

## 9. NEW MUSIC IN GREECE

In modern Greece Orpheus tunes his lyre atonally. This scordatura was initiated by Nikos Skalkottas, a Greek disciple of Schoenberg, who died in 1949, at the age of forty-five. He left a large number of manuscripts, and a special Skalkottas Committee was organized in Athens to prepare his music for publication.

Skalkottas makes use of Schoenberg's method in an almost rhapsodic manner. His little piece for cello and piano, written shortly before his death and published under the title *Tender Melody*, is instructive in this respect. The cello part consists of fourteen consecutive statements of a songful theme of twelve different notes: F#, E, D, C#, C, B, G#, A, F, G, Eb, and Bb. The rhythm varies radically, and the register shifts freely from one octave to another. Individual notes of the basic series, and even sizable thematic fragments, are repeated, but the denominations of the tone-row never change. There is no transposition, no inversion, no retrograde motion. The piano accompaniment traces a twelve-tone row of three mutually exclusive diminished seventh chords formed by symmetrically diverging and converging minor thirds. An incidental tone-row in the piano accompaniment is represented by three arpeggiated four-note figurations, and its elements enter an explicit tonal coda with a double pedalpoint on the tonic and dominant. *Tender Melody* is an example of a dodecaphonic way of writing a Romantic piece of music. On its pages Schumann seems to meet Grieg in a fine mist of chromatic vapors. But Schoenberg himself never demanded orthodoxy from his students, and he spoke warmly of Skalkottas as one of his most gifted students.

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The image of Schoenberg is much more clearly visible in another score of Skalkottas, his *Little Suite* for strings, written in 1942. In it he applies the method of composition with twelve tones to melodic formations that suggest modern Greek melorhythms, with their serpentine melismas and angular intervallic structures. Time and again, in the midst of this folksong atmosphere, there suddenly rises a Schoenbergian outcry, an eighth note paired with a quarter note of the same pitch, and followed by a despairing sigh escaping to a high note in decrescendo.

It is only natural that dodecaphony, being a Greek word and a Greek numerical concept, should have special fascination for modern Greek composers. Yet one of the most remarkable composers of modern Greece, Jani Christou, is not a follower of Schoenbergian precepts. He describes his *Metatropes* for orchestra (its English title is *Patterns and Permutations*) as written in a "meta-serial" idiom. "The music expresses the endless formation of patterns through various levels of experience," Christou writes, "while at the same time it reveals the urge to break up this merciless process."

Christou submitted *Metatropes* to the National Radio of Athens for a competition in 1962. It was selected for the finals, and after eleven rehearsals was recorded on tape. But the work was disqualified when the rumor spread that it had already been performed in America, thus breaking the *jus primae noctis* for the competition. The rumor was false. There was no American performance, but Christou's name was inadvertently (or maliciously, as Christou claims) disclosed, and since anonymity was essential, the score had to be withdrawn.

*Patterns and Permutations* finally was performed in Athens on March 11, 1963, and created a riot, a rare phenomenon in the annals of musical events in modern Greece. The reasons for displeasure on the part of the audience and some critics were familiar: the harshness of the music and the annoying abundance of percussive rhythms.

Quite different from *Patterns and Permutations* is Christou's set of six songs to poems of T. S. Eliot, composed for voice and piano in 1955, and arranged for mezzo-soprano and orchestra in 1957. This is a haunting score, partaking of cosmopolitan Romanticism and Viennese Expressionism, somewhere on the geodesic line between Mahler and Berg.

Christou's earlier work, a symphony, was first performed in London on April 29, 1951 under the direction of Alec Sherman, while the rest of the

program was taken up by Tchaikovsky. One newspaper review was headlined: “New Greek Work—a Protest against everything Tchaikovsky stands for.”

A still earlier work, *Phoenix Music* for orchestra, should be mentioned. It had a performance in London in 1950, one at the Maggio Fiorentino in 1951 conducted by Willy Ferrero, and several performances in Athens. The music is programmatic and “freely atonal,” but lacks discipline. Christou is “no longer fond of it,” and regards it as a “souvenir” of his early moods.

Among Christou’s current interests is theater music. His score for the *Prometheus Bound* of Aeschylus was performed at the Epidaurus Festival in the spring of 1963. In the same year he wrote background music for a television program sponsored by Esso Petroleum Co. and shown internationally on the home screen, with the poet Robert Graves as narrator. The television scenes were filmed at Delphi, and for its music Christou went back, as he puts it, to his “ancestral memories.” Some of this music is almost operatic in style, for Christou believes that “music and dancing were quite as important as the spoken parts” in ancient Greek tragedy. But, he carefully adds, he “did not attempt to imitate what might have been valid 2,500 years ago.”

Jani Christou was born in Heliopolis, Egypt, on January 9, 1926. His father was a Greek businessman, who did a lot of traveling with his family. Christou attended a British school in Alexandria. In 1945 he entered King’s College in Cambridge, where he studied philosophy. At the same time he took private music lessons with Hans Redlich in Letchworth. He obtained his M.A. Cantabrigiensis in philosophy (known in Cambridge as Moral Sciences). He is convinced that philosophical disciplines, especially logic (not Aristotelean logic, but symbolic logic of Bertrand Russell and linguistic logic of Ludwig Wittgenstein) helped him form his own musical style. In order to be “validly non-logical” he had to master the techniques of logic.

For a brief period Christou studied orchestration with Lavagnino in Italy; he also spent some time in Zurich, where he became interested in the psychological theories of Dr. Jung, mainly through his brother, a brilliant student of Jung, whose book *The Logos of the Soul* was published posthumously, after he was killed in an automobile accident.

Like Ulysses, Christou eventually returned to Greece, married, and settled on his father’s estate on the island of Chios. It was in Chios,

Christou says, that he found himself in music, working in his own creative laboratory “like some medieval alchemist.” He continued to maintain a studio in Athens, and frequently traveled to Italy and Switzerland. “I have never held an official position in my life,” Christou writes, “and I never attended a conservatory. I have no degrees in music, never had any orthodox musical training, and I consider myself mainly self-taught. I did try to attend music classes in Cambridge, but I could not stand the academic method of instruction.”

Christou’s personal idiom is unlike any other composer’s even though it is not absolutely original. The rhythmic canons, the ingenious displacement of natural accent, the subtle hammering on repeated notes, the fusion of incompatible instrumental colors, the complex but widely dispersed harmonies, the curiously meandering melodies gliding along an imaginary tangent, the sudden eruption of fanfare-like proclamations, all these traits of Christou’s music look and sound familiar, but their ensemble is unique. Perhaps his “medieval alchemy” led him inadvertently to the philosopher’s stone that transmutes the base metals of common devices into musical gold.

The name of Yorgo Sicilianos is known to American audiences through a performance of his First Symphony by Dimitri Mitropoulos with the New York Philharmonic on March 1, 1958. He was born in Athens on August 29, 1922 and studied music at the Athens Conservatory, graduating in 1951. He subsequently entered the Santa Cecilia Academy in Rome, where he was a student of Pizzetti. In 1955 he received a Fulbright Scholarship, which enabled him to study composition with Walter Piston at Harvard University, with Boris Blacher in Tanglewood, and with Vincent Persichetti at the Juilliard School of Music in New York. He then returned to Athens, where he became active at the Hellenic Broadcasting Institute. There are parallel developments between his early music and that of Jani Christou; both experienced the spell of expansive rhapsodic forms. But Sicilianos adopted a more severe neo-Classical idiom than Christou, and made a transition to more orthodox serial techniques. Chamber music is a natural form of expression for Sicilianos, but not for Christou. If Christou is the Greek Ives, then Sicilianos is the Greek Bartók. Sicilianos writes music of solid substance and polyphonic lucidity. His predilection for works of limited sonorities with an autonomous percussion section is a Bartókian trait. In this respect, his ballet *Tanagra*, for two pianos and percussion, is characteristic. After a performance in 1958, he arranged it

for full orchestra, a version that was first performed in Athens on February 5, 1962. This was followed by an extensive work in the same general style, *Synthesis*, scored for double string orchestra and percussion. It was successfully performed in Athens on November 26, 1962.

The list of works composed by Sicilianos during the fifteen years of his creative maturity is impressive. His first significant work, *The Revelation of the Fifth Seal*, a symphonic poem in a grand rhetorical, oratorical manner, was brought out in Athens on May 11, 1952. A performance of his Concerto for Orchestra took place in Athens in 1954. His three string quartets demonstrate his ability in modern polyphonic writing.

Sicilianos writes this about himself, using third person singular: "Sicilianos belongs to that group of musicians who believe in a renovation of Greek music and who, having freed themselves from the narrow folkloric tradition created by the former generation of Greek composers, are following contemporary musical trends with the conviction that the music of our time, as an artistic manifestation, has abandoned the framework of the so-called national school, and has acquired a more universal and more human character."

The "former generation of Greek composers," to which Sicilianos alludes, was bound to the Italian tradition. Its most outspoken representative was Manolis Kalomiris, the grand old man of Greek music, who wrote operas and symphonies in a fine Italian style. He died in 1962, and with him died the Greek dependence on Italian operatic models.

If the oldest generation of Greek composers gravitated towards Italy, their immediate successors turned their sights on Paris. Georges Poniridis, who was born in Constantinople in 1892, went to Paris to study with Vincent d'Indy, became completely Parisianized, and even published a collection of erotic poems in French. His music presents a fusion of Greek modalities with Impressionistic harmonies. Particularly interesting are his works of the latest period, in which he makes use of dodecahphonic structures in a tonal or bitonal context.

Petro Petridis, born in Asia Minor in 1892, had a brief moment of modified glory in the 1920s when some of his symphonic pieces had scattered performances in Europe. He studied with Albert Roussel in Paris and adopted a neo-Classical style of strong polyphonic texture. After he returned to Greece, he wrote a powerful oratorio and pieces in Greek folk modes. A man of cosmopolitan culture, a linguist (he can recite Homer in

the original for hours), Petridis finds himself unjustly suspended between two musical worlds, that of traditional Classicism and obsolescent modernism. But with a favorable shift in world esthetics, his music may yet enjoy a revival. It is good music, and there is no reason why it should not become more widely known.

Dimitri Levidis (1886–1951) lived most of his life in Paris, and was naturalized as a French citizen, esthetically as well as legally, for his music assimilated the technique of French Impressionism to the full. Also French-oriented was Emil Riadis (1890–1935), who had some lessons with Ravel, and wrote a number of pieces reflecting Ravel's influence.

Greek composers of the middle generation, chronologically encompassed within the 20th century, should be mentioned. Antiochos Evangelatos, born in 1904, is a distinguished pedagogue, as well as composer of a number of effective works in various genres. Theodore Karyotakis, born in 1903, was a student of Mitropoulos; he wrote music for the theater, some symphonic pieces, and choral works. Finally, the name of Dimitri Mitropoulos himself ought to be included among modern Greek composers, for he wrote a fine Debussyan opera and many sensitive songs.

With Skalkottas, the needle of the Hellenic musical compass shifted to the north, to Vienna. Several Greek composers of his generation experienced a similar change of orientation, starting out with stylized Greek dances and later adopting, integrally or partially, the dodecaphonic credo. Such was the case of Yiannis Papaioannou. He was born in Kavala on January 5, 1910. He studied at the Conservatory of Athens, and subsequently took lessons with Honegger in Paris. His early programmatic symphonic works—*Poem of the Forest* (1942), *Pygmalion* (1951), *Hellas* (1956)—followed the golden mean of acceptable modern music, but in his Fourth Symphony, composed in 1962, and in his Quartet for flute, clarinet, guitar, and cello, written in the same year, he asserts himself as a serial composer. In this music the intervallic scheme becomes angular, tonal connotations disappear, rhythmic figures branch out in asymmetrical patterns, and the instrumentation assumes a spastic character. Indeed, orthodox dodecaphony is here superseded by serialism rooted in the music of Webern.

A very active group of Greek composers born in the 1930s, to whom dodecaphony is pre-natal, and even obsolescent, is represented by the names of Yannis Ioannidis, Theodor Antoniou, and Stephanos Gazouleas.

Yannis Ioannidis was born in Athens on June 8, 1930. He studied organ and composition in Vienna. His early works—Piano Sonata (1959), String Quartet (1961), *Triptych* for orchestra (1962)—adhere to a greater or lesser extent to Schoenberg's practices. But his Duo for violin and piano, written in 1962, veers away from strict dodecaphony to free atonality, thus reversing the historical course of modern music. He explains this retreat by his conviction that "atonality, as a system of absolute equality and independence of all twelve tones, insuring an unlimited number of harmonic combinations, is self-sufficient."

Theodor Antoniou was born in Athens in 1935. He studied violin and composition there; in 1961 he went to Munich, where he continued his study at the Staatliche Hochschule für Musik. His music is serial but not necessarily atonal. In this respect, his Concertino for piano, strings, marimba, vibraphone, kettledrums, and other percussion instruments, is most unusual. It starts out with a supremely tonal interplay of the tonic, supertonic, and dominant in unison, in the plainest G major. The basic tone-row grows out of this figure by a simple additive process. The rhythm is organized serially at a different rate of distribution of stresses from that of the cumulative tone-row, so that each individual note of the theme is stressed as the tone-row is gradually integrated. There are three movements; in the second movement the process of serialization is intervallic, and in the third movement the rhythmic parameter is the prime thematic impulse. In his orchestral *Antitheses*, Antoniou applies a different technique to each of its three movements, and their titles suggest these contrasting styles: *Pedal-Melos*, *Lines-Spaces*, *Planes-Points*.

His *Epilogue*, written in 1963, is serially organized in most of its elements, and the score contains an aleatory episode in which the conductor gives only entrance cues, and the players improvise along prescribed notes, with the rhythms and octave positions free. The piece, to a text from *The Odyssey*, is scored for mezzo-soprano, speaker, oboe, horn, guitar, piano, double bass, and percussion.

Stephanos Gazouleas, born in Larissa in 1931, studied with Hanns Jelinek in Vienna, and acquired from him a thorough technique of twelve-tone composition. Esthetically, his main influence is the music of Anton Webern. His *Six Lyric Pieces* for flute and piano, written in 1962, are congenial imitations of Webern's poetic miniatures. His other works reflect an affinity with Skalkottas; of these, his *11 Aphorisms* for piano are modern evocations of Romantic moods.

An interesting attempt to organize ancient Greek melos according to modern serial ideas is made by Arghyris Kounadis in his orchestral work *Chorikon*. Kounadis was born of Greek parents in Constantinople on February 14, 1924. Having completed his primary musical education in Athens, he received a fellowship from the Greek government to continue his studies in Germany, where he became a student of Wolfgang Fortner. It was Fortner who conducted the first performance of *Chorikon*, with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, on May 15, 1962. The work is in four movements, with characteristic titles: *Melos*, *Strophe*, *Antistrophe*, and *Epilogue*. The thematic elements of the score are derived from a dodecahphonic series, which is articulated into two quasi-symmetrical tropes, covering, in its original form, the range of an augmented octave. The inner notes of each trope are permuted, generating two subsidiary tone-rows. The series appears in inversion and retrograde motion, and is integrated into the harmonic structure. In contrapuntal development Kounadis applies the principles of heterophony, which, according to his observation, underlies the melodic formations of modern Greek folksongs. Furthermore, he distinguishes three types of heterophony: canonic, i.e., diagonal; monophonic, i.e., linear; and harmonic, i.e., vertical.

Kounadis is a versatile composer. He writes theater music for performances of ancient Greek tragedies, using archaic modes, and instrumental works in an ultra-modern idiom. Of the latter, his *Triptychon* for flute and chamber orchestra (1964) is of importance. He also experiments in Webern-like instrumental sonorities, as exemplified by a trio for flute, viola, and guitar composed in 1958.

Among Greek modernists, the curious figure of Manos Hadzidakis stands apart. Curious, because he started out as a composer of witty modernistic piano pieces, but achieved fame as the author of the theme song for the Greek film, *The Children of Pireus*, released in France under the title *Jamais le dimanche*, and in America as *Never on Sunday*. Hadzidakis was born in Xanthi, Macedonia, on October 23, 1925, received academic education in Greece, and published, as his op. 1, a piano suite, under the title *For a Little White Seashell*. The second movement of this suite is named *Conversation with Serge Prokofiev*, and it catches the spirit of Prokofiev's polymodality very nicely.

It was inevitable that Greek music should have taken an Icarus-like flight into the ultimate dimension of space-time, proceeding on a stochastic course. Stochastic is the key word in the hyper-sophisticated



circles of musical innovators of the second half of the century. It denotes a variable function determined by random phenomena in time. In other words, stochastic music is aleatory. The prime apostle and protagonist of stochastic composition is Iannis Xenakis. He was born, of Greek parentage, in Braila, Rumania, on May 22, 1922, and studied engineering in Athens. Upon graduation, he joined the studio of Le Corbusier in Paris, and worked with him on architectural projects for twelve years. It was not until Xenakis was nearly thirty years old that he undertook serious musical studies. He enrolled in the class of Messiaen at the Paris Conservatory, and also took lessons with Honegger and Milhaud. Bypassing Schoenbergian dodecaphony and Webernian serialism, Xenakis began writing music according to the mathematical theories of sets and calculus of probability. The titles of his works indicate his preoccupation with scientific concepts. Thus, *Pithoprakta* for orchestra connotes the idea of “probable realization” (the first half of the word means probable in modern Greek, and the second half is obviously cognate with the word practical). *Pithoprakta* was first performed in Munich on March 8, 1957, and had an American performance at one of Leonard Bernstein’s avant-garde programs with the New York Philharmonic. The title of another work by Xenakis, *Achorripsis*, scored for twenty-one instruments, is derived from the word for sound in modern Greek and the plural of the word for jet. The music is then, according to Xenakis, a spray of sounds, a sonorous radiation, a stream of musical electrons.

In 1962 Xenakis wrote two pieces for the IBM 7090 electronic computer. He programmed the music specifying duration and density of “sound events,” leaving the parameters of pitch, velocity, and dynamics to the computer. The first piece is entitled *Morsima-Amorsima*, with an affix ST/4–1, 030762, which is deciphered as Stochastic Music for 4 Performers, No. 1, completed on the 3rd day of the 7th month of the year No. 62 in the present century. Its duration is calculated to be in the vicinity of ten minutes, but it can be stochastically expanded or contracted. The second piece is *Amorsima-Morsima*, and its affix is ST/10–2, 080262, which signifies Stochastic Music for 10 Performers, No. 2. According to the symbol, it was completed on the 8th day of the 2nd month of 1962, that is, earlier than No. 1. Both pieces were played for the first time at a rather memorable concert given at the Technological Institute of Athens on December 16, 1962, sponsored and financed by, of all people, Manos Hadzidakis, the composer of *Never on Sunday*. And it was conducted by

Lukas Foss, no mean aleatorist himself. For future archivists it should be noted that the official Greek program carries the wrong date, December 16, 1961, on its title page. Since the program states that the concert took place on the Day of the Lord (*kyriaki*) and since December 16, 1962 was a *Sunday*, and since many of the works played at this concert were composed in 1962, the error of the date of this computerized concert is patent.

For the 1963 Festival of Contemporary Music in Venice, Xenakis contributed a piece for two orchestras and two conductors, entitled *Stratégie*. The strategy consists in antiphonal wrestling. The conductors are given "parameters" of duration and intensity; strategic meetings are held at cadential fermatas, at the end of each of the nineteen divisions of the piece. The audience decides by acclamation which conductor and which orchestra overwhelmed which. The degree of vociferation of individual members of the audience enters as a stochastic factor. At its first performance on April 23, 1963, Bruno Maderna was an easy winner against his less known rival.

Stochastic music requires special symbolic notation, in which curves of probability point to the occurrence or non-occurrence of a sound event, and the thickness of terraced lines corresponds to the optimum loudness. This type of "optical notation" is now employed by probabilistic composers all over the world.

Several composers of the Greek avant-garde have settled, more or less permanently, in Germany. Of these, the name of Nikos Mamangakis is beginning to be known. He was born in Rethymnon, Crete, on March 3, 1929, and studied with Carl Orff and Harald Genzmer. In his music he adopts numerical sets as thematic complexes which determine the parameters of the entire composition. Because an arithmetical series can be infinitely varied, one such composition is unlike any other that has a different numerical matrix. *Monologue* for unaccompanied cello, which Mamangakis wrote in 1962, is based on the set of numbers 7, 5, 8, 9, 2, which determines the principal parameters, making the music unique.

George Tsouyopoulos was born in Athens on October 11, 1930. He studied with Hindemith in Zurich. In 1957 he settled in Munich, and joined the cosmopolitan avant-garde there. He strives to achieve a total organization of serializable elements, but he is circumspect about free improvisation. His *Music for Percussion*, composed in 1959, is serialized according to seven parameters: 1) spatial placement of sound, that is, pitch;

2) time structure of sound, that is, rhythm; 3) instrumental timbre; 4) dynamics in three levels, corresponding to forte, mezzo-forte, and piano; 5) sound density; 6) duration of pauses; 7) dodecaphonic linearity. The serial rows of these factors are not synchronous, so that multiple interpenetrations result. Tsouyopoulos emphasizes that the unfolding of each row may continue ad infinitum, and that there is therefore no concrete end of the work; nor, he adds as an afterthought, can there be any beginning, for the whole composition represents an event placed between two asymptotes. *Music for Percussion* contains 95 measures in all, but Tsouyopoulos puts the word “end” in quotation marks over measure 95, thus suggesting an open end and an indefinite continuation.

*Music for Percussion* represents the latest stage in the development of Tsouyopoulos. His earlier works are still safely neo-Classical, according to the tenets of Hindemith. In this style he wrote two string quartets, a Sinfonietta for eight instruments, and some vocal music. His *Sérenata* for voice, flute, viola, and guitar (1957) discloses Weberian traits.

Anestis Logothetis came to music through painting. He was born in Burgas, Bulgaria, of Greek parents, on October 27, 1921. He studied art in Greece and in Vienna, exhibited a series of “polymorphic graphs” in art galleries, and then used these drawings as symbolic musical notation. He states: “As a result of research, I came to the conclusion that appropriate graphic representations of sound can be used as psychological associations between the visual impression and its rendering in sound. Such graphs then become catalysts that release multiple transformations and combinations of actual sounds, providing a stimulus to performers to produce music.” He points out that, given such latitude of interpretation of his polymorphic graphs, there exists an infinity of possible integrations of the differential points and curves in “graphic music.”

The titles of his graphs are significant: Cycloid, Culmination, Coordination, Expansion-Contraction, Impulse (quantitative), Impulse (qualitative), Interpolation, Catalyzation, Parallax, Texture-Structure, Concatenation, Centrifugal.

George Leotsakos, born in Athens in 1935, studied oriental languages, and became interested in expressing the poetic brevity of Japanese Haiku verses in atonal music. His cycle of songs to the texts of Haiku poems, each of which has three lines and 17 syllables, is written in dissonant counterpoint, but the melorhythmic outline is as precise as the Japanese form itself.

The parallelism between the trends of new Greek music and modernistic developments elsewhere in the world is obvious, and parallel lines do meet in global geometry. But Greek composers strive to relate the abstract concepts of modern music to the modalities and the ethos of ancient Hellas. It is to be hoped that their stochastic asymptotes will lead them towards a fruitful synthesis of the new and the old, of the national and the cosmopolitan.

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