

Chapter 9

Chrēstou, Adamēs, Koukos: Greek Avant-garde Music During the Second Half of the 20th Century

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In this article I propose a comparative approach to the neo-Hellenic art music of the post-war period and I examine its resonance on the Balkan and European art music scene. This is critically presented through the paradigmatic cases of three contemporary Greek composers (Jannēs Chrēstou,¹ Michalēs Adamēs² and Periclēs Koukos),³ who adopted diverse music, stylistic and philosophical viewpoints.

The ideological confrontations between the two opposing sides of the Cold War polarity (the western and the eastern) represented a nodal point in the turn of cultural politics in almost all European countries after the end of the Second World War. This reformation involved both the artistic-creative and the educational-informative dimension of cultural politics. Within the circumstances of political propaganda international forces founded institutes in various countries that became systematically active in the field of fine arts and sciences. These organisations supported the interests of their donors and, among other activities, they provided scholarships for art studies abroad; they also set up several festivals, exhibitions, concerts and seminars and they actively participated in the cultural life of local communities.⁴

More particularly, during the first post-war years the base was laid for new, pioneering quests and experimentations in western art music. The extensive use of atonality in combination with the unavoidable transition to total serialism, the use of aleatory techniques, the birth of electronic and electro-acoustic music, along with the spread of music theatre and multimedia works produced innovative music morphemes within a web of music universalism. The abolition of tonality and the cessation of the Romantic and national schools movements resulted in the gradual overthrow of the hegemony of West-European music and the development of particular music dialects.⁵

During the same period the socio-political, economic and cultural situation in Greece was characterised by great fluidity, at least until the change of polity (from military junta to parliamentary democracy) in the middle of the 1970s. Political fermentations and cultural transformations allowed traditional Greek society to accept novel ideological norms and material preferences. The significant rise in the urban population along with the subsequent modifications in the structure of production, the change of consumer practices and thus of personal expectations, the boosting and thickening of political activities concerning formal institutions (state, public administration) and mass politics (parties, collective individuals, society of citizens) radically reformed the older Greek cultural values.⁶

In the case of contemporary Greek music from 1950s onwards, cultural renovation stimulated a vivid mobility both within Greece as well as abroad. Greek composers

participated, apprenticed and created within the frame of international art movements; they were keen on current developments and shaped modern tendencies through the fusion of indigenous (local or national) tradition with elements of western music culture.⁷ The composers' adjustability to the demands of progressive music creation was related to the fact that the innovations adopted by western pioneers included features that were very coherent to those of the Greek music tradition, such as the use of micro-intervals and modes, free or controlled improvisation, as well as various special techniques of vocal and instrumental performance (Rōmanou [Ρωμανού] 2000: 167–168).

The constitution of the National Orchestra of Thessalonica, the creation of the Third Programme of the Hellenic Radio Foundation, the enactment of the Athens Festival, and the establishment of the Odeon of Herodes Atticus as the central venue for concerts represented crucial developments that were related to the reinforcement of art music life in Greece.⁸ The charismatic composer Manos Chatzidakis established the Experimental Orchestra and developed a multiform activity in cultural affairs, emphasising music production and the promotion of the works of young composers. In 1962, a new institution was born in Athens, the “Manos Chatzidakis Composition Competition” of the Doxiadēs Technological Organisation. During this competition composers of contemporary avant-garde music were presented to the Greek public. Among them, one could discern the fascinating persona of Jannēs Chrēstou, who, until then, was living and working mainly abroad.

Born in Cairo in 1926 and coming from a wealthy family, Chrēstou was brought up in the cosmopolitan bourgeois environment of Alexandria in Egypt and stayed in close contact with the local elite. The composer's family and social environment, along with the fact that he spent his childhood and adolescence in a country with a long tradition in philosophy, had a dramatic effect upon his work.⁹ Initially, he attended the English College of Alexandria, while at the same time he took his first music lessons from Alexander Plotnikoff and Gina Bachauer. In 1945 he travelled to England to study philosophy and logic with Ludwig Wittgenstein and Bertrand Russell at the University of Cambridge.¹⁰ At the same time he was taught advanced music theory by Hans Ferdinand Redlich, former student of Alban Berg, while he frequently visited Italy to follow Vito Frazzi's classes of composition and Francesco Lavagnino's classes of orchestration and film music. Chrēstou considered himself as self-taught in the sense that he carried out most of his projects beyond his teachers' tutorship.

His brother's – Euangelos Chrēstou – attendance at the Zurich Institute and his encounter with Carl Jung's analytical psychology and alchemy drove the composer deeper into philosophical speculation and introspectiveness.¹¹ Euangelos was to him a personal mentor and spiritual guide; consequently, his death in a car accident in 1956 was a fact that haunted the composer during the rest of his life. This had a dramatic impact on both his temperament as much as on the field of his artistic activity. After this heavy loss, Jannē Chrēstou edited his brother's manuscripts and published them in one volume titled *The Logos of the Soul*. In the meantime, the composer returned to Egypt and married Thēresia (Sia) Chōremē, a young painter and friend of his since childhood.



Jannēs Chrēstou at the ancient theatre of Epidauros.

In 1960 he was forced to abandon Egypt due to political and financial changes, particularly in the field of industry. Chrēstou settled permanently in Greece, dividing his time between Athens and Chios. Despite his efforts to remain professionally independent and stay out of music events and shows, the public showed great appreciation of his work as well as of his charming personality. During the last decade of his life, his popularity spread rapidly. He was then working on the idea of creating a cultural complex, wherein it would be possible to host an international festival of contemporary music. Yet, the very night of his birthday, 8 January 1970, Chrēstou was killed in a car accident, just like his brother.¹²

Chrēstou's creation, according to the researcher Jannēs G. Papaioānnoū, falls into six subsequent stages: a) First Period (1948–1953), b) Second Period (1953–1958), c) Third Period (1959–1963) d) Fourth Period (1964–1966), e) Fifth Period (1966–1968) and f) Sixth Period (1968–1970) (Papaioannou 1970). Another division of his work into three lengthier periods is also possible: a) First Phase (1948–1958), b) Second Phase (1959–1964) and c) Third Phase (1965–1970), in the manner that Giōrgos Leōtsakos has suggested (Leotsakos 2009b). Both these suggestions accord with the psycho-philosophical route of Chrēstou's artistic mutation, persisting on the composer's greatest works and innovative theses.

Chrēstou's first composition, if one excludes the early juvenile works, is *Phoenix Music* for orchestra (1948–1949). This work is based on the so-called "Phoenix Principle" (birth – growth – climax – death – rebirth), which is a dynamic procedure of transforming a fundamental initial motif into the central core of the whole creation, referring undoubtedly to Egyptian beliefs. The inclination towards the use of small intervals (small second and

diminished third), the alternate use of music progressions and sonic collisions, the exclusion of any music development, together with the liberal structure of form – in this case, the symphonic poem – are elements that define the composer's style and characterise this work. Furthermore, the process of variations evident in *Phoenix Music* should be treated on an allegorical level; as Anna-Martine Lucciano explains, it “may no longer be regarded as a technique, but as a phenomenon. Thus, it no longer relates to the sound object itself but to the way in which this object is perceived” (Lucciano 2000: 4). Within the environment of free atonality, the short chromatic motif is constantly being transformed as a symbol of perpetual recreation of the mythical fowl and the renaissance of life.

The First Symphony (1949–1950) shares a lot in common with *Phoenix Music*, yet it communicates a more profound tragedy, a gradual complexity and a linear orchestral writing (Guarino 1955). In The First Symphony climax is not achieved through the increase of tension or thickness but rather through the mutation of the sentimental charge into looseness, as Charēs Vrontos likes to put it (Vrontos [Βρόντος] 1983: 75). To serve this purpose, Chrēstou uses Thomas Stearns Eliot's poem, *Eyes that Last I Saw in Tears*: a poem which is also included in his later collection, *Six T. S. Eliot Songs* (1955). This middle part introduces the piece with the human element through its vocal presence, and functions as a compositional bridge on the one hand and as an antithetic projection between the first and the last part on the other.¹³ Along with the above works, reference should be made to the *Latin Liturgy* (1951); this is a music interpretation of the sacred texts in their ceremonial sequence with influences of Stravinsky, which was later incorporated into the finale of his Second Symphony (1957–1958).

Chrēstou's *Patterns and Permutations* (1960) proved a landmark, as it reflects the composer's aesthetic turn and the establishment of a new route in his personal music system. Chrēstou names this special type of material organising “meta-serialism”. This term may be rendered as “beyond serialism”, since, although the twelve-tone series might be used as a starting point, the structure of the sonic phenomena is also based on further parameters that do not relate to serialism. In *Patterns and Permutations* the composer introduces a set of new terms while he also uses pre-existing ones in a different context: for instance the “permutations”, the “patterns” (simple and complex), the “isochrones”, the “mega-statement”, the “anti-patterns”, the “continuum” and so on. What is necessary to clarify at this point is that this method is not put forward as a normative form that needs to be coursed systematically; instead it functions as an outline of re-contemplation around the compositional morphemes and their dynamic traits, which serves the composer's music aspirations. The conception of the above idea offers Chrēstou the chance to work in a manner that is quick and technically flawless and which, at the same time, reveals the mysticism and spiritual-orientation of his inner world. The first performance of the work in 1963, by the Athens State Orchestra, took place in a rather triggered atmosphere under the threat of conflict between the supporters and the opponents of contemporary music. The oratorio *Tongues of Fire* (1964) summarises the characteristics of this “new system” putting particular emphasis on the asymmetric multi-rhythmic articulation of the voices being used.

Music for theatre in Chrēstou's work rightfully comprises a distinct section. His collaboration with Karolos Koun at the National Theatre of Greece was of significant importance in scoring for ancient Greek tragedy and comedy. *Prometheus Bound* (1963), *The Persians* (1965), *The Frogs* (1966) and *Oedipus Rex* (1969) belong to the last decade of the composer's life and affirm Chrēstou's beliefs on the performative texture of the ancient drama: through a climax of his psychological state the spectator is driven to the liminal state of catharsis. Chrēstou's theatre music relies upon the psychodynamic energy of ancient rites, the combination of particular rituals, as well as the sacramental experience of magic petitions. The use of concrete and electro-acoustic music, together with a reformation of the original theatrical texts, transfers the spectator directly to the thrill and the release of tension evident in the scenic action.

Experienced theatricality is inherent in Chrēstou's creation, even in works not designated as original music background in scene shows. This characteristic is particularly felt in the music of the composer's last productive decade and has resonance with his growing interest in life, and life after death – possibly as a result of his brother's early death. The works *Mysterion* (1965–1966), *Praxis for 12* (1966) and *Enantiodromia* (1965–1966) represent the different direction that his compositional expression takes as an osmotic procedure of merging music with other performing arts (with these being mainly acting and dance). Moreover, they function as an art manifesto of negation towards the inherited aesthetics by focusing on the liberating, participative and communicative nature of music (Lucciano 2000: 92).

On this basis one may come to conceive two of the central notions in Jannē Chrēstou's music: "Praxis" and "Metapraxis". Thus, according to the composer, "Praxis" represents a music action belonging to a particular rationale, whereas "Metapraxis" symbolises an action that opposes this logic or surpasses it. The one suggests, yet, concurrently undermines the other, threatening the very meaning of the medium itself. The turn in Chrēstou's approach manifests itself through the transition from the model of "Phoenix Principle" to the "Lunar Prototype" and the acceptance of the possibility of "Eclipse" being the dynamics of fortuity, of the unexpected. The three different forms of notating his music conception (synthetic, proportionate and measured), which the composer formulates and explicates, include plentiful audiovisual and spatiotemporal elements, concerning the constituents of the sonic events. In many of Chrēstou's works a combination of notational systems is evident, so that both extra-musical and para-musical factors are ascribed in the most complete possible way.

The rather eccentric work *The Strychnine Lady* (1967) departs philosophically from Carl Jung's book *Psychology and Alchemy* and was influenced by a dream that the composer had. The *Epicycle* (1968), on the other hand, sets the music background for the screening of a film within the scope of the Greek Week of Contemporary Music. These pieces unfold and establish former compositional techniques, like happenings, immeasurable controlled improvisation and mixed media that extend to the point of chaotic self-decomposition. *Anaparastaseis* [Re-enactments], a cycle of 30–40 works, refers to the event of ephemeral creation of performances. Of these numerous compositions, only *Anaparastasis I*, *Astronkatoidanykteronomigyryn*

(1968)¹⁴ and *Anaparastasis III, The Pianist* (1968) were performed during Chrēstou's life time.¹⁵ The rest exist in the form of unfinished, synoptic sketches. They are extraordinary musical psycho-dramatic forms, where the relationship between the performers and the audience gain particular healing gravity, whereas music is restrained to a prudent expression. The composer's lattermost conception happens to be the operatic adaptation of the Aeschylus' trilogy *Oresteia*. In this work, which remained incomplete, Chrēstou deals with mythical archetypes, paralleling them with the feeling of panic that man bears in his failing to solve the matter of existence.

Through a comparative approach to Jannē Chrēstou and Iannis Xenakis' works, Giōrgos Zervos mentions characteristically that "even in his most 'anti-musical' moments, with these being the moments of 'metapraxis' of the instrumental works and the 'anaparastaseis', Chrēstou remains deeply musical. [...] On Chrēstou's romantic, expressionistic, introvert and metaphysical mood, Xenakis juxtaposes an anti-romantic mood and a philosophical rationalism". And he continues: "Chrēstou's *Anaparastaseis* differ from Xenakis' *Polytopes* in the sense that they comprise more of a genre of primordial rituals, during which what is released is the most profound and violent subconscious powers of man, rather than an effort to revive a certain mode of life and expression of the ancient Greek society or a new Gesamtkunstwerk (total work of art) referring to a future or utopian society" (Zervos [Ζερβός] 1999: 145– 146).

For a deeper understanding of Chrēstou's work, it is really important to pinpoint that the composer also bears the substance of a metaphysical thinker, expressing, in a large degree, the speculations of the 1950s and the 1960s. His music, seen as direct emanation of his inner restlessness, is presented as personal intention, a consistent revelation and a gradual embodiment of his philosophical theories.¹⁶ The antitheses, the confrontations and the ambiguities constitute basic characteristics of his music. The world of the primitive and the magical co-exists with that of contemporary massiveness and collective hysteria. Spiritual ecstasy, proto-performance and mystical rituals are combined with modern commonalities. The logical is correlated with the paralogical, the illogical and the alogical, while ritual is associated with representation. Also, everyday life meets with its excess and ordinariness is combined with exceptionality. The East is conceived through the West, whilst the past and the future are conceived as the "other" expressions of the present, and vice-versa.

The issues concerning the relation between eastern and western music tradition, and their assimilation into new music sets, are the central artistic and ontological keystones of Michalēs Adamēs' work. Adamēs was born in Piraeus and since the age of eleven he became systematically involved in both Byzantine and Western European classical theory and practice at the Athens and Piraeus Conservatories. Initially, he acquired the certificates for Byzantine music and chanting, while later he advanced to counterpoint, fugue and composition as a student of Jannēs A. Papaiōannou at the Hellenic Conservatory. During the period of 1949 to 1954 Adamēs attended the Department of Theology, at the University of Athens, while being actively involved in choir conducting. The years 1961 to 1965 proved of great significance for the young composer, since he went to Brandeis University of Boston

for postgraduate studies in composition, Byzantine music palaeography and electronic music.

During his stay in the United States, Adamēs expanded his horizons to the technical potentialities and the speculations of contemporary music, while at the same time delved deeper into the core of Byzantine music. These two modes of expression coexisted as much in the studies he attended as in the shaping of his personal compositional style. Some of his chamber music compositions, like *Anakyklisis* (1964) and *Prooptiki* (1965), were performed in America for the first time, gaining considerable distinction. In the genre of electroacoustic music he composed works with the use of videotape, such as *Piece I* (1964) and *Piece II* (1964), as well as works with mixed media, like *Proschemata* (1964). Along with the particular works considered as milestones, this period marked the beginning of the composer's mature compositional phase.

In 1965 Michalēs Adamēs returned to Greece and created the first private electronic music studio, since at that time there was no alternative set-up place for music production via technology. In his studio he composed works through mostly electronic and electroacoustic sources.¹⁷ This is not to say, however, that he did not create music for the conventional instruments of the western orchestra; in fact, he composed various vocal and choral pieces, chamber music and theatre music. In 1968 he was appointed as the director of the Music Department of Pierce College, making several appearances with its choir in various artistic performances around Athens.

Beyond Michalēs Adamēs' compositions, what is of equal importance is his presence as a musicologist, particularly in the field of Byzantine music. Among his studies, the most important was his paradigmatic reference to one of the earliest samples of Orthodox polyphonic music that dates back to the 15th century. Adamēs' manifold activity also extended to administration competences. In 1966 he was elected secretary of the Greek Society for Contemporary Music, while from 1975 to 1985 he was appointed to the position of the president. Adamēs was the president of the Special Committee of the Ministry of Culture responsible for the development of choirs and a member of the Administrative Committee of the Ionian University, which formulated the curriculum and the organisation of the newly established Music Department. Adamēs is also a member of the Greek Composers' Union.¹⁸

During a period of about forty years Adamēs succeeded in constructing a pioneering style, within which he transmuted not only the technical and aesthetic features of the Byzantine tradition but also its further symbolisms. Despite the fact that the basic principles and morphological characteristics of Byzantine music cannot conform to the melodic and harmonic hermeneutic models of western performance, Adamēs' music achieves vast sensation and is internationally appreciated by contemporary music audiences. This is mainly due to its linear form, its polyrhythmic, polymelodic and polymodal combinations, and furthermore, due to the Byzantine chanters' techniques being incorporated in many of his works (for instance, the idiomorphic sound structure, the micro-intervals, the *isokratema* or drone bass, the specific melismatic ornamentation, and so on).

A distinct quality found in many of Adamēs' pieces is the amalgamation of the West-European and the Byzantine notation; this practice beautifully serves the composer's utmost purposes, such as the attempt to bring together the western with the eastern music sphere. This encounter is also evident in the orchestration, through the interweaving – that is, the recomposing or the juxtaposition – of heterogeneous timbres. An example of this could be the use of Byzantine chorus and various traditional Greek idiophones together with conventional instruments of western music and also with electronic sources. The above stressed points, concerning the notation and the orchestration in the composer's work in connection with his stylistic and aesthetic attachment to the neo-Byzantine song, on the one hand, and to atonality, serialism and electronic media, on the other, led to the establishment of Michalēs Adamēs as a very special, yet solitary figure in Greek art music from the 1960s onwards.

In order to maintain – to an extent – the ideals of the senior Greek National School of Music, and incorporate them within the contemporary notions of nationality, many composers attempted to feature particular elements of Greek music tradition (Byzantine, demotic and folk) through its mixture with West-European music. At the time of Michalēs Adamēs' intense creativity, his attitude towards Greek tradition is considered as “courageous in Greece, where many Orthodox intellectuals still reject western music as incompatible with their ideas of national identity” (Conomos and Leotsakos 2009).¹⁹ The formation of a rather idiosyncratic liturgical and musical ethos based – for the most part – upon the Byzantine cultural legacy is evident in works such as *The Sixth Seal of the Apocalypse* (1967), *Genesis* (1968), *Kratema* (1971) and *Tetelestae I* (1971).

The vocal and choral works of Michalēs Adamēs cover a big part of his creation, from the *Hail Mass* (1950) and the *Byzantine Passion* (1967) to *In Bethlehem* (1988), the *Lament of Virgin Mary* (1994) and the *Os Thessavron* (1994). His work for ancient drama performances is of great importance. During the period 1960–1974 Adamēs composed mainly for tragedies, most of which contained electronic music and were supported by live electronics. Moreover, between the years 1971–1973, he composed electronic incidental music for some theatrical plays. *The Seagull* (1977), a piece for flute, double-bass, percussion and videotape, tells the story of a bird that denied the main purpose of its existence – i.e. flying for food seeking – and turned to more profound values of life such as freedom, creation and love.²⁰

The 1980s represent a liminal period for Adamēs' work. During this phase the composer devoted himself primarily to instrumental music, while in general his style went through a gradual modification.²¹ By expanding his research to the Byzantine and traditional modes and the rhythms of the demotic song, Adamēs applied a kind of polymelodic counterpoint. This method was used, for example, in his pieces *Alliostrofa* (1986), *Eptaha* (1989), *Enestota* (1991), *Esothen* (1991) and *Hellenion* (1996). According to this technique, “independent lines combine to produce striking harmonic conflicts”, in a quasi-kaleidoscopic effect with various alternating and overlaying tone-colours (Conomos and Leotsakos 2009). The linearity in Adamēs' instrumental composition and, consequently, the formation of dense melodic complexes and imaginable horizontal sound progressions – clearly depicted even



Rehearsing Periclēs Koukos' opera *Manuel Salinas*. From left to right: the composer, the conductor Lucas Karytinis and the stage director Spyros Evangelatos.

in some of his earlier works such as *Photonymon* (1973) and *Tetelestae II* (1988) – results in a peculiar homophonic texture, a continual web; at the same time, however, this result bears significant performing difficulties, a fact that applies to several of these works (Symeōnidou [Συμεωνίδου] 1995: 18).

His philosophical beliefs, his intellectual unrest and his personal experience are explicitly set forth in most of his works, imbuing them with a special symbolic dimension and a distinct dramatic vitality. On the base of the melismatic character of Byzantine music (with its fine melodic ornaments and phrase extensions) and its principles of structure, Adamēs' work is perceived as an unprecedented idiom: a continuous flow of music that loyally follows the ethos and the aesthetics of the Orthodox Church, within the frame of western avant-garde; a melting pot of music and further cultural processes, an intermediary between the East and the West; an alternative reuniting these two musical worlds.²²

The crucial issue of employing cultural and musical dialectics in the field of contemporary music appeared to have been stressed by subsequent Greek composers, each of them through their own perspective. The long debated (in the area of “new musicology”) concept of “identity” acquired a different form with an additional meaning.²³ From that point onwards, Greek avant-garde composers have been accepted as equal members within the globalised music community. Among these creators is Periclēs Koukos, who dynamically entered the scene of Greek art music after the second half of the 1980s.

Periclēs Koukos was born in Athens in 1960. He received his first music lessons from his father, who was adept in Byzantine music and psalmody. From an early age he became particularly interested in rock music, while later, after his registration at the National Conservatory of Athens, he started getting involved with classical music. He took piano lessons from Toni Geōrgiou. He was taught advanced music theory by Dēmētrēs Dragatakēs

and composition by Jannēs A. Papaiōannou. He continued his piano studies in Vienna (1980–1983); later on he took orchestral conducting and composition lessons at the Royal Academy of Music, University of London (1986–1988). In 1987 he presented part of his work as the Greek delegate at the UNESCO International Rostrum of Composers, held in Paris. Within the same year he represented young Greek composers at the First Music Conference of the International Cultural Centre of Delphi (his paper was entitled “Young Greek Composer in Contemporary Society: Motives of Creation”), while in 1989 he took part in a European programme of radio exchanges.

Most of Periclēs Koukos’ works had been commissions on behalf of grand cultural institutions and had been presented at concerts and festivals inside and outside Greece. Apart from artistic creation Koukos was also involved in the administrative music sector. Being one of the most noteworthy figures of contemporary Greek music he temporally acquired vital positions in the country’s music life (president of the Greek Festival, art director of the Greek National Opera, vice-president of the Greek Composers’ Union, curator at the Home of Letters and Fine Arts, president of the “Manolis Kalomiris Society”, art director, piano teacher, professor of advanced music theory and composition in major conservatories in Athens, etc).²⁴

Koukos’ began systematically writing music in 1983, when – after his studies in Vienna – he returned to Greece. Between the years 1983–1986 he composed a “significant amount of works, which, even not totally atonal, move within the free harmonic space of extended tonality” (Symeōnidou [Συμεωνίδου] 1995: 195). This particular style of the first phase of his creative era, applied primarily in some of his early orchestral compositions as well as in some of his chamber music, was obviously inspired by his professor, Jannēs A. Papaiōannou. Technically, many of his strictly atonal works of this period included tonal centres and gravitational poles in a way that not only preserved the immediacy of musical communication but also revealed the composer’s ideological intention not “to become self-restricted into a single ‘school’” (Symeōnidou [Συμεωνίδου] 1995: 196).

His desire for stylistic autonomy is one of the basic characteristics of the postmodern style.²⁵ This is revealed even in his early compositions, like the one-act children’s opera buffa *Merlin the Magician* (1986), but also the *Proem* (1986), a technical study of orchestration for large symphonic ensembles. With the opera *Conrois and his Copies* (1987–1988) the composer attempts the daring, at his time, turn towards purely tonal composition. “Behind the subtle and captivating melodies and themes, sometimes with remote echoes of Weill and Stravinsky, lies a strictly organised tonal and harmonic plan” (Leotsakos 2009c). *Conrois and his Copies* is a one-act fantasy opera that addresses the versatile matter of music as creation: the composer’s conflicting relationship with the ideal order that he individually constructs and their collating with the “other”, the different world of love and emotion.²⁶ The most important feature of this opera is the compact and balanced structure of the music material. The interval of the third is the basic generative ingredient both in the melodic and the harmonic frameworks. Like most of Periclēs Koukos’ works this opera follows the principle of the “economy of means”, including rhythm. Sometimes poetry is combined with music so

as to be interpreted as a whole and, at other times, it is opposed to music as an independent hermeneutic view. As for the last act of the drama, this is not simply given but is provoked as the spectator's subjective solution (Kōstios [Κώστιος] 1991).

Human voice through song acquires particular gravity in Koukos' works, as it becomes the most essential vehicle of communicating the composer's inmost intentions across his audience. The neo-Romantic nostalgia – a hovering sensation of parallel distance and proximity, an ambivalent relationship between the present and the recent past – constitutes the core of the formation of the song cycle *Diary for Passers-by at the End of the Century* (1993–1994).²⁷ The melodic-harmonic and the orchestration references to popular music of the 20th century (blues, jazz, rock, pop, etc.) are expressions of an individual but also a transnational music identity, which the creator wishes to highlight. Periclēs Koukos finely succeeds in combining various elements that seem contradictory. Through a kind of discourse that reforms music norms yet devoid of falling out with them, the composer uses former codes so to create a totally personal and, eventually, extremely characteristic language of interaction.

The search for contact between the composer and his social environment is one of the most crucial issues with which art music creation is engaged. In an attempt to respond to this need, contemporary avant-garde music at times wholly demolishes “the traditional” while at others attempts to transform older musical morphemes into new ones, thereby virtually giving birth to a “meta-musical” logic: a critical, aesthetic and political discourse that is far away from “pure” music; a discourse coming from music and being concurrently about and beyond music. In the work of each of the three composers the concept of “meta-music” is present, however, this takes on a different meaning in each case. Thus, in the case of Jannēs Chrēstou it emerges as a denial of the conventional means of performance, in Michalēs Adamēs' as a reformation of the lived tradition, while in Periclēs Koukos' it appears as an application of the established practices within different contexts of interpretation. The new generation of composers in Greece, following up closely with the procedures and the orientations of contemporary music, heads next to an internationalised and – at the same time – multicultural scene of art music and preserves its own perspective through the current polyphonic reality.

Notes

1. Also written: Jannis or Janis Christou.
2. Also written: Michalis Adamis.
3. Also written: Periklis Koukos.
4. Various foreign cultural organisations were created in Athens (for instance, the Italian Institute of Culture, the Goethe Institute and the Hellenic American Union), which, along with the pre-existing French Institute, engulfed the Greek art pioneers of the times (Rōmanou [Ρωμανού] 2000: 167–168; Dontas [Δοντάς] 2001).

5. For an overall estimation and an account of the tendencies and the figures of contemporary Neohellenic music, see Slonimsky 1965; Zervos [Ζερβός] 1999.
6. For further information concerning the socio-political and cultural setting of post-war life in Greece, see Lambiri-Dimaki 1983; Charalambis, Maratou-Alipranti and Hadjiyanni 2004; Mouzelis 1996.
7. Together with avant-garde music, popular song flourished in post-war Greece. Popular music fusions started from a similar attempt to bind together “western” and “eastern” elements but in a different style from that of the avant-garde. Various personalities in Greek musical and cultural life got involved in this process, in one way or another. The central point of reference turned out to be the Mikēs Theodōrakēs-Manos Chatzidakis dipole. As well as these two composers, whose work and attitude deeply influenced their epoch as well as the next generation of musicians, some other music creators (e.g. Stavros Xarchakos, Jannēs Markopoulos, Manos Loizos, Dēmos Moutsēs, Chrēstos Leontēs and Dionysēs Savvopoulos) followed a similar path, each one with a distinctive personal aesthetic, and ideological and socio-political view. More particularly, a new music genre, the so-called “art popular song”, was created. Art popular song was characterised by a) an inner ambiguity, as is shown through the combination of the terms “art” and “popular” in its name, b) the composer’s formal music education, c) the use of poetic lyrics, and d) a massive acceptance by the audience. For further information according to Greek popular and art popular music in the post-war era, see Holst-Warhaft 1997; Notaras [Νοταράς] 2001: 131–132; Mylōnas [Μυλωνάς] 1985.
8. The Greek National Tourism Organisation was mutated to the main vehicle of culture and development. Its fundamental concern was the construction of an – otherwise fictitious – image of cultural prosperity. Culture was clearly related to the mimic adoption of western social etiquette and modes of behaviour. See Rōmanou [Ρωμανού] 2003; Dontas [Δοντάς] 2001; Leotsakos 2009a.
9. Being a businessman, Chrēstou’s father tried to direct his son towards economic studies, while his mother, a well-known poet and a warm supporter of spiritualism, influenced Chrēstou towards mysticism and meditation. Moreover, his relationship with the Egyptian *intelligentsia* and aristocracy of the time, and the overall religious orientation of the culture where he grew up, proved to be determinative factors concerning his future choices.
10. Chrēstou kept well in touch with England and France. The English language and education, in particular, had a great influence on him. Besides, English was the language the composer used to note down his personal, philosophical and music speculations as well as a detailed indication of his dreams.
11. Beyond his preoccupation with music composition, Jannēs Chrēstou devoted considerable time to the study of philosophy, anthropology, psychology, history, theology, science of religion, magic and alchemy.
12. For more information on Jannēs Chrēstou’s biography and works, see Symeōnidou [Συμεωνίδου] 1995: 439–443; Lucciano 2000: xv–xviii, 169–178; Leotsakos 2009b; Kalogeropoulos [Καλογερόπουλος] 1998: 598–601.
13. For an analytical approach to Chrēstou’s *Phoenix Music* as well as *The First Symphony*, see Sliōmēs [Σλιώμης] 2000.
14. “Astronkatoidanykteronomigyrin” refers to a strophe from *Agamemnon* by Aeschylus which means “I have become familiar with the assembly of all the stars of night”.
15. For a more detailed analysis of the *Anaparastaseis*, see Zapheiroupolou [Ζαφειροπούλου] 2004.

16. Jannēs Chrēstou’s “dream diaries” are of exceptional musicological interest, given the fact that they combine a significant number of historical and psychological parameters that refer to certain works of the composer.
17. For a review of Michalēs Adamēs’ electroacoustic work, see Loufopoulos [Λουφόπουλος] 1999.
18. For further information concerning Michalēs Adamēs’ biography and works see Symeōnidou [Συμεωνίδου] 1995: 16–20; Conomos and Leotsakos 2009; Kalogeropoulos [Καλογερόπουλος] 1998: 59–62.
19. Furthermore, in an attempt to interpret the overall tendency towards the use of folk and traditional music elements on behalf of young Greek composers, Giōrgos Zervos mentions characteristically: “Although the way and the degree of using the Byzantine chant is different in each occasion, the very fact that they all attempted to incorporate elements of the demotic or the Byzantine music tradition – a phenomenon that continued even after the National School era and keeps carrying on, yet limitedly, up to the present day (in a sense that approaches postmodernism) – indicates nothing but another attempt to enhance the questioned state of contemporary western music creation with a ‘foreign’ grand music culture that, in our case, is the Byzantine one” (Zervos [Ζερβός] 1999: 151–152).
20. This work is based on Richard Bach’s novel *Jonathan Livingston Seagull* (1970).
21. The period in question is described as particularly difficult for Greek electronic music avant-garde. “The primary cause was the insufficient equipment and studio facilities as the demands were gradually growing higher, yet without having the analogous financial security. Faced up against this dead-end, many composers gradually abandoned electronic music during the late years of the decade and either turned to instrumental music (like Michalēs Adamēs in 1977) or abandoned composition on the whole. Other composers (like Ch. Xanthoudakēs, D. Terzakēs, Th. Antōniou) went abroad either to study or to find occupation in fully equipped studios in foreign countries” (Loufopoulos [Λουφόπουλος] 1999: 11).
22. For an insight into the composer’s opinion concerning his own work, a kind of an autobiographical article, see Adamis 1995.
23. For further theoretical and methodological pinpoints concerning “new musicology”, see Subotnik 1991; McClary 1991; Kramer 1995. See also Rōmanou [Ρωμανού] 1998.
24. For further information on Periklēs Koukos’ biography and works, see Symeōnidou [Συμεωνίδου] 1995: 195–197; Kalogeropoulos [Καλογερόπουλος] 1998: 280–281.
25. The term “postmodern” refers, on the one hand, to a music style defined according to given characteristics and, on the other, to the status of contemporary cultural, social, economic and political reality. As a musical style, “postmodern” includes elements of the art that lies across, after and beyond “modern” and, more particularly, eclecticism, self-reference, ironic attitude, collage, multi-diversity and the diffusion of genres. As a situation, postmodern music represents an expression of the corresponding period that is distinct for its globalising sense in the sectors of finance and culture, the dominance of the mass media and the development of information technologies. For various approaches on the phenomenon, see Jameson 1991; Lyotard 1985; Turner 1990. Concerning the issue of “the modern” and “the postmodern” in music, see Albright 2004; Lochhead and Auner 2002. For the Greek perspective on this matter, see Lapidakēs [Λαπιδάκης] 2000; Zervos [Ζερβός] 1987.
26. For a thorough and deep analysis of the work, see Kōstios [Κώστιος] 1991.
27. Concerning the concept of “nostalgia”, in the way that this is depicted in contemporary postmodern scientific and artistic tendencies, see Hutcheon 2000; Jameson 1989.

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Serbian and Greek Art Music

A Patch to Western Music History

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Edited by Katy Romanou



Intellect Bristol, UK, Chicago, USA

First published in the UK in 2009 by
Intellect Books, The Mill, Parnall Road, Fishponds, Bristol, BS16 3JG, UK

First published in the USA in 2009 by Intellect Books, The University of
Chicago Press, 1427 E. 60th Street, Chicago, IL 60637, USA

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A catalogue record for this book is available from
the British Library.

Cover designer: Holly Rose
Copy-editor: Heather Owen
Typesetting: Mac Style, Beverley, E. Yorkshire

ISBN 978-1-84150-278-6
EISBN 978-1-84150-338-7

Printed and bound by Gutenberg Press, Malta.

Chapter 7: The Greek National Music School	125
Yannis Belonis	
Chapter 8: Nikos Skalkottas	163
Katy Romanou	
Chapter 9: Chrēstou, Adamēs, Koukos: Greek Avant-garde Music During the Second Half of the 20th Century	187
Nick Poulakis	
Index of Persons	205