

# **Yannis Andreou Papaioannou (1910 – 1989): The Conference's Commemorated Composer**

Demetre Yannou

Department of Music Studies, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece  
yannou@mus.auth.gr

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## **1. Introduction**

In dedicating the Conference *Beyond the Centers ...* in memoriam of Yannis Andreou Papaioannou's hundredth year since his birth, the Organising Committee aimed not only to celebrate the active representative of Greek avant-garde music and the teacher. It aimed rather to bring out the composer and his work within the contemporary discussion about the concept and the spread of musical avant-garde during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This aim was intended through the conceptions breath of the conference objective and it is also realised, so far possible, through the program of the two concerts, who accompany the pure scientific part of the conference.

It is obvious, I think, that such an approach is useful as well for the international musicological discussion, as also for the Greek music and especially for the study of Papaioannou's work. Because it also promotes the enhancement of the international musicological discussion about the conception and the interpretation of the modernism for the advantage of its conception and interpretation in the work of Greek composers and vice-versa – i.e. the enhancement of the musicological discussion about the music modernism in Greece for the conception and interpretation of the phenomenon in general. Nevertheless the autonomous and specialised content of the conference's papers, so far enlightening and original it might be – and I wish it will be so, leaves a gap between the specialisation of the presented issues and the overall image of Papaioannou's personality and work.

It is just this gap, that the present lecture aims to fill. And it comes for this reason first in the schedule of keynote lectures in this conference.

## **2. Biographical information**

Composer Yannis Andreou Papaioannou was born in Kavala, an important trade and port city in East Macedonia, in January 6, 1910 and died in Athens in May 11, 1989. Born in an intellectual and music lovers family (his father was a physician), he began with piano lessons when he was 6 year old. After long systematic and advanced music studies in Athens, he graduated with diplomas in the usual conservatory branches of advanced theory (harmony, counterpoint, fugue) and piano between 1930 and 1934. Unlike many of Greek composers, he never made systematic studies abroad. Just in 1949, when he was already known as a composer in Greece, he received an UNESCO scholarship for visiting international music centers in Europe. Thanks to this scholarship, he visited important music centers in France, Italy and Swiss in 1949 – 1950. In any case he considered himself rather as a self-taught in composition.

During his whole life the professional activity he practiced, was the activity of music teacher. From 1934 to 1961 he was music teacher in schools of general secondary education. From the

same year (1934) on, he collaborated during many years as teacher in various conservatories, the only establishments of special and advanced music studies in Greece till the foundation of the university music departments (since 1985). He acquired a big reputation as a teacher of advanced theory branches, during his teaching from 1952 to 1976 in the so called «Hellenicon Odeion» («Greek Conservatory»). In the «Greek Conservatory» and in private lessons (which he almost continued till his death), he taught a large number of future Greek musicians, composers and musicologists, in harmony, counterpoint, fugue and composition (including also modern composition technics, for which he was the first and for a long time the only teacher in Greece).

As a composer he participated in various collective bodies for the promotion and spreading of the work of Greek composers and especially for the promotion and spreading of the Greek and international avant-garde. So since 1947 to 1983 he was member of the Administrative Council of the Union of Greek Composers. He also was founding member and president (1964 – 1975) of the Greek Department of the International Society for Contemporary Music and of the Greek League of Contemporary Music (1965 – 1975).

### **3. The Works**

Y. A. Papaioannou composed a great number of compositions. The Complete descriptive Catalogue of his works contains 222 opus numbers signed by the abbreviation AKI, also including some lost works.<sup>1</sup> The first opus number in the Complete Catalogue dates from 1931 and the last from 1989, about a month before his death.

A productive composer, Y.A. Papaioannou cultivated almost all genres of music. A short systematic overview of his works, I think it will be a starting point for some remarks and inquiries open to revisions, understanding disputes, and confrontations especially fruitful in a conference.

A first remark made at a glance in the works catalogue, is that the compositions of Y.A. Papaioannou can be generally classified in the usual musical works categories of the european music tradition.

The instrumental works for a big orchestra contain 5 symphonies, 5 works for one or more instruments soloist and orchestra (concerts, suite, e.a.), 1 concerto for orchestra and circa 15 symphonic works in the type of symphonic poem or of the orchestral suite.

A numerous category of instrumental music constitute the works for chamber orchestra or for little instrumental ensembles of various instrumental combinations. Those works belong to all the years of Papaioannou's activity, since his youth till the last years before his death. Most of those works can be classified in usual music genres. But there are also many works, who can not be classified in such genres.

The greatest, concerning the number, category of instrumental works, is the category of chamber music – i.e. the works for one to 4 instruments except the works for piano solo. A remarkable feature of this category is the often use of unusual instrumental combination. So for example among the works for 4 instruments, there is only one work in the usual combination of the string quartet vs. three works for unusual instrumental combinations. Among the works for 3 instruments, there are respectively one work for each one of the usual combination of string and piano trio vs. three works for less usual or unusual instrumental combinations. In the category of 2 instruments, predominates in number the duo for violin and piano. The works for these combination contain as well items belonging in the tradition of well known music genres and forms, like sonatas and suites, as well items written in free form or genre. The duos for other instrumental combinations, among them also many works for

various wind instruments and piano, contain mainly works in free form. Generally speaking the works in free form belong to the time after 1950, although they do not absent in the previous time also – especially in the first years of Papaioannou's compositional activity. In the chamber music also belong 14 works for one instrument solo, composed for various instruments and almost all in free form. Among them we find one work for organ (an unusual choice for a Greek composer) and a work for double bass solo, which we will hear in today's concert.

The works for piano solo also form a numerous instrumental music category. They cover the whole time of the composer's activity since his earliest works, in the beginnings of the thirties till the last years before his death, like for example *Erotikon* (AKI 145 – 3rd edition of the Complete Catalogue, AKI-Nτ 242) (1986), which we will hear in tomorrow's concert. The biggest part of them belongs to the genre of the suite, the prelude or the free character piece with suggestive title.

The biggest part of Papaioannou's works belongs to the vocal music genre. Among them there are songs for choir a capella, works for choir and/or vocal soloists and instrumental ensemble or chamber orchestra, works for one voice solo and orchestra or instrumental ensemble, songs for one voice and piano and one song for one unaccompanied voice.

Among the vocal works of Papaioannou, there are no works of musical theatre (i.e. opera, operetta or any other kind of musical theatre with voices). For the scholar the total lack of such works is noteworthy, especially if one considers that the composer was a systematic theatergoer and cinephil. In any case, if Papaioannou did not write any work for musical theatre, he did write incidental music for 7 theatre plays (5 of them ancient greek tragedies), one cinema music and one broadcast music for a cultural - historical series of the Greek Broadcast Organisation in the late fifties. To these must also be added 4 ballet suites.

#### 4. The texts

Apart from the musical compositions, there are also various texts related to music that Papaioannou left behind. Since Papaioannou was a scholar musician with a wide field of interests, it seems obvious that he left a great number of manuscripts, who give testimony about his personal studies. They are in most cases notes he made when he was studying various books or various topics. Having learned, often through his music studies, french, english and german (those are the languages, aside the greek language, in which we find notes in his manuscripts), he could very early have access to the international literature on music.

An interesting detail shows us the way of his early personal studies and the way he had his first advices in composition. In 1926, when he was 16 years old, he bought the *Cours de Composition Musicale* by *Vincent d'Indy*, which he systematically studied. His personal copy of this book in his library, in which the first and the second part of the work are bound in a volume, bears clear traces of repeated reading and according to the testimony of his widow, he used to say, that he learned french by studying this book.

Papaioannou's texts are also various papers and articles published or not, dated from the sixties or seventies and dealing mainly with the avant garde tendencies of the 20<sup>th</sup> century music. For the scholar of special interest is the unpublished text of a lecture he gave on April 1975 in Thessaloniki bearing the title *The artist in his laboratory*. This is the only extended, although not systematically finished, text dealing with his personal views about composition and the process of musical artistic creation.

## 5. Teaching activity and teaching work

Papaioannou's teaching activity was a very important part of his personality and his whole activity in general.

Among the musicians in Greece, later at a certain point also abroad, Papaioannou was very well known, especially from the fifties onwards, as a teacher in the disciplines of musical texture (advanced theory) and for many years as the only teacher in Greece who taught contemporary compositions techniques from the free atonality, the twelve tone technique, the serialism and the aleatoric composition. It seems that his reputation as a teacher lasts at a certain point till our days as a legend, although his last students are now beyond the middle age of their life and the younger generations could not have known him.

Here there is a point somehow paradox for contemporary times. Papaioannou, although he wrote various, published and unpublished texts about music, he never wrote or spoke about his own teaching work. He also never wrote or published any handbook for any musical discipline, although in various of his texts he makes general remarks about musical education and the teaching of music. He always practiced his own teaching activity exclusively within the *lesson* – i.e. the process of direct contact between teacher and pupil.

The way he practiced his teaching activity in combination with his reputation as teacher, refer to a general feature of the learning procedure in artistic studies and especially in music: to the primordial and main importance of the lesson as a process of direct contact between teacher and pupil.

Therefore the case of Papaioannou is from this point of view similar to that of many other musicians who rised to prominence as teachers in the whole music history either in Greece or abroad, without having left any written document of instructive character. Their value as teacher is deposited solely in the positive experience their pupils had of them, and secondly in the work, what ever it may have been, of their pupils. For the later generations the difficulty in such cases lies in the fact, that the life procedure of the lesson, still lives only as a subjective reminiscence of those students. Its reconstruction is only possible through their testimonies. As one of Papaioannou's students at the end of the sixties and the beginning of the seventies, I think, I can, give my own testimony, which I have compared with the reminiscences of other students of his the same, in earlier or later times.

The special and personal way of Papaioannou's teaching style, which very much impressed the student, was his ability to take the place of the student and to conceive from this point of view the approach at the teaching object. He could in this way adapt himself in the talent, the abilities and the personal interests of his pupils and conceive therefore for each one of them a personal tuition, which he always readapted during the time of their studies.

It seems obvious to admit, that an important factor for the development of Papaioannou's teaching abilities, was the fact that he himself was essentially self-taught. Of not lesser importance, I think, was the wide field of his interests, within and outside the music, and the deep knowledge he acquired since his youth on different teaching systems of harmony, counterpoint and fugue. To those disciplines he added later the teaching of modern composition techniques.

The importance of the live lesson for Papaioannou's teaching in combination with the fact, that he never wrote any teaching treatise, implies that there was not some kind of a tuition or teaching system of his own.

The only thing one could underline, are some stable features of his teaching. In the harmony he taught the functional theory, using it as a tool to make understandable by the student the

historical changes of the harmonic tonal texture. In this way harmony teaching became, especially in advanced level and thanks to his special exercises, a knowledge and an exercise in style. In counterpoint he taught basically the palestrinian counterpoint according to the codification of Knud Jeppesen in the internationally well known counterpoint handbook. In the fugue he followed a personal way of teaching. He took account of the *fugue d' école* (he often expressed during the lesson his recognition for the old manual of André Gédalge), but he never confined his fugue lesson on it.

So, with the exception perhaps of counterpoint, in none of the other traditional disciplines of music texture we could speak of any special teaching system in Papaioannou's lessons. Also, the distinction between harmony, counterpoint and fugue, especially on the advanced study level, did not play any important role in his lessons. The stable orientation point was the student with his abilities and his personal inclinations.

Papaioannou aimed in his lesson to develop in each student, taking account of his personality, the mastership in the technique of musical texture rather on the basis of the musical works, than on the basis of an abstract school writing. And then he aimed to cultivate in the student a musical sensibility without making the lesson an exercise on musical texture according to the periods of music history. To those goals he borrowed exercises from many known treatises (using often for less advanced students or for beginners exercises from Paul Hindemith's *A Concentrated Course in Traditional Harmony*). But he principally composed or invented exercises especially not of the usual kind of given melody or bass, but rather of various kinds of more or less elementary and guided composition. Those exercises aimed at provoking the interest and the imagination of the student and at developing his musical sensibility. This kind of exercises, in various types, he also used for the teaching of the contemporary compositions techniques, especially the twelve tone and the serial technique.

Those exercises are the only remnant of Papaioannou's teaching work. They are written on sheets or fragments of stave sheets, or even on little blank papers, with the staves written in hurry by the composer himself, with few, seldom extended, or even without instructions, and they were given, not always the same, to each student separately, accompanied or not by some oral advices by the composer himself, for the preparation of the next lesson. The composition of those exercises seems to cover all the lengthy activity of Papaioannou's life as a teacher. The way they are written and their enormous number (circa 5000, or even more), is an eloquent testimony for the importance they had for his teaching, but also for their function nevertheless complementary to the live tuition during his lesson.

In the years following the death of the composer, the preparation for editing of those exercises began and is now near to the end, by the speaker with the scientific collaboration of the colleagues Costas Tsougras and Kostas Chardas.

## **6. Some remarks on the compositions**

Papaioannou in some of the CVs he wrote in various times, as well as in other texts relating to his work, distinguishes various periods in his evolution as a composer. The comparison of those testimonies to each other and to his work and the studies that are made meanwhile about his work, allows the distinction of two essential periods in his work: Before and after the turn towards the new composition techniques and the aesthetical concepts of the musical avant-garde of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – and especially the atonality, the twelve tone technique and the serialism.

The composer himself dates this turn in 1950, the year of his sabbatical stay abroad. Nevertheless his works show that the turn was not a case of one year, in spite of the fact that the composer himself considered this year very important. Compositions from 1948 – 1949 to

1951 – 1952 show that the turn was rather a gradual detachment from an aesthetic paradigm in search and adoption of another.

The aesthetic paradigm from which Papaioannou departs in this time, is the aesthetic paradigm of the national music as formulated in a representative way in texts and realised in musical works especially by Manolis Kalomiris (1883 – 1962).

Although Kalomiris in his numerous texts and in his personal evolution as a composer, shows an open minded and non dogmatic attitude towards what is and what is not national music as a paradigm for the contemporary greek music, he, in the same time, affirms, criticising works of the early representants of the greek avant garde, like for example Skalkottas, that at least the ideological reference to the fundamental importance of the greek traditional music is necessary for the development of the contemporary greek music. Thus, he takes a negative attitude against phenomena like atonality and twelve tone technique in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In general Papaioannou follows also the aesthetical paradigm of national music through personal paths of compositional thinking in his works of the forties. A very characteristic and perhaps the more representative example is the symphonic poem *Bully Basil / Billy* (AKI 86, – 3rd edition of the Complete Catalogue, AKI-NT 107) (1945) inspired by the short story with the same title written by Stratis Myrivilis (1890 – 1969) – a short story which in its turn is a characteristic example for the ideological tendencies of the modern greek literature in the time between the two world wars.

The critical detachment from the aesthetic paradigm of the national music characterizes the personal course of many young Greek composers in the first decade after the Second World War (and later). And this fact gives material for musicological research on texture and compositional technique matters to the new graduated and doctors of the university music departments – a very positive development for the musicological reflection in Greece.

But here going back to the work of Y. A. Papaioannou, I would like to pay attention to another direction. And this direction change corresponds in my opinion to one question, which is hiding within the general topic of our conference and in the reexamination in our time, of the musical modernism of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: *Beyond the centres* – the topic could be formulated with an interrogation mark containing also the opposite: ***Beyond the centers or toward the centres?***

The direction to which I would like to turn my attention concluding my speech, is the query of continuity elements in Papaioannou's work.

Taking into account all of Papaioannou's compositions, as they appear in the Complete Catalogue, one can ascertain a permanent "programmatic" concern with the broadest meaning of the word – i.e. in the meaning of a program which exists independently of the musical work, or in the meaning of a program or an idea suggested by the title or the way the work is constructed. Indeed since the early up to the latest compositions and in all genres of instrumental music, there is a great number of works with suggestive or programmatic titles. And these works quantitatively outrun the works, whose genre implies more or less a formal schema coming from the classical tradition, like for example symphonies, sonatas or concertos.

This feature seems to be interesting from many points of view. During the years when Papaioannou followed the aesthetic paradigm of the national music, this feature links him to the so-called National School of Music in Greece. The same feature, maintained in his works still after his turn towards the aesthetic paradigm of the musical avant-garde of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, leads us to the core of his aesthetic inquiries.

In short I will point out only two, but very representative, points from his lecture *The artist in his laboratory* (1975):

«The lack of form sense (Formgefühl) appears [...] when one applies mechanically predetermined schemata, without a convincing coherence of the parts, without their evolution letting their evolution to appear spontaneous.»

«Every musical composition is the product of a *generative idea*, i.e. of a nucleus, which includes in embryonic state, all the constitutive parts of a perfect organism. [...] This generative idea we will name a motive. It is what one often subconsciously conceives and appears in the conscience, like every kind of idea, in that particular psychological state of mind, the inspiration, whose duration usually is very short; [...]» (engl. transl. D.Y.)

In these two excerpts, and not only in these, an impressive correspondence to music aesthetical attitudes of the romantic is manifested. It is interesting to observe, that the personal way in which Papaioannou approaches the general problem of the relation between material and form in music, is already formulated in the romantic concept of the *poetical idea* - the element, which in the romantic conception is considered as the constitutive substance of music itself. And this concerns the ideological level as well, as the technical level of the composition. In the first case the poetical idea is the expression of the unconditioned creative will of the artist. In the second, it is the attempt to liberate himself from any schematic constraint of form or genre borders, through the unconditioned development of minimal music elements, as for example the motives.

In order to avoid lengthy references on sources of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the recent literature, I will confine myself in one very eloquent for its laconic precision excerpt from a Richard Strauss letter dating in 1890. There the author, after having considered the programme music as the par excellence expression of a music free from every schematic constraint of the form, adds and generalises:

«Every new idea has to create its own new form, which is the fundamental condition of a musical work.»<sup>2</sup>

I could not say here to which extent the influence of the romantic music aesthetic and compositional technique on Papaioannou's thinking is direct or indirect (for example through the importance of the motives for the atonal and the twelve tone composition technique). In any case an important issue for future research on Papaioannou's work is the query of the intermediations through which this coincidence between romantic music aesthetic and his way of thinking happens. It is furthermore interesting to evaluate to which extent in this case the personal concerns of the composer coincide with the general situation of art / artificial music in Greece, taking in account the importance the matter discussed here had for all new national traditions of 19<sup>th</sup> century of art / artificial music as well, as for the avant-garde of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The temporary adoption of national music ideas by Papaioannou gives enough evidence, I think, for such a coincidence. On the other side the fact, for example, that he never composed a music theatre work seems to be only a personal choice, which differentiates him from general tendencies in the national music, as well as in the musical avant-garde of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

A concrete example of what the internal logic of Papaioannou's music and his attempt to correspond the form to the *generative idea* mean, is a short occasional piano piece, which is reproduced here entirely because of its brevity, the *Waltz of the white roses* (AKI 110 — 3rd



## ΤΟ ΒΑΛΣ ΤΩΝ ΛΕΥΚΩΝ ΡΟΔΩΝ

## THE WALTZ OF THE WHITE ROSES

A.K.I. 110

The analysis and the interpretation of music in various levels is the goal of musicology. By highlighting some basic features of Papaioannou's music in my lecture, I tried to formulate a framework for further research concerning the position of his music *beyond* or *towards* the centres of 20<sup>th</sup> century music avant-garde, during its second half.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> In the three different editions of the *Complete Catalogue of Works* (all in Greek and English) there are some differences in the total number of works, which receive an AKI number. Especially the third edition of the *Complete Catalogue of Works*, prepared under the editorship of Dr. Maria Dourou (Yannis A. Papaioannou. *Complete Catalogue of Works*. 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, Philippos Nakas The Music House, 2010), which appeared during the days of the Conference and was consulted by the author of the present lecture after the Conference, changed the numbering of the works and added some compositions, which were not included in the first and in the second edition. The third edition therefore comprises 248 works signed by the abbreviation *AKI-Nr.* For the purposes of the present lecture all those differences and changes are not of special importance.

<sup>2</sup> «jede neue Idee [muß] ihre eigene neue Form [schaffen], die Grundbedingung eines musikalischen Werkes ist.» (engl. transl. D.Y.)

Richard Strauss, *Letter to Johann L. Bella*, March 1890, quoted according to: STRAUSS, Richard (1980). *Dokumente — Aufsätze, Aufzeichnungen, Vorworte, Reden, Briefe*. Hrsg. von Ernst Krause. Leipzig, p. 61.

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