

# **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*, *Achorripseis*, *Nuits*, *Polla ta Dhina*, *Herma*, *Evryali*, *Synaphae*, *Charisma*, *Anaktoria*, *Empreintes*) and in Mycenae (Polytoxon 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**

Katy (Ekaterini) Romanou (b.1939) is Associate Professor of Musicology at the University of Athens. She has done considerable research on recent Greek music history. Katy Romanou was a music critic in the daily *He Kathemerine* (1974-1986), and is in the editorial board of the Greek periodical *Musicologia*. She is an associate editor for Greek language in RIPM. Latest book (in Greek): *Greek Art Music in Recent Years* (Athens 2006). She is the editor of the book (in English): *Serbian and Greek Art Music. A Patch to Western Music History* (Bristol & Chicago, 2009).