

# POPULAR MUSIC OF THE GREEK WORLD

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Edited by  
Eleni Kallimopoulou and Panagiotis C. Poulos





ETHNOMUSICOLOGY &  
CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY  
LABORATORY



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**Eleni Kallimopoulou and Panagiotis C. Poulos**



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In memory of Chris Williams (1958-2022)



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# 10 | THE PIANO IN GREEK POPULAR ORCHESTRAS OF THE EARLY 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY: AN OVERVIEW OF THE MATERIAL

NIKOS ORDOULIDIS

## **Prelude on “modeness”<sup>1</sup>**

The term “modeness” is used purposefully in order to include definitions usually consigned to the words “popular,” “East” and “modality.” The problems regarding the first two are patently clear: the in-between “places” between the poles of the high-status and the popular and that of the East and the West are innumerable, and hardly distinguishable. The third word, modality, presents two problematic points: on the one hand, it has been wrongfully connected to Eastern musics, even though it does not constitute their exclusivity; on the other hand, it describes a simple systematic analysis, of melodic movement and (rarely) its harmonization. The alternative term “modeness” renders, in its totality, the behaviour of a musical entity with its specific characteristics, rhythm, melody, harmony and so on as the epicentre, not, however, as a theoretical substance with self-contained rules, but as an implemented case. In other words, how it functions in the artistic act is examined: its creation context and utilization, the implementation of its protagonists (musicians, intermediaries, audience), performance practice and technique, technological issues and so forth. This approach incorporates those elements described by the terms “East” and “modality,” simultaneously expanding their scope. At the same time, though, it highlights a fundamental characteristic of popular music expression, which is none other than the orality and ensuing fluidity during realization (Ordoulidis 2021a, x–xi).

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<sup>1</sup> Many thanks for the valuable advice and generosity regarding historical material to Stelyo Berber, Cemal Ünlü, Panagiotis and Leonardos Kounadis, Nikos Dionysopoulos, Charles Howard<sup>‡</sup>, Pekka Gronow, Tony Klein, Eleni Liaskou, Thanasis Gioglou and Kostas Vlisidis.



Modeness is borne out of the musical concept of the performers, placing the person-artist and their musical experiences at the epicentre, relegating the mechanized theoretical stereotypes to the background. In other words, modeness is not opposed to the West and the scholarly, but it also does not replace the Eastern and the popular. In parallel, it seems to exist as a tool in performance practices of not only popular musicians but also scholarly ones. This emerged modeness transforms these two large groups from typical categorizations which depend on their product, to more humanistic entities which depend on the creator of the product, permitting and facilitating the examination of the material which was created by the musicians who serve both categorizations.

This prelude was deemed necessary so that it is understood from the outset that the presence of the piano in the repertoires we will examine below essentially outlines in between spaces, between very powerful bipolar theoretical formations. In other words, on the one hand we are interested in seeing whether these implementations redraft the prevailing theoretical norms (*makam*, *laikoi dromoi*, classical European harmonization, et al.); whether the implementations give rise to the need to reconsider the theories, which observed musical phenomena from a variety of repertoires, high-status or popular. On the other hand, we are interested in including other parameters in our examination, equally serious and interesting, and which in the end seem to have often played a catalytic role in the final audio product. That is, on what kind of piano, with what sound equipment, in what historical-social context and with what cultural background a pianist played a piece, and, at the end, to what extent these elements influenced the way in which they harmonized, phrased, embellished the melodies and harmonies, and organized the rhythmic accompaniment they performed. Finally, through the tool of modeness, we are interested in examining whether Europeanization was solely responsible for the introduction and use of the piano in musical traditions that were far away from the centres of classical Europe, or whether innovation was also a dynamic factor that pushed folk-popular musicians to adopt tools that were unusual and/or unfamiliar, for the traditional musical models of the areas where they lived and created.

## **Introduction: An uncommon aesthetic cloak<sup>2</sup>**

In the international reality, the piano appeared in its familiar “classic” identity, but it also appeared in alternative aesthetic attire: it performed a different repertoire in a different manner, constructing an autonomous entity. These alternative aesthetics, active even in the present, remained excluded from research.<sup>3</sup>

This text concerns the presence of the piano in non-high-status musical idioms of a specific part of the Greek-speaking world. The basis of the research is the historical discography, in an attempt to follow the instrument in the different paths it followed, from that of the classical music of Europe. The aim of the article is not the examination and analysis of the historical-social context that prevails each time in the places that present discographical products; in any case, through the references to specific historical documentation, issues regarding social trends, technological developments, the economic networks, national ideologies and more, are outlined.

It should be said from the beginning that the recorded repertoire focused on does not constitute a solid aesthetic body. This is neither a specific and uniform repertoire, with distinct aesthetic boundaries, nor a planned practice of piano performance. If two common features of all the cases could be named, these are: the recorded works cannot be categorized into what we would call “classical music,” that is, a high-status form of art; and that the way in which the pianists perform the instrument in these recordings differs from the way in which it is performed in the pianistic tradition of classical

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<sup>2</sup> The present study constitutes part of a broader project which, in the form of postdoctoral research, is funded by the State Scholarships Foundation of Greece (IKY) and is titled “Eastwards heterotopias of the piano” (2020–2022). The basic aim of the research project is the highlighting of a special and unexplored aspect of the piano: its role outside of its usual context, which is that of classical music. The research programme focuses on discography found in various musical realities within a broad geographical span (Eastern Europe, the Balkans, the Eastern Mediterranean, the Middle East and North Africa). This research is co-financed by Greece and the European Union (European Social Fund – ESF) through the Operational Programme “Human Resources Development, Education and Lifelong Learning” in the context of the project “Reinforcement of Postdoctoral Researchers - 2nd Cycle” (MIS-5033021), implemented by the State Scholarships Foundation (IKY).

<sup>3</sup> This type of pianistic repertoire in the discography is detected with certainty in the following countries: Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Romania, Greece, Turkey, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Israel, Lebanon, Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, India and Iran. Obviously, the performances and repertoires differ from place to place (see Ordoulidis 2022). Three large categories result from the examination of the material, which are also valid for the Greek-speaking repertoire which this article is to examine: recordings which present quite clearly an Eastern modernness, recordings whose modernness is probably more Easternesque, and recordings in which a balance of elements (Eastern or/and Easternesque with Western or/and Westernesque) is observed. Another characteristic observed in some of these areas is the marginality of performance practices, which waver between what is often called in the worlds of the musicians but also in ethnomusicology as “playing with the ear” and that of a more standard, even though clearly fluid, manner of performance (see also Lilliestam 1996).

Europe. The repertoire that will be placed at the epicentre concerns a wide range of genre categorizations, which in any case cannot be clearly defined. They begin with what we would call light song of the cities and extend to tunes that come from the folk repertoires of the countryside and, obviously, also the rebetiko, which is often considered as divided into two large categories: the Smyranean and the Piraeen.<sup>4</sup>

The article is divided into two parts: on the one hand, through the references to historical documentation, a general overview of the presence of the instrument is presented, not only in the territories of the modern Greek state in particular, but also generally in key cities with a strong presence of Greek-speaking musicians. Although the focus of the article is the musical experience of Athens, indeed covering a large period of time, there are also cases related to Smyrna (İzmir), Constantinople (Istanbul) and New York. At certain time periods, these cities presented—New York still does—a large and dynamic Greek-speaking community. Even though the historical-social context in these areas is completely different from that of Athens, the references in these cases help in understanding the various phenomena that occurred in Athens. At the same time, they constitute a viewing angle of the complex network of popular music formulations, since—at least until the early 20th century—cultural borders and the products produced rarely adhere to political borders. Often, musical recording is a tool of communication between Greek speakers living in different areas. In addition, examination of the discography clarifies issues concerning the historical period characterized by the passage from the reality of the great empires to the world of nation-states.

The first part of the article focuses on three categories of sources, the shortcomings presented in the research regarding them so far and the problems that these sources often give rise to: the historical press, the photographic material and the narratives of the leading figures. Supplementing the references to this documentation, samples from the historical discography are also used, in order to complete them and to crystallize their image as much as possible.

On the other hand, in the second part, the focus is on the historical discography in the same areas, examining samples of the recorded products of Greek-speaking musicians. In historical discography, we find the piano even in the time period of the mobile recording workshops, that is, right from the start of commercial discography (ca 1900). The recordings that will be examined in this article span the period from the

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<sup>4</sup> For the problematic issues regarding these terms, see Smith (1991); Pennanen (1999); Gauntlett (2001); Kokkonis (2005); Andrikos (2018, 15–6, fn. 2); Ordoulidis (2021a, fn. 1).

beginning of the 20th century up to and including the 1950s. Invariably, these cases constitute a rather small sample of the overall corpus, which is of great interest regarding both its diversity and its time scope.

### **Historiographical remarks on the piano in Greek popular music**

First of all, it is worth mentioning the work of Alexis Politis, who in his book *Romantic Years – Ideologies and Mentalities in the Greece of 1830-1880*, attempts to construct the historiographical map of the presence of the piano, both in the Greek peninsula and in places with an intense presence of Greek speakers. Politis indexes a large volume of primary sources, concerning locations and protagonists as well as the terminology used at the time, which referred to what later prevailed as “piano.” Politis’s research places the “beginning” of the presence of the instrument in the time of Thomas Bruce Elgin, whose wife brought a piano to Athens in 1802. Equally interesting is the reference to Veli Pasha, Ali’s son, who brought an instrument to Tripolitsa in 1809. Politis records pianos that were in the homes of wealthy families, but also piano teachers, talking about several locations, such as Smyrna, Mytilene, and even Amaseia (Politis 2009, 127).

In terms of current research on folk-popular music traditions and the role of the piano in them, the historical press and its indexing is one of the most burning issues. A crucial mass has not yet been indexed, which will allow us to find out about musicians’ names, live performance venues and concerts. To a large extent, the indexing of the historical press will come to complement the findings and information from the historical discography, which are at a better level today (see for example Figure 1 and 2).

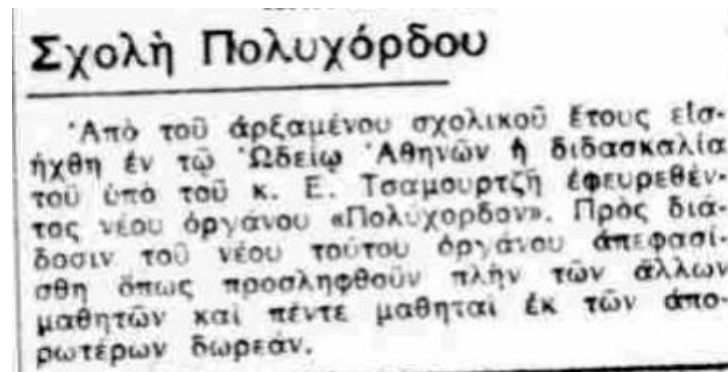


**Figure 1.** Advertisement in the newspaper Hellas (23/12/1907, Athens). FEXI PIANOS You can very easily give your wife or daughter a PIANO, paying the FEXI store 50 drachmas per month.



**Figure 2.** Newspaper Hellas (3/2/1908). THE OUTDOOR PIANIST OF ATHENS. One day it snowed, the next, a travelling musician, the Italian Karolos Vasilitis, with his instrument, played in the middle of the square under the sun. (Photograph Mr Georgios Alexiou)

Nevertheless, the findings so far show that the instrument had gained a dynamic presence in places outside the European classical music reality. In addition, evidence suggests that attempts were made to manufacture piano-based instruments, which were originally intended for use in high-status repertoires, but ultimately failed. One such case is the so-called “polychordo” in the 1930s (Figure 3):



**Figure 3.** An article in the newspaper *Proia* regarding the beginning of a teaching department of the new “polychordo” instrument at the Athens Conservatory (10/10/1937). School for Polychordo. At the beginning of the current school year, the teaching of the new “Polychordo” instrument, invented by Mr. E. Tsamourtzis, was introduced at the Athens Conservatory. In order to promote this new instrument, it was decided, apart from the rest, to accept five students for free.

Although the article will deal in detail with the historical discography below, it is worth mentioning at this point some of the few recordings that have been found so far, in which an instrument is heard which initially appears to be a canon. A closer look, however, reveals that the sound is probably produced by a hammer strike, after a key-stroke. It may be that the polychord, which in its probably rather short life, managed to be introduced by folk-popular musicians in the historical discography (see for example Figure 4).



**Figure 4.** An example from the small number of recordings where perhaps the so-called “polychordo” participated. Vale me stin angalia sou<sup>5</sup> (Kounadis Archive Virtual Museum<sup>6</sup>).

A second critical source is the historical photographic material.<sup>7</sup> As regards the bouzouki-based rebetiko style, which starts en masse from 1933 with the recordings of Markos Vamvakaris in Athens, the photographic material of Ilias Petropoulos must be mentioned, some of which is published in his book *Rebetika songs* (1996 [1968]), in which many pianists, leading figures of the music stage, are depicted.<sup>8</sup> Through the observation of the photographic material, not only from the Petropoulos archive but also from other sources, certain extremely interesting findings result. For example, in an overwhelming majority we observe that the lid and the panels of the pianos in the venues are either open or removed, clearly to obtain intensity and clarity of sound. The number of panels which are open or removed seems to be connected to the size of the orchestra, the size of the venue but also the presence (and the type) of audio coverage of the music stage. In other words, if the piano participates in fairly large orchestras,

<sup>5</sup> Vale me stin angalia sou (Βάλε με στην αγκαλιά σου), Columbia CG 1014 – DG 6033, Athens, 1934: <https://vmrebetiko.gr/en/item-en/?id=10491>, accessed February 7, 2024. Other recordings where a polychordo may be involved: Chtes to vradu ston teke mas (Χτες το βράδυ στον τεκέ μας), Columbia CG 935 – DG 2124, Athens, 1934: <https://rebetiko.sealabs.net/display.php?d=0&recid=5520>; I foni tou argile – Pente chronia dikasmenos (Η φωνή του αργιλέ – Πέντε χρόνια δικασμένος), Columbia CG 1108 – DG 6066, Athens, 1934: <https://rebetiko.sealabs.net/display.php?d=1&recid=6495>; M' argile kai baglamades (Μ' αργιλέ και μπαγλαμάδες), Columbia CG 1206 – DG 6118, Athens, 1934: <https://rebetiko.sealabs.net/display.php?d=0&recid=2468>; Kolonaki Tzitzifies (Κολωνάκι Τζίτζιφιές), Odeon GO 4082 – GA 7490, Athens, 1949: <https://rebetiko.sealabs.net/display.php?d=0&recid=5008>, all tracks accessed February 7, 2024.

<sup>6</sup> Kounadis Archive Virtual Museum: <https://vmrebetiko.gr/en/d-home-en/>, accessed February 7, 2024.

<sup>7</sup> See the BA thesis of Kanella Politopoulou “The piano and the pianists in Greece through photographs from publications for the urban folk-popular song,” at the Department of Music Studies of the University of Ioannina (2021).

<sup>8</sup> The rest of Petropoulos's photographic material is in the Gennadius Library in Athens.

the pianist is forced to open and remove both of the two large covers (the cover at the bottom in front of the legs and the cover in front of him, which covers the hammers).

From the photographic material, we also conclude that often the pianists are also the accordionists, playing sometimes the one and sometimes the other instrument.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, it seems that they are possibly the only musicians using sheet music, as either on the music rack or on the closed lid of the instrument, we often see open or closed sheet music and their covers. The answer to the sheet music may lie in the biohistories of some of the protagonists of the 20th century.

In many sources we read about the polystylistic repertoire which is usually performed in the venues (see Ordoulidis 2021a, Chapter 13). Many times, it is the pianists who begin the musical programme with works from the light Greek repertoire, or even foreign hits. The sheet music constitutes certainly a quick and easy solution for the learning of many and various genres, as the pianists, in most cases, are musicians who know how to read and write.

An extremely interesting piece of evidence came into our possession from the daughter of one of the protagonists, about whom we shall speak in more detail below. It is a handwritten document by the pianist Mitsos Mertikas, which functions as a guide to the repertoire or even the sequence of the programme in the live performances of the orchestras in which he participated, in the music halls he worked in (see Figure 5). The repertoire range is obvious in this guide. Additionally, the fact that we found in the same archive, in the form of commercial sheet music, a variety of these titles, emphasises the aforementioned concept of the role of the pianists in the orchestras and in the musical programmes of the venues.

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<sup>9</sup> We should not forget that the tradition of the free-reed key-based aerophones is an older story, as far as Greek-speaking musicians are concerned. Mainly in Constantinople at the beginning of the 20th century, musicians performed and recorded with the harmonika as the leading instrument, creating a school of technique. Two important cases are those of Giangos Psamatianos and Antonis Amiralis.



1	TO KAPABANY	18	RAMONA	23		34	
2	H ALLELUIAH I ΕΧΑΝ ΤΡΕΤ.	19	LI UNA LAGRIMA	24	TANGO DES ROSES	35	ΓΥΝΑΙΚΕΙ... ΓΥΝΑΙΚΕΙ
3	ΕΙΣΗ-ΒΟΚΟ ΚΕΝΟ/ΕΡΩ 77	20	KONSTANTINOPLE	25		36	ΜΗ ΡΩΤΑΙ ΓΙΑΤΙ...
4	ΤΕ ΤΥ ΣΑΙΣ...	21	UN SOIR A SINGAPOUR	26	UNDER THE MOON	37	ΑΧ! ΣΟΥΤΑΝΑ ΜΟΥ
5	ΤΙ ΤΥΠΟΣ ΙΙ	22	MIO PADRE	27		38	Μ' ΑΓΑΠΟΥΣΕΙ
6	TANGO SELECTO	23	ALI BABA	28		39	NOTE ROMAN?
7	ΒΑΣΙΛΙΚΟΣ ΣΤΗ ΓΑΛΛΙΑ	24	H ΠΡΩΤΗ ΑΓΑΠΗ	29	GOLIBRI	40	DONES GORAZON
8		25	LOTOS	30		41	O, DONA GLARA
9		26	DESEO DE AMOR	31		42	TANCO ΤΟΥ ΕΡΙΝΟΥ
10	DANS UN SOUIRE	27	HIMALAYA	32	BROADWAY MELODY	43	
11	= OBI MAROSE MARIE	28		33		44	ΣΙΕΜΠΕ

**Figure 5.** Pages from a programme guide from the Mitsos Mertikas archive.

45		56	ΒΑΣΙΛΙΚΟ	67		79	ΓΑΥΚΟ ΜΟΥ ΑΓΟΡΙ
46		57		68	ΜΑΝΑ ΤΑ ΑΓΙΟΓΥΔΙΑ ΜΟΥ	80	ΤΟ ΠΡΕΤΟ ΕΡΕΤΙΜΟ ΦΥΛΙ
47	ΕΛΑ ΠΡΙΝ ΞΕΒΥΞΗ	58		69	ΚΑΛΤΙΟΔΕΤΑ	81	ΧΟΡΑ ΡΟΥΜΑΝΙΚΙ
48		59		70	ΑΤΣΙΤΤΑΝΙΚΟ	82	ΧΑΣΑΤΙΚΟ ΠΟΛΙΤΙΚΟ
49		60		71		83	ΣΥΡΤΟ ΣΑΜΙΕΤΙΚΟ
50		61	ΧΑΣΑΤΙΚΟ	72	ΧΑΣΑΤΙΚΟ ΠΟΛΙΤΙΚΟ	84	ΧΑΣΑΤΙΚΟ ΠΟΛΙΤΙΚΟ
51	ΦΕΝΙΑΙ ΕΑ ΓΙΝΕ	62	ΡΟΥΜΑΝΙΚΟ	73		85	ΜΟΝΟΝ ΕΜΕΝΑ
52	ΜΑΛΜΟΖΑ ΕΡΩ	63	ΡΟΥΜΑΝΙΚΗ ΧΟΡΑ	74		86	ΧΑΣΑΤΙΚΟ ΠΟΛΙΤΙΚΟ
53		64		75	TANCO ΤΗΣ ΑΓΑΠΗΣ	87	ΤΡΙΝΚΙ-ΤΡΙΝΚΙ ΤΑ ΤΟΥΡΝΑ
54	Η ΓΥΝΕΚΑ ΤΟΥ ΣΙΣΤΑΝ	65		76		88	ΧΟΡΟΣ ΡΟΥΜΑΝΙΚΟΣ
55		66	ΧΑΣΑΤΙΚΟ ΠΟΛΙΤΙΚΟ	77		89	ΖΥΜΕΥΑΝΙΑ ΜΑΤΙΑ
				78		90	

**Figure 5b.** Continuation of the previous.

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91	ΟΡΟ ΜΟΥΡΤΟ	142	ΑΤ. ΤΩΝ ΑΓΓΕΛΩΝ ΤΩ ΤΟΜΑΤ	143	ΧΕΡΑ ΒΛΑΧΙΚΗ	144	ΜΑΥΡΗ ΠΑΝΗ-ΕΡΑΤΩΝ ΕΣΤΙΝ
92	ΠΑΝΑ	145	Η ΠΕΙΣΜΑΤΑΡΑ	146	ΟΤΥΧΕΡΟΣ ΑΛΗΤΗΣ	147	
93	ΠΑΡΑΤΟΝΙΑΡΑ	148		149	ΤΡΑΒΙΑ ΤΑ	150	ΕΥΑΤΟ ΣΥΛΒΡΙΑΝΟ
94	ΧΗΡΑ ΜΟΥ	151		152	RIGOLLETO	153	ΔΕΝ ΕΣΤΕ ΔΕΛΕΠΙΑ
95		154	ΕΤΕ ΠΑΡΑΤΙ ΤΗΣ ΑΝΑΤΤΕ	155	ΚΑΡΜΕΛΑ	156	ΣΤΑΝΟΛΑΙΜΕΙ ΣΠΙΝΟΙ
96		157	ΤΟ ΤΑΝΤΟ ΤΟΥ ΣΠΙΝΟΥ	158	ΧΑΣΑΤΙΚΟ ΒΑΡΕ	159	ΣΕΡΕ ΤΑΙΜΕ
97		160		161	ΓΥΝΑΙΚΕΣ	162	
98		163		164	Σ, ΕΝΑ ΜΗΝΟ ΖΑΧΑΡΩΤΑΝΟ	165	ΑΧΙ ΣΟΥ ΑΤΑΝΑ ΜΟΥ
99	ΔΕΣΤΟΝΙΤ. ΔΕΣΤΟΝΙΤ	166	Η ΓΥΝΑΙΚΑ ΤΟΥ ΔΡΟΜΟΥ	167	ΜΑΡΙΤΑ ΜΟΥ ΚΟΝΙΣ/ΙΤΣΑ ΜΟΥ	168	
100		169	ΤΟ ΤΑΝΤΟ ΤΟΥ ΧΟΡΩΝΟΥ	170	ΒΑΣΣ	171	ΜΑΤΙΑ ΜΑΧΜΟΥΛΚΑ
101	ΗΧΑΛΙΑ	172	ΜΑΡΕ ΡΕΣΙΚΟ	173	ΡΕΣΙΚΟ	174	ΣΙΕΜΟΡΕ

**Figure 5c.** Continuation of the previous.

Finally, the words of the musical protagonists saved by scholars are another source, which adds a different aspect to the research. Many times, the cross-referencing of sources is more than necessary, as often various problematic issues arise, such as, for example, intensely emotionally charged speeches of the protagonists, interventions in their speech, but even issues of fabrications and/or distortions of reality.

In Aggeliki Vellou Kail's biography of Markos Vamvakaris,<sup>10</sup> he states:

There were many smoking dens, but the prince of dens was Gravaras in Athens, there on Anargiron Street [...] There was an orchestra inside, you smoked anything you liked, but in the beginning there was only a piano, Manolis the Turk, the epitome of tough. They loved him because he used to play a lot of heart-breaking Turkish pieces. All the tough guys loved him [...] Some heavy Turkish zebekika, some chasapika. Only on the piano (Vellou-Kail 1978, 114).<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Indicative samples of Vamvakaris's discography, where the piano takes part: Adeiasé mou ti gonía (Αδειασέ μου τη γωνιά), Parlophone GO 3697 – B 74078, Athens, 1946: <https://youtu.be/1SPI26RMhLI>; Kapoio vrady me fengari (Κάποιο βράδυ με φεγγάρι), Parlophone GO 4249 – B 74186, Athens, 1950: <https://youtu.be/b-5F5VL3oWs>; San me deis kai sou sfyriszo (Σαν με δεις και σου σφυρίζω), Parlophone GO 4250 – B 74186, Athens, 1950: <https://youtu.be/mNNVAYsFpaQ>, all tracks accessed February 7, 2024.

<sup>11</sup> Based on the data so far, it seems that Gravaras opened his first enterprise around 1925, in Vathis Square. The smoking den mentioned by Vamvakaris concerns the one that probably opened in 1930 on Anargyron Street. A photograph of this specific smoking den: <https://bit.ly/3MjbwSQ>, accessed February 7, 2024.

This is Manolis Mamounas, Thanasis Kataras also mentions him in his article “Popular music stages in Menidi.” Kataras refers to the so-called “Paranga,” the community kiosk of Acharnon, built in 1925.<sup>12</sup>

In the summer of 1927 the first piano is purchased, with Dimitriadis as the pianist, who plays mainly European music (waltzes, mazourkas, fox trots etc.), but also various taksims [that is, eastern style improvisations] and other fantasies on popular musical themes. In 1927–1928 the kiosk changes hands and is taken over in partnership by Panagos Gikas and Mitsos Visarakis. On occasion, important pianists worked at the kiosk, such as Mitsos Mertikas, Manolis Mamounas aka The Turk, Vangelis Isychopoulos (who transformed the piano into a kanoon, striking the chords with hammers) and the blind pianist Eudokimos (Kataras 2014, 63–4).

[...] In the earlier hours of the dawn, [Manolis Mamounas] stoned, he played amazing excerpts of operettas, arias, waltzes and so on. He too read sheet music, like me. He made the piano a cimbalom putting something on the chords. (Kataras 2015, 79).

Mitsos Mertikas, mentioned by Kataras in his article, came with his nephews Giannis and Grigoris, also pianists, but also with his father-in-law Agapios Masilis, a pianist from Smyrna. All three were leading figures in the music stages of Athens. Mitsos Mertikas was born in Smyrna, about 1900 and died in Athens in 1990. In 2018, his musical archive was given to the Department of Popular and Traditional Music of the Technological Educational Institute of Epirus, now the Department of Music Studies of the University of Ioannina by his daughter Zoe, with the aim of digitizing and cataloguing it, by the Workshop for Piano in Popular Musics (for Mertikas see also Skandali 1991 and 2008).

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<sup>12</sup> “Manolis the Turk seems to have been active on the music stage for more than two decades. In 1936–37 he worked with Stauros Tzouanakis in the music hall ‘O Theios,’ the orchestra included a violin, guitar, piano, voice (Kataras 2014, 261). Additionally, Christos Dimopoulos, a musician who played a three-string bouzouki and was active in the 1950s, mentions in a narrative that he had worked with Stellakis Perpiniadis, Karatapakis and Manolis the Turk (Altis 2008, 74)” (Liaskou 2019, 16). The narration of Konstantinos Dimitriadis, whose godfather was Manolis Mamounas (or Mamonas, according to Dimitriadis himself) is extremely interesting: <http://pikinos.blogspot.com/2015/02/blog-post.html>, accessed February 7, 2024.

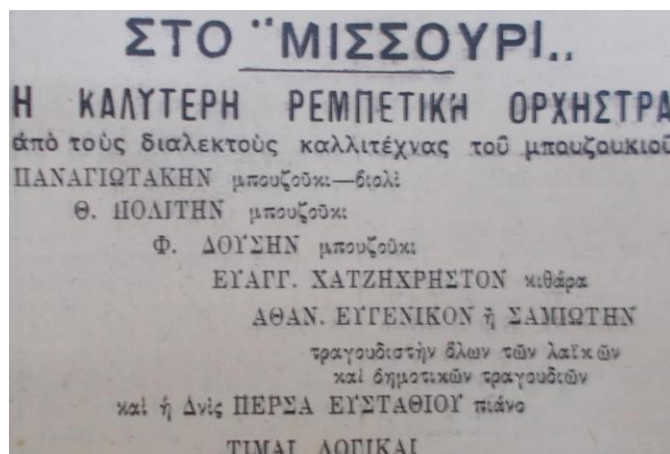
Agapios Masilis (Figure 6) was born in Bornova, Smyrna in 1907 and lived there until 1922, when he came to Greece with his family (mother and two siblings) after the Asia Minor catastrophe. He settled and lived in Athens until 1990. He married Zoe Skomopoulou, a refugee from Constantinople, and had three children (two girls and a boy). According to the testimonies of his family, he was an autodidact musician. He withdrew from the music stage early on due to health reasons, even though he was not old. At home, he had an upright piano and mainly played without sheet music. In the early 1980s, he was confined to a wheelchair and he never played the piano again. He worked in the nightclubs and cabarets of the period. Stefanos Vartanis, popular violinist and composer, was his friend and regular visitor.



**Figure 6.** Agapios Masilis (Mertikas family archive).

The case of Euangelia Margaroni constitutes a special chapter in the examination of the popular piano protagonists, and this because the issue of the presence of women in the world of the Greek popular music culture arises, both on the music stage as well as in recordings (see also Figure 7). Undoubtedly, the musicians' guild always constituted a particular circle, with their own code, as opposed to that of the singers. Margaroni constitutes a special case, as she is one of the few cases of a female presence in the world of the popular music culture, with many years of experience, who not only plays an instrument in the orchestra, but also arranges, harmonizes and inspires cooperation and trust in Vasilis Tsitsanis, who keeps her at his side for 34 years (Ordoulidis

2012, 36).<sup>13</sup> On the one hand, she is the daughter of the santur player Manolis Margaronis, something which means she has practical experience in popular music; she knows how it functions, its distinctive roles and the value system by which it is governed. On the other hand, her studies in classical piano render her part of a more scholarly and obviously literate world and tradition, but also of course a rationale regarding instrumental performance.<sup>14</sup>



**Figure 7.** The newspaper Peiraiki Zoi (2/2/1949): a publication with the name of another female pianist.<sup>15</sup> AT “MISSOURI.” THE BEST REBETIKO ORCHESTRA with the finest bouzouki artists PANAGIOTAKIS bouzouki-violin, TH. POLITIS bouzouki, F. DOUSIS bouzouki, EVANG. HATZICHRISTOS guitar, ATHAN. EVGENIKOS or SAMIOTIS singing all the popular and folk song and Miss Persa Eustathiou piano. REASONABLE PRICES.

Another protagonist, mainly of the music stages, Giorgos Rovertakis, talking in his autobiography about the beginning of the 1930s, mentions:

At the time, playing the bouzouki was a bit of a clandestine affair, Markos [Vamvakaris] had not yet appeared on the scene [Vamvakaris records for the first time approximately in 1933]. And the ones that did exist were not being

<sup>13</sup> Indicative samples of Tsitsanis’s discography, where Margaroni plays the piano: Ta dialehta paidia (Τα διαλεχτά παιδιά), Columbia CG 2828 – DG 6913, Athens, 9 June 1951: <https://youtu.be/3fTsQk5sDZk> [last accessed 7/2/2024]; To karavi (Το καράβι), HMV 7XGA 229 – 7PG 2565, Athens, 24 March 1959: <https://youtu.be/L8G3nIa4d98>, both tracks accessed February 7, 2024.

<sup>14</sup> “Additionally, Lili Nikolesko is another woman we see working with important artists on the popular music stages, not only in this period but also the subsequent one. Through the photographic material (Alexiou 2003, 439) we see her work with Vasilis Tsitsanis in 1949” (Liaskou 2019, 19).

<sup>15</sup> Many thanks to Kostas Vlisidis for the discovery of this historical document.



employed. The rebetiko was played by other instruments; the piano, the violin, the guitar (Schorelis and Oikonomidis 1973, 12).

Rovertakis was born in 1911 and left Smyrna in 1922 to settle in Piraeus with his family. His father died when he was young, so his mother put him in an orphanage with one of his eight siblings, he received some initial musical training there. In Greece, the Smyranean Dimitris Voulgaridis hired him at his cinema “Ilisia.” The silent movies of the time were accompanied by live music. At the “Ilisia” there were two instruments: a violin (Giorgos Dragatsis, nephew of Ogdontakis) and a piano. His enthusiasm with the piano led him to study it for hours, sometimes at the cinema and sometimes at the cabaret next door. Very soon, he followed the profession of musician.<sup>16</sup>

Regarding Smyrna, not only should Aristomenis Kalyviotis and his works be mentioned (2002), but also the many newspapers in circulation there too. Kalyviotis refers to an article by John Veinoglou, who claims that at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century there were 2500 pianos in existence in Smyrna (2002, 42). The material published by Kalyviotis in his own book, as he presents the names of venues with musical instruments, piano importers, tuners, piano teachers etc., reinforces this claim. The fact that some of the earliest recordings of the Estudiantina Sideris, such as the song *Tounte – tounte*,<sup>17</sup> recorded in 1906–7, were conducted with the inclusion of a piano in its orchestra, reinforces, in turn, the dynamic role of the instrument in urban popular music implementations (see Figure 8). The song is known as *Tsopanakos imouna* (τσοπανάκος ήμουνα), and while the piano does not present any special interest regarding performance practices, it highlights the dynamic role and constant presence of the piano in Smyrna.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> A composition by Rovertakis, on which he possibly plays the piano: *Mangika den mou xigiesai* (Μάγκικα δεν μου ξηγιέσαι), Parlophone GO 3857 – B 74111, Athens, 1947: <https://youtu.be/f94mhd-SkTo>, accessed February 7, 2024.

<sup>17</sup> Τούντε – τούντε, Odeon CX 691 – 31330, Constantinople, 1906–7: <https://vmrebetiko.gr/en/item-en/?id=4414>, accessed February 7, 2024.

<sup>18</sup> Another early discographical reference to the piano in the world of the estudiantinas is a recording of the song *S' ekein* (σ' εκείνην), by the Estudiantina Christodoulidis, in 1906 in Constantinople: Odeon CX 707 – No 31315: <https://vmrebetiko.gr/en/item-en/?id=5106>, accessed February 7, 2024. For the Greek estudiantinas see Ordoulidis 2021a, 88–100 and 2021c.



**Figure 8.** Example of the historical discography related to Smyrna and Constantinople. Tounte tounte by the Estudiantina Sideris (Kounadis archive Virtual Museum).

Regarding the *estudiantinas* and their protagonists in Constantinople and Smyrna, it is worth mentioning the trip some of them made to New York, setting off on 8 December 1922 from Constantinople and reaching New York on 8 January 1923. Among others, musicians like Zounarakis and Christodoulidis worked on the ship; all together recorded in New York, on 19 January 1923. In the orchestra, the Italian De Vapoli also participated as a pianist (see Kalyviotis 2009). Two *estudiantinas* in Constantinople well known from the historical discography, are the *Estudiantinas* Zounarakis and Christodoulidis.

In the bands of Smyrna and with the “toys” [instruments] we would express our sorrow in Minor, with violoncellos, pianos, harps, santurs, mandolins, guitars and violins (Papazoglou 1994, 9).

The memoirs of Angela Papazoglou (1994), wife of Vangelis Papazoglou, constitute another vivid source. The latter was a leading figure, not only in Smyrna but also later in Athens. The memoirs refer to many aspects of the piano, but also to the names of the protagonists on the music stages, such as Roupenis, Tsalapatani and Michalakis, names of teachers, venues etc. Not only the pianos, which are connected to Smyranean Europeanization, but also the music in general, characterize the reality of Smyrna, at least regarding its Greek-speaking element. Angela, in one of the many times she mentions the music, talking about the historical events (the Greek army about to disembark, the hopes of the residents to unite with the Greek state etc.), says:

Doum-Doum the big drums  
In the big band of joy  
On the big stage of the world.  
Doum-Doum the big drums  
I finally got a job in freedom  
And my voice buried, centuries of silence  
writhing at my feet.  
Thousands of santurs... Doum-Doum the big drums  
Thousands of pianos... thousands of guitars...  
Thousands of harps... Doum-Doum the drums (Papazoglou 1994, 28–9)

### **Historical discography and the piano**

The indexing and validation of the Greek-speaking historical discography has flourished in the last ten years. One of the substantial improvements made has to do with the documentation of the non-Athenian discography, until then almost eclipsed by scholarly interest in the Athenian. Greek commercial recordings have been found in Constantinople, Smyrna, Athens, Thessaloniki, Cairo, Alexandria, Berlin, London, Milan, New York, Chicago, and New Jersey.

Each of these places had its own characteristics and composed a different condition each time, under different terms. In many cases we find Greek-speaking musicians who are on the move, often due to concerts, recording in places where strong Greek communities were established, such as in Egypt where musicians travelled from Smyrna and Constantinople were often recorded. In America, the migratory currents also carried musicians, who established themselves there and ultimately left a large discographical imprint. A crucial element relates to the construction of local recording and production factories. Until then, factories were found in major European cities where the first and largest companies were usually based, such as Gramophone in London, Pathé in Paris and Lindström in Berlin with its popular Odeon label.<sup>19</sup> They initially sent mobile recording crews to virtually all continents except, of course, America.

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<sup>19</sup> Indicative bibliography regarding the early history of the recording industry: Gronow (1981; 2014), Ewbank and Papageorgiou (1997), Tschmuck (2006), Martland (2013).



Soon factories were constructed in places that cater to the needs of the nearby areas. In Constantinople Orfeon built a factory around 1911, Columbia in Athens in 1931.

Discographical research reveals that musical networks were created rapidly, in which music and musicians dwelled: for example, we see wandering musical melodies in various places in the Mediterranean, the Balkans, Eastern Europe and America,<sup>20</sup> where local musicians became familiar with them and reconstructed them, but also borrowings in performance practice.<sup>21</sup> The capacity of the repertoire is endless, which was de-territorialized and blended with other repertoires, forming, now, glocalized characteristics: the cosmopolitan traits of the large urban centres, in combination with the new technological means, promoted polystylisms and polymorphisms of the musical realities.

It is important to understand the context of recording by mobile workshops, as there were still no suitably designed sites, adequate audio media, specific corporate policies, not even specific local musical identities, as the musicians themselves were often on the go, employing a variety of repertoires, and coming from diverse ethno-cultural groups etc.

In other words, we see the piano in this early discography only if an instrument already exists in one of the sites chosen by the recording workshop. Based on the samples of the early discography, it seems that the places which fulfilled the (rudimentary for the time) requirements had upright pianos, which were also used by the protagonists of high-status musical forms to record their own repertoire. The cost of purchasing a piano was often high, and when it was not, the instrument being heard is in very poor condition. Most of the time, older instruments from Europe arrived in Greece for resale. In this early discography, both in Athens and in America, it seems that companies chose scholarly, literate musicians who performed folk or folk-like (δημώδη, *dimodi*) songs, and of course often compositions by scholarly composers, Greek or foreign. One of the most special cases in the early discography of Athens was Ioannis Sakellaridis, one of the most popular chanting personas of the Orthodox Church.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> See Ordoulidis, 2021b.

<sup>21</sup> A look at the catalogues contained in the absolutely monumental work of Richard Spottswood *Ethnic Music on Records* (1991) is enough to confirm the musical networks of the time. See also the virtual room in Kounadis Archive Virtual Museum, titled “Cosmopolitanism in Greek Historical Discography:” <https://vmrebetiko.gr/en/cosmopolitanism-en/>, accessed February 11, 2024.

<sup>22</sup> For Sakellaridis, see Ordoulidis (2021a).

Sakellaridis left his discographical imprint in the 1900s, recording folk and folk-like songs with piano accompaniment (see Figures 9 and 10).



**Figure 9.** Example of the historical discography of Sakellaridis in Athens. Sta Salona,<sup>23</sup> for piano and voice (Kounadis Archive Virtual Museum).



**Figure 10.** Example of the historical discography of Sakellaridis in Athens. To Erinaki,<sup>24</sup> for piano and voice (Kounadis Archive Virtual Museum).

In Athens, it is also worth mentioning both the Panellinios (Panhellenique) Estudiantina and George Savaris, in whose recordings a piano was used. Their performances swayed between scholarly and popular. The Panellinios Estudiantina seems to have been introduced to Athens by Savaris, and made recordings in the mid-1920s (see

<sup>23</sup> Sta Salona (Στα Σάλωνα), Odeon GX 14 – No 65080, Athens, 1907–8: <https://vmrebetiko.gr/en/item-en/?id=5173>, accessed February 7, 2024.

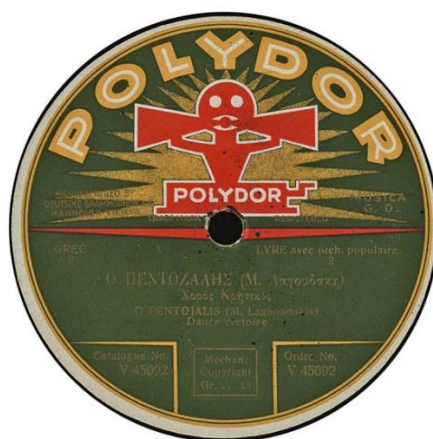
<sup>24</sup> To Erinaki (Το Ερηνάκι), Odeon GX 168 – XG 181 – X 58574, Athens, 1907–8: <https://vmrebetiko.gr/en/item-en/?id=5142>, accessed February 7, 2024.

Figure 11). And Savaris, born in Tinos around 1880, was active in Smyrna and Constantinople as a member of the *estudiantinas*, and eventually moved to Athens.



**Figure 11.** Example from the discography of the Panellinios Estudiantina with the participation of a piano. *To chasisi*<sup>25</sup> (Kounadis Archive Virtual Museum).

In addition, in this pre-bouzouki period in Athens, it is worth mentioning the case of Michalis Lagoudakis, from Sitia, Crete. According to Stauros Kourousis and Konstantinos Kopanitsanos (2016, 111–2), Lagoudakis recorded in Athens in the mid-1920s for the Polydor company six Cretan tunes. In two of these recordings, he plays the violin and is accompanied by a piano (see Figure 12).



**Figure 12.** Sample from the discography of Michalis Lagoudakis, with the participation of a piano. *O pentozalis*<sup>26</sup> (Kounadis Archive Virtual Museum).

<sup>25</sup> *To chasisi* (*To chasisi*), Odeon GA 1045 – GO 24 – A 154033, Athens, 1925: <https://vmrebetiko.gr/en/item-en/?id=10314>, accessed February 7, 2024.

<sup>26</sup> *O pentozalis* (*O pentozalis*), Polydor 4563 ar – V 45092, Athens, 1926: <https://vmrebetiko.gr/en/item-en/?id=5350>, accessed February 7, 2024.

In America, from the 1910s, the personas of Marios Lymberopoulos (see Figure 13), Tetos Dimitriadis (see Figure 14), and Loukianos Kavvadias (see Figure 15) dominated the discography. All three use the piano to the fullest. Especially Kavvadias, who was born in Constantinople in 1879 and later immigrated to America, eventually settled there, founded a music school, and made several recordings in which he performed the piano himself. In addition, Kyriakoula Antonopoulou and Marika Papagika made few recordings where a piano was involved, which according to American records seems to be performed by a woman called “Mrs Virginia” (probably Virginia Magidou).



**Figure 13.** *Pale methysmenos*,<sup>27</sup> a recording by Marios Lymberopoulos in New York (Kounadis Archive Virtual Museum).



**Figure 14.** *Pseutopokadoros*,<sup>28</sup> a recording by Takis Nikolaou, pseudonym of Tetos Dimitriadis, in New York (Kounadis Archive Virtual Museum).

<sup>27</sup> *Pale methysmenos* (Πάλε μεθυσμένος), Columbia 58582-1 – E 3611, New York, ca September 1917: <https://vmrebetiko.gr/en/item-en/?id=4594>, accessed February 7, 2024.

<sup>28</sup> *Pseutopokadoros* (Ψευτοποκαδόρος), Victor Orthophonic CVE 39645 – 68852-B, New York, 1927: <https://vmrebetiko.gr/en/item-en/?id=4269>, accessed February 7, 2024.



**Figure 15.** Hetzaz taksim,<sup>29</sup> a recording with the participation of Loukianos Kavvadias, in New York (Kounadis Archive Virtual Museum).

The appearance of the piano in the discography of Athens became more regular in the era of the local factory, which was built in 1931 while its recording studio started operating in 1936, obviously because in the factory it was a permanent fixture in the recording studio. The fact that in America, in the recordings of the Greek-speaking world, we see the piano firmly established much earlier, is no coincidence, as the factories of the large corporations there constituted the sole condition.<sup>30</sup>

The discographical repertoire which has been collected up to now is diverse: song recordings which could be placed under the “umbrella” of the Café Aman style; recordings belonging to the so-called light and burlesque song, which is often dressed in popular attire, mainly regarding forms, performance practice, the chordal sequences, etc.; recordings of Piraeen rebetiko based on the bouzouki; recordings of contemporary popular and popular-like (λαϊκότροπα, *laikotropa*). The examination of the deployment of the piano by the popular artists highlights an adoption trend of anything coming from “outside” (instruments, forms, aesthetics and so on). As far as instruments are concerned, the history of such appropriations is rich: the clarinet, brass instruments, the violin, the violoncello and so on.

<sup>29</sup> Hetzaz taksim (Χετζάζ ταξιμ), Panhellenion Record 208 A, New York, 1919–1920: <https://vmrebetiko.gr/en/item-en/?id=4946>, accessed February 7, 2024.

<sup>30</sup> For Greek-speaking recordings made in America see Bucuvalas (2019).

### **Analysing samples from the historical discography**

In very few cases do we know any biographical data, much of which is uncertain, of the names of the pianists who took part in recordings. In many cases, we do not even know the names of the contributors. Discographical documentation, especially concerning urban folk-popular music, is one of the thorniest issues in Greek musicology, something which has been touched upon frequently in the past (see Smith 1989 and 1991; Aulin and Vejleskov 1991, 12–23; Pennanen 1995, 2004, 18 and 2005; Kokkonis 2005; Ordoulidis 2012, chapter 3).

The performance technique in many of the pianistic cases that we will examine is extremely interesting, since, on the one hand, it deviates from the customary—for the general public—classical pianistic sound, something which automatically poses issues of aesthetic, and, on the other hand, introduces itself as a field of important musicological value, regarding orchestration manner, applied modality on the piano, popular rhythms, cultural syncretism, polystylism and a multitude of others, whose examination and analysis can provide answers to issues concerning both musicians and musicologists.

The first recording of the historical discography that we will examine was conducted in 1935 in New York. The new Politakia, the legendary *estudiantina* of Smyrna, worked in the lounge of the ocean liner Byron. In two voyages to New York, led by Spyros Peristeris, “orchestrator” of the Piraeen *rebetiko* and son of Aristeidis Peristeris, founder of a Smyranean *estudiantina* and a Corfiot by birth, 16 songs are recorded. One of them titled *Beykos*,<sup>31</sup> for piano and mandolin (Figure 16).

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<sup>31</sup> Βεϊκος (Μπέικος), Orthophonic, CS 89815-1 – S 674 and VI 38-3057, New York, 7 May 1935: <https://vmrebetiko.gr/en/item-en/?id=4916>, accessed February 7, 2024.





**Figure 16.** The record label of Beikos, recorded in 1935 in New York (Kounadis Archive Virtual Museum).

From the way the piano accompanies, we surmise that the pianist is a popular music *insider*. He is familiar with the harmonic landscape of the piece and even though he exhibits no special skill, one can tell that he knows how to set the tempo and groove of the piece, in order to prepare the rhythmic-harmonic foundation for the mandolin. The aggressive, that is abrupt, short in duration and with a particular intonation, staccato of the performance manner of the chasapiko and the I–V degree alternations on the bass played by the left hand, show that he knows the “job.” In the orchestra of the ship Sosos Ioannidis, who is a pianist, also participates (see Figure 17). Comparing the sound of the piano in *Beikos* with other recordings in Athens, on which we know Ioannidis plays, it is safe to surmise that the pianist here too is one and the same.

Sheet No. **5**

### LIST OR MANIFEST OF ALIENS EMPLOYED ON THE VESSEL AS MEMBERS OF CREW

Required under Act of Congress of February 5, 1917, to be delivered to the United States immigration officer by the representatives of any vessel having such aliens on board upon arrival at port of the United States

MAY 5 1935

Vessel "BYRON" arriving at NEW YORK from the port of PINAKOS ON APR. 19, 35

(1) No. on list	(2) State whether member of crew last preceding voyage of vessel to U. S.	(3) NAME IN FULL Family name Given name	(4) Length of service at sea	(5) Position in ship's company	(6) SHIPPED OR ENGAGED When Where	(7) Whether to be paid off or dis- charged at port of arrival	(8) Whether able to read	(9) Age	(10) Sex	(11) Race*	(12) Nationality	(13) Height	(14) Weight	(15) Physical marks, peculiarities, or disease	(16) REMARKS Including names and dates of other ships
1		TSEKOS PANAGIOTIS	10 YRS	LINER KEEPER	APR. 19, 35 PINAKOS	NO	YES	48	M	GREEK	GREEK	5,9	--	NONE	
2		PERVESSIS ANTONIOS	5 DO	BAKER	DO DO	NO	YES	47	M	DO	DO	5,7	--	DO	
3		CAVALAS ZANNIS	5 DO	DO	DO DO	NO	YES	37	M	DO	DO	5,9	--	DO	
4		FOUNTOS VASSILIUS	10 DO	DO	DO DO	NO	YES	60	M	DO	DO	5,7	--	DO	
5		VELIGORANIOS ANTONIOS	7 DO	BUTCHER	DO DO	NO	YES		M	DO	DO	5,8	--	DO	Did not sail PL.
6		BOUGIOURIS MARCOS	11 DO	BAKER	DO DO	NO	YES	53	M	DO	DO	5,8	--	DO	
7		KANANALIOS GEORGIOS	4 DO	DO	DO DO	NO	YES		M	DO	DO	5,8	--	DO	Did not sail PL.
8		OLYBOS PERIKLIS	1 DO	DO	DO DO	NO	YES	60	M	DO	DO	5,9	--	DO	Did not sail PL.
9	FIRST	SAVARIS GEORGIOS		MUSICIAN	DO DO	NO	YES	57	M	DO	DO	5,9	--	DO	
10	FIRST	IOANNIDIS SOTIRIOS		DO	DO DO	NO	YES	40	M	DO	DO	5,7	--	DO	
11	FIRST	VIDALIS GEORGIOS		DO	DO DO	NO	YES	54	M	DO	DO	5,6	--	DO	
12	FIRST	MILIARIS IOANNIS		DO	DO DO	NO	YES	41	M	DO	DO	5,7	--	DO	
13	FIRST	MAKRIS SYRFANOS		DO	DO DO	NO	YES	64	M	DO	DO	5,6	--	DO	
14	FIRST	PERISTERIS SPIROS		DO	DO DO	NO	YES	39	M	DO	DO	5,7	--	DO	
15	FIRST	ZERVOS ALEXANDROS		MOVIE OPERATOR	DO DO	NO	YES	52	M	DO	DO	5,6	--	DO	
16	FIRST	AKARLIS KRISTOS		DO DO	DO DO	NO	YES	39	M	DO	DO	5,8	--	DO	
17		MITSOYAKIS MICHAEL	8 DO	CHIEF COOK	DO DO	NO	YES	46	M	DO	DO	5,9	--	DO	
18		VALMAS ZANNIS	8 DO	COOK	DO DO	NO	YES	47	M	DO	DO	5,7	--	DO	Did not sail PL.
19		LAKKAS KONSTANTINOS	3 DO	DO	DO DO	NO	YES	56	M	DO	DO	5,8	--	DO	Did not sail PL.
20		OLYBOS AGAMEMNOS	4 DO	DO	DO DO	NO	YES	37	M	DO	DO	5,6	--	DO	Did not sail PL.
21		ARVANITAKIS KRISTOS	5 DO	DO	DO DO	NO	YES		M	DO	DO	5,6	--	DO	See 111, 8/16
22		RAMATEIS ALEXANDROS	8 DO	DO	DO DO	NO	YES		M	DO	DO	5,5	--	DO	Did not sail PL.
23		PAPAGEORGIOU DEMETRIOS	18 DO	PERMAN	DO DO	NO	YES	56	M	DO	DO	5,8	--	DO	Did not sail PL.
24		GIANNAROPOULOS KRISTOPHOS	1 DO	DO	DO DO	NO	YES	27	M	DO	DO	5,6	--	DO	See 111, 9/16
25		TSILIS STEFANOS	8 DO	DO	DO DO	NO	YES	40	M	DO	DO	5,6	--	DO	Did not sail PL.
26		ZYSSIKATOS DEMANUEL	8 DO	DO	DO DO	NO	YES	24	M	DO	DO	5,7	--	DO	Did not sail PL.
27		PANDIMOS ANTONIOS	4 DO	COOK	DO DO	NO	YES	59	M	DO	DO	5,6	--	DO	Did not sail PL.
28		SAKRAS MICHAEL	10 DO	PERMAN	DO DO	NO	YES	52	M	DO	DO	5,7	--	DO	Did not sail PL.
29		VELIGORANIOS IOANNIS	13 DO	COOK	DO DO	NO	YES	57	M	DO	DO	5,8	--	DO	Did not sail PL.
30		ANTIPASS ANDRILON	3 DO	PERMAN	DO DO	NO	YES	36	M	DO	DO	5,7	6	DO	Did not sail PL.

\*The list of races on back hereof.  
Note.—Failure to furnish full or correct information in columns (3), (6), (7), and (8) is punishable by a fine of ten dollars for each alien. See other side.

Immigrant Inspector

**Figure 17.** The passenger list of the Byron, on which we see the musicians: Savaris, Ioannidis, Vidalis, Milliaris, Makris, Peristeris (<https://heritage.statueofliberty.org> [last accessed 7/2/2024]).<sup>32</sup>

The sound of the piano in the following recordings is very close to the sound of *Beikos*. It does not accompany in the “classic” pianistic manner but chooses an “à la popular” manner of performing, that is, characterized by the aggressive staccato in the style, with the rationale of the “bass-piano”—the left hand plays octaves in the lower part of the keyboard usually performing the I–V of every chord, performing abruptly

<sup>32</sup> Many thanks to Tony Klein for pointing out to me the passenger list of the Byron.



and with intense intonation the notes and/or creating basslines from one chord to another, while the right hand in the middle or higher part of the keyboard plays chords in variant ways (for more examples see Table 1).

Title	Label	Matrix	Catalogue	Rec. date	Link
Tatauliano chasapiko	Columbia (USA)	W 205348-2	CO 56031F	May 1926 ca	<a href="https://youtu.be/WnNnw14Y5fI">https://youtu.be/WnNnw14Y5fI</a> accessed February 7, 2024
Karotseris	Victor (USA)	BVE 40605-4	VI 80322 & S 327 & V 19021	7 Nov 1927	<a href="https://bit.ly/3j9yw8n">https://bit.ly/3j9yw8n</a> accessed February 7, 2024
Gia des me pos	Victor (USA)	CVE 57912	VI 58045	13 Dec 1929	<a href="https://youtu.be/UTR8BKHLNno">https://youtu.be/UTR8BKHLNno</a> accessed February 7, 2024
San roufao to krasi	Victor (USA)	CVE 57914	VI 58045	13 Dec 1929	<a href="https://youtu.be/xxKVxTofmyo">https://youtu.be/xxKVxTofmyo</a> accessed February 7, 2024
Vre manges fylachtheite	Odeon (Greece)	GO 2056	GA 1722	1934	<a href="https://youtu.be/aXYOdM5lbI">https://youtu.be/aXYOdM5lbI</a> accessed February 7, 2024
I babesa	Orthophonic (USA)	89814	ORS 672	1935	<a href="https://youtu.be/Le7tEN5TvCc">https://youtu.be/Le7tEN5TvCc</a> accessed February 7, 2024
Ithela na 'cha dyo kardies	HMV (Greece)	OGA 652	AO 2441	1937	<a href="https://youtu.be/MPcuz1ppPsI">https://youtu.be/MPcuz1ppPsI</a> accessed February 7, 2024
Ennoia sou Anastasia	HMV (Greece)	OGA 840	AO 2518	1938	<a href="https://youtu.be/QjKbpGNaNcc">https://youtu.be/QjKbpGNaNcc</a> accessed February 7, 2024

**Table 1.** Chasapikos in the Greek-speaking discography with the technique of “bass-piano.”

It is worth mentioning certain details regarding the second song of the above table, extracted from the discographical lists of the electronic archive *Discography of American Historical Recordings* (DAHR, <https://adp.library.ucsb.edu> [last accessed 7/2/2024]) as well as the electronic archive of Erik Butterworth ([www.goldov.com/butterw/emdb](http://www.goldov.com/butterw/emdb) [last accessed 7/2/2024]). The violin is played by Lazaros Constantine or Constantin who is registered as of Romanian descent. The piano is played by Michael Corm. After communicating with Tony Klein and Tony Russell (researchers of historical recordings) the following information resulted:<sup>33</sup> The New York inventory of 1925 contains similar Greek names and surnames: Lazar, Lazarus, Lazaros, Constantine, Constantino, Constantinos. However, the only name which is accompanied by the characterization “musician” is that of Lazar Constantino, who, as his wife Pasha, comes from Russia. Michael Corm, in the 1940 inventory, declares himself as a “concert pianist.” According to the DAHR list, the accounting ledgers of Victor have the piece in question registered as Greek.

<sup>33</sup> Communication through electronic correspondence on 5th August 2016.

It must be noted that in the Greek-speaking discography of America, on the one hand discography validation is easier because of the effective organization of a large part of the material and, on the other hand, many of the characteristics of the repertoire appear different from that of the major metropolises (Athens, Constantinople).<sup>34</sup> One of these has to do with instrumentation and the more frequent appearance of the piano in a leading role.

Another interesting piece of evidence deals with the fact that there are many recordings in which the only accompanying instrument is the piano, something which indicates that a different trend prevails from the eminent typical orchestra of the Piraeen rebetiko (bouzouki-guitar). The fact that most of this type of recordings were conducted in America presents special research interest. Even more so when we deal with songs that have already been recorded in Greece, using the orchestra of the Piraeen rebetiko typical of the time, while the same songs, in the recordings of America, change this classical orchestra and in the new type the piano takes on a role.

The next audio example is a recording from 1936, Athens, composed by Kostas Skarvelis and titled *Agapa ti manoula mou*. The piano has a more dominant role, as it performs not only the introduction but also the other parts, at the same time playing on the vocal parts.<sup>35</sup> In the next piece, by Kostas Karipis, also recorded in 1936, the piano has a similar role, sharing the introduction with the violin. In both recordings, the embellishments of the right hand are of special interest, as well as the sense of a “saloon”<sup>36</sup> which the instrument grants the recording, which is titled *Ti to les kai den to kaneis*.<sup>37</sup>

The next recording constitutes a special case. First of all, it is the popular *Minore manes* of Smyrna,<sup>38</sup> recorded for the first time around 1908, a musical pattern which we see at least 50 more times in Greek discography until the 1950s (see Ordoulidis, 2018). The example in question was recorded in Greece and it is credited to Spyros

<sup>34</sup> See also Ordoulidis 2021d.

<sup>35</sup> *Agapa ti manoula mou* (Αγάπα τη μανούλα μου), Columbia CG 1485 – DG 6259, Athens, 1936: <https://youtu.be/9F5FrmpDnwY>, accessed February 7, 2024.

<sup>36</sup> Rhythmic structures in triplets, specific embellishments of the right hand, responses with specific chromatic ascending structures in a major environment, specific descending chordal analysis.

<sup>37</sup> *Ti to les kai den to kaneis* (Τι το λες και δεν το κάνεις), HMV OGA 442 – AO 2362, Athens, 1936: [https://youtu.be/8YjCUB\\_8oQc](https://youtu.be/8YjCUB_8oQc), accessed February 7, 2024.

<sup>38</sup> It concerns the gazel form, popular in Ottoman music, which we see in Greek-speaking discography as manes or amanes. The minore manes is a Greek-style voice improvisation with rhythmical accompaniment and it constitutes a very dynamic entity, which developed into a production musical form, a pattern for new musical melodies, but it also experienced multiple unadulterated repetitions. Regarding gazel and manes see for example: Feldman 1993; O’Connell 2003; Pennanen 2004, 9–12, 21; Kounas 2010 and 2019; Kokkonis 2017, 97.

Peristeris, who possibly also plays the piano. Due to the fact that Peristeris is familiar with the condition of Smyrna, the whole manes seems to depend on him, that is, the piano.<sup>39</sup> Spyros Peristeris is a key persona in the urban popular, a protagonist early on, from the music stages of Smyrna, and later artistic director of Odeon-Parlophone in Athens. In discography but also in photographs on music stages we see him also as a pianist (see Figure 18). From his early references in Athens, we see him in the club “Mourouzis,” in 1924 participating in the orchestra as a pianist. About ten years later, we see him again as a pianist on the music stage with Vasilis Tsitsanis.



**Figure 18.** Spyros Peristeris on the music stage as a pianist (Tsitsanis archive).

As far as the “exchange” between scholarly and popular musicians is concerned, and their borrowings in artistic languages, a rather illustrative example is the case of Yorgos Bacanos. By religion, a Christian, a resident of Constantinople during the switch from the condition of the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Democracy, of gypsy stock and, Greek-speaking. He was born in 1900 and died in 1977. Bacanos is known for the redefinition and popularity which the oud acquired.<sup>40</sup> Despite this, perhaps influenced by the Europeanization of the Ottoman Empire, he records with a piano as well. In his historical taksim, recorded circa 1928,<sup>41</sup> he uses the same technique as that used in the gazel sung by Kemal Bey, some years later. In these recording, the effort to

<sup>39</sup> Minore manes, skilro to pepromeno mou (Μινόρε μανές, σκληρό το πεπρωμένο μου), Odeon GO 2067 – GA 1766, Athens, 1934: [https://youtu.be/gxNt\\_tWP8kA](https://youtu.be/gxNt_tWP8kA), accessed February 7, 2024.

<sup>40</sup> Regarding Bacanos, see Bacanos (1997) and Andreou (2014).

<sup>41</sup> Piyano İle Taksim, Odeon CO 320 – RA 202521, Istanbul, 1928: <https://youtu.be/tlEJ8GXBWKA>, accessed February 7, 2024.

implement the *kanoon* technique is evident. Technology and the sound architecture of the piano seem to help Bacanos not only to implement but also to evolve it on the spot. All this in a *taksim* in which, theoretically, he must adhere to a specific composition form, many times with the rationale of the “theoretically orthodox.” In his attempt to achieve this goal the piano does not seem to hinder Bacanos who complies with a traditional perspective regarding melodic development (*seyir*) of the makam Hicazkâr. If nothing else, Bacanos reveals that he has fully comprehended the mechanics of the instrument, how it “functions,” something which helps him to transcend the mimicked *kanoon*. Bacanos dismisses the theoretical canons and grants us historical recordings, with the piano outlining the in-between, of West and East, a pragmatic place of a period which is characterized by the *dialogical reciprocity* among cultural diversities.

Bacanos, however, is a protagonist in popular repertoires too. That is, he performs at night in music halls. This type of repertoire, again with the piano, is recorded with his brother Alekos, who plays the kemence: *Arap Çiftetellisi* (also known as *Rast Oyun Havası*).<sup>42</sup> Yorgos accompanies his brother in a singular manner. What is interesting is the structure, which passes from one section of the piece to the other. Evidently, they perform together and feel artistic familiarity with each other. On the other hand, Yorgos seems to know the instrument, and in combination with knowing the repertoire well, he lays the rhythmic-harmonic foundation for Alekos, transcending the theoretical issues of the equal-tempered/untempered dipole. The way in which he creates sound on the piano is something worthy of analytical examination. He seems to possess a singular perception of the keyboard, the sound colours of the instrument but also the implementation of modality on the piano. So far, twelve recordings where he appears to play the piano have been partially validated.

These recordings of Bacanos are one of those special moments when the popular reveals its aesthetic substance. This substance lies between the two charged dipoles, East–West and scholarly–popular, “taking a stand” and not caring about the theoretical literature which, in any case, came after its creation. With a more technical language, it is amazing how Bacanos managed the micro-interval language of the lyre in *Rast oyun havası* and he accompanied it with an instrument, which theoretically cannot recreate the same intervals, it can, however, “communicate,” showing that Bacanos knows this “language.” In essence, breaking away from these theoretical dictates,

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<sup>42</sup> Arap Çiftetellisi, Odeon RX 131543, Istanbul, circa 1940: <https://youtu.be/kIGd3mDRXJc>, accessed February 7, 2024.

Bacanos transforms the interval diversity of the piano into an advantage, proposing, through his recordings, a different way of performing with the instrument; another “language” with which the instrument can articulate “speech” and be a protagonist.<sup>43</sup>

## Epilogue

In this article we have attempted a general overview of the available categories and types of documentation regarding the research concerning the presence and the role of the piano in the popular music of the Greek-speaking world. The overview was accompanied by samples of these types of documentation. In the future, the indexing and validation of these sources will greatly contribute to the crystallization of the image of the instrument in this research. In addition, we wanted to cite a sample of the recording corpus that has been collected so far, in order to demonstrate the repertoire range and the diversity observed in performance practices. The piano, like other accompanying instruments in popular orchestras, has built its own identities in terms of ways of performing. Popular musicians “pulled” it towards the aesthetics of the repertoires they served each time they adopted it and built new languages of expression. Clearly, the whole issue is directly related to several key issues, such as social and technological developments, within a historical context long in duration and large in geographical dispersion, which starts from the industrial revolution and reaches up to the birth of the nation-states and the phenomena observed in their own histories. Regarding the historical discography, although as mentioned the research has advanced considerably, there are many and, in many cases, perhaps unsolvable problems, such as finding the names of the protagonists who took part in the recordings, but also of course the indexing and validation of as large a volume of recordings as possible. The instrument, like the repertoires in general, displays “parallel lives,” depending on the location where the recordings take place. This is an extremely serious issue, as repertoires are performed in different aesthetic terms in each region, often by the same

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<sup>43</sup> A photograph of Bacanos on the piano can be found here: <https://bit.ly/3mYoVRp>, accessed February 7, 2024. Although the article is not concerned with modern discography and repertoires, it is worth mentioning the case of Stavros Xarchakos, a literate composer who belongs to the school of popular-like composers. In the LP album released in 1968 titled “Markos our teacher” (Markos o daskalos mas, Μάρκος ο δάσκαλός μας), Xarchakos records a taksim for piano, which he probably performs himself. This is the song titled O kavouras (Ο κάβουρας). In this taksim Xarchakos shows that he has listened to the taksim of Bacanos, whose articulation and technique he emulates: [https://youtu.be/GR\\_zFxHojZA](https://youtu.be/GR_zFxHojZA), accessed February 7, 2024.

musicians who recorded them elsewhere earlier, which opens the door to even more research issues. Finally, the whole issue of the presence of the piano in these repertoires is not a museum issue, with a beginning and an end. On the contrary, its presence and its diversity of expression is enriched over the years, and continues to play an active role in the more modern genres too, such as the popular-like songs of scholarly composers, such as Manos Hadjidakis and Mikis Theodorakis. Moreover, quite often, pianist-composers emerge, whose work is extremely interesting in terms of the role they give to the instrument and the way in which they compose popular-like songs, as for example in the cases of Mimis Plessas, Stavros Kougioumtzis and Giannis Spanos. To this day, performance practices continue to shape and evolve in parallel with artistic trends, finding new avenues of expression.

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