

Musical Archetypes and the “Greek Musical Character” through Time...

In this epoch, wherein there exists the exponential and merciless growth of globalization which erodes the populace socially and culturally brushing aside national traditions and cultures, the problem of *Greekness* which has repeatedly preoccupied artists, philosophers and politicians, remains at the center of controversy.

From the Greek enlightenment which was the corner stone of the Greek Uprising of 1821 to the Destruction of Asia Minor of 1922 and the period between wars to our days, the definition of “what is the meaning of *Greekness*” remains an object of study and reflection.

According to Konstandinos Tsatsos (1899–1987), President of the Democracy of Greece, Academic, Professor of the Philosophy of Law and Literaturist,

Greekness is that which exists from the time of Homer to the present day intact in the depth of our souls, while on the surface its façade is interchangeable through the centuries. Hellenism is that which comprises unison, the basic identity of the Greek spaces of all ages.

This Greekness is a meeting of the spiritual and intellectual, of virtues and vices, of charisma and negativity which are expressed in the ethos, the fine arts, the philosophy and the Religious state. At times through the ages virtues dominated at others malices, at others the Greeks reached infinity, while at other times they fell tragically. The basic structure remained consistent. Greekness. Probably the most beautiful aspect of the Greek Revolution is the uprising of Greekness, of our historical conscience which had never really been extinguished in the Hellenic space and has defined the path of our nation for the future¹.

Now, many years later, Mikis Theodorakis, the Greek composer, politician and intellectual, in his work titled “*On the problem of Hellenism*”, commenting on the work of two great Greek poets of the 20th C., Odysseus Elytis (Nobel Prize of Litterature, 1979) and Yannis Ritsos (Lenin Prize for Peace, 1977), he states:

What is really the common aspect of Elytis and Ritsos? Undoubtedly, the Greek language, the Greek ethos, the presence of Greek space and time in their work combined with the knowledge and the love of historical tradition and the cultural values of the Greek populace which preside; when characterized in one word, it is Greekness².

The evidently unbreakable link of the term with tradition, provokes from time to time negative comments, as some choose

to attach Greekness to regression to long past forms of tradition, to an art movement equivalent to social constructs and ways of life which belong to the past, brushing aside the social conscience of our epoch.³

Taking into consideration these conflicting points of view and limiting myself to the art of music and more specifically to the song, I shall attempt in this paper to prove, using particular examples, that continuity exists in the music of Greeks from ancient times to present. This historical journey will reveal to us the musical archetypes which portray the character of Greekness in the music of my country allowing us, as a result, to speak of “*Greek music*” and not simply of “*the music of Greece*.”

I consider it essential to stress from the outset that I interpret the term archetype as that which results from the etymology of the word: *αρχή + τύπος*, as the original type, the prototype, the model which appeared in a defined time in history, evolved, was transformed over the centuries, retaining however its essence as a common point of reference.

Due to the obvious need for time limitations we are not allowed an indepth reference to the complete parameters of music, in this paper we are restricted to the study of instrumentation, scales and rhythm.

Based on the archeological findings as well as the sparse written sources which have been saved, the music of the wider greek world appears around 3000 B.C. Representations from this period which belong

¹ TSATSOS Konstantinos, “The Greeknes as pedestal of the Nation. The 1821 and our historical countenance”, in “Manual to the Dissertation of Ideas” (Θεμέλιο στην Έκθεση Ιδεών), Athens, 1988, Ed. Baharakis, vol. 3, p. 119.

² THEODORAKIS Mikis, “About the problem of Greekness”, in “Greekness and ‘intelligencia’”, Athens, 2007, Ed. Ianos, p. 20.

³ VOURNAS Tasos, GARIDI Eleni, “The tradition and its survival in today’s civilization”, Athens, Ed. Tolidis, p. 24.

to the Cycladic culture, illustrates two musical instruments: one portable type of harp, the *angular harp* as well as a *double aulo* (*double pipe*) or *diaulo*. Later representations which belong to the Minoan and Mycean cultures (2000 B.C.) illustrate mostly the *lyra* as well as a large selection of musical instruments which were derived from the cultures of Mesopotamia and Asia.

In the time of Homer (8th Century B.C.) a flourish in music is defined. At this time, the most ancient form of music the *epos* appears. This is a long-form narrative song chanted at the symposia of the leaders from the *aidos* accompanied by the *phorminx*. The flourish of music spreads to archaic times – 7th to 5th Centuries B.C. – with the development mainly in Lesbos of the lyrical poetry: of the choral lyrical poetry – for chorus – and of the monody – songs – which is interpreted to the accompaniment of the *lyra* and *aulos*. While at the same time, in Sparta, choral poetry and music flourished – music interpreted by young men and women. The choral song was accompanied by the *lyra*, the *aulos* and a dance movement. A particularly significant type of choral song is the *dithyramb* – a song interpreted with the accompaniment of the *aulos* in honour of the God Dionysos – which was transformed into a type of savant form by Arion around 600 B.C. The *dithyramb* is considered as the basic form of the *anapaistika* and of the choral songs of the ancient drama. The *anapaistika* were musical reading with guitar accompaniment while the choral songs – for example, the *stassimon*, the *kommos*, the *monodic songs* or *amoivaia meloi* – were chanted with the accompaniment of the *aulos*.

However based on the findings of the ancient Greek art and pottery, it was revealed that other musical instruments were used: namely the *tympanum*, the *epigoneion*, the *pandoura* or *trichordion*. More evolved forms of these instruments appear even today.

More particularly:

- the *double pipe* or *diaulos* was a wind instrument with two flutes which were played synchronously. Whether the same melody was played by both or whether one played by one melody and the other a steady note, a kind of unison was heard. In the first case the double pipe is considered as the first form of the modern bagpipe of the islands named *tsambouna* and in the second case of the modern *gajda* of Balcan⁴.
- the *tympanum* of Ancient Greece, which consisted of a skin membrane of a cow stretched over a wooden hoop or the lip of a shallow clay bowl, is similar to the present day *defi* or the cypriot *toubeleki*⁵.
- the *epigoneion* was a string instrument which belonged to the category of the *psalterium* – the chords were set to the palm movement with the fingers – and played in a horizontal position. The evolution of which is today's *kanonaki*⁶. It is considered an instrument of eastern origin, since few are the references to its use in the Greek world.
- the *pandoura* or *trichordion* was a string instrument with three chords in the form of the *lute* with small body and a long neck. In most cases it is present in the representations of the great cultures of the middle east. Under the same name but also as *tambura* or *tambur* it is known in the Byzantine period⁷; while in the present age it is called the *tambouras* and is considered as the first form of the *bouzouki*.

In reference to the *lyre* and the *guitar*, it should be mentioned that they continue to be called by these names but bear no resemblance to the ancient Greek instruments known by these names and can not be considered as their first forms. The only possible element connecting them is that the ancient Greek instruments and the modern day instruments both belong to the string instruments category.

In reference to a later period in particular the “*Byzantine period*” which lasted from the 7th Century A.C. to 1204 the year in which the first fall of Constantinople took place at the hands of the Crusades, synchronously to the ecclesiastical music of the christian orthodox church, the later termed “*Byzantine Music*”, the “*acritic songs*” were being developed. By this term we mean the heroic songs which were being developed from around the 8th–9th Centuries and later, in the beginning, in the eastern border areas of the Byzantine Empire – in the Ponto and in Cappadocia – and which spread later to Epiros, the Ionian islands,

⁴ MAVROIDIS Marios, *Ancient Greek Musical Instruments: Lectures in Faculty of Music in Ionian University (Greece)*, 1993.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ ANOGIANNAKIS Foivos, *About Rebetikon Song*, in *Roads to Rebetikon* of Gail Holst, Ed. Denise Harvey, Limni Evoias, 2001, p. 197.

Crete and Cyprus. The main purpose was the telling of the stories of the achievements of the “*akrites*”, that is of their courageous protection of the borders against the arabian attacks – the term “*akrites*” has its roots in the Greek word “*akra*” = *synora* = *borders*. The songs of the akrites which comprise the oldest examples of “*demotic music*” (= Greek folk music) in comparison with the Byzantine music which is solely phonetic, is accompanied by musical instruments. According to Samuel Baud Bovy, “*these musical instruments were mainly types of lute with a long neck, in a variety of forms and names.*”⁸

The first fall of Constantinople is followed by one of the most significant modern Greek cultures: the epoch of the Venetians in Crete which began around 1210 and ended with the occupation of Handakas – called Herakleion nowadays – by the Turks in 1669. During these four centuries, Handakas constituted possibly the greatest cultural center of the era.

Music appears in three forms: ecclesiastical music, mondain music and traditional folk music of the residents of the country-side. It is characteristic that for the first time western polyfonia can be detected in ecclesiastical music while at the same time the use, according to sources, of small portable church organs. Parallel the development of mondain music resulted in the appearance of precece types of demotic fanfare. The most widely used instruments were the trumpet, the flute, the lute, the guitar, the violin and the viola da gamba. And so it is that occidental musical instruments appears for the first time in Greek music. Finally, in reference to the popular traditional music of Crete, the western influence was mostly evident in Eastern Crete: the songs and dances were the same as those which have survived upto date while the instruments have diversified. Then in use were “*askomantoura*” and “*thambioli*” (a kind of flute) and not the modern lyra of Crete which appears in the wall paintings of the Byzantine and Meta-Byzantine period. The modern lyra of Crete were eastern in origin and arrived in Crete around the 17th Century.

During the Turkish occupation (1453–1821) even though every kind of cultural creativity had ceased, there was the development of a new form of demotic poetry and music, the “*kleftika songs*”. They took their name from the “*kleftes*” that is the arm Greeks who fought against the Turks and for whom their achievements have become legends. The composer and the lyricist of the “*kleftika songs*”, which from time to time were interpreted to the accompaniment of instruments, are generally anonymous. An exception were some “*kleftika songs*” which were inspired by the members of the Greek revolution themselves, such as Makrygiannis who according to witnesses “*not only sung admirably the kleftika songs and play them on the tambouras but improvised too.*”⁹

It is also worth noting the revolutionary “*Thourio*” eventhough it is not a demotic-kleftic song. The work is that of Rigas Velesinlis, the savant visionary instrumentalist of the Greek Revolution who with his inspiring texts attempted to move the subservient Greek. According to witnesses Rigas “*sung and played the Thourio on the aulo making shivers run down people’s spines.*”¹⁰

We can not overlook the inevitable influence on the Greek culture and art of the culture of the different national tribes which co-existed in harmony in Constantinople, the capital of the Ottoman Empire. This influence on the music was evident both in the musical instruments adopted from the eastern cultures such as the *nei*, the *outi* or the *santouri* as well as in the rhythms and the scales.

The consolidation of the musical instruments of eastern origin into Greek music is cemented with the development, at the end of the 19th Century, of the urban popular song, later known as the *rebetikon*, which grew mainly after the catastrophe of Smyrni and more precisely between 1930 and 1950 in the urban centers such as Athens, Piraeus or Thessaloniki where the emigrants settled. The term “*rebetikon*” is possibly derived from the Turkish word *rebet*¹¹ which means “a man that can not be governed, that is rebellious, unlawful”, or from the Slavic word “*rebenok*”¹² which means brave men. The characteristic rebetik orchestra comprises instruments which originated in the East such as the *bouzouki*, the *baglamas*, the *outi*, the *santouri*, the *toubeleki* which can co-exist with the violin, the clarinet, the guitar, the accordion and the piano.

A few years later, at the beginning of the sixties and within the framework of efforts to create “*a music for the masses*”, the Greek composer Mikis Theodorakis suggests the marriage of traditional instruments

⁸ BAUD-BOVY Samuel, *Essay about Greek Demotic Song*, Ed. Foundation of Folkloric Culture of Peloponnisos, Nauplio, 1996, p. 37.

⁹ BAZIANAS Nikos, *About our Folk Musical Tradition*, Ed. Typothito, Athens, p. 144.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

¹¹ VOLIOTIS-KAPETANAKIS Ilias, *One Century of Popular Song*, Athens, Ed. Nea Synora-Livani, 1989, p. 84–85.

¹² Article about “*rebetikon song*” in the Greek Encyclopaedia Papyros Larousse Britannica, vol. 51, p. 333.

of popular music with that of the instruments of the symphonic occidental orchestra. The creation of the popular oratorio “*Axion Esti*” wherein the *santouri* and the *bouzouki* are incorporated in the symphonic orchestra strengthening the “national divide” which had broken out in 1958 with the setting in music of the “*Epitaph*” of Giannis Ritsos by Mikis Theodorakis. Then the composer innovatively dares to use a popular instrument; the *bouzouki*, in his setting in music of the poetic text of a savant poet. This could be considered a reply to the request of the Greek composer Manos Hantzidakis, who had from 1948 “*stressed the need for a return to the source and the wealth of popular sensitivity*”¹³ with the aim of the renewal and rejuvenation of the Greek song. The use of such a popular instrument could not help but create a strong reaction amongst Greek intellectuals even more so particularly since this instrument was in no way of Greek origin!

Despite all of this, the attempts of Mikis Theodorakis not only achieved the results desired, from then on the regular popular orchestra comprises two *bouzouki*, a guitar, a basso, a piano and drums as well as leading other young Greek composers to use in their orchestrations the instruments of traditional music with those of western orchestra. A characteristic example is the use of the *lyra* of Crete, of the *lute*, of the *santouri* by the noted Cretan composer, Giannis Markopoulos (such as in the song “*Hilia Myria Kymata*”).

The retention of this archetypal instrumental ensemble, which was the result of the perfect fusion of the eastern and the western influence in the musical art of Greece, is most significant and desirable only when it is achieved with complete respect for the tradition.

As mentioned previously the influence of non-Greek cultures on the music of Greece, is also evident in the scales as well as the rhythms. In particular, if we return to Ancient Greece and its music, we can discern a tendency for the dependency on ancient Greek modes: the *dorian*, the *frigian*, the *lydian*, the *myxolydian*, the *aeolian*, the *ionic* and the *hypolydian*- each of which had its own *ethos*. In using the term *ethos*, the ancient theoreticians of music referred to “*the expressive character of each mode and to the fact that they could inspire the soul of the audience*”¹⁴; for example, the *dorian* expressed masculinity, the *hypodorian* expressed a proud, dynamic, epic type, the *myxolydian* a sad type etc...¹⁵

These modes were carried over into the Byzantine era and renamed *echos*: *echos A'*, *echos B'*, *plagal echos A'* etc. Dependent on these *echos* were both the Byzantine music and the acritic demotic songs.

Also based on the ancient Greek modes was the music of medieval Europe <...> upto the point where around 1500 and due to the domination of instrumental music- while the Byzantine, the demotic and the ancient Greek music were dependent on the human voice-, the western world passed from Modal to Tonal systems.¹⁶

Tonality is introduced into the music of Greece with the savant composers of the Ionian School (19th Century) such as Nikolaos Halkiopoulos-Mantzaros, the composer of the Greek National Anthem, Spyridon Xyndas who wrote the first opera with Greek libretto titled “*Υποψήφιος Βουλευτής*” (“Candidate for Parliament”) and Philiskos-Spyridon Samaras the composer of the “*Anthem for the First Olympic Games*” in 1896. These composers due to their studies in the West were initiated into tonality, were influenced in particular by the Italian opera of the 19th Century and were hence unable to provide work with Greek character.

From the composers of the Ionian School and thereafter tonality shadowed modality without as such that implying that modality was completely abandoned. Modern Greek composers such as Manolis Kalomiris – main representative of the Greek National School, Nikos Skalkotas – main representative of the Greek avant-garde, or Mikis Theodorakis who initiated the movement of the “*art-song*”, reintroduced modality to their work. For example, many times in his songs Theodorakis inspired by the context of the poetical passage and in effort to support it better, he sets it to music considering the ethos of Greek ancient modes such as in the cycle of songs “*Lyrikotera*”¹⁷.

¹³ MYLONAS Kostas, History of Greek Song, Athens, Ed. Kedros, 1985, vol. 2, p. 22.

¹⁴ REINACH Theodore, The Greek Music, Ed. Payot Paris 1926 and Ed. Institute of Book – A. Kardamitsa, Athens, 1999, p. 77.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 79.

¹⁶ THEODORAKIS Mikis, “About the problem of Greekness”, in “Greekness and ‘intelligencia’”, Athens, 2007, Ed. Ianos, p. 44.

¹⁷ STIGA Kalliopi, “Mikis Theodorakis: the cantor of the link between ‘scholarly music’ and ‘popular music’”, PhD, Université Lumière-Lyon 2, France, November 2006, vol. 3: “Interview given by Mikis Theodorakis to Kalliopi Stiga, Athens, 9-6-2001”, p. 324.

Moreover we can not overlook the influence of the Rebetic scales which were applied to Modern Greek musical creations. The scales of *rebetika* known as “*dromoi*” are no more than a fusion of Byzantine *modes* with the *makam* of Arabic and Turkish music. The most often used *dromoi* are: *rast*, *houzam*, *hitzaz-kiar* or *piréotikos*, *niavent*, *sabah*¹⁸:

The image displays six musical staves, each representing a different *dromoi* scale. Each staff is written in treble clef and contains a sequence of notes with accidentals. The scales are labeled as follows:

- Rast**: A scale starting on C, with notes C, D, E, F#, G, A, B, C.
- Houzam**: A scale starting on C, with notes C, D, E, F#, G, A, B, C.
- Hitzaz-kiar**: A scale starting on C, with notes C, D, E, F#, G, A, B, C.
- Pireotikos**: A scale starting on C, with notes C, D, E, F#, G, A, B, C.
- Niavent**: A scale starting on C, with notes C, D, E, F#, G, A, B, C.
- Sabah**: A scale starting on C, with notes C, D, E, F#, G, A, B, C.

I believe that Greekness which characterizes the complete works of Mikis Theodorakis is due in the main to the co-existence of ancient Greek modes, rebetic *dromoi* and western tonality, such as in the cycles of songs “*Politeia A*”, “*Politeia B*”, “*Politeia C*” and “*Politeia D*”¹⁹.

Finally, there is one further element which defines Greekness in the music of Greece. They are the frequently used single rhythms which according to Greek researchers as well as foreign ones – as Thrasvoulos Georgiadis, Giorgos Amargiannakis, Samuel Baud-Bovy... – it has been proven derive from the archetypal meters of the ancient Greek poetry – such as the iambic, the trochaic etc.

Take, for example, that which is widely used in Greece, the seven part rhythm used in the traditional dance of *syrtos kalamatianos* which is a combination of a three part iambic rhythm or a three part trochaic rhythm with a four part spondious rhythm:

The image shows the musical notation for the *Kalamatianos* rhythm. It consists of two staves in 7/8 time. The first staff shows a sequence of notes: a dotted quarter note, followed by two eighth notes, and then a quarter note. The second staff shows a sequence of notes: a quarter note, followed by two eighth notes, and then a quarter note. The rhythm is labeled as **Kalamatianos**.

¹⁸ The scales are written according to the use of the *bouzouki* players. As the strings of the *bouzouki* are tuned on *re-la-re*, all scales are transported so that their tonics or other important notes of the scale are one of those notes.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 489.

The nine part rhythm of the dances of Asia Minor, the Ponto, the Dodecanese, as the *zeibekikon* in 9/8 or 9/4 and the *karsilamas* in 9/8 present in the form, of the two part rhythm in the tragedies of Euripides²⁰:

The image shows four musical staves. The first three staves are in 9/4 time and represent the *Zeibekikon* rhythm. The first staff shows a sequence of eighth notes. The second and third staves show variations with dotted rhythms. The fourth staff is in 9/8 time and represents the *Karsilamas* rhythm, showing a sequence of eighth notes. Labels 'Zeibekikon' and 'Karsilamas' are placed to the right of their respective staves.

The rhythm of 9/8 is also one of the basic rhythms of the rebetic songs; for example, of the song «Συννεφιασμένη Κυριακή» (“*Cloudy Sunday*”):

Ζεϊμπέκικο παλιό «ΣΥΝΝΕΦΙΑΣΜΕΝΗ ΚΥΡΙΑΚΗ» = «Dimanche ennuagée»

The image shows a musical score for the song «Συννεφιασμένη Κυριακή». It consists of four staves of music in 9/8 time, with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The first staff has a circled 9/8 time signature. Chords are indicated above the notes: D, G, D, D, Em, Em. The second staff has chords: D (D7), G, A7, D. The third staff has chords: D, Em, A7, D, D, A7, D. The fourth staff has chords: G, A, A7, D, A, G, D, A, D. The lyrics are written below the notes: Συννεφιασμένη Κυριακή, μοιαζεις με την καρδιά μου.

Moreover, these rhythms are used both by the modern savants and the modern popular composers, such as Kalomoiris, Hatzidakis, Theodorakis etc. For example, the song “*Drapetsona*” of the cycle of songs “*Politeia A*” of Mikis Theodorakis, is composed in 9/8:

²⁰ TYROVOLA Vassiliki, *The Rhythms of Greek Traditional Dances*, Athens, Ed. Gutenberg, 1998, p. 51.

ΑΡΑΗΤΣΩΝΑ
Drapsona

Introduction ΜΗΚΗΣ ΘΕΟΔΩΡΑΚΗ

Introduction

Κα - θε, καρ - φη του
αρη - τω - νια - σης

αι - κρα και λυ - ρος με - ταν - τω
του α - σπρα και που - λια κα - θε του

Theme A

κα - με το θε - ο - κρη σου - λια
πο - ρε ιδρω - τας κρη - να - σεις - να - ρος

ε - γω και κει η η - ρε του κρη - να
κα θε πα πα θε του κρη - να

Theme B

κα - με το θε - ο - κρη σου - λια
πο - ρε ιδρω - τας κρη - να - σεις - να - ρος

α - ρα και κρη - να - ρος σου - λια
κα θε του κρη - να και σου - λια

Theme C

α - ρα και κρη - να - ρος σου - λια
κα θε του κρη - να και σου - λια

Theme D

κα - με το θε - ο - κρη σου - λια
πο - ρε ιδρω - τας κρη - να - σεις - να - ρος

α - ρα και κρη - να - ρος σου - λια
κα θε του κρη - να και σου - λια

Theme E

α - ρα και κρη - να - ρος σου - λια
κα θε του κρη - να και σου - λια

fin (R)

κα - με το θε - ο - κρη σου - λια
πο - ρε ιδρω - τας κρη - να - σεις - να - ρος

This work has shown how the instruments, the scales and the rhythms to which we have referred are derive from the musical archetypes of Ancient Greece, and do not appear solely in the modern Greek space but characterize the music of most of the Balkans, the Middle East and European Asia. Implying that, the diversity of music across space and time is due to the marriage in various ways of the specific parameters. It has become clear that the geographical position of Greece together with its socio-political evolution over thousands of years have played a defining role in the creation of the Greek Character of music. However without the contribution of the spiritual charisma which characterises the Greeks, there would be no possibility of a reference to “Greek music” but only to one of the “music of Greece”. Any reference would simply be to a spatially limited music while now it is possible to talk about the ecumenical character of the music of Hellenism.

I believe that it is most appropriate to end where we began with the following words of Konstantinos Tsatsos:

Beneath all disguises, beneath all Religious and Political transformations, Greekness remains intact, that spiritual essence of Greece which reminds one of the depths of the sea which stays constant while the surface ripples with the repeated currents and storms.²¹

Santrauka

Muzikiniai archetipai ir „graikiškas muzikinis charakteris“ laiko perspektyvoje

Dėl Graikijos geografinės padėties ir šimtmečius vykusio socialinio bei politinio šalies vystymosi graikų civilizacija buvo veikiama ir Rytų, ir Vakarų kultūrų.

Graikiška muzika, kurios šaknys siekia senovės Graikijos laikus, pasiekė mūsų amžių įvairiomis formomis – kaip bizantinė, liaudies, populiarioji (rebetikos, autorinės dainos) ir akademinė (jonėninė mokykla, graikų nacionalinė mokykla) muzika.

Pranešimo tikslas yra, pirma, charakterizuoti graikų muzikinius archetipus, lyginant pasirinktus visiškai skirtingus (pagal geografinę kilmę, chronologiją ir pan.) muzikinius tekstus; antra, atrasti šiuos muzikinius archetipus autorinėse XX a. dainose, nagrinėjant įvairių kompozitorių, tarp jų ir Mikio Theodorakio bei Mano Hatzidakio, kūrybą; trečia, atskleisti šių muzikinių archetipų reikšmę „graikiškas muzikinis charakteris“ formavimuisi.

²¹ TSATSOS Konstantinos, “I am coming from Greece...”, in “Manual to the Dissertation of Ideas” (Θεμέλιο στην Έκθεση Ιδεών), Athens, 1988, Ed. Baharakis, vol. 3, p. 127.