

# Caryatid Hairstyling Project brings beautifully braided tresses to *Odyssey* readers

By

On Tuesday afternoon, April 24, *The Blue Skirt* joined Grade VI and teachers from the English, Art and History Departments for a lecture and demonstration about hairstyles in ancient Greece based on the sculpted figures of six Maidens, known as Kore A, B, C, D, E, and F, who form columns that hold up the roof of the porch of a temple on the Acropolis called the Erechtheum.

Each Kore wears a long draped garment, stands on bended knee,



fish tail.

and carries on her head a procession basket, but what is most beautiful about each sculpture is the hair. It is long and thick, curled

**Young girls perhaps wore these hairstyles more than 2,000 years ago.**

and braided in all sorts of different ways, so that many rippling patterns are formed at once.

Professor Katherine Schwab, who teaches Art History at Fairfield University in Connecticut, wondered whether the thickness and elaborate arrangement of the hair



A Caryatid's fish tail.

of these sculptures was simply to make the neck area of the columns heavy enough to hold up the roof of the temple, or whether the hairstyles reflected how young girls of noble families actually wore their hair on special days. The hairstyles would clearly have taken hours to arrange. Professor Schwab reasoned that if those hairstyles could be copied on girls today, then we might see how young girls of about fourteen or fifteen actually wore their hair more than two thousand years ago.

What Professor Schwab then did was remarkable. She assembled six of her students with long hair and took them to the best local hairstylist she knew in Fairfield, Milexy Torres. From photographs taken in Athens, Milexy Torres recreated corkscrew curls and thick fish braids on the Fairfield



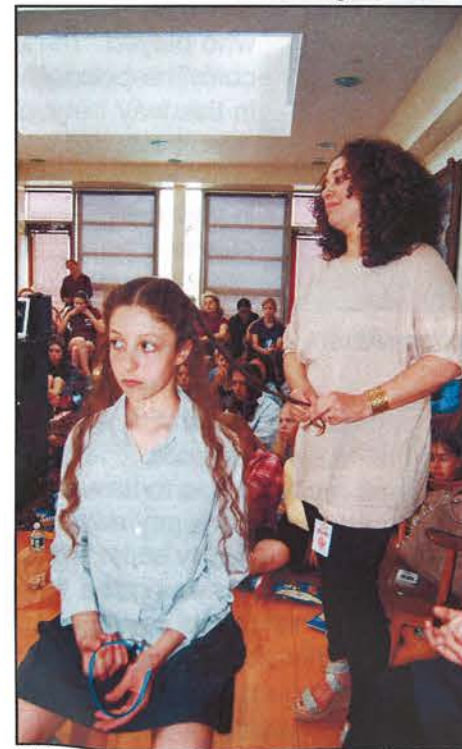
fish tail.

students and Professor Schwab made a film of the project.

Helaine Smith of the Brearley English Department heard Professor Schwab lecture at Columbia two years ago and asked whether she and Milexy might come to Brearley this spring to show the VI's, who are reading *The Odyssey*, what Homer must have meant when speaking of women, girls and goddesses "of the beautifully braided tresses."

So, at 12:20 on Tuesday, April 24, the entire sixth grade assembled in 12G and watched in fascination as Professor Schwab showed slides and Milexy selected two sixth graders.

and , whose hair she braided and set to look like that of a Kore. Both girls have



Milexy Torres creating curls

very long and curly or wavy hair, which Milexy said was the best for holding such styles. brown hair was formed into a large

**Both seemed to have stepped out of the ancient past.**

fishtail braid with corkscrew curls down the sides and thin braids circling the crown. thick black hair was also shaped into a fishtail but on either side of it were other braids that Milexy then wrapped around , head. Both girls looked just beautiful and seemed to have stepped out of the ancient past.

During Professor Schwab's talk and Milexy's demonstration the VI's asked lots of questions, both about ancient households and about who did the girls' hair and about how it was done. Milexy thought that there may have been

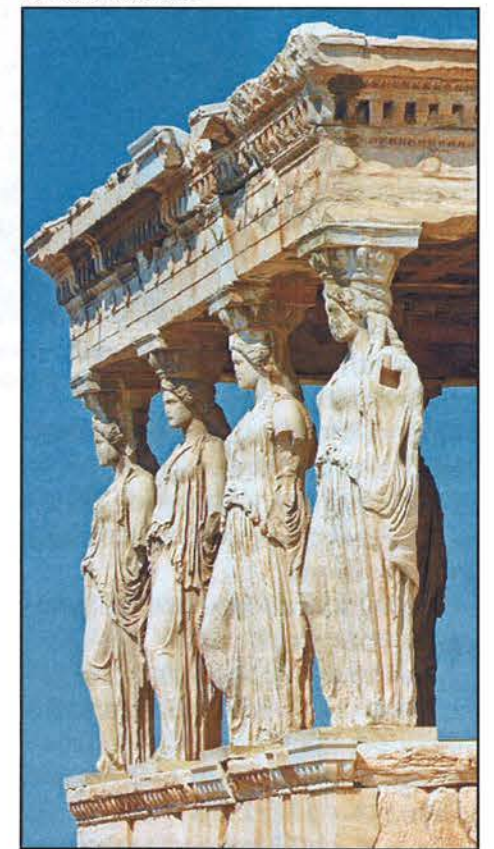


Professor Schwab.

some sort of curling irons heated in coals, and perhaps some sort of wax used as a fixative, the way we use hairspray. Someone asked what the ancient Greeks did without rubber bands, and Professor Schwab said that they may have used thin leather straps.

Professor Schwab showed photographs not only of the sculpted Maidens, but also of sculptures of male athletes and gods with braided hair. She also said that, on various occasions, included betrothal, a center braid was shaped and then cut as a ritual offering to a god.

It was a wonderful demonstration, as these photographs show, and made history come alive for us in a way that we had never experienced before.



The Erechtheum, showing four Maidens.