



Contemporary Greece

History, Arts and Letters
MUSIC I

Prof. Vassiliki Koutsobina
vkoutsobina@ill.uoa.gr



Classical concepts with a lasting impact on western music

- the concept of *ethos* (Plato ca. 428-347 BCE in *Republic* and *Timaeus*)
- the connection between music and numbers—Pythagoras
- the idea of a universal music, that is, music of the cosmos or the spheres
- words (poetry)-music-rhythm are inseparable
- the theory of ancient Greek music. Some major theorists include:
 - **Pythagoras** (6th c. BCE, Sicily, preserved through later writers)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gYtSI4-ShLU>
 - **Aristoxenos** (4th c. BCE)
 - **Pseudo-Euclid, *Sectio canonis*** (ca. 350-275 BCE)
 - Musical intervals expressed in ratios: 2:1 (octave), 3:2 (fifth), 4:3 (fourth), 9:8 (tone)
 - **Cleonides** (2nd c. CE)
 - **Ptolemy** (2nd c. CE)
 - **Quintilian** (3rd c. CE)



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9RjBePQV4xE>

COLDPLAY

MUSIC OF THE SPHERES



Medieval writers transmitting ancient Greek music theory (AGMT) to the West

- **Boethius**, 6th century CE—most important source to transmit AGMT to the West. He proposes 3 types of music:
 - Musica mundana
 - Musica humana
 - Musica instrumentalis
- Music is part of the *quadrivium* (fields of knowledge) of mathematical arts: arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, music
- Later Christian writers even retained the Greek terminology: named the scales with names such as Dorian, Phrygian, Lydian, etc.

† Consul & eximie seruator philosophys. Vt uideat uoc

BOETIVS



Iudicio ante forum peccatorum indice rerum.



$$\frac{1}{2} \frac{3}{2}$$

$$\frac{3}{2} \frac{1}{2}$$

$$\frac{1}{2} \frac{3}{2}$$

$$\frac{3}{2} \frac{1}{2}$$

$$\frac{1}{2} \frac{3}{2}$$

$$\frac{3}{2} \frac{1}{2}$$

$$\frac{1}{2} \frac{3}{2}$$

$$\frac{3}{2} \frac{1}{2}$$

$$\frac{1}{2} \frac{3}{2}$$

$$\frac{3}{2} \frac{1}{2}$$

$$\frac{1}{2} \frac{3}{2}$$

$$\frac{3}{2} \frac{1}{2}$$

$$\frac{1}{2} \frac{3}{2}$$

$$\frac{3}{2} \frac{1}{2}$$

$$\frac{1}{2} \frac{3}{2}$$

$$\frac{3}{2} \frac{1}{2}$$

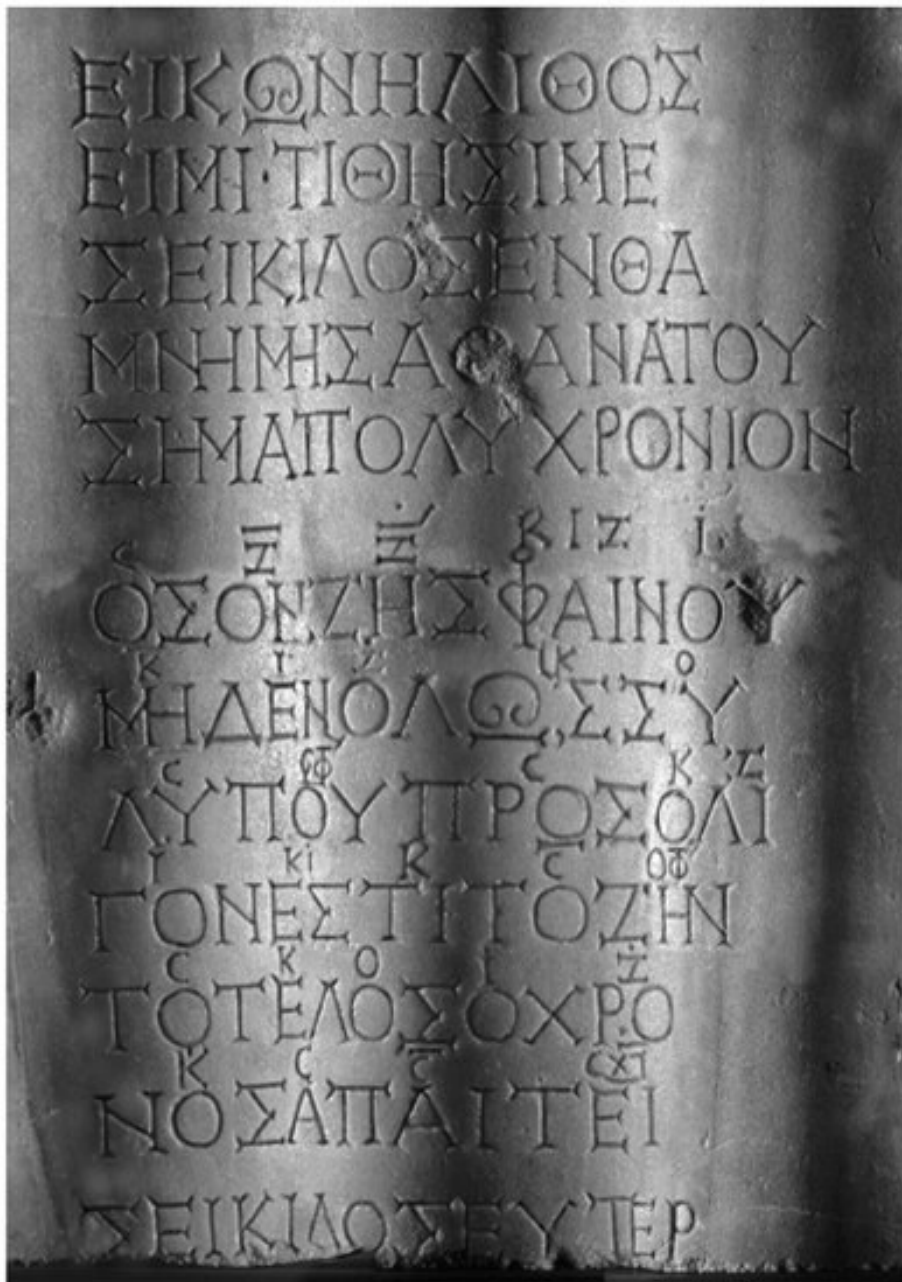


Philosophy Presenting the Seven Liberal Arts to Boethius
Ms. copy, *Consolation of Philosophy*, France, 14th century

The Renaissance:
revival of classical
models

**WHAT ABOUT THE
SOUND OF MUSIC???**





Seikilos tomb, Copenhagen

The Song of Seikilos. The only complete musical composition from ancient Greece.

“Εγώ η πέτρα είμαι μια εικόνα. Με έβαλε εδώ ο Σείκιλος ως διαχρονικό σήμα αθάνατης μνήμης”

*ΟΣΟΝ ΖΗΣ ΦΑΙΝΟΥ, ΜΗΔΕΝ ΟΛΩΣ ΣΥ
ΛΥΠΟΥ. ΠΡΟΣ ΟΛΙΓΟΝ ΕΣΤΙ ΤΟ ΖΗΝ, ΤΟ
ΤΕΛΟΣ Ο ΧΡΟΝΟΣ ΑΠΑΙΤΕΙ*

Όσο ζεις, να χαίρεσαι.

Καθόλου να μη λυπάσαι!

Η ζωή είναι σύντομη.

Ο χρόνος απαιτεί το φόρο του.

1 C Z Ż K I Z İ
Ο - σον ζῆς φαί - νου

2 K̄ I Ż İ K̄ O C̄ O Φ̇
μη - δὲν ὄλ - ως σὺ λυ - ποῦ. —

3 C K Z İ K̄ İ K C̄ O Φ̇
πρὸς ὀ - λί - γον ἐσ - τὶ τὸ ζῆν, —

4 C K O İ Ż K̄ C C̄ C Ẋ 7
τὸ τέ - λος ὁ χρό - νος ἀ - παι - τεῖ. —

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9RjBePQV4xE>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cm1aPxOORrs&list=RDCm1aPxOORrs&index=1>

Ways classical notions about music found expression in the early modern era

- Pastoral themes populated poetic verses set to music (madrigals) and pastoral dramas (*Arcadia*)
- Opera as a revival of tragedy
- Expressive-rhetorical potential of music created musical forms that embody ideas of drama (e.g. exposition of a topic, tension, resolution)
- Music entails a kind of drama, which is codified and played out in what we call tonal music (music of Mozart, Beethoven and most of what we are familiar with today)

Claudio Monteverdi, *L'Orfeo*, 1607





The East

- Byzantine Empire—big body of **religious melodies** sung monophonically – sharp contrast with western polyphony
- 1453 Siege of Constantinople
- 1830 Independent Greek State. During this time main genres in the Hellenic region are
 - Folk songs transmitted orally (wrote down later)
 - Religious music preserved through notational system of **neumes** (example in next slide)—prevented the acquaintance with western music and vice versa



Ionian islands

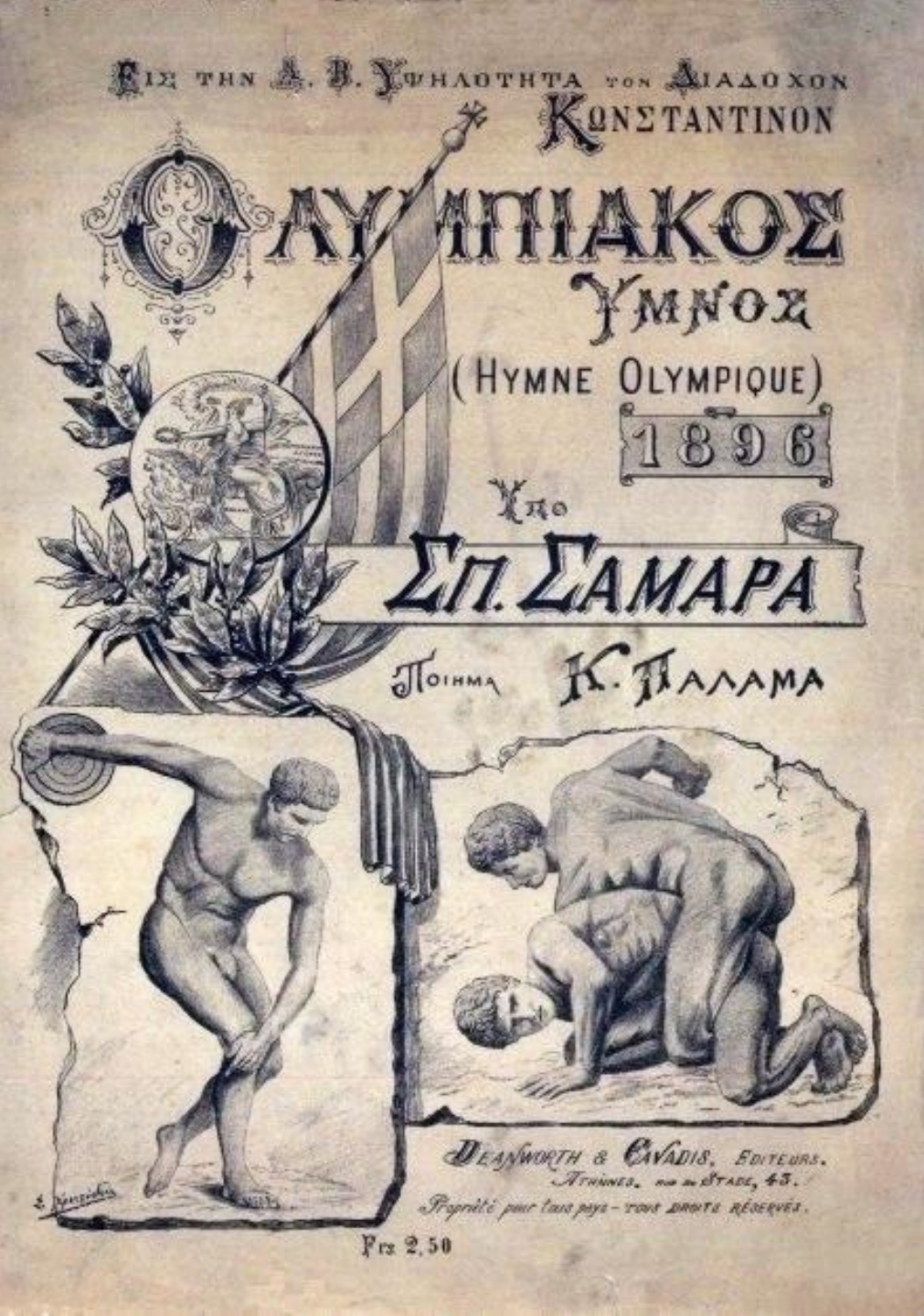
- Heptanese
- Seven islands
- Septinsular
- Corfu, **San Giacomo** theatre—first opera performed in 1733—regular operatic season after 1771



Nikolaos Mantzaros
(1795-1872)
Composer of Greek
National Anthem

Established Corfu
Philharmonic Society, 1840

Beginnings of *Ionian School
of Music*



“Greek music”, 2nd half of 19th century

- First opera with Greek libretto: *The Parliamentary Candidate* by Spyridon Xyndas, 1867, San Giacomo
- **Pavlos Carrer (1829-96)**: operas inspired by the Greek War of Independence--some with Greek libretto (*Markos Botzaris*, *Kyra Frosini*, *Despo*)--and by classical antiquity (*Marathon-Salamis*)
- **Spyros Samaras (1861-1917)**: first Greek composer to establish international reputation. One of the most important *verismo* composers.
 - Composed the **Olympic anthem for the first modern Olympic games in 1896** (declared official anthem in 1956) among many successful operas.
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=38X5rh6S3F4>

Developments in the early 20th century

- **Greek Melodrama**, 1900 (an institution in support of Greek opera)—Dionysios Lavragas its first director
- **Greek National Opera**, 1939 (replaced the Greek Melodrama)
- **National School of Music** (after 1910): main figure the composer **Manolis Kalomiris (1883-1962)**—strong folk music element combined with Wagnerian orchestration. Relegated Italian-trained musicians. Sought to combine “authentic, unspoiled folksongs embellished with all the technical means of the musically advanced peoples”. His works include:
 - *Symphony of Leventia* [bravery], 1918-20
 - *O protomastoras* (the Masterbuilder), opera on a novel by Nikos Kazantzakis (1883-1957, author of *Zorba the Greek*).
 - Texts in demotic Greek. Established 2 more conservatories: the Hellenic and the National Conservatory. Important figure for music education. Maria Callas was a student of the National Conservatory.
- Folk music had an exotic sound for many composers; Maurice Ravel composed 5 *Mélodies populaires grecques*



Contemporary Greece



History, Arts and Letters

MUSIC 2

*Developments since 1950.
The avant-garde. Popular
expressions*



Nikos Skalkottas (1904-49)

Studied in Berlin with Arnold Schoenberg—developed his own version of 12-tone music (or dodecaphonic, or serialism)

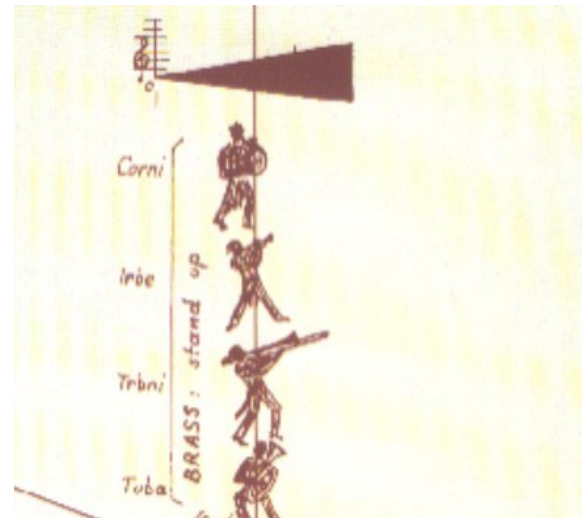
Occasionally incorporates folk tunes in his orchestral works.

The primary modernist
composer of Greece



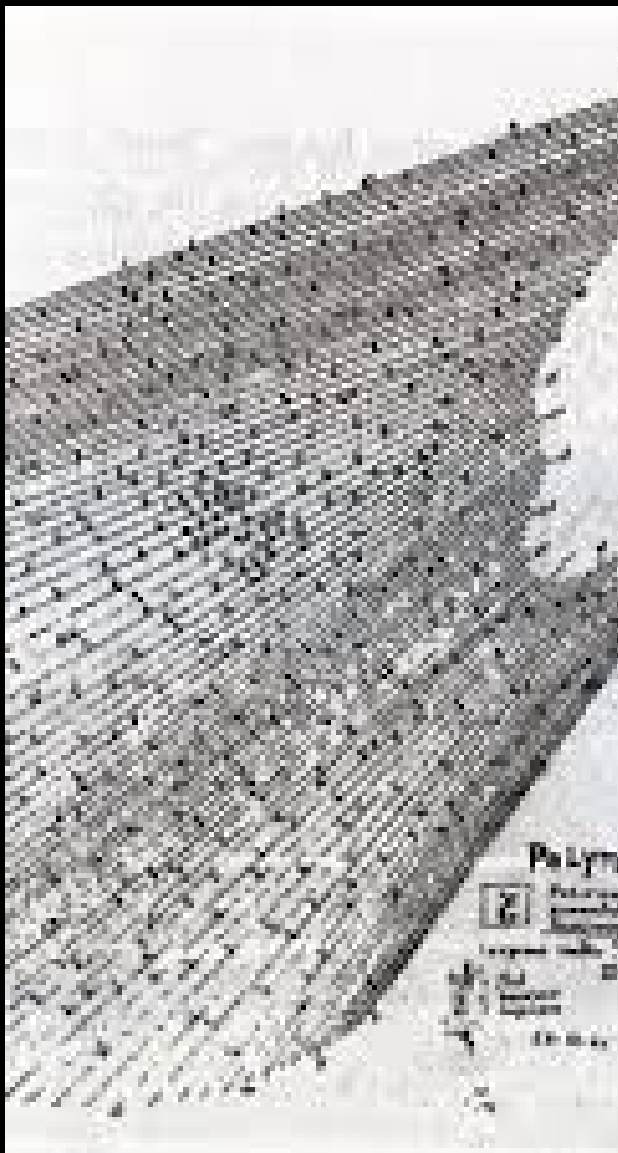
Yianni Christou (1926-70):
his music combines
philosophy, mysticism, rituals,
and metaphysical ideas.
Graphic notation of ritual
enactments
Collaborated with theatre
director Karolos Koun

Phoenix music
Tongues of fire
Anaparastasis



Ancient
theatre of
Epidaurus,
revivals of
ancient
tragedies





Iannis Xenakis (1922-2001)

turned architectural space
into musical time; multi-
media experiences;
sound-and-light
installations--*polytopes*
designed a system for the
conversion of graphic
stimuli into sound



The Philips
Pavillion in
Brussels
designed by
I. Xenakis





Popular genres

SONGS:

- *Smyrneika* (from Smyrna, Asia Minor)—especially after **1922**
- *Politika* (from Constantinople)
- *Amanes*

Cafés-aman, Oriental sound, improvisations

- ***Rebetiko***--subculture
- Main instrument became the **bouzouki**
- Vassilis Tsitsanis popularized the genre and made it widely available and acceptable
- **Laïko**—formulated in the 1960s merged rebetiko with musical styles of the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East
- Promoted by flourishing record industry

Popular “art-song” (Entechno)

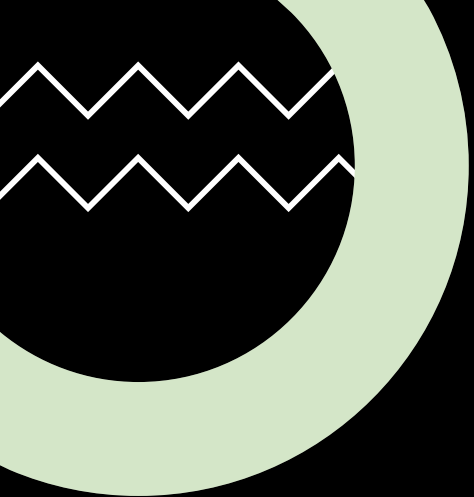
- **Entechno** (entails *techni*=art): more sophisticated than rebetiko and laiko= Art-song of a popular appeal for entertainment
- Frequently sets to music poetry from well-known poets. Combines elements from rebetiko, local traditions, and European art music (the songs are often orchestrated)
- **Manos Hadjidakis (1925-94)**
 - 1961 Oscar Award for the movie *Never on Sunday*
 - *Gioconda's Smile* (1965, mixes imaginative orchestration with tuneful melodies)
 - Supported *rebetiko* songs



Mikis Theodorakis (1925-2021)

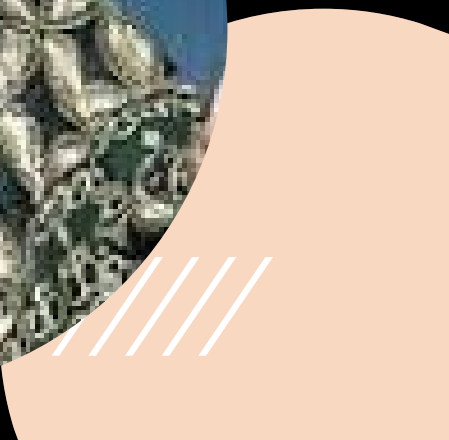
- Art-songs, laika, orchestrated songs
- Songs of resistance, **political**
- Orchestral music
- Film music for *Zorba the Greek* (1964)





Composers with international appeal. Found refuge in Paris in the 1960s

- **Vangelis (Papathanassiou), 1963-2022:** electronic, ambient, classical orchestral music, film scores—*Chariots of fire* (1981); *Blade Runner* (1982)
- **Demis Roussos (1945-2015)**— Progressive rock band “Aphrodite’s Child” with Vangelis



Music and video excerpts we listened to:

- Pythagoras—Monochord <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gYtSI4-ShLU>
- Seikilos Song <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9RjBePQV4xE>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hMLjkH0mjgo&t=1980s> (especially after 33:00)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ufZ0QPNrpmU&t=3678s> (Xyndas, *The parliamentary candidate*)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=38X5rh6S3F4> (Olympic anthem by Spyros Samaras, from the 2004 Athens Olympic games)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C1exBdkNUCU> (Kalomiris, *Symphony of Levendia*)
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mHglhdb_17Q (Ravel, *5 mélodies populaires grecques*, French text)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BUN9WjzCWgM> (Ravel, *5 mélodies populaires grecques*, Greek text)

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q6SdpdTUM5w&list=PLC729408177E17261&index=3> (Nikos Skalkottas, *36 Greek dances*)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tjmT3nW4tu0> (Yiannis Christou, *Anaparastasis*)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=40pusyJOGqI&t=328s> (Christou with theatre director Karolos Koun)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nvH2KYYJg-o> (Iannis Xenakis, *Pithoprakta*)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Suis4IfbAAE> (Iannis Xenakis, video about the composer, series “Great composers”)

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xY2JK8XEXDE> (rebetiko, authentic performance)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k2GeWHZBUIY&list=PL22C3C23E10BFDBD3> (Hadjidakis, *Gioconda's smile*)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1qzJtiMI4pl> (Hadjidakis, feature song from movie *Never on Sunday*)
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9oxwENvNeJ4&list=RD9oxwENvNeJ4&start_radio=1 (Hadjidakis, *Reflections, Kemal*)
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rPaLWRYDbws&list=RD9oxwENvNeJ4&start_radio=1 (Hadjidakis, *Reflections, Street Song*)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2AzpHvLWFUM> (Theodorakis, Zorba scene)
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=djiHjagQKUU&list=RDdjiHjagQKUU&start_radio=1 (Theodorakis, film song from movie *A Neighborhood Called "The Dream"*)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CSav51fVIKU> (Vangelis, *Chariots of fire*, 1981)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5HP1DdiqaEs> (Demis Roussos, *Rain and Tears*)

Revival of folk and traditional music, 2020s

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5IIZ-ruDKOA> isokratisses
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SJXb1y1A6Dg> kadinelia
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l55LUEfnbX8> satti

Main reading

- Consult the relevant sections in the article “Greece” (sections IV, V, and VI) available online through Oxford Music Online
<https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/display/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-3000000167?rskey=s9VZNM&result=1#omo-9781561592630-e-3000000167-div1-1> (needs institutional access)
 - Or through the printed version in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (available at the campus library)
- ***
- *On Ancient Greek Music* <https://www.ox.ac.uk/news/2013-10-23-oxford-classicist-brings-ancient-greek-music-back-life#:~:text=HomeNewsOxford%20classicist%20brings,>

Suggestions for paper topics

- Music for the Olympic games
- Ancient Greek Music: notation, instruments, sounds etc
- Nikos Kazantzakis and musical settings inspired by his writings
- Maria Callas (any aspect of her life, performances)
- Politics and Music
- Ravel's 5 melodies populaires grecques (1904-06): historical context, sources of the melodies etc
- On different composers (one of the following), e.g. Dimitri Mitropoulos; Iannis Xenakis; Nikos Skalkottas...et al.
- Contemporary Women composers
- Traditional musical instruments
- Rembetiko (or other popular genres)
- Greek film music: e.g. Eleni Karaindrou for the films of Theo Angelopoulos; Evanthia Reboutsika; *Zorba the Greek*: the writer, the film, the music; et al (some sources below):
- <https://www.ertecho.gr/radio/i-foni-tis-elladas/show/greek-music-express/ondemand/1031180/greek-music-express-giants-of-greek-film-music-eleni-karaindrou-marios-strofalis-03-06-2025/>
- <https://www.greeksongs-greekmusic.com/greek-music-in-movies/>
- https://www.academia.edu/424606/The_Greek_Film_Musical_A_Critical_and_Cultural_History
- <https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/abs/greek-film-noir/dark-cinema-dark-sounds-mimis-plessas-and-the-integration-of-jazz-into-greek-film-noir/9755F801BD0CAC6FD1EB16CC21AD233C> (Neo-noir film music)

THANK YOU!!!

Visit these places:

- Niarchos Center (SNFCC)
- Megaron, The Athens Concert Hall
- The National Museum of Contemporary Art (EMST)
- Herodium (ODEON HERODES ATTICUS)