

# **Three Byzantine Odes for Soprano and Instrumental Ensemble by Yannis Andreou Papaioannou: Reflections of the Byzantine Chant on the Personal Style of the Composer**

**Γιάννη Ανδρέου Παπαϊωάννου Τρεις Βυζαντινές Ωδές για σοπράνο και ενόργανο σύνολο: αντικατοπτρισμοί του βυζαντινού μέλους στο προσωπικό ιδίωμα του συνθέτη**

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## **Abstract**

Yannis Andreou Papaioannou forms his personal style in his late period (1966-1969); this specific style is outlined in this paper, the aim of which is to point out reflections of the Byzantine chant on significant compositional parameters of the work *Three Byzantine Odes* for Soprano and Instrumental Ensemble (AKI-Nt 185). To examine the *Odes*, it is important to define these significant parameters: the tempo, the vocal part melodic lines and the instrumental part composition. There is particular emphasis on the study of the vocal part, in which one can detect notation material originating from the dominant notes of the Mode in which the Byzantine chant was originally written. Furthermore, Papaioannou uses various means to compose the vocal part, where the human element is seen in opposition to the divine one; these two elements, at one time, join each other in a dialogue while, at another, they are vividly described through the narration of the events. This parametrical analysis approach is recommended for all Papaioannou's late works, which follow the nontonal and metaserial techniques serving Papaioannou's compositional purposes. Within the scope of a brief literary approach of the *Odes*, an attempt is made to explain their meaning, in order to highlight the continuity of this work, a continuity which elevates the *Three Byzantine Odes* to a trilogy describing the Humanization, the Passion and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

## **Prologue-Historical framework**

Yannis Andreou Papaioannou studied thoroughly Byzantine Music during his second period (1944-1952). He composed *Prelude and Choral* for Choir and String Orchestra (AKI-Nt 98)<sup>1</sup> in 1944 and harmonized *Four Hymns of the Holy Week* (AKI-Nt 126) in 1948. From

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1. The numbering of the works follows that of the Third Edition of *Papaionnou's Complete Catalogue of Works* (Moschos, Xanthoudakis, Ntourou, Nakas The music House, Athens 2010).

1950 onwards he focused on studying and teaching modern composition techniques. During his late period (1966-89), on the occasion of the 2nd New Religious Music Week held in Kassel, West Germany, in 1967, he composed *Three Byzantine Odes* for Soprano and Instrumental Ensemble (AKI-Nt 185) based on texts by Theophanes Graptos, Sophronios and John Damaskenos. The work was completed on December 26, 1966, just three days before the composer completed the cantata *The Funeral of Sarpedon* (AKI-Nt 186) based on poetry by C. P. Cavafy. The *Odes* are the only late period work, in which the composer sets Byzantine texts to music. The work was performed in St. Martin Church, in Kassel, on March 30, 1967 by soprano Errika Margraf under the baton of Hermann Emmerling. It follows the nontonal and metaserial techniques characterizing and forming Papaioannou's late personal idiom but it is still influenced by Byzantine chant. Although the composer's personal style is not to be discussed in detail at this point, his specific idiom will be outlined, so as to highlight the reflections of the Byzantine chant on some basic compositional parameters of the *Three Byzantine Odes*.

### **1. The personal style of Y.A. Papaioannou**

This style is in accordance with the composer's purposes from which he rarely diverges and which can be detected throughout all his late vocal and instrumental works. However, his aims in certain works must not be confused with components of style, as they are usually related with previous compositional periods. For instance, the use of twelve-tone series in Papaioannou's last period constitutes a compositional parameter for certain works but should not be considered as a general purpose of the composer. So, dodecaphonism is not directly associated with his late-period personal style. Indeed, his personal style trades seem to be mainly the following:

- combination of serial and nontonal techniques;
- use of the timbre as structural component of the work;
- search for new instrumental techniques enriched with special effects;
- creation of long melodic lines;
- utilization of controlled aleatoric components;

- tempo and time signature changes (used to distinguish between the different parts of the work);
- existence of varying rhythmic and melodic “cells” throughout the work;
- syllabic approach as to the setting to music (as a rule);
- limited use of melismas (melodic embellishments);
- variety of instrumental ensembles supporting the vocal part; and
- composition of brief song cycles as homogenous works, often based on texts written by different poets, as it is the case of the *Three Byzantine Odes*.

An examination of the *Three Byzantine Odes* reveals many of the composer’s above mentioned purposes, which can be considered as basic compositional parameters of the work. The aim of this paper is to approach the parameters where one can detect reflections of Byzantine Chant. Some specificities regarding the tempo, the composition of the vocal and instrumental parts, the coexistence of these parts, as well as the way the composer puts the texts into music are directly related with the fact that Papaioannou sets Byzantine texts (and not just any kind of text) to music.

## 2. The *Odes*

The manuscript of *Ode A* bears the title *Ἀδέτω σοι, Δέσποινα* (*David, O Lady, shall sing to thee*) and it is included in the *Canon to the Annunciation of Theotokos (Mother of God)* by Theophanes Graptos. It is a slow *katabasia* and it is chanted during the Paschal Morning Office (Orthros). It is sung in the same way as *Ἀνοίξω το στόμα μου* (*I shall open my mouth*) in Mode 4. The gender is diatonic and subtle. The subject matter of *Ode A* is the announcement to the Virgin Mary that she would conceive and give birth to the Son of God. The dialogue between Archangel Gabriel and Virgin Mary suggests the chastity of the Mother of God and the omnipotence of the Lord.

The manuscript of *Ode B*<sup>2</sup> bears the title *ὦ πώς* (*O, how?*) and it is a Doxastikon by Sophronios. It is sung in Mode Plagal 2. The gender is chromatic and powerful. *Ode B* is a paraphrase of the troparion *Τάδε λέγει Κύριος τοις Ιουδαίοις* (*That is what the Lord tells the Jews*). It is divided into two sections: an introduction in which the narrator expresses his sense of wonder about the unjust condemnation of Jesus, and a text referring to the words of the

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2. The Doxastikon *ὦ πώς* (*Oh, how*) is called *Ode B* by the composer.

Lord, in which the magnificence and the omnipotence of the divine element is contrasted with the ingratitude and the pettiness of the human nature.

The manuscript of *Ode C* bears the title *Αναστάσεως ημέρα* (*Resurrection Day*) and it is the hirmos of *Ode A* from John Damaskenos's *Easter Canon* (or *Canon of Pascha*). It is sung in Mode 1. The gender is diatonic and subtle. The subject matter of this ode is the exaltation of the Resurrection of the Lord, the victory of life over death and the passage to eternity.

### **3. Reflections of the Byzantine chant on basic compositional parameters of the *Three Byzantine Odes***

#### **3.1. On the composition of the vocal part**

The basic compositional components of the vocal part are the dominant notes (d.n.)<sup>3</sup> of the Modes and the contrast between the divine and the human elements. In this part, one can detect some of the composer's fundamental principles applied to all his late vocal music works: extended nontonal melodic lines; varied rhythmic and melodic formulae, articulations and dynamics; and long ascending intervals in accented syllables of words of essential meaning.

##### **3.1.1. The dominant notes of the Modes and their role in the composition of the vocal part**

In connection with the hirmological part<sup>4</sup> (*Odes A, C*), it can be assumed that, by converting conventionally the Byzantine Modes to the Western Music notation system<sup>5</sup>, the dominant notes of Mode 4 are E, G (Βου, Δι), while these of Mode 1 are D, G (Πα, Δι). In the sticherarical part<sup>6</sup>, the dominant notes of Mode Plagal 2 are D, G, A (Πα, Δι, Κε). Therefore, according to the above remarks, the following can be noted:

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3. d.n.: dominant note (abbreviation).

4. *Odes A* and *C* are Canons. Therefore, the dominant notes are defined as such according to the hirmological part.

5. *Ode A*: Mode 4: E, F, G, A, B, C, D, E. *Ode B*: Mode Plagal 2: D, E flat, F sharp, G, A, B flat, C sharp, D (chromatic syntonic scale), and *Ode C*: Mode 1: D, E, F, G, A, B, C, D (in this descending motion, B becomes B flat).

6. *Ode B* is a Doxastikon. Therefore, the dominant notes are defined as such according to the sticherarical part.

**In Ode A:** regarding the composition of the vocal part, special emphasis is put on the use of the dominant notes of Mode 4; these notes are often used in phrase openings or closings and they are heard on the strong beat of the measure, after an upbeat (arsis). More rarely, the dominant notes compose phrase sections in combination with other notes of the Mode. Namely:

Bar 16i<sup>7</sup>: phrase opening with B-E-F-G. The ascending 4th B-E puts emphasis on the first three notes of Mode 4, where E and G are d.n.;

bar 18i: phrase opening with d.n. G;

bar 33i: phrase opening with d.n. E;

bar 36i: the melisma selected for the word *σύλληψιν* (*conception*) is an 8va: from E to E;

bar 37v and 38i: emphasis on d.n. E;

bar 39iv: phrase opening with d.n. E;

bar 48ii, iii: phrase closing with d.n. G;

bar 49iii: emphasis on d.n. E;

bar 50ii: phrase opening by repeating d.n. G;

bar 51i, ii: phrase section suggesting Mode 4;

bar 52i-iv: phrase with emphasis on d.n. E, G;

bar 58ii: phrase closing with d.n. G;

bar 59iii-iv: phrase opening with emphasis on d.n. G;

bar 61i: phrase opening with d.n. G;

bar 62iii and 63iii: phrase opening with d.n. E and emphasis on d.n. G in the melisma used to set to music the word *Θεού* [*of God*]; and

bar 64iv: d.n. E on the accented syllable of the word *περαίνεται* [*are accomplished*].

**In Ode B:** the dominant notes of Mode Plagal 2 are stressed, as in *Ode A*, but still not so frequently. Namely:

Bar 6: opening of the melos with emphasis on d.n. G;

bar 12iv-v: emphasis on d.n. A in the melisma used for the word *θανάτω* (*to death*);

bar 19v: phrase opening with d.n. A;

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7. The Roman numerals refer to music sections within the same bar (a section being a crotchet).

bar 23i: phrase closing with d.n. A;

bar 24ii: idem;

bar 30i: phrase opening with d.n. A;

bar 32: emphasis on d.n. G, D; and

bar 41iii-iv and bar 42i: emphasis on d.n. D, A in the melisma used for the word *Μακρόθυμε* (*Forbearing*).

Moreover, the composer selects notes “rotating” around the axis of d.n. G and utilizes the intervals between the notes, with the 20-moria interval (three semitones or minor 3rd) characterizing Mode Plagal 2 being the most important; specifically, the notes B flat-G-F sharp, i.e. a combination of minor 3rd and minor 2nd intervals. This relationship between the intervals is transferred to bars 7-8 (A flat-F-E) functioning thus as a precursor of the original notation material which follows in bars 9, 10 and it is repeated towards the end of the vocal part (melos) in bar 41. In-between, the composer transfers this relationship between the intervals (bar 14iii) and variates it, principally in the following ways : a. with contrary motion (bars 26, 33); b. with changes in the layout of the intervals (bars 10-11, 12, 14, 16-17, 19, 26, 29, 42); c. with changes in the layout of the intervals and contrary motion (canceric: bars 16ii, 23); d. with contrary motion between the intervals, as well as with a conversion of one of the two intervals to major (bars 14, 15, 16 -with ascending motion-, 20, 30). Finally, some other interval combinations may be considered as more distant variations. In these combinations, the notation material becomes broader and forms melodic patterns of larger width (bars 25, 27 -minor 2nd and perfect 4th; bar 26 -minor 2nd and perfect 4th; bar 32 -minor 2nd and diminished 5th-; bar 42 -minor 2nd and augmented 5th, etc.).

The above mentioned notation material is the basic component of the vocal part of *Ode B*. However, this material is occasionally detected in the other two *Odes* and it constitutes a unifying factor for the work.

**In *Ode C*:** the d.n. of Mode 1, just as in *Ode A*, is particularly emphasized but this emphasis is not as frequent as in *Ode B*. Namely:

Bars 9v- 10i: melos opening with the first three notes of Mode 1 (D-E-F-E), with D being the d.n.;

bar 33i-ii: see bars 9-10;

bar 33iv: phrase opening with d.n. D;

bar 35iii-iv and bar 36i-ii: phrase opening with d.n. D. The phrase refers to Mode 1 mainly because there is a chromatic transition of B to B flat, although B flat is not heard in the descending motion of the vocal part (melos);

bar 37iv-v: phrase closing with d.n. G;

bar 38i-iii: phrase opening with d.n. G. The phrase refers to the descending motion of Mode 1.

bar 56i: phrase closing with d.n. D;

bar 57ii-58i: emphasis on d.n. D, G;

bar 62ii: use of d.n. G to set the word *αιώνιος* (*eternal*) to music; and

bar 63ii-iii: use of a perfect 4th ascending interval (A-D) to underline d.n. D, although the melos ends on C sharp.

### **3.1.2. Human and divine elements: their opposition through dialogue and narration in the *Odes***

In *Ode A* the human and the divine elements are in contrast through Virgin Mary's dialogue with the Archangel. The part of the Holy Mother is given in successions of short intervals without melismas or complicated rhythmic patterns. The part of the Archangel consists of sequences of long intervals culminating through varied rhythmic patterns with acciaccaturas or dotted notes. In *Odes B & C*, these two elements are opposed to each other through the narration of the events (in *Ode B* the narrator is the Lord himself), while the expressive means used by the composer remain the same.

### **3.1.3. Setting *The Odes* to music**

One of the basic features of Papaioannou's personal style is the fact that he places melismas on words of important meaning. However, in the *Byzantine Odes*, the composer adds melismas to words that already bear melismas in their original Byzantine chant form (such as *ιαμάτων* [*for the healings*], *μακρόθυμε* [*Forbearing*], *θανάτω* [*to death*] in *Ode B*; *αιώνιος* [*eternal*] in *Ode C*). Furthermore, he puts music into words and sentences according to the importance of their meaning. A good example, amongst others, is the word *ουρανοί* (*heaven*) in *Ode C*, for which the composer chooses an ascending motion and an ascending melisma. As to the sentence *εκ γης προς ουρανόν ο Θεός ημάς διεβίβασεν* (*from earth to heaven, hath our Lord caused us to pass over*), the ascending melodic line reaches its highest

tone peak in the word *ουρανός* (*heaven*). From this peak, the line starts to go down to meet the words *ημάς διεβίβασεν* (*caused us to pass over*), following a descending motion of one and a half octave.

### **3.2. On the composition of the instrumental part**

Generally, the instrumental parts play a significant dramaturgical role in Papaioannou's late vocal works. These parts contribute to the progression of the work: they often narrate the events so as to serve a sort of theatrical and musical economy. Their structural components are rhythmic and melodic formulae, performed and articulated with a variety of dynamics, but avoiding wide melodic lines. Their role is modified, when they coexist with the vocal part, which they support and heighten by creating sound backgrounds of astonishing timbre richness.

The instrumental ensemble of the *Three Byzantine Odes* includes: Flutes I-II, Clarinet, Bass Clarinet in B-flat, Celesta, Harp, Piano, Percussion, Viola and Cello. The instrumental parts of the *Three Byzantine Odes* bear all these characteristics. Furthermore, the dominant notes of the Modes appear in various instruments, for instance in the cello part:

1. With long-note values.

In *Ode A*: bars 1, 12-13, 14-16i, 18-20i, 50: d.n. E; bars 21i-23ii, 65: d.n. G.

In *Ode B*: bar 9: d.n. A; bars 11, 19-20, 48: d.n. D; μ. 36-37: d.n. G. In *Ode C*: bars 2iii-iv, 26v-27, 29iv-v-30, 41: d.n. D; bars 13-14-15, 37-38iii, 51iv-v: d.n. G.

2. At the beginning or at the end of a phrase or of a rhythmic/melodic pattern, performed pizz.

In *Ode A*: bars 4iii, 52v, 58: d.n. E; bar 62: d.n. E, G in unison pizz.; and bar 66: d.n. E. In *Ode B*: bars 4i, 21: d.n. G; and in *Ode C*: bars 3iv, 8iii, 47ii: d.n. D.

Finally, the opening unison of each *Ode* also includes the d.n. of each Mode: In *Ode A*: E (Cello); in *Ode B*: G (Viola); and in *Ode C*: D (Clarinet), G (Flute).

### **3.3. On tempo**

Generally speaking, tempo changes in the late vocal works are fewer compared to those in the instrumental scores. In the cantata *Funeral of Sarpedon*, which was composed by

Papaioannou at the same time as the *Three Byzantine Odes*, tempo changes can be detected throughout the whole vocal part. In the *Odes*, the tempo changes only in the instrumental parts. In *Odes A* and *B* it remains stable throughout the whole melos, whereas in *Ode C* the melos has two different tempi. This tempo change is clearly noted in the instrumental part. This specific feature refers to the Byzantine chant, which is usually performed with limited manipulations of tempo. Throughout the whole score, the composer marks one *accelerando* and one *poco ritenuto* in the vocal parts of *Odes B* and *C* respectively.

## **Epilogue**

In this paper we have attempted to examine the Byzantine reflections on Y.A. Papaioannou's personal idiom, through a thorough and global approach of *Three Byzantine Odes* for Soprano and Instrumental Ensemble. These reflections were detected in the basic compositional parameters of the work, such as the composition of the vocal and instrumental parts, as well as the tempo. Therefore, it can be concluded that Papaioannou does not seek to bring to the listener's mind direct evocations of Byzantine chant, as he remains faithful to the nontonal and metaserial techniques characterizing his late period works.