

Yorgos Sicilianos and the musical avant garde in Greece

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Abstract

Yorgos Sicilianos (1920–2005) is one of the most important figures of musical modernism in Greece. Along with Yannis A. Papaioannou he pioneered the introduction of the musical avant garde in post-50 Greece through his musical work and his institutional activities. The introduction of modernist idioms by Sicilianos and Papaioannou in the mid 50s has been regarded either as a disruptive force to the preeminence of the Greek National School or as a necessary adjustment to the 'contemporary' international developments, a difference in reception that reflected the two opposing movements, the 'conservative' and the 'progressive', which would dominate Greek musical life until the mid 70s.

This paper focuses on the several phases of the second period (1954–1981) of Sicilianos's work and aims at situating them in the context of Greek musical life, looking at factors like institutions, composers, performers, critics and the audience. On the other hand, the paper attempts to illustrate how, in the last phase of the second period of his work, the composer appropriates techniques that have been associated with postmodernism, like indeterminacy, collage, quotation and eclecticism, staying however within the framework of a modernist attitude.

Methodologically, the paper relies on documentary research and analysis, as well as on the investigation of issues of performance and reception, aesthetics and ideology.

CV

Valia Christopoulou: Ph.D. in Musicology (University of Athens). She graduated from the Department of French Language and Literature and the Department of Music Studies of the University of Athens and also received a piano diploma and a harmony degree from the National Conservatory of Athens, and a counterpoint degree from the Athenaeum Conservatory. She has been the curator of the exposition "Yorgos Sicilianos. The composer in the avant garde of contemporary music" (Benaki Museum, 2007). She is the author of articles and program notes. She teaches piano at the Music High School of Pallini.