

Avant garde and postmodern elements in Jani Christou's music for ancient dramas and comedy (1963-1969)

Anastasia Siopsi

Music Department, Ionian University, Greece
siopsi@ionio.gr

Abstract

Jani Christou did not consider himself to belong to any school or musical trend. However, an artist is related in various ways with his own era and society; therefore, it is interesting to trace and analyze such aspects of Christou's possible attachments to his era, something which forms the main aim of the proposed paper. The work to be analyzed thus is the music that Christou wrote for ancient dramas and one comedy. From 1963 to 1969, Jani Christou wrote music for four ancient tragedies and one ancient comedy (in chronological order, "Prometheus Bound" (1963), "The Persians" (1965), Agamemnon" (1965), "The Frogs" (1966), "Oedipus Rex" (1969)). There is a parallel development of musical language and philosophical thought; catharsis seems to be the ultimate aim of the audience's experience of his work as a ritual.

In my view, Christou's music for ancient dramas has elements which can be named as modern (the concept of art as ritual, the idea of universality -beyond national borders- which is underlined even in "The Persians", both by stage director Karolos Koun and Christou), avant-garde (post-serial music, power of 'sound', usage of magnetic tape, a new logic for musical composition, most of all, an aspiration to transcendence, to the spiritual, through the exploration of dream states or the instinctive and subconscious levels of the psyche (primitivism)) and postmodern (contextuality, narrativity, instinctive/immediate gesture, usage of tradition and archaic modes, subjectivity, parody). The composer also readdresses and explores fundamental questions on the roles of the composer, the performer and the listener. This mixture of elements is eclectic for each case and forms a highly subjective, personal musical language justifying, if nothing else, Christou's demand not to be labeled; at the same time, however, they create a link of the creator with his era.

CV

Anastasia Siopsi is an Associate Professor in the field of "Aesthetics of Music", Music Department, Ionian University, Greece and a teacher/consultant in the Greek Open University (course: "History of the Arts in Europe", degree: "European Civilization"), Greece. Her main research areas include German romantic music, especially Richard Wagner's music dramas and German music at the interwar period, modern Greek art music, music terminology in Greek language and issues of music education in Greek Universities. She has published books, chapters in books, articles, and presented papers at international conferences. Some of her publications include a monograph entitled *Three essays on Manolis Kalomiris* [Greek], a book entitled *Music in 19th-century Europe* [Greek], a chapter entitled "Dreaming the Myth of 'Wholeness': Romantic interpretations of Ancient Greek Music in Greece (c1890-1914)", in *Textual Intersections: Literature and the Arts in Nineteenth Century Europe*, a chapter entitled "Greek Women Contributing to Art Music in Greece and Abroad", in *Her Art: Greek and Greek-American Women in the Arts*.