

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

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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, Neophytos Enkleistos, toward the end of the twelfth century, are commonplace in their condemnation, but are especially interesting because Neophytos 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.

² See Roderick Beaton, *Folk Poetry of Modern Greece* (Cambridge, 1980), pp. 77-8.

³ I. Tsiknoropoulos, "Γεωγραφικά και λαογραφικά τοῦ Ἁγίου Νεοφύτου," *Κυπριακαὶ Σπουδαὶ* 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 incomprehension of western-trained ears. The bafflement 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 discords."⁴ 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 clarionets or hautboys intended to be in unison."⁵ Chandler in 1776 complained of being tormented by his gardener "with droning songs and the melancholy tinklings of a rude lyre";⁶ and Edward Dodwell in 1805, having remarked that "the music was of a most discordant and unharmonious kind," strictly forbade singing among his retinue 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!"⁷

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."⁸ 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 "rude" 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.

⁴M. M. Newett, *Canon Pietro Casola's Pilgrimage to Jerusalem in the Year 1494* (Manchester, 1907), p. 200.

⁵William Gell, *Narrative of a Journey in the Morea* (London, 1823), p. 180.

⁶Richard Chandler, *Travels in Asia Minor and Greece*, 3rd ed. (London, 1817).

⁷Edward Dodwell, *A Classical and Topographical Tour through Greece, During the Years 1801, 1805, and 1806* (London, 1819), 2, p. 18.

⁸Cited in J. Griffiths, *Travels in Europe, Asia Minor and Arabia* (London, 1805), p. 116.

Historical differences

Greece, unlike most other European countries, has never really assimilated the classical musical tradition of her western neighbors. The reason for this is partly religious — the deep-seated hatred of the Greek Orthodox for everything Frankish (i.e. Western) goes back even beyond the Fourth Crusade. But probably more crucial was the effect of Ottoman Turkish rule in almost all parts of the Greek-speaking world during the very centuries (the sixteenth to the nineteenth) when the European musical tradition was reaching its fullest and most characteristic development. Even after the political and cultural re-attachment of Greece to Europe, western music has gained a surprisingly small foothold. Both the discipline and the tonality of western music remain foreign to many Greek musicians, and imported classical music at least (as opposed to the more easily assimilable pop and rock music) shows no sign of displacing more traditional musical forms. Similarly, although a number of talented Greek composers, such as Skalkotas and Xenakis, have made significant contributions to the avant-garde movement in European music in the twentieth century, these composers were all trained and were largely active in the west, so that it would be an exaggeration to say that they had worked *within the tradition* of Greek music. (Like Stravinsky and Bartok, perhaps, they brought something of the music of their native country into the European tradition, but that is a different thing.)

Greece's lack of participation in the western tradition was not compensated by the development of a parallel "classical" tradition of her own. During the Ottoman centuries the "high art" music of the capital and of local magnates was Turkish classical music, which belongs to the musical tradition of the Islamic world. And although Greeks seem to have played their part in this tradition, so far as I am aware there is no branch of Turkish classical music which belongs distinctively to the Greek-speaking provinces of the Ottoman Empire. Historical conditions effectively prevented Greek music from evolving a classical tradition of its own, since Greek society at the time of Ottoman domination lacked either wealthy patronage for native music or the consequent specialization of musical skills which took place during the same period in western Europe.

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.⁹ 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 Hadzidakis 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.¹⁰

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.¹¹

⁹Described by Roderick Conway Morris: "Greek Cafe Music," *Recorded Sound* (London), 80 (1980) pp. 79-117. For an authoritative account of the history and development of *rebetika*, see Stathis Gauntlett, *Carmina Rebetica Graeciae Recentioris* (Athens, 1984).

¹⁰Described in Gail Holst, *Theodorakis: Myth and Politics in Modern Greek Music* (Amsterdam, 1980).

¹¹See Bertrand Bronson, "The Morphology of Ballad Tunes," *Journal of American Folklore* 67 (1954) 5-6; the "Proceedings of the Seventh Conference," *Journal of the International Folk Music Council* 7 (1955) 23; and discussion in Beaton, *Folk Poetry*, pp. 70-2.

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 one note. This is known in Church music as the *loov* (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 Epiros, where the principle of the drone has been taken further to the point where a group of five

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 ἤχοι, their old Byzantine name, in the music of the church — are probably not connected with the modes (τρόποι or ἁρμονίαι) 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 (café 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

¹²For 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) 1-11.

¹³See Academy of Athens, *Ἑλληνικά δημοτικά τραγούδια, Τομ. Γ' μουσική έκδοση* (Athens, 1968), pp.xv-xxv and discussion by Beaton ("Modes and roads").

western-trained 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 $3 \div 4$ ($3 \div 2 \div 2$), or as $4 \div 3$ ($2 \div 2 \div 3$); and there are many different ways of dividing a bar of nine beats.

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

¹⁴See Doktor Suphi, *Nazari ve Ameli Turk Musikisi* (Istanbul, 1933-35); Zeki Yilmaz, *Turk Musikisi Dersleri* (Istanbul, 1973).

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 rhythmical pattern of the *kalamatianos syrtos*, almost the national dance of Greece, is natural to the point of being hackneyed, to Greek ears, but even this relatively simple rhythmical pattern ($3 \div 4$) can sound strange and elusive to the western listener. The *kalamatianos* is danced all over Greece, as is the *zeibekiko*, a dance in slow nine-rhythm originally from Asia Minor but widely diffused through the urban tradition. Apart from these panhellenic dances, rhythmical 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 structure, modern Greek traditional music offers quite different opportunities and challenges to the musician than are explored and overcome 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 fallen 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 advantages 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 instruments 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 instruments available to traditional performers, so allowing them to realize their musical idiom 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 effective way with the work of serious poets. Suffice it to name in conclusion the achievements in this direction of Mikis Theodorakis in the 60s of Yannis Markopoulos (with the voice of Nikos Xylouris) in the early 70s, of the talented and sadly unobtrusive Eleni Karaindrou with a single record published in 1974, *I Megali Agrypnia*, and of Christodoulos Halaris.