

JANI CHRISTOU CONFERENCE 2013

GOLDSMITHS UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

SATURDAY 16 NOVEMBER 2013

stoning and screams

M

app. 1,5"

3,5" approx.

Yes

Nooo... Ah.

Yes!

Oh!

Az

ffffz (sempre)

M conductor: *speech*

signal the beginning of this passage by striking the gr. cassa. The sounds of the orchestra must come in the intervals between the soloist's groans and hammerings.

The image shows a hand-drawn musical score on a black background. At the top, the title "stoning and screams" is written in a simple, lowercase font. Below the title, there are several musical notations and annotations. On the left, a "1" is written next to a vertical line. Below this, "ffffz (sempre)" is written. Above the main staff, there are two horizontal arrows: one labeled "app. 1,5\"" and another labeled "3,5\" approx.". The staff itself has several vertical lines extending downwards, some ending in arrows. Above the staff, there are several speech bubbles and boxes containing the words "Yes", "Nooo... Ah.", "Yes!", and "Oh!". A box labeled "Az" is also present. On the right side, there are two crossed swords. Below the staff, a dashed line is labeled "M conductor: speech". At the bottom, there is a small figure of a person striking a gong, with a caption: "signal the beginning of this passage by striking the gr. cassa. The sounds of the orchestra must come in the intervals between the soloist's groans and hammerings."

OISEAUX BIZARRES ENSEMBLE

PERFORM

JANI CHRISTOU

SATURDAY 16 NOVEMBER 2013
GOLDSMITHS, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON
RHB 167
20.30

JANI CHRISTOU'S LATE WORKS
PERFORMED BY THE OISEAUX BIZARRES ENSEMBLE

EPICYCLE
ANAPARASTASIS I: THE BARITONE
ANAPARASTASIS III: THE PIANIST

With many thanks to:

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Keith Potter for his immense, multi-dimensional support and omni-directional help with organising this conference.

The Jani Christou Archive and Goldsmiths Music Department.

All the people who supported or participated in this conference.

All the musicians and performers from London, Amsterdam, Berlin, Barcelona, Thessaloniki and Canberra, who gathered here tonight in order to make this performance possible.

Programme Notes¹

Epicycle, for variable instrumentation and continuum (1968)

Devised and performed by: Danaï Bletsá, Thanásis Deligiánnis, Artemis Ignatídou, Alex Ioánnou, Angelína Kartsáki, Eirini Kartsáki, Andriána Minou, Danaï Pappá, Haris Saslis, Nikos Stavlas, Beckett the cat and Virginia the fish

Continuum/technical support: Emmanouíl Benetos

Epicycle was written by Jani Christou (1926-1970) in 1968 and was first performed the same year in Athens, as part of the 3rd Hellenic Week of Contemporary Music. The word 'epicycle' derives from the Ptolemaic astronomic system and refers to a circle which is contained in a larger circle. The work was very strongly criticised by Christou's friend, the music critic Giorgos Leotsakos, who claimed that the extremely open form of *Epicycle* (the score is a sketch that does not specify anything as far as duration, number of performers or type of performance are concerned) and what Leosakos called the composer's mode of 'self-cancelation' could only result in chaos (Leotsakos, 1968).

However, Christou believed that through this 'voluntary abdication' of his role as 'composer, in the sense of the organiser of a set of parameters within the limited stretch of conventional performance-time', he was able consciously to play with chaos in order to reach the roots of 'protoperformance', the type of musical performance the composer considered as the only effective one (inspired by the ancient rituals of renewal) and to the development of which he focused during his last two creative periods.

The only definite 'direction' contained in the score is the constant presence of a 'continuum': in other words, a continuous pedal of sounds, gestures, images or anything with which the performers (or audience) choose to engage, on top of which the 'events' (unspecified actions of the performers) take place. The intriguing score of *Epicycle* and the unusual creativity required for its realisation have made performances of the work quite rare.

In one of his personal notes, dated 1968, Christou states that 'a composer is not an entertainer. Previously he was required to entertain his audience. Now his audience entertains him. His audience performs for him ... the world performs, the composer looks on'. During *Epicycle*, the juxtaposition of performer and spectator is also a central issue; the performers and the audience are often equally

¹ The programme notes were written by Andriána Minou. Quotations by Jani Christou are taken from his personal notes, found at the Jani Christou Archive in Athens. Other quotations are taken from the following sources:

Anne-Martine Lucciano, 2000, *Jani Christou: the works and temperament of a Greek composer* (trans. by Catherine Dale), Amsterdam, Harwood Academic Publishers

Giorgos Leotsakos, 30/12/1968, review entitled 'Contemporary Music /Jani Christou Epicycle' in the newspaper *TA NEA*, Athens

Giorgos Leotsakos, 3/12/1969, review of *Anaparastasis III* in the newspaper *TA NEA*, Athens

exposed and sometimes take very similar risks; while these two roles are occasionally reversed, with the spectator having the opportunity to transform from the one who reacts into the one who acts, and vice versa. The performers are caught in the two axes of metamorphosis and impotence, repetition and eclipse, while the audience actively takes part (sometimes coincidentally...) in this journey through a chaos of parameters, failures, transformations, misunderstandings, fantasies, instinctive or civilised reflexes - and more.

***Anaparastasis I: The Baritone*, for baritone, conductor, instrumental ensemble and vocal participants (1968)**

Baritone: Alex Ioannou

Conductor: Thanasis Deligiannis

Ensemble: Sophie Baltatzi, Rosie Bergonzi, Danai Bletsas, Jenny Brand, Polly Hewett, Artemis Ignatidou, Angelina Kartsaki, Kostas Kouzof, Evi Nakou, Danai Pappa, Dimitris Skyllas, Kristin Sofroniou, Colin Somervell, Nikos Stavlas

***Anaparastasis III: The Pianist*, for soloist, conductor, instrumental ensemble and continuum (electronic tapes) (1969)**

Pianist: Andriana Minou

Conductor: Thanasis Deligiannis

Ensemble: Danai Bletsas, Artemis Ignatidou, Alex Ioannou, Angelina Kartsaki, Kostas Kouzof, Evi Nakou, Danai Pappa, Dimitris Skyllas, Kristin Sofroniou, Nikos Stavlas

Electronic Tapes: Emmanouil Benetos

Jani Christou was planning to include *Anaparastasis I: The Baritone* and *Anaparastasis III: The Pianist* in his last, unfinished work, *Anaparastases*, which would consist of around 130 'anaparastases' (re-enactments). These are the only two pieces of this major work to be completed and performed. The musicologist, Anne-Martine Lucciano, sees the work as 'more like psychodrama, unfolding in a theatrical spirit of ritual, a sort of laying bare of the human soul ... these acts of theatrical ritual may induce a feeling of fear in the spectator, but it is a sacred fear comparable to that produced by the effect of catharsis in the theatres of antiquity' (Lucciano, 2000).

For *The Baritone*, Christou used the subtitle '*astronkatoidanykteronomighyrin*', a phrase from the opening of Aeschylus's *Agamemnon*. In this work, the soloist attempts to recite the first seven lines²

² Translation of the ancient Greek text, used in *The Baritone*.

'My cry to the gods is for release from this year-long watch. Here, on the Atreidae's roof-top, I keep following the motions of the stars at night, crouched on my elbows like a dog. Those luminaries, bringing about our winters and our summers - those stars, with their waxing and their waning.'

of the tragedy, but ends up 'performing' the text with the key-word 'release' as his guide, and with the instrumental ensemble joining him in this psychodramatic ritual.

Regarding *The Pianist*, Giorgos Leotsakos characterises the figure of the soloist as 'psychologically handicapped ... the symbol of psychological castration' (Leotsakos, 1969). Indeed, the main characteristic of the work is its intense ritualistic quality, which is performed as a confrontation between a system (conductor and orchestra) and an anti-system (soloist and piano), while a set of electronic tapes functions as a sonic ambience that provokes all the musicians to perform a 'metapraxis'.

The two *Anaparastases* are perhaps Christou's works that most clearly illustrate his concept of 'metapraxis', which could be summarised as an action that does not conform with the 'conventional' practices of an expressive medium (as opposed to 'praxis').