

Music in the Service of the Directorial Vision: The Case Study of the Theatrical Performance of *Acharnians* in 1976 by the Greek Art Theatre (Theatro Technis)

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Abstract

Someone could claim that a well prepared, contemporary theatrical production consists of a thorough planning, a period of rehearsals and the final presentation of the work before the audience. Whether we talk about a collective theatrical organization or a hierarchical one, we should agree upon the fact that the directorial vision could be considered as the motivating gear of a theatrical performance. It is the director's or the team's directorial vision – in the cases of alternative, collective theatrical productions – which guides those who participate in a theatrical performance and, therefore, it is commonly accepted by actors and actresses that one should follow instructions, find his path and “build” his role as part of a team which serves a certain objective. Because of the diversity and complexity of modern productions as well as the increasing need for high quality, original performances – in terms of *mise-en-scène*, acting, stage and costume design, lightning and music – certain professional collaborates are called to participate in the stage of the preparation and contribute to the final aesthetics of a production. In the case of preparing the theatrical performance of an ancient Greek Comedy, the musician plays a significant role, as the choruses of ancient comedy are an integral part of this genre. The performance of the ancient Greek Comedy *Acharnes* in 1976 by the theatrical group of Greek Art Theatre (Theatro Technis), under the directorial guidance of Karolos Koun and the music which Christos Leontis composed for its needs, is a case study for the current thesis, the analysis of which intends to reveal the way the composer collaborated with the director and the members of the theatre company. The play, written by Aristophanes, was first taught and presented to the ancient Athenian audience in 425 B.C. The choral parts, accompanied by music and sang by the members of the chorus, have since antiquity been considered to be of significant importance for this ancient theatrical genre. It is, therefore, quite intriguing to thoroughly and methodologically examine the way the music composed for the needs of a specific performance contributed to the overall outgrowth of a contemporary attempt to present the ideas and the beliefs of an ancient Greek poet to the modern Greek theatrical audience. Did the composer follow the instructions of the director? Did he serve the directorial vision? Did he interact with the director and the members of the Greek Art Theatre? In what ways and up to what extent was music co-responsible for the commonly accepted success of this particular performance? It will be attempted to answer the above questions with the help of the composer's personal testimony, his kind contribution of archival material from his personal files, accompanied by the simultaneous, cross-examined analysis of the performance which was filmed in 1976.

Keywords: theatre, ancient Greek comedy, ancient Greek chorus, performance, music, director, composer.

1. Introduction

1.1 *The theatrical performance*

Someone could claim that a well prepared, contemporary theatrical production consists of a thorough planning, a period of rehearsals and the final presentation of the work before the audience. Whether we talk about a collective theatrical organization or a hierarchical one, we should agree upon the fact that the directorial vision could be considered as the motivating gear of a theatrical performance. It is the director's or the team's directorial vision – in the cases of alternative, collective theatrical productions - which guides those who participate in a theatrical performance and, therefore, it is commonly accepted by actors and actresses that one should follow instructions, find his path and “build” his role as part of a team which serves a certain objective.

Because of the diversity and complexity of modern productions as well as the increasing need for high quality, original performances – in terms of *mise-en-scène*, acting, stage and costume design, lightning and music – certain professional collaborates are called to participate in the stage of the preparation and contribute to the final aesthetics of a production. In the case of preparing the theatrical performance of an ancient Greek Comedy, the musician plays a significant role, as the choruses of ancient comedy are an integral part of this genre.

1.2 “*Acharnias*” – *Summary of the plot*

The *Acharnias* is Aristophanes' oldest surviving comedy. It was taught by Kallistratos in 425 B.C. and it was awarded the first prize in Lynaia, the ancient Greek celebration in the month called Gamilionas (between January and February) in honor of the revelry ancient god Dionysus (Blume, 2008: 43). The ancient Athenian audience of the comedy had already been experiencing the consequences of the Peloponnesian War for six years, being confined behind the walls of Athens and Piraeus and facing the destruction of their country houses, vines and olive trees because of the summer attacks of the Peloponnesian Army (Dover, 2010).

Dikaiopolis, the main character of the comedy, is an Athenian farmer who supports peace. After a disappointing discussion in the governing body of Ekklesia, he acts against the will of the citizens of Athens. He decides to make peace for thirty years with the enemies of the city for himself and the members of his family. To achieve his goal, he turns for help to the immortal Amfitheos. The Chorus, which consists of old men from the municipality (*dimos*) of *Acharnes*, a region in the north part of the city of Athens which has faced extensive catastrophes because of the Peloponnesian invasion, furiously opposes the idea of peace and even attempts to pelt the hero in the middle of his family celebration of the fest of *Dionysia*, organized in December. Dikaiopolis finally manages to persuade half of the Chorus whereas the other half remains unmoved in its views and invokes the example of the Athenian general Lamachos who fights against the Peloponnesian enemies. Lamachos appears on stage but Dikaiopolis' arguments result in persuading the rest of the Chorus for the rightfulness of his beliefs (Dover, 2010).

A Paravasis follows the resolution of the dispute between Dikaiopolis and the Chorus. The following two scenes reveal the results of the hero's decision to create a private market and trade with citizens of hostile cities. Time goes by and Dikaiopolis has to celebrate the fest of Anthestiria (between February and March). A little later a messenger from the council of the generals informs Lamachos that he is ordered to guard the passages in Parnitha and be on alert lest the Boeotians attempt a raid. Another messenger invites Dikaiopolis to a celebration organized by the priest of Dionysus. The chorus appears on stage and afterwards Lamachos and Dikaiopolis return. The symbolic contrast is obvious. Lamachos is wounded and he also limps whereas Dikaiopolis is drunk, happy and supported by two girls. Lamachos leaves the stage from one side

(*parodos*) while the Chorus escorts Dikaio polis when he triumphantly leaves from the other side of the stage (Dover, 2010).

1.3 *The Lyrical parts*

The structure of the Attic comedy is based on two axes: the comic hero and the Chorus. The comic hero and the other actors of the comedy interact with the Chorus by alternating speech and songs. The plot of the comedy follows a specific dramatic form which consists of the report of the problem in the preface, followed by the hero's attempt to find a solution. Despite the dispute he manages to realize his plan. From the first entrance of the Chorus (*Parodos*) till Paravasis, the hero's success is consolidated, and it is the felicitous result of his idea which is revealed in the sequent scenes of the second part of the comedy, in contrast to the older, unpleasant situation (Pappas, 2012).

The dialogue scenes, which are written in iambic meters, resemble the oral speech. The Chorus' parts, however, have different meters and are characterized by a wide range of metric forms. These are the lyrical parts which are sung by the Chorus. When the Chorus converses with the actors there is a kind of music recitation. In such cases a certain structure is followed, which could schematically be described with the form ABA'B'. A and A' are lyrical parts with metric correspondence, while B and B' are groups of lyrics which are recited either simply, as normal speech is delivered, or with the accompaniment of a musical instrument. The form, therefore, of Aristophanes' comedy follows the scheme of prologue (*Prologos*), first entrance of the Chorus (*Parodos*), a kind of struggle of the hero to achieve his goals called *Epirrimatikos Agon, Paravasis* (a part in which the Chorus is undressed, stops the action and addresses the audience), various choral parts and episodes (iambic scenes) and the exitus (*Exodos*) (Pappas, 2012).

2. Method of the study

2.1 *Sources*

Apart from the search for primary research sources regarding the directorial work of Karolos Koun as well as the search for works analyzing Aristophanes' production of theatrical plays, the research method applied to the current thesis focused on the thorough analysis of the filming of performance of the *Acharnians* in the ancient theater of Epidaurus in July 1976. It has been commented that, both from a musicological, but also from a theatrical perspective, capturing sound, motion and image is a presumption and at the same time a source of a wealth of information (Kostios, 2015: 97-97).

The filming which has been analyzed is one of the sources used in order to answer several questions regarding the music composed for the needs of the performance directed by Karolos Koun in 1976. The recording of an interview with Christos Leontis, the composer of the music for the *Acharnians* is an additional source from which – following a thorough cross examination of all the information gathered for the performance – conclusions and answers to the posed questions were derived. The interview was recorded on 29 October 2021, at Christos Leontis' house. Apart from the discussion and the answers to my questions, the composer entrusted me with his original notes and scores of the music written for the *Acharnians*.

2.2 *Questions to be answered*

The methodological tool for the case of the living source and the spoken word is the question (Kostios, 2015: 58-61). During the interview with Christos Leontis, the questions which were asked concerned both the collaboration of the composer with the director for the needs of his

theatrical performances as well as the aesthetic perceptions of Christos Leontis and the extent to which they converged with those of Karolos Koun. Because of the personality of the composer, the particular interview was more of an open discussion. The prescheduled questions to which the effortless narration of Christos Leontis finally gave answers were the following:

1. Did the composer follow the instructions of the director?
2. Did the composer interact with the director and the members of the Greek Art Theatre?
3. Did the composer participate in the rehearsals?
4. Was the music recorded?
5. What were the aesthetic and ideological views of both the director and the composer?
6. How did the audience react during the performance?
7. Which were the rhythmic models followed by the composer?
8. Was the composer influenced by a certain music genre?
9. What did the critics and other musicians say about the music composed for the needs of the performance of the *Acharnians*?
10. Is the composer satisfied with the result of his work?

According to Walter Puchner, music in its semiotic functionality in the theater can undertake functions similar to the linguistic, paralinguistic and kinetic points of the actor, as well as functions of space. Music in the theatre has an even more specific meaning than in other cases of music performances, since it lies, and it is also used in combination with various semiotic systems (Puchner, 2010: 101-105). Therefore, the music composed for the needs of the performance of the *Acharnians* should be examined through the spectrum of the original directorial vision which is based on the beliefs and the aesthetic preferences of Karolos Koun. Additionally, the way the musical compositions influenced the theatrical performance of the actors, should also be critically seen and recorded. The questions regarding the directorial approach which had to be answered for the needs of the current study are the following:

1. What was Karolos Koun's purpose when he decided to direct the *Acharnians*?
2. What was the aesthetic and theatrical procedure of Karolos Koun?
3. Did the music composed for the *Acharnians* serve the directorial vision?
4. Did the music offer practical solutions to stage problems?
5. Do we recognize any influences of the music on the acting, the kinetic and the reactions of both the Chorus and the comic heroes?
6. Was the translation of the ancient text altered to serve both the music composition and the directorial vision?

3. Results

“First I planned what I liked to hear. And when I saw that the actor was shining and moving comfortably and it helped him phonetically and kinesiology and expressively, I kept it. Otherwise, I wrote a new piece. So, with the *Acharnians*, when I went to the rehearsal for the first time, I had some draft sounds with me. When the people who were there heard the sounds, they started dancing. An uplift! This is how I created the music for the whole play. With percussions. Also, the rhythm that I gave. It's not only the sound, the sound color. It's also the rhythmic action, the opportunity you offer the actors to move. To all the exits, to all comedies, even today, I have a rhythm that I love. The Thracian, the Zonaradikos. I'm stuck with this rhythm.

It's like galloping. All this thing excited Koun. This is where we found our common ground ideologically, aesthetically", commented Christos Leontis during our discussion.

At one of his interviews to Ciorgos Pilichos Karolos Koun said that he could not work in a prescheduled way and that he could not even think in such a way. He had to work empirically and be influenced and inspired by what he saw and what he heard. He was guided by the live body, the voice, the speech, the movement. He only had a draft, basically instinctive conception of the form and the rhythm the actors should follow but the details were revealed and finally concluded during the rehearsals (Pilichos, 1987: 62). The relevance between Koun's and Leontis' ideas is obvious. They both worked during the rehearsals and they both were inspired by the reaction of the people around them. They both had a certain rhythm in mind - either the rhythm of the music or the rhythm of the play – and they had a form, a general idea in mind, which was shaped in the course of their collaboration with the members of the troupe.

However, what is the ideological and the aesthetical common ground (to which Christos Leontis referred) that connected the musician of the *Acharnians* with the director? In a lecture in 1943 Koun mentioned that the main aesthetics he had followed at the beginning of his directorial work for the troupe Laiki Skini was connected – in a formalistic way - to the popular element as it was manifested in the village and island life, in the folk songs, in the Byzantine hagiographies and on the ancient vessels. This particular aesthetics was defined by Koun as Greek popular expressionism. He also admitted that he continued being influenced (in a more cultivated way, however) by popular art. Trying, though, to create primitive popular art in the contemporary world is anachronistic, as Koun mentions (Kaggelari, 2010: 65-68). It is, therefore, the soul of the contemporary popular man which was being investigated, the popular soul which Christos Leontis said that he was trying to discover and to which he addressed his work with his own tools, the rhythm played by percussions and traditional instruments.

As Kostas Georgousopoulos commented on a review he wrote for the theatrical performance on 18-19 August 1976, George Lazanis, the leading actor who played the role of Dikaiopolis, reminded the audience of the role of Karagiozis, the popular hero of the shadow theatre, which he had acted in an earlier play directed by Karolos Koun and written by Giorgos Skourtis (Georgousopoulos, 2007: 120-121). This is when the collaboration between Karolos Koun and Christos Leontis started. According to the composer's narration, Skourtis had asked him to write the music for the performance based on his play *Karagiozis almost Veziris* and directed by Koun. Leontis claims that Koun was thrilled when he told him that he intended to use traditional instruments such as the kanun. Koun came from the East (he grew up in Constantinople) and none of the musicians he had worked with previously had such a procedure. He also supported the idea that truth, which he searched for, lies in the originality and simplicity of the people. He even asked the cleaning woman if she liked the play which was performed at the time because he wanted to communicate with the common people. To Leontis' opinion their next collaboration came naturally since the *Acharnians* were folk people, charcoal burners in the profession, therefore the music composed for the needs of this performance should be based on traditional music and have a similar sound color.

According to Thodoros Grammatas, Karolos Koun created a special communicative relationship between the stage and the audience (Grammatas, 2002: 275), and this seems to have been the procedure of Christos Leontis who, as he said, wanted to feel as part of the audience during the rehearsals. He used to put himself in the position of the spectator of the play when he descended the stage and went to the square of the theatre. His goal was to compose the kind of music he would like to listen to and additionally to help the actors move, react and speak in the way that would serve the needs of the text and the overall needs of the performance.

Karolos Koun explained that in Greek Art Theatre he and his colleagues tried to discover the appropriate sounds, both vocal and musical, the musical orchestration of the speech,

a variety of rhythms and movements which are dictated by the various tragic or comic situations (Ploritis, 1981: 67). This is proven by the analysis of the music composed for the performance of the *Acharnians* in 1976. Did the composer follow the instructions of the director? Christos Leontis insists that Koun was out of tune. He could not tell him anything about the kind of music he should compose. He did what he liked concerning music. But Koun would talk to him about the mien of the whole attempt. He could explain what the objective of each scene was and consequently he would either accept or decline the proposals of the composer.

The thorough examination of the music composed for the performance of the *Acharnians* in 1976 reveals the use of a wide range of rhythms while there is obvious influence by the Byzantine and oriental music genres. In particular, the composer uses a variety of rhythms (3/4, 4/4, 5/8, 6/8, 7/8, 8/8, 9/8) which are quite often mixed. A characteristic example is the music composed for the entrance of the Chorus of the *Acharnians* (*Parodos*). The score of the music (Image 1), which was kindly entrusted to me by Christos Leontis, shows that the piece starts with the rhythm of 2/4, continues with 7/8, which is played by percussion instruments and it is followed by a mixed rhythm which combines 7/8 with 6/8. The instruments used were also noted down. Apart from the traditional Greek percussion instruments the orchestra includes a Greek kind of *bagpipe* as well as *zournas*, another oriental kind of a wind instrument with a sharp, penetrating, loud sound.

The entrance, the exit of the envoy ambassadors in Persia and the entrance of Theoros, who was sent to Thrace, are accompanied by a marching musical piece played by wind instruments. The sound of the trombone in these pieces is characteristic. When the Thracians enter, however, a quick four-note rhythmic motive played by percussions can be heard. The same pattern follows their exit while the exit of Dikaiopolis and Ampitheos before *Parodos* is accompanied by a *tsifteteli* rhythm. It is characteristic that when the ceremony of Dikaiopolis and his family in honor of Dionysus starts, an ancient Indian percussion called *tabla* is heard. The rhythmic pattern continues in the same way with the addition of other percussion instruments and of the flute, which is a clear reference to antiquity. When the Chorus expresses fear because Dikaiopolis threatens to slaughter a basket of coals, a pentatonic song influenced by the music of the Greek region of Epirus is heard, however, without the accompaniment of any instrument. A quick dance piece with the combination of traditional string and western brass wind instruments is played before the meeting of Dikaiopolis with Evripidis. When the chorus is divided, the part which follows Lamachos sings a marching tune played by brass instruments, the clarinet and the western drum, while the other half sings a ruble melody in the same rhythm but of a quite different, dancing feeling. The two parts finally sing their parts simultaneously making their contrast clear.

The examination of the scores shows that all the entrances and the songs of the chorus are poly – rhythmic. They combine 7/8 with 6/8. The use of traditional instruments as well as the parts of prose that the Chorus recites are also noted on the score (Images 1, 2, 3, 4). On the score of *Parodos* 3, the rhythm turns to 6/8 to become mixed again. It is noted that it is the rhythm of the traditional Macedonian dance called Zonaradikos (Image 3). The part of *Paravasis* (Image 5), however, seems to be simpler as the rhythmic pattern of 2/4 alternates with 3/4 (Image 5). Finally, the last image of the score for *Dikaiopolis' Dance* as it was named by the composer (Image 6) includes the information of the rhythmic pattern. The subtitle *Syngathistos* constitutes another proof of the claim that the music composed for the *Acharnians* is influenced by Greek traditional music in an attempt to invoke the popular element which has survived in modernity.

4. Discussion

The answers to the questions posed at the beginning of the examination of the performance of the *Acharnians* in the ancient theater of Epidaurus in July 1976, should be considered of significant importance since they reveal the way the director collaborated with the musician of the production. As Michael Mayar mentions, “one of the important and often difficult issues for the stage transfer of a classic drama work is the integration of space and music in the action” (Mayar, 2004: 110). Analyzing the aesthetics of one of the collaborators of a theatrical production and its relevance to the aesthetics and the ideology of the director of a particular performance with the help of the personal testimony of the composer and the recourse to archival material which has been entrusted by Christos Leontis himself, can be an additional approach to the overall project, though, from a different angle. The conclusions made for the evolution of the contemporary Greek directorial procedure of ancient Greek drama can, therefore, be more objective and comprehensive, as they add new parameters to the relevant research.

5. Conclusion

“Modern Greek culture is undoubtedly an alloy of Western and Eastern influences, an alloy that Koun always tried to revive in the stage interpretation of classic dramas” (Mayar, 2004: 115). This alloy can be recognized in the music composed by Christos Leontis for the needs of the performance of the *Archanians* in 1976. The use of both eastern, brass and oriental musical instruments, as well as the combination of the western marching rhythm with different traditional rhythms - derived from the popular Greek music but also from the more official, Byzantine music – came as a natural result of the effort to integrate in a free, imaginary, modern approach of the ancient drama the evolution of the contemporary Greek audience. This is the aesthetics and the ideology that – according to the composer’s narration – both Christos Leontis and Karolos Koun had.

Apart from the analysis of the scores and the surviving musical parts of the performance, the interview with the composer revealed an effortless affinity in the aesthetic views of the musician with the director as it was described by Karolos Koun himself when he said, “The Greece that exists within us must be closed by us, Greeks, in order to recognize our ancient poets. So let us realize and love everything that today’s Greek reality offers us in shape, rhythm, color and sound, the mental and spiritual wealth, everything that is left and still exists around us from the time of our ancient ancestors ... The Greece that exists today, will lead us Greeks to avoid what is dead in the external form of the Ancient Theater and to present freely, on stage and in directing, adapted to the theatrical space and the demands of the spectator of our time, a work written two thousand years ago, and which remains essentially alive” (Kampouri, 1972: 11).

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Appendix

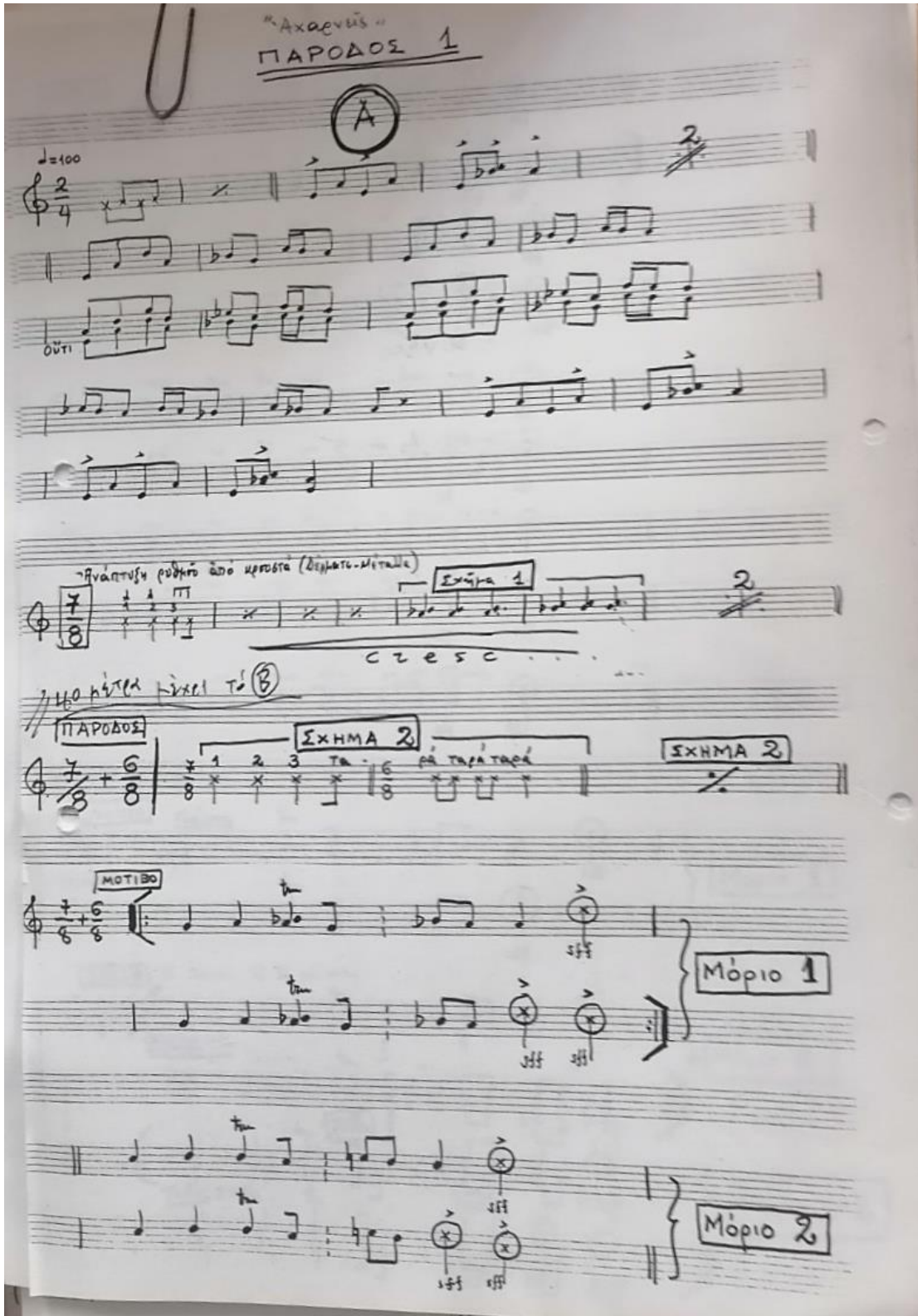


Image 1. The handwritten score of Parodos 1 by Christos Leontis

ΠΑΡΟΔΟΣ 2

ΧΟΡΟΙ

1 Τρί-στη ο-λοι 2-νο σου!

Κα-τά πα-ρά του Κυ-νήγι!

2 Για τής πόλης τό κα-τά

πα-ρά τον πα-ρά

3 τους δια-βά-τες ο σου-νους

για του λό-γου του πα-ρά

4 και να πα-ρά τς πα-ρά

2-νο τους πα-ρά

5

ΟΡΧΗΣΤΡΑ

Τράντα

Μόριο 1

ΠΡΟΖΑ

Το παλιόν, εὐ δὲ τῶ πατρ...

Latinos in Do

Tuba

Tuba

Μόριο 1

Μόριο 1+2

Image 2. The handwritten score of Parodos 2 by Christos Leontis

ΠΑΡΟΔΟΣ 3

ΣΧΗΜΑ 2 Τὰ ποτὴ σου χένια, ἄλλοι ΣΧΗΜΑ 2

ζωνταεικός οὐδῆς

ΧΟΡΟΣ Α' ΚΟΡ. ΤΡΑΓΟΥΔΙ Β

ὄ- μος ἔπρε - γῆ - ὁ ἔβ' αἶος
 εὐά- μων ἰσὸς ἔσαν γὰρ ἄ- τες ποὶ πα εὐπύθου - να - τὸ φλυδῆ
 τὸ σπο- τῆς - α γὰ - ἄω - τῆ - vos με' τὰ κα' βρου - να στὸν ἔφο
 νὰ τὸν ἔστρω σω στὸ κυ - νῆ - σι // Σ. Τῆ δεύτην φορά f (τραγουδῆται ἀπὸ
 τὸ χορὸ ἀσκήτης)

ΠΡΟΣΑ ΚΟΡ. καὶ ἡ Πιρῆται ἀν προπῆτες -
 τκαίντα + οὐτι ἕπουλα καὶ τ' εὐκοδία //

ΤΡΑΓΟΥΔΙ Γ

ἄγα vi σην - κῆ - μος τῶ ρα ὄ- πρου δὲν ἄω - ῖα - να ντῆ ον
 τῶν γῆ - πο' ντουσι ἄ - στρα - γὰ - σοι κι β' - χουν τὰ κα - νία - βα ρῶ. νι //

54 ἡβ' ρα

τκαίντα + Νταρῆι

Τῆ II volta 4

Image 3. The handwritten score of Parodos 3 by Christos Leontis

Image 4. The handwritten score of Parodos 4 by Christos Leontis

65J. 63

ΠΑΡΑΒΑΣΗ

// ΤΙ ΚΑΤΑΝΤΙΑ!

♩ = 116

Τά ντια Τί κα - Τά ντια Τί κατάντια είναι Τόν - τη Τί κα -

Τόν - τη Τους γε - Ρό - ντους με τ' αίσθητά μαδά Για να του τρα - βή - τε Τών - τη

Για να του τρα - βή - τε και να του τρα - νί σου τα πι - να - κι -

Τί κα - τά - ντια Τί κα - Τά - ντια Τί κα - τάντια είναι

Τόν - τη **ΟΡΧΗΣΤΡΑ**

ΤΡΑΓΟΥΔΙ Σαυ - τους που διά την πόλη μας πο - τά - μι έ χυσαν το γέλο κιά ντριά

Γνώ - στα Σαυ - Γνώ - στα Τί κα - τά - ντια Τί κα -

Τά ντια! Τί κα - τάντια είναι Τόν - τη **ΟΡΧΗΣΤΡΑ** **ΠΡΟΣΑ** Τί κατάντια είναι τόν - τη Τους

γέλοτος με τ' αίσθητά μαδά να του τραβήτ. Αύτους που διά τή πόλη μας...

... έβγαζαν... ούνα αυτά; **ΤΡΑΓΟΥΔΙ** Τί κα - τάντια Τί κα - Τά ντια Τί κατάντια είναι

Τόν - τη Τί κα Τόν - τη

FINE

Image 5. The handwritten score of Paravasis by Christos Leontis

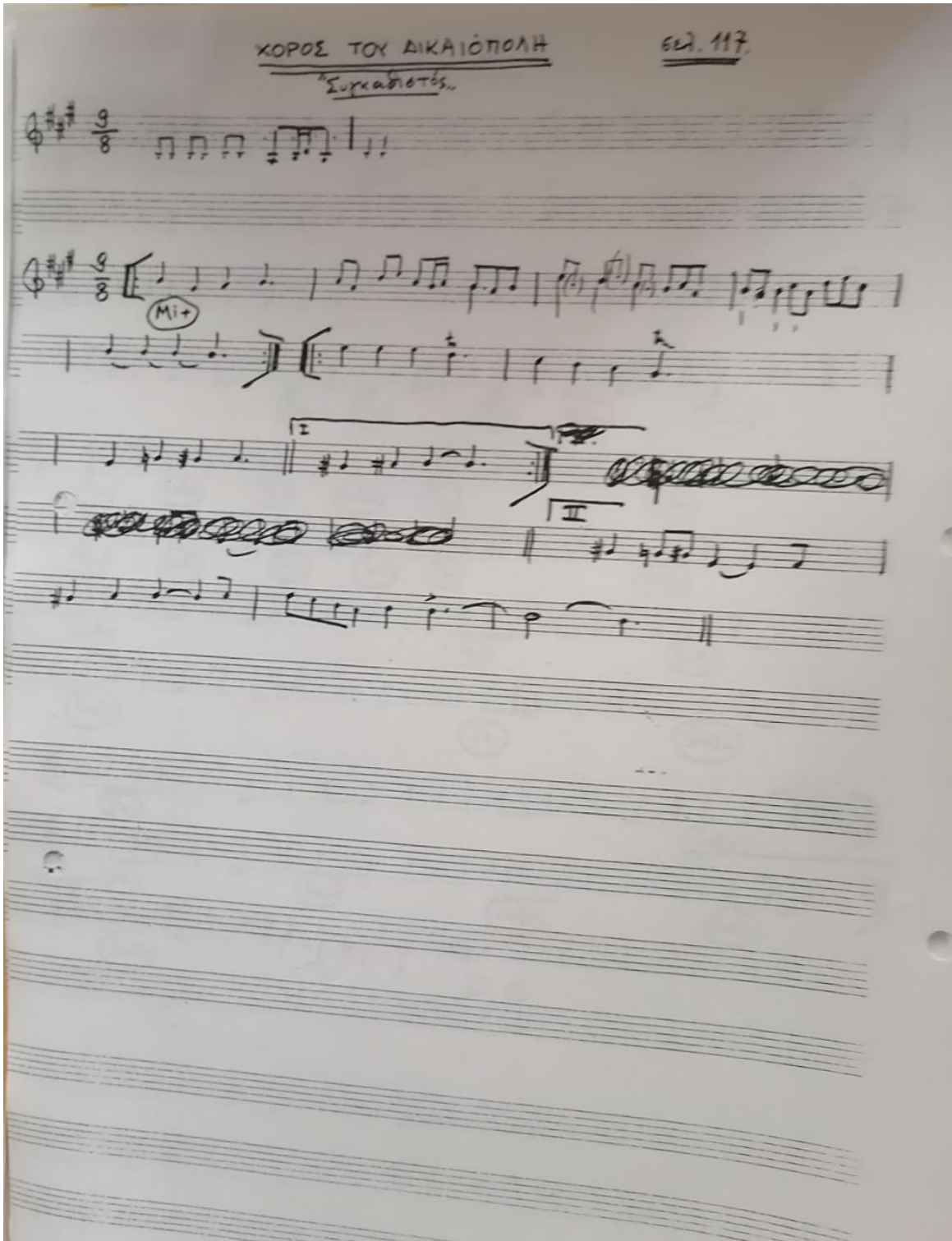


Image 6. The handwritten score of Dikaiopolis' Dance by Christos Leontis

