

THE “CLASSIC” CHARACTER OF THE GREEK SANTUR

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Abstract: The santur has been associated with tradition and therefore with the traditional and popular repertoire. However, it has been used in classical works by Greek and foreign composers, choosing it as a soloist or the main instrument of the classical orchestra. The aim of this paper is to see the "classical" character of a traditional instrument through the study of the "concertino for sanduri and orchestra" by the Greek musician Dimitris Dragatakis. fundamental knowledge of sandouri in matters of area, technical and structural requirements.. On the other hand, we compared through the recording of the specific musical work, the performance of the musical score by the santur player. The main research questions focus on how a traditional instrument such as the santouri is incorporated into classical music forms and how it is rendered by both the musician and the composer. As a methodology, the analysis of the musical score was chosen, focusing on the part of santur and we used the observation of the performance of the musical text by the sandour player. As a tool of the observer, the recording of the musical work was used, which was from the personal archive of the composer. At the same time, through bibliographic references, the musical influences of both the composer and the musician chosen to play as a soloist in the musical project were studied. The results showed that the Greek composer Dimitris Dragatakis, who although his education is based on the principles of classical music, chose the santur and the santouri player Tasos Diakogiorgis, who in addition his influences of traditional music, he had also studied advanced music theories and had experiences with other classical Greek composers. The composer in general seems to have received the technical capabilities of the instrument but the performance of the musical score seems not to be faithfully performed by the santur player. This indicates that a classical music composer who chooses to include a traditional instrument as a solo instrument in the orchestra has a leniency the soloist player in modifying some musical notes not only because of the technical difficulties that arise but also because of a better interpretation of the musician.

Keywords: Greek santur, concertino for sanduri solo and orchestra, Dimitris Dragatakis, Tasos Diakogiorgis

1. INTRODUCTION

The santouri was a musical instrument that was widely accepted in East and West. Although it was considered an instrument associated with traditional orchestras, it was nevertheless used from time to time in classical works (concerts) either as a solo instrument or as a main instrument in the classical orchestra (Gifford, 2001). Consequently, some also characterized it as a "living room" instrument.

The development of the instrument as a concert instrument dates back to the period between the Baroque and Classicism (1750-1790). Johann Kuhnau through a letter he had sent to Johann Mattheson in 1717, writes characteristically about the virtuoso of that time Pantaleon Hebenstrei that he demonstrated the skill playing prelude, fantasy, fugue and caprice, using the keyboards (bagues) (Kofteros, 2019)

Then research by various musicologists such as Karl-Heinz Schickhaus states that in 1972 he discovered in the Copenhagen Museum of Music History an unidentified Danish manuscript dated 1753, called Tablature arranged till Hakke-Brett which included melodic lines from 43 pieces of music for solo santouri which were imprinted in pentagram and marked with letters of the alphabet (Pilka, 1981).

Also, L. Mozart in 1755 had mentioned in his letter to Lotter's publisher in Hamburg, had thought of adding a santouri or cymbal to the "Reverend" agreement. Similarly other composers such as List of Hungary who incorporated the cymbal into his symphony works. Indicatively, the work *Untarischer Sturmmarsch* (1875) and the orchestral version of the sixth Hungarian Rhapsody. Also, Igor Stravinsky used the cymbal in the works *Ragtime* (1918) και *The wedding* (1914-17) as well as Zoltan Kodaly, Bela Bartok, O Orff, Heinz Holliger, O Boulez, Humphrey Searle, Igor Stravinsky etc. (Foulias & Vouvaris, 2016).

In Greece, Greek composers such as Manolis Kalomiris pioneered and incorporated in 1920 a traditional instrument such as Santouri in the symphonic project "Lavender Agreement" in the "Skertso Glenti" part. Other composers followed who used Santouri either as part of the Symphony Orchestra or as a solo instrument. Among them is George Hatzimichelalis in the "Moiroloi tis Fokias", Giorgos Koumentakis in "Melodia Grafomixanis 2006", George Kouroupos, Vassilis Tenidis, Michalis Christodoulides, Kyriakos Stefanou, Michalis Adam, Theodoros Antoniou in the works "Philoktitis" (1967), Dimitris Dragatakis in the project "Medea" (1968), Nikephoros Rotas in "Alkistis-Calipo" (1974). From the above Greek composers, the present study focuses on the musical work of Dimitris Dragatakis who composed the musical work "concertino for sanduri solo and orchestra" in 1988 with the soloist of the Greek santouri, Tassos Diakogiorgis (Kofteros, 2019)

Dimitris Dragatakis came from Epirus. He had dealt with the violin as well as with composition wherever he was established in the field of music. His studies on the one hand were based on classical music and on the other hand he had the influences of traditional music due to his origin and mainly due to the interest he showed for traditional sounds and traditional instruments through newer techniques. (Kalopana, 2009). The reason for the composition of the concertino for sandour and orchestra was the Municipality of Heraklion, which suggested to the Greek composer to make a project of partnership of an established "classical" form with an instrument that strongly bears the traditional timbre and cultural characteristics. One of the characteristics of the Greek creator Dimitris Dragatakis is the intense element of Greekness and direct communication through the echoes of the sonorities of tradition (Mythology III, 1985). The musical language of Dimitris Dragatakis incorporated elements from ancient Greek drama and the music of the Epirotian folk song.

The choice of the composer for the soloist of the santouri Tassos Diakogiorgis was not a random choice. Tasos Diakogiorgis was a student of the National Conservatory of Athens in which the Greek composer also studied. His teachers in classical studies were the same as the teachers of Dimitris Dragatakis. Therefore, the soloist of the santouri despite being born in Rhodes and his first hearings were in traditional music where he actively served it, he also had excellent knowledge of stphonic music instruments such as xtlophone, metallophone etc. He has also collaborated with other great Greek composers such as Manos Hatzidakis, Mikis Theodorakis in the play "Axion Esti", Yiannis Markopoulos in the dance drama "Theseas" and in the plays "Ithagenia", "Chroniko", "Free Polioricians", the late Argyris Kounadis, Dimitris Terzakis etc. Tasos Diakogiorgis participated with his santouri in cinematographic and theatrical films. In 1964 he was a member of the light orchestra E.I.R and later in the symphonic orchestra of ERT (Samiou, 2021).

2. METHODS

Qualitative research tools were chosen for the analysis of the research topic. Initially, the key element of qualitative research is the understanding of the research issues through the subjects participating in them. In this particular research, the research questions are as follows (Bryman, 2017):

- How does an instrument of tradition like the santouri fit into forms of classical music?
- How is it performed technically and expressively by a musician of traditional music?
- How does the composer treat a traditional instrument in classical forms in writing through the score?

The subjects of this research are the composer Dimitris Dragatakis who composed the "concertino for sanduri solo and orchestra" and the soloist of the sanduri Tassos Diakogiorgis.

Before the research questions were analyzed, the researcher conducted an investigation through the search of sources either bibliographic or from internet searches around the musical profile of both the composer and the musician chosen in order to understand the reason behind the creation of the work that connects the seemingly opposite musicians worlds of tradition and classical music and therefore of the composer and the traditional player of the santouri.

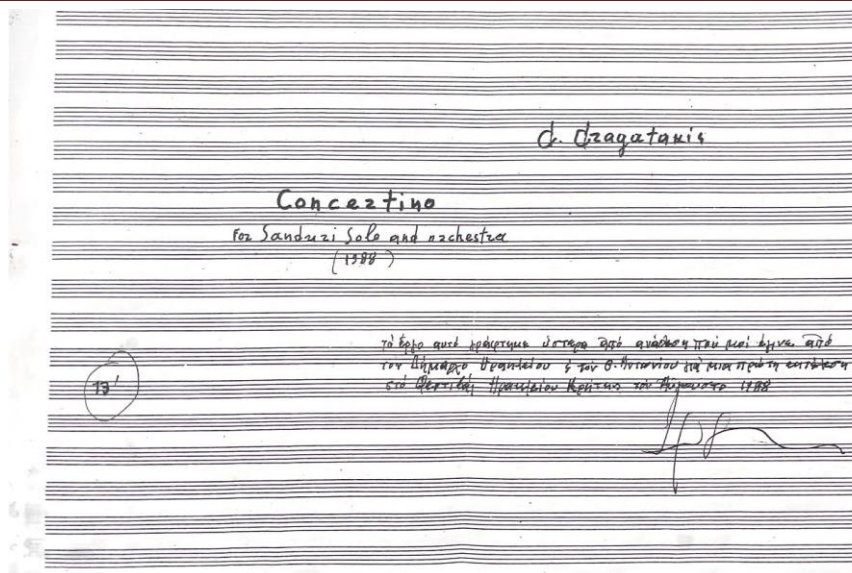
After examining the theoretical framework regarding the musical background of the two subjects, the researcher continued in the field of research through communication with the subjects who in the compared case there was no possibility of physical presence because they have passed away but the communication was through the archival material (musical score and audio material) of the composer which was delivered to the researcher by other third parties. The researcher proceeded through observation in the field of research which included the analysis of the concertino focusing on the part of the santur. The following elements were investigated to:

- what extent did the composer adhere to the technical specifications of the instrument, i.e. its musical length and the seemingly technical difficulties that the santur player would face
- whether the musical score was performed by the composer according to the audio material

The researcher then assembled the musical themes using European notation, which had been partially modified based on the score by the santouri soloist either due to interpretation or enrichment of the melody or due to technical difficulties. The program is used for the comparative study of the modified subjects were Musescore 3.

3. RESULTS

When analyzing the musical text we notice that Dimitris Dragatakis signs his musical work as "Concertino for sanduri solo and orchestra" (1988). We would like to underline that even though it is a work by a Greek composer, the title is in English. The santouri is rendered as "sanduri", a fact that creates some interpretations. Some of them one could mention that the santouri because it is an instrument whose name and form has undergone several variations due to its evolution in different countries until the establishment of the type and its name per country, it justifies a composer or even a musician who plays the santouri to sign the santouri as "sanduri" according to the closest phonological approximation of the instrument in the Greek language (Dragatakis, 2020).



When analyzing the musical text in the santur part we notice the following:

- the melodic lines of the dulcimer chosen by the composer extend from the F# contra bass to the G in the high range. This proves that the composer was based within the confines of the dulcimer's range.

In other words, he utilized three octaves of the instrument.

- Mainly exploited the bass and middle region of the instrument in which the santur players mainly choose to play.

- the work has a free atonal character which is characteristic of the composer

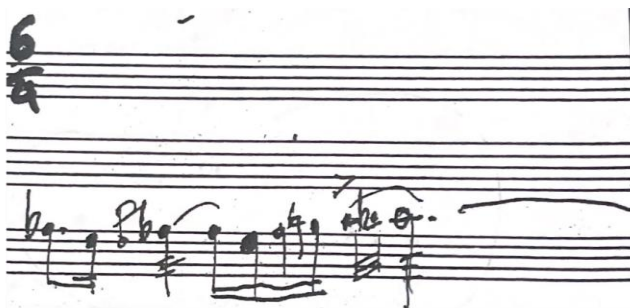
- in his writing the composer used melodic lines in which the santur player in one hand should hold isocrata and in the other analyze the melody.

- the melodic line of the santur is based on repeated melodic and musical patterns that inspired an Aegean character and the rich rhythmic variety of the Greek regions. More specifically, in the middle of the work there were continuous rhythmic changes of 6/4-5/4-6/4-3/4-5/4-6/4-5/4-4/4-3/4-4/4 -6/4-4/4-3/4-4/4-3/4-4/4-3/4 to end up in 3/8 while the original rhythmic pattern was 4/4.

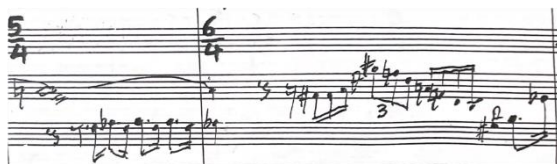
- in the santur part there are no marked dynamics as emphasized in the other instruments of the symphony orchestra.

An important element observed during the analysis of the musical text was the approach of the santurier Tassos Diakoiorgis. It was observed that in a general context his playing style was adapted to the strict and measured performance of the score except for some points that he chose to enrich or and to paraphrase the melody part by putting small additions. It should be noted that in one part of the work the composer chooses the soloist to play a solo without meter which on the one hand had a specific structure but on the other hand the santurier showed with small modifications the free expression of an improvisation.

The table below lists some melodic modifications of the santur player based on the score



Melodic line from the original score



Melody variant by the soloist of the santur



4. DISCUSSIONS

According to the results of the research, various questions arise for discussion which concern the central theme of the article, namely the "classical character" of a traditional instrument. Is the inclusion of a traditional instrument such as the santouri in works of symphonic music considered a novelty or a new musical form? The Greek composer apparently chose to create a work of atonal music with a solo instrument, the santouri, as he wanted to declare the liberation of music from the laws of traditional tonal harmony and the classical instruments chosen for a symphonic work. The santouri, even though it is structurally considered a "sigkerasmeno" instrument (specific instruments are those that cannot play specific frequencies, following the western way of grading notes into tones and semitones) manages to render the intervals that are not foreseen by its construction when the musician is familiar with the style of music he is called to perform. The present musical work "concertino for sanduri solo and orchestra" by Dimitris Dragatakis which refers to a "strict" form of musical composition, the soloist of the santouri, Tasos Diakogiorgis, despite having experienced and heard traditional authentic interpretations, managed to render the written score by incorporating elements that at the same time declared a freedom in the expression of the musician (Papadakis, 1983).

5. CONCLUSIONS

The santur is an instrument that spread in countries of the East and the West and was adapted accordingly to the musical needs of the peoples. The santouri belongs to various musical genres thanks to its special timbre and technical capabilities, i.e. the ability to solo and have an accompanying character. From the data of the study we realize that many Greek and foreign classical composers showed interest in the santur both to integrate it into a symphony orchestra and to compose on the technical requirements of the instrument. Dimitris Dragatakis was considered a pioneering composer as in his musical works he adopted modern techniques and means drawing from ancient Greek music and the tradition of Epirus. When analyzing the musical work he composed for solo santur and orchestra, we understand that he respected the traditional nature of instrument incorporating melodic lines and rhythmic patterns that were influenced by rich Greek traditional music. The soloist of the santouri, having a classical education and experience with his other participations in symphony orchestras, managed to adapt the way of playing with a disciplined and perfectly defined interpretation.

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