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The ‘praxis-metapraxis’ concept:
towards a musical performance beyond logic by Jani Christou
A credo for music (1968)

“Decoration and aesthetics have been and are powerful negative factors in music”
“The function of music is to create soul, by creating conditions for myth, the root of all soul. Where there is no soul, music creates it. Where there is no soul, music sustains it”.
iii. “The points of interest in a composition are those at which these transformations take place, although the demarcation lines are never fixed”.
ii. “Basically the meaning of music is a function of our possibility of experiencing such transformations.

Music which is meaningless for one person may not only be valid for another, but can also strike him with the force of revelation

(for example, a person may listen to a piece of music without being able to relate it to anything he has heard previously. He nevertheless feels that something has moved him)."
Praxis – Metapraxis

Any living art keeps generating an overall logic fed by a collectivity of characteristic actions.

Whenever an action is performed to conform with the overall logic of the art, that action is a "praxis".

But whenever an action is performed so as to go beyond the overall logic of the art, that action is a "metapraxis".
“The role of the composer has not been devalued simply for the sake of the surprise value of some "happening" (which quickly wears off anyway).

The role of the composer has been devalued in order to allow whatever elements were available at the time to behave as symbols of events, and certainly not as "artistic events", nor as synthesized events.”
Anaparastasis III: The Pianist (1968)
for a soloist, conductor, instrumental ensemble and tapes
Mysterious sounds and breaths

mf-mp
(depending on the volume of tape)

See that the orchestra leaves gaps so that the sounds produced by the soloist can be heard.

Conductor: Speech

Attempt at Communication with the Piano

Murmur, caress, kiss and lick the piano; giggle, hysterically, crawl under the piano, roll into positions of pleading. Use all the possible movements and gestures that express supplication and anguish; towards the end become a little threatening, become more abrupt in your movements.

See that the sounds you produce are audible, using the gaps left by the orchestra.

Before standing up, look as if you are about to shout something with your eyes, and finally say the audience which you keep looking at up to the end.

Cresc. poco a poco sempre... Threateningly...

Cresc. poco a poco sempre... Threateningly...
Theodoros Antoniou, conductor

Jani Christou, composer

Grigoris Semitekolo, soloist
threads and punctuations

Orche.

Cond.

Soloist

Tape 1

Tape 2

Tape 3

5

100” approx.

pop

pppp

treads: very high thread-like notes produced by 6-8 or three violins

sotto

These solos are in semiquaver fig. 6-8. pp

or soundless blowing of a flute or piccolo (ff etc.)

punctuations: as in cue 3

first sparse threads are performed and later punctuations assembled.

with threads towards the end the passage becomes more dense so that

one thread overlaps another or one thread covers two or three punctuations.

create a mysterious atmosphere.

STIFLED LAMENT

produce occasional short cries like stifled sobs,

moaning, your head and body with small movements.

raise your right

slow and towards

must be suit-

field lament

let moving.
stoning and screams

M

M conductor, speech

Signal the beginning of this passage by striking the gong. The sounds of the orchestra must come in the intervals between the soloist’s groans and hammerings. The orchestra must not produce more stonings and screams than those contained in the picture.

Hammer, the last keys of the keyboard, raising the arm (right) high as though it is an arb.

produce groans (cue 9) but not synchronised with the hammer blows.
ATTEMPT TO COMMUNICATE WITH THE AUDIENCE
with the right arm make the gesture of the "scatter,"
with slow ritualistic movements; produce occasional
cries (just audible) of intense effort.

\[ \frac{3}{4} \quad \frac{1}{2} \quad \frac{1}{4} \quad \frac{1}{3} \quad \frac{1}{2} \quad 1 \]

\[ \text{th m kt f th s mn... th... oh} \]
SYSTEM-ANTISYSTEM

SYSTEM:
The conductor and his team belong to a world which, although it wants to be controlled by some 'system', cannot manage to ignore the events that threaten the coherence of this system.
ANTI-SYSTEM:
On the other hand the soloist, with his activities and efforts at the end of the work to make an explanatory gesture, aims at breaking through the barrier of the coherence of the 'system', and capture a meaning beyond the 'system'.
ATTEMPT TO COMMUNICATE WITH THE AUDIENCE
with the right arm make the gesture of the “scatter,”
with slow ritualistic movements; produce occasional
cries (just audible) of intense effort.

\[ \frac{3}{4} \quad \frac{1}{6} \quad \frac{1}{3} \]

\[ \text{kh m kf dh s mn... th... oh} \]
A music of confrontation

I am concerned with a music that confronts, with a music that wants to stare at the suffocating effect, even terror, of much of our every-day experience of living; with a music that does NOT seek to escape the relentlessness of the patterns in which this experience keeps unfolding. With a music that does not only attempt to escape this experience, but that seeks out its forms – and eats them up, and throws them up again, just as dreams do.”
“Musicians, and non-musicians; actors, and non-actors; dancers, and plain people.

Any of whom may perform some gesture, some action, or move about formally, as in some dance, or not formally, as in some life-situation.

Any of whom may play musical or non-musical instruments – plain objects which are struck or stroked, or otherwise handled for their sound, or sophisticated electronic equipment processing live sound or play-back, producing calculated effects, or random effects; sounds that are musical or concrete, or that reproduce the ordinary sounds of living.

Any of whom may perform within their category (praxis) – a violinist playing the violin, or beyond their category (metapraxis) – the violinist screaming.
Circular pattern
“Lunar pattern”

generation - growth - destruction – cessation
Phoenix Music (1948)
on a fixed idea
myth of phoenix, mythical bird reborn from its ashes
The Lunar Experience

“For countless generations the renewal of vital processes has been experienced according to a common basic pattern of

*generation - growth - destruction - cessation*

repeated on and on: the pattern of renewal.

In the depths of man's prehistory it was the moon's monthly performance that originally drew attention to this pattern.”
The pattern of renewal:
generation followed by growth followed by destruction
followed by cessation, repeated endlessly.

Or in lunar imagery: the nascent moon becoming the
full moon becoming the dying moon swallowed up by
dark, in regular succession, on and on.
“It is not hard to imagine the state of alarm provoked by the spectacle of giant moon decaying into total extinction nor is it hard to picture what the response could have been to the moon's most spectacular performances of all: its eclipse.

For early man, this was an IRREGULARITY and it could have caused much terror, even panic.”
JANI CHRISTOU
1926–1970

ANAPARASTASIS I

"The Baritone"

ΑΣΤΡΩΝΚΑΤΟΙΔΑΝΥΚΤΕΡΩΝΟΜΗΓΥΡΙΝ
Αναπαράστασις
Ana – parastasis

Reactualisation, representation

Protoperformance
Music and proto-performance (1968)

The early archetypal point of view did not know history. Instead, it looked upon everything that took place, whether processes of nature close to man, or in the environment at large; whether single activities of individual men, or the compounded activities of many men; whether the fate overtaking some single individual, or the fate overtaking the group as a whole; it looked upon all of these as repetitions of some aspect of a numinous original, an archetypal pattern - or MASTER-PATTERN, even to the point of identification.
Under such circumstances nothing had any meaning, or any proper existence, unless it could be considered as a repetition of the master-pattern, or as a component of such a pattern; of a master-pattern being and action existing both in time and in the center of every moment in time. This is certainly not what history is about. But it is what myth was about.
And it is also what rituals of renewal were about. These were PROTO-PERFORMANCE - re-enactments of the original proto-pattern - the master-pattern; re-enactments in terms of corresponding mythic imagery; key-performances re-vitalising the master-pattern, when its cycle was exhausted, through forms of sacrifice, life for life, keeping it going. Because the pattern simply had to keep on renewing itself, if man and nature were to do the same.
Such rituals were vital acts of re-affirmation, of participation and identification with the master-pattern. Through these "proto-performances" man related - connected - by activating a process of feed-back between the numinous and himself; not for his own benefit only, but for the benefit of the total environment in which he lived and of which he was part.
JANI CHRISTOU
1926–1970
ANAPARASTASIS I
"The Baritone"
ΑΣΤΡΩΝΚΑΤΟΙΔΑΝΥΚΤΕΡΩΝΟΜΗΓΥΡΙΝ
Oresteia Eschylus
‘astronkatoidanykteronomigyrin’
‘I keep following the movements of the stars during the night’

Phonetically:

THEOUS MEN ETO TONDTH’APALLAGHN PONON
FROURAS ETIAS MICOΣ, IN KIMOΔENOS
STEGHES ATRIDTHON ΑΝΓΑΤΕΝ, KINOS ΔTHIKIN,
ΑΣΤΡΟΝ ΚΑΤΙΔΘΑ ΝΙΚΕΠΟΝ ΟΜΙΓΗΡΙΝ,
KE TOUS FERONTAS CHIMA KE ΘΕΡΩΣ VROTIS
LAMBOUS DTHINASTAS, EMBRERONTAS ETHERI
ASTΕPAS, ΟΤΑΝ ΦΘΙΝΟΣΙΝ, ΑΝΤΟΛΑΣ ΤΕ ΤΟΝ...
AstrnKAtdthNKTEGRnMIGHRN

EXPLOSIVE
evowel in mp, mf

grow red with tremendous effort involved
Voice breaking off for tense pauses during which the effort continues uninterruptedly:

e.g. THOUS EFFORT MN ET EFFORT etc.

choking silently

picture 20

Gasps, MM, stifled shrieks punctuate his choked outbursts more and more - some stifled shrieks occasionally explode into real fractional shrieks, but never more than a sharp jab.
PANIC-STRICKEN

Theous men eto tondth'apallaghin
ponon frouras etias mikos, in kimome-
SOLO

VIOLA

[ppp]

2"

7"

2½"

7½"

SUDDEN
SOLEMNITY

Á-S-TRON

1½" - 3½"

spoken in deep solemn loud resonant voice

KÁ-TIDTHA

freeze

freeze

straighten up 5/8 in.

bend 1/4 in.
solo

freeze

resume SLOW ARM ACTION