

The semantics of Michalis Adamis's music and the claim for abstraction

Petros Vouvaris

Department of Music Science and Art, University of Macedonia, Greece
vouvaris@uom.gr

Abstract

An element that remains consistently distinctive in the writings of the Greek composer Michalis Adamis (b. 1929) is his lifelong conviction to the dynamic interrelation between symbolism and abstraction that permeates the aesthetic orientation of his compositional outlook. Apart from, but not contrary to his belief in the inherently abstract nature of music, Adamis considers the symbolic qualification of his music's semantic content commensurate with the historical or cultural distance from the shared frame of reference that defines its symbolic dimension. In terms of compositional practice, the abstract inherence of Adamis's music is allowed to emerge not through the deployment of automated procedures upon semantically sanitized musical material but through an attempt to incorporate material and procedures from his Byzantine and Greek traditional musical inheritance. The structural means effectuating this attempt pertains primarily to the centonization of idiomatic melodic formulas into motivically saturated melodic lines, disposed synchronically in poly-melodic and poly-rhythmic settings that unfold temporally within an articulated structural narrative. By looking into one of Adamis's latest works (*O Atermon Chronos*, 2007), the present paper aims at investigating the role of the aforementioned structural procedures in attaining syntactic unity without neutralizing the music's semantic charge. Within the conceptual framework of Mikhail Bakhtin's (1981) notion of dialogism and Alastair Williams's (1999) idea of a semanticized modernism, Adamis's abstraction is reinterpreted as a process of transcending tradition, leading to the opening up of a contoured absence that semanticizes his music.

CV

Petros Vouvaris holds a doctoral degree in Piano Performance and Pedagogy with a minor in Music Theory from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, USA. Papers of his have been presented in conferences both in Greece and abroad, while his articles have been published in both Greek and foreign journals. He is an active performer, having given piano solo and chamber music recitals both in Greece and the USA. He is currently a Lecturer in Music Form and Analysis at the Department of Music Science and Art of the University of Macedonia in Thessaloniki, Greece.