

# Post-Avant garde elements in Jani Christou's music for ancient dramas (1963-1969)

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**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 this 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.

Christou's work as a whole is characterized by the spirit of spontaneity, apparent simplicity and authenticity. In his music written for ancient dramas and a comedy, we can trace elements that reflect, at a certain degree, the diversity of the post-war musical avant-garde: in this paper I attempt to show references to the two main movements; postserialist modernism and, especially, experimentalism.

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.

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 this paper. More specifically, my main purpose is to locate Christou's music within the wider debates about, and trends of, post-avant garde of the 1950s and the 1960s in culture and the arts.

The work to be analyzed thus is the music that Christou wrote for ancient dramas and one comedy. Also, since these works of mixed genre cannot be discussed on a purely musical level alone, I will attempt to evaluate the relationship between the aesthetics of the stage production and of music, especially within the collaboration of Christou with Karolos Koun. Christou himself referred to his music for the theatre as a sideline. However, he considered as 'representative' works from amongst them the ones he collaborated with Koun. A very important reason for this is that the composer shared quite similar convictions as Koun with regard to artistic as much as the philosophical interpretation of the content of ancient tragedy. More importantly, Christou expressed himself more freely and took entirely personal initiatives (particularly in the musical treatment of the chorus in "The Persians") thanks to the understanding collaboration of Koun, as the composer himself noted.<sup>1</sup> Alexis Minotis, the other stage producer that collaborated with Christou is a different case. The composer, referring to his music for "Agamemnon", declared his reservations in his report entitled "Views by a young

composer" in *Ethnos*, 12/7/1965. Christou wrote as follows: '[...] At *Agamemnon* [...] I compromised with the directions of the stage producer and finally did what I did not want to. I compromised to such an extent, that I accepted half the music I wrote for the tragedy to be heard. Of course, it is not Minotis's [the stage producer] fault. I had envisaged Aeschylus' tragedy in a different way, which resulted to find myself opposed to the stage production.'<sup>2</sup> However, it was the view of the stage producer which prevailed.<sup>3</sup>

## **Presentation of the ancient plays**

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.

This cycle of works, according to musicologist George Leotsakos, was the only one to reach a natural conclusion; as Leotsakos points out, the composer himself affirmed his intention not to concern himself any longer, or at least for a long period of time, with this musical genre.<sup>4</sup>

Christou's music for ancient dramas is a special case because it has elements which are treated more systematically than in his other previous works. A very important one is that of theatricality; according to musicologist Lucciano, 'in writing music for the theatre...Christou perhaps became more aware of the way in which the element of theatricality could be exploited in his music'.<sup>5</sup> Another important one is the use of the chorus. Chorus plays the most functional role in articulating drama as a ritual. The elaboration of such a ritualistic character is developed systematically in Christou's music for ancient plays<sup>6</sup> and, therefore, is a characteristic attached in a unique way to his theatrical works.

For these reasons, it is important to see how the characteristics of this cycle of works develop and the ways that they can be related to post-avant garde aesthetics and techniques.

## **The Avant-garde**

Avant-garde has become a label, eclectically applied to any type of art that is anti-traditional in form. At its simplest, the term is sometimes taken to describe what is new at any given time: the leading edge of artistic experiment. Under this broadly perceived definition, we might claim that Christou is an avant-garde artist since authenticity characterizes his work as a whole; also, to the extent that we recognize his genius, we can assume that he is essentially 'avant-gardistic'.<sup>7</sup>

### **Avant-garde in the '50s and '60s: post-serialism and experimentalism**

#### **1. Post-serial music: prominent technological dimension, usage of magnetic tape, power of 'sound', a new logic for musical composition.**

Aesthetic modernism is renewed from the 1950s and on. Central to this was the extension of serialist techniques and their interdependence with a growing resort to electronic media and scientific theory. The ideal was to provide a universal basic

system for composition, as tonality has once been. This was the epitome of high modernism, founded on the belief in the possibility of a total, deep-structural, and scientific renewal on the grounds of musical progress. Thus, the extension of serialist techniques went hand in hand with the interdependence with a growing resort to electronic media and scientific theory.<sup>8</sup>

We can observe that a technological dimension is exploited in music written by Christou for –almost- all ancient plays; also, the composer develops a new logic for musical composition based on the power of ‘sound’.

In “Prometheus Bound”, Christou used taped sound for the first time. By that time he had already reached technical maturity and developed his own system of musical elaboration through the process of ‘patterns’<sup>9</sup>. So, he directed his inquiry more towards the still unexploited possibilities of the sound material itself.<sup>10</sup> For “Agamemnon” he did not use taped sound. However, at this period, Christou developed his own system of musical elaboration through the process of ‘patterns’, ‘permutations’<sup>11</sup>, ‘isochrones’<sup>12</sup>, and so forth, notions which the composer himself developed in his works; owing to these characteristics, the composer Giannis Papaioannou named this compositional period as postserialist.<sup>13</sup> By means of these techniques, Christou developed a new logic for musical composition.

For “The Persians”, the instrumental music is clearly electro-acoustic. The composer recorded the final result directly onto tape. Christou used taped sound also for “The Frogs”, along with music for orchestra and actors. Finally, the last contribution to this theatrical genre, his music for “Oedipus Rex” (1969) is exclusively electroacoustic, in which no traditional instruments intervene with the tape.

I must stress the fact, however, that the ‘rational madness’ of the serialists was by no means Christou’s principle for his music. Nor was the idea of progress his main principle because the ritualized musical acts he wanted to produce were not developing structures (within linear time); rather, he intended to transform them to archetypal dimensions of psychic existence, beyond time and space.

Christou treats the chorus’s role as the most important one and his main aim becomes just the one I described earlier: a transfiguration beyond time and space by means of rituals performed by the chorus. His ultimate aim is to use the chorus ‘as a means of arousing fear and ecstasy through vigorous collective declamation together with song and bodily movements’, just as it was used by fifth-century tragedians in Athens. ‘In short’, to use Christou’s own words, to have ‘a public form of ritual acts aiming to create emotional renewal’.<sup>14</sup>

## **2. The experimental tradition and its postmodern legacy**

### **2.1. On modernism, experimentalism, and ritual:**

Ritual, as an essential component of modernism and the experimentalists, is also a main characteristic of Christou’s music for ancient plays; we can assume, thus, that the perception of art as a ritual, chorus as ritualistic, is inherited from modernism, and communicates with the aesthetics of post-avant-garde experimentalists.<sup>15</sup>

For the experimentalists, music sets up repetitive and cyclic rhythmic structures that permute as the performance unfolds: a ritual process set in motion. Also, against the serialist view of time as linear, ‘duration’ as mathematically quantifiable, experimental composers viewed time as noncumulative, nondirectional, static, and rhythm as cyclical, repetitive, and processual.

These characteristics of the experimentalists can be found in Christou's music for ancient dramas and comedy. We shall see how the ritual process is set in motion by an emphasis on cyclic time, mainly by means of the role of the chorus.

## **2.2. Repetitive, cyclic and static structures of sound:**

Christou uses ostinato and rhythmic punctuation in his choral parts (i.e. 2<sup>nd</sup> and third stasima in "Prometheus", melodic-rhythmic ostinato in "The Persians") which serves to emphasize the musical unity of the pieces.

Of course, choral parts, the 'stasima', are often presented in cyclic forms, especially in "Prometheus" and "Agamemnon".

From "Agamemnon" onwards, there is a barely perceptible, continuous 'cocoon' of sound, or else, a constant yet calm sound world which, according to the musicologist Lucciano, 'may not longer be considered as an "ostinato" as in the earlier works, but as an indication of the new concept of the "continuum" that was to occur in Christou's music from the mid-1960s'.<sup>16</sup>

## **2.3. The role of the chorus:**

Chorus plays the most functional role in articulating drama as a ritual. If we analyze Christou's development of style for the choral parts, with the exception of the musical style of "Oedipus Rex" which has very little in common with that of the preceding ones, we can trace a few important characteristics which are gradually elaborated, starting with "Prometheus" and "Agamemnon" and ending with "The Persians". "The Frogs" is also a different case in many aspects since it is a comedy which, according to the musicologist Lucciano, 'appeared as an amusing distraction in the middle of the composer's complete output'.<sup>17</sup>

*(1) Gradual predominance of music and elaboration/emancipation from the text.*

In "Prometheus" and "Agamemnon" the choral melody has mainly a modal and melodic character which reveals the strong accentuation of the Greek language; we might say that the music is very much subordinated to the text. This, of course, is largely due to Alexis Minotis's aesthetics who wants to emphasize on the articulation of the speech in a natural and clear manner. In "The Persians" the text of the chorus is treated as an autonomous sound entity.

*(2) Progression from an emphasis on the functional role of diatonic forms and 'Greek color' (byzantine and folk melodies) to exploration of all musical possibilities of the voice.*

In his music for "Prometheus", Christou refers to his 'Greek origin' which, as he believes, helped him to find within himself the Greek melodies.<sup>18</sup> In this tragedy, chorus articulates emotion in the realm of diatonicism and consonance; the 'stasima' are presented in a cyclic form and are progressed from chromaticism or atonality to modality and diatonicism. In "Agamemnon", the choral passages and the orchestration of the episodes have many characteristics in common with "Prometheus".<sup>19</sup>

However, in "The Persians" Christou himself observes as follows for the use of the chorus: 'I was attracted by the possibility of using the chorus as a means of reproducing the raw material of the tragedy, the basic elemental emotions. This is what I tried to achieve by selecting the position of the words and phrases in such a way that they create patterns of autonomous vocal sounds of varied texture'.<sup>20</sup> As a result, according to Leotsakos, 'the chorus members, in a savage, primitive style that makes one's hair stand on end, spit out their emotion in an agitated polyphonic texture of mass hysteria...'<sup>21</sup> Christou's use of sound in this drama is rich and various: '[he

exploits] every possibility of the human voice from speaking and singing to shouting, passing through every imaginable shade of expression from wailing to mournful psalmody, *glissandi* to the sound of the breath, and sighing to screaming and crying, by emphasizing words or key expressions in the text that penetrate the listener's ear'.<sup>22</sup> In this way, the dichotomy between 'speaking' and 'singing' disappears; what we hear is an integrated sound substance arising from these two heterogeneous sources.

*(3) Emphasis on cyclic time by means of human voice as sound: ritual acts aiming to create emotional renewal*

By taking into the limits the chorus's sonorous possibilities, to the very boundary between the world of normality and that of madness, the metaphysical dimension appears like a channel of sound connecting the familiar world of life to the unknown world of death.<sup>23</sup> In "The Persians", the ritualization of the musical act is a work of synthesis that unites music, gesture, movement and group choreography.

I will also mention here that the dimension of cyclic time, articulated by music in "Oedipus Rex", takes place by means of simplicity and the interiorization of the drama. The composer himself explains this style as such: 'Many critics find the reserved style, removed from every "shrieking" dramatic element, in which I interpreted the play *Oedipus*, strange. But this was precisely my aim, and it is this that I consider to be my contribution. I would have done the same with any other tragedy; nowadays I think I prefer to emphasize the inner force of the text and the characters, rather than the "tragic exteriorization" to which we have been accustomed until now'.<sup>24</sup>

In the ancient plays, the division between linear and cyclic time is roughly given by the division between the plot and the chorus's parts.

For Christou, I suggest that this division of time is articulated schematically as such: Chorus-cyclic time: ritual acts aiming to create emotional renewal (collective 'soul'). Plot-linear time-serial/post-serial/electro-acoustic music: create the idea of progress in time.

Chorus's role is to freeze time and reflect, to articulate emotion in the very dionysiac sense of the word. Chorus promotes the ritualistic character of the ancient drama, so, it corresponds to the experimentalists' aspirations. Also, for Christou, chorus plays the most important part in an ancient drama.

It is very important to observe that, for the plot, that is, the action within linear time that gives the idea of progress, Christou writes music in a different style. In "Prometheus", for example, the purely instrumental passages or those accompanying the declamation of a soloist are written in an atonal or serial style. Also, the music for the orchestra and chorus in the "Persians" springs from different compositional procedures. The instrumental music is clearly electro-acoustic. We might say that Christou's such choices follow at a certain extent the aesthetics of post-serialism which have as a principle the idea of progress and, therefore, correspond better to the notion of 'linear time'.

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#### **2.4. The 'Other': the use of non-western elements**

Modernists developed stylistic references to nonwestern forms. And like the eclectic modernists of the early century, experimentalists (i.e. the minimalists, Philip Glass, Steve Reich e.t.c.) had an interest in, and made reference to, nonwestern and popular musics.<sup>25</sup>

The use of non-Western elements is a characteristic not only of the experimentalists but also part of the identity of modernism in Greece. In Greece, opposition to the West had a long history. First of all, in Greece of the 1890s-1920s, the historical, social and political circumstances were entirely different from those in Western Europe (two Balkan wars, defeat in Asia Minor).<sup>26</sup> Even later, in the 1930s, Greece's Western orientation was ideologically countered with an Eastward orientation. As Marinos Pourgouris puts it, '...the tension between East and West permeated the historical, social and political spheres and, in some ways, shaped the outlook of the 1930s generation of poets and writers.

In the search for the lost Greek memory, Eastern oriented Byzantium offered a convenient alternative to the Western Ancient Greece; the latter was widely adopted by the West (politically, culturally, architecturally, and literarily), whereas the former was a historical locus of resistance to the West'.<sup>27</sup> Such two-sided orientation is also evident at the next decades in modern Greece.

Within these perspectives, we can view the presence of Eastern elements in Christou's music and Koun's stage production. Byzantine influences exist in Christou's music for his theatrical works. They are more evident in his music for "Prometheus" and "Agamemnon". When he was composing music for "Prometheus", the composer stated that "[his] Greek origin helped [him] to find within [himself] the Greek melodies and all the other elements [he] needed to produce [that] work..."<sup>28</sup>

We can trace quite a few such examples in Christou's music for "Prometheus" and "Agamemnon". For example, the third stasimon in "Prometheus" has a music style that Christou himself described as 'simple and archaic, the extension of which may be seen in Byzantine music'.<sup>29</sup> The four stasima in "Agamemnon" intone psalmody on a single repeated note, emphasizing thus on the sobriety of the music. However, in "The Persians" Christou declared that psalmody properly so-called was a secondary concern for him and whenever it appeared it was nothing more than one 'acoustic' event in the work amongst many.<sup>30</sup> The Byzantine character is given, occasionally, for example at the second stasimon which is 'hieratic with "byzantine" gravity', or a byzantine melody that appears as a last-minute inclusion, a while before Darius's appearance but has no structural importance.<sup>31</sup>

As far as it concerns other elements of Christou's music for "The Persians", the percussion instruments which occupy a prominent position in the instrumental music, since whole passages of music are exclusively rhythmic<sup>32</sup>, are used in such a way as to suggest the musical tradition of Near-Eastern countries.<sup>33</sup>

The spirit of East is also captivated by means of staging and scenery designs in "The Persians". Yannis Tsarouchis, the scenic designer, mixes classicism and Eastern elements.

East is very important for Koun's aesthetics of stage production. Karolos Koun was director of the Art Theater. His aesthetic principles were derived from what he named as 'Greek folk expressionism' and are evident at least at his reception of Aristophanes. I will present briefly Koun's own statements that clarify this notion:

...we modern Greeks have the great privilege of living from day to day among these forms, shapes, sounds, rhythms, in about the same way as the average ancient Greek did, but also as Homer, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides and Aristophanes did, the days bringing momentous or ordinary events, troubles or tranquility, while their minds and spirits brought forth their great works. This is why if we want to interpret their plays in a truly creative manner, we must draw near them and

discover all the things that penetrated their souls, consciously or unconsciously; we must discover anew all the great secrets that nature revealed to them –the sky, the sea, the rocks, the sun, the men who lived on those rocks and under that sun.

These living elements that still surround us in this land will help us apprehend the thoughts and the poetry that pervade their work far better than all the ponderous, scholarly treatises that have been written on how ancient drama was staged...

.....  
Greece as it is today will guide us and steer us clear of all the dead matter that often clutters the outer form of ancient drama; it will help our directors and designers to approach –freely and imaginatively, in a manner adapted to the requirements of both theatre and audience in the present age –works that were written two thousand years ago, yet still remain essentially alive.<sup>34</sup>

The influence of the Eastern culture is largely accepted and embodied in Koun's aesthetics since, moreover, he himself was brought up with sounds, shapes, colors and smells from Prusa and Kostantinoupoli. For Koun, classical theatre should be a mixture of two heterogenous cultures: the mysterious East and the rational West, a co-existence of Apollon and Dionysus, just like modern Greek civilization. There is an eastern dimension, for example, in terms of the chorus's movements in "The Persians" which imply both panic and modesty, of its steps which are soft and cautious in the night, revealing the slavishness but also the discretion of the East.

Also, in "The Frogs", eastern rituals are performed, of course among many other heterogenous things which I will present briefly next.

However, East for Christou is not part of his personal path of artistic development as far as it concerns compositional procedures. He may have gradually abandoned all ancient European or western cultural elements (along with every kind of traditional musical notation) from "Mysterion" (1965-66) onwards; however, abandonment of western music did not coincide with embracement of Eastern musical idioms. But, I must say, that his philosophical views included also a reference to ancient Egyptian symbols through his studies with the philosopher Bertrand Russell.

## **2.5. Tonality, parody and realism: a 'touch' of postmodernism in "The Frogs"?**

Postmodernism makes a decisive break with modernism.<sup>35</sup> In cultural practice, it encompasses one of the two following strategies: either aesthetic reference to popular culture with the intention to overcome the separation between high and low culture and to appeal to the popular audience, or aesthetic reference, or return, to premodernist cultural forms –realism, narrative, tonality, and so on.

Drawing on popular musics for their modes, their rhythmic, repetitive, or structural forms, or treated as pastiche or parody, or created musical montage by overlaying one music upon another (as with Ives) is a characteristic of the experimental composers. These techniques are considered, however, central to postmodern aesthetics; yet, they go back to certain early modernists (Debussy, Satie, Varese, Ives and Cowell), but they are largely absent from serialist modernism.

We can find many of these characteristics in the production of "The Frogs", where Christou uses tonal language which matches with the realistic aesthetics of Koun. Koun supports the idea of the cultural continuity between ancient and modern Greece. He

believes that modern Greek interpretations of the ancient writers should avoid dangerous alien mannerisms in order to guarantee continuity of the pure folk wit which is the same in all epochs. Koun, as Gonda van Steen puts it, 'saw Aristophanes as the enduring expression of native folk genius, living on in an unspoiled popular culture set in the enchanting physical environment of rural Greece'.<sup>36</sup> Having this point of view, he creates realistic staging for "The Frogs".

It is a fact that the music Christou wrote for Aristophanes' "The Frogs" (1966) is exclusively tonal, highly colored, even parodic, borrowed from everyday life.<sup>37</sup> As Christou himself explains: 'The music I used in The Frogs is basically the music of everyday life. I mean I used jazz elements and popular music from Greece and abroad. In short, anything you might hear on switching on the radio...'<sup>38</sup>

Also, the parodic element intervenes three times during the course of the play. At these points Christou in turn imitates the musical styles of Mussorgsky, Wagner and Verdi.<sup>39</sup>

But, are these characteristics enough to name Christou's music in this case 'postmodern'?

I would suggest that they are not, because what seems to be important for the composer himself, regarding his music for "The Frogs", is 'to render prominent the elements of ritualism'. As Christou states, 'whatever the subject of [Aristophanes]' comedy, it unfolded according to a ritual "recipe" which, in *The Frogs*, may be identified with the "passions" of Dionysus, with the mythological archetypal drama of the renewal of life after death...Today, through my music, I have tried to bring these ritual elements to the surface.'<sup>40</sup> And the composer did this mainly by moving the chorus from highly comical situations to a ritual atmosphere, particularly at the end of the work. Such treatment of the chorus proves once more the importance that Christou gave to the ritualistic character of the play and lessens the importance of any other characteristics of the work that might be related to the aesthetics of post-modernism. This argument can be further supported by Koun's own reservations which he expressed for Christou's music for "The Frogs", claiming that this music was not suitable for the 'spirit' of his production.<sup>41</sup>

## **2.6. The transformation of the roles of composer, performer, listener**

Influenced by ethnomusicological studies of the ritual and participatory nature of nonwestern musics, the experimentalists were centrally concerned with the social and the live, performative aspects of music. Experimentalists often aimed at live performance that was intended to give the performer maximum interpretative play. The emphasis was on the performance process, music as an unfolding and participatory ritual event structured by time. But the composer remained the author of these events.

Janni Christou also readdressed and explored fundamental questions on the roles of the composer, the performer and the listener. For him, the performer plays an important role; he has freedom to improvise and this might recall the experimental music with composers like John Cage and his followers (including composers Morton Feldman, Christian Wolff, Earle Brown e.t.c.) It is since "Agamemnon" that improvised or semi-improvised sections appear in his music.

## **Epilogue**

In conclusion, Christou is a composer who embraces many quite eclectic resources, post-avant-garde trends, and also presents some very individualistic musical beliefs. His work as a whole is characterized by the spirit of spontaneity, apparent simplicity and authenticity.<sup>42</sup> In his music written for ancient dramas and a comedy, we can trace elements that reflect, at a certain degree, the diversity of the post-war musical avant-



garde; we saw references to the two main movements: postserialist modernism and, especially, experimentalism. These elements are blended in a highly subjective, personal musical language. They justify, if nothing else, Christou's demand not to be labeled; at the same time, it is important to underline them because they create a link of the creator with his era.

I should mention, finally, that Christou's choices of musical means correspond, also, to similar choices by other Greek composers at the last decades of the twentieth century. Music written for productions of ancient drama in modern Greece did not derive from the mainstream of European operatic tradition but from contemporary musical idioms blended with folk elements of music tradition. Symphonic music in productions of ancient dramas is introduced as early as the interwar period; however, characteristics like folk tradition and byzantine music, non-western elements, a more lyrical approach due to respect of the words, the use of magnetic tapes and electronic sounds and other experimental approaches form alternative approaches to ancient drama as musical theatre not just by Christou but also by composers like Jannis Xenakis, Theodoros Antoniou, Argyris Kounadis, Giorgos Kouroupos and so forth.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Christou, Jani, "In composing for the chorus", in *Art Treatre 1942-1972*, Greek Theatrical Society; quoted in Anna Lucciano, *Jani Christou. The Works and Temperament of a Greek Composer*, (Harwood Academic Publishers, 2000), 56.

<sup>2</sup> Janni Christou, "Views by a young composer [Greek]", *Ethnos* (12/7/1965).

<sup>3</sup> Since the beginning of '60s, music critics such as Foivos Anogeianakis and Dionysios Giatras criticize the superiority of the role of the stage producer in productions of ancient dramas. Giatras, for example, states his belief that the unsuitability of music which is written for contemporary performances of ancient tragedy is due to the predominance of the stage producer who has 'a questionable musical sensitivity' and, therefore, by judging on the grounds of the performances so far, he is 'totally inappropriate to suggest to his musical collaborator how to solve the problem of uniting the tragic text with music'. (Dionysios Giatras, "Music in tragedy. Introduction towards a systematic study [Greek]", *Theatro*, n.12 (1963), 34-37: 35) Also important composers such as Jani Christou, declare their reservations and even accuse the 'dominance' of the stage producer at fields of expertise that, at least from a technical point of view, they are not suitable to make decisions. However, the relation between a stage producer and a composer is not always problematic. This is the case of the collaboration between Koun and Christou; the production of *The Persians* is used as an example for next generations by setting criteria for aesthetic judgment of future productions.

<sup>4</sup> Radio broadcast entitled 'Music for the Theatre: *The Persians* by Jani Christou', Programme 3, Code no.: 1 B6-42/76. (Date: 6 January 1976); quoted in Lucciano: 59.

<sup>5</sup> Lucciano: 88.

<sup>6</sup> Apart from the Latin Liturgy (1951).

<sup>7</sup> I quote Poggioli's term in his statement "the modern genius is essentially avant-gardistic". (Renato Poggioli, *The Theory of the Avant-Garde*, (Cambridge, Mass, 1968), 224)

<sup>8</sup> According to Boulez, "[the composer has] to collaborate with the scientific research worker in order to envision the distant future...The musician must assimilate a certain scientific knowledge, making it an integral part of his creative imagination...Technology and the composer [should collaborate together]". (Pierre Boulez, from IRCAM publicity 1976; quoted in Georgina Born, *Rationalizing Culture. IRCAM, Boulez, and the Institutionalization of the Musical Avant-Garde*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 1)

<sup>9</sup> The term 'pattern' stands for any independent system of either static or active events. Any pattern, whether active or static, calls upon the participant's energy for its expression in time. Patterns should be understood in terms of forms for action requiring a constant feed-back between a pattern's possibilities and the participant's energy. (Luciano, 132-3)

<sup>10</sup> See *ibid.*, 61.

<sup>11</sup> The term 'permutation' stands for the general process of multiplication of musical matter through the re-organization into different tonal and structural combinations of a given number of factors. (Christou's own definition; quoted in *ibid.*, 44)

<sup>12</sup> The term 'isochrones' is used by Christou to designate any group that can be described as such: "Live material" is serial material seen not only in terms of tones but of proportionate time-values too. A basic series of twelve tones will also express a basic succession of twelve time-values, and each time-value is seen as an

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intrinsic property of each degree of the series. Permutations of the degree will also yield permutations of time-values and thus a variation in the arrangement of the twelve tonal degrees will give a different rhythmic structure each time. Horizontal energy is thus a built-in factor forming fresh structural combinations with each permutation of the basic series. Such derivative "live" series, although generating fresh rhythmic combinations with each permutation, will nevertheless have an identical total duration in common with each other and with the basic series –since this will always be the sum of the same twelve time-values, no matter how these are re-arranged'. (Christou's own definition; quoted in *ibid.*, 44-45)

<sup>13</sup> The term 'postserialism' refers to developments beginning in the late '50s and '60s following the demise and fracturing of the total serialist project. Born gives the following definition of the term: "rather than bringing the full range of compositional developments since the '60s under this term, I reserve it for those that continued in the scientific, deterministic, rationalist, and theoreticist vein of total serialism, to which was increasingly added a prominent technological dimension. In other words, I use postserialism to designate the discourse that followed on from total serialism and that, even if explicitly rejecting serialism at times, attempted to salvage and reinvigorate dominant features of that approach, primarily by reference to science and technology." (Born, 55-56) However, Christou himself called his musical principles and organization 'meta-serial', that is, 'beyond serial', and not 'post-serial'. This is because 'although the series in its basic and orthodox form of twelve notes constitutes the point of departure for this system, the wider organization of the work depends equally on other components that are not related to any way to the serial system'. (Luciano, 43)

<sup>14</sup> See interview with Christou by George Leotsakos, *Vima*, (22 August 1965); quoted in *ibid.*, 57.

<sup>15</sup> In spite of the considerably fewer productions of ancient dramas in Europe in comparison with Greece of that era (see a comparison of the quantity of the performances of ancient dramas in Europe with those in Greece, based on statistics, in Platon Mavromoustakos, *Performances of ancient Greek drama and history of modern Greek theatre [Greek]*, (Athens, 2001), 175-176), the broader artistic quests of modernists in Europe include ancient Greece as one of their models. However, ancient Greece is perceived as an 'exotic' model together with other distant cultures, either in time or in space. We can suggest, therefore, that the modernists' tendency to create works with ritualistic character does not aim at reviving the ancient past, something which is the issue, at a large extent, in Greece of that era. It rather attempts to articulate spiritual transcendence and social critique, or else, to use the voice of the 'other', by claiming its spiritual 'authenticity', in order to comment on current realities. (See, for more detail, Anastasia Siopsi, 'Aspects of modern Greek cultural physiognomy through the looking glass of music's role in revivals of ancient drama (1900-1940) [Greek]', international conference's annuals entitled *Greek music for the opera and other forms of the performing arts in the 20<sup>th</sup> century*, (international conference, Athens' City Music Hall, March 2009), [www.mmb.org.gr/files/2010/Πρακτικά%20Συνεδρίου.pdf](http://www.mmb.org.gr/files/2010/Πρακτικά%20Συνεδρίου.pdf), 112-127)

<sup>16</sup> Lucciano, 69.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

<sup>18</sup> See interview with Christou by G.K.Pilichos, *Ta Nea*, (Monday 20 May 1963).

<sup>19</sup> This is not coincidence since the stage producer is in both productions Alexis Minotis, and thus Christou's music follows, at a large extent, his aesthetic preferences. The fact that this is the case can be also supported by the comparison of "Agamemnon"'s choral parts with "The Persians"' ones. The vocal treatment in the first tragedy conveys a world that is much more conservative, on the total, than that of "The Persians", although Christou composed his music for "The Persians" at the same year, and even months earlier, than that for "Agamemnon".

<sup>20</sup> Jani Christou, "In composing for the chorus", in *Art Theatre 1942-1972*, Greek Theatrical Society; quoted in Lucciano: 74.

<sup>21</sup> George Leotsakos, *To Vima*, (22 August 1965); quoted in Luciano, 75.

<sup>22</sup> Lucciano, 75-6.

<sup>23</sup> See *ibid.*, 81.

<sup>24</sup> Interview with Karolos Koun, *Vima*, (4 June 1969). It is worth mentioning here, in the form of a parenthesis, that the complete transformation of time to a continuous, cyclic dimension, without the sense of beginning and end, that is, the fullest adaptation of a play to the mythological dimension of time, takes place in the music that Christou wrote for the "Oresteia", a 'contemporary opera', as the composer named this work, which was a free adaptation of Aeschylus homonymous work. The most important change of Aeschylus's text is the end: in Christou's opera there is no salvation at the end which is a commentary for modern world. Instead, the opposites continue forever, articulating the eternal repetition of cycles without the ability to escape.

<sup>25</sup> The experimentalists' relation to popular and nonwestern musics is limited to using them as a source –for quotation, for transformation, for use as an influence. A certain distance is thereby maintained: popular and nonwestern musics retain the status of an 'other' –a quality going back to their ancestors, such as Claude Debussy and Charles Ives.

<sup>26</sup> Before the First World War, Greece had fought in the two Balkan Wars (the first in 1912-13 against the Ottoman Empire, the second in 1913 against Bulgaria); a year after the end of the Great War, the shattering of the national dream of the *Megali Idea [the Great Idea]* took place after Greece's defeat in Asia Minor. (See, for example, Marinos Pourgouris, "Topographies of Greek Modernism", *The Avant-Garde and the Margins* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2006), 88-112: 92).

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The declaration of the dogma of 'the Great Idea' took place as early as 1844, by Ioannis Kolettis, and coincided with the beginning of modern Greek historicism. Romantic nationalism gradually replaced democratic nationalism which was based on ideas of Enlightenment and French Revolution. (See P. Kitromilidis, "Ideological Trends and Political Quests. Perspectives from the Greek Territory [Greek]", in *Aspects of 19<sup>th</sup>-century Greek Society [Greek]*, (Athens, 1984), 23-38: 31). Romantic historicism's quest, based on studies of the philosophy of history of the 1840s, puts upon a different perspective the notion of Greek modern identity. The most important symbolic change is the attitude towards Byzantium. According to it, Byzantium and its culture grew out from ancient Greek civilization. This sense of historic continuity, attributed to Greek culture, seemed to be a necessary gesture for the formation of national identity. At the decade of 1890s, Byzantium was completely accepted as a part of Greek historical consciousness. In close relation to the theory of 'historic continuity', the dogma of the 'Great Idea' was directed towards the restoration of Byzantium and the identification of Greek state with Greek nation. The epilogue was disastrous in 1897 and completely tragic in 1922.

On the issue of the relation of the above with music in Greece of those times see, for example, (1) Anastasia Siopsi, *Three Essays on MANOLIS KALOMIRIS [Greek]* (Athens: Greek Musicological Publications 4, Music Publishing House Papagrigoriou-Nakas, 2003), esp. 1<sup>st</sup> chapter ("Hermeneutics of Tradition", 18-34), and (2) Siopsi, 'Dreaming the myth of "wholeness": Romantic interpretations of Ancient Greek Music in Greece (c1890-1914)', collective edition entitled *Textual Intersections: Literature, History and the Arts in Nineteenth Century Europe (Internationale Forschungen zur Allgemeinen und Vergleichenden Literaturwissenschaft series)*, (Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi, 2009), 201-21.

<sup>27</sup> Pourgouris, 93-94.

<sup>28</sup> Interview with Christou by G.K.Pilichos (1963).

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> See Christou, 'In composing for the chorus...'

<sup>31</sup> See Lucciano, 80.

<sup>32</sup> Repeated drum rolls punctuated by cymbal strokes, various rhythmic effects, e.t.c.; see, for more detail, Lucciano, 75.

<sup>33</sup> See *ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> Koun's statement is quoted in the 1993 Athens Festival brochure (English edition, published by the Greek National Tourist Organization), 156-160.

<sup>35</sup> The concept of postmodernism, which arose in literary and architectural criticism, has been generalized to refer to new cultural forms from the 1960s and '70s on. Like modernism, postmodernism subsumes different tendencies...The movement is unified by common origins in the attempts of artists and intellectuals to supersede the impasses of modernism, and motivated by a common dissatisfaction with modernism. The main characteristics include the celebration of heterogeneity, dissent, and its sensitivity to difference. (See Born, 45, 47)

<sup>36</sup> Gonda A.H.van Steen, *Venom in Verse. Aristophanes in Modern Greece*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000, 167.

<sup>37</sup> See, for more detail, a description of this music in Lucciano, 82-84.

<sup>38</sup> Interview with Christou by Vangelis Psyraakis, *Messimvrini*, (18 July 1966); quoted in *ibid.*, 82. The usage of tradition is evident, for example, in Aiakos's song, which is most highly colored with popular elements, performed typically on the gaida (a sort of gaggpipe of Cretan origin), full of freshness and poetry. As Lucciano observes, 'this work incorporates a large number of deliberately ill-matched elements coordinated by a powerful imagination which ensures that the listener does not experience the music as alien to the essence of the comedy'. (*Ibid.*, 84)

<sup>39</sup> See *ibid.*, 84.

<sup>40</sup> Interview with Christou by Psyraakis, (1966).

<sup>41</sup> See, for example, «Mimis Kougioumtzis. The art is within our soul [Greek]", *Technes kai Grammata*, (29 September 1993). (interview by Giannis H. Pappas); also, Vasilis Aggelikopoulos, "A 'softy' in ancient Athens [Greek]" (interview of Mimis Kougioumtzis), *To Vima*, (9 August 1992).

<sup>42</sup> See Lucciano, 68.

<sup>43</sup> See, in more detail, the issue of music written for ancient dramas in modern Greece of the last decades of the twentieth century Anastasia Siopsi, "Music and the scene in stage productions of ancient dramas and comedies in Greece at the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century", *New Sound International Magazine*, issue no.36 (dedicated to "Music & Scene Today") (December 2010, forthcoming issue).