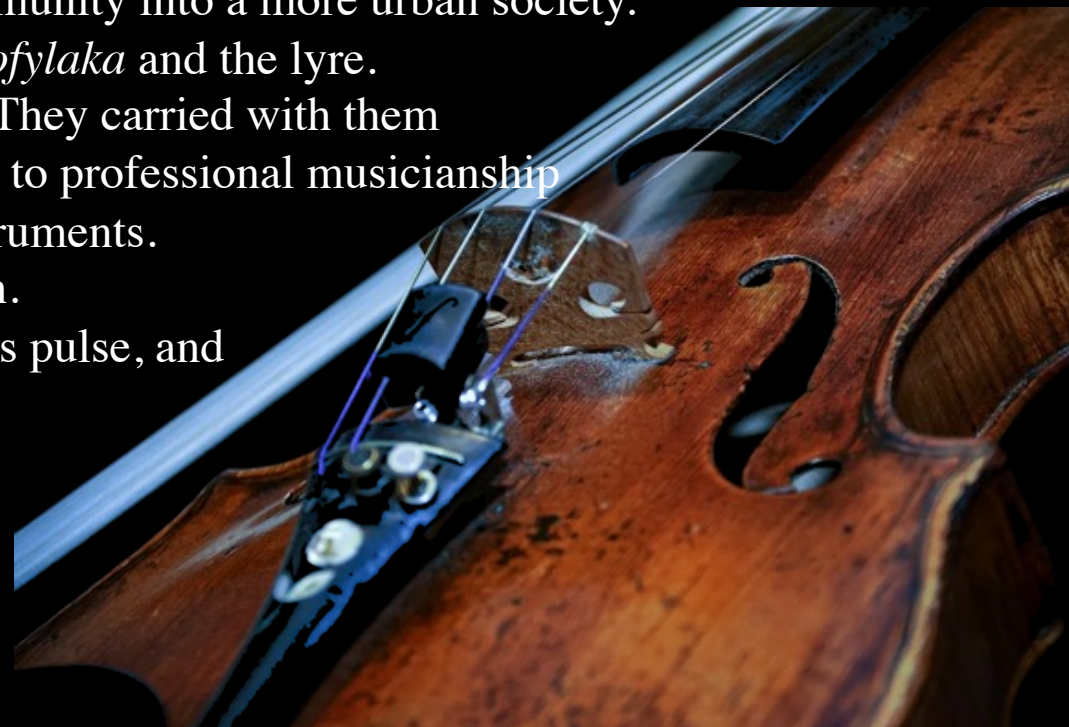




## *The violins in Ikaria*

The violin found its way into the traditional music of Ikaria through two gateways—Athens and America. In America, the Greek diaspora already knew the violin well, embracing it as an instrument of entertainment. One of them, Dimitris Glaros—known as “Jimmy”—returned to Ikaria in 1920. He brought with him not only the violin, but also the urban, Western repertoire that gradually began to replace the old traditions.

At that time, Ikaria was changing, shifting from an agrarian, pastoral community into a more urban society. The arrival of the violin came almost as a fashion, displacing the *tsapounofylaka* and the lyre. Later, as more locals returned from abroad, the transformation deepened. They carried with them gramophones and the popular music of the era. The passage from amateur to professional musicianship gave the violin an even stronger presence, elevating it above all other instruments. From the early 2000s, a new generation of violinists reshaped the tradition. Through their creativity, the repertoire was renewed, the dance regained its pulse, and the festivals took on fresh life—transforming the music itself, and above all the “*Ikariotikos*” dance, into something both timeless and new.



## *What role do the violinists play?*

*Are they a quiet, steady force—or masters who rouse the soul?*

*Naturally, they are both.*

*For a festival presupposes dance, and dance itself requires music. At the heart of Ikaria's orchestra stands the violin, leading the way.*

*Yet this documentary will take the reverse path: from the solitary violinist, to the ensemble, to the dance, and finally to the festival.*

*Through this unfolding journey—alive with spirit, attentive in its gaze, and always centered on the human presence—we reveal another element essential to longevity: the rhythm of dance and the enduring power of music.*



## *The violists*



- 1 Mimis Efstratoudakis: the violinist who stirs even the goats and sheep.
- 2 Nikos Kokhylas: the “dreamer” violinist, and more.
- 3 iannis Roussos: the “boatman of the Aegean” and his violins.
- 4 Nikos Fakaro: the “Ikariotikos” in all its glory.
- 5 Giannis Frangos: the “wandering” violinist.

## *Efstratoudakis Mimis*

[...] I was born in America in 1990, but when I was two and a half my parents returned to the island. It was here that I first heard the violin—at a festival. I was captivated. I begged my mother to buy me a violin so I could play. Instead, she did something greater: she sent me to study with Sosa Plakida.

I remained under her guidance for eight dreamlike years. At the same time, I never missed a festival, never missed a celebration. By the age of ten, I had already begun to find my own way.

[...] I still remember the first time I played at a festival—Karavostamo, 2003. Sweat poured down my face, not from fatigue but from nervousness. And then I saw the joy in the people's eyes. Their excitement swept away all fear. Since then, I play *with* the audience. I speak to them, and they to me, through music. Together, we sustain each other, playing for endless hours. In Ikaria, we often begin at nine in the evening and continue until eleven the next morning. Don't ask me how I manage to play non-stop for over ten hours—I still don't know.

[...] In my youth, I was a mischievous kid, but fate brought me to Magdalini, my wife. Everything changed for the better, and now I have two children: little Dimitrakis and my violin.

Like all Ikarians, we are versatile. I also work in livestock farming. If you look from Karavostamo up the slope, you'll see my little sheep. They know me and sense me. Sometimes I take my violin and play for them. Then they gather around and won't leave. What can I tell you... the best audience!





# *Koxilas Nikos*

[...] My name is Nikos Kokhylas, and I was born in Ikaria in 1987. I chose the violin because my cousins, uncles, and my parents' friends played, and most of all my father, who was a great merrymaker. At our house, you often heard instruments being played. Later, I found myself in Athens, and for six years I took lessons with Yiannis Zevgolis. I earned my first wage at 17, one summer in my village. Then I started playing at an Ikarian tavern in Piraeus. At 21, I returned to the island, and since then I have lived here. On this island, I can do everything I dreamed of. Like my father, I am a stonemason, and I take pride in my skill with stone. It is an art to match stone with the landscape, and the landscape with the stone. Sometimes, when I finish a stone wall or enclosure, I take the violin and play to it (laughs). On another island, they'd call me crazy, but in Ikaria everyone understands me. Now, about the violin. When I play, I give joy to the people, and they return it to me. When I play, I feel—the way they dance—their steps, and I shape the music to follow them, and for them to follow me.

[...] Where do I play? At feasts and festivals, like all violinists in Ikaria. But I prefer the smaller festivals and celebrations. In those, I feel closer to the people, and that immediacy fills me with energy. I have been lucky in many things in life, but my happiness was complete when I met and married Rita Sumbirats Torres, a woman full of vitality and joy, who is also my support. Together we had Avgerinos, whom we adore. This year, we baptized him properly as a little Ikarian, with a big festival.



# *Rousos Giannis*

I was born in the summer of 1954 in a village of Ikaria called Manganitis. [...] Until recently, there was no road, and until the war, the children used to shine light with mirrors at the ships, seeking communication with the outside world.

With my father playing the lyre at home, that was the first instrument I began with, around the age of six. I was eight when my uncle from America brought my father his first violin.

[...] I wanted to learn the violin well, but the old musicians—self-taught and playing without notes—did not reveal their art, so as not to lose their livelihood. Thus, I too am self-taught. Without tape recorders back then, I tried to play from memory what I had heard.

At ten, I began to play the bouzouki as well. And so, with violin and bouzouki, I went on for the next fifty years—until 2013, when I abandoned the bouzouki and stayed with my great love, the violin. The first time I played for an audience I was fifteen; now I am fifty-five, of which thirty-three years I have spent in America.

[...] I must have played at about 5,500 events. I had no children of my own, but my “other children”—violins, lyres, bouzoukia, and whatever else you can imagine—hang all around my music room. I love fishing. From my house, I gaze at the sea, and when I am at sea, I gaze at Ikaria. What can I tell you... a blessed place.



## *Fakaros Nikos*

I was born in Ikaria in 1978. My first musical experiences were at the island's festivals. At the age of twelve, I began to study the traditional violin. It was then that my late grandmother ordered a violin for me.

I studied at the Philippos Nakas Conservatory, where I took traditional violin lessons with Giorgos Marinakis as my teacher, and I graduated with the highest distinction, "Excellent." Afterwards, I attended specialized lessons in Advanced Theory (Special Harmony). I also studied violin with the late Giorgos Korros, Nikos Chatzopoulos, and Giannis Zevgolis.

A decisive role in my musical journey has been played by the traditional festivals of my homeland, in which I participate with my orchestra *Musicaroi*. I often travel abroad, particularly to America, where Ikarians of the diaspora organize remarkable musical evenings and cultural events.



## *Fraggos Giannis*

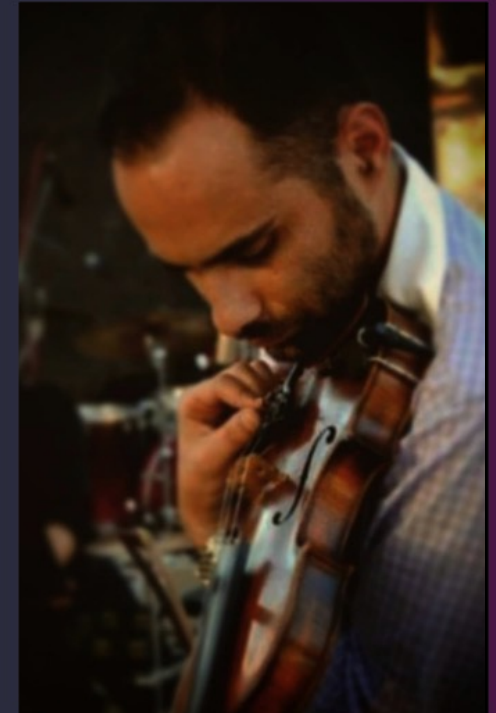
[...] I was born in Athens in 1977 but grew up in Ikaria. At the age of ten, I began to learn the violin, and my teacher was my father, who was self-taught. From 1987, I started playing at events and festivals in Ikaria and among the diaspora in America. In 1995, I graduated from high school and moved to Athens to study at the National Conservatory.

[...] I studied advanced theory, classical violin, and traditional violin. In 2002, I began my professional career as a permanent collaborator with Glykeria.

[...] Many people ask what the “Ikariotikos” dance is. The Ikariotikos is a living organism that springs from tradition but continues to change and renew itself. After all, anything that does not renew itself dies.

If you ask me what my hobby is, I will say traveling. All my life I have traveled—I have been to America, Europe, countries of the East... many journeys.

[...] I believe strongly in love! A person must travel, fall in love, love, and be passionate (\*meraklis\*) in whatever they do!





## SPEAKERS ... (some of them)

### *Vagelis Fabas*

He has collaborated in many documentaries, films, and cultural events concerning Ikaria, and especially its music.

His critical eye and deep historical knowledge of the music of Ikaria make him indispensable also as a speaker, as he will help the audience penetrate the secret world woven by the notes of the violins of Ikaria.



### *Pantelis Vroutos*

Nobody knows better than him how the festivals were after the war. His historical references will broaden the perspective between yesterday and today—a figure who will surely captivate the audience.

We will also have a discussion about longevity in relation to space, entertainment, and the festival.



## SPEAKERS

*Lefteris Poulis*

“Skatzakas” is a living legend on the island and knows better than anyone else the historical course of violinists in Ikaria. He is proposed as the speaker who will develop the historical aspect.

“My name is Lefteris Poulis, and they call me ‘Skatzakas’ —that is how people know me. I was born in Mandria, Ikaria, in 1949. I come from a refugee family, and my wife is from Mandria. I have lived all my years here in Ikaria, though not always, as I often left for work—or rather, for the work of a violinist. From a young age, I was an orphan. My grandmother, who was a teacher in Frantato, took me in. When I was ten, my aunt bought me a violin, and that is how I started.

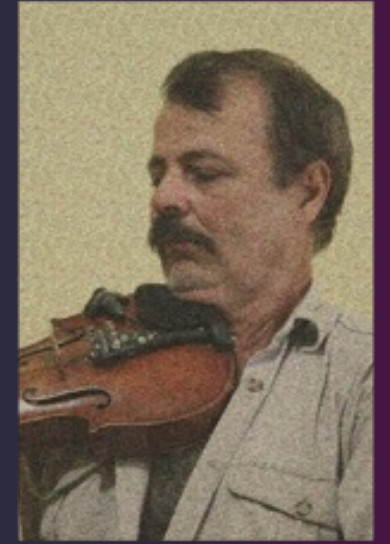
[...] My father, my grandfathers, and my uncles were all musicians, and so too will be my children and grandchildren.”

At the age of fifteen, I began playing at festivals, entirely self-taught. Later, when I went to Athens, I sat with other musicians and learned what I needed to know.

But in those old days, money was scarce, and I would take my wife with me in the band, and she played the *laouto*. Later, when we started a family, well, then it was no longer possible, and I left her at home.

I have done all kinds of work in my life, but my main occupation has always been music. I have worked in Stamos, in Fournoi, in Mykonos, in Syros, in Italy, and I have even been to Turkey. I have also traveled to various places in America.

I know how to lead the crowd and make them have a good time. As soon as I take my bow to play the Ikariotikos, everyone rises up to dance.



# the REVELERS

The unforgettable, unique personalities, without whom the festival would lose all meaning.

## DIAMANTIS



The botanist. Of unknown age, at the Arethousa festival no one takes to the dance floor until he begins—out of respect alone.

## ELENI



“The Salonikian” is known for her custom-made jewelry, but at the festivals she is famous for her tireless dancing and revelry.

## LOY



If there is anyone who has made a standing date with the festivals and has never missed a single one, it is the one and only Lou.

## Creative team



**DIRECTOR:** Dimitris Arvanitis

He began his film career in 1973. He has directed 5 feature films, 6 short films, 250 television documentaries, 1,286 dramatized television episodes, 24 industrial documentaries, and 21 events. He has received 12 awards at major international and domestic festivals, 5 of which were for documentaries.

**CV:** :<https://dportproductions.com/assets/pdf/arvanitis-CV.pdf>



# Creative team

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY: Katerina Maragoudaki

One of the most experienced Directors of Photography in Greece, with international studies and career. She has worked on numerous feature and short films, television series, documentaries, theatre videos, and commercials. She has designed the lighting for more than fifty dramatic, dance, and music performances in Greece and abroad.

Link:

*link:*



**ΜΟΥΣΙΚΟΣ ΣΥΜΒΟΥΛΟΣ: Βαγγέλης Φάμπας**

He loves Ikaria and for many years has organized the cultural dialogue festival \*‘‘Ikaros’’\*.

He has collaborated on many documentaries, films, and cultural events related to Ikaria, and especially its music.

He studied at the National Conservatory of Athens, MA at Copland School of Music, Queens College, CUNY, Graduate School & University Center CUNY, and DMA at the State University of New York at Stony Brook. Since 1980, he has been composing music for theatre and cinema. In New York, where he lived for 16 years, he collaborated with PBS, CBS, BBC, and ZDF. In Greece, he worked with the National Theatre of Northern Greece, the Cyprus Theatre Organization, various municipal theatres, and independent theatre groups. He has composed music

*link:*



# Producer

The logo for d-port PRODUCTIONS. The text 'd-port' is in a white, lowercase, sans-serif font, with a purple circle around the 'o'. Below it, the word 'PRODUCTIONS' is in a smaller, white, uppercase, sans-serif font.

d-port  
PRODUCTIONS

## D-PORT PRODUCTIONS

Founded and operating continuously for the past 32 years, with numerous successful productions and co-productions to its credit. It has 500 sq.m. of offices, 6 editing suites, and 2 fully equipped mobile filming units with state-of-the-art technology. It also owns professional lighting and grip equipment, transport trucks for technical gear, and auxiliary equipment for shoots.

In recent years, it has expanded into other “green” fields, producing high-quality organic olive oil and developing innovative photovoltaic parks.

*link:* <https://dportproductions.com>

IN PRODUCTION

Title: «ZEFKIN»  
Ner of episodes: 1  
Location: Ikaria  
Genre : Documantery  
Duration: 75'  
Format: HD 4k

### PRODUCTION SCHEDULE

DEVELOPMENT/ IN PRODUCTION: 1/3/ 2023

PRE-PRODUCTION: 7 /9/ 2023

SHOOTING SCHEDULE: six weeks between 9/12/ 2023 ~ 20/12/2025

EDITING- sound / image post-prod. : 20/12/2025 ~ 20/6/2026

IN PRODUCTION

Title: «**ZEFKIN**»  
Ner of episodes: **1**  
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*Some footage from winter in Ikaria*

<https://youtu.be/-TxTaWUUK-Y>

<https://youtu.be/02Wdn1Situ4>

[https://youtu.be/b6Cy\\_gYEguk](https://youtu.be/b6Cy_gYEguk)

<https://youtu.be/ZDhXC9m512M>

<https://youtu.be/4jJZBsFNI5Q>



# The **V**iolinists and the **L**andscapes



*5 VIOLINS in IKARIA*

«**ZEFKIN**»



## IKARIA

It resembles a landscape taken from a film.

Yet artificial intelligence has not had a hand in it.

A crew from *\*Game of Thrones\** came to Ikaria and filmed its landscapes. They later used them as backgrounds.

The BBC has already produced two documentaries, and Netflix included it in the documentary entitled: *\*Longevity: The Secrets of the Blue Zones\**.





Photo Gallery





# Photo Gallery





KAI





Photo Gallery





# Photo Gallery

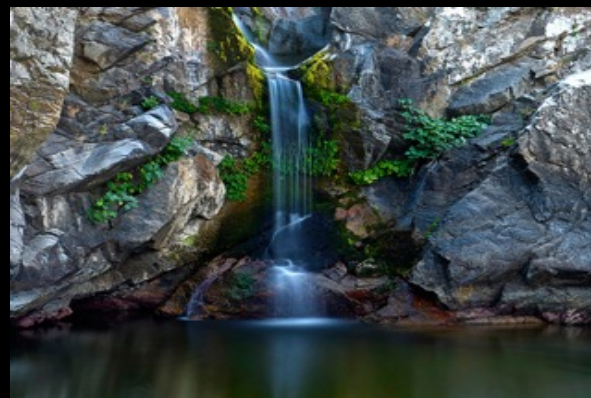




Photo Gallery





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*Documentary 75'*

## *5 VIOLINS in IKARIA*

