

Eastern and Western Music Meeting the Greek Orchestra Under the Sound of “Bouzouki”

Whenever we talk about “*bouzouki*” we have to keep in mind that we don’t use simply a term which makes a reference in a musical instrument; we use a term which highlights a very big part from the overall of the meaning, the history and the energy which is closely connected to the geographical and cultural area known as Greece.

It is generally accepted that the root of the word “*bouzouki*” is to be found in the Turkish word ‘*bozuk*’ which means: a) *tuned bad*, b) *a type of musical instrument with nine chords*¹. Also in the Meydan Larousse, Main Dictionary and Encyclopaedia the word ‘*bozuk*’ is referred to “*as the name given to a type of instrument, resembling both the ‘tambouras’ and the ‘baglamas’, found in some parts of Southern and Western Anatolia as well as villages in Kayseri, of medium size with a long neck (the term tambouras must be retain for future reference). Based on a popular etymology of the word, the name is given because changes must be done to the tuning of the instrument for passing from one macam to another (in Greek the macam is referred to as dromos). The instrument, ‘the bozuk’, is widely known as “bouzouki”*².” (pic. 1)



Picture 1

The instrument which has established its presence in the Eastern Mediterranean from the time of Ancient Greece and the Byzantine period up to present bears a long neck and belongs to the lute family. It is present in the music of a great number of the Eastern Mediterranean countries but known by other names depending on the period and those who used it. In Ancient Greece, as well as in the Byzantine period, the instrument was known as the ‘*pandouris*’, ‘*pandoura*’ or ‘*trichordion*’.

The terms ‘*pandoura*’, ‘*pandouris*’ and ‘*fandouros*’ are also to be found in the work “*The Great Theory of Music*” of Chrysanthos, the Archbishop of Durrës. The term ‘*tambouras*’, to be found in his work of a more contemporary period, is used to define the “*bouzouki*” and its variations during the Ottoman Empire. By the end of this period, we come across the Turkish term ‘*bouzouk*’ which in Greek became “*bouzouki*”³.

The Encyclopaedia Britannica defines it as follows:

«*Tanbur: also spelled TAMBUR, long-necked lute played under various names from the Balkans to northwestern Asia. Closely resembling the ancient Greek pandoura and the long lutes of ancient Egypt and Babylon, it has a deep, pear-shaped body; a fretted neck; and two to ten double courses of metal strings fastened with front and side tuning pegs without a pegbox. The tanbur has remained popular since medieval times. Its derivatives include the Greek buzuki, the Romanian tamburitza, and the Indian sitar and tambura*⁴.»

At this point, having defined the term “*bouzouki*” from a semantic as well as an etymological point of view, we are in the pleasant position to be able to take you on a tour of the “*bouzouki*” spanning the times, the classes and the social conditions prevalent, through the different orchestras, forms of music but more basically through the soul of the Greeks.

At the beginning of the 20th Century, the “*bouzouki*” is an instrument used solely by those social classes which are marginalized. The vagabonds (called ‘*magkes*’ or ‘*koutsavakides*’ in Greek), comprise a closed company with a distinct character, way of life, and habits. Each member in his own way supports his individuality within the group, while at the same time, contributes to its existence and continuity: one as a great dancer or singer, another showing courage and daring, while one would play the “*bouzouki*” with a great talent⁵.

Due to their marginalization, the places where this music grew were either in goals and opium dens (‘*tekés*’ in Greek) which were small, dimly lit rooms or sheds wherein low seating was set in a circle and the members

¹ THEOFYLAKTIDOU A., *Turkish-Greek Lexicon*, Istanbul, 1960, p. 105

² Meydan Larousse, *Great Lexicon and Encyclopedia*, p. 540

³ KONSTANTINIDOU Maria, *The Sociological History of Rebetikon*, Athens, 1994, Ed. Medousa-Selas, p. 55-56

⁴ Encyclopaedia Britannica (Edition 1998 in CD ROM); (Copyright 1994-1998 Encyclopaedia Britannica).

⁵ KONSTANTINIDOU Maria, *op.cit.*, p.52

would get together to smoke pot or the nargiley in which case there was always a grate of hot coals in the centre of the place⁶. (pic. 2, pic. 3) Because of their way of life, these people were called amongst other things *'rebetes'*. A term which most likely, derives from the Turkish word *'rebet'* meaning unruly, deserter, illegal one⁷ or from the Slavic word *'rebenok'*⁸ to mean brave.

At this point, a short visit to the three phases of the evolution of *'rebetikon'* is necessary. The first phase is that named "*proto-genre*" (prior to 1922). Chronologically it comes at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution in Greece (1870...) when the masses gather in the cities and a whole new underworld appears which lives and moves in the shadow of the revolution. The songs of this period are invariably anonymous, oral and strictly limited in diffusion being ones whose references are mostly about hashish, incarceration and the world of thieves and vagabonds. The second phase (1922-1940), named the "*classical period*" begins with the mass arrival of the Greek refugees from Asia Minor in the major cities of Greece. Through these people and the culture they carried with them, *'rebetikon'* took its final form. There follows the epoch of the appearance of the undersigned song, the first recordings and the relatively wider diffusion of it due to the presence of a louben proletariat significantly enlarged which co-exists with addicts and contrabandists, with macho-lovers and pick-pockets. The third phase (1940-1953), "*the period of the working class*", which chronologically covers the Italian-German occupations and the Greek Civil War as well as the first period of peace, is the main phase of the evolution of the *'rebetika songs'*. The social basis of *'rebetika songs'* is widened to include an even broader spectrum of the working classes. Nevertheless, *'rebetika songs'* are not uncovered by the Athenian Elite until well after 1953 when it had already started to lose its aura⁹.

The main characteristics of the *rebetikon* are:

a) in a poetical level:

- 1) the thematology of the songs which is referred not only to the hashish and the goal as previously mentioned but also to eroticism, dance and company
- 2) an uncaring and spontaneous style
- 3) the strict prosody of the lyrics with the almost permanent use of the iambic or trochaic verse with 15 syllables
- 4) the domination of the distich as basic poetical unit, the frequent use of rhymes, the short duration of the songs¹⁰
- 5) the use of the chorus which is generalized in the 'period of the working class' of the *rebetikon*, with the songs of Tsitsanis
- 6) the use of interjections during the interpretation such as *'aman'* or *'ah aman'*, that are an expression of feelings

b) in a musical level:

- 1) the scales in use are the "dromoi" which are a mixture of Byzantine modes and Turkish and Arabic makam. The most widely used "dromoi" are: the *rast*, the *usak*, the *houzam*, the *hitzas*, the *hitzaz-kar* or *piréotikos*, the *niavent*, the *sabah*, the *kiourdi*, the *minore*^{11, 12}
- 2) the frequently use of the rhythm of the dances: *zēibékikon* (9/4 or 9/8), *chassapikon* (4/4), *hassaposservikos* (4/4), *tsiftetéli* (4/4), *karsilamas* (9/8), *kamilierikos* (9/8), *aptalikos* (9/8), *kalamatianos* (7/8) and *ballos* (4/4)^{13, 14},



Picture 2



Picture 3

⁶ *ibid.*, p.54

⁷ VOLIOTIS-KAPETANAKIS Ilias, *A Century of popular song*, Athens, Ed. Nea Synora- Livani, 1989, p.84-85

⁸ Encyclopedia Papyros Larousse Britannica, Athens, Collective Edition: Papyros – Great Encyclopedia Larousse – Encyclopedia Britannica, 1992, vol. 51, p.333.

⁹ DAMIANAKOS Stathis, *The Sociology of rebetikon*, Athens, Ed. Plethron, 2001, p.156-157

¹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 58

¹¹ HOLST Gail, *Road to Rebetika*, Limni Evoias, Ed. Deniz Harvey, 2001, p.75

¹² PAGIATIS Charalampos, *Popular Modes (Dromoi)*, Athens, Ed. Fagotto, 1992, p.6-7

¹³ DAMIANAKOS Stathis, *op.cit.*, p.58

¹⁴ HOLST Gail, *op.cit.*, p.77

- 3) the melodic line is characterized by spasmodic glissandi¹⁵
- 4) the improvisation which allows the freedom of expression of the performer in function of his virtuosity and mood
- 5) the *taxim* which is an introduction to the song, melodically and the rhythmically free¹⁶, improvised by the performer in order to initiate the audience in the modality of the song (to the mode on which the song is composed)^{17 18}
- 6) the orchestration which depends as much on the 'bouzouki' and the baglama as it does on the «outi», the «laouto», the «santouri», the «toubeleki», the «violin», «the guitar», «the clarinet», the «accordion», the «piano»¹⁹

More precisely the orchestras formed by the 'rebetes', set the "bouzouki" and the 'baglamas' as protagonists, whilst the other instruments such as the guitar, the accordion, the 'tsoumbous', the violin, the 'kanonaki' played an accompanying role. (pic. 4)

The "bouzouki" as such was a three-course (six strings in three pairs) and its tuning was *re-la-re* {octave} usually and rarely *la-mi-la* and *sol-la-re*²⁰.

The song almost always began with an introductory solo (taxim) of the "bouzouki" player who at a suitable time introduced the rest of the instruments and the voice to the main song with a characteristic movement of the neck of the "bouzouki" and of his head at the same time. It is not by chance that up to now the 'bouzouki' players when playing an analogous introductory solo they set the orchestra in the 'main intro' of the song in exactly the same way.



Picture 4

Rebetik songs have been interpreted by simple people as well as self-taught musicians who sang and played and who were always prepared to improvise depending on the prevalent mood. The most well-known *rebetes* are: Markos Vamvakaris, Yannis Papaioannou, Yovan Tsaous, Vangelis Papazoglou, Anestis Delias, Stratos Pagioumtzis, Stelakis Perpiniadis, Bagianteras, Apostolos Hatzichristos, Mihalis Genitsaris, Vassilis Tsitsanis, Giorgos Mitsakis.

The performers of that time did not admittedly play with the speed, the clarity and the precision with which they do so today. They are however considered virtuoso. Their slow indolent sentimental *taxim* was a spontaneous source of expression of their life experiences and of their psychological mood of the moment. Their knowledge and imaginative use of the musical modes help the *rebetes* to better describe- with the use of appropriate mode- their feelings and their musical ideas.

For this reason today despite the high level of virtuosity of the contemporary 'bouzouki' players, it is difficult for them to achieve equality of style with the exception of a few performers who have studied the music thematology of this particular period. Besides the extensive use of the musical modes is negligent in the contemporary Greek popular music and the Modern Greek musical creations are restricted to the use of three or four modes. The result of which is that contemporary 'bouzouki' players are clearly taught popular-*rebetik* modes but, alas, are unable to come into contact reach their everyday musical lives.

One of the most important roles in the link between 'rebetikon' and popular music was played by Vassilis Tsitsanis²¹ (1915–1984) (pic. 5) who is considered to have been one of the greatest Greek 'bouzouki'



Picture 5

¹⁵ DAMIANAKOS Stathis, *op.cit.*, p.58

¹⁶ TYROVOLA Vassiliki, *The Rhythms of Greek traditional Dances*, Athens, Ed. Gutenberg, 1998, p.113

¹⁷ HOLST Gail, *op.cit.*, p.91

¹⁸ PIERAT Gérard, *Theodorakis: the legend of popular music*, Athens, Ed. Kedros, 1979, p.91

¹⁹ HOLST Gail, *op.cit.*, p.78-81

²⁰ KONSTANTINIDOU Maria, *op.cit.*, p. 56

²¹ http://el.wikipedia.org/wiki/Βασίλης_Τσιτσάνης

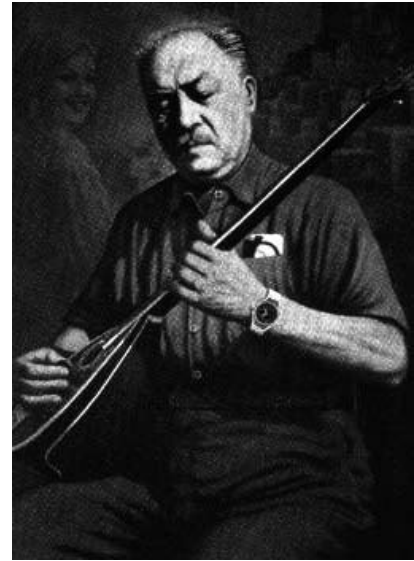
players, composers, and lyricists of all times. In his childhood he learned the mandolin, the violin and of course the *'bouzouki'*, a fact which probably makes him the first person to play the popular instrument but also holds a basic classical music education. His recording career as a composer and *'bouzouki'* player which began in 1937, continued into the 80's and was the onset of a new era of composers-*'bouzouki'* players who became the nucleus of the popular music by opening the way for the arrival of the popular orchestra. At the onset he worked as composer and *'bouzouki'* player, alongside many famous artists of *rebetikon*, such as Vamvakaris (pic. 6), Pagioumtzis, Perdikopoulos and was to become a mentor to great names of popular singers such as Marika Ninou, Sotiria Bellou, Prodromos Tsaousakis, Stelios Kazantzidis, Kaiti Grey.

A similar path to Vassilis Tsitsanis was followed by another great composer- *'bouzouki'* player, Yannis Papaioannou²² (1913–1972) (pic. 7). A skilled musician, he composed popular songs influenced by traditional Greek music as well as his family roots in Asia Minor. His compositions were a fusion of *serenade*, *ballos* and sounds from the Asia Minor. As a performer, Papaioannou first brought into recording the use of primo-secondo *'bouzouki'* which has until then always played first voice. Moreover up to date, Papaioannou is recognized as being the performer who was most capable of improvisation during a performance. It is also worth mentioning that Papaioannou was one of the first Greek popular composers to travel to the USA to sing to the diaspora (1953). On returning he became best man as well as permanent associate musician of Vassilis Tsitsanis.

In those days, the *'bouzouki'* retained the very same characteristics that it had had in the *'rebetik orchestra'*. A three-course (six strings in three pairs) clear acoustic instrument whose handling is characterized by the placing of the right hand at a distance from the sound box and close to the bridge. In time, the composers become more and more famous- moving away from the syndrome of the anonymity of the rebets- to the point where they systematically appear at the Greek night clubs. It is at this time that the electric version of the *'bouzouki'* appears to amplify and ameliorate the natural sound of it.

Tsitsanis and Papaioannou led the way for many worthwhile composers-performers, each of whom made his mark on the popular song, such as Giorgos Mitsakis, Mpampis Mpakalis, Apostolos Kal-daras, Akis Panou...

However, one which stands out from the rest is Manolis Hiotis²³ (pic. 8), if not only for his innovative superior compositions then for his virtuosity in the performance which in his time was considered truly revolutionary. Born in 1920, his first appearance as a musician at the age of fifteen is made at a Greek night club in Nafplion. A year later, in 1936, he moved to Athens where he worked alongside many well-known *rebetik* singers and at just seventeen years old he signs a contract with Columbia as a director first performer. In no time, he composed and distributed his first song "*I don't care about money*"; with this the world of music recognizes his enormous talent and performer's ability. He was the first to use an amplifier with the *'bouzouki'* while in his live performances and thereafter in his recordings he used electrical sound. As a virtuoso performer of the three-course *'bouzouki'*, he was the one who added, according to prevalent opinion, the fourth string to the instrument placing it in a position



Picture 6



Picture 7



Picture 8

²² http://el.wikipedia.org/wiki/Γιάβνης_Παπαϊωάννου

²³ http://www.sansimera.gr/archive/biographies/show.php?id=345&name=Manolis_Hiotis



Picture 9



Picture 10



Picture 11

to capably reproduce the four-part harmony (pic.9, pic.10, pic. 11). This opinion however is today deemed inaccurate since it would appear that the four-course *'bouzouki'* existed prior to this innovation. It has been claimed that in a personal discussion between George Karagiannis and the daughter of Yannis Papaioannou, Chrysa, she mentioned that her father had added a fourth sting to the *'bouzouki'* and sometimes actually appeared using it. How accurate this is, we will never know.

During the 40's and up to 1966, Hiotis composes one success after the other and his career reaches a peak when he co-exists musically with Mary Linda (pic. 12) who beyond being his partner in his personal life was also his singing partner. Together they travelled to the USA where Hiotis gave performances in night clubs



Picture 12

and casinos, coming into contact with musicians of different nationalities and with different musical origins. Influenced by this contact both as a composer and a performer, he became the protagonist of the use of latin rhythms in his songs which lift to the top through fabulous improvised soli, such as in the songs *"My past loves"*, *"Flame"*, *"My swarthy gipsy"*, *"Get up my girl"*. At the same time however, true to the popular idiom, he composed a classical style and remarkably good popular songs.

Beyond the role of composer, in the area of life performance Hiotis becomes the beloved soloist of the popular and scholar composers. It is not by chance that Mikis Theodorakis and Manos Hatzidakis engage him as their very own soloist in a plethora of works.

Manolis Hiotis just as many of above-mentioned composers/performers lived the joy of life in the public eye not only because of their virtuosity but mainly because of their eponymous presence on the composer's world. This explains the absence of publicity of a great number of performers who had maybe more talent than even Hiotis had. Dimitris Stergiou (Bebis), Giannis Stamatiou (Sporos), Giannis Tatasopoulos, Haris Lemonopoulos, Giorgos Tsimpidis, Giannakis Aggelou and some others were a few of the inconspicuous but highly skilled and well-trained performers of that time.

They all belonged to the same environment as Hiotis and the famous singers and creators of their epoch. It is not by chance that at some stage, they all travelled to and were musically active in the USA where they were given recognition by audiences and specialists. Further, most of them played with disparate orchestras of musicians of different nationalities, marrying the Greek element with the latin of Latin-Americans, with the gipsy of the Romanians, with the flamenco of Spanish and with the classical forms, a fact that becomes evident

in their orchestral compositions. According to anonymous declarations, Hiotis himself on many occasions admitted that Lemonopoulos, Tatassopoulos, Aggelou and some others were much better than him.

Twenty years after the first appearance of Vassilis Tsitsanis and the *rebetikon* gained its place to the popular idiom. The fact seems very clear from the formation of the orchestra to the poetic thematology of the songs. The *rebetik* orchestra with the violin, the *'santouri'*; the guitar and the tambourine has been succeeded by the popular orchestra with the piano, the bass, the timpani, the latin percussions and with the occasional replacement of the accordion by the Farfisa or the Hammond. This change of course excludes the use of instruments such as the violin, the accordion or the clarinet previously existed in the *rebetik* orchestra.

Finally, in reference to the poetic text of popular songs, subjects of love, romance, poverty and daily routine they have remained timeless, but the versifiers' style is more fine and refined than in *rebetik* songs. Closely associated with these subjects is that of migration which makes its appearance in popular songs at the same time as the first wave of migrants from Greece headed for America, Germany, South Africa and Australia. A characteristic example is that of Stelios Kazantzidis, the greatest, according to many Greeks, popular singer who sang about the pain of living abroad, difficulty in surviving and the hidden desire to return. And as we are sure, you can all gather the main medium of expression in these cases was not other than the *'bouzouki'*.

At the same time, as the *'bouzouki'* was becoming familiar to the West being identified with Greek music due to the enormous unexpected success of the film "*Never on Sunday*" by Gilles Dassin- protagonist was the important Greek actor and politician Melina Merkouri who sang the "*Kids of Piraeus*" to the music of Oscar award winning Greek composer Manos Hatzidakis- in Greece, there broke out an unprecedented battle over the *'bouzouki'*.

Up to that point, the *'bouzouki'* was associated in the first instance with the marginalized music of *rebetikon* and secondly with light hearted popular songs of variété which were regularly interpreted at the theatre or the cinema and were largely imitations or translations/arrangements of fashionable foreign songs originating in the USA or Latin America. Neither one was intended for anyone else other than the simple people who were in great need of forgetting their daily routines to the sounds of the *'bouzouki'* of Hiotis, dancing everything from *zeibekikon* to *mambo*, from *bolero* to *cha-cha*, dances which were substitutes for the tango or the *waltz* of other eras. On the other hand, the elite were satisfied to attend concerts were the great classical compositions were interpreted or even the works of the National Greek School while looking down on anything that had to do with the popular song, despite the fact that in earlier years the composer Manos Hatzidakis had attempted to break down the disinterest by way of a lecture on the subject of the wealth and beauty of Greek popular songs.

With critical spirit and exceptional sincerity Manos Hatzidakis, made reference to the lack of the Greek character in the light hearted song and highlighted the need for return to the sources and to the wealth found in the people's sensitivity:

"For it would appear somewhat nonsensical to think that the chassapikon may or is going to replace the tango. These popular rhythms have something more than that which is required to meet the needs of our nightly entertainment- even if that style is imposed upon or up held by the working classes.

To want, therefore, to ignore the reality and especially of his country, can only result in disaster. These years are difficult ones and our popular song which is not created by people of the fugue and the counterpoint so that it might not care for sanitation and for makeshift arrangements of healthy, it sings of the truth and only the truth²⁴."

But in that epoch, the proposals of Hatzidakis, despite their importance, fell on deaf ears; in fact they incited strong negative reactions. Characteristically V. Papadimitriou in his article "*The rebetikon and its actual supporters*" published in the journal "*Free letters*", on February 1949, commented:

"In conclusion I would like to highlight the fact that the rebetikon song, as it has been shaped, in no way represents either in its content, in its expressive form, nor in its musical language the popular song, despite the fact that it may display in elements of popular music- something that exists also in the other type of light hearted song- the rebetikon song according to those that it expresses, tend towards collapse and decline²⁵"

²⁴ HATZIDAKIS Manos, "*The interpretation and the place of the popular song*" in HOLST Gail, *Road to Rebetika*, Limni Evoias, Ed. Deniz Harvey, 2001, p.152-153

²⁵ PAPANIMITRIOU V., "*The rebetikon and its actual supporters*", in HOLST Gail, *Road to Rebetika*, Limni Evoias, Ed. Deniz Harvey, 2001, p.151

A little bit earlier than Hatzidakis, on January 1947, the music critic and musicologist Foivos Anogeianakis brought about strong negative reactions both from the elite as well as from his leftists comrades, while in his article “*The rebetikon song*”, written for the newspaper “*The radical*” (Ριζοσπάστης), he talk also about the value of the rebetikon:

“This column has at some point, though restrictively shown concern with the contemporary popular urban song that is to say with the rebetikon. The tradition of the popular song and somewhat less of the Byzantine music is, to the possible surprise of some, continues in these songs which are a genuine form of today’s popular music. Various conditions and terms of life created the demotic song. The battle, the nature, the mountains, the fields, the fair were its sources. Other frameworks of life born the contemporary popular urban song: the life of urban centers. The fast social diversity which was composed after the freedom of 1821, leads musical creation down different paths. The music of the West drags away our “scholars” who in the beginning cut off every attachment to the mother source of the demotic song.

On the other hand, the working classes who remained at a distance to the influence of the West– since the cost of education and the difficulties of life did not allow– continue to sing: this time, however, their life in the cities. Love and romance, the misery of life, many times the feeling of the need to escape, irritated mood or humor become subjects of the songs. The tragedy closely associated with irony, the lyricism with narrative prosaicism are, many times, realized in wonderful melodic forms. Their main characteristic is the original melodic line (...). The lyrics, closely tied with the music– or most times the poet is also the composer–, they have offered us, several times, poems which many poets would envy, for their simplicity and their intensity, for the well–placed adjective or the unassuming expressive power.²⁶”

The urges of Hatzidakis and Anogeianakis, were not in vain. For a decade later, in 1958 a young composer named Mikis Theodorakis took all into consideration when he set in music the sublimes work of the Greek poet Giannis Ritsos, “*The Epitaph*”. In all eight songs of the work: 1. *Where did my boy fly away?* 2. *Your sweetly scented lips*, 3. *On a day in May you left me*, 4. *My star you’ve set*, 5. *You were kind and sweet of temper*, 6. *Whenever you stood near the window*, 7. *If only I had the immortals’ potion*, 8. *My sweet lad you have not been lost*, the influence of traditional Greek popular music is evident not only in the harmonic-melodic level but in also in the rhythm. However, that which was a true innovation was the use of the ‘*bouzouki*’ in the orchestration for which Mikis Theodorakis will be finally rewarded.

The premier of “*The Epitaph*” takes place in Elefsina, in Attica, in August 1960 by the first popular orchestra of Mikis Theodorakis (piano: Giannis Didilis, ‘*bouzouki*’: Kostas Papadopoulos and Lakis Karnezis, guitar: P. Petsas, bass: V. Papagelidis) who was also the conductor, with many great names taking part, as amongst others: the singer Grigoris Bithikotsis and the actresses Irini Papas and Aleka Paizi.

One month later, in September 1960, Manos Hatzidakis recorded the work (Fidelity) with a different orchestration that is a “conventional” musical group, replacing the ‘*bouzouki*’ with the mantolino and with Nana Mouskouri as interpreter. At the same time, a second recording is realized with Mikis Theodorakis’s original orchestration and with the most-prominent ‘*bouzouki*’ performer of the time, Manolis Hiotis and with Grigoris Bithikotsis as interpreter.

The ‘*bouzouki*’ would no longer be played in the traditional rebetikon way. It had become a virtuoso instrument and was tuned as a guitar and not in the traditional way with 5th and 8th open. Hiotis added many of his own ornaments – ‘*tsalimia*’ – to the melodies, contributing invaluable to the work. Moreover, his hard, unmistakable plucking, his heavy tone on the phrases and the slightness of his rhythm which he achieved brought together and balanced out perfectly with the clear, fine voice of Bithikotsis²⁷.

It was Mikis Theodorakis wish for the orchestra of ERT to take part in the recording but the musicians refused to play with Hiotis²⁸!

Both recordings provoked strong reactions from those involved in the Greek music world as well as dividing Greek society:

“Things have taken on the dimensions of a National matter and the conflict over the song continued for a long time becoming a subject of political exploitation from every point of view and ideological stand²⁹.”

²⁶ ANOGEIANAKIS Foivos, “*The rebetikon song*” in HOLST Gail, *Road to Rebetika*, Limni Evoias, Ed. Deniz Harvey, 2001, p. 139–140

²⁷ Gail HOLST, *Mikis Theodorakis: myth and politics in contemporary Greek music*, Athens, Ed. Andromeda, 1980, σελ. 76

²⁸ *ibid.*, p. 57

²⁹ MYLONAS Kostas, *History of the Greek Song*, Athens, Ed. Kedros, 1985, vol. 2, p. 49

The first version was more easily accepted by the Athenian elite while the second invited despair: how dare Mikis Theodorakis put the lyrics of a great poet like Ritsos in the mouth of a rebet like Bithikotsis? How did he dare to marry great poetry with a popular instrument such as the 'bouzouki'? In reality, it was connected to the hashishers who played in the infamous underground hang outs³⁰.

The words of Vassilis Arkadinis in his article "*The Music of Mikis Theodorakis on the Epitaph of G. Ritsos. An attempt to revive our popular song*", which was published in the newspaper "Daybreak" (Αυγή) on 8th of October 1960, showing in a characteristic way the negativity of the people towards the second version of "*The Epitaph*":

"A careful look at the score of the song's melodies, on hearing Nana Mouskouri's recording and their comparison with the recording of Columbia reveal a significant as well as basic difference between these two recordings. In the first one, we have the simple, unclouded, primary conception of the music idea which exudes rigor in the popular song, and the second the consciously, sophisticated bouzouko-rebetik style which not only differentiates and betrays the original musical idea but also destroys the meaning, the power, the grandeur, the charm of a monumental poetical creation which is what the Epitaph of Giannis Ritsos is. What could be worse!

Manos Hatzidakis with the delicate artistic sensitivity which distinguishes him portrayed the depth of the poetic work at the same time as tracing the thread of this really excellent primary musical idea. Rejecting the suggestion of the composer who wanted only 'bouzouki', trusting the interpretation of the songs mainly to Nana Mouskouri while the orchestral accompaniment modestly are discretely underlined.

On the contrary the recording by Columbia basically misquotes the poetic text and the musical conception, touching on parody. The composer himself here presents incomprehensible and unacceptable things in the name of "popularity"³¹.

On the contrary on March 30th 1961, Helen Papadimitriou participating in the research carried out by the newspaper "Daybreak" (Αυγή) referring to "*The Epitaph*", wrote in her article:

"I wish to express without reservation and in a few words my joy over the co-operation of poetry and popular music which to begin with will constitute a point of reference for everyone as well as for the clear, essential success, the unnoticeable strong virtuosity of Theodorakis and Bithikotsis, for drawing out the lyrical vein of Ritsos and for giving to his lyrics an heroic almost ceremonial meaning³²."

Mikis Theodorakis did not hesitate to take side in the debate which concerned the Greek popular music and the role of the 'bouzouki', this much discussed instrument, had to have in Greek music. In particular, during the presentation of the recording of "*The Epitaph*" which was organized in September 1960 by the Association of Cretan Students, Mikis Theodorakis took the opportunity to express his opinion about the popular song as well as about the 'bouzouki' and its role in the contemporary Greek popular music:

"The 'bouzouki' is to Greek music what the guitar is to Spanish flamencos, the balalaika for the Russian songs, and the accordion for the Parisian waltz. It is in some ways the modern national popular instrument. It is what gives us a prototype and individualistic stamp. If there is a vast prejudice to it then the 'bouzouki' is not to blame but those who use it. The instrument in itself is not, as you know, anything more than simple wood and strings. No moral, no prevention, no social miasma can be part of those simply materials.

Let's take things in hand, with its great name 'bouzouki', which it would appear bothers us so. What technical possibilities does it offer us? What timbre does it give us? What must we examine? The hashishers played it. Yes, alas. The knife is played by murders but we cut our bread and eat it...³³"

Forty-two years later on February 26th, 2002, Petros Pandis, one of Mikis Theodorakis' closest colleagues, was asked his opinion:

³⁰ *ibid.*, p. 49

³¹ ARKADINOS Vassilis, "*The Music of Mikis Theodorakis for the Epitaph of Giannis Ritsos; an effort of renewal of our popular song*" in *Theodorakis Mikis, About Greek Music*, Athens, Ed. Kastaniotis, 1986, p. 190-191

³² PAPADIMITRIOU Eleni, "*Untitled Article*" in *Theodorakis Mikis, About Greek Music*, Athens, Ed. Kastaniotis, 1986, p.227

³³ THEODORAKIS Mikis, *Conference in THEODORAKIS Mikis, About Greek Music*, Athens, Ed. Kastaniotis, 1986, p.176

"I can't understand why people did not accept the 'bouzouki'. Mikis always said that what was important was the way in which the instrument is used. He said that with the knife you can kill someone but also cut bread which is a saintly act. The 'bouzouki' was badly used but when you play Mikis's songs it takes on other dimensions {so} why not {use} it in a symphony? It is an instrument just like every other at least I can't see any difference"³⁴.

Consequently, it is clear that despite the conflict which broke out amongst the critics in the 60's, the use of the 'bouzouki' did not create problems for those who understood it as just one more musical instrument like all the rest without giving any social or other connotation to it.

And so, four years later, in 1964, Theodorakis once again becomes daring by presenting what may be considered his most significant work, the popular oratorio *"Axion Esti"*, to the poetry of the Nobel Prize winner Odysseus Elytis. In this three-part work: *Genesis- Passion- Axion Esti*, which the internal structure depends on the narration (in prose), on the hymn (in free verse) and the chorus (in metric verse), Mikis Theodorakis uses respectively a narrator, a chanter and a popular singer. The musical structure is completed with a mixed choir, a symphonic orchestra (1-2 flutes, 1-2 oboes, 1-2 clarinets in B, 1-2 bassoons, 2 horns, 3 trumpets in B, 3 trombones, 1 tuba, strings, timpani, percussions: drums, bass drum, triangle, tam-tam, toms, bongos, tambourine, military tambourine, tambour de basque, glockenspiel, metal phone, xylophone), and the popular orchestra (2 'bouzoukis', santouri, 4-8 mantolins, 2 pianos, 1 acoustic guitar, 1 classical guitar, 1 electric bass, drums).

In this very co-existence of the symphonic orchestra with the popular orchestra and because of the creation of a new world of sound, which Theodorakis called *"meta-symphonic"*, his new innovation takes life. Never before had the 'bouzouki' or the santouri shared their sound with that of instruments of the Western classical orchestra nor had the instruments of the symphonic orchestra shared theirs with traditional instruments. For example, in the hymn *"My foundations"*, the orchestral accompaniment is based on the *"lamentation of Epirus"*: the clarinet imitates the technique of playing of Epirus, while the santouri and the percussions imitate the sound of lambs and so creating a naturalistic orchestral picture. In the popular song *"With the star lantern"* which begins with the four-vocal choir accompanied by simple chords on the high-pitched areas of the piano, and the 'bouzouki' enters simultaneous with the singer, placing emphasis on the grandeur of the lyrics: *"Where can I found my soul? The four-leaves tear..."* (pic. 13, pic. 14, pic. 15).

The exact same approach of the co-existence of the symphonic and popular orchestras was adopted by Mikis Theodorakis when he set in music his equally monumental work *"Canto General"* to the poetry of the Chilean poet Pablo Neruda. Even though the first orchestration of the work executed in 1972 in Paris involves only the popular orchestra, the final arrangement of the work (1973-1980) includes mezzo-soprano, baritone, mixed choir and symphonic orchestra which comprises 3 'bouzouki's, 1 electric guitar, 1 acoustic guitar, 1 12-strings guitar, electric bass, 2 pianos, percussions for 6 performers. In this work Mikis Theodorakis keeping the Spanish language of the poetic work, he matched it with the traditional Greek and Latin-American rhythms.

If during the 60's and the 70's, Mikis Theodorakis manages to insert traditional musical instruments into the symphonic orchestra, twenty years later he fills the popular orchestra with instruments of the symphonic orchestra as for example in the second recording of the contemporary popular musical tragedy *"The Ballad of the Dead Brother"* where the sound of the violin, the violoncello, the clarinet, the trumpet tie harmonically with the sound of the 'bouzouki' and the santouri.

While Mikis Theodorakis attempts to achieve the union of savant and popular music through the co-existence of the symphonic and the popular orchestra and to use the 'bouzouki' as the main link, those who followed on from Manolis Hiotis, such as Christos Nikolopoulos or Thanasis Polykandriotis, they attempt among other things to bring about the evolution and the promotion of the technique of the playing of the instrument.

As already mentioned from the time of Hiotis, the 'bouzouki' began to move to a more superior level with regards to skill and thematology, then the influence of the narrow framework of popular music being filled with a plethora of elements to be found in classical music and in the world-ethnic- music (jazz, latin, blues). Therefore it was to be accepted that the handling of the instrument would change taking on a style more closely associated with the skills required to play a classical instrument.

³⁴ Interview of Petros Pandis to Kalliopi STIGA in STIGA Kalliopi, *Mikis Theodorakis: Le chantre du rapprochement de musique savante et de la musique populaire*, Thèse de Doctorat, Lyon, Université Lumière-Lyon II, Novembre 2006; vol. 3, p. 1333-1334

81

20

M. 1
M. 2
M. 3
M. 4
PNS
Solo
Bass
S.
A.
T.
B.
VI. 1
VI. 2
Al.
Vc.
C.B.

Picture 13

82

25

M. 1
M. 2
M. 3
M. 4
PNS
Solo
Bass
S.
A.
T.
B.
VI. 1
VI. 2
Al.
Vc.
C.B.

Picture 14

83

30

M. 1
M. 2
M. 3
M. 4
PNS
Solo
Bass
S.
A.
T.
B.
VI. 1
VI. 2
Al.
Vc.
C.B.

Picture 15



Picture 16



Picture 17

In 1963, Christos Nikolopoulos³⁵ (pic. 16) makes his appearance on the night club scene in Athens and in Greek recording studios, at the age of fourteen. This virtuoso, he becomes active as a session musician over the following twenty years, and thanks to his recordings the sound of the instrument changed. He introduces a new approach to it too as well as changing the way in which a *'bouzouki'* player sits opposite a microphone during a studio recording.

In a similar way, Thanasis Polykandriotis³⁶ (pic. 17) who began his career as a *'bouzouki'* player around 1964, as a session musician, and was for some twenty-five years a follower of the great performers of rebetik and popular music, manages to achieve changes in the sound of the instrument though not as perceptible as Nikolopoulos did.

These changes were largely due to a number of general aspects and of hidden details which we shall highlight for you:

The majority of *'bouzouki'* performers used large triangular extra heavy plucks of the Ibanez type. The result of this was that while the instrument vibrated more, the sound was noticeably harsher. During Nikolopoulos era, the use of a medium to heavy pluck was employed and so while the instrument did not lose its vibration or intensity and the sound produced was lighter.

Almost all *'bouzouki'* players of previous generations played by placing the right hand at a distance from the hole of the sound box where the sound emanated, placing it near the bridge. This allowed for a harsher sound which of course complimented the style and the thematology of the music being played. Nikolopoulos and to a degree Polykandriotis move their right hands much closer to the hole of the sound box and consequently the sound is more atmospheric and softer without losing mass and presence.

The fact that Greek music was being more and more influenced by a number of different styles of music due largely to the geographical position of the country but also to the temperament of the Greek people, made it was necessary for those playing its music to be as chameleons. The further west the melody was, the greater the precision, accuracy and lack of freedom in movement innovation and sound improvisation the player had. While the further east the melody was, the greater the need to follow the musical idiom and the idiosyncrasy of the music. On many occasions many a talented *'bouzouki'* players has dared to imitate the sounds of eastern instruments (such as the *saz*, the *oud* or the *kanonaki*) as well as eastern motives (non-tempered music on a tempered instrument). Characteristic is the example of the great Giannis Palaiologou who has gone down the history not only as a highly skilled player but also as the player who introduced *à la turque* and *à l'arabia* to the *'bouzouki'*.

From the end of the 70's, the sound of the *'bouzouki'* in the studio begins to move away from its electrical nature and by conserving the historical cycles, to return to its more natural sound, that of an instrument played

³⁵ <http://www.cnikolopoulos.gr/>

³⁶ <http://www.polykandriotis.gr/>

close to the microphone (instrument-performer-microphone). While technology has advanced increasing the demands made on performers, the mistakes made by musicians before the more sensitive microphones, are not allowed. Not only mistakes in the notes being played but also in finger positioning or dragging.

The path of Nikolopoulos- Polykandriotis is followed from the 80's to present by performers of exceptional technique, such as the fondly remembered Vassilis Iliadis- confidant of Manos Hatzidakis in "*The Epoch of Mellisande*" (1980) and probably the first of the new generation to systematically study classical music on the '*bouzouki*', Panagiotis Stergiou, Manolis Karantinis, Giogos Dramalis, Giannis Bithikotsis, Panagiotis Apostolidis, Thanassis Vassilas, Lakis Laftsis, Makis Mavropoulos, Manolis Pappos, Pandelis Constandinidis...

These performers belong to a generation which dominates today in the concert (live) and recording execution of the '*bouzouki*'. Also they are performers who have not only studied popular and ethnic music but hold knowledge of classical music. They play a plethora of instruments, read the score (a fact that was almost non-existent in previous generations), they have knowledge of composition for orchestra and many of them have studied classical composers.

At this point, we would like to make a reference to a distinguished teacher of '*bouzouki*', Themis Papavassiliou, who since 1981 creates a School for the teaching of '*bouzouki*', through such innovations as: 1) teaching virtuosity by obliging his students to play works of Paganini (24 caprices), Bach (Preludes and Fugues), Chopin (Fantaisies), Rhodes (24 caprices for violin), and generally any piece of classical music that can be played by '*bouzouki*', 2) teaching his students musical theory- harmony- counterpoint- elements of fugue, composition and orchestration- in contrast to the majority of professors who teach through experience, 3) concentrating on prima-vista and the automatic dictée musicale, 4) conveying to his students mathematics and physics with the aim of making clear the phenomenon of sound and of the fabrication of the instrument so that they might learn the frequencies areas of the '*bouzouki*' and so adapt their handling.

The blossoming of the virtuosity of the '*bouzouki*' and its promotion in the West as a member of the symphonic orchestra, through the works of Mikis Theodorakis, brings the '*bouzouki*' closer and closer to the symphonic orchestra. From 1970, a short time after Haris Lemonopoulos' cooperation with The Royal Albert Hall, Thanasis Polykandriotis recorded along with the symphonic orchestra RCA, works of Theodorakis, Hatzidakis, Xarhakos in Rome and in Napoli at the RCA studios.

The Song Festival of Thessaloniki has innovated the symphonic orchestra in each annual final competition, making the '*bouzouki*' a permanent instrument in it. Great Greek singers and composers give performances of their works orchestrated for symphonic orchestra and the '*bouzouki*' plays a solo role (G. Dalaras, Glykeria, G. Theofanous). Many performers dare to execute classical works with the '*bouzouki*' and the symphonic orchestra or to compose their own musical works on classical motives. Finally with reference to recording, there are times when the piece of music allows orchestrations employ symphonic orchestra in conjunction with popular ones. In this context too, the '*bouzouki*' holds the place of a soloist (Haris Andreadis, Giorgos Pagiatis, Tsik Nakasian, Kostas Ganoselis, Kostas Klavas).

So in an opposite way, the popular orchestra and the '*bouzouki*' on many occasions become hosts to, if not symphonic orchestra, then to quartets, sextets and octets of classical symphonic music. The result is the same: the '*bouzouki*' despite being host, coexists with the western musical idiom, never hesitating to marry it with very eastern sounds, while many times we talk of coexistence and not of the alteration of the character of one of the two. Of course, such a thing ceases to be true when we talk about symphonic orchestras of Middle Eastern countries (such as Glykeria with the Israeli Symphonic Orchestra). This situation could be due in part to the change in the prototype of the sound of the popular music in Greece. As technology evolves and as music becomes globalized, the need for a more complete, richer and more voluminous -in terms of frequencies and orchestrations- result is created. The use in part or totally of symphonic orchestra basically helps this to be achieved.

We would like to hope that through this trip through the decades and through the personalities associated with the '*bouzouki*', we have brought you closer to the nature of the instrument as well as to the idiosyncrasies and the psychology of those performers involved. It is quite true that in short spaces of time, instruments and performers are transformed in natural but inevitable way. Before closing, we believe that it is worth saying a few words about the reality of this fact.

As has been previously mentioned and as we believe you know, Greece due to its geographical position or to social or political idiosyncrasies exists as a natural border, just as the crossroad, of East and West. From ancient times up to date, this place has been the passage from a world-theory and bio-theory to another and we have learned to live with that from the time of our birth as if it were natural. This fact cannot be proven

in any other way than through our cultural heritage. While on the subject music, it is worth mentioning that our country has as many different musical styles as geographical regions.

Our popular music is part of our tradition and it cannot nor should attempt to break away from this destiny. With the passing of time, the musical heritage of the Greek refugees from the East was bound to meet the musical traditions of metropolitan Greece and come to co-exist with Western music which either through the scholar Greek composers who studied in the West or because of those who went as immigrants or because of globalization, was and is a living organism of Greek musical reality. In all of that the *'bouzouki'* was both a point of reference and meeting while its timber which from an early stage was consistent with the Greek popular element, it was the very arable land on which this co-existence was able to bear fruits.

Since this timber is a point of reference, it would be true to say that perhaps this instrument is the most suitable to conserve the Greek musical identity as a unit in the global musical mosaic which appears in this new era more and more homogenous. It remains in the hands of the servants of the art of Music and future *'bouzouki'* performers whether this instrument will be able to realize such great responsibility. May be for us it is too later but the historian of the future will reveal whether or not mankind- who gives life to instruments- is able to stand tall in the face of the situation.

Santrauka

Rytų ir Vakarų muzikos susitikimą su graikų orkestru lydi buzukio garsai

Dėl Graikijos geografinės padėties jos kultūra buvo veikiama ir Rytų, ir Vakarų. Ši dvejojama įtaka akivaizdžiai matoma graikų muzikoje, kurios šaknys siekia antikos laikus, o istoriškai ji pasireiškė įvairiomis formomis – per bizantinę, liaudies (jonėninė mokykla, graikų nacionalinė mokykla) ir populiariąją (rebetikos, autorinės dainos) muziką.

Šio pranešimo tikslas – atskleisti ypatingą buzukio reikšmę „graikiško tembro“ formavimuisi. Žvelgiant iš istorinio, sociologinio ir muzikinio taško, nušviečiama graikų orkestro evoliucija nuo *rebetiki compania* (1900–1940 m. populiariusis rebetikų orkestras) iki šiuolaikinio graikų (populiariosios muzikos ir simfoninio) orkestro. Dėl šios evoliucijos rytietiški tembrai yra sėkmingai derinami su vakarietiškais stiliais, ir atvirkščiai.