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Mikis Theodorakis and the articulation of modern Greek identity

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Introduction

THEODORAKIS GOES FOR GOLD

I

The air is filled with anticipation, agitation even. There are only a few seconds left of the second half. A final goal lifts the entire stadium to its feet, roaring, applauding, cheering its heroes. The hundreds of people who have gathered to support the Greek women's basketball team cannot contain their pride and exhilaration. 'Yes! They've won! *We've* won!' The familiar sound of the bouzouki rings out from the stadium loudspeakers. There is no need for an introduction. As one person and as if controlled by an unknown force, the crowd puts its hands together: 'Dada….dada…. didi-dada…' As the tempo increases, so does the rhythm of the clapping; faster and faster, intensifying in dynamic level and escalating in energy. As the music becomes a fast dance, the women's team knows that there is only one thing to do – they link arms, form a circle and begin the *hasaposerviko*, their dance of victory, right there, in the middle of the basketball court. This is just what the spectators want - a tangible, 'Greek', celebration of triumph.

You may already have guessed the identity of the piece of music that spurred the crowd and players on: Mikis Theodorakis' 'Zorba's Dance'. Time and time again, this music was played at the 2004 Olympic Games, intended to excite the spectators (and the athletes), invariably bringing them to their feet. This is music that has gained a life of its own; a life over which its own composer no longer has control.

When asked about the prevalence of Theodorakis' music at the Olympic Games in Athens 2004, there is one simple answer: It was everywhere. Theodorakis' music resonated at the opening ceremony, along with that of Manos Hadjidakis. As a volunteer and spectator at the Games, I heard it in the many stadia, as well as in the outer domains of the Olympic complexes. I invariably caught 'Zorba's Dance' while watching an Olympic event on television. Even the *Official Olympic CD* features eighteen of

Theodorakis' popular songs sung by different artists. Not only was I bombarded by his music at Olympic events, but on a tour to Delphi (a 'non-Olympic' event), the choice was either the latest interpretation of what 'ancient' Greek music sounded like, or the music of Greece's 'national' composer, Mikis Theodorakis.

What does this actually tell us about Theodorakis' music? Is it part and parcel of what it is to be Greek? Does it define the style of Greek music? Or encapsulate Greek spirit? The fact that all the songs on the *Official Olympic CD* were composed by Theodorakis strongly suggests that he is synonymous with both Greek identity and Greek musical expression. My quest in this research report is to find out how this has come about.

II

My own experience (as a South African of Greek descent) is that Mikis Theodorakis' music *has* without question become part of Greek identity. One cannot speak about Greek culture without speaking about music, and one cannot speak about Greek music without invoking Theodorakis. While I was in Athens in 2004, I talked to many people, young and old, from students to security guards, volunteers to professors. They reconstructed a gigantic figure for me, describing him as a god, a brilliant, amazing man, about whom I would find masses of information for my research. Masses of information I did find, but strangely enough little of it is seriously academic. The truth is that Theodorakis has provided me with hundreds of popular songs and other works to analyse, songs that remain close to the heart of the Greek people. However, it was only when I began this research project that I learnt that Theodorakis is also a Western art music composer. Some people I spoke to were as surprised as I was to hear this. Others would quickly remark: 'Theodorakis is a communist, you know!' Responses to these different aspects of Theodorakis' creative personality and experience suggest an ambivalence: he is obviously a potent symbol of Hellenic culture, a legend who has inspired people throughout the years; at the same time, there is a sense of dislike for, or rather

misunderstanding of, 'the communist', the leftist, 'the one who says he is a socialist but who has made a fortune'.[1]

Theodorakis continues to be acknowledged as a man who fought for Greece, who rose against the Junta and who struggled for justice. He is undoubtedly a national hero. But he still seems to be misunderstood in some ways. A music student remarked that it is not Theodorakis that is Greece's national composer, but Manos Hadjidakis.[2] Theodorakis was simply a political composer, she argued, part of the past. Her reasoning was obviously based on the fact that Theodorakis composed music during an important political period in Greece's history, a time when Greece was trying to find a stable political/cultural identity. (This period is marked by the Civil War between 1946-49, and the period of the Junta, from 1967-74.) Theodorakis was politically active then, imprisoned and exiled for his beliefs; his music was banned. Does this explain why he is *still* revered in the Greek community, why we hear his music everywhere even without knowing who he is, and why he has become a hero for the Greek people? What about the music itself, the way it seems to move the Greek spirit and to bear some relation to Greek society? Are the above statements valid observations, and if so, why is his symphonic music so different? And why is it mostly unknown?

Drawing on contemporary identity theories, such as those of Martin Stokes and Simon Frith, my aim in this research report is to interrogate the construction of modern Greek identity in Theodorakis' music. In Chapter One, I unravel the complex webs spun by history and culture to shape the modern nation, and the ways in which Theodorakis' political and musical life have intersected with these webs in the twentieth century. In Chapter Two, I discuss the establishment of the *Popular Art Song* (*Entechno Laiko Tragoudi*) as a powerful agent of modern Greek identity. Chapter Three examines major moves in Theodorakis' advancing of popular art forms and hence his own renegotiation of modern Greek identity. Theatre, 'metasymphonic' music and lyric tragedy are genres

[1] These responses were taken from my conversations with Greeks while attending the Athens Olympic Games in 2004.
[2] This Greek music student volunteered at the Athens Olympic Games in 2004. Unfortunately, her name has been lost from my records.

that I discuss. Chapter Four explores Theodorakis' inner world, his beliefs and perspectives. Chapter Five discusses the phenomenon of Theodorakis' *Zorba* as the all-encompassing representation of modern Greek identity.

Chapter One

MODERN GREEK IDENTITY: HISTORY, POLITICS AND THEODORAKIS

> 'The present-day Greek', wrote the editor of a newspaper in insurgent Greece, 'is not reborn, as is commonly believed; he is born. He is the child of a famous and proud father, possesses the same features and constitution, the same functions, almost the same intellectual powers; in short, he is the living image of the father, a lion's cub. To grow and become like his father, he must have the same upbringing, the same conditions, those at least which are in accord with the spirit of the present century.'
>
> (*Geniki Ephemeris tis Hellados*, 20 Feb. 1826
> quoted in Koliopoulos & Veremis 2002, 227)

Understanding modern Greek identity is a complex issue. It involves understanding the concept of Hellenism and also what being Greek in this day and age means:[3] namely, a multi-dimensional, multi-layering reaching back to the ancient Greeks. In this chapter, I will attempt to unpack these layers and create a picture of modern Greek identity through an examination of key points in Greece's (modern) history. Thus I trace the main events that have led to what we have come to know as present-day Greece, both geographically and culturally. I then place Mikis Theodorakis within this historical frame. In the second part of this chapter, I examine the role and development of music in modern Greece, and hence its changing identity as it was influenced by, and in turn influenced, its social and cultural context (Stokes 1994). I locate Theodorakis within this framework and establish his very close bond with Greek cultural identity and the reciprocal role his music has played in defining it. This will provide the foundation for the chapters that follow.

[3] The word 'Hellenism' refers to the civilization of the ancient Greeks, or Hellenes: 'Because ancient Greece furnished the beginnings of Western science, philosophy, and art, Hellenism has come to stand for a set of ideals as well as for the historical culture that developed them' (Edel 1967, 28). 'The word "Greek" is derived from the name of one of the less significant tribes of Greece (the *Graikoi*, Latin *Graeci*) and has been used outside that country from Roman times to the present. The Greeks' own name for themselves during most of their history has been Hellenes, of their country Hellas, and of their language Hellenic' (Diver 1967, 417).

1.1 The Historical Negotiation of Modern Greek Identity

The complexity of modern Greek identity lies in the fact that only in the past thirty years has it been able to mould itself without the pressures of external forces: from the 1400s to 1800s, Greece was under Turkish rule. Greek Independence in 1821 was followed by a turbulent sequence of foreign kings, dictatorships, population exchanges via the Asia Minor Disaster of 1919, civil war (1946-1949), Italian and German occupation and, finally, the Junta (1967-1974). This young modern nation that has struggled to survive and also retain its identity in the five hundred years until after the Junta has attempted and, I believe, managed to preserve as well as connect with her ancient Hellenic roots. However, it is obvious that Modern Greece is not simply a continuation of the Ancient nation, although the latter is and always will be part of the modern conception (no matter how often scholars dispute this fact). In order to understand modern Greek identity, its origins and creation, one has to look at key points in Greece's history.

'Nation-states have always been socially constructed' (Connel & Gibson 2003, 117) and modern Greece is no different. A sense of 'nation' or rather, an 'imagined community' as Anderson (1983) puts it, is created through cultural means such as language, music, national artistic traditions, religion, ethnic identity as well as visual symbols (such as flags, emblems, crests, currency) (Connel & Gibson 2003). Observing these cultural expressions and historic movements will reveal how the Greek nation has been shaped.

In his *Reading Greece*, David Mason poses the question 'What is Greece?', and also asks at what point in history one should start exploring the concept of 'Greece' (2002, n.p.). In my attempt to understand and research modern Greek identity, I found these questions were being asked time and time again. The concept 'Greece' occupies a mythic and mystical space in the contemporary imaginary and memory, largely due to the place that its ancient civilisation occupies in the philosophical and political traditions of the western world. In trying to arrive at tangible answers, Mason asks: 'What borders in time and space do we use to comprehend it[Greece]?' (Mason 2002, n.p.). Does one take as a starting point Ancient Greece, from Alexander the Great, the Byzantine era, or four

centuries of Ottoman domination? Or does one choose Greece's Independence from 1829 or 1833? The monarchy, the Balkan War, The Treaty of Sevres (1920) and the Asia Minor catastrophe also offer particular events and dimensions to the construction of Greek identity (Mason 2002). Something that I found surprising is the fact that Modern Greece is actually younger than the United States. This highlights the inescapable and immense presence of the Ancient World in Modern Greece today, and reinforces the belief that it is impossible to separate the two concepts or histories, the modern and the ancient.

Having considered the various options, I have decided to begin my quest for modern Greek identity at the moment when Greece was liberated from the Ottoman Empire. The Greek revolution, otherwise known as the 'Greek War of Independence' (1821 – 1829), is considered by many scholars the origin of Modern Greece as well as the beginning of the project of creating a Greek geographical and cultural space.

From the fifteenth to nineteenth centuries, Greece was dominated by the Ottoman Empire: south-eastern Europe, the Black Sea and the Middle East were one political realm where the non-Muslim majority (which included the Greeks) was excluded from mainstream politics (Petmezas 2004). This period also covered the European Renaissance – an era culminating in the 'Enlightenment – a new phase of social and intellectual development' (Petmezas 2004, 14). Only a small minority of the non-Muslim elite in south-eastern Europe was allowed to participate in or even have access to the intellectual developments of the Enlightenment period (Petmezas 2004).[4] However, non-Muslims did have some religious freedom, and as a result, minorities such as the Greeks affiliated themselves with their religious groups; in the case of the Greeks, the religious group were predominantly Greek Orthodox. Religion played and still plays a major role in the construction of modern Greek identity, since the Greeks were united through this faith.

[4] Although the predominant view decries the exclusion of Greece from the Renaissance, Mikis Theodorakis believes that it was in part a good thing; united in their oppression, the Greeks were also united in the arts; there was no elite class, all were Greeks and all were the same (Malandris n.d.). However, the absence of the Renaissance also aligns Greece with the east, contradicting the notion that Ancient Greece is considered to be one of the founders of Western civilisation.

A ‘Greek national revival’ came about as the Ottoman Empire weakened in the late eighteenth century. This was because many of the merchants and craftsmen were non-Muslim and mainly Greek Orthodox. Thus a dynamic social group, a diaspora of merchants, artisans and ship-owners, was formed in Europe (Baxevanis & Petropulos 1990). Although many were not Greek, the Greek language was used for commerce, culture and administration. In addition, a significant number of Greeks studied in foreign countries, creating an interest in ancient Greece and its folkloric culture (Baxevanis & Petropulos 1990). The *Philike Hetairia* (Friendly Society) was formed in 1814 in Russia by a group of Greek merchants who organised a movement against the Turks of the Ottoman Empire; this led to a Greek revolt in 1827 when France, Britain and Russia decided to help Greece become a ‘self-governing part of the Ottoman Empire’ (Baxevanis & Petropulos 1990, 386). Finally, after Russia defeated Turkey, these same powers ‘recognised Greece’s Independence and pledged to protect it’, according to the London protocol of 1830 (Baxevanis & Petropulos 1990, 386). Otto I, of Bavarian royalty, was made king of the Kingdom of Greece in 1832 (Petmezas 2004).

Greece’s struggle for independence was supported by Philhellenes all over the world, basing their concept of a Greek Kingdom on the ancient civilisation of Greeks (or rather, the Hellenes). Gail Holst-Warhaft explains:

> The struggle for modern Greece’s national independence took place in a context of 19th century European idealization of ancient Greece and its achievements. ‘The Classics’ became the cornerstone of the British, German, and French education, with the Greek language at its heart. In 1807, the Parthenon Marbles, brought to England by Lord Elgin, were exhibited to an awed public. Greece became an essential part of the ‘Grand Tour’ undertaken by aristocrats of sufficient means who wanted to see the monuments of great civilizations with their own eyes. The most famous of these aristocratic tourists, Lord Byron, visited Greece in 1809 and 1810, and published his stirring ‘Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage’ on his return. Byron’s call to the Greeks and those who loved ‘Hellas’ to overthrow their Turkish overlords was heeded by thousands of foreign Philhellenes who joined the Greeks in their struggle not because they knew anything about the contemporary inhabitants of a small province in the Ottoman Empire, but because of an ideal of what Greece or rather Hellas stood for.
>
> (Holst-Warhaft 2002, n.p.)

There was a significant and problematic discrepancy between the idealized Greece and the social reality of the liberated Greece. This new Greece consisted mostly of poor

inhabitants whose language was not the same as that of the ancient Greeks,[5] and four hundred years under the Ottoman Empire meant that their customs and traditions were more 'oriental' than European (Holst-Warhaft 2002, n.p.). It is the above dichotomies that problematize the issue of modern Greek Identity: Is Greece Eastern or Western? Is it Balkan or European? Are its citizens Hellenes or not? These questions were still being asked at the beginning of the twentieth century, and certain historical events further complicate them.

Even today, most Greeks consider themselves direct descendants of the ancient Greeks. It is quite a natural identification, and one cannot blame the modern nation for making it – the ruins of the Parthenon still stand on the Acropolis overlooking Athens (not to mention many other ancient ruins that decorate even the metro stations), and have done so through centuries of domination and struggle and throughout the modern age. It is also natural to want to claim a relationship with the civilisation that invented democracy and was one of the intellectual hubs of the ancient world. This was the nationalism, the 'idealization' of Greece that gathered support for the revolution from Philhellenes all over the world in the 1820s and has continued to feed the imagination of modern Greek identity. The creation of this 'imagined community' was responsible for uniting the people in order to achieve liberation (Anderson 1983). Thus the new liberated Greek nation insisted upon its ancient identity. However, it also had to deal with its modern, newly liberated reality, and all that that implied. The Europeans 'had no interest in allowing Greece to be modern' (Mason 2002, n.p.). In actual fact only a small fragment of Greece had been liberated by 1832, and its inhabitants numbered only about 735 400. A large population of Greeks still lived in parts of the Ottoman Empire and in Asia Minor. According to Petmezas, the new independent state represented only the first step in uniting the 'Hellenes' in a 'sovereign constitutional polity' (2004, 20).

After many revolts, Otto I was replaced in 1863 by George I – a Danish prince who ran a more democratic government that 'limited the royal power and gave much power to an

[5] The modern Greek language is derived from Ancient Greek. 'Ancient Greek is not as strange to contemporary Greeks as Anglo Saxon is to English speakers, and Homeric Greek is probably closer to modern Greek than Middle English is to modern English' (Jusdanis 1991, 41).

elected parliament' (Baxevanis & Petropulos 1990, 386). During the second half of the nineteenth century, and through further struggle and revolts against the Ottoman Empire, Greece gained more land including the Thessaly region, Crete, and a few islands. Finally, Greece was establishing its physical borders. In 1910, after many protests, Eleftherios Venizelos became prime minister, although still under a monarchy (Baxevanis & Petropulos 1990). Under Venizelos, Greece expanded geographically and by the second decade of the twentieth century increased its population by two thirds, its inhabitants numbering about four and a half million people by 1913 (Stoianovich 1967). In 1913, King George was assassinated and succeeded by his son, Constantine I (Baxevanis & Petropulos 1990).

Another focal point in the negotiation of modern Greek identity lies in the events of the Asia Minor disaster,[6] which followed soon after the conclusion of the First World War and its redivisions of territory. According to the Treaties of Neuilly (1919) and Sevres (1920), certain Bulgarian and Ottoman regions were to be incorporated into Greece, and other disputed areas given either to Albania or Italy (Petmezas 2004). Smyrna was mostly inhabited by Greeks and would become a Greek protectorate for five years, after which a referendum would be held to decide its long-term future (Petmezas 2004). However, the Turkish General Mustafa Kemal Ataturk led a Turkish national resistance against the Treaty of Sevres. As a result, and with the support of the British, Greece unsuccessfully attacked Ankara in 1920. Greece became isolated from the other allies (apart from the British), who had made agreements with the 'Kemalists', and by August 1922, after several years of fighting, Greece's army could not withstand the massive Turkish attacks (Petmezas 2004, 31). The Greek-Orthodox and Armenian populations of Asia-Minor, who had fought on the Greek side, paid a heavy price in lives and property. The event ended in bloodshed, destruction and emigration, and has come to be known as the 'Asia Minor Disaster' (Petmezas 2004, 31).

Consequently, according to the Treaty of Lausanne (1923), Asia Minor, Eastern Thrace and the islands of Ivros and Tenedos were to be ceded to Turkey. However, this was not

[6] This event's significance will become apparent in the discussion on music and identity.

the harshest clause included in the Treaty: All Greek-Orthodox populations in Turkey were to be 'forcibly exchanged' with all Muslim populations in Greece. Both the Treaty of Neuilly and the Treaty of Lausanne, which also demanded a '*voluntary* "exchange of populations"' between Greece and Bulgaria, resulted in the complete ethnological reconfiguration of the countries concerned (Petmezas 2004, 31). In addition to the Greeks,

> Turkish-speaking Christians of inner Anatolia were forced to leave their ancestral lands, while Cretan and other Greek-speaking Muslims of Greece followed Turkish Muslims and moved in the opposite direction. Only the Turkish and Pomak Muslims of Eastern Thrace remained in Greece as the counterpart of the large Greek-Orthodox population of Constantinople that was allowed to remain in Turkey. The Treaty guaranteed the rights of both minorities to unprejudiced justice, free exercise of their religion, education in their national language and, of course, enjoyment of all civil rights and full security of their life and property.
>
> (Petmezas 2004, 31)

Unfortunately, the rights Petmezas refers to were abused on both sides. With the above exchanges in population it can be assumed that the idea of 'Greece' was destabilized, and so was the identity of its people. A natural reaction to this event was a reluctance to accept the new incoming populations. The assimilation of such big populations within a new geographical space naturally had an inevitable influence on their respective identities: for example, the Greek population from Turkey brought with them their own customs and music that would in time become part of a new cultural mix.[7]

In 1924, after another military revolt, Greece was declared a Republic (Petmezas 2004). Political confusion in the following years expressed itself in conflict between 'republicans' and 'royalists' (Baxevanis & Petropulos 1990, 388). After several uprisings and elections, King George II was called back to the throne and, in 1935, Greece was once again under the rule of a constitutional monarchy (Baxevanis & Petropulos 1990). In 1936 there was an election which gave the royalists and the republicans equal numbers in parliament, and the balance of power to the communists, who had fifteen of the 300 seats in Parliament. Observing this, George II allowed General Joannes Metaxas to form a military dictatorship. The latter dissolved parliament in August 1936 and remained a dictator until his death in 1941 (Baxevanis & Petropulos 1990). At this point Mikis

[7] The effects of the population exchanges on Greek music will be discussed in the section on music and identity.

Theodorakis becomes a significant actor both in terms of music and politics on the Greek stage.

1.2 Theodorakis: The Modern Greek

Mikis Theodorakis was born in 1925 on the island of Chios where he was exposed to folk music and the music of the Greek Orthodox Church (Giannaris 1972). His parents were refugees of the Asia Minor Disaster, and had moved from Smyrna to Chios (Giannaris 1972). His father was a civil servant and, as a result, Theodorakis and his family moved from place to place in Greece, including Chios, Mytilini, Syros, Ioanina, Kefalonia, Patras, Pyrgos, Tripoli, and finally Athens in 1943. Thus, in his childhood, there was no time to settle down and establish roots (Theodorakis 2005a). This is significant in discussing the identity of Theodorakis: on the one hand, by moving from town to town, he had the opportunity to observe the different Greek traditions and musics that existed there; on the other, moving around so often kept Theodorakis confined within his family circle and his own imaginary world. He had no contact with symphonic music until about 1941 when he heard Beethoven's Ninth Symphony at the cinema,[8] an experience that moved the composer very deeply (Malandris n.d.).

Although Greece was neutral during World War II, it was occupied by the Italians, Germans and the British. In March 1942, while Greece was under German occupation, Theodorakis took part in a demonstration and was arrested and tortured by the Italian authorities assigned to the area, after which he managed to escape to Athens (Holst 1980). This experience sparked his interest in Marxism and he began reading Lenin and Marx. He also joined the National Liberation Front (EAM), the largest resistance group against the Nazi occupying forces (http://romanos.mikistheodorakis.gr/bio/big_en.htm). At this time he decided to study composition at the Athens Conservatory under Professor Philoctetes Economides (http://www.mikis-theodorakis.net/bio-e.html). Throughout his studies, he remained active in the resistance until the end of the war.

[8] There were no radios or gramophones available to him at this point.

In October 1944, although German forces withdrew from Greece, there was constant conflict between communist and non-communist resistance groups, resulting in a Greek Civil War, lasting from 1945-1948 (Baxevanis & Petropulos 1990). This was one of the most devastating events in modern Greek history. Even today misunderstandings persist about this war: it is a popular sentiment among the Greek public that the Greeks were fighting a war foisted on them by the superpowers, Russia on the one hand, and Britain and the USA on the other. In actual fact, both sides were fighting 'for Greece'. This event deeply affected Theodorakis, who was a leftist. The British supported Greece against the communist 'rebels' and, with the Truman Doctrine in 1947, the United States took over this British support (Baxevanis & Petropulos 1990). Theodorakis went underground and eventually was caught and exiled to the island of Ikaria, and twice to the island of Makronissos. He was subsequently hospitalized for deteriorating health (http://romanos.mikistheodorakis.gr/bio/big_en.htm). In the prison on Makronissos, he composed his First Symphony, and became interested in folk music as well as the *rebetika* or lower class popular songs (Holst 2005).[9] He had not previously paid any attention to the *rebetika* because his middle class family did not encourage this kind of music. Moreover, 'his Marxist idealism led him to view the songs as both decadent and apolitical' (Holst-Warhaft 2002, n.p.). However, his exposure to them revealed that they were musically interesting and that they 'spoke to the very Greeks whom he wished to reach out to' (Holst-Warhaft 2002, n.p). Thus, he began notating their melodies, aware of their potential material for a new type of song. He envisioned combining this musical material with the best of Greek poetry, thus creating a new type of popular music that would cross class barriers and appeal to a broad audience (Holst-Warhaft 2002).

In 1949 the civil war finally ended with the defeat of the communists. This left the National Army under Marshal Alexander Papagos in control (Baxevanis & Petropulos 1990). Despite Theodorakis' active participation in the underground resistance movement, he was

[9] The *rebetika* are Greek songs associated with the 'urban low-life milieu' of the 1890s – 1920s (Holst-Warhaft 2001, 906). In the 1930s, the rebetika became more commercialised when recording studios were established and began recording these songs. 'This genre occupies a similar place in Greek culture to that of the tango in Argentina or the flamenco in Spain' (Holst-Warhaft 2001, 906).

able to graduate from the Athens Conservatory in 1950, with a diploma in harmony, counterpoint and fugue (http://romanos.mikistheodorakis.gr/bio/big_en.htm).

During the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s, Greece was governed by various coalition governments that were basically democratic in ideals (Baxevanis & Petropulos 1990). In 1954, Theodorakis won a scholarship to The Paris Conservatoire, where he studied composition with Olivier Messiaen and conducting with Eugene Bigot.[10] In Paris, he was completely with European art music and identified particularly with the music of Bartok and the early music of Stravinsky: it was modern yet still retained national elements. He was also interested in their orchestrations and rhythmic innovations (Holst 1980). Thus Theodorakis used his newly learnt techniques and attempted to 'combine Greek thematic material with contemporary European compositional style' in his compositions (Holst 1980, 28). His Greek heritage remained significant in his work, even as a western art music composer in Paris. During this period he composed music for the Ludmilla Tcherina Ballet, Covent Garden, the Stuttgart Ballet, and film music, as well as symphonic works and chamber music.

In 1957 he was awarded the First Prize at the Moscow Festival by Shostakovich (http://romanos.mikistheodorakis.gr/bio/big_en.htm). He was also commissioned to compose a ballet and, in 1959, he presented *Antigone* at Covent Garden (Holst 1980). This was his first work to gain serious critical attention outside of Greece. In the same year, Theodorakis was awarded the American Copley Prize as the 'best European composer' and the first prize of the International Institute of Music in London. It seemed that he was on the path to becoming an international classical composer (Karageorgis 2001). However, at the premiere of *Antigone*, Theodorakis observed that the Byzantine melody of the opening affected the audience emotionally. This made him question his musical path, whether to move back to melody or forward with modernist music (Holst 1980). His decision was made when he was sent the poem *Epitaphios* by Yannis Ritsos, a leading Greek poet: 'He set the poems to music in a single day making use of elements from Greek popular, folk and ecclesiastical music' (http://www.mikis-

[10] Theodorakis 2005, Holst 1980, Giannaris 1972.

theodorakis.net/bio-e.html). He also decided to return to Greece and involve himself in Greek politics.

In 1960 Theodorakis founded the Small Symphony Orchestra of Athens, touring throughout Greece in an attempt to familiarize audiences with symphonic music (http://romanos.mikistheodorakis.gr/bio/big_en.htm). In 1961 the government of Constantine Caramanlis recognised the composer as a threat, and banned his 'political' works (Holst 1980, 71).

Caramanlis resigned in 1963 and George Papandreou (Centre Union Party) became Prime Minister (Baxevanis & Petropulos 1990). In this year, left-wing Parliament member Grigoris Lambrakis was murdered under circumstances which revealed that many government officials were corrupt. This incident deeply affected the Greek political psyche. As a result Theodorakis, now a member of the United Democratic Left Party, founded and became president of the The Lambrakis Youth Movement (http://www.mikis-theodorakis.net/bio-e.html). He was also becoming internationally famous for his film score *Zorba the Greek* and his oratorio *Axion Esti*.

The Lambrakis Movement was a significant step for Theodorakis – it was not only a political and historical movement, but also a social and cultural one. He believed that cultural revolution leads to social change; thus, while fighting for political change, freedom and national independence, one should also fight for cultural change. The Lambrakis Movement envisioned the establishment of a future society and the building of a new Greek culture, while safeguarding and advancing the political goals of the present (Theodorakis in Sgourakis & Sgourakis 2005, 218). This concept is at the core of Theodorakis' thought throughout his life and work. It is illustrated by one of the stories that the composer recounts – a dialogue he had with a ten-year-old Lambrakis follower.

> Theodorakis asked him: 'Tell us why you are a "Lambrakis"?'
> The young boy answered: 'I have a vision.'
> 'What vision?' Theodorakis asked.
> 'Stadia, libraries,' responded the boy.
>
> (Theodorakis quoted in Sgourakis & Sgourakis 2005, 219)

To Theodorakis, these words reflected his own thoughts, his own *raison d'être* – these were the first stepping stones to a new Greek socio-cultural world. These ideals were perfectly embodied in his metasymphonic oratorio *Axion Esti*.

In 1966 the Greek government was weakening because Papandreou believed that previous elections had been rigged and that the army, supported by the constitutional monarchy, stood in the way of democracy (Baxevanis & Petropulos 1990). At this time, Theodorakis' works had once again been banned as a result of his involvement in a demonstration against the king (Holst 1980). Papandreou and the king, Constantine II, clashed over the latter's powers and control of the army (Baxevanis & Petropulos 1990). Parliament dissolved on 14 April 1967 in political confusion. New elections set for May never took place because, on 21 April 1967, the royal palace, government, as well as radio stations, were seized by the Greek army. A military dictatorship (junta) was set up under Colonel George Papadopoulos. The junta made mass arrests, curtailed many liberties, prohibited political activity, controlled newspapers and dissolved many private organisations (Baxevanis & Petropulos 1990). The beginning of the junta marked the end of what Theodorakis considers one of his happiest and most productive periods.

On the day of the coup d'état, Theodorakis decided to go underground, and he appealed to the people to resist the dictatorship. With a group of other dissenters, he founded the first resistance organization against the junta and was elected its president (http://romanos.mikistheodorakis.gr/bio/big_en.htm). The junta imprisoned all suspected communists and opponents and, in August 1967, Theodorakis was imprisoned in isolation in the notorious Bouboulina street security prison. Later he was moved to Averoff prison (http://romanos.mikistheodorakis.gr/bio/big_en.htm). His music was also banned by the junta. Nevertheless, during this time, Theodorakis continued to compose and managed to send his work abroad. Although King Constantine remained Head of State, he was powerless: when he tried to overthrow the junta in December 1967, he failed, and he and his family fled to Italy (Baxevanis & Petropulos, 1990). A new constitution increased the Prime Minister's power.

In protest, Theodorakis began a hunger strike (November 1967), after which he was hospitalized and released from prison but placed under house arrest. Eventually he was exiled with his family to Oropos camp in Arcadia. In this concentration camp, Theodorakis' health deteriorated seriously, causing an international protest for his release from such celebrities as Arthur Miller, Laurence Olivier, Dmitri Shostakovich, Yves Montand and Leonard Bernstein (http://romanos.mikistheodorakis.gr/bio/big_en.htm). As a result of this pressure he was released in April 1970 and left for Paris, where he lived in exile. Whilst abroad, Theodorakis was still active politically, meeting with many world leaders and personalities in an effort to bring democracy back to Greece (Holst 1980). He toured the world giving concerts, interviews and statements about the fall of the dictatorship, trying to spread a message of freedom, democracy and peace, as well as voicing the problems of suppressed minorities. His concerts became rallying points for other countries fighting against oppression. After a series of attempted coups, Papadopoulos' government was overthrown by a group of military officers led by lieutenant General Pradon Gizikis on 25 November 1973. Gizikis became president (Baxevanis & Petropulos 1990).

In 1974 troubles in Cyprus flared up. Eventually, the Cypriot government was overthrown by Cypriot troops led by Greek officers (Baxevanis & Petropulos 1990). Claiming that Greece had violated the independence of Cyprus, Turkish troops invaded the island, and after several days of fighting, a cease-fire was signed (Baxevanis & Petropulos 1990). As a consequence of this crisis, Greece's military government collapsed. Constantine Caramanlis was invited by the military leaders to become Prime Minister again and was sworn in as Prime Minister of a civilian government on the 24 July, 1974. In November, Greece had its first elections in ten years (Baxevanis & Petropulos 1990). Theodorakis was finally able to return to his homeland.

On his return Theodorakis spent his time touring Greece and holding discussions and in 1976 formed the 'Movement for Culture and Peace'. Because of increasing differences with the Left, especially the Greek Communist Party, as well as his frustration in uniting

the different factions, Theodorakis decided to devote himself to composing symphonic music. In 1983 he was awarded the Lenin Prize for Peace (http://www.mikis-theodorakis.net/bio-e.html). Theodorakis' output at this time included symphonies, oratorios, operas and sacred music. He toured abroad frequently, giving performances of his own music. While speaking out about problems of democracy and the abuses of human rights, he formed a committee for 'Greek-Turkish friendship' (http://www.mikis-theodorakis.net/bio-e.html). In 1989 Theodorakis was appointed Minister Without Portfolio in the Conservative Government of Mitsotakis (Greece), confusing rightists and leftists and suggesting that the composer stood for a particular set of ideals rather than a particular political party. His main political task was educational, to promote cultural reform (1990-1992), and reconciliation between Greece and Turkey. In 1993 he retired from politics and became the general music director of the Symphony Orchestra and Choir of the Hellenic Radio (Holst 2005). He continued to be in great demand as a conductor of his own works. In November 2000 Theodorakis received the Onassis International Prize for Culture, and in the same year he was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize (which went to South Korean President Kim-Dae-Jung). In May 2005 Russian President Vladimir Putin presented commemoration medals to Mikis Theodorakis, Manos Glezos and Nikos Terzoglou, and on 31 July Theodorakis was awarded Russia's St. Andrew's Prize for 'his efforts to empower the people spiritually and to promote peace and harmony between nations' (http://en.mikis-theodorakis.net/index.php/article/articleprint/429/-1/69/). In September 2005 Theodorakis, scientist Apostolos Papagergious (and others) received the Soranos award, and in November of the same year UNESCO honoured him with the International Music Prize.

Theodorakis continued giving concerts for human rights causes all over the world throughout the 1990s. These included a concert after Chernobyl, opposing the use of atomic energy, and concerts in Turkey promoting democracy and human rights, and also a solution to the Cyprus problem. He has continued to be outspoken about human rights' violations all over the world. The 'Culture for Peace' movement was inspired by his ideas. In 1999 he completed his trilogy of operas based on classical tragedy (Holst 2005).

In 2005 Theodorakis celebrated his eightieth birthday, and was honoured with a symposium celebrating his life and works in his father's homeland, Crete, in July of the same year. In March 2006 a symposium entitled 'Music and Universal Harmony' took place in Heraklion, Crete, once more honouring Theodorakis. Along with his works, topics relating to the psychology and sociology of music, and the music of the spheres were offered.

1.3 Language and Identity

As previously mentioned, nation-states are 'constructed' through cultural and traditional means, and one of the most important cultural issues that has faced Greece throughout her history is that of language. Tracing the steps of the acceptance of the modern Greek language demonstrates the battle in shaping a modern Greek identity. Gregory Jusdanis observes: 'The most important instrument for the creation of a national consciousness is the vernacular... . The intelligentsia has to call on the masses to fight for a revolution in the language they understand' (1991, 41). In Greece, the issue was a matter of diglossia, 'the contemporaneous presence of two registers of the same language' (Jusdanis 1991, 41). The language existed in a series of registers such as classical Greek, the academic and church language as well as the vernacular.

In the twentieth century, two forms of the language were used: the spoken language called *demotic*, and the academic and official language called *katharevousa* ('puristic'), in which older forms are preserved. People on the street were speaking a different language to scholars and people in parliament – children were going to school, learning and speaking *katharevousa*, and changing to *demotic* when going home. This split in language-use posed many questions around modern Greek identity, as it not only questioned the medium of national education, but also how Greeks viewed their relationship with their past and how they defined themselves as a western society (Jusdanis 1991). Was Greece traditional or modern, eastern or western, a nation or an Empire, classical or Byzantine? Those who wanted to keep the image of Ancient Greece

tried to impose a 'puristic language' or *katharevousa* and defended it as the language of the church. Liberal thinkers argued for the demotic. This disagreement even resulted in physical violence: there were fatal casualties in demonstrations in Athens in 1901 and 1903 respectively when a demotic translation of the New Testament was published, and subsequently when *Oresteia* was performed in modern Greek (Jusdanis 1991).

Katharevousa became a national idiom by law in 1911. In the 1960s, *demotic* began to be incorporated into the educational system but was once again abandoned when the junta came into power in 1967, allowing it only in primary schools. After the junta was overthrown, a law was passed in 1976 making *demotic* 'the language of education and state' (Jusdanis 1991, 46). In 1981 Andreas Papandreou's administration introduced the monotonic system where the accents of the Hellenistic era were simplified and no longer required to be learnt. The linguistic controversy has thus only been resolved in recent years, and a standard language established for all official and unofficial uses (Jusdanis 1991). This resolution meant that state institutions and the common people had a common language, and thus a homogenous national culture. This went a long way in resolving underlying tensions between the state and the common citizen.

Greece's struggle to become a 'modern' nation can be traced through the path of its language: it expresses the inherent division between a self-imposed image (i.e. the Hellenistic) and the practical reality of a country. Just as the history of language provides a metaphor for the ancient/modern dichotomy in the formation of Greek identity, so too does its music. Different social groups have traditionally been represented by different musics; in the nationalistic imagination and conception of Theodorakis, they have been reunited.[11] Theodorakis used the different musics, from the various socio-cultural circles of Greece, to create one musical vernacular, one that represented a unified national consciousness, that 'call[s] on the masses to fight … a revolution in the language they understand' (Jusdanis 1991, 41).

[11] Theodorakis' manner of uniting the different musics is discussed in Chapter Two.

It is important to note that Theodorakis used neo-Hellenic poetry for his popular art songs, music written in the 'modern Greek' language understood by all. This was poetry to which the masses probably would not have been exposed, but through Theodorakis and his songs they could experience the poetry and understand it at the same time.[12]

Before examining the meaning and function of Theodorakis' music, it is necessary to explore the musical context preceding and surrounding his career, both folk and western art, since he used both traditions to create a new expression of Greek identity.

1.4 Music

It is important to comprehend the role music plays in Greek society. Music is 'possibly the most popular cultural activity of the Greeks' (Deffner 2004, 411) and in Greek culture, music has been inextricably linked to politics (Holst-Warhaft 2002). This is evident in the case of Greece, as can be observed by the Greek government's attempt to control the music available to the public (Holst-Warhaft 2002). Greece's political identity is one of the major keys in understanding its cultural and ethnic face. 'Music informs our sense of place' (Stokes 1994, 2) and is able to underline a political agenda; thus it becomes an important agent and 'informs our sense' of Greece, whose modern history has been an undeniably political one.

1.4.1 Byzantine Music

During the Ottoman Occupation, the Greeks affiliated themselves with their religious group, which was Greek and mainly Greek Orthodox. Their lack of exposure to a cultural renaissance resulted in the absence of a 'Western art music' tradition, and so musical life was limited to the Byzantine liturgy and folk music (Hindley 1990). Most post-Byzantine music (that is, music that was composed after the fall of Constantinople in 1453) or 'Greek' music was ecclesiastical, choral, monophonic and without instruments. During

[12] Theodorakis' poetry and music will be further discussed in Chapter Two.

the four centuries under the Ottomans the main change was an increase in melismas and ornaments (Mathiesen et al. 2001). Theodorakis used Byzantine music as part of his material, and it remains significant in terms of what it has symbolised throughout (modern) Greek history, especially during the Ottoman occupation. The church, through secret schools, kept the Greek language and its culture alive. Religion thus played such a pivotal role in preserving Greek identity that its music was very familiar to its people, and the Greek population experienced their identity through the music of the church. In turn, religion (and its associated music) played a major role in the negotiations of modern Greek identity.

After Greece's liberation, the music of the Greek church was far removed from that of medieval times; however, modern Greek musicologists and theorists continued to refer to it as 'Byzantine' (Holst-Warhaft 2002). This was a way of connecting Greece's ancient past to her modern reality. The strong association of Byzantine to ancient Greece has lead to the belief that the experience of this particular music connects modern Greeks to their ancient 'roots'.[13]

1.4.2 Folk/demotic and Popular music

In addition to *demotic*/folk music and the associated Greek dances, popular songs filtered into the Greek music tradition. Examples are the *cantada*, or light songs, essentially imported from Italy. Giannaris (1972, 120) describes 'Eastern folksong' as another source of Greece's music – as part of its 'roots' – including Semitic, Arabic, Indian and Turkish influences: '… [it] exerted a long-lasting influence on native Greek music, not so much because of the melody but because of the instrument and the voice.' However, it is natural for Turkish influences to be filtered into Greek music because of the short distance between the two countries, the four hundred years of occupation as well as the Asia Minor refugees. But the most dramatic impact on Greek music was made by the *rebetika*.

[13] The significance of Byzantine music will be explored in Chapter Three which discusses Theodorakis' use of it in the re-imagining of Greek identity.

1.4.3 The Rebetika

The results of the Asia Minor Catastrophe had musical consequences. Given that music and identity are inextricably linked, the musical outcomes should confirm the influences of the ethnological exchanges, and reveal some of the negotiations of identity that the people of Greece had to make.

Because of the large urban working class created by the one million refugees (from Asia Minor) of the 1920s, and a lack of infrastructure to provide for them, an urban underworld of hashish and drugs flourished. With it a new style of music, *rebetika*, was created – one that started in Piraeus, and spread to Athens and then to other urban centres. The performers of these songs were refugees, and the style was Smyrnaic and that of other regions of Asia Minor. Its main instrument is the *bouzouki*, and the lyric content is concerned with the underworld and hashish-smoking, love, drug-addiction, police oppression and death (Broughton *et al*. 2000). The style had a shady reputation, but was popular with the 'urban dispossessed' (Broughton *et al*. 2000, 129). During Metaxas' dictatorship of 1936-40, *rebetika* musicians were harassed and some were exiled to islands or sent to prison.

Greeks originally displayed a limited interest in the music of Asia Minor, but this changed dramatically after the population exchange. In the 1920s record companies began searching for and recording new artists, including in their output regional folk musics, amongst them songs from Asia Minor. This inevitably raised problems for the conception of modern Greek identity. Holst-Warhaft explains that the songs from Asia Minor represented

> (…) the oriental side of modern Greek inheritance which set Greeks apart from Europeans but expressed their deepest emotions. On the other hand, both the light music of the European cafes or the operetta and the classical music played by the emergent bourgeoisie linked Greeks to the broader musical world of Europe where many felt they naturally belonged.
>
> (2002, n.p.)

The harassment of *rebetika* musicians by the government represents an official attempt to shape the nation's identity by denying this part of its culture. Theodorakis at first did not pay attention to the *rebetika*, but when exposed to them in the prison of Ikaria, he saw in

them the voice of the people – music that made them remember. In 1949 Manos Hadjidakis presented a lecture and concert at the Athens Art Theatre. The subject was the *rebetika*, and he described it as 'a powerful form of popular expression' that unified 'word, music and movement'. Featuring leading *rebetik*a performers, Hadjidakis argued that it was important to 'preserve the spirit of this urban music' (Holst-Warhaft 2002, n.p.). The upper class did not instantaneously embrace the style; however, this was the beginning of a more widespread acceptance of the genre's existence in the Greek musical world (Holst-Warhaft 2002).

When Theodorakis describes the popular and/or folk musical climate while he was growing up and before he became a composer, he notes that the popular and/or folk musician was not considered as a profession. These musicians were looked upon as 'gypsies' and were not even buried in the same burial grounds as other citizens. If other people copied or followed these 'gypsies', they would share the same outcast fate (Theodorakis in Sgourakis & Sgourakis 2005). This illustrates the divisions in the music scene in Greece. Theodorakis would be the one to consciously break down these barriers and illusions musically and socially.

1.4.4 Western Art Music in Greece

Greek western art music has a short history, beginning with Greece's liberation in 1830 (Mathiesen *et al*. 2001). 'Western music was almost unknown to mainland Greeks in 1830, when over 350 years of Ottoman domination came to an end' (Mathiesen *et al*. 2001, 350). However, most composers who came to teach in Greece were Italian-trained and influenced. The Athens conservatory was founded in 1871 and the first local composers – the so-called 'Ionian School' – were influenced by Italian forms and styles. In Athens, Greek musical life only truly began to develop after World War One. Manolis Kalomiris (1883-1962), who received his musical education in Vienna, and Petro Petridis (1892-1977), who studied with Roussel in Paris, are considered as the two real founders of a national school in Greece. 'Both have written many works in all fields, including music for the theatre, and the five symphonies by Petridis testify to a remarkable mastery

of construction' (Hindley 1990, 498). Although Kalomiris fought for a 'Greek National School' and paved the way for Greek conservatories to be established, the style of his music was still 'Italianite' even though it encompassed some Greek folk melodies and rhythms. This was criticised by composers such as Theodorakis and Hadjidakis.[14]

The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians states that in about 1948, the western art music tradition was 'eclipsed' by the songs of Theodorakis, Hadjidakis and their followers, songs that were based on the *rebetiko* (Mathiesen et al. 2001). Mathiesen describes the musical climate of the time as follows:

> Western-influenced Greek music tended to be neglected in favour of an 'authentic' Greek – (i.e. *rebetiko*) influenced popular music with alleged roots in Byzantine chant, as exemplified by songwriters such as Hadjidakis, Theodorakis, Yannis Markopoulos, pop singers such as Marinella, Yorgos Dalaras and Nana Mouskouri, and to a lesser extent by much publicized figures such as the synthesizer composer Vanghélis Papathanassiou (Vangelis).
>
> (Mathiesen 2001, 351)

[14] Throughout this research, I have found that the composer Manos Hadjidakis has constantly been compared to or linked with Mikis Theodorakis. The two composers have also been the subjects of much intense debate: Who played the more important role in Greek music? Who had the most influence? Who is most loved? I recently watched a television interview with Hadjidakis' friends (it would have been the composer's eightieth birthday). Theodorakis' name was mentioned often, and a close friend of Hadjidakis quoted him as saying: 'I have two regrets in life: One is that I never got married. Two is that you [the public] married me to Theodorakis.' This statement is in itself revealing about their relative positions in Greek music. Although Manos Hadjidakis' music falls outside the boundaries of this research, it is necessary to clarify his position in relation to that of his friend, the composer Mikis Theodorakis.

The chapter on music in the brochure 'About Greece', published for the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens, begins: 'The global reputation of Modern Greek music rests largely on the work of Manos Hadjidakis and Mikis Theodorakis' (Deffner 2004, 411). Manos Hadjidakis died in 1994, and throughout his life he stayed out of the public and political limelight. He composed a great deal of film music (for eighty films) and music for the theatre, as well as song cycles that are still in the Greek repertory. Mikis Theodorakis, on the other hand, has lived a very public and often very political life. He has always been outspoken on world and national issues, and his powerful physical presence at his concerts has played an important role in his career. Although Hadjidakis' music was also popular at an important political time, its meaning or message was not necessarily political, whereas Theodorakis' music is overtly political because of his political views and socio-cultural intentions (this is borne out by the fact that his music was banned when the military junta was in power).

In thinking about these two great figures, I believe that I have found for myself the core difference between them: Theodorakis' life and career can be summarised in two words: Duty and Music. This is apparent in both his own and in the writings of others: Duty to his country, to life and to the world seem to have motivated his compositional career and his personal/political life (Theodorakis 2005a, Author's Interview 2004, Giannaris 1972, Logothetis 2004). Hadjidakis, on the other hand, could not be bound by anything or anyone. He had purely musical rather than specific socio-cultural intentions (Miralis 2004). This does not make either composer better or worse, simply different. Although there is still much debate as to whose music most embodies Greek identity, this question lies beyond the scope of this research.

In this description, there is no doubt that the *rebetiko* is authentically Greek.

In the 1950s Kalomiris' era had ended. In 1962 the 'Manos Hadjidakis' Athens Technological Institute Competition introduced avant-garde composers living or studying abroad to Greece, including Xenakis, Logothetis and Mamanganakis (Mathiesen 2001). In western art music, both Theodorakis and Hadjidakis are not considered part of the art music domain, although they have composed prolifically in the genre. The closest they may have come to this categorisation is as film composers.

As a Greek composer, Theodorakis took the musical traditions of Byzantine, *demotic*, *rebetika* and western art techniques and created a new music 'vernacular', one that appealed to a broad audience while making a socio-cultural impact. By including the *rebetika* he made it possible for the Greek people to remember who they were, not just as an ideal but also as a historical and cultural reality. By forging this new hybrid musical identity, he simultaneously moulded a new modern Greek identity that accepted its previously denied heritage. This was also done by actively opposing political establishments that resisted cultural development. The first step of this cultural revolution was creating the 'Popular Art Song', a genre incorporating neo-Hellenic poetry, traditional instruments, performers of the *rebetika*, as well as melodic elements of folk and Byzantine music – elements from all parts of Greek life, and more importantly, music that would speak across social class boundaries.

Chapter Two

RE-IMAGINING THE GREEK THROUGH THE POPULAR ART SONG

> In the *Laws* Plato proposed that musical and literary training should ensure that 'the whole community may come to voice always one and the same sentiment in song, story and speech'. (*Laws*, ii, 664a)
>
> (Anderson & Mathiesen 2001, 902)

> The hour of the crisis for me rang after the composition of the ballet *Antigone* (1958). I had then to decide whether to continue in the direction of classical music which I had taken from the beginning, or to start afresh. My first effort was directed towards the solution of the inconsistency between music and poetry. Since poetry, of all the Greek arts, is undoubtedly the most advanced, what could be more direct, I thought, than to unite the two supreme achievements of the modern Greek mind. And thus was born *Epitaphios* (1958), which was nothing other than this marriage of modern Greek poetry to the modern Greek pop music. If this experimentation were to be a success, its failure would judge the future effort. With the term 'success' I naturally mean one thing only, namely if this work would or would not become 'art of the masses'.
>
> (Theodorakis 1983, 31-32)

When Theodorakis set the poem *Epitaphios* by Yannis Ritsos (1909-1990) to music, he 'changed the course of Greek music forever' (Holst-Warhaft 2002, n.p.). Not only did he create a new type of music that would in time become a symbol of Greece, but he redefined existing social and cultural identities. *Epitaphios*, a song cycle of eight songs, was introduced to the public in 1960 and, owing to its performance at large public gatherings and extensive media coverage, it was talked about for more than a year (Giannaris 1972). In fact it was at the centre of considerable controversy. Giannaris writes that 'the work was too revolutionary, because it brought together too many opposing elements' (1972, 118). In this chapter, I explore these opposing forces and observe how their synthesis challenged social perceptions and cultural identities; a synthesis that not only marked the birth of a new collective music (a new Greek music 'vernacular') but also the creation of a new collective identity.

The 'revolutionary opposing elements' of *Epitaphios* mentioned above refer to the following aspects of the song cycle: the subject-matter and authoring of the poem; the instrumentation and vocal performer; and the melodic material. The poem *Epitaphios* was

written by Yannis Ritsos, a leftist and Marxist, and dealt with the 1936 massacre of unarmed tobacco factory workers protesting for better wages in Salonica (Giannaris 1972). It was inspired by a photograph of a mother bending over the body of her dead son killed by police who were repressing the tobacco workers' strike. Holst-Warhaft writes:

> By using both the imagery of the folk lament and of the Virgin's lament for her dead son and calling his poem *Epitaphios*, Ritsos had already used traditional Greek imagery in a way that shocked the public. He remained proud, all his life, of the fact that the poem was publicly burned by Metaxas and remained banned longer than any other piece of literature in modern Greek history.
>
> (2002, n.p.)

Thus both the choice of poet and his subject-matter served to alert the Greek authorities to Theodorakis' political intentions. The composer's choice of performers was cause for further objection: Grigoris Bithikotsis was then a plumber by day and a bouzouki player by night (Giannaris 1972). He had an untrained voice and was associated with the *rebetika*. Manolis Chiotis was also a *bouzouki* instrumentalist. The use of the bouzouki in itself constituted an outrage: '…no serious composer should waste his talent with the *bouzouki*, or debase good poetry by wedding it with such music' (Giannaris 1972, 118).

Theodorakis linked his musical imagery to the poetic imagery by using melodic material from the liturgy for the *Epitaphios*. Holst-Warhaft describes this as 'the most solemn ritual of the Orthodox Church, so linking the young man's martyrdom musically as well as poetically to the Passion of Christ' (Holst-Warhaft 2002, n.p.). He combined ecclesiastical melodic material with *demotic* characteristics, as well, of course, as the *rebetika* (Giannaris 1972, Theodorakis 2003, Holst-Warhaft 2002). The *demotic* elements were absorbed from the different sound worlds around the Aegean Sea to which Theodorakis was exposed while moving around from Mytilene to Syros, and Ikaria to Crete. Prevalent are motifs from the laments/dirges of the Mani and Cretan *demotic* music or '*rizitika*', songs that Theodorakis considers revolutionary in themselves (Sgourakis & Sgourakis 2005). One can also distinguish ecclesiastical sounds and island song style (Theodorakis 2003). The melodic content in itself gained an even more *laik*[15]

[15] 'The term *laik* (laikos, laiki, laiko) applies to the dance, music and song of the harbour areas and the cities, as distinguished from the *demotic* (folk) music and dance of the rural areas and the islands. An attempt to differentiate the two types of music was made during the period of Mikis' musical movement in Greece in the 1960's…[The] term 'pop' [is sometimes used] for *laik*, although the English word does not convey all the connotations of the Greek term, either sociologically or musically' (Theodorakis 1983, 60).

character with the *bouzouki*-playing of Chiotis, who was a specialist in his craft: he contributed to the work by highlighting particular *demotic* dance rhythms and how their influence within the songs (*Hasapiko* dance is in 4/8 time; *Zeimbekiko* dance is in 9/8 time). Theodorakis considers himself forever a student of these 'geniuses' of this kind of *laik rebetiko* music (Sgourakis & Sgourakis 2005, 214). Even without taking into consideration the subject matter or instrumentalists, the melody in itself is a fusion of multiple Greek musical identities that formed an all-inclusive Greek sound – a musical 'vernacular' that was part of the soundscape of Greece. Theodorakis explains his motivation:

> This [*Epitaphios*] was an outburst for me. It was as if all the styles I knew had to come out. It couldn't just come out with the Western Music style influencing my compositions at that time.
>
> (Quoted in Sgourakis & Sgourakis 2005, 214)

Like Theodorakis, Ritsos served time in prison camps before, during and after the Civil War period (from 1947-1952), and after the 1967 military coup, he lived under house arrest or surveillance. His poems were mainly political in content, 'serving communism with his art' (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yannis_Ritsos). His early writing demonstrated a concern with classical style and themes; later he moved to a more 'deeply personal lyricism' (http://www.poetseers.org/the_great_poets/eu/yan).[16] Theodorakis was himself forging a new cultural identity, expressing the experience of his Greek heritage. This song cycle marks the beginning of his conscious attempt to 'use melodic and rhythmic strengths of Greek popular music, together with the finest of modern Greek poetry as the basis of an ambitious program of raising the standard of modern Greek music' (Holst 1980, 60). This new Greek music was always in direct dialogue with the people. Despite the shock waves that it created, *Epitaphios* was a great success, marking the birth of a song cycle type that was to be called 'Popular Art Song'; it was the first of many to come (Theodorakis 2003). In fact it was to prove the vehicle through which a new conception of Greek identity was to be experienced, negotiated and represented. Theodorakis

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The word most often used to translate '*laik*' is 'popular', but for the sake of referring directly to the sources, I will use the term '*laik*'.

[16] Some of his best known works include *Tractor* (1934), *Pyramids* (1935), *Epitaph* (1936) and *Vigil* (1941-1953) (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yannis_Ritsos).

attributes its success to the Greek youth who were the first to embrace the style (Sgourakis & Sgourakis 2005).

The resulting uproar from the different levels of society stemmed from the composer's choice to combine the voice of Bithikotsis and sounds of the bouzouki with poetry. Holst-Warhaft emphasises the strong reactions of many Athenians:

> It shocked not only the general public but also the intellectuals of Athens, many of whom thought he had taken leave of his senses, not because he had used elements of the rebetika but because he had used the low-class bouzouki and a nightclub singer to interpret high-class poetry.
>
> (2002, n.p.)

Musical aesthetes and literary scholars were also angered that the meter of Ritsos' poetry was broken down when it was set to rebetic rhythms, particularly 9/8 and 4/8 (Giannaris 1972). However, using poetry was fundamental to Theodorakis' aim of raising the standard of music in Greece, while starting a cultural awakening that would spread to the masses. Theodorakis explains:

> The contemporary Greek folk-song of the mid-century had one great defect: it was unbalanced. The more passionate and profound was the music, the more banal the text… . My first efforts were directed therefore towards righting this imbalance. Poetry was without any doubt the most highly developed of Greek Arts; what, therefore, could be simpler than the association of these two great achievements of Greek modernity: poetry and popular music.
>
> (Theodorakis, 'My Artistic Credo' 1970
> http://en.mikis-theodorakis.net/article.net/article/articleprint/358/-1/68/)

Thus *Epitaphios* provoked many poets, and the trend of collaboration between (popular) composers and poets began – the 1960s was a time of cultural blossoming in Greece. As Theodorakis says: 'Which of these poets did not want their poetry to reach the lips of the people on the wings of song?' (Theodorakis 2003, 40) Setting poetry to music was not a new concept; it was its setting to a popular style that made this movement a cultural revolution.

Simon Frith theorises the fluidity or mobility of identity – it is a process, not an object, and in experiencing music, one is experiencing the 'self-in-process'. In listening to *Epitaphios* the people were experiencing themselves (Frith 1996, 109). In his studies, Charles Seeger observes that 'music is not just a thing which happens "in" society'; 'a society might also be usefully conceived as something which happens "in music" '

(Stokes 1994, 2). Theodorakis' music seems to anticipate the emergence of a new kind of Greek experience; it soon became generally popular across social class. Forged into it are layers of Greek experience and status: that is, the ecclesiastical (that represented the Greek faith/religion), rebetic (representing 'low' popular), demotic/folk (representing the rural), and poetic (representing intellectual/'high' art) elements.

Theodorakis' creation of a new national music challenged Greek citizens to look at themselves. In its bringing together of poetry, musicians and melodic material, what emerged as a new genre, nevertheless, retained its different essences, allowing Greek people both to recognize their group identities and experience their new national identity. Frith observes that music not only reflects people but it 'produces' them; we experience music through both subjective and collective identities (Frith 1996). Understanding the 'self' comes through reference in this case to the 'other', the collective: 'it is seldom necessary for the individual to define a personal identity unless their self-concept is challenged, and such a challenge usually exists in the form of an "other" or different identity' (Hammond 2005, 5). The Popular Art Song forced the masses and aesthetes to reevaluate who they were: suddenly the identity of the Greek intelligentsia was challenged by the act of listening to '*bouzouki* music', a style that expressed another reality of the Greek nation – the *demotic/popular/rebetik* culture. In turn, the image of the Greek masses was now expanded to include the neo-Hellenic content of the intelligentsia that was previously not considered their own. The *laik* or seemingly popular style of the song cycle gave them access to the poetry and subject-matter, a major part of Greek culture which the masses would probably have never known. Thus the cycle also symbolised the possibility and potential for the attainment of knowledge usually reserved for the 'learned'; the populace was able to access the 'beauty and truth' previously reserved for a small portion of the community (Theodorakis 2003; Theodorakis 1999). As a result, the poetry in this song cycle no longer was the property of the Greek elite, but it now belonged to the masses – it was relocated into their domain.

These new identities were processed and reimagined through the experience of music (Frith 1996), particularly through the *Epitaphios*, the Popular Art Song. Separate class

identities were brought closer together and linked in the same musical experience and space.

Epitaphios was also given a political identity by the state: the rightists thought it was politically threatening and banned it from national broadcasting while the leftists regarded setting this poetry to music as blasphemy and attempted to destroy Theodorakis' records.[17] However, these political actions impelled the youth (and the masses) towards rather than away from the music; the banning was taken up as a challenge and Theodorakis' music was played enthusiastically in taverns, and night clubs (Theodorakis 2003). Young Greeks even asked Theodorakis to record another version so that clients in different taverns and other places could hear his songs (Theodorakis 1998). According to the composer, the masses were in line with the ideology of the Lambrakis Movement, a movement for socio-cultural change. Creating *Epitaphios* was a step towards creating or rather reaching the 'free' Greek, the Greek who wanted access to 'beauty and truth', and Theodorakis felt that with *Epitaphios*, he had done so: 'For the first time there existed a reconciliation, love, deep spiritual relationship with the entire nation' (Theodorakis 2003, 134).[18] So *Epitaphios* projected the identity of the modern Greek who was free – culturally, politically and socially. By taking part in the cultural activity of listening to or singing *Epitaphios*, the youth were not only expressing these ideas of 'freedom' and 'beauty and truth', but they were also living these ideas (Frith 1996). This feeling was to be engraved onto the new conception of what it meant to be a Modern Greek.

Setting a poem of this calibre to music was already a groundbreaking step and the simultaneous release of two forms of this song created further interest. In fact, the two recordings were described as having created a 'small civil war' between their supporters, highlighting their different aesthetics and social representation (Theodorakis 1999, 176; Giannaris 1972.).

[17] They removed Theodorakis' recordings from juke boxes (Theodorakis 1998, 49).
[18] All quotations taken from Theodorakis 2003, 1998 & 1999 are originally in Greek and have been translated into English by C. Mouyis and A. Mouyis.

There needs to be some clarification on how the two recordings came about. In 1959 the recording company 'Lyra' was looking for new music and asked Theodorakis to record the songs of *Epitaphios*. Nana Mouskouri had heard about the cycle and wanted to sing it, and because she was Hadjidakis' vocalist, he also wanted to be involved. They all entered the recording studio with mandolins, guitars and piano, but with no bouzouki. Hadjidakis played the piano while Theodorakis conducted, but it was the composer's first time in a studio, and so Hadjidakis offered to swop places with him, which he happily accepted (Theodorakis in Sgourakis & Sgourakis 2005). However, Theodorakis was not completely happy with this recording. He wanted a more *laik* sound and intended to use the bouzouki and the voice of Grigoris Bithikotsis whom he had heard on the loudspeakers of Makronissos where he was imprisoned during the Civil War. So he recorded his own version of *Epitaphios* with Bithikotsis and Chiotis, who both contributed their knowledge of *rebetik* rhythms and style (Theodorakis in Sgourakis & Sgourakis 2005). Both versions were released in September 1960, one week apart, and both were a success.

Contrary to popular belief, there was no antagonism at all between the composers Theodorakis and Hadjidakis. They were merely expressing their personal styles. In fact Theodorakis considered himself fortunate to have two released versions of *Epitaphios*. The two different orchestrations reflected the division of Greek opinion on the song cycle, a division which created difficulties for Theodorakis when preparing for the premiere. The director of the radio orchestra agreed to let the composer use his orchestra along with his own choice of singer, Grigoris Bithikotsis, and bouzouki instrumentalist Manolis Chiotis. He did so, however, without taking into account the hostility of the orchestral musicians (Giannaris 1972). During the first rehearsal, the symphonic instrumentalists refused to play with 'a nightclub singer and the bouzouki', and walked out (Giannaris 1972, 130). Theodorakis attempted to substitute the bouzouki with the guitar, but on finding the result completely different to what he had intended, he protested to the director, who in turn told the orchestral musicians that they would be fired if they did not cooperate (Giannaris 1972). The latter had no choice but to comply, and rehearsals proceeded smoothly, including bouzouki and Bithikotsis. However, on the

night of the performance, Bithikotsis suffered chronic stage fright and could not sing; he had never before performed in a formal concert hall (Giannaris 1972). Theodorakis, who was conducting, took hold of the microphone and acted as soloist. Remarkably, at the end of the concert, Hadjidakis joined in and played one of the songs at the piano (Giannaris 1972).

Much of the disagreement concerned the voices of the two vocalists: The voice of Hadjidakis' vocalist, Nana Mouskouri, has been described as 'saccharine', contrasting completely to Bithikotsis' untrained *rebetika* style voice (Giannaris 1972, 131). Some argued that a man's voice could not be used to interpret a mourning mother. According to Giannaris (1972), the intentions behind each orchestration differed completely: Hadjidakis wanted to create a chamber piece whereas Theodorakis wanted the *bouzouki* as the focal instrument of the song cycle. 'Mikis' intention… was to use the *bouzouki* as a solo protagonist, supported by the forceful natural vibrancy of the voice of a man who had suffered, even as the mother in the poem had suffered' (Giannaris 1972, 131).

In 1960 a public performance of music organised by the Association of Cretan students at the Venizelos Hall turned into an open debate between Theodorakis and Hadjidakis supporters (Theodorakis 2003; Sgourakis & Sgourakis 2005). The two composers and a musicologist took the platform. Both sides of the argument were aired. Theodorakis justified his interpretation by explaining that the *bouzouki* expressed the 'elegiac threnody found in the klephtic dirges of the Mani, the songs and dances of the islands, and the Cretan *rizitika*', thus making the performance completely 'laik' (Giannaris 1972, 132). He described the Hadjidakis' version as a different kind of *Epitaphios*: '…lyrical, nuptial; it is the epitaph of a sister to her brother and a lover to her lover, rather than a mother to her son. But if the first [Hadjidakis'] *Epitaphios* is lyrical and nuptial, the second [Theodorakis'] is of the market-places and the alley-ways, where the brave youth gasped and loved just before he got a bullet in his heart' (Giannaris 1972, 132).

Theodorakis also defended the use of the *bouzouki*:

> The bouzouki is to Greek popular music what the guitar is to flamenco, the balalaika to Russian songs and the accordion to Parisian waltzes. It is, from one point of view, the national popular

> instrument. It is what gives us a separate, national and individual stamp. If there exists against it an enormous prejudice, one can hardly blame the instrument itself, only those who make use of it. The thing itself is, as you know, a combination of worked wood and strings. No morality, no prejudice, no social disease is contained in these simple materials.
>
> (Theodorakis quoted in Holst 1980, 61)

Theodorakis was thus determined to break down previous associations and meanings attached to the *bouzouki*. In a way, he was in the process of giving it a new identity, as a national instrument that stood for all Greece, rather than representative of the urban underworld of Athens.

However, attacks on Theodorakis continued. He was accused of using beautiful poetry to 'cleanse a low and degrading music instrument' and told that such collaborations would perpetuate the 'bad psychology' (namely, the weariness, escapism and fatalism) of the *rebetika* (Giannaris 1972, 133). Theodorakis made the impassioned rejoinder that everyone from the sailor to the taxi driver and the salesman wanted to sing and to understand the poetry of Ritsos, because it was now presented in their own musical language. The songs of the *rebetika*, Theodorakis insisted, also expressed the real plight of the people and were thus part of a genuine cultural expression and art form (*ibid.*).

Along with attacks on Theodorakis' use of the bouzouki, there were accusations that the composer had disrespected Ritsos by choosing Bithikotsis to sing. Theodorakis responded by stating that it was 'unthinkable' that there was a class 'worthy' to sing and a class considered unworthy to do so (Giannaris 1972, 134). The people on the street who sang these songs did not care to which class the poet belonged, or what colour or creed they were; they only cared if the song or poem moved them sufficiently to cause them to sing it. 'He insisted that Bithikotsis' voice, and the way he trained him to sing, would become the collective voice of Greece.' (*ibid.*) Theodorakis also explained how he had carefully composed every syllable and worked out the poem's internal rhythm, relating it to *demotic* or *laik* dance rhythms. Still his critics repeated: the *bouzouki* was associated with the urban underworld of the hashish dens. This continuing saga is captured in a letter from the poet Manos Eleftheriou, printed in the newspaper *Anexartitos Typos* in December 1960:

> A small civil war is raging these days in the musical sector of our intellectual life… . They call Theodorakis' *Epitaphios*, composed to the verses of our first-rate poet Yiannis Ritsos, a product of the brothels and an apotheosis of the bouzouki establishments. So they prolong endlessly one musicological difference between the interpretation of the famous threnody by Hadjidakis and Mouskouri and that of Theodorakis-Bithikotsis, until it becomes a fuse about to ignite national dissension.
>
> (in Giannaris 1972, 136)

Lectures and interviews were held throughout the music world in Greece, and the interpretation and performance of Bithikotsis and Chiotis on the bouzouki were also taken up on the radio. The Mouskouri version would be followed by the Bithikotsis version, initiating heated debate and popular response. Giannaris writes that 'the Kolonaki aristocratic crowd embraced the former; the proletariat neighbourhoods of Athens and Piraeus, the latter. At the same time, magazines and newspapers welcomed comments and conducted interviews to present the "Theodorakis camp" and the "Hadjidakis camp" (Giannaris 1972, 133).

This strong reaction from different social classes convinced Theodorakis that this was the kind of music that the populace had been waiting for. He claimed that the only instrument that could be embraced by the majority of people was the *bouzouki* (Giannaris 1972). He also discussed the Popular Art Song and insisted that the *rebetik* tradition should be respected, as it had within it the potential for development into 'a more sophisticated art, the embodiment of a genuine Greek musical form' (Giannaris 1972, 133). He substantiated his claim by referring to Schubert, Schumann and Brahms, 'who had also been inspired by common roots but arrived at different creations' (*ibid.*). As mentioned in Chapter One of this report**,** Theodorakis only began listening attentively to the *rebetika* when he was in prison in Makronissos. This was also when he began notating the songs (Holst-Warhaft 2002).

One particular debate (organised by the Law Students Association in March 1961) in the presence of Theodorakis and a few well-known poets tackled questions concerning the history of Greek music and specifically the effect of the War of Independence (Theodorakis 2003). It was noted that Greek music of the nineteenth century was primarily country music, since Greece was mostly made up of villages (Giannaris 1972).

Theodorakis explained the growth of the *laik* songs as a phenomenon of urbanisation; the resulting separation of *laik* from the *demotic* songs was problematic as both are 'expressions of the people' (Giannaris 1972, 137). He pleaded directly for the involvement of poets such as Dimitris Christodoulou, Yannis Ritsos, Odysseus Elytis and Nikos Gatsos, asking them to accept the difference between the *laik* and the artistic. It was possible to keep writing in chosen personal styles, he said, while also finding inspiration to create 'genuine *laik* song' (*ibid*). Theodorakis also wanted to challenge the poets to write better poems, intended for musical setting and thus a different art – the line must be 'in harmony with the melody – direct, perceptible, and clear' (Giannaris 1972, 138).

From then on, *Epitaphios* was a major topic of conversation for some time to come, and universities and schools invited Theodorakis to lecture and perform his music in a 'teach-in' method that involved teacher and student participation. These discussions were not restricted to academic institutions, and soon gained the participation of working-class people, as well as labour unions; '… even the police did not want to be left out' (Giannaris 1972, 137).

Epitaphios and the song cycles that followed changed the face of music in Greece – firstly, the song cycle was an accepted serious and popular form; secondly, the *bouzouki* and *rebetik* singer were accepted to interpret and perform poetry; thirdly, a new form of performance was created namely, the 'pop concert' (Giannaris 1972). This broke away from the traditional forms of performance – previously, pop or *laik* music was performed only in taverns or night clubs and broadcast on the radio.[19] Therefore this new means of communication 'brought the creators and interpreters into direct contact with the masses' (Theodorakis 1983, 32). There was no longer a barrier between the creator and interpreter on the one hand, and the people on the other (Giannaris 1972).

[19] These facts have been confirmed from testimonies of family members who lived in Greece at the time. This has also been confirmed by Theodorakis (by e-mail) from his secretary: "Mr Theodorakis has told me that there were no popular concerts at that time."

Hadjidakis' orchestration was vital in the process of re-experiencing existing socio-cultural identities; it can be considered the catalyst in opening the discussion of the existence of separate social and musical identities. With the existence of Hadjidakis' 'chamber' orchestration, a version that at that time represented the high classes and perhaps belonged to them, there were two concrete musical forms that represented the 'self' and the 'other'. These musical opposites (significantly only in terms of orchestration) fuelled the debate around high art versus popular. With Theodorakis' orchestration, the poetry was a tool that brought what was considered the 'lower class' music or 'music of the masses' into high-class territory, and in turn took the intellectual property to the masses in a (musical) language that they could understand. The acceptance of the new musical form by the high classes did not happen instantly: with the help of Theodorakis' 'educational' seminars, his unique representation of 'music of the masses' would in time transcend its class barriers. Thus this new musical language would no longer belong to one social level in Greek society, but to all strata of the society, to the *laos*.

It is interesting to interrogate Theodorakis' intentions and his awareness of issues of identity in his conceptualisation of *Epitaphios.* When Theodorakis made the decision to leave behind the serial tradition of Western classical music, he could not wait to delve into the music of the *laik* composers. He felt that this music was alive, even if it did not have the complexity and majesty of Western classical music. He saw the *laik* songs as consolidated works of 'aesthetic delight' that are integrated with the people and the era out of which they are borne: 'I once wrote that pop songs help us forget. *Laik* songs, however, make us remember. It was exactly this sort of folk memory – as Elytis also expressed it – that I mainly intended to awaken, to sharpen' (Theodorakis 2003a, 16). With his conscious desire to transcend class barriers, he tapped into various Greek histories and traditions and synthesized them, creating a cultural well and a new experience of national identity, one that was first embraced by the masses and eventually by all Greeks. Thus national memory or rather 'folk memory' was reawakened every time the people listened to and sang these songs which contained elements that represented national stories: By experiencing these through the Popular Art Song, none of these

histories and stories could be ignored. All these narratives and traditions moulded the modern Greek.

That this new song genre permeated all Greek society is amply documented;[20] whether or not it appealed to Greeks from all walks of life depended on their 'ethics and aesthetics' (Frith 1996, 109). The self (which is always an imagined self) can only be imagined 'as a particular organization of social, political and material forces' (Marx in Frith 1996, 110). 'Music, like identity, is both performance and story, describes the social in the individual and the individual in the social, the mind in the body and the body in the mind; identity, like music, is a matter of both ethics and aesthetics' (Frith 1996, 109). If music is a metaphor for experiencing identity, the Popular Art Song gave modern Greeks the opportunity of experiencing themselves in society, their place in the Greek community, as well as their social beliefs, ethics and aesthetics. So the genre offers a sense of both the self and others, the subjective in the collective. The components making up *Epitaphios* challenged questions of 'ethics and aesthetics', as they were previously associated with different, separate identities within the Greek nation: the *rebetik* culture had never before been related to neo-Hellenic poetry, nor were the performers and the melodic material. Consequently, questions that arose went to the core of Greek cultural identity: What is 'Greek'? What is genuine 'Greek' music? What makes one performer more 'Greek' than another? How does the music reflect the identity of the poetry? What the synthesis revealed was that the different components (that is music, poetry and performance) were all part of Greek history and tradition in one way or another and could no longer be denied.

2.1 Poetry and Text

Poetry played a primary role in Theodorakis' endeavours to reach the masses and raise the standard of popular music in Greece, and has done so throughout his musical career. He played an active role in taking the great neo-Hellenic poets out of their literary circles

[20] Holst 1980; Logothetis 2004; Agorastakis 2005.

and directly to the public. In his career, 'he set almost every major Greek poet to music and wrote literally hundreds of songs, many of which are familiar to a generation of Greeks' (Holst-Warhaft 2000, n.p.). This movement created a new genre of poetry – poetry specifically written to be set to music.[21]

Theodorakis also aimed to expose the masses to the 'beauty and truth' of poetry. He explains:

> Relying on purely popular art, the song, I decided at the beginning to shatter the class barrier, shaping step by step, systematically and persistently, the masses of underprivileged with regard to art, so that they can become adept at the absolute beauty and truth.
>
> My main support in this attempt was poetry. Even in my simplest songs, I asked for the cooperation of the poets, so that, word by word, stanza by stanza, I would instil the 'knowledge/learned' on the minds and conscience of the masses. And this has been the core – the main attempt of my life.
>
> (Author's Interview 2004)

If we consider Theodorakis' Marxist beliefs, and that according to socialist realism, 'the artist's prime responsibility is to fellow participants in the effort to construct a genuine democratic culture', we can consider his use of poetry not only as a tool to communicate with the masses, but also as an act of 'democratising' the arts, i.e., music and poetry (Norris 2001, 599). Hence his Marxist ideology is not only at the foundation of his political actions, but also at the core of his musical creations. This is illustrated by the fact that, apart from his film scores and ballets, all his music is based on poetry or text. In his settings, he transformed poetry (some of it Nobel Prize winning) into *laik*, that is, of the people. It is also significant that the poetry itself was not adapted in any way;[22] rather, it would be carried by the music. Theodorakis enthuses:

> In the beginning was the Word! My whole work is an illustration of this truth. In order to explain my music, one must first study the text.
>
> It was not moreover by accident that I had announced from the very beginning that I intended to be a faithful servant of modern Greek poetry. I wanted to take this idea so far, that it would be impossible to imagine text and music in any other relationship.
>
> (Theodorakis 1970, n.p.)

[21] It should be noted that this 'poetry set to music' did not simply make the poems song lyrics; they still occupied the genre of poetry.
[22] Using ancient tragedy, Theodorakis' translated their texts into modern Greek.

Gregory Jusdanis observes that '…national culture is really literary in nature…' (1991, xi). This literary realm is an 'imaginary realm in the construction of the state', as it captures stories, fictions and narratives that mirror the nation (Jusdanis 1991, xi). In part the function of national culture is to preserve traditions, and to connect present with past achievements. Theodorakis' intention was to create a 'national' music, based on literary and poetic traditions, which were already narratives and reserves of national culture. He is therefore reinforcing these cultural and national narratives in the musical realm. The musical aesthetic is in itself a narrative of the modern Greek nation, extractions of folk memory that preserve traditions, remember stories and connect the past with the present. Thus, his synthesised musical aesthetic worked hand in hand with 'national' poetry and text to form a unified Greek consciousness, narrative and identity.

2.2 The Birth of the Popular Concert

The phenomenon of the 'pop' concert that emerged as a result of *Epitaphios* provides a new space and experience for the negotiation of identity. Not only did the pop concert 're-imagine' the people socially, but it also acted as a tool of resistance against the state. When *Epitaphios* was banned and removed from radio and the juke boxes, Theodorakis reacted to these actions on every level: with statements, articles, protests, new songs, and especially with the 'popular concert':

> With the concert, I wanted at the outset to destroy the curse of the ban. To get close to the people. Into the neighbourhoods. Into the countryside.
>
> (Theodorakis 1998, 49)

He also believed that, along with laik music ringing out from taverns and public centres, composers and poets should speak to their public face to face: He argued that the 'deserted' people had a need to feel close to their own spiritual leaders; but they themselves, poets and composers, also needed to feel close to the people – this could be done with the Popular Concert (Theodorakis 1998, 49).

In 1961, Theodorakis, with the help of poets Livaditis and Christodoulou, set up the first 'popular concert' in the countryside. At this performance, Aleka Paizi and Irini Papa also recited *Epitaphios*. There were nevertheless continued political repercussions: In a

concert in Naousa in the same year, 'thugs' of the authorities stoned the performers, even though they hindered the concerts only for a short while (Theodorakis 1998, 49). Thus the concerts also gained a reputation of resistance, unifying the masses against the state while experiencing a new national identity. Theodorakis continued to organize Popular Concerts in open spaces such as theatres throughout villages and cities of Greece where the public came into contact with the poets and their poems (Theodorakis 1999, 178).

'Places', according to Anthony Giddens, are the 'physical setting[s] of social activity situated geographically' and these become 'thoroughly penetrated by and shaped in terms of social influences quite distant from them' (quoted in Stokes 1994, 3). We have the ability to 'relocate' ourselves in music, and by doing so spaces and places are brought close together:

> The musical event…evokes and organizes collective memories and present experiences of place with an intensity, power and simplicity unmatched by any other social activity. The 'places' constructed through music involve notions of difference and boundary. They also organize hierarchies of a moral and political order.
>
> (Stokes 1994, 3)

So through these concerts, the audience was not only experiencing 'themselves' in a new national musical style, but they werealso creating new memories and new notions of 'Greekness'. The audiences were also unified as 'free Greeks' resisting against the state. The concerts further reinforced these notions, reorganizing 'hierarchies of moral and political order' and generating and manipulating new meanings (Stokes 1994, 3). Later in the sixties, Mikis Theodorakis' performances often took place in stadia playing to huge audiences, posing new geographical and logistical challenges. Theodorakis also played a major role as the conductor and composer of his works; his stage presence is legendary for its power and charisma.

Through the cultural activity of making, listening and experiencing music, individuals and groups within the public sector come to know and understand themselves better as groups and individuals within society as well as within Greek contemporary culture (Frith 1996). This process was aided by Theodorakis' talks and seminars on *laik* music, seminars that brought people into contact with their cultural heritage and created

discussion within the community. However, the need to 'live' these ideas within a social space such as a concert illustrates the need to renegotiate social alignments:

> Musics are invariably communal activities, that bring people together in specific alignments, whether as musicians, dancers or listening audiences. The 'tuning in' (Schutz 1977) through music of these social alignments can provide a powerful affective experience in which social identity is literally 'embodied'.
>
> (Stokes 1994, 12)

If relationships are activated through music, then *Epitaphios* and the song cycles that followed activated the common alignment of 'Greekness' within the listeners, and activated the relationships of Greeks as a large collective. Thus, the relationship between socio-cultural classes was also 'activated' and negotiated, especially in the arena of a cultural activity such as the 'popular concert'. In this way, music (here, it is Popular Art Music), can 'rival the principles of social organisation' (Stokes 1994, 12).

The political and social repercussions of the Popular Art Song and the popular concert reinforce Theodorakis' belief that cultural revolution is the essence of social change (Sgourakis & Sgourakis 2005). We need only to observe the effects of *Epitaphios* to justify this point of view. In addition, Theodorakis believes that in order to create political change, it must go hand in hand with cultural change (which will create social change). These beliefs were the backbone of creating music that would be meaningful to Greek society and would create a new experience of modern Greek identity.

Theodorakis began the reconception and reimagination of modern Greek identity with the Popular Art Song, specifically with *Epitaphios*. However, he would continue to reimagine the Greek image with three goals: 1) to seek and find genuine modern Greek melody; 2) to constantly keep in direct dialogue with the people while developing methodically and gradually from the simple to the more complex; 3) to seek and find a genuine modern Greek musical form (Theodorakis 1983, 32). This was not only a musico-aesthetic need for the composer but a socio-political one. He explains:

> I wanted the Greek people who embraced my songs to progress on the basis of their love for songs, starting at the song and advancing to new musical forms; forms in which, apart from the voice and popular instruments, would contain new sound colours. For example, choirs and symphonic instruments as well as new musical techniques like harmonies, counterpoint and orchestration. In other words we went towards symphonic forms of music relying on songs and more widely on poetry set to music, which would secure our interest and the dynamic

> participation of the people in our undertaking. And we can say that this happened in Greece by the composers in the 60s… . Don't forget, for Greeks to listen and to sing the words of great poets in their everyday life, was and emphatically remains a serious/important step in the conquest by a whole nation, of high culture/art, purely neo-Hellenic content, in character and form.
>
> (Author's Interview 2004, n.p.)

Although *Epitaphios* was not initially accepted by everyone, it did launch a cultural revolution, and it did become an 'art of the masses', opening up a new path in modern Greek music. The next step was to reinforce the Popular Art Song, and to create more sophisticated forms that could be absorbed by the masses (Theodorakis 1983). Based on the same principles, namely the fusion of traditional, rebetik and folk elements with Western art techniques and high poetic texts, these forms were to be expanded into Theodorakis' so-called 'metasymphonic' music. Expressions of Greek identity would also be realised in theatre as well as opera, or rather 'Lyric Tragedy'. In the following Chapter, I will discuss how Theodorakis further expanded the concept of the modern Greek through new musical forms and genuine Greek creations.

Chapter Three

MYTHOLOGISING THE MODERN GREEK: THEATRE, METASYMPHONIC MUSIC AND LYRIC TRAGEDY

> At every concert, both the poetry and music equally created an atmosphere of artistic mysticism. The public got the message. Maybe they felt that they were part of a new religion in which art was God, music and poetry were the saints, and motherland Hellas was the temple.
>
> (Theodorakis 2005a)[23]

From the time of his return to Greece in 1960, Theodorakis was intensely active in both composition and politics – he was a Member of Parliament and the leader of a powerful youth organization, the Lambrakis movement. He wrote hundreds of songs that were listened to by millions of Greeks. Significantly, these songs 'seemed to crystallize the spirit of those years, to represent a challenge to the old repressive forces in Greek society' (Holst 1980, 100). They were not only heard on records but also on film soundtracks; many were composed for film.[24] In addition, Theodorakis composed music for various English films and ancient tragedies as well as music for theatre. He created the Small Orchestra of Athens in 1962.

Now that he had expanded the socio-cultural space and brought the *rebetik*, *demotic* and poetic culture into one realm, Theodorakis aimed to advance the Popular Art Song, musically encapsulating the developing spirit of the nation. Part of his mission would be achieved by creating more complex musical forms. He would continue this attempt based on the best neo-Hellenic poetry and expanded musical forms, using greater musical forces and drawing to a greater extent on western classical music while remaining in direct dialogue with the people (Theodorakis 1983). He also aimed to create modern Greek opera and tragedy, based on Greek 'contemporary mythology' and the Popular Art Song (Theodorakis 1983, 8).

[23] Translated from the original Greek speech (Theodorakis 2005a).
[24] See *Electra* 1962; *Sinikia to oneiro* (Neighbourhood of Dreams) 1960; *Prodomeni Agapi* (Betrayed Love) 1962; *To Nisi Tis Aphroditis* (Aphrodite's Island) 1962.

In this chapter I will explore how Theodorakis continued to challenge the old identities and reinforce and create new socio-cultural and musical identities in key developments and works from his substantial oeuvre. I will look at one representative work from each relevant time period, namely his most significant and controversial stage work or 'modern myth', *The Ballad of the Dead Brother*, and his metasymphonic *Axion Esti*. I will also discuss his move to opera, or rather, 'lyric tragedy'. In these works Theodorakis challenged his fellow citizens to face their history and acknowledge their identity aesthetically and contextually, while growing culturally.

3.1 Contemporary Greek Myth: *The Ballad of the Dead Brother* (1962)

> Always having as my model ancient Greek tragedy, I conceived the work of this period [the sixties] as a canvas on which the figures and ideas of our era could be embroidered, and, more specifically, the events and ideas that distress the Greek people.
>
> (Theodorakis 1983, 9)

Apart from exploring various genres and styles of musical composition, Theodorakis delved deep into the music of the stage – he composed ballets, musicals and music reviews, music and songs for theatrical text, music for ancient drama, *laik* or folk opera, and opera, or rather, what the composer calls, 'lyric tragedy' (Theodorakis 1999). What concerns us at this point is his 'laik opera', *The Ballad of the Dead Brother* (1962), in which he reflects social and political identities within the storyline, structure and music. It is one of the most important steps in the creation of genuine Greek contemporary tragedy.

Even when composing for ancient drama, Theodorakis knew that the music must speak to modern man. The viewing public remained a very important element: Theodorakis pointed out that in ancient drama the people were represented by the chorus, and the chorus was the mouthpiece of the state. Similarly, for modern drama to be successful, it too had to be the mouthpiece of the people, thus performing a social function (Giannaris

1972; Theodorakis 1983). Theatre should therefore be a living experience, inviting the participation of the audience:

> In a sense, it [modern drama] would be 'political', as was ancient Greek drama, which involved the total experience of the *polis* (the state and its citizens). The modern political theatre, furthermore, would, again like the ancient, be inseparable from music.
>
> (Theodorakis 1983, 8)

Like its ancient predecessor, the modern tragedy should not simply be entertainment, but rather offer catharsis, a cleansing of emotions 'by projecting on stage the experiences and problems of the people' – experiences that would function as the raw material of 'myth' that inspired modern plays (Theodorakis 1983, 8-9). It is exactly these as well as his own experiences from which Theodorakis derived the material for his contemporary 'myth'; *The Ballad of the Dead Brother*.[25]

> Popular drama, opera or musical: any of these appellations can apply to The Dead Brother's Song, but its character is that of contemporary popular tragedy.
>
> In this complex work, Mikis Theodorakis blends the ethos of ancient Greek tragedy, the myths and symbols of the modern Greek history and the structural elements of folk and popular songs.
>
> (Monemvastis 2001, n.p.)

The strongest influence on *The Ballad of the Dead Brother* was ancient tragedy. 'Ancient tragedy, while always remaining alive, is especially fitting today, where we see the people become the Chorus, entire nations becoming the Chorus' (Theodorakis 2003, 80).[26] Where the fateful characters of *Epitaphios* acquire their material and symbolic identity through song, the characters of *The Ballad of the Dead Brother* are based on real characters and incidents out of which the songs emerge (Theodorakis 2003). These real life characters and events are drawn from the recent past of the Greek Civil War (1946-49), and gave it a new historical reality and personality. One must also remember that

[25] It is necessary to mention the predecessor to *The Ballad of the Dead Brother*, Irish playright Brendan Behan's *The Hostage.* Theodorakis set this controversial contemporary play, which is a tragic 'myth' of a struggle against oppression (the Irish against the British). In this play, the composer believes that the audience was moved all the more deeply because of the 'disarming light tone of the alternating speech song' (Theodorakis 1983, 9). Although the Greek public related it to the Greek civil war, it was not genuinely Greek in either story or language (it was translated), even though its songs became very popular especially when featured on the soundtrack of the film *Z*.

[26] Translated from the original Greek text.

Theodorakis personally experienced the struggles, torture and imprisonment of this haunting time in Greece's history.

For the composer, the civil war gave rise to 'conditions and figure-symbols' that provided rich soil for Greece's own 'modern Greek mythology', beginning when the tension between Greek and foreigner (in World War One) is replaced with its antithesis, Greek against Greek (Theodorakis 1983, 36). *The Ballad* was inspired by the myths and symbols of modern neo-Hellenic history; by ancient tragic characters and Greek *demotic* and popular song (Theodorakis 2003). Each song, first written as a poem and then set to music, is a self-contained story with its own characters, symbols and action. Together they form part of a greater story: 'Altogether these small stories seemed to converge into one unified direction – as if they were part of a unique "large story" ' (Theodorakis 2003, 81).

This 'large story' set in the Greek civil war deals with two brothers on opposing sides of the struggle, the Left and the Right.[27] Their mother tries her utmost to reconcile the siblings. However, in the end both brothers die: Andreas (Right) is killed in battle at the peak of the civil war, and Pavlos (Left) is betrayed by his girlfriend Ismene as she attempts to save her father's life. She too is finally killed. The final song is a reconciliatory one calling for all, Leftists and Rightists, to unite.

In a large number of traditional *demotic* and *laik* songs, the love of the mother, who is the 'most painful but most concrete symbol of modern Greek mythology', is the focal point of tragedy (as in *Epitaphios*) (Theodorakis 1983, 37). The mother symbolically represents Greece, which is being destroyed by the hatred between her two sons (Giannaris 1972; Theodorakis in Logothetis 2004). *The Ballad of the Dead Brother* was first produced as a ballet/dance suite, and then as a play, and is based on 'ballad cycles', one of the most popular and important categories of the composers' song cycles.[28]

> The texts of the ballads are distinguished by a unity not only of authorship but of the thematic melodic material. The poems describe either a single event or the situation and the mood of the

[27] The Left was communist and the Right capitalist.
[28] This refers to all 'ballad songs', not only those of *The Ballad of the Dead Brother*.

> lyrics is reflected in the musical composition as a whole. The songs often maintain only a tenuous relationship with the world of Greek popular music. Rhythms are stretched and altered, the orchestration is extended to include classical instruments and there are occasional sections of chromatic vocal writing.
>
> (Holst 1980, 104)

In the theatrical version, Theodorakis added two more songs; one a setting of Kostas Virvos' poem, a lullaby called 'Sleep, My Little Angel'. Musically, Theodorakis feels that his most important contribution is what he calls the 'big *zeimbekika*' (Theodorakis 2003, 84).[29] His previous song cycles, which include *Epifania*, *Politia* and *Archipelagos,* prepared him to compose this expressive laik dance. There are five such songs in this tragedy: 'One Evening', 'Pavlo and Nikolio', 'The Dream', 'The Orchards' and 'Unite!'. Using this dance rhythm was a symbolic gesture. Theodorakis explains:

> In what better way can I commemorate and honour the laik dance of dances, the zeimbekiko, than to wed it to the subject-matter of the recent suffering of the Greek people? For many people, the zeimbekiko means taverns, the breaking of plates, entertainment. However, for me, ten years had passed from the time we danced to it in the tents of Makronissos with minds full of dreams and expectation. Anyway, the decade of the sixties was a new movement for many people, especially the youth. What better gift could I offer them? Nice songs are good. However, good songs are nicer. Which meant then – and for always – never allow the 'memory of the people' to fade…
>
> (Theodorakis 2003, 84)

So the composer is using this popular laik rhythm, the *zeimbekiko* rhythm, as a medium for the Greek public to re-experience a significant part of their history in song, as well as to 'physicalise' it with movement. They are experiencing the 'self-in-process' (Frith 1996) while internalising the experience of this recent 'myth', the civil war, by dancing and singing to it. The music and dance themselves evoke popular or *laik* memory. The story is a modern myth in which, Theodorakis believes, we are all protagonists (Theodorakis 2003).

The final song of the work 'Unite!' is a Gloria written in 9/8 *zeimbekiko* rhythm and, according to Holst (1980), it is probably the first choral piece to be given such a rhythm. It ends the work in reconciliation, as the full cast marches towards the audience singing the words: 'Unite stone to stone! Unite hand to hand!'

[29] A zeimbekiko is a laik dance in 9/8.

The instrumentation once again represented the *laik* or popular public, and the orchestra included two *bouzoukia* and two *laik* singers. Grigoris Bithikotsis, Costa Papadopoulos and Laki Karnezi took part in the musical ensemble, giving a new dimension to this innovative Greek theatrical tradition (Theodorakis 2003).

The presentation of neo-Hellenic song, dance and acting was given the term 'Total Theatre', and was aesthetically new to the audience (Giannaris 1972; Holst 1980). In the prologue, the chorus *is* the orchestra. There is an interaction between the instruments and singers, and symbolically there is also an interaction between the dead (actors) and the living (audience). On stage, characters and events come and go; the *laik* orchestra (representing the people), however, remains throughout the duration of the drama. The musicians are seated on a small platform (the same as those found in Greek taverns): 'The musical instruments and the singers symbolize the permanent axis around which all peoples and nations turn… . They become "characters" on stage' (Giannaris 1972, 153). As the play progresses, the characters often ask the laik singers for advice or assistance. They play the role of 'the eye and the soul, the voice and memory of the people and of history' (Giannaris 1972, 154). On the other hand, the 'chorus' only plays the role of the observer and never participates in events, but only 'delivers justice' through song.

In the second act, neither chorus nor musicians participate. They are replaced by masks and their instruments that are hung on the wall of the platform area. The musicians are now invisible: the sounds of the *santouri* and the *clarino* (folk instruments) are played offstage together with the *bouzouki* ensemble (Theodorakis 1983). Ismene sings her song of betrayed love. The reconciliatory 'Gloria' (described above) ends the drama.

> The laik instruments were transformed into holy cherubims of a new religion. Along with the stage with the hung masks, the Singers and the Musicians, they became an invisible chorus, which expressed with wisdom and passion the general status quo of the City (polis), of the Laos, of Time. Just as the ancient Greeks and the Persians, they [the 'invisible' chorus] too had the same relationship with the work that they watched and heard: they had lived it; it was theirs; in some way they had taken part in its birth.
>
> (Theodorakis 2003, 86)

In a note to his audience in November 1962, Theodorakis explained that his intentions were primarily political:

> In such critical times for the nation and the people, I believe that the living artist must undertake works with actions that will directly help solve the crisis, and find a solution. I believe that the only road to win the battle of history and civilization is, at this moment, true unity. Not conformist, expedient or methodical unity – but unity that is meaningful to all Hellenes.
>
> (Theodorakis 2003, 81-82)

This theatre piece is a genuine Greek product, and the centre of the drama is based on the family, 'the heart of the Greek nation' (Giannaris 1972, 152). To Theodorakis, this constitutes 'mythology'. In prison in 1970, he wrote: 'Mythological figures are those who, either out of relief or illusion, are turned into the bearers and also victims of historic becoming' (Theodorakis 1983, 38). This reveals his belief that the theme, as well as the problem of civil strife, is not only Greek, but universal (Theodorakis 1983). As discussed in the first chapter, Theodorakis was victimised and exiled for his political affiliations. His conscious efforts to change and to bear historical circumstances have made him into a mythological figure; the bearer of historical becoming.

The genre of total theatre expressed the torment of Greece's recent history. However, the songs used in the play have been taken out of context and kept alive.[30] It is through them that the 'mythology' of the civil war in modern Greek identity, and the sense of the 'self-in-process'(Frith 1996) have been reinforced. This popular style is also reinforced through the symbolism of the figures onstage: the popular band represents the 'eye, soul, voice and memory' of the people of Greece, and thus modern Greece (Giannaris 1972, 152). Here the laik aesthetic also represents the people, as it does in *Epitaphios*.

The choreographed version of *The Ballad of the Dead Brother* was performed in April 1962 and its theatrical counterpart in October of that same year. Although the music and dance suites were popular, the play was not. Theodorakis remains unsure of whether this was because of the nature of the theatrical genre or his political views (Theodorakis 2003). He aimed to expose and exorcise the 'evil' of the extreme political division by 'cloaking' it with poetry and music; he hoped that the result would lead to the public's

[30] This is the case also with the 'popular' songs of *Axion Esti*.

experience of catharsis and unification. However, the notion of unity between the two sides made Theodorakis a target for both Leftists and Rightists, and he was stuck in a political crossfire between them. The uproar surrounding *Epitaphios* (1960) did not compare to the shocked response of both sides to *The Ballad of the Dead Brother*, both of which still believed that their reasons for fighting were justified; neither side wanted to witness Theodorakis' scene of reconciliation (Theodorakis 2003, Holst 1980, Giannaris 1972). EDA banned the first production of the work, forbidding its members to attend, and convincing others not to see the show (Theodorakis 2003). Thus the play became the victim of a 'conspiracy of silence'; this extended to the leftist newspaper *Avyi* which did not print a word about the play. Although this extreme reaction certainly affected the play's success as theatre, it did not extend to its music. Recordings sold widely, and the tragic story entered Greek consciousness '…dressed with the rhythms of the most authentic neo-Hellenic dance, the zeimbekiko' (Theodorakis 2003, 86).

Theodorakis maintained his stance regarding the mythic status of *The Ballad of the Dead Brother*. It expressed political as well as moral values, and showed that usually the evil are not punished and the good are not rewarded. Contemporary writers observe that it is truly a modern tragedy: '[it] corresponds completely with the Aristotelian Principle of tragedy, because it provoked fear and worship and mercy in the listener, and in the end, it provoked catharsis and purification, [and] deliverance' (Katsavenakis 2005, n.p.).[31] According to Stephania Merakou (2005), it belongs with Brecht's political theatre (as does *The Hostage*). As in ancient tragedy, there are no human winners or losers – the winner is peace and love (Katsavenakis 2005). Each character has his or her own dilemma, and each is justified in experiencing it. Furthermore, there are direct references to ancient drama: Ismene's blind father has roots in the Oedipus character, while Ismene herself is a symbol of love, fate and sacrifice. The mother is the central figure and the embodiment of human drama as she suffers for her children, who in turn represent two different worlds. The songs re-enact the chorus of tragedy while the laik singer expresses public sentiment (Merakou 2005).

[31] Translated directly from the Greek text by C. Mouyis.

Thus, embedded in this new modern Greek expression, are layers of both ancient Greek experience and modern Greek history and culture: namely, the ancient Greek form; neo-Hellenic history and neo-Hellenic song and dance. Monemvasitis (2005, n.p.) calls it a G*esamtkunstwerk*, a unique prototype of ancient drama: 'With this work Mikis is distinguished as an indisputable Greek tragedian' (Monemvasitis 2005, n.p.).

For the composer, the lack of acceptance of the theatre piece by the intelligentsia of Athens ended the possibility of exploring and developing the genre. In the sixties, Athenian music theatre bloomed in the form of political satire and light music, but the combination of all myth and story, dance and acting was not mined at a deeper level. Nor was Theodorakis' vision for a new type of '*laik* opera' or 'modern Athenian tragedy' (Theodorakis 2003, 86), even though he once again successfully fused song and music with theatre and dance in the musical review *Beautiful City* (1962). However, his perceived failure in the meshing of tragedy with *laik* music onstage sent him in the direction of other forms such as the *Laik* Oratorio.

3.2 Metasymphonic Music: *Axion Esti* [32]

> I wanted to travel the journey from the song to the symphonic in dialogue with the people, as happened in the West. Only there it [the journey] lasted a long time. I was hoping that we would complete this task within a few decades. So, from the song I moved onto the *song cycle* and then I even subdivided the cycles according to their density and their unity, poetic and musical. From there, I took a leap into the *laik oratorio* with *Axion Esti*, and I call this Metasymphonic Music. Now, with the *Ballad of the Dead Brother* I envision a kind of modern *Laik* Tragedy. Doesn't the Greek word for song [*tragoudi*] have its roots in the word tragedy [*tragodia*]? Which other element has been added to it? Myth, Poetry, Tragic Heroes and the Chorus.
>
> (Theodorakis 2003, 82)

From the Popular Art Song cycles and their derivatives, Theodorakis moved towards what he called 'metasymphonic' music, a combination of choral and symphonic writing with popular song (Karageorgis 2001). He insists that the term 'metasymphonic' does not mean post-symphonic, but rather that it refers to a qualitative difference between western

[32] The term 'Axion Esti' translates roughly as 'it is worthy'. It comes from the ecclesiastical Greek Orthodox tradition that takes place in the pre-dawn hours of Holy Saturday, when Christ's body is symbolically carried out of the church (Giannaris 1972).

and neo-Hellenic musical art (Theodorakis 1998). His main concern remained to create a modern living musical art, an art of the masses, which moved beyond the original forms of the popular art song and song cycles. Questions that engaged him were: Could one use harmony, counterpoint and orchestration techniques without being led automatically into the arena of western music? Where would this new use of techniques come from and would it serve the consciousness of modern Greek music (Theodorakis 1998)? *Axion Esti* is generally considered to be Theodorakis' most important work; however, this 'Popular Oratorio' also marked the composer's last attempt to synthesise Greek folk and popular material with contemporary western art technique (Holst 1980). According to Theodorakis, *Axion Esti* was a goal as well as a starting point (Theodorakis 2003a).

The distinction between metasymphonic and symphonic music is illustrated by looking at Theodorakis' earlier oeuvre.[33] Previously, he attempted to incorporate traditional music into the body of western European music, using all the known techniques from Gregorian Chant and Bach to Schoenberg, Stravinsky, Bartok and Shostakovich (Theodorakis 1998). In his metasymphonic works he attempted to create a sound that came from the neo-Hellenic music sound-world (unadapted into the western art tradition). Theodorakis believes that he did not fully plumb the depths of this endeavour – it was merely a first step – and hopes that young composers will pursue it (Theodorakis 1998).

For me, listening to *Axion Esti* for the first time was an intensely personal experience. It was personal because it connected me with my Greek heritage, one that a South African of Greek origin fears to lose. When first experiencing the entire work, I was taken on a journey: Along with its poetic and orchestral impact, I was enveloped by Byzantine church melodies and the sounds of popular Greece; and I recognised a few famous popular songs, which I had previously had not realised belonged to a larger musical unit. The 'church sound' aroused in me, as it has in millions of others, a kind of reverence; a reverence that is infused in all parts of the work, even in its so-called 'popular songs'.

[33] See Symphony No. 1, *Carnaval.*

According to Theodorakis, a metasymphonic work is firstly a poetic, then a musical work (Theodorakis 1998). Thus one needs to understand the significance and background of the poem before delving into its score. Theodorakis calls the poem *Axion Esti* 'a monument of modern Greek art':

> …its deep Greekness places it on the frontline of the struggle of our nation for its fulfilment regarding its distinctive historical worth, its moral standing and presence. Both the dimensions of the poetic text, and its general form, obviously led to the search for a new musical form. The work runs the whole gamut of the history of the Greek nation, from the genesis of 'this small Great world' to the prophetic vision of the sufferings imposed on us by the present dictatorship [1967-1974].
>
> (Theodorakis 1998, 54)

Axion Esti was written in 1959 by the poet Odysseus Elytis, who received a Nobel Prize for Literature in 1979. He belonged to a specific generation of poets of the 1930s that produced some of the best poetry in modern Greek history. His participation in the Albanian campaign in the early forties changed his life and inspired his poems, *Axion Esti* being one. It is 'epic in proportions' (Holst 1980, 83), a kind of national anthem of Greece, describing its toils and struggles throughout history:

> It is a complex and difficult poem and one that had special qualities which appealed to Theodorakis… . The poem is a celebration of the pagan, sensual world of ancient Greece and at the same time a tragic summary of the history of modern Greece, specifically during the Second World War and the Civil War. It reasserts the fundamental themes of Greek folk poetry, of man's close connection with the natural world, especially the Aegean landscape of sun and light, of his struggle for freedom and of the immediate presence of death.
>
> (Holst 1980, 83)

Already, the poem in itself is a cradle of national memory, reawakening events of Greek history, both ancient and modern. The power of this poetic narrative is multiplied with the added dimension of music, which, within itself, has many layers of experience. As with *Epitaphios*, the music taps into a multi-dimensional unconscious. However, *Axion Esti* is infinitely more complex – it incorporates many more traditions, including that of contemporary western art music. In contrast to a song cycle such as *Epitaphios* that contains eight songs, *Axion Esti* is a unified work comprising hymns, popular songs, prose and orchestral interludes. Thus, Theodorakis took the familiar musical language of the people and further advanced it into a new expression.

The bold presence of the text with its particular ideas and visions already offers the Greek public a strong basis to merge with it creatively:

> *Axion Esti* [is a] bible of the Hellenic nation - the word of the poet is the word of the nation. The poet's memory – the people's memory. The people themselves are the creators of the events that inspired the poet. His sufferings – their sufferings. And his glories – their glories! Thus there exists an absolute identification between the poetic content and the human creators of this content. The poetic text runs through the veins of these people because it comes from those same veins. Moreover, *Axion Esti* is the mirror in which our people see their historical self. This constitutes the first fundamental characteristic of every living, true and great art. From then on, the composer's work becomes easy, as long as he does not betray the poet. And the music will follow, serve, comment on, and sometimes, if it can, expand on the poetry. Nothing less, nothing more.
>
> (Theodorakis 1998, 58)

Theodorakis cannot imagine, at least in the near future, a genuine neo-Hellenic musical work (for the masses) without a poetic text.[34] The text remains the key to connecting with the people:

> The masses still want to 'understand', not only emotionally, aesthetically and abstractly, but also logically and concretely. That is, they want there to exist particular content and ideas that concern them and that they understand absolutely and therefore identify with them absolutely… . In this work the Word (*logos*) is completed with the hyper-logical contribution of the music. A complete aesthetic structure is created. The metasymphonic work.
>
> (Theodorakis 1998, 61)

Theodorakis took four years to conceptualise and complete *Axion Esti*, and he presented it to the public in 1964. He wanted to be sure of his aesthetic, and he counted on the fact that his previous songs and song cycles had 'train[ed]…the public to accept the instruments of the people and the pop singer in art music' (Giannaris 1972, 167). Elytis himself conceptualised his poem as a 'Folk Mass' ('Laik liturgy') (Brandes 2003).[35] Theodorakis' establishment of the Small Orchestra of Athens in 1962 played a major role in 'training' the public: It performed concerts throughout the cities and villages of Greece, bringing symphonic music to the average listener. This was vital to the composer's goal of communicating with the larger population:

> It was not so much that my own questioning delayed the presentation of the work…I would say that it was because of the fact that I did not want to lose contact with the general public, who awaited my next work… . In the meantime, more importantly, while my audience was continually growing, it was also maturing… . In 1962 with the establishment of the Small Orchestra of Athens, my public, that is, simple citizens, started to be initiated into symphonic music. It wasn't a desire of mine to simply conduct symphonic works. I did it because I believed that initiating the average listener into the symphonic sound and into symphonic forms was a

[34] Dance music is a sole exception.
[35] The Greek public actually do consider *Axion Esti* a kind of 'folk religious mass' (Brandes 2003, 30).

> necessary precondition to the understanding of works like *Axion Esti*. In other words, high art works from the point of view of words on the one hand, and the prism of sound on the other, had to rely strongly on living traditions, as were expressed at that time by the *laik* public, a public that was sensitive, refined and thirsty for beauty and truth, things that created within it a new spiritual power. That is why, when *Axion Esti* fell like a seed, it fell into rich fertile ground.
>
> (Theodorakis 2003, 136)[36]

Theodorakis at first had two models on which he could base *Axion Esti*: Bach's oratoria which contain arias, recitative and chorales, and the Greek liturgy which contains sacred psalms, the reading of the Gospels, and the hymns and chants of the *Psalti* or Orthodox cantor. Both models have three basic elements (prose, measured verse and free verse) which also exist in Elytis' poem. (Theodorakis 2003). Theodorakis had to make sure that the unity of the poem remained intact and that the poet's goals were not betrayed in any way.

Because the poem's structure (and tone) is based on the liturgy of the Orthodox Church, it prompted Theodorakis to turn to its musical material. This was not unfamiliar territory for him: much of his musical education began there, and he had also conducted, sung in and written for church choirs. '…he [Theodorakis] continued to delight in the beauty of the Byzantine based in the liturgy long after he had ceased to believe in its teaching' (Holst 1980, 83). The symbolic number 'three' also plays a significant role in the poem's conception (thus relating it to the liturgy), and so it is divided into three main parts: The Genesis, the Passion and the Gloria (Axion Esti). Although Theodorakis does not use the entire poem (he only uses one-fifth), he keeps these divisions intact (Giannaris 1972). The internal structure of the music also has three elements – the narration, the hymn and the chorale. Theodorakis explains:

> For the first [narration], the poet uses prose, for the second [hymn] free verse and for the third [chorale] measured verse. So in my work I used parallels – the narrator who reads the [prose] work, the Psaltis [Orthodox Cantor] for the hymns and the Popular Singer for the choral sections. Another three equally basic elements complete the musical construction of the work: a) the mixed choir, b) the orchestra and c) the popular instruments. Beside the popular orchestra (two bouzoukis, guitar, piano, bass and drums)[37] it felt natural to add two more organic units, one vocal and one instrumental which…had to fit into the new musical mood so as not to be a mere collation of heterogeneous elements.
>
> (Theodorakis quoted in Holst 1980, 84-85)

[36] Translated from the Greek text.
[37] In the first orchestration of *Axion Esti*, the popular orchestra also included a *santouri*.

By using these three forces, that is, prose, hymns and popular song, Theodorakis overcame the obstacles of the diverse elements of linguistic phrasing and metrical difficulties, obstacles that other composers and critics had found in the poem (Giannaris 1972). While the laik singer or soloist filled the role of the *koryphaios* (a term given to the chorus leader of ancient tragedy), for the citations of the text by the narrator, Theodorakis imagined the liturgy of the Orthodox ceremony, where two cantors and a priest recite the bible (Brandes 2003). He wanted to remain faithful to the form of the ecclesiastical tradition and liturgy because 'I believed that the general public had to be initiated into the poetic word, when of course it dealt with the memory of my country, as the poet says. I wanted the next generations to have as their bible the recent sufferings of their race – Albania, the Resistance, Civil War' (Theodorakis 2003, 138).

An examination of *Axion Esti*'s musical structure will reveal the fusion and integration of diverse elements. I do not intend to give a bar by bar analysis of the entire work, but I would like to shed light on the characteristics that make it important and unique.

The first section begins atonally with the use of the composer's most recent symphonic techniques. The poem begins with the words 'then he spoke and the sea was born', and this genesis is emphasised by the (deliberately brief) musical depiction of chaos. This 'musical chaos' is a symbolic gesture, representing the western art tradition that the composer had just abandoned, and out of which a new musical world was being born (Theodorakis 2003, Giannaris 1972 and Holst 1980).

After this short section, order is restored by the psaltis (orthodox cantor) singing a hymn.[38] The hymns form some of the most important material of the work, as they firstly define its character (in a liturgical sense), and secondly, allow the composer to overcome the harmonic and rhythmic limitations of the popular song (Holst 1980). These hymns weave themselves throughout all three sections, providing a unifying function. (No other song type appears in all three sections.) Three of the five hymns, (the opening hymn, 'My

[38] English hymns are usually quite rigid in their form and structure, while Greek hymns sung by the psalti are much freer and recitative in character.

Roots in Mountains' and 'Temples in the Shape of the Sky'), are rooted in Byzantine as well as demotic music – 'elements of Byzantine melody are juxtaposed with *demotic* melody and rhythm while the orchestra echoes the sounds of folk instruments and the bells of the Greek countryside, both secular and religious' (Holst 1980, 86). Theodorakis regards these three hymns as his 'most complete step towards the region of meta-symphonic music' and the articulation of 'a clear neo-Hellenic musical climate beyond the region of popular song' (Theodorakis 1998, 60). The instrumental accompaniment is also given particular characteristics: The accompaniment of 'My Roots in the Mountains' is specifically inspired by northern Epirotic funeral dirges. 'The clarinet is played in Epirotic style with characteristic wavering pitch, while the santouri and percussion evoke the sound of sheep bells' (Holst 1980, 87). Other features are Byzantine melody and a drone (Theodorakis 1998).

The hymn 'Temples in the Shape of the Sky' is a dialogue between the choir and instruments on the one hand, and the *psalti* on the other. It is also in a *tsamiko* rhythm, which is a Greek *demotic* dance in 3/8. This dialogue relies on simple counterpoint which the composer believes does not distance the people from the neo-Hellenic idiom, but, on the contrary, suggests a lively role for contrapuntal writing in modern Greek music (Theodorakis 1998, 60).

'Here am I' and 'In a Far Country' recall the opening atonal section and thus contemporary western art musical expression (Holst 1980). Theodorakis wanted to highlight the strong underlying rhythms by having the choir recite and 'declare' as a group, according to the prototype of the ancient drama (Theodorakis 1998). This rhythmic chanting of the *psalti* and the choir, not in any tonal setting, serves a narrative as well as percussive role.

Thus, all the sound materials have modern Greek roots vital to a new neo-Hellenic soundscape: 'I wanted the sounds to affect us as neo-Hellenes…to bind us so tightly with emotional, psychological and intellectual states and situations that are familiar and known' (Theodorakis 1998, 60). In effect Theodorakis has created a meeting ground for

what were previously considered completely different traditions. The orchestration itself illustrates this point: there is a choir, symphonic and also *laik* orchestras (which includes the *bouzouki*),[39] as well as a church figure – a *psalti*, and a narrator. Thus physically (instrumentally) and musically, these different traditions meet, interact, and become one. Epirotic dirges, traditional and *demotic* music, liturgical Byzantine music and contemporary western art techniques interact to form a solid flowing artwork. It is also significant that the poetic and most of the musical material is structurally and aesthetically liturgical.

The significance of the liturgical aesthetic and content is evident when one considers the historical role that the church played in Greek society. During the four hundred years of Turkish occupation, it was the church that kept Greek culture alive, and today it is still respected and esteemed for doing so. It was also a priest who raised the flag of the revolution in 1821 when the Greeks rose up against the Turkish occupation. Thus the church not only played a major cultural but also a political role. As previously mentioned,[40] Greece as a nation is mostly Greek Orthodox, and the sound of the *psalti* in church is familiar to everyone, no matter what social class. In addition, the symbols of the psalti and the narrator are charged with meaning and represent Hellenic faith and history. *Axion Esti* is deeply expressive of not only a Hellenic aesthetic but a Hellenic unconscious.

The second section (*The Passion*) contains five of Theodorakis' most popular songs (settings of the measured verse of the poem), and they bridge the difficult sections of the piece. These songs have often been extracted and interpreted by popular artists, and are thus known beyond the context of *Axion Esti* (Holst 1980). Although they communicate on a direct level with the audience, Theodorakis wanted to extend their internal boundaries – they contain characteristics of rebetic and island rhythms, cantades and modern *laik* musical phrases:

> I tried to give a new dimension based on the melodic phrase and extending the melodic language beyond the known body of our traditional popular music… . The analysis of the

[39] Note the reaction of the orchestra to the bouzouki and popular singer when rehearsing *Epitaphios*, as discussed in Chapter Two.
[40] See Chapter One.

> melodies of these songs shows us the melodic strengths contained in the world of our popular music.
>
> (Theodorakis quoted in Holst 1980, 94)

What characterises popular Greek songs, apart from the instrumentation, are the melodic lines, and these are usually tonal (major or minor), while *demotic* songs are modal. Rhythmically, they are based on a few main dances: the *hasapiko* (in 2/8), *zeimbekikos* (9/8) and *hasaposerviko* (4/8). Although there is not much variety, the *zeimbekiko* has the most rhythmic interest (2+2+2+3). Harmonically, the popular song has even less variety and mostly uses chords I, IV and V. In an attempt to redeem this, Theodorakis added other chords, mainly III and II. Thus, rhythms and harmonies remain secondary to the melodic line of a popular song, supporting and following it, 'colourless and faceless' (Theodorakis 1998, 55). Theodorakis also added a choir which stood next to the *laik* singer; and next to the *laik* orchestra were the symphonic instruments. The role of the symphonic orchestra is minor compared to the other forces, though, while the choir's role is very important, especially in the chorales where it assumes virtually the same significance as the popular singer.

Theodorakis once again uses a *laik* or popular singer for the five 'popular' songs – he originally used Grigoris Bithikotsis (as in *Epitaphios*) – in contrast to the *psaltis*' trained baritone voice used for the hymns. The *laik* singer is accompanied by a *laik* orchestra, and is at times joined by the choir: 'We have a dialogue between the leader and the chorus, something which doesn't happen in conventional popular song and which adds a new dimension to artistic popular song!' (Theodorakis quoted in Holst 1980, 95) Thus, the composer fuses the familiar with the unfamiliar: in his use of 'popular songs' as links between the difficult sections; and in his expansions of these popular forms to include contemporary techniques. By expanding on what the audience is used to hearing, the 'popular' or '*laik*' incorporates new characteristics and meanings.

One of the most popular of the composer's melodies comes in the first of these five songs, 'A Solitary Swallow'. It is in the rhythm of a *hasapiko*, a *rebetiko* dance, although rhythmically it is the simplest or least interesting. Harmonically, it is reminiscent of

Greek popular music, 'but the relation of melodic line to text is unusually fine' (Holst 1980, 96). The second song, 'With the Star's Lamp', has characteristics that make it unusual: Although it is based on Byzantine melody, the composer adds bars of triple time, which 'interrupt the steady flow of duple rhythm. The chorus itself is an innovation, and the high bell-chords on the piano are sometimes held over so that they form a syncopated rhythm with the chorus…' (Holst 1980, 96). The remaining three songs are also based on Byzantine and folk song elements. The setting of the words is carefully calculated, and Theodorakis uses techniques such as singing phrases on repeated notes as is done often by a *psalti* or priest in an Orthodox Church. This is structurally important in terms of the entire work and also because of the liturgical references in the text.

The final Gloria section is performed by the *psalti*, choir and orchestra. The entire choir begins this section in a major key, and it is once again in the rhythm of a *tsamiko* (3/8), a dance which is characterised as strong and masculine (Giannaris 1972). This dance is 'interrupted' at various points by the *psalti*, because the text dictates a change in rhythm. Alternating from choir to *psalti* is also necessary in creating continuity throughout the work. At times during this hymn, Theodorakis uses the violin like a Cretan lyre. (He is insistent that the symphonic instruments are used so as not to lead to or remind us of western classical music (Theodorakis 1998).) Over the rhythmic foundation of the tsamiko, a neobyzantine melody is developed by the choir in two voices, primo and secondo. Both the structure of the melody and rhythmic groupings, and the underlying rhythmic drive give the necessary glorifying character. The two voices have as their prototype the songs of the church, in this case, the Epitaphio which is a Good Friday ceremony (Theodorakis 1998).

The poet Odysseus Elytis believed that Theodorakis' Gloria encapsulated the spirit of the poetic section to its utmost, in all its melodic and rhythmic features as well as its instrumentation (Holst 1980). Every aspect is carefully structured and related to the 'sound and symbolism of Elytis' verse' (Holst 1980, 94). Although it forms the high point of the entire work, this section is not what most Greeks remember from *Axion Esti*,

nor what makes this demanding work accessible to the general Greek public. In Holst's words:

> It is the popular songs of *Axion Esti* which the Greeks remember. They are sufficiently rhythmically close to their prototypes to be familiar and they all have traditional melodic associations. Sung by a singer like Bithikotsis, with his unmistakable rembetika-style voice and accompanied by bouzouki and popular band, they give the illusion of being typical popular songs. They serve an important function in Theodorakis' complex setting of a long and difficult poem by involving the entire audience to a point where it can accept the more inaccessible music of the hymns.
>
> (Holst 1980, 98)

Axion Esti was successful with a large proportion of the public. According to Holst, 'no other record of his has sold so well' (1980, 99), and the work is aesthetically satisfying.

> None of the techniques he employed were revolutionary but the synthesis of popular form with classical western technique had transformed a complex intellectual expression into music that was, and still is, sung on the streets.
>
> (Holst 1980, 98-99)

It was no easy task reaching this point in composition. Starting with *Epitaphios*, Theodorakis had 'struggled to be true to the familiar patterns – both melodic and rhythmic – of our traditional folk song-writing', at the same time 'honing…musical weapons' to achieve his long-term goal: 'a totally neo-Hellenic, artistic and craftsman-like work' (Theodorakis 2003a). This he created in *Axion Esti*

Axion Esti's audience reflects its success as a potent cultural symbol. Instead of attracting a public with specific social alignments (Stokes 1994), Theodorakis' music brought together groups from different social strata; it attracted a large collective of a national (rather than a social) alignment. The composer used tools (text, instrumentation, interpreters; the establishment of the popular concert and the Small Orchestra) to create a national style of music and a national audience. Where musical bricolage is not always popular (Stokes 1994), Theodorakis worked together with the public towards *Axion Esti*'s success. He created a new social and national experience, infused with Greek meanings; both 'serious' and laik forms are Greek in their origins and expression.

The fact that *Axion Esti* turned out to be one of the most commercially successful releases on the Greek market is confirmed by the fact that there are now three different versions, all with different performers and interpreters. What is quite remarkable, given the

enormous role of language, is that there are Swedish and also German recordings (Brandes 2003). Theodorakis' record company was initially suspicious and nervous about recording the original Greek music, believing that its possible success would influence the folk music industry negatively:

> They were aware of the fact that, the audience for such works was limited among the followers of 'classical music' as it has come to be known. What they feared was the fact that the broad audience for Greek songs, and especially, those who listened to folk songs, might 'stick' to this kind of music since they were the ones who rushed to embrace the first Theodorakis' song cycles.
>
> (Brandes 2003, 29)

They also worried that, in future, they would have to hire many more musicians (that is, the popular and symphonic orchestra, choir and soloists). The recording company gave in to Theodorakis' demands only because of contractual reasons (Brandes 2003).

> The fact that *Axion Esti* became the biggest commercial success of all my works was a surprise for many. But not for me. Because I had worked insistently and correctly preparing the public, so that no one could wonder whether the public of that time was worthy of the work or if the work was worthy of the public.
>
> (Theodorakis 2003, 137)[41]

Axion Esti's poetry and music played a vital role in evoking 'national memory'. Its evocations of Ancient to Modern Greece reinforce and awaken associations of nation and heritage. 'Memory itself become[s] present. ... The *Axion Esti* is the steady step in a continually changing reality: it is the country's detailed ideogram, its plain finger print' (Iliopoulou 2003, 31). Where *Epitaphios* is a poetic masterpiece in expressing a mother's anguish for the loss of her son in an important political moment in history, *Axion Esti* is a journey through Hellenism. It is remarkable that only four years before its release, there was a 'small civil war' about *Epitaphios* concerning the use of the *bouzouki*, singer Grigoris Bithikotsis and the poetry.[42] Now, they all appeared on the same stage with an orchestra and choir. Furthermore the record was a complete success. Theodorakis had created a Greek public: one that was exposed to and that accepted the 'beauty and truth' that the country had to offer; its poetry, its music and its traditions. *Axion Esti* was indeed a 'detailed ideogram' of the people (Iliopoulou 2003, 31); if it was not a picture of a

[41] Translated from the Greek text.
[42] Refer to Chapter Two.

maturing, cultivated modern Greek nation, it embodied the aspiration to be one. This seems to follow the hopes and goals of the Lambrakis movement – the desire for cultural and social change.[43]

> I always liked to say that people don't listen with their ears, they listen with their imagination. If they have one. …[I]t looks as though at that time the Greek *laos* did have imagination, sensitivity, the thirst for new and a focus on historical memory.
>
> (Theodorakis 2003, 139)

So *Axion Esti* held within it the ideals of a more mature concept of modern Greek identity, fusing neo-Hellenic culture with mass ideology. While giving the public an opportunity to experience their historical narrative through poetry, Theodorakis also gave them a new musical form in which to embrace it, one that contained within itself enough of their identity for them to understand, and thus grow with it. This ideal, unified modern Greek musical experience looked towards the future; its mythology merged with metasymphonic form.

In *Epitaphios*, *Axion Esti* and *The Ballad of the Dead Brother*, Theodorakis focuses on defining points in Greece's history. *Epitaphios* expresses a mother's personal loss, the result of a strike suppressed by government; *Axion Esti* spans a period from Ancient Greece to Modern Greece; *The Ballad of the Dead Brother* focuses on another defining time in Greece's collective psyche: The Civil War. Theodorakis constantly makes people relive and remember themselves through the chosen text, poetry or narrative as well as through the aesthetic. He achieves this while advancing musical forms and allowing the public to experience their identity through different genres, whether songs and song cycles, flow songs, stage productions, or music for tragedy.

The time before the Junta, from 1960-1967, was, in Theodorakis' view, the pinnacle of his artistic and personal dialogue with the public. 'In terms of contact with the people, they were the "best years of my life"!' (Theodorakis 1998, 50) When the Junta took over, Theodorakis was one of the founding members of the resistance organisation, the Patriotic Front. He put all his energies into the resistance, using music as one of his primary weapons. During the Junta, he composed works such as *Epiphania-Averoff*, *The*

[43] Refer to Chapter One for Lambrakis Movement.

Sun and Time, *State of Siege*, *March of the Spirit* and *Canto General*. When freedom came in 1974, he strongly believed that these works, written in security prisons, in banishment, and played on anti-dictatorial radio stations, would become the works of the post-junta period. But they did not (Theodorakis 1998, 51). Strangely, the people chose to listen to the 'old' works, the familiar banished music: in the six months after the fall of the Junta, 1,8 million records were sold. The public devoured what was once denied them; this was their 'revenge'. They did not want to hear music that reminded them of resistance or war heroes.

Along with his political crises[44], the aftermath of the junta prevented ninety percent of Theodorakis' new scores from being disseminated (Theodorakis 1999). Hence the composer turned to symphonic works and opera. He did this in isolation, cut off from contemporary Greek music. Holst-Warhaft believes that the composer's operas have a broader appeal as they 'alternate between the familiar and unfamiliar, with melodic echoes of Theodorakis' own earlier works as well as Greek folk and liturgical material' (Holst-Warhaft 2000, n.p.). In the music of this period, however, Theodorakis never turns away from the concept 'Greece': he searches for it in the myths and tragedies of his ancients.

3.3 Operas and Symphonies: Taking the 'Popular' out of the Popular Art?

> My popular art song became the basis from which I moved to what we call the symphonic, to musical tragedy and to lyrical fulfillment. For me, all techniques are legitimate, useful and valuable when they serve my basic goal. All forms of sound, their roots, their combinations, eastern, western, high art, popular, are welcome in the workshop that strives to envelop with sound a living body with a heart, brain, veins and spiritual flesh. Thus it is not a robot with materials that momentarily surprise you, because they're really electrodes and metal that will one day rust, until it becomes dust.
>
> (Author's Interview 2004)[45]

[44] In 1977 Theodorakis ran for election and lost; in 1978 he ran for the position of Mayor of Athens and again lost; he was in and out of politics, mainly with the Left

[45] Translated from the Greek text by C. Mouyis.

Theodorakis' entire oeuvre is dense and complex, containing all forms of music. He believes that only an inflexible mind would try to separate his popular from his art works. Composing operas and symphonies was not a separate but a continuing act of creativity: 'I felt the need to offer the necessary keys, so that whoever would want to get to know me in essence, could unlock all the doors and windows of my musical work' (Theodorakis 1999, 17). In fact, his new project was a continuation of his metasymphonic works.

3.3.1 Symphonies

In the 1980s Theodorakis made a conscious decision to distance himself from popular music and return to classical music. He composed his Second (1981), Third (1981), Fourth (1986/1987) and Seventh Symphonies (1983), *Passion of Saduccees* (1982) and the *Zorba Ballet Suite* (1988). He was aware, in making this move, of the changing cultural context and felt that he had a cultural responsibility to do so.

Taking into account the significance of the text in Theodorakis' previous oeuvre, it is not surprising that all his symphonic works are also based on texts. The importance of the ancient chorus, representing the nation, is even more evident in these symphonies, materialising as a choir with soloists. Although the addition of vocal forces to a symphony is not usual, Theodorakis justifies his decision by explaining that as a Greek composer he has the authority to interpret the Greek word 'symphony' in any way he sees fit (Theodorakis 1995).

> Why should the sonata form inevitably determine the form of the symphony? Besides, in which respects is a symphony by Haydn related to one by Gustav Mahler? I have said it again and again: For me, symphony is a wall-painting. Goethe once wrote about the Parthenon that he felt it to be "frozen music". What the Parthenon is for architecture is the symphony for music.
>
> (Theodorakis 1995, 5)

Theodorakis wrote his first symphony between 1948 and 1953. It deals with his experiences, memories and the general suffering during the Second World War. 'The search for God, centre of the universe, having led through the spirit of darkness and light, ended in this symphony with the discovery of God in the person of the worker'

(Theodorakis quoted in Vogt 1998, n.p.). His next symphony was composed thirty years later: The Second Symphony, *The Song of the Earth* (1981), like the First, expresses dark experiences of banishment, torture, emigration, fear for one's own life and concern for family and friends in times of political unrest (Zacher 1995). The texts of Dimitris Solomos (1798-1837) form the basis of Theodorakis' Third Symphony (1981). It tells of a mother, driven to madness by grief when she loses her two small sons during the Greek War of Independence against the Turks. This is a significant step, because 'it is here for the first time, that we meet an anonymous representative of the people, who suffers a fate comparable to the great women figures of the classical tragedies' (Zacher 1995, 46).

The Seventh Symphony, *The Spring Symphony*, follows, and is based on Yiannis Ritsos' texts 'Spring Symphony' and 'March of the Ocean'.[46]

> …My symphony is also a profession of faith towards my country, with which I have suffered, struggled and conquered. Beyond that, it is a reflection on the fate of mankind's common home, the earth.
>
> (Theodorakis quoted in Vogt 1988, n.p.)

Theodorakis' final symphony is his fourth, *Symphony of Choirs* (1986/87). According to Zacher (1995), in this work the composer interweaves three lines of tradition: 1) the symphonic tradition into which vocal parts are integrated; 2) the tradition of great women figures (also evident in his stage works, operas *Medea*, *Electra*, *Antigone* and the ballet *Antigone*); 3) the tradition of a Hellenocentric perception of history that does not contradict the composer's cosmopolitanism (1995, 46).

Theodorakis considers his Fourth Symphony closest to Greece as it is based on Aeschylos' *Eumenides* and Euripides' *The Phoenician Women*. The work consists of two movements (for each narrative) and two soloists stand in for the ancient chorus leaders. The musical material is drawn from music he composed for ancient tragedy. It weaves itself through mazes, expressing the nature of tragedy and human fate (Zacher 1995). Ironically, Theodorakis' Fourth Symphony is the most dissonant of all the symphonies, and as Zacher (1995) notes, it is difficult to find the composer of popular melodies in it.

[46] `Someone has to break with the dogma of consecutive numbering!' (Theodorakis quoted in Zacher 1995, 46.)

In these works, as in his operas, Theodorakis uses traditional symphonic orchestration – no popular instruments such as the bouzouki are included. The popular element is the choir, representing the nation: hence it is the primary means of maintaining direct contact with his audience. Using the word as well as the human voice aids him in this attempt. Theodorakis explains:

> The voice was man's first musical instrument and remains till today the most authentic instrument for the interpretation of music. It directly expresses our spiritual world and the emotions that pervade us which we 'dress' with sounds in order to express them. The human voice unites us directly, because it speaks straight to the heart. On the other hand, musical instruments rely on material and techniques, a fact that distances the song and musical sound (from its directness) so that the presence of the word element becomes a necessity. And when it comes to the symphonic sound, this distance is so great, that it demands systematic education, which transfers the original and basic function of music from a dialogue between soul and soul into a conversation between a `musical mind' and educated listeners, who have to leave a large part of their emotional world outside the concert hall. Those are the reasons why I take refuge in vocal music.
>
> Another element is the presence of the poetic word which accompanies about ninety percent of my work. This is because I address a public who continues to regard the function of Music and Poetry beginning with the emotion and ending up in the dream, basically satisfying our spiritual world, while the so-called 'Absolute Music' with its complex forms, demands a special knowledge and speciality which has always been the privilege of the very few.
>
> Finally, Greek music tradition is based for the most part on song, that is, in music and poetry, and the rest, the instrumental music, is based on dance.
>
> (Theodorakis quoted in interview by Venetiadou 2004, n.p.)[47]

Thus one can call the element of the human voice and the text it invokes the 'popular' element within his symphonic works, along with the use of musical material which is inspired by *demotic* and Byzantine elements. In addition to these symphonies, Theodorakis composed *Divine Liturgy* (1982), *Requiem* (1984), and *Passion of Saduccees* (1982), all of which are based on texts (Theodorakis 1999a, 3). Thus far, he felt that he had almost reached the limits of combining song (*tragoudi*), chorus and orchestra; however he lacked the ability to identify musically with the complexity of the emotions, thoughts, passions and clashes that characterise the protagonists of tragedy (Theodorakis 1999). The next step would be to advance this form, and opera served this exact purpose. 'I always had and still have the wish to put music to a tragedy in which all persons would have to sing' (Theodorakis 1995, 5).

[47] Translated from the Greek text.

3.3.2 Lyric Tragedies

> I always considered tragedy as the highest degree of the human spirit.
>
> (Theodorakis 1999, 129)

Theodorakis' interest in composing opera is hardly surprising given his strong belief in the communicative ability of the text. He has composed five operas: amongst them, the trilogy *Medea*, *Electra* and *Antigone*. They were written between 1988 and 1998. 'They are, in many ways, a summation of his life's work, which has always concentrated on the human voice, and almost always on Greek themes' (Holst-Warhaft 2000, n.p.). However, he had already written what he had called an 'opera buffa' between 1984 and 1986 called *Kostas Karyotakis* or *The Metamorphoses of Dionysos*, based on the poetry of Karyotakis and 'inspired by his disgust at the corruption of the PASOK [Pan Hellenic Socialist Party] government' (Holst-Warhaft 2000, n.p.). Although this seemingly new style of composing can be viewed as the composer's move away from the people, we shall see that this is in fact a step towards preserving modern Greek identity.

Opera today is an elitist art, anywhere in the world. Holst-Warhaft argues that 'the idea that opera might be "music for the masses" is not only far-fetched but undesirable to the average opera buff who thinks of himself as belonging to a cultured minority' (2000, n.p.). It is very difficult for a composer to be taken seriously when moving from 'popular' to 'serious' music, especially since Theodorakis spent his whole career trying to break down the boundaries between them.[48]

In August 1988 in the ancient arena at Verona, Theodorakis conducted his *Zorba Ballet Suite*.

> On the opening night, as he conducted the orchestra, Theodorakis was proud to see his name hanging on a banner besides the giants of Italian opera. After the triumphant success of the ballet and a few glasses of wine, he made a promise to the director of the Verona festival. "I will compose three operas," he said. "One for Verdi, one for Puccini and one for Bellini."

[48] Theodorakis has been compared to Leonard Bernstein, whose musical *West Side Story* overshadowed the rest of his life's work (Holst-Warhaft 2000).

(Holst-Warhaft 2000, n.p.)

This was the beginning of his operatic trilogy. In the introduction to his book *Poetry Set to Music. Volume III: Lyric Tragedies* (1999), Theodorakis observes (he wrote the introduction in 1996) that it was the most crucial point in his composition. This is because, with the introduction of his operas or 'lyric tragedies', he knew that he had distanced himself from his familiar soundworld, the soundworld with which he had gained the trust of the Greek listener (Theodorakis 1999). He hoped the new initiate listener would make the leap with him, intellectually and spiritually: 'I'm not referring so much to the myths – that are more or less known – as to purely musical elements' (Theodorakis 1999, 17). The unfamiliar dimensions of this new soundscape for the Greek listener would, he imagined, be harmony and orchestration. For the Greeks, the harmonic revolution of popular/*laik* music occurred only half a century ago with the music of Tsitsani (Theodorakis 1999).[49] Consequently, popular art music generally retained the same harmonic language so not to lose contact with the wide public. Theodorakis took four years to present *Axion Esti* because he was afraid that the public would turn their back on him; introducing his operas, he experienced the same fear (Theodorakis 1999, 18).

For Theodorakis, the most important musical dimension in these operas is the melody, the common root in all of his compositions. In his opinion, this contrasts to what happens in the west, where melody is not the main focus of composition (Theodorakis 1999). Theodorakis' melodies are mainly inspired by three influences: 1) the extended lines of Byzantine melismas 2) *Rizitika* or Cretan folk songs and 3) 'Songs of the table' or Greek *demotic* songs. These form the material of every opera. The composer sees the opera as a continuous melody, like a flowsong, from beginning to end.[50]

[49] Contrary to the West, Byzantium did not develop its harmonic language, as the harmonium was not allowed in church (no instruments were). Thus the music remained monophonic with underlying harmonic support (Theodorakis 1999).

[50] A flowsong is one of Theodorakis' categories of song. It is a form defined by the text: 'The voice of the singer, with the dominant verse, rolls along with the music without any repetitions, often reminiscent of a chanter's recitation' (http://www.mmb.org.gr/page/default.asp?la=299id=1159). This type is a complete break from traditional forms of popular music; however, the melodic material is still drawn from liturgical, folk and laik/popular themes (Holst 1980).

> Naturally, even though complete songs do exist, this new melodic understanding cannot be related to my well-known melodic style. And perhaps the fact that this melodic world, by which the Greek public knows me, exists, could be the biggest obstacle in my new endeavour. Because the public – at least those who love my music – must now learn that there is another Theodorakis, a new Theodorakis, to discover and if possible create the same close bond as was the case with his previous work.
>
> (Theodorakis 1999, 18)

Theodorakis was aware that he was presenting a 'new Theodorakis', and although the melodic material and the stories and myths were Greek in origin, the operatic form was not. Perhaps these Greek roots were the links to opening the form to a mass audience. The composer's main concern in his trilogy was to elevate the words to melody. They were no longer separate entities, but part of the whole structure. Furthermore, the recitative did not have the characteristic plain musical recitation of an aria as in traditional operas: normally the composer works the musical recitation in around the chords. Theodorakis wanted to follow the current of the word, as if he were musically supporting a tragedy. He now had classical singers instead of actors and could therefore direct musical inspiration freely and naturally in the avenues that the word would lead; he allowed the word to inspire him (Theodorakis 1999).

The next dimension of his operatic works, and one of the main generative phenomena in tragedy, is rhythm; it characterises and expresses the core of tragic passion, such as anger, worry, spiritual tension, solutions and insolubility of problems (Theodorakis 1999). Theodorakis believes that if melody or *melos* gives height, depth and colour to the tragic current, then rhythm is the vehicle that sets the gears in motion, and also abruptly brakes the current. In other words, rhythm controls the irregular current of passion as a result of the continuous clashes, hesitations, and inescapable decisions of fate. The third dimension, the harmonic language, is determined by the melody and the rhythm; however, it must make its own contribution to the dramatic situation.

The composer wanted his operas to be harmonically and melodically self-sustaining: to understand melody, one must understand harmony and vice-versa. The chorus in these tragedies is once again a main character, and different in its role to traditional opera. It is generally written monophonically. The orchestra's role is that of a foundation; it supports

the structure. However, this role has expanded significance and it is elevated to the status of melody, rhythm and harmony (Theodorakis 1999).

The audience Theodorakis would like to reach is still the 'Greek public' – not the one audience with access to western music. The public with whom he wants to communicate is no different from the one he addressed in his Popular Art songs. Theodorakis explains:

> We began a long journey in the area of Greek music, that we timeously bound it together tightly with Greek poetry, so that it resulted in such a high quality of Greek art able to express and move the neo-Hellene…This is the public I'm referring to. This is the public I'm aiming for.
> (Theodorakis 1999, 19)

If one considers these operatic works a continuation of the composer's metasymphonic works (such as *Axion Esti*, *Canto General* and *March of the Spirit*) these Lyric Tragedies can also be considered '*Laik Oratoria*'. What differs is the enhanced drama, the tragic characters, forceful emotional clashes and the appearance of an ancient chorus with the modern aesthetic style (Theodorakis 1999, 19).

3.3.3 A Place for Opera Today?

One cannot help questioning Theodorakis' move into this new form: What did it mean for the composer to write an opera? Was it a need for self expression? Researching his intentions has revealed that this choice was definitely not solely self-expressive. Not only did Theodorakis aim to further develop Greek musical forms by moving towards Laik Lyric Tragedy, but he sought to preserve Greek culture and connect Greeks with their core raison d'être – the ancients. He attempted to 'bring us closer to the unrivalled world of ancient tragedians while sounding a discovery of a new neo-Hellenic-musical-poetic-dramatic world to enrich the participation and our contribution in the development of music of the people' (Theodorakis 1999, 19). This was also the ideal that underlay his Fourth Symphony.

Theodorakis admits that even though he calls his operas 'Lyric Tragedies', the genre is still opera. In his opinion, this reveals that the most natural form of music is song with instrumental accompaniment (Theodorakis 1999). A melody accompanied by a popular

instrument or piano is called a song (*tragoudi*) or Lied; a melody accompanied by a symphony orchestra or an orchestra and choir is called an oratorio, cantata or opera. The determining factors of its labelling are its content, the nature of the melody and harmony, and the use of the instruments and voices. Thus, in order to create a true neo-Hellenic form, one can draw on the 'western' conventions (opera and symphonic music were born in the west) to create a new form, one that would express the soul of the nation and be part of its own spiritual, artistic and historical tradition (Theodorakis 1999). This new form would be based on the stories of ancient tragedy.

> As a Greek composer, I feel that I have a special relationship with tragedy, with the tragic. And it is not only the inescapably close relationship that we have with ancient texts from the time of our adolescence. Parallel to that, it is the continuation of the tragic spirit, as the neo-Hellenes continue to experience it showing that, as individuals and as a nation they are actively intertwined with Fate in their lives in one way or another.
>
> (Theodorakis 1999, 125)

In order to measure the success of Theodorakis' operas, one can look at the number of performances that have taken place, in and outside Greece. *Medea*, the first of the trilogy, was premiered in Bilbao, Spain in 1991, and was also performed in Germany in 1995. Perhaps the lack of performances is due to the fact that the full version of the opera lasts five and a half hours. The second of the trilogy, *Electra*, was premiered in Luxembourg in 1995, and since then has enjoyed various performances in Poland (throughout 1995 and 1996), Greece, Cyprus, Bucharest, Belgrade and New York, Carnegie Hall in 2000.[51] *Antigone*, the final opera of the trilogy, was the first to be premiered in Athens at Megaron Mousikis in October 2000. It is the most accessible of the three, and was performed at a time when Athens had the musical resources to stage it (Holst-Warhaft 2000). In November 2005, two concerts were held in Athens in celebration of these operas: the first featured excerpts of *Medea* and *Elektra*, and the second, excerpts from *Antigone* and Theodorakis' final opera *Lysistrata*. [52]

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[51] The operas are performed in Greek with subtitles.

[52] *Lysistrata*, Theodorakis' final opera, was one of the main works composed for Greece's Cultural Olympiad that was to lead up to the Athens Olympic Games in 2004, and it was performed in June and September 2002. It is an ancient comedy, Aristophane's political satire, and tells the story of women of Greece who refuse their men sex in order to stop the Peloponnesian war. Overall, it conveys a message of peace and unity. Theodorakis parodies his own music in the score, and also adds excerpts of Hadjidakis. Sounds of the bouzouki as well as a popular orchestra are included to underline the place of the laos, the people (Interview by Guy Wagner 2004, http://en.mikis-theodorakis.net/index.php/article/articleprint/325/-1/49/). This opera can be seen as a reflection of Theodorakis: it is an ancient comedy (Theodorakis has

Performances of Theodorakis' lyric tragedies reveal that he has not been unsuccessful, especially when looking at the widespread staging of *Electra*. However, it is still unclear where these operas stand in terms of the international twentieth century repertory: they are not mentioned in the UK/London Opera Guide. On the other hand, Theodorakis' intentions in writing them extended far beyond their dedication to Verdi, Puccini and Bellini. As always, he had a cultural agenda. Whether or not his own aesthetics were fulfilled, however, is a question that cannot simply be answered by looking at performance statistics. Theodorakis would measure his success by the audience's experience of these tragedies, their process of identification, and their perception of their link with the ancient Greeks, a process that is essentially unmeasurable.

As is obvious, the ancients are a strong anchor in Greek identity, and are ever present in modern Greek life. Theodorakis speaks about 'Big Shadows'. These shadows exist in multiple forms, in order for people's souls to grow and for their spirits to be elevated. If modern man stops or relaxes, it will be the end. Examples of such shadows are Medea and Electra, prototypes of the process of spiritual pain, catharsis and deliverance. In western mythology it is clear who will be punished and who will win; in the ancient Greek myths, the protagonists are instruments of fate and impelled to fulfil Duty, in accord with the balancing of universal harmony.[53] Those who ignore the laws of universal harmony must be punished. Without such trials, the soul cannot be cleansed (Theodorakis 1999).

When Theodorakis composed music for ancient drama, he set the chorus to music, and wrote accompaniments for the characters (Theodorakis 1999). The chorus in the Lyric Tragedy serves as a basic cell of harmony, that is, universal harmony, and is the link which joins divine harmony with human fate, the rule of life and death, good and evil.

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always had a sense of humour) which actually conveys strong political messages, the most important calling to the Greeks to unite for peace. This is something that Theodorakis has been doing all his life – crying out for social harmony. In addition, women are and remain the focus of this and many of his works.

[53] The concept of 'Universal Harmony' will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Four.

Once again, it represents the anonymous nation and its people (*laos*).[54] Theodorakis feels that he himself is a cell of this 'nation-chorus'. The earthly expression of the chorus and its counterpart (the nation) is the song, or the *tragoudi* (in that every nation expresses itself through its popular songs). As previously mentioned, the Greek word *tragoudi* is derived from the Greek word for tragedy, *tragodia*. For the composer, it is important that the word has remained uncorrupted, and true to its origins, literally meaning ode (*-odi*) to the goat (*trago-*): the goat was one of the metamorphoses of Dionysos, otherwise known as the Latin Bacchus (Theodorakis 1999, 125). Lyric tragedy therefore has *tragodia* (tragedy) or *tragoudi* (song) as a point of reference, and as a result can only be one continuous song. A flowsong's prototype was the Byzantine melody, where the current of the melody could last for twenty to forty continuous minutes. But lyric tragedy differs from the flowsong for two reasons: 1) It serves the myth. 2) There is a new dimension, the dramatic dimension, which is expressed through two basic elements, the heroes of the drama and the chorus (Theodorakis 1999).

Theodorakis' opera *Kostas Karyotakis* is subtitled 'The Metamorphosis of Dionysos', suggesting its spiritual dimension: the song cycle Dionysos is a both a religious and spiritual drama (Theodorakis 1999, 126).[55] By 'religious' or 'spiritual' is meant:

> …the attempt to link mortals with the centre of universal harmony and applying its laws to relationships between them, so that they can be transformed into instruments of fate. They become increasingly charged symbols of divine will destined to erupt after suffering through painful stages and intolerable spiritual/emotional martyrdom.
>
> (Theodorakis 1999, 126)

These symbolic characters continue to exist; they were actors in the human arena in Greece during times of struggle such as the foreign occupation (1940-44), The Civil War (1946-1949), Post-civil War (1950-1967) and the Junta (1967-1974). Theodorakis is himself a symbolic character, 'destined' to suffer but always to keep in touch with his core beliefs, his centre of universal harmony.

Theodorakis believes that heroes and heroines such as Medea and Electra become the carriers, the vehicles for a modern spiritual ceremony through which the audience

[54] The role the chorus plays in *The Ballad of the Dead Brother* and *Axion Esti* is similarly important.
[55] *Kostas Karyotakis* had four performances in Greece in 2000.

becomes spiritually and emotionally linked with the centre of universal harmony (Theodorakis 1999). This is why he chose to use a modern expressive means to unite the public spiritually and emotionally with the 'trampled' laws of universal harmony – a 'trampling' that is a result of our present day living. These operas thus perform a certain function which, if they are taken for granted and routinely put on as shows, they will not be able to fulfil. The identification with the heroes must take place, and in so doing, enable the identification with universal harmony. The purpose of these Lyric Tragedies would be defeated if only the music aesthetic process was privileged. Theodorakis is aware that this identification may only happen in many years to come with the change of people's mentalities - if indeed they change (Theodorakis 1999).

Throughout many historical contestations, the Greek public struggled to keep its identity by battling with forces that tried to overrun the country. In his music Theodorakis recreated, reflected and together with the people, re-experienced and in turn reinforced modern Greek identity. However, in the eighties, the native Greek population faced yet another crisis around identity, this time the result of consumerism and western influence. Worst of all, this threatened to result in a loss of connection with Ancient Greece. Theodorakis branded this decade the worst time of 'de-Hellenising' and 'demythologising'; such external forces attempted to 'discredit our national character lead[ing] us to nothingness' (Theodorakis 1999, 126). He turned once more to ancient mythology, with which his theory of universal harmony coincided, as did ancient Greek philosophy. This was the only way to stop the destruction, he believed, calling on the Gods, Dionysos in particular, to observe the threat against 'the holy Vineyards that, for thousands of years, gave us the holy inebriation'; the fountainhead of Greekdom, from which the joy of life had sprung (Theodorakis 1999, 126). He felt impelled to preserve the development of modern Greek identity.

Theodorakis' aspirations can be read as idealistic and highly romantic. However many times these operas are performed, one cannot expect the audience to experience the music in a particular manner, nor can one expect them to identify with the characters in a particular manner. In addition, Lyric Tragedies cannot combat the effects of globalisation

and the technological revolution. Nevertheless these were the cultural visions with which Theodorakis began his musical journey with the Greek *laos*, starting with the song cycle *Epitaphios*, ideas that in fact were a reality and shone brightest in the sixties. They belong to a certain epoch which had ended by the 1980s.[56]

Theodorakis' aim was to write opera after opera based on Greek myth in order to spread the message, and to keep the ancient connection alive.[57] His main fear was that the Greeks would forget their umbilical connection and that the process of de-Hellenisation would lead to an inability to understand the essence of life through the diachronic meaning of the presence and involvement of myth in the life of the Greek citizen; the first victim would be the song, that is, the neo-Hellenic chorus (Theodorakis 1999). This is because song is the expression of the people, and if the people lose their identity, their form of expression will suffer. Metaphorically, the chorus, that is the public, left the Greek stage in the eighties; Theodorakis believed actors had become clowns, and tragedy had become caricature. Instead of becoming involved, the people had become observers (Theodorakis 1999).

As a result, Theodorakis chose to take refuge in the 'Big Shadows' of the past, his roots. At the same time, in the spirit of connection with the 'future' (or rather, the present), Theodorakis wrote his memoirs, which revealed the heart of neo-Hellenic tragedy, expressed through newer, younger mythical heroes; specifically through the Chorus-Nation in moments of divine elevation by means of struggle. Euripides and Sophocles helped him meet the eternal symbols of this new living neo-Hellenic tragedy. In 1994, Theodorakis affirmed that he still found his own sense of renewal in the ancients (Theodorakis 1999). 'The Gods are still controlling the threads of our destiny', he asserted. 'I sense them every moment' (Theodorakis 1999, 127).

[56] This romantic side of Theodorakis and his views on where we stand in the world today will be further explored in Chapter Four.
[57] See *Medea*, *Electra*, *Antigone* and *Lysistrata*.

Chapter Four

A 'UNIVERSAL MAN' IN SEARCH OF HARMONY [58]

> We cry, the Greeks cry, because we do not have an objective today.
> Yesterday we had as objective to put off the dictatorship.
> Today, the objective is to find ourselves.
>
> (Theodorakis 1994, n.p.)[59]

> Mikis was our man. Now he is our musical expression.
> A musical expression is something continuous, eternal.
>
> (Anna Synodinou quoted in Malandris n.d.)

'I don't want a star – I want a GALAXY!' Mikis Theodorakis jokingly exclaimed at a press conference on hearing that a research committee gathered for a conference in Crete wanted to name a star after him.[60] This is the kind of boundless enthusiasm that has characterised Theodorakis the man and the way he has lived his life. In this chapter I explore the internal world of this Greek composer, examining his core beliefs, his extraordinary drive and the things that have shaped him both as a man and an artist; in short, I look into 'what makes him tick'. I look in turn at Theodorakis' 'credo', his sense of duty and search for what he calls 'Universal Harmony' sometimes via a broadly Marxist ideology. In doing this I elaborate on his views on the role of art and music and where he believes he and Hellas stand in the world today.

4.1.1 A Search for Universal Harmony

> As there are men who thousands of years ago turned their gaze and thoughts to the sky to discover the nature of Harmony and Music, I think it is not strange that in our time the thoughts of these immortals could be imitated by an ordinary mortal who, being unaware of their work, was led to the same conclusions through his Music. In other words, while long ago, the Sky led Pythagoras to Music, today this ordinary mortal man followed Music to the Sky.
>
> (Theodorakis 2006, n.p.)

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[58] The term 'universal man'was used to describe Theodorakis at the International Symposium 'Music and Universal Harmony' in Crete, March 2006.
[59] Transcript of film.
[60] International Symposium 'Music and Universal Harmony' in Honour of Mikis Theodorakis, Heraklion, March 2006.

In Tripolis in 1943, the seventeen-year-old Theodorakis began formulating his own theory of the cosmos. He called this theory 'The Law of Universal Harmony' (Theodorakis 1999). It involves a set of beliefs that has motivated his actions and reactions throughout his life and was highlighted at an international interdisciplinary symposium held in honour of the composer, entitled 'Music and Universal Harmony'. This conference took place in March 2006 in Crete, the birthplace of Theodorakis' father.

Significantly, this was not a symposium organised by a group of musicians, but rather by academics in the Department of Philosophy and Social Studies of Crete along with the Prefecture of Heraklion. Papers were presented by nineteen scholars from all over Europe, Australia and the USA.[61] The main speakers included Colwyn Trevarthen from the University of Edinburgh, and Jerome Bruner from the University of New York. Theodorakis himself presented a paper on Universal Harmony.

The presentations tackled various topics in and around the following subjects: Theodorakis, his music and contribution; Universal Harmony; theories in ancient and modern Greece; music of the spheres and of the hemispheres of the mind; the music of animals; human music and its genesis; and social harmony. It therefore examined the roles of music and sound in the world, animal kingdom and in the universal spheres, and their place in human development, as well as the manner in which they create a sense of belonging. In the closing discussion the main speakers and honorary Doctors of the University of Crete, including Theodorakis, debated the topic 'Universal, Social and Musical Harmony'.

This event was open to the public, and it offered a new perspective on Theodorakis.[62] His 'unknown' side was tackled by researchers, who acknowledged him as a poet, author, philosopher and western art musician. He was thus represented as a man who could bring

[61] Present were experts in the following areas: law; music; musical acoustics; music education; musicology; psychology; child psychology; psychobiology; philology; philosophy; perception, action and development; social anthropology; social studies; physics and bioacoustics.
[62] The opening speeches dealt with the composer himself and were entitled: 1) Theodorakis: A Renaissance Man 2) Mikis Theodorakis – The Image 3) Origins of a Voice from the Future.

together intellectuals from all over the world in an ultimate reflection on social harmony and peace. His global status as creator, intellectual and peacemaker was consolidated.

4.1.2 Origins of a Universal Harmony

Theodorakis' concept of Universal Harmony served as the departure point for the symposium, a concept that emerged very early on in his life and that can be tracked back to his childhood.[63] From a very young age, Theodorakis was influenced by a myriad great thinkers, many of whom he discovered in the hundreds of books kept in his father's book collection (Theodorakis 1999; Giannaris 1972). Two of these remained Theodorakis' guides throughout his life. Both Kostis Palamas (1859-1943) and Dionysios Solomos (1798-1857) are considered two of Greece's national poets.[64] Theodorakis was also influenced by the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, specifically his work *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872). Nietzsche celebrates the 'free spirit…whose magnanimity is genuinely above resentment; the superior intellect in a well-developed body; the boundless affirmation of this world which considers even the eternal recurrence of the same events at gigantic intervals not a horrible but a joyous thought' (Kaufmann 1967, 532). Theodorakis observes that, while many people spoke casually about the Nietzschean spirit, he had to find it within himself. For the composer, it was Palamas who taught him about this spirit, and his ideas served as building blocks for the composer's theory of Universal Harmony (Theodorakis 1999). In his writings, Palamas expressed his adoration of the word, verse and human speech; he regarded verse as a microscopic

[63] At the Symposium of Universal Harmony, Theodorakis admitted that his theory, in essence, repeats what the Pythagoreans had already discovered 2500 years ago; although he calls this 'unforgivable', he finds it astounding that he, after 2500 years, 'had arrived on [his] own at the very same conclusions, led by [his] experiences acquired through music' (Theodorakis 2006, n.p.).

[64] Dionysios Solomos is best known for writing *Hymn to Freedom* (1823), of which the first two stanzas make up the Greek national anthem (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dionysios_Solomos). Kostis Palamas wrote the words of the *Olympic Hymn*, with music composed by Spyros Samaras. It was performed at the first modern Olympic Games in 1896, and declared the official Olympic Anthem in 1958 (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kostis_Palamas). 'Palamas has been called 'the 'national' poet of Greece and was closely associated with the struggle to rid Modern Greece of the 'purist' language and with political liberalism. He dominated literary life for thirty or more years and greatly influenced the entire political-intellectual climate of his time' (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kostis_Palamas).

symbol of the rhythm that governs the Universe.[65] This idea forms the basis of Theodorakis' beliefs. He explains: 'Palamas believed that the rhythm of poetry – the rhythmic stride – symbolises the rhythm that governs the universe. I, as a musician, would add Harmony to this' (Theodorakis 1999, 151). Therefore, he considers music and art as necessary elements in understanding Universal Harmony.

Theodorakis believes that all his preoccupations, including his life-long devotion to 'Duty and Music', stem from his inner spiritual world, which in turn, he says, stems from the world of science. This spiritual world began with his introduction to the macrocosm and the microcosm that essentially derives from the Hegelian principle: 'Thesis – anti-thesis – synthesis [composition]' (Theodorakis 2005b, n.p.).[66] Theodorakis was led to the following realisations: two opposing concepts, Darkness (or Chaos) and Light (or energy), change matter into form. This 'form' that 'translates into both the beginning and end…that comes from Godly power, the pure energy that when still, moves the world', is Harmony.

> It is Harmony that creates and, at the same time, is created by the universe. In other words, the Universal Harmony and its centre – God. God – the Law; The Law of Universal Harmony. So the elements of Ethics and Art – Duty and Artistic expression – existed under the roof of a clearly spiritual belief, responsible for sorting out my inner questions and explorations. I came to the realization of who I am, why I am and what I need to do, in order to totally and completely align myself with the Laws – the product of the Centre of the Universal Harmony.
>
> (Theodorakis 2005b, n.p.)

Theodorakis believes that everyone should strive to discover Universal Harmony in order to leave this life 'fulfilled and happy and be worthy of the gift of life' (Theodorakis 1999, 155). While everything in the universe forms an enormous crystallised Harmony, it revolves around the Sacred Centre of the cosmos. Man's identification with this centre results in his fulfilment. What stops this identification is not his body but his soul, which is in fact a 'ruined universe', the result of disorder, confusion and chaos (Theodorakis 1999, 156). Nevertheless, the Sacred Centre calls and attracts man. By getting to know oneself, one senses this uncontrollable attraction to this centre. As reflection is the soul's

[65] Palamas' texts inspired Theodorakis' first two oratoria, *Hymn to God* and his First Symphony (Theodorakis 1999).

[66] All quotations from Theodorakis (2005b) have been translated by C. and A. Mouyis from the original Greek.

main redeeming quality, when a powerful phenomenon (in direct relation with the laws that govern it) is placed in front of the soul, it not only passively reflects it but mirrors it dynamically, plastically, and moves in accord with its own energy (Theodorakis 1999). Theodorakis believes that this is the reason man must place in front of the soul another world, one that is a Harmonic World, which is moulded by Man's Imagination (Theodorakis 1999). Hence opposite the 'megacosm' of Universal Harmony, a 'microcosm' is created. However, at the moment these two centres move towards identifying with one another and fusing, the Mind (which itself has created this microcosm) prevents them from so doing; because the mind connects with memory and memory deteriorates (Theodorakis 1999).

According to Theodorakis, art is the key to creating harmony within the individual and within his society.

> I believed that Art was the only power that could create within us a microcosm in perfect parallel with the Cosmos. It could transfer the Laws that define Universal Harmony, inside us. It could make each one of us miniature solar and huge astral systems. So that each one of us can be 'tuned in' according to the Space that surrounds us. So that our inner harmony can be attuned to the Global harmony, and so that we can become living molecules of the one and only Harmony. This completion of ours, for me, corresponds with the supreme goal of life. Otherwise, we are sweepings that move here and there in the winds of life, until we turn into dust.
>
> (Theodorakis 1999, 151)

The composer's theory of Universal Harmony is not merely a set of ideas, but forms the core of his belief system and spirituality. Theodorakis' views ultimately tell us that he believes that every part of the world is connected and that music has a direct effect on human behaviour. Although this may seem idealistic, it motivated his composition output and helped him create music that reflected a unified Greek society.[67] If we apply Theodorakis' theory to his own actions, he reflected a modern Greek identity by creating a microcosm of music and poetry, which the society experienced, and therefore mimicked. However reductionist this world view sounds, it served his goals and was effective especially situated in the particular era. This can be seen in parallel to the revolutionary climate of the sixties. Music became a medium through which the new generation could express their identities; it reflected their thoughts and hopes. Ideals of

[67] See Chapter Two and Chapter Three.

'peace', 'love' and 'revolution' were expressed through song, most notably by groups such as The Beatles and protest singers such as Bob Dylan. They, like Theodorakis, were also romantics, who believed in a different world, and represented the romantic face of the world. In both the sixties and Theodorakis' most successful period, musicians provided ideals and a means of identification that people could choose to either take on or reject. Similarly, by choosing to project his idealism through his music, Theodorakis moulded his own identity and bound himself with the Hellenic community, even when living outside Greece. Via his microcosm, Theodorakis believed he was involved in creating a 'harmonious' society in which he could live – his perfect world.

4.1.3 Towards the Sacred Centre through Marxism and Christianity

Theodorakis' theory of Universal Harmony reflects a strong romanticism, a quality that has motivated his idealistic visions of creating a utopian society through music and art.[68] His beliefs are in fact informed by Marxism. Marxism is idealistic and utopian, envisioning a society where each individual understands his role in his community; it is a peace-loving, utopian vision of equality and freedom, where the proletariat comes into power and usurps capitalist power (Singer 1980). According to Engels

> …Marx was before all else a revolutionist. His real mission in life was to contribute, in one way or another, to the overthrow of the capitalist society and of the state institutions which it had brought into being, to contribute to the liberation of the modern proletariat…
>
> (quoted in Singer 1980, 78)

Like Plato, Marx believed that personal happiness is to be found in 'virtuous conduct and in serving one's community' (Singer 1980, 80). As a result there would be harmony between the individual's interest in happiness, and the needs of the community; the harmonious appearance of the community would in fact be a reality, and the people would control the economy instead of being controlled by it (Singer 1980). The philosophy of Marxism differs from the negative Communist label that has been thrust on Theodorakis by his society. Where Communism embodies 'the dictatorship of the proletariat', Marxism is 'a world in which each gave according to their abilities, and received according to their needs' (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communism). Unlike

[68] See Chapters Two and Three.

Communism, Marxism concerns itself with the means of production rather than distribution, and resolves 'various conflicts between man and nature, between man and man, between freedom and necessity, and between individual and species' (Singer 1980, 79). Therefore, to Marx, this ideology is the goal of history and the answer to all problems, as 'a virtual paradise on earth' (Singer 1980, 80).

Marxism elevated Theodorakis' quest for Universal Harmony to another, broader level; it came at a crucial point for him, a time when he had to solve the position of 'the other'; the negative, the enemy, evil. He was introduced to Marxism during the Italian Occupation of Greece in the early 1940s. Theodorakis welcomed and internalised this new social theory and philosophy, and accepted it as a weapon, transferring the longing for Harmony to a social level (Theodorakis 1999). He saw Marxism as a theory that harmonised relations amongst people; however, he believed that a society could only reach this level when an individual was able to develop his own personality to the point that he was able to harmonise all his abilities and actions inside a social unit (Theodorakis 1999).

Theodorakis became part of the illegal Leftist organisation in 1942 because he felt it was necessary in those times; however, he remained sceptical about the rigidity of Marxism in the belief that strict rules and theories cover up mediocrity, weakness and lack of values. He feared that the new structures of new parties hid in their depths the tendency to replicate the autocratic structures of an autocratic class (Theodorakis 1999). He did not want the conditions that he was fighting against to be reproduced as a revolutionary caricature. He therefore rejected the structure (of the party), arguing that a revolution is only possible if the first structure is destroyed; a perpetuated revolutionary guise cannot create social harmony (Theodorakis 1999).[69] In other words, without a true revolution, social harmony cannot exist. With the creation of Popular Art in the 1960s Theodorakis began viewing art as a means of creating social revolution.[70] The participation of the

[69] He became Minister without Portfolio in the conservative government of Mitsotakis in 1989.
[70] See Chapter Two.

masses in his work led to his interest in a new phenomenon, an 'art of the masses'; the combination of political and cultural revolution. He remarks:

> This was a group 'lift off' from everyday banality into the arena of a dream reality, with the cooperation of Marxism, that is to say, a particular socio-political action which has as its goal the deliverance of man within the liberated social unit.
>
> (Theodorakis 1999, 152)

Marxism was thus a means of liberating man within a liberated society in Theodorakis' view. He surmised that striving towards personal deliverance and social liberation would lead society quickly and essentially towards harmony between its members (Theodorakis 1999).

This movement contributed to Theodorakis' romantic view of a Popular Art unifying the people, and bolstered his broadly Marxist ideology and his theory of Universal Harmony. He speaks of a 'dream reality', suggesting that he is aware of the idealistic nature of his project. Ironically, his quest for social harmony, which he saw through Art and Marxism, contributed to the misunderstanding of him: As mentioned previously, today, he is still branded as 'the communist' in Greece, an accusation made with little attempt to understand his particular viewpoint. This was one of the factors that led him further into isolation and labelled him an outsider. In an interview, I asked Theodorakis if he classified himself as a communist and if his philosophy has shaped his music in any way. He responded with the following:

> The word "communism", after the brainwashing that has gone on for so many years in the Western world, is equal to the meaning of "murderer", "terrorist", "bloodstained", "enemy of freedom", "instrument of bloodstained Stalin" etc. Therefore please don't involve me in such questions, because nobody will understand a thing.
>
> (Author's Interview 2004, n.p.)

Nevertheless, it was Universal Harmony that remained the only key to true freedom for the composer himself. At a particular point in his youth, his new encounter with Marxism clashed with his faith in Christianity, challenging the message of love in its ideological demand for a struggle that was fuelled by class hatred (Theodorakis 1999). Although there was contestation between these two ideologies in Greece in the forties, Theodorakis found a way of mediating between them in his personal philosophy: 'The Law of Universal Harmony was above Love and Hate because it functioned as a Need, if we of course wanted to become worthy of the Art of Life' (Theodorakis 1999, 155).

Theodorakis thus retained the humanism of the Christian faith and the principle of social justice from Marxism, while building a belief system in the ideal of Universal Harmony; with its values also focussed on love and justice, he felt it offered him absolute freedom as a goal, process and way of life (Theodorakis 1999).

However, Theodorakis made a most surprising admission at the conference of Universal Harmony:

> I should like to stress one more time something that I believe must be quite clear: this theory for the existence of the Law of Universal Harmony is entirely a *figment of my imagination*. The Law of Harmony, as perceived in the movement of stars and in other functions and phenomena of the animal and plant kingdom, was for me a prop. I accepted it to support my inner need for coordinating my spiritual and intellectual world with the harmonious process that in my imagination leads to the Universe.
>
> (Theodorakis 2006, n.p., author's italics)

Theodorakis implies that this 'figment of [his] imagination' is a conscious strategy enabling him to survive a world of disharmony; perhaps a defence mechanism that enabled him to deal with his reality. He lived in anything but a harmonious world, what with the Italian and German Occupation, the Greek Civil War and the Junta. He was an 'unfree' man in an 'unfree' country; his philosophy was designed to help free the minds of the Greeks in an environment where physical freedom did not exist. Furthermore, as his theory is 'a figment of [his] imagination', he does not expect anyone else to invest in it. It expresses his own psychic and ideological commitment to the Greek masses and to the collective good, even if it is romantic and idealistic.

4.2 Identifying the Artist and his Art

> My ideological arsenal can be summarised in three words: FREEDOM, PEACE, CULTURE.
> (Theodorakis 2005c, n.p.)

Theodorakis survived much hardship, imprisonment and torture throughout his life. However, what has kept him rooted and functioning is his self-awareness as an artist with the notion that creativity is power in the most helpless of times. Ironically, he also identifies himself as a loner in the national struggle for the modern Greek ideal.

Theodorakis believes that creativity is the best weapon to prove one's real superiority over any persecutors: 'When I was exiled, imprisoned and tortured, there was one magic flame that transformed into creation: The flame of the free individual' (Theodorakis 1999, 161). When a creator is pushed towards loneliness and forced to plunge into his depths, his creativity blossoms: 'It is as if he moulds around him a "cocoon" made up of non-material spiritual creations that protect the artist's "*chrysalis*" ' *(ibid.)*. This protective creative essence separates artists from other people; they are 'mythic' in status because they have the strength to mould the collective need for expression – not just any kind of expression but one that stands the test of time *(ibid.)*. It was therefore necessary for Theodorakis to identify himself as an artist, using music as a 'tool' (Stokes 1994, 10) to provide him with a sense of identity while at the same time offering him a sense of freedom and protection. Furthermore, as an artist, he is able to feel closer to universal harmony. In fact he has the power to express the group identity. He is in a way admitting that he has a privileged relation to the process of experiencing identity, given music's powerful role in the formation and expression of identity.

For Theodorakis, the most essential quality of art is its liberating charge: 'Art means freedom' (Theodorakis 1999, 161). He therefore places responsibility on the artist, as he believes an artist can only be fulfilled if he strives to contribute to the listener's freedom and hence his needs. For Theodorakis, assuming this position is called 'politic' [*politiki*] and is the only true politic: art is not an end in itself, but a means for the citizen [*politi*] 'to be led through freedom to complete spiritual, intellectual and ethical blossoming'; it also keeps the soul 'nourished' in the face of oppression (Theodorakis 1999, 161). Furthermore, the composer believes that when men identify with the 'spiritual achievements of their time', they are offered a dimension of immortality - the ultimate 'goal-expectation' of every living being (Theodorakis 1999, 162). Furthermore, music, the appearance of Universal Harmony, can help man discover the essence of life by uniting him with the Truth and the Law of Universal Harmony by tuning him into 'this unique reality that is Symphony of the Cosmos', even if it is only momentary (Theodorakis 1999, 162). In so doing, man honours the gift of life that was given to him,

even if briefly. Theodorakis' vision of utopia was seeing society partake in the gift of art: Music (the ideal expression of Harmony) exists above daily routine, man's existence is blessed when it is uplifted to the worlds of music (Theodorakis 1999).

Assuming this role as the artist, the 'politic', is a lonely quest for Theodorakis:

> …deliverance through art and conquering internal harmony with art's help, is a very lonely action. A selfless action… . I'm afraid that alone, one by one, we shall conquer this harmony, alone we shall die, alone we shall face the ultimate existential dilemmas and difficult struggles with which life and in particular the 'others' confront us.
>
> (Theodorakis 1999, 154)

The poetry of Palamas and the security of the composer's family helped Theodorakis deal with this aspect of his life. Palamas' notion of the 'foreigner', the 'stranger', the loner who stands out, inspired Theodorakis' visions of the cosmos and microcosmos that make up what he has termed Universal Harmony; it also helped the composer find his place in the world 'as the stranger that I was' (Theodorakis 1999, 151): 'Within the distinctive people, I am distinctive…' (Palamas quoted in Theodorakis 1999, 150). Furthermore, Palamas helped Theodorakis understand his connection to his roots as well as the need to have a motherland. His poem 'The Twelve Words of a Gypsy' (1907) spoke to Theodorakis: 'The human soul cannot exist without a motherland…' (Palamas quoted in Theodorakis 1999, 154). These writings taught 'genuine internationalism' to Theodorakis for the very first time: 'The poem broadened my soul and my mind. Suddenly in this small town I made every fatherland my fatherland, I made every country my country…' (ibid.). While Palamas' poetry provided Theodorakis with 'spiritual nourishment', his family offered him total safety, such that he never feared being alone (Theodorakis 1999). He was able to endure 'the solitude of the crowds', so often present in his life, and to continue his lonely journey undisturbed – his unstoppable quest of collecting 'newer and newer and newer sounds' (Theodorakis 1999, 155).

> I lived my life through sound. Without the noises affecting me. And this is because – as I said – I was given the gift to win my loneliness with the help of loved ones, relatives and friends, who created a wall around me, with myself very happy in the middle, accompanied by Music – the Parthenon of Sound.
>
> (Theodorakis 1999, 155)

The composer's isolation and loneliness have often led to his comparison with the demi-god Prometheus, who boldly stole fire from the Gods of Olympus and gave it to the

people, but who was ultimately doomed to the mountains of Caucasus, suffering eternal pain and loneliness (Duckworth 1967). Theodorakis easily evokes the image of this mythological figure, as a man who tried to spread the artistic and cultural flame to the masses, only to become cut off from them. His lonely quest for social harmony led to the loneliness caused by the misunderstanding of him by others: he was attacked by ideological adversaries; political sectors also marginalized him, wanting only the composer, not the thinker whose fundamental political stance was unifying, embracing all levels of society.

Mimis Androulakis (n.d.) observes that Greece pushed Theodorakis into isolation: he observes that, after the fall of the dictatorship (1974), Theodorakis was an isolated man in Greece itself; exiled not only during the dictatorship, but also in democracy, he remains in exile in his own house in contemporary Greece (Androulakis in Malandris, n.d.). Theodorakis is thus in the final analysis a tragic figure. '…his song has always been the song of the eternal Promethean man, of the man who revolts who says: "Enough! I revolt!" It is the song of the eternal guerilla' (Androulakis quoted in Malandris, n.d.). For Androulakis, the composer's song is a unique song of Dionysus, the self-destructive and rebellious little Greek God; the God of love and death. He also insists that what Wagner attempted to do with Apollo and Dionysus, Theodorakis achieved with Prometheus and Dionysus: Theodorakis wanted Prometheus, the eternal guerrilla, to sing in the language of Dionysus, the language of Love. He also wanted Dionysus, the self-destructive lover, to sing in the language of Prometheus, the warrior. 'Theodorakis succeeded in this like nobody else' (Androulakis in Malandris, n.d.). The author implies that Theodorakis wanted to be a resistance fighter using the language of love, not with the sword; music was the composer's language of love, through which he expressed resistance and freedom. Although Theodorakis hoped that people would embrace a similar stance, that is, resist with love – resist with music – he was still on a lonely quest. This quest would become the quest for fulfilment of that which Theodorakis – the artist and politic – calls the 'Greek Dream':

> It was and still remains a vision of ideas and sounds. A Greek dream with robes and verses, that helped me move forward, building, on either side of it, two parallel worlds with a common depth and foundation. The political vision and the musical universe, two elements of my personal dream, had a common route in their need to express a cosmic theory and a way of life,

> which came out of the depths of my anthropocentric and Hellenocentric conscience. And perhaps this utopian perception of life was what led me to a continuous and traumatic clash with current thinking and conditions. However, the journey was thrilling.
>
> (Theodorakis 1999, 160)

The dream became a reality in the sixties when Theodorakis saw Greece transform into a 'nation-interpreter…worthy of our ancestors and the laws of Global Harmony' (Theodorakis 1999, 160).[71] Ironically, it was the time when the composer left his country in the late fifties that brought him closer to the concept of his homeland:

> One's country is simply an idea. My country is an idea within myself. I lived in Greece, I was raised in Greece, I fought in Greece, but later, there was a gap between the ideas I had for my country Greece and what was happening around me. When I went to Paris for the first time in 1954 to study at the Paris Conservatoire, I started to discover another Greece. I think that was the true Greece. I had idealised my country in my mind. I had even discovered the popular-laik music while I was in Paris. It was there that I wrote all the songs that are now sung in Greece. The distance brought me closer.
>
> (Briechle-Jarisch & Althaus 1995, n.p.)

The decline of this 'nation-interpreter' began in the eighties, and so Theodorakis returned to the ancients for inspiration. As discussed in Chapter Three, he saw the technological revolution as a major threat to Greece and to the rest of the world - a revolution controlled by multinational monopolies in which, Theodorakis believes, the people cannot win. Theodorakis is convinced that technology has given man immeasurable powers that could free him from a great deal of labour and offer him free time; however, the opposite has occurred:

> People have never before had less free time in any other society than in the post-industrial society. And when we say free time, we mean culture. When we say lack of free time, this is barbarity.
>
> (Theodorakis in Malandris, n.d.)

In other words, the post-industrial era has affected the creation of culture; where technology should aid the promulgation of culture, the opposite has occurred as people have become trapped in a vicious circle of production and consumerism. In Theodorakis' opinion (Theodorakis 1999), they no longer have the time to dedicate themselves to the arts of philosophy, art, public affairs as did the Ancient Greeks. This view of the post-

[71] See Chapter Three.

industrial era clearly stems from Theodorakis' Marxist/socialist beliefs. It also reveals his longing to return to his 'roots', the ancients and the Hellenic ideal.

Moreover, according to the composer, consumerism also brought with it the overloading of pop-culture and 'rotten dreams', and the 'demythologising' of the nation (Theodorakis 1999). For Theodorakis, its man-made (as opposed to 'live') music only affects emotions momentarily, and therefore is simply sound, not music (Theodorakis 1999). After the creation of the Popular Art song and the cultural movement that came with it, there was a return to the 'good old times' when the Greek song served merely as entertainment, relaxation and often contributed to what Theodorakis calls the 'degrading self-destruction of the art consumer' (Theodorakis 1999, 153). This is part of his battle for culture:

> How many times have I explained – unfortunately in vain – that out of all social and class battles, the strongest, deepest and never-ending one is the cultural battle, a battle supported and fed by the international Ruling Class – in other words – the ruling classes of all capitalistic countries. They are the ones that keep for themselves every artistic creation of value, leaving to the people only the laik/folk music – typecast as light, joyful, fast selling and free of any spiritual element.
>
> (Theodorakis 2005b, n.p.)

For Theodorakis, therefore, identity is *cultural* identity, and for Greece to be 'saved' from this technological and consumerist age, she must rely on her strong roots, those of culture and civilisation.[72] The Greek cultural spirit is still present, Theodorakis affirms, as is evidenced by her two Nobel and two Lenin Prizes, and the contributions of the Greek diaspora (e.g. Constantine Cavafy). Although the Greek diaspora is far away from Greece and does not have the same spiritual power it had in the past, Hellenism still exists as 'a secret strength inside our veins' (Malandris n.d.). He explains that although monotheism has influenced the west, and crimes of humanity such as colonialism, fascism, and two world wars have been committed in the name of monotheism (colonialism, fascism, two world wars, etc.), the west is not only defined by monotheism; it is also strongly rooted in Hellenism. It has taken the best of Greece, even the words themselves:

> …They say democracy, geometry, philosophy, theatre. The positive elements of their civilization, their humanity, they have taken them from the Acropolis, from here, from Greece, from the Greek spirit. Can we accept the west's claim today that they have nothing to do with Greece? That we are not Greeks? This is a defamation. We ourselves refuse our Greek identity.
>
> (Theodorakis in Malandris II, n.d.)

[72] See Chapter Three.

Therefore in our present world one has to reveal to the ordinary man who he is (in Malandris II, n.d.), expose him to and teach him about his culture and traditions. Without this so-called exposure and teaching, one's cultural identity cannot in fact be shaped, and thus one's figurative roots are lost. Theodorakis' means of planting seeds of culture was through his music; he devoted his music and life to creating and revealing Greek identity. However, while doing so, the composer, at the same time, trusts that one has to be national to be international: in believing in oneself and one's origins, something so original is created that others will understand it even if they have a different tradition and history (Theodorakis quoted in Malandris n.d.).

Theodorakis' views reveal his disillusionment with the contemporary world, and his greatest concern is the loss of 'roots' and identity. Moreover, he is not in touch with the position of technology and its power; he has lost his sense of mission in the twentieth century, as his nationalistic ideals related to modern Greece conflict with present-day reality due to factors such as the technological revolution, globalisation, and Greece's membership of the larger European community. It has been a struggle positioning his role in modern Greece, and in the contemporary world it has become more and more difficult to discover one's national identity. In response to the opening quotation of this chapter, I asked Theodorakis if we have found our objective and ourselves today. It is difficult to disagree with his answer:

> Which nation, I wonder, has found itself today? And how can any nation find itself when the superpower determines the future of humanity based on its unprecedented power of destruction? And what can a nation plan when, faced with the dilemma of 'War or Peace', it is impossible to say 'Peace' with courage and conviction? Because only with Peace can we secure the future… .
>
> (Author's Interview 2004)

He carries on to say that nations do not have the power to oppose the superpowers because their leaders are simply 'puppets' of the superpowers, and he questions how we know who we are when the superpowers are telling us where or who we must be. He implies that there may be no place for nationalism or for a cultural identity – we are controlled by these external forces to the extent that we are not able to fully express and experience culture, hence our roots are withering. The composer himself seems to be

speaking from a space outside time and place; where once he succeeded in capturing the spirit of the nation, he can no longer do so. Once again, Theodorakis can be seen as a Promethean figure, who is struggling and suffering eternal loneliness and torture.

Theodorakis can be described as Hellenocentric because, in the process of searching for and maintaining his personal origins, he has found a way to deal with this inconstant modern reality. One may ask: Is getting to understand and know our roots a way of being in this world? Is anyone interested in the ancients today? Theodorakis' belief in the ancients remains firm, and, in his opinion, is the only constant in Greece's history. Although present-day Greece may not be developing in a specific direction, her citizens, in Theodorakis' opinion, act like the ancients with an endless love or embedded need for freedom (in Malandris n.d.). This is illustrated by the fact that, historically, Greece has never had a noble class. Furthermore, her basic national need for freedom is fundamentally the single trait that enables her to rise up against and resist foreign forces. Here, the word 'freedom' not only implies physical freedom but a personal freedom, a freedom to express and live the Greek culture and tradition (Malandris n.d.). Theodorakis explains that this is the reason he turned to tragedy, through a belief that Apollo and Dionysus are in some way alive today, transformed (in Malandris, n.d.). When he composed the opera *Kostas Karyotakis*, subtitled *The Metamorphosis of Dionysos*, he believed that Karyotakis was Dionysos; Elytis or Ritsos were Apollo, not simply poets, but a way of life. He explains that Greece in 1940 was sacrificed for freedom, because she was faithful to her traditions: a country condemned to be a slave is better off dead (in Malandris, n.d.). The frightening number of 900 000 out of seven million citizens were killed, because all of Greece resisted being in chains. This statistic is scarcely spoken of, but is an intrinsic part of Greek national identity:

> But if Greece does not realize its power, we are in the worst danger of being de-Hellenised; demythologised. We may lose our Greek identity. One way to destroy Greece is to open her borders and allow in different Islamic hordes to invade and conquer her. But they know that we may suffer in the beginning, but if there are roots, there will be a resistance and one day, Greece will rise again.
>
> (Theodorakis in Malandris, n.d.)

> The Promethean idea means progress… . It is a continuous duty to be better; an effort to make man human. …Even when Theodorakis mourns, he mourns loudly, he cries out, because he has lived the adventures of humanity. He cries against the injustice of Prometheus bound in Caucasus. He believes in the life-giving impact of fire in the world, not the destructive fire, but the creative fire, which galvanizes new figures, creates new perspectives and hopes for man. We should not forget that what Prometheus promised us is struggle and labour through the gift of fire, but at the same time he offered hope to man.
>
> (Georgousopoulos in Malandris, n.d.)

The theory of Universal Harmony has shaped and defined Theodorakis' world and, along with his Greek dream, has been the core of every action and composition. A Marxist frame of reference helped him mobilise his ideas onto a broader level. Palamas helped him deal with existential questions and questions of belonging, while the Ancients strengthened him in the modern world. However, his disaffection with the modern world, particularly the technological revolution and globalisation, stems from his romantic visions of mankind living in social harmony, in a possibly unrealistic and ideal community. Our contemporary world reveals that culture is as contaminated as anything else; the technological revolution and globalisation played their parts in shaping modern Greece. In a way, that is inconsistent with Theodorakis' view of Greekness. He thus rejects much that has constructed Greek identity in the contemporary world.

In the past two years, since the composer's eightieth birthday, there has been a slight change in his sense of loneliness and lack of acknowledgement.[73] Theodorakis was surprised and hopeful when academics from Crete decided to create a conference around him, highlighting all aspects of his work and life. The Conference of Universal Harmony also revealed the ever-growing interest in his biography and oeuvre. It proclaimed his abiding commitment to the Greek idea:

> I will never regret the fact that I have and always will believe in 'another' Greece, because it was we who tried and finally moulded such a Greece with our own hearts and minds.
>
> (Theodorakis 2005b, n.p.)

[73] Conference of Universal Harmony 2006.

Chapter Five

ZORBA TRANSFORMATIONS

> Zorba is faith in life, and the belief in the simple values of life. It is the idea of redemption through dance. It is the fusion of the intellectual and the simple human being who finds solutions through artistic expression and love for life. That is why Zorba is synonymous with Greece.
>
> Zorba is a hymn to culture, to dance, to love, to wine, to the simple things that technology is overshadowing. This is precisely the reason why it [the philosophy of Zorba] has such a great influence over those countries which are in danger of losing their souls by being in the web of the cables of technology and the internet.
>
> Mikis Theodorakis on the philosophy of Zorba
> (Logothetis 2004, 196)[74]

> …while music may be **shaped** by the people who first make and use it, as experience it has a life of its own.
>
> (Frith 1996, 109)

Zorba is Greek and Greek is Zorba! Whether referring to the music, the dance, the character, the book or the film, there is no escaping this strong identification. I recently watched a Hebrew advertisement for Feta cheese that was circulating the internet, and the narrative was accompanied by none other than 'Zorba's Dance'. Predictably, a new radio commercial for a Greek restaurant also sounded out the familiar sounds of the bouzouki. There is no doubt that Theodorakis' popular music has become a universal symbol of 'Greekness'. And yet, only fifty years ago, the very instrument at its core, the bouzouki, was not even considered a national instrument. How has it come to represent the Greek culture and image? The answer has to lie in 'Zorba'.

[74] Translated from the original Greek text.

5.1 Zorba's Beginnings

It all began with *Zorba the Greek*, the film for which 'Zorba's Dance' was composed, and which is responsible for the music's initial reception and success. Directed by Michael Cacoyannis and based on the novel by Nikos Kazantzakis, the film *Zorba the Greek* was released in 1964. It received four academy award nominations: Anthony Quinn was nominated for best actor in a leading role, and director Cacoyannis received three nominations for Best Picture, Best Director and Best Writing, and Best Screenplay Based on Material from Another Medium. The film also won three Academy Awards for Best Supporting Actress (Lila Kedrova), Best Art Direction and Best Cinematography, all significant in the success and exposure of the film as well as the music. It starred the unforgettable Anthony Quinn as well as Alan Bates, Lila Kedrova and Irene Papas. The story is set in Crete, where an English author (played by Bates) arrives hoping to complete a biography on Buddha while seeking to re-examine his values. He befriends the flamboyant Greek, Zorba, who teaches him to celebrate life, and who is 'determine[d] to educate Bates in the ways of the world or, to be more precise, Zorba's world' (http://http://en.mikis-theodorakis.net/article/articleprint/370/-1/50/). During his stay on the island, Bates meets a widow (played by Papas) who is desired by every man in the village, but who dies tragically by the hands of the locals who accuse her of adultery. The author also observes Zorba's 'romance' with Madame Hortense, played by Kedrova. After they have both suffered the vicissitudes of love, Zorba convinces the author that 'failure is an inescapable part of life, and that only by constantly tasting defeat can one truly enjoy life's victories' (http://http://en.mikis-theodorakis.net/article/articleprint/370/-1/50/). When a project, brainstormed by Zorba and agreed upon by the Englishman, to transport logs from the mountain tops to the shore via a sluice, collapses completely, and all finances are depleted, the author asks Zorba to teach him to dance – right there and then on the beach. This is where Theodorakis' famous piece of music, 'Zorba's Dance', is heard and the two men dance together in a powerful expression of emotion and solidarity.

The novel, *Alexi Zorba*, from which the film was created, was written in 1946 (Nault *et al.* 1990). It provides an archetype of a modern as opposed to ancient Greek, one with which modern Greeks can identify. The novel has also offers a new modern philosophy of life:

> The novel can be perceived as a vaccine against metaphysical thinking and it describes the contrast introduced by Friedrich Nietzsche between the Apollonian and the Dionysian outlook on life. Apollo/the narrator represents the spirit of order and rationality, while Dionysus/Zorba represents the spirit of ecstatic, spontaneous will to live. It could be argued that the narrator [author] does not make much of a struggle against the Dionysian spirit, however, the book is a tribute to life in this world, as was the philosophy of Nietzsche. At the same time the book is a warning about not wasting your time reading books about life when you could be living it for yourself.
>
> (http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Zorba_the_Greek%28novel%29)

The film therefore is also highly symbolic in its content. During the course of the story, Basil, the author, is exposed to a new world, that of Zorba, who offers him pearls of wisdom and lessons of life that you would expect an educated author to give an uneducated peasant instead of the other way round. Adding to the notion that Zorba depicts the Dionysian spirit and Basil the Apollonian, Zorba can be viewed as a symbol of Greece while the author represents the outside world. In this light, the final scene symbolises the merging of these two worlds. When the author, Basil, learns to dance, he enters the world of Zorba, learning that it is acceptable to express emotion and to be physical. Zorba himself has been influenced by his new friend: 'I've never loved a man like I love you'.[75] Thus the music can be seen as an invitation, a portal through which anyone can have a taste of the Greek experience. All they have to say is: 'Zorba, teach me to dance, will you?'[76] This equates the Greek spirit with the Dionysian, further suggesting that experiencing this music offers the opportunity to sample the Dionysian life-force or essence.

> Basil's simple request testifies to a major expansion of his attitude … . Dionysus was impetuous and passionate, unreflective and irrational; his passions were expressed in the strong emotional arts such as music and dance … . Rational and reflective, passive and restrained, the Apollonian world view is expressed in literature and sculpture, in the contemplative arts rather than the active ones. Apollo checked the emotions, Dionysus offered them free reign. Although possessing opposite orientations in the world, Zorba and Basil are for a brief time coupled in harmony. Thus, when Zorba's sluice collapses, Basil opts for the Dionysian remedy of dance. He, too, has a choice

[75] Said by Zorba in the film *Zorba the Greek* (1964).
[76] Said by Basil/the author in the film *Zorba the Greek* (1964).

> of acting either rationally or emotionally. For the ancient Greeks, as well as for the modern Kazantzakis, this temporary union marks a rare peak of human experience, the material from which myths are made.
>
> (http://alanbates.com/abarchive/film/zorba.html, n.p.)

To Kazantzakis, Cacoyannis and Theodorakis, Zorba's character represented the 'ideal man – the primitive, sensual, free individualist – the Greek male' (Giannaris 1973, 141). These are characteristics that appeal to many who love the film and character. Theodorakis explains this identification:

> I don't know why, but almost everybody identifies with [Zorba], or rather would like to do so. He has a certain charm, has a lot to offer, while at the same time he is an objective observer. He is the person we are all searching for nowadays. If everybody were like that, we would have a different society. Zorba is very much the common man, personifying to a certain extent the people. He does not want to elevate himself above others and he loves everybody, the widow, Hortense, the Englishman; up to a point he is not even interested in himself.
>
> Such unpretentious people are hard to find nowadays. For he does not play the role of the saviour, not at all, but he can nonetheless convince, aiming instinctively for the essence of things. And when the widow is murdered, when Hortense dies, when the construction project fails, when therefore a complete tragedy has taken place, he has the strength to face up to life, to march on and take life as it is. This is perhaps the reason why people are so fascinated by this figure.
>
> (Theodorakis 1996, n.p.)

According to Giannaris, *Zorba the Greek* was 'the film in which Mikis' music achieved its most triumphant expression…for here, at last, was a theme close to the composer's heart… . Mikis was able to plot and explore his talent and bring to the score all his convictions concerning the vitality of the Greek musical tradition' (Giannaris 1972, 141).

In terms of film scores, this was not the composer's most 'mature' work; he wrote music for many other films that had a strong political message, and were intended to be seen by a wider audience (e.g. The film *Z*). Writing for this relatively new art form which did not undergo much government control, allowed him to spread his music at a time when his other 'political' music was banned. Film was also a link to the world outside Greece. Nonetheless, the score of *Zorba the Greek* was not intended to be 'socio-political' in the way that many of the composer's Popular Art Songs were. What has in fact occurred is that Theodorakis' Popular Art songs represent 'Greece' to the Greek people, while 'Zorba's Dance' symbolises 'Greece' to the world outside of its borders.

5.2 Perceptions of 'Zorba'

When first tackling the subject of 'Zorba's Dance', I decided to canvas a range of opinions via an informal experiment: I sent an e-mail to the recipients of my entire address book, urging them to forward the message to anyone they wished; I requested that they write their first impressions and thoughts – be it one word or one paragraph – on hearing the word 'Zorba'. I added a post-script asking them to also write their first responses on hearing the word 'Theodorakis'.

I received forty-five responses in all, and the respondents included Greeks living in Greece, Greeks of the diaspora, and non-Greeks. The answers were enlightening: Four people wrote comments that had nothing to do with the subject; for example, one recipient wrote that 'Zorba' reminded her of a Turkish soup ('corba'), while another wrote: 'Africa – zulu – animal – chanting – aliens – vanishing – space – planets.' They were non-Greeks between the ages of twenty-two and thirty. At least fifteen people, one third of the group, consisting of non-Greeks and Greeks of the diaspora, had heard of 'Zorba' (be it the dance, character or film) but they did not have any knowledge of who Theodorakis was. (Their ages ranged between eighteen and sixty.) Of the nineteen recipients who knew Theodorakis, three mentioned politics (two said 'junta', and one – 'revolutionary') and one mentioned 'communist' in response to his name. Ten people mentioned 'Anthony Quinn'. Two respondents mixed up Theodorakis with the composer Manos Hadjidakis (to the name 'Theodorakis' one person responded 'Never on a Sunday', a composition of Hadjidakis, and the other talked about the influence of the works of '*Manos* Theodorakis'). Eight people (about one sixth) associated Theodorakis specifically with music, four associated him with Greece, and four associated him with both Greece and her music.

Although this is not a properly designed statistical survey, I found it interesting that one third of the respondents, ranging from ages between eighteen to sixty, had heard of Zorba (this group consisted of non-Greeks and Greeks of the diaspora - no Greeks living in Greece), but were not familiar at all with its composer. Some responded rather

passionately about the Greek dance and how it represents a zest for life, the breaking of plates, or, in their words, a Greek village or holiday; but, although this music was, for them, symbolic of Greece, they were nevertheless unfamiliar with its composer.

I have found that the symbolic representation in the music has become as culturally emblematic as that of the near mythological character of Zorba; and the two are inextricably linked. It is difficult to separate out the identities of Anthony Quinn, Alexis Zorba, Nikos Kazantzakis, and Mikis Theodorakis; their images and meanings permeate one another. In the case of Anthony Quinn, an American actor who has taken on many roles, his visual identification with the character of Zorba is so strong that many cinema-goers seem to have transplanted his Greek 'identity' onto his more general film and personal life.[77] Furthermore, Anthony Quinn himself identified strongly with the character Zorba: In a Larry King interview just before he died, Quinn said that he did not know where Anthony began and Zorba ended. Even for those who have only heard the music and are neither familiar with the film nor the composer, 'Zorba's Dance' is irradicably associated with the Greek spirit (as it is imagined globally), that same spirit that was so vividly represented in the passionate character of Zorba in the film. However, the film was the ground from which the seed of 'Zorba's Dance' grew into an international signifier of 'Greekness'. As Giannaris (1973, 141) puts it:

> The liberating power of the bouzouki music and Zorba's dance at the close of the film, the *syrtaki*, became the property of the whole world. Millions who had not seen a Greek dance before acquired at least a visual image of 'Greekness'.
>
> (Giannaris 1973, 141)

5.3.1 Zorba's Dance – the Music

Did you say…dance?[78]

'Zorba's Dance' is brilliant in its simplicity. One of the main characteristics is its speeding up from a slow to a fast *hasapiko* (4/4), followed by a fast *hasaposerviko*

[77] In his subsequent films, Anthony Quinn was even referred to as 'Zorba the pope' or 'Zorba the politician' (http://alanbates.com/abarchive/film/zorba.html n.p.).
[78] Quoted from the film *Zorba the Greek.*

(4/4).[79] Its harmonic structure is simple and based on three chords: ii, V7 and I. The main melodic motif played in the bouzouki contains a rising semitone to the dominant note, the two famous notes. The tension is then released when the music breaks out into a fast *hasaposerviko* or, as Theodorakis would have it, a fast *syrtos*. However, the main 'Greek' feature, that which gives it its character, is its instrument, the *bouzouki*: it defines 'Zorba's Dance', and some believe that this particular piece of music defines the instrument.

Martin Stokes (1994) in his *Ethnicity, Identity and Music* gives a compelling theoretical account of how a piece of music can come to stand for or even form the notion of an identity, in this case an 'exotic' identity to an international audience. He notes that music is a powerful tool which can preform a knowledge of other places through experience (Stokes 1994). This means that the experience of listening to bouzouki music along with watching the narrative (Zorba and the author – Anthony Quinn and Alan Bates – dancing on a Cretan beach) preforms a knowledge of what Greek music sounds like. Furthermore, it constructs a perception of Greek dance music, a Greek dance, a Greek location as well as a Greek man. This perception therefore defines 'Greekness' and controls any other problematic 'others' (Stokes 1994, 19). In other words, new images or music must fit into this preformed knowledge of what is 'Greek'.

Importantly, the music and images representing Zorba offer preformed notions of what it is to be a *modern* Greek, much as the more recent box-office hit 'My Big Fat Greek Wedding'[80] suggests a stereotype of what Greek families living abroad are like. The character of Zorba also preforms our notions of a Greek man: Zorba is someone who expresses emotions, from sadness to joy, physically through dance. The consequence of this process is that these very popular sounds and images remain rooted deeply in 'collective historical myths' (Stokes 1994, 5). This is illustrated by the various responses I received in my survey to the word 'Zorba'.

[79] These dances will be discussed in more detail in the following section.
[80] *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*, released in 2002, directed by Joel Swick.

The last scene of *Zorba the Greek* not only gave the world a visual image of a Greek dance, but also a visual representation of the music itself. The infectious, slightly asymmetrical physical movements are underlined in the contours of the melody, the accumulative dynamics and accelerating rhythms and tempo. Dance, music and character are fused into what has become the public recognition of Greekness. The strong identity of the music and its sense of atmosphere conjure up a plethora of images; the sturdiest among them without a doubt being the celluloid image of Anthony Quinn as Zorba the Greek dancing barefoot and solitary on a Cretan beach:

> That Zorba is dancing out his sorrow, not his joy, is a detail often forgotten, and it is the simpler fantasy of Zorba as embodiment of earthy appetites and unencumbered joie de vivre that is enlisted to sell everything from "Opa!" restaurants to package holidays in Greece. The erasure of complexity in Zorba's dance in favor of a more immediately comprehensible story is hugely telling…
>
> (Cowan 1990, xii)

Zorba's dance represents a space – geographical, social and cultural – that defines the general understanding of 'Greekness'. Although the separate symbols that appear in the scene (i.e. music, dance, characters) have a strongly cumulative effect, the music itself contains these retrospectively. In Martin Stokes' words, the actual musical event 'evokes and organises collective memories and present experiences of place with an intensity, power and simplicity unmatched by any other social activity' (Stokes 1994, 3). Of course, dancing to the music and living it in this form intensifies its experience further.

Dance provides a powerful performance space where meanings are generated, negotiated and manipulated (Stokes 1994). This can be observed in the life of the dance itself. Today, *Zorbas*, the particular Greek dance danced to the music of 'Zorba's Dance', has been taken up as an authentic Greek dance, and is reproduced in many social events. It is, in fact, not 'authentic': The *Syrtaki* or *Zorba* was created for the film *Zorba the Greek*, and is a combination of slow and fast versions of a dance called *hasapiko* (characterised by two dancers standing beside one another with hands on shoulders), as well as a *hasaposerviko* – an open-circle dance using a basic pattern of six steps (Cowan 1990).[81] The word *syrtaki* is derived from a group of Greek dances called *syrtos*, which means

[81] The slow version of the *hasapiko* employs a 4/4 beat division, while the fast version of the same dance employs 2/4 (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hasapiko). The *hasaposerviko* is in 2/4.

'dragging' or 'shuffling' (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sirtaki). *Syrtaki* is the diminutive of the word *syrtos*, i.e. 'small *syrtos*'. This new combination of dances making up the *syrtaki* or *Zorbas* is therefore a 'modern' dance that has been embraced and accepted as part of Greece's cultural heritage. It has in fact become a modern and 'authentic' expression of 'Greekness' in the way that the bouzouki is considered an 'authentic' Greek instrument today.[82] A characteristic that sets this Greek dance apart from other traditional dances is its speeding up of the dance. Most Greek dances remain in one tempo and rhythm. 'Zorba's Dance', however, starts slow, speeds up, and breaks into a second fast dance, creating an expectancy and anticipation in the listener.

By listening to or dancing to *Zorbas*, a particular ethnicity (Greek) and web of identities are constructed (Stokes 1994). As Cowan observes, Zorba has not only come to represent 'Greekness' but has 'mobilised' Greece by acting as a marketing tool. Advertisements, holiday brochures and restaurants often use 'Zorba's Dance' and image to attract consumers or foreigners in much the same way that the pyramids and belly-dancing attract one to Egypt. Embracing one's identity and ethnicity can be seen as a positive step in promoting one's country and this (marketing) 'act' further reinforces Greek identity.

5.3.2 Beyond Words

Text or poetry has always both informed as well as structured Theodorakis' works. Although he succeeded in communicating with the majority of the Greek public, the Greek language (as with many 'national' musics) was a barrier between Greece and the outside world. Although his songs have been translated and sung all over Europe, non-Greek-speakers cannot understand or fully experience the music if the text is not translated. In composing for film, it is the narrative that gives music its structure. This applies universally; actually it is a two-way situation: music can be used to give a film structure.

> ..music inflects scenes with emotional and dramatic resonance, suggests character, setting, and mood, influences perceptions of narrative, time and space, creates formal unity and a sense of

[82] See Chapter Two for how this has come about.

> continuity, interacts with human speech and other sounds, and compensates for the loss of 'liveliness' and spatial depth that characterize the cinema's elder sibling, the theatre.
>
> (Gorbman 1998, 44)

In the final scene of *Zorba the Greek*, the music is instrumental and the dance purely visual and kinetic. In this instant, music becomes part of the narrative while providing the underpinning emotional meaning. Without words or language, a major barrier immediately vanishes; the music communicates to the audience together with the visual images, images that are comprehended through the scene and story. The music, performed out of its original context, nevertheless brings with it a range of associations and 'collective historical myths' (Stokes 1994, 5). By taking the music out of its context and relying on these associations, the music transcends all barriers of language, while dancing to it enhances the experience and 'contact' with music: it enters a physical, kinetic dimension as it is internalised through movement.

5.4.1 Zorba Transformations

The music of 'Zorba' had a long journey before its appearance on film. Theodorakis was mainly inspired by Cretan dance, particularly *Chaniotikos Syrtos*, and wrote the 'Chaniotikos Syrtos' for piano and orchestra, transcribed it for piano and percussion and for other ensembles, and eventually for the bouzouki. Themes of the *syrtos* were played in the film *Dream Neighbourhood* (1961). Theodorakis calls these different appearances of this music 'transformations of Dionysios'. 'The *syrtos* finds its culmination in art music in the First Suite for piano and orchestra, completed in Paris in 1955. In "popular art music", the first opportunity was in Michael Cacoyannis' film *Zorba the Greek*' (Theodorakis n.d., 16). The *syrtos* formed the second, fast part of 'Zorba's dance', where the *hasaposerviko* is danced.

Theodorakis wrote the popular song 'Make your bed for two' with words by Iakovvos Kambanellis for the film *The Neighbourhood of Angels*. This was then known as 'The Cretan Dance', and used the famous two-note motif that is now Zorba's theme (Theodorakis n.d., 18). This 'Cretan Dance' forms the first section of 'Zorba's Dance' that starts off slowly before it speeds up, and breaks out into the *hasaposerviko* (or, as

Theodorakis calls it, the 'Chaniotikos Syrtos'). The combination of the *Chasapiko* dance with the *syrtos* was thus transformed into a new dance that took Zorba to the four corners of the earth (Theodorakis n.d. 19):

> '…if you examine it carefully, you will see that it is simple, so that it could be seen as popular music, as Cretan music. Perhaps Theodorakis, a Cretan himself, did nothing more than draw on the collective musical memory of his ancestors, perhaps of the great lyre player, Theodoromanolis (1820), the Theodorakis clan leader. How else to explain the immediacy that inspires people from such vastly different cultures to get up and dance to that Cretan dance, the now famous 'syrtaki'. More than 30 million recordings have been sold, hundreds of imitations made, and hundreds of arrangements. Even the techno dance originated in 'Zorba's Dance'.
>
> (Andreas Brandes n.d., 14)

The composer's roots are very pronounced in the material within 'Zorba's Dance'. Kazantzakis himself is from Crete, and the plot takes place on the island of Crete. Theodorakis believes that the music and story were born out of the history of Crete, and therefore the music existed long before the story of Alexi Zorba:

> I think that I existed before Alexi Zorba, I existed before this Alexis Zorbas. For this reason, all this music existed before the film. I did not write it for the film. The music I wrote existed a long time before. The film and the book simply completed it. Why? Because I am from Crete. Everything is born out of the climate and from the history of Crete. From the moment anyone steps on Cretan land, he feels free! There is a different morale. How do I say it? There is a different set of values. You are free.
>
> (Theodorakis quoted in Briechle-Jarisch & Althaus 1995, n.p.)

5.4.2 Zorba Dance Remix

'Zorba's Dance' has not been limited to its 'Greek' context; it has also made its mark on the international dance scene as a dance remix by Dj O. This version is virtually identical to the original with an added disco beat. In this form, one does not have to dance to it in 'Greek style'. However, the ethnic Greek meanings are still mobilised. One of my own experiences illustrated this: I recently went to an Italian function for young adults, and as soon as this remix was played, all the people on the dance floor grabbed each other by the shoulder and proceeded to dance their own version of a *Zorba* circle-dance. 'Zorba's Dance' remains Greek in the public imagination; even in its transformation into a disco hit, associations and meanings have remained.

5.4.3 Reflections of 'Theodorakis' in his *Zorba Ballet Suite*

In 1988, Theodorakis completed his *Zorba Ballet Suite*, which was commissioned by the Arena of Verona. He considers it his 'most representative work' because it unites the three musical influences that have shaped him as a composer, namely 'the European, the Greek and the Cretan' (Theodorakis 1996, n.p.). While his 'European' persona stems from his musical education and the symphonic composer within him, the Cretan music is the music of his father and forefathers, and the music of his childhood. Theodorakis spent two years of his childhood in Crete, and the material of the Cretan folk music to which he was exposed was to provide the material for *Zorba the Greek* and would be further incorporated into his Ballet Suite. Theodorakis believes that it is only in this work that all these influences are united:

> But it was not until the Zorba Ballet (1988) that I attempted to unite these different influences… [in] my 'most representative work.' I tried to grasp these elements not as a contradiction but rather as a unity, just as I bear them within myself; I am simultaneously a Cretan, a Greek and a European.
>
> (Theodorakis 1996, n.p.)

The ballet suite and film music share two vital elements: 'three or four musical motifs and the characteristic personality of Zorba' (Theodorakis 1996, n.p.). The musical material of the ballet suite incorporates in its entirety an earlier work entitled *Greek Carnival Ballet Suite* (1948-49), as well as music from the film and some older popular songs. At the time Theodorakis composed the *Carnival Ballet Suite*, he aimed to create a type of 'symphonic folk music'; however, he felt that he had reached a dead end with this genre. He only resumed his pursuit of this goal in the 1980s. The *Zorba Ballet Suite* not only incorporates music from Theodorakis' past musical life, but it incorporates different texts and lyrics by various artists such as Michael Cacoyannis, Odysseus Elytis, Nikos Gatsos, Iakovvos Kambanellis, Yannis Ritsos, Errikos Thalassinos and the composer himself. Thus, the ballet has a vocal element, realised through a choir and a soprano soloist. In addition to the symphonic orchestra, there are also two bouzouki players. It is thus easy to understand why Theodorakis considers this his most 'representative' work - it not only reflects him musically (the 'European', Greek and Cretan), but also his multiple poetic influences.

When discussing the texts and instrumentation of the *Zorba Ballet Suite*, it is easy to forget that it is a ballet. The narrative is expressed physically on stage concentrating on the character of Zorba, the man who expresses his emotions through dance.

The first time I heard the *Zorba Ballet Suite*, I wondered how 'Zorba's Dance' would be performed; throughout most of the ballet, the *bouzouki* did not seem to feature or I simply could not hear it on the recording. It finally appeared in the third last piece of the ballet called *Hasapiko Dance*, sounding out the famous introduction of 'Zorba's Dance'. I found out later, after examining the score, that the *bouzouki* only performs at this point. My anxiety stemmed from the fact that I could not imagine how the character of the dance could be expressed without the *bouzouki*. Finally hearing it, I realised once again how much the instrument defined the dance, even though the orchestra and the powerful brass section contributed significantly to its expressive content. It is as if the dance was amplified in all of its emotion and greatness, as if to say to the western European world, 'I am present!'.

> …the ballet closes with the Cretan dance dominated by the bouzouki, almost as a form of revenge for Greek popular music, and it now lives on in opera houses in Rome, Warsaw, Sola, Cairo, Budapest and Athens.
>
> (Andreas Brandes n.d., 15)

In addition to the symphonic orchestration, the material and therefore the form of the dance are expanded; the original material is fleshed out in an ingenious unified manner giving the piece more contrast and movement. The entire 'Zorba's Dance' section expands to about eight and a half minutes. I imagine that the new material gives the dancers more freedom to play with 'Zorba's Dance', that is, the actual Greek dance; it also gives the music more grounding and substance as a symphonic work. Although there is always a return to the famous two-note motif of the original 'Zorba's Dance', it is finally completed in its original form, ending with the fast circle-dance, the *hasaposerviko*. It concludes the ballet (as it does the film), using all orchestral forces – choir, orchestra and bouzoukis. It is powerful and effective while still maintaining its 'Greekness'.

'Zorba's dance' in the context of the ballet suite is not simply an orchestrated version of the original film music – it is a symphonic dance that stands on its own. It can also be seen as all-encompassing expression of Theodorakis' identity: While the symphonic orchestra and bouzouki sound out the famous themes of 'Zorba's Dance', the choir sings the following words:

> At the celebrations of Dionysos
> You had your people with you
> Greetings Crete, Mother Earth
> Mother of Dionysos,
> Zorbas, Brother of Dionysos
>
> (Theodorakis 1999b, 294-296)[83]

The music is – all at once – 'Zorba's Dance', Theodorakis the western art composer, the *laik* composer, the Cretan; while the words acknowledge the ancient: Dionysos. The choir also represents the ancient Greek chorus, the mouthpiece of the state. All these elements completely reflect Theodorakis in music, philosophy, and harmony.

This ballet is another medium for Zorba to travel the world. The music's spirit has entered concert halls and international stages throughout the world. It seems to have surpassed the performances of Theodorakis' previously most performed work, *Canto General*. As a ballet, it also has appeal as it transcends language barriers, even though the choir sings in Greek; the words are always translated in programme notes for the audience to 'follow' the plot, if need be. However, like opera, ballet is an international genre.

What better way to redefine Theodorakis himself than by taking the music by which people identify him, and transforming it to incorporate all the aspects that he believes reflect him as a composer? Perhaps through this ballet suite, Theodorakis himself will once again, in time, be redefined, not only as the man who composed the film music of *Zorba the Greek*, but also as a composer of ballets, 'Zorba's Ballet', an all-encompassing symphonic, choral, folk and stage composition. As Theodorakis views it, it is yet another 'transformation of Dionysos' (Theodorakis n.p., 18).

[83] Translated from Greek by A. Mouyis.

5.4.4 Mikis the … *Zorba*?

> UNESCO awarded its International Music Prize 2005 to 'Zorba the Greek' composer Mikis Theodorakis for his contributions to understanding between cultures and the advancement of peace.
>
> (http://www.breitbart.com/news/2005/11/04/051104190858.q6qvubgo.html)

The above announcement of Theodorakis' UNESCO award reveals his everlasting identification with the film music of *Zorba the Greek*. In an electronic interview, I asked him if he ever felt confined by the 'sound' of Zorba. The following is his response:

> Not at all. If my music is a small sea, 'Zorba' is one of its many waves. The label 'Zorba' is of course limiting. But what can I do… ? Everything is a matter of time. When there's a true creation, in the end nothing can stop it from becoming known. In any case "Zorba" (Ballet Suite) becomes a mythical figure after the release of the CD of DECCA (Charles Dutoit, Philharmonic Choir and Montreal Orchestra, London Philharmonia), where even the symphonist is revealed under the name that for international MME means "syrtaki"…
>
> (Author's Interview 2004)

> Even today, almost half a century after the music was first heard in the film… people all over the world feel that they are hearing Greece when they hear those first two notes.
>
> (Georgios Malouchos quoted in Moody, n.d., n.p.)

'Zorba's dance' has lived an adventurous life, in different shapes and forms of 'Greekness'. When I hear the first sounds of the dance, all I want to do is move my body – I want to synchronise my steps to those played by the *bouzouki*, perhaps in an effort to synchronise myself directly with my sense of 'Greekness'. Experiencing the music and dancing to it is an articulation of a particular identity through sound and space, a short time span when nobody can doubt that I belong to this collective kinetic emblematic of the Greek lust for life. All I can do is be thankful to Kazantzakis for awaking Zorba's spirit, and to Mikis Theodorakis, for articulating this spirit with his unforgettable music.

CONCLUSION

I

There is yet one more manifestation of 'Zorba's Dance' that has added a new dimension to its expression of Greekness: its use in the Athens Olympic Games in 2004. As outlined in the introduction to this report, 'Zorba's dance' in particular functions in a way that connects Greek people with their ethnicity. As Martin Stokes observes, music and dance can encourage people to feel that they are in touch with an essential part of themselves (Stokes 1994) as well as part of a broader community who share values in their expression of body and music. There is no doubt that Theodorakis's music created this particular effect at the Olympic Games.

The 2004 Olympic Games in Athens was a major achievement for Greece; it was an opportunity to prove that Athens was a modern European city, capable of organising such a significant event. It was also an opportunity to express a new Greek identity. Of course, the ancients were a major presence in this celebration as they still define an important part of Greek identity. The opening ceremony of the Games portrayed a journey through history from ancient to modern times. What moved me most as a spectator was a drumming section depicting the origins of ancient Greece; later at least fifty *bouzoukis* on stage sounded out what we have come to recognise as modern Greek identity. The music played was mostly that of Mikis Theodorakis and Manos Hadjidakis.

In the context of the Olympic Games, 'Zorba's Dance' was 'reinvented' as more than just a Greek dance; it was acknowledged as the internationally recognised symbol of 'Greekness'. As I have recounted in the introduction, this dance was constantly heard at sporting events, stirring the crowds and perhaps motivating athletes. In my informal survey on responses to 'Zorba', a few respondents mentioned the Olympic Games, suggesting that it has acquired a new layer of meaning, associations and memories for different people involving and representing almost every country around the world. Each

country shows off its own flag, music and symbols. In a way, 'Zorba's dance' functioned as an unofficial national anthem for Greece, emblematic of a Greek national identity. Hence the Olympic Games added to a preformed knowledge and understanding of the music.

II

At the 'Conference of Universal Harmony in Honour of Mikis Theodorakis', which took place in Heraklion, Crete in March 2006, the composer was reflected in a new light. In addition to academic research, Theodorakis the 'classical' musician was presented in a concert of his music, celebrating the end of the event. The following chamber pieces (in a 'serious' western art music style) were performed: a string quartet called *The Cemetery* (1946); *Helikon* (1952) for piano and string quartet; *The Most Lyrical* (1996) for voice, piano and string quartet; *Beatrice in Zero Street* (1987) for voice and string quartet and *Sextet* (1947) for piano, flute and string quartet.[84] Sitting in the audience, I observed that people's responses to this music indicated that they were probably more familiar and comfortable with the popular rather than the 'art' composer. Their whispered conversations with fellow spectators revealed that this was music that they did not know and were not expecting. Perhaps they were hoping for the one familiar song, the familiar tune that embodied this man for them. Some even seemed a little confused, not really understanding what they were hearing, as if they were experiencing some kind of culture shock. Nevertheless, Theodorakis, the cultural symbol, was applauded warmly by the people crammed into the overflowing conference-turned-music-hall; they had come even if only to catch a glimpse of this legend.

This performance reflected Theodorakis as a composer of 'serious' music, rather than a popular/laik composer as he is more generally known. Honouring his art music in this

[84] *The Cemetery* (1946) was composed for Argyri Kounadi and was originally written for choir and string orchestra; the composer tries to give music meaning from the first four lines of the poem 'Crazy Mother' by Solomos. *Helikon* (1952) was originally written for piano and orchestra and was reorchestrated for piano and string quartet. *The Most Lyrical* (1996) is based on poems of Theodorakis' brother Yannis Theodorakis *Tis Nyhtas to Oneiro* [The Night's Dream] and *Afto to Kalokairi* [This summer]). The poetry of Dionysi Karatza provides the material of *Beatrice in Zero Street* (1987), of which Theodorakis wrote four songs.

international forum of course projected Theodorakis' identity in a new fashion and invited the audience present to add this to their existing perceptions. As Frith remarks, one can only make sense of a musical/aesthetic experience by 'taking on both a subjective and a collective identity' (Frith 1996,109). Theodorakis was presented in a new light because the aesthetic ranged beyond the popular/familiar territory associated with the composer. As music is a 'key to identity' that offers 'a sense of both self and others, of the subjective in the collective,' the composer himself had to be reimagined by the audience (Frith 1996, 109). Theodorakis himself is mobilising his popular identity into a new domain, an identity which the audience experiences through this new expanded aesthetic which affirms the contemporary belief that music is understood as an experience, a 'self-in-process' (Frith 1996, 109).

III

My exploration of Theodorakis' musical, political and philosophical ideas has revealed him to be a deep and complex character. When I decided to explore his music and identity, I thought I would be researching the life of a Greek musician. However, I discovered so much more. I found a resistance fighter, a poet, a writer, a philosopher, a thinker, a Promethean figure and a true romantic – a 'Homo Universalis'. I also uncovered the complex faces of modern Greece, and in the process, I explored my own roots and what they mean to me.

It is difficult not to be in awe of this composer who is not only prolific in his compositions, but in his ideas and dreams. At a particular moment in time, Theodorakis reimagined and expressed Greek identity through his music, particularly through Popular Art, and made it possible for the ordinary Greek citizen to know himself within a group. He unified all Greeks culturally and gave them a way of being in the world and making sense of it (Frith 1996). He further reimagined Greece with his metasymphonic music, culminating in the all-encompassing *Axion Esti*. Motivated by his disillusionment with the technological age, in the eighties Theodorakis turned towards the ancients, writing Lyric Tragedies, while Greece moved forward with all that comes with modernity,

including popular culture. The symbol of Theodorakis, the art composer 'who writes symphonies and operas' and reveals his ancient origins, was not, at least on the surface, as linked to the political and social context, the context to which he had been so tightly bound in the sixties and seventies. Hence this 'symphonic' side has remained virtually unknown in Greece and not been significantly celebrated or identified. But, in his romantic notion of the artist as the articulator of spirit and vital creativity, Theodorakis held strongly to his theory of Universal Harmony, amplifying and contextualising it with the radically democratic idealism of Marxism. His philosophy became a feature of his identity.

Despite the fact that Theodorakis' own personal identity has not been fully understood or recognized, he firmly believes that knowing and understanding one's origins, and keeping the cultural spirit alive, will protect Greece from losing her collective identity. He will always be at the forefront of promoting Hellenism both as an eternal symbol for peace, freedom and culture, and the crucial rootedness of the Greek nation.

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