

An introduction to the Compositions of Christodoulos Vassiliades

Whatever is created autonomously from roots and tradition is determined to be extinguished and die out. On the contrary, whatever originates from live experiences of life and subsequently becomes the experience of man-creator, is destined to survive within the framework which is determined by human life as is today (birth-death, creation-end of the century).

It is needless to mention that both the composer of a musical piece of work and the audience must share the same cultural tradition as that of the composer in order to a) perform (composer) b) comprehend (audience) the musical work.

The musical pieces contained in this book are simple and do not demand particular skills on the part of the performer.

All the works were written within a period of nine months, from February to October 1990.

The main characteristic of these works, as the title itself suggests, is «Memories». By using this term we mean that on listening to these compositions, the audience has the feeling, in some way or another, that the music is reminiscent of marked personal experiences in his life and at the same time, whilst listening to this music, he is sometimes directed towards liberated self criticism.

All the compositions have a sad funereal character and are delivered in a minor key except for two, namely number nine and number ten (the latter indeed being a study) which are written in a major key. When all is said and done, all the compositions contain the idea of joyous sorrow rather than everlasting grief.

I believe that «D minor» is the most representative scale of this kind of musical composition. In Byzantine Music (or rather Choral Art) this scale is identified with the first or the plagal first mode, whilst in ancient Greek, D minor is equivalent to Phrygian mode.

Whilst, as written above, this present work takes its inspiration from our rich Tradition, as a nation and as a people, its architectural structure however is not included in previously established musical forms.

However, for its composer, one particular piece stands out. It has a particular inspiration and this happens to be number 2. For this reason it has been created for two pianos (Number 12).

Opinion has it that if a work of a contemporary composer is beautiful and is liked, then it is a repetition of previous hearings. However, others claim the exact opposite.

In other words, that one cannot in actual fact consider something to be beautiful which repeats the previous. This is attributed to saturation of previous hearings. As for myself, may I be permitted to say that I take a completely different view of the issue: Deep down, all works of music are approximately alike and one piece of music brings to mind another piece. Each time a piece is written life's experiences are always expressed in a variety of ways. The eternal problems of life itself, pain, sorrow, divine love, love for mankind, death, desertion, separation, repentance, poverty, loneliness, war and many others. All of these remain unchanged as emotive of human existence even if the external appearance of things changes. Man, in the depths of his existence remains essentially indestructible. As art (thus music too) express the depths of one's soul, it follows that they too can change forms outwardly but in actual fact they retain an indestructible nucleus.

Consequently, every time a composer tries to express that which he lives in notes, he is struggling to resolve one of the many problems of existence. The realisation and the expression of the problems mean simultaneously the first step towards its resolution. Thus, the composition of a piece of work essentially takes for granted prior interpretation of healthy elements which Tradition hands down to us and consequently the onset of the creation of a new work baptised in the revitalisation of this Tradition and at the same time enriched by the personal experiences of the particular composer. It is obvious that, via his work, the creator expresses that which he considers to be most vital for his own course. However, no course is autonomous from the collective state of being. For this reason, the true creation acts as a measure of salvation not only for the creator but for the soul of the whole.

In order to create something genuine in the field of music, then it must be due to the brilliance and the overwhelming emotions from within the heart of the composer. Firstly, the composer himself must live it to the full. The music which the composer's fingers will transfer to the piano (or any other instrument) and which later will be written on the musical scale, must be the abundance of his love and not the insufficiency. To live one's life in the correct way does not allow room for groaning, murmuring, despairing or giving up in difficult times, but on the contrary, does make room for constant repentance, hope, thanksgiving and praise.

Of course one must not forget that the creation of something worthwhile in the field of music presumes first and foremost the in depth learning, knowledge and the utmost possible absorption of experiences of genuine Tradition. There is also another equally important issue: We have to submit to the past, become enslaved and comprehend the past, learning and executing with precision the masterpieces which have been handed down to us. Then and only then, when we have «buried» our will and «immersed» ourselves in the works of great musical composers, will we be mature enough so that eventually as time lapses we will be in a position to create something which is our very own and which expresses us absolutely, something which, in reality is both

beautiful and genuine and which after being tried and tested by the public, the geographical position and above all, time itself, will prove to be durable.

Every new creation has to be subjected to trial and criticism not only by the distinguished but by the common public. If it manages to survive this test then it makes its way into people's lives. If, on the other hand, it proves to be unworthy then it is destined to die, is automatically lost and remains written on paper only. Whatever manages to hold its own and survive as time takes its toll is precious (within the framework of historical events) on the assumption that it serves the plan of Eternity.

“Emerging Memories” is a 1993 short edition. It contains five songs. The lyrics were composed by Roulla Ioannidou-Stavrou and I composed the music. The songs can be performed by piano, keyboard, guitar and vocal song. “The Kyrenia ship” (the first song of the edition) was awarded honorary distinction in a USA competition. In 1996 two other editions were published: “Ten variations for piano” and “Eighteen variations for violin”. These compositions are not following the style of classical period's variations (i.e. theme and variations). Instead they are independent short pieces based on traditional motives of Greek and Cypriot traditional music.

In 2005 I published “Hymns to the Lord - Melodies of piety”. The book contains nine songs. The lyrics were composed by Elder Germanos, Abbot of Stavrovouni monastery. The music of the songs was composed by myself, by Monk Chariton and by Gerasimos Papadopoulos. It is religious music in European and Byzantine notation.

Currently I am working on another composition: “Dialogues” for piano.

I have also published three books on music theory. 1.) “Theory of music”, 2.) “Concise dictionary of composers- Basic forms of music” and 3.) “From right to left” for piano. Considerable theory and practical information for understanding traditional Greek and Cypriot music is provided in the above editions.