Xenakis’ 1975 return to Greece: Politics, aesthetics and ideology in the reception of his work

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Abstract
Iannis Xenakis escaped from Greece in 1947. He was sentenced to death in absentia and was only permitted to return to the country in 1974 after the fall of the colonels’ junta and the elections of 17 November.

The situation in Greece the first years after the fall of the long junta (1967-1974) placed political and ideological questions on the front-line of every discussion and interest, and music –precisely, singing– experienced unprecedented popularity, being the main vehicle of propagandising revived or new political parties. Despite some unsuccessful attempts to use Xenakis’ music for such political propaganda, his music was mainly performed in the Athens Festival, at the Herod Atticus Theatre (where in the summer of 1975 were performed among others, Metastaseis, Pithoprakta, Achorripsais, Nuits, Polla ta Dhina, Herma, Evryali, Synapheae, Charisma, Anaktoria, Empreintes) and in Mycenae (Polytopon of Mycenae in 1978).

Having had the chance to meet Iannis Xenakis during the last years of his absence from Greece (in Bloomington, Indiana in 1969-72) and to cover, as a music critic in Kathimerini, the concerts, the lectures etc. organised at his return to Greece, I experienced the qualitative nuances in the reactions of both the composer and his public, produced by the conflicting currents between his heroic past and his cosmopolitan present, between a romantic, fictitious element of Greek politics (amplified in those post-dictatorship years) and the quest for pure, “pre-objective” (to use Adorno’s term) contents of avant-garde music.

CV
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