Opting for a pragmatic rather than a romantic view of history, the laographia of this period was able, during the Second World War, to refute successfully the renewed attacks, instigated by the propaganda of the German occupying army, against the "purity" of the Greek race and the continuity of Greek culture. The German propaganda, in trying to prevent the German soldiers stationed in Greece from making the connection between the Ancient and the Modern Greeks, published and circulated books and pamphlets repeating the old thesis of the Fallmerayer about the Slavic origin of the Modern Greeks and, as if that was not enough, adding a new theory about their "Levantine" origin. The Germans used these arguments in order to deprive the Greeks of their rights on their ancestral "Lebensraum." 21 Greek folklore answered to the task of providing the continuity of Greek culture with arguments drawn, this time, from documentary rather than speculative history.

21 About Kyriakides' efforts to refute the German propaganda on the "purity" of the Greek race during the Second World War, see my Theory of Folklore in Greece, pp. 127-31.

The Art of Greek Folk Music

RODERICK BEATON

GREEK MUSIC HAS ALWAYS SUFFERED from a bad press. Even in classical times, when a sophisticated musical tradition flourished, the art of the practical musician was not held in particularly high esteem. Most ancient writers on the subject considered acoustic theory far superior to music-making, and Plato, in the Republic, is even harder on musicians than he is on poets, taking away from them most of their musical instruments, restricting the modes in which they should be allowed to play, and finally subordinating music to the words it accompanies. 1

In Byzantine times the Church took a predictably stern view of all music other than that prescribed for its own rituals, and this Church music, up until the later Middle Ages, was probably quite distinct in character from the secular music of Greek-speaking lands, of which not a note survives. The views of the Cypriot monk, and later saint, Neophylos Enkleistos, toward the end of the twelfth century, are commonplace in their condemnation, but are especially interesting because Neophylos was the first writer ever to record a fragment of what is recognizably a modern Greek folk poem. 2 The chances are that this description of a wedding feast is not mere conventional tirade but based on first-hand knowledge: "from the morning they devote themselves to blameworthy and diabolical works, I mean dances and instruments and music and shameful acts and wine-bibbing and other things hateful to God and to the Devil most pleasing." 3

1 Republic 398-400.
3 Tsiknopoulou, "Γεωγραφικά και λαογραφικά του Άγιου Νεοφύτου," Κυπριακή Στοιχεία 26 (1962) 106.
In more recent times, and even down to the present, Greek music has had to contend, not so much with the censure of the Church, as with the in comprehensibility of western-trained ears. The buffeting and often disapproval or worse, of the western auditor, goes back to at least the fifteenth century, when Canon Pietro Casola, visiting Crete in 1494, was "greatly astonished at the chanting of the said Greek [priests], because it appeared to me that they chanted with great discord." 3

The English and French travelers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were less hesitant in their condemnation. William Gell describes, of a visit in 1804, "the discordant and screaming sounds of two Turkish clarinets or hautboys intended to be in unison." 4 Chandler in 1776 complained of being tormented by his gardener "with droning songs and the melancholy tinklings of a rude lyre"; 5 and Edward Dodwell in 1805, having remarked that "the music was of a most discordant and unharmonious kind," strictly forbade singing among his retainers on an archaeological pilgrimage, on the grounds that "the traveler is sometimes tormented in this manner by his attendants from sun-rise to sun-set." 6

Much more perceptive, however, was the comment of Dalloway at about the same time. "They reject notes," he writes (presumably meaning written notes), "depending entirely upon memory; but are notwithstanding guided by strict rules of composition, according to their own musical theory." 7 The broad truth of Dalloway's observation is now recognized by musicologists, who see their task as being to interpret the "rules of composition" and the "musical theory" of a musical tradition such as the Greek, in which these things are not explicitly set out.

My purpose in this paper is to point to some of these, in order to show how, despite its strangeness to western ears and its relative neglect by serious musicology, Greek music is not either "ruddy" or "primitive," nor, conversely, intelligible only to those who have grown up with it. Traditional Greek music is a developed art form in its own right, and can be valued as such. My starting point will be the differences between Greek music and European classical music. Certain of these differences are historical. Others are best treated as purely formal.

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3M. M. Newett, Canon Pietro Casola's Pilgrimage to Jerusalem in the Year 1494 (Manchester, 1907), p. 200.
6Edward Dodwell, A Classical and Topographical Tour through Greece, During the Years 1801, 1805, and 1806 (London, 1819), 2, p. 18.

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The absence in Greece of the kind of musical specialization found in the west and the consequent lack of a classical or art-music tradition, have meant that the clearcut division in the west between the classical music of the courts and later of the nineteenth-century concert-going bourgeoisie on the one hand, and the music of the "folk" and their non-specialist musicians on the other has no counterpart in Greek music. The traditional secular music of Greece can really only be called...
folk music. Even though there is no distinct, classical tradition of Greek music, this folk music has on occasion served as the basis for developments which can claim “classic” status within the broad tradition. One was the sophisticated cafe music of the Asia Minor and Greek mainland cities exemplified in the early rebetika. For a time around the beginning of this century the patronage, not of wealthy families such as the Borgia and the Gonzaga, but of the clients of hashish-houses and brothels spending the proceeds of pettier misdeeds, did allow musicians to specialize in their art, and also exacted high standards of performance from them. A second development of the tradition which may claim “classic” status would be the so-called new wave of popular music in the 1960s, made internationally famous by Hadjidakis and Theodorakis. This is not traditional music of course; it is the work of professional composers and performers. But its weaving together of elements of traditional Greek and of western music may represent, at its best at least, a significant innovation from within the tradition of Greek music.

A second historical feature which distinguishes modern Greek secular music from that of the west, and which is related to the absence of a classical tradition, is that the music is not written down. There are no scores to study, no parts to distribute, and of course no controlling figure like the orchestral conductor. For most of this music, there is no composer either. The performer is himself a composer. He learns the melodies he plays or sings from hearing them performed by others, but in the absence of a fixed musical text, he is expected not to repeat exactly what he has heard, but to vary it, adding to it or subtracting from it, and to use it as the basis for whatever ornaments his skill permits. At the same time there is a marked conservatism in this process of continuous composition — the broad outline of tunes or of melodic phrases often remains unchanged over a period of time, although no two renditions are remotely identical, when compared note for note.

The fact that the composer and performer are necessarily the same person is another instance of the non-specialization that distinguishes this tradition from classical music. The composer-performer is never likely to explore the art of composition to the theoretical heights of a Schoenberg; nor can he be expected to develop the technical possibilities of his voice or of his musical instrument to the level attained by modern concert performers. But it is important to remember that the concert performer has no responsibility whatever to provide the music he sings or plays. The folk musician who does both is doing something different from either the classical composer or the concert performer, and if he does his job well, it need be no easier than either of theirs.

**Formal differences**

The formal characteristics of Greek music also require that very different demands are placed on the Greek performer/composer than on the composer of a classical piece of music. I shall mention three of these: monody, tonality and rhythm.

_a. Monody._ Almost all of modern Greek music is monodic, that is to say, there is only one musical line, the melody, without either harmony or counterpoint. The absence of harmony is common to the music of the Islamic world, although historically it may also be related to the absence of instrumental music of the Orthodox liturgy. In the west it was the development of keyboard instruments, beginning with the church organ, that made harmonization in instrumental music readily possible. Be that as it may, in Greek music when two or more instruments play together, only a melodic line is present. And since the melodies are not fixed, it follows that two instruments or a voice and instrument will not produce an identical melody. Musicologists have devised the term “heterophony” for the resulting sound, and this term quite correctly emphasizes that unison, the lack of which so disturbed William Gell, is not intended.

Sometimes a plucked stringed instrument such as the lagouto (a long-necked lute) or guitar is used to provide rhythmic backing to the melody, as is common in Crete when the bowed lyra is accompanied by the lagouto. In these cases the players strum elementary chords, but it is not clear how far back this practice goes. Apart from this, the nearest to harmony that is generally found in Greece is the drone, which usually varies by no more than that one note. This is known in Church music as the leof (or level note), a name which suggests that its function is to keep the principal singer in tune. A fascinating exception to the general pattern is found in the northern part of Epirus, where the principle of the drone has been taken further to the point where a group of five

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10 Described in Gail Holst, _Theodorakis: Myth and Politics in Modern Greek Music_ (Amsterdam, 1980).

or six singers, with well defined parts, produce a kind of "polyphony" based on the pentatonic scale.

b. **Tonality.** Mention of the pentatonic scale serves to introduce the topic of the tonality of Greek music. And in this too, the northwest where the music is pentatonic, is unique. Elsewhere Greek music is modal. The modes of modern Greek music — called δρόμοι (roads) by instrumental musicians and ἴχνου, their old Byzantine name, in the music of the church — are probably not connected with the modes (τρόποι or ἰχνον) of ancient Greek music. The well-intentioned attempt, which is still sometimes made, to apply the ancient names of modes, Phrygian, Lydian, etc., to the modes of modern Greek music obscures the fact that the meaning of these names and the functioning of these modes in ancient music is still far from understood. The equation of the ancient modes with the actual scales which sometimes bear their names in modern musical theory, was made in the middle ages, at a time when only the names, and nothing of the musical practice, of the ancient Greeks survived.\(^{12}\)

Western European music is based entirely on only two modes, the major and the minor, which compared to Arabic, Turkish or modern Greek music represents real poverty in this area of musical elaboration. The vocal music of the Greek church recognizes eight distinct modes. Just how many modes are represented in folk music is a matter for theoretical debate: a great many melodies cover quite a small tonal range (usually five or six notes) so that it is not always easy or useful to determine the mode (that is, the octave series) to which they theoretically belong.\(^{13}\)

The music of the east and north of the Greek-speaking world has the richest variety of modes. In these areas, and in urban folk music (cafe music or rebetika), the modal system used was that of Turkish music, known as the makam system. Greek instrumental musicians in Asia Minor, in the cities, and throughout much of the northern Greek mainland, used the Turkish names for the δρόμοι in which they played — and this is still true of many surviving refugee musicians and their descendants who came into Greece from these areas after 1922. In the Turkish makam system the octave is not divided up into the whole tones and half-tones of the European major and minor scales, but into a variety of intervals of different sizes, many of which sound out of tune to
damaged ears, and whose arrangement in various sequences makes up the characteristic features of each mode, or makam. The distinctive feature of this tonality is not, as is sometimes thought, the use of quarter tones, but rather of a variety of different microtones, none of which corresponds exactly to the semi- or to the quarter-tone of western theory.\(^{14}\)

These intervals are common to much Greek music, even to types of music where the δρόμοι are little used and overt Turkish influence is much less. The characteristic tonality of Greek church music, which is quite unlike that of either western music or even of the Slav Orthodox churches to the north, is based on a very similar system, and it is striking that in the last century, books of church hymns sometimes gave the names of Turkish makamlar in place of or alongside the old Byzantine names for the church modes.

Something of this distinctive tonality is also found in the folk music of the central and southern mainland and the southern islands, although it is less common there to find the Turkish names being used for the modes, or to hear such modal variety in the music. But in the islands especially, diatonic influence, presumably from the west, is strongly established and probably goes back to the days of the Venetians. Only the Ionian islands, off the west of Greece, escaped Turkish domination and musical influence entirely.

c. **Rhythm.** Here again it is remarkable (for the westerner at least) to discover the relative poverty of rhythmical possibilities of European music compared with Greek. All European rhythmic invention (at least until relatively recently) has been based upon the regular repetition of groups of two or of three beats. But in Greek music groups of twos and threes may alternate in a wide variety of fixed patterns, so that in addition to bars consisting of two or three beats or their multiples, the equivalent of the "bar" in Greek music may be made up of an odd number of beats: five, seven or nine, split up into varying patterns of twos and threes. Five, for instance, may be played as a group of three followed by a group of two, or as a group of two followed by a group of three. Seven may be divided either as 3 + 4 (3 + 2 + 2), or as 4 + 3 (2 + 2 + 2), and there are many different ways of dividing a bar of nine beats.

These often highly complex rhythmical patterns are not counted out by beat by the performer. Rather, from listening to other musicians, he learns to internalize the rhythmic pattern on which the music

\(^{12}\)For an analysis of the diachronic development of Greek music and relevant bibliography see Roderick Beaton, "Modes and Roads: Factors of Change and Continuity in Greek Musical Tradition," *Annual of the British School at Athens* 75 (1980).

\(^{13}\)See Academy of Athens, *Ελληνικά δημοτικά τραγούδια, Τόμ. Γ’, μουσική βιβλίο* (Athens, 1968), pp.xv-xxv and discussion by Beaton ("Modes and roads").

is based, the length and shape of phrases, and of possible ornamental figures, that will fit into the pattern. All of these rhythms belong to dances, with formal steps, and the steps of the dance are an essential part of the rhythm of the music. The rhythmic pattern of the kalama

tianos syritos, almost the national dance of Greece, is natural to the
point of being hackneyed, to Greek ears, but even this relatively sim-
ple rhythmic pattern (3 \div 4) can sound strange and elusive to the
western listener. The kalamatainos is danced all over Greece, as is the
zebekteko, a dance in slow nine-rhythm originally from Asia Minor but
widely diffused through the urban tradition. Apart from these
panhellenic dances, rhythmic complexity is largely confined to the
north and east — to the northern mainland, especially Macedonia, and
to Anatolia, especially Pontos.

As a result of its different historical evolution and formal struc-
ture, modern Greek traditional music offers quite different oppor-
tunities and challenges to the musician than those explored and over-
come in the conservatories of Europe and America. The development
of melody, in the absence of harmony or counterpoint, focuses attention
on the melodic line and its ornamentation. The complex tonality of
the mode system offers opportunities for improvisation which have long
dehisced out of use in the European tradition, and the large number of
rhythmic patterns allows a complexity of rhythmic invention such as
has only begun to be explored by western composers, with all the ad-
vantages of pen and manuscript paper, in this century.

Epilogue

So far I have dwelt upon the past, and my emphasis has been on
what is traditional in Greek music. The traditional music is still sung,
played and enjoyed, not in a spirit of revival, as is usually the case with
Anglo-American folk music, but as part of the life of the people in
the Greek provinces, and increasingly of people who have moved into
Athens from the provinces bringing their music and musicians with
them. But inevitably the tradition has been affected by the modern
world, and particularly by the rapid re-orientation of the Greeks away
from the Islamic middle east and toward western Europe. The effects
of this re-orientation can easily be seen in music, in the adoption of
western musical instruments, in the introduction or development of in-
stuments with fixed frets such as the guitar or bouzouki which can
only play in a European tonality, and in the gradual rounding up or
down of the characteristic intervals of Greek tonality to conform to
the western diatonic scales.

But it would be wrong to take a nostalgic view and to suggest that
these influences are necessarily for the worse. A tradition, if it is alive,
is never static, and the little we know of the history of Greek music
suggests that it has always been receptive, in a creative as well as a purely
mimetic way, to changing outside influences. Present influence from
Europe has greatly enhanced the technology of instrument-making, for
instance, as well as the sophistication of many of the musical in-
struments available to traditional performers, so allowing them to realize
their musical idioms with greater range and accuracy.

Another effect of influence from the west has been the creation of
a new "popular music" (λαϊκή μουσική), which as mentioned earlier
represents a development of the tradition in a new and, we may still
hope, fruitful direction. Most interesting in the last decades have been
the experiments of composers, in a broadly popular idiom, in using
the instruments, melodies, rhythms and sometimes even the singers of
traditional music to create new effects, often allied in an unusually ef-
fective way with the work of serious poets. Suffice it to name in con-
clusion the achievements in this direction of Mikis Theodorakis in the
60’s of Yannis Markopoulous (with the voice of Nikos Xylouris) in the
early 70’s, of the talented and sadly unostrusive Eleni Karaindrou with
a single record published in 1974, I Megali Agrypnia, and of Christo-
doulos Haliris.