

## **PROGRAM NOTES**

### **Twentieth Century Greek Composers and their Music**

**Giorgos Dalaras, Apostolos Hatzichristos, Apostolas Kaldaras and Nikos Skalkottas** are all notable Greek composers of both classical and/or popular music of the 20th. century. All pieces on tonight's program are original compositions that are arranged for string orchestra.

**Giorgos Dalaras** was born on September 29, 1949 in Nea Kokinia, Piraeus and is a world-traveller who has performed in many concert venues. He was married to Anna Ragousi, his agent and they have one daughter, Georgianna. Dalaras' father, Loukas, was an accomplished singer of rebetiko, a popular Greek folk song genre. His recording, Peninta Chronia Rebetiko Tragoudi, **50 Years of Rebetiko songs**, in 1975, has helped revived the rebetiko tradition. The lyrics of all rebetika songs such as **Enas Kompos i Hara Mou** (*My joy is just one drop*) have to do with expressing the longing of the return to the old Greece and political sufferings of its people.

**Apostolos Hatzichristos**, a Greek singer/composer was born in Kokarialli, Smyrna in 1901 and died in 1959 in Athens. He was also proficient on the accordion, bouzouski (a traditional Greek folk instrument), guitar and piano.

The English translation of his song **I Xenitia** is *Exile/Foreign Land*. The lyrics "expresses the strife and heartache endured by a people expelled from their homeland. **I Xenitia** features a simple, Persian-esque melody, played by the first violin and later expounded upon in a short improvisational-like cadenza (or taximia, in Rebetika parlance). The second violin - taking the role of a guitar - provides rhythmic grounding and an icy pedal tone color. An eerie harmony in harmonics is sung by the viola, which also interrupts occasionally with a secondary melody; the cello line provides a yearning, sardonic bass line for his string quartet brethren, occasionally joining the melodic dance with the first fiddle." ([www.sheetmusicplus.com](http://www.sheetmusicplus.com))

**Apostolos Kaldaras** was born on April 7, 1922 in Trikala, Greece and died on April 8, 1980. His music was used in movies such as *Kapote klaine kai oi dynatoi* (1967), *The Man with the Carnation* (1980) and *Hard Goodbyes: My Father* (2002). **Nyctose Xoris Feggari** ("Night Without Moon") is a rebetika.

**Peter Deneff** grew up in a musical home, exposed to classical music, Greek songs, and the Beatles. After many years of classical piano lessons he began jazz studies with the world-renowned pianist Mike Garson (of David Bowie fame), with whom he crafted the art of improvisation by studying the great jazz. During this time he also studied many ethnic styles that contributed to the development of his classical and jazz compositional style as well as the formation of his original ethno-jazz group *Excursion*. He also studied music composition and film scoring at California State University Long Beach, where he earned his bachelors and master's degrees in music composition. While at CSULB, Deneff composed his *Three Greek Dances for string quartet* and *Hellenic Village Suite for modified wind quintet*. *Three Greek Dances* as well as many of Deneff's string quartet arrangements were recently featured in a very special concert held in late 2013 in Perth, Australia. On the academic side, Peter has taught at Musician's Institute, Orange County High School of the Arts, and currently at Cypress College. Deneff has written many film scores including *Five*

*Aces* (Charlie Sheen) and Jack London's *Love of Life*, to name a few and won first place in the Louisville Film Festival in 2012.

**Three Greek Dances for String Quartet** explores the world of Greek folk dance music as interpreted by a modern art music composer. The strings are made to play in a very percussive and rhythmic manner not unlike the performance practices of traditional Greek folk instruments like the lyra and the laouto. Furthermore, the odd time signatures that are employed in the first and third movements pose a great performance challenge to the players, especially those who are unaccustomed to Balkan rhythms. The slow second movement gives the quartet a break from the frenzy of the first movement and a chance to prepare for the fiery 7/8 movement to come.

- I. **Karsilama** – A fast, syncopated 9/8 dance. This rhythm is of Turkish origin but was incorporated into Greek music by the *Smyrnai*, Greeks who inhabited Asia Minor's Black Sea District prior to their exile.
- II. **Tsamiko** – A slow to moderate mountain dance in  $\frac{3}{4}$ . One of the most popular Greek folk dances, it originates from the mountainous regions of Epiros and Thessaloniki.
- III. **Tik** – A fast 7/8 dance. The tik has Turkish origins but is a common dance form in Northern Greece.

*(Program notes provided by the composer.)*

**Nikos Skalkottas** was born in Chalcis on the island of Euboa, Greece on March 21, 1904 and died in Athens on September 19, 1949. He came from a poor family but was privileged enough to have the opportunity to receive violin lessons from his father and his uncle Kostas. He continued to study the violin at the Athens Conservatory and graduated with honours. He lived in Berlin from 1921 to 1933 but he gave up performing in 1923 and decided to pursue a career as a composer. He studied composition with Robert Kahn, Paul Juon, Kurt Weill and Philipp Jarnach and most importantly, Arnold Schoenberg. Skalkottas married violinist Matla Temko and had two children but their marriage lasted only a few years.

Skalkottas has written music in three different styles: *Tonal*, *Atonal* and *Twelve – Tones*. However, he was not very interested in incorporating traditional Greek folk melodies into his compositions. Maybe that was the reason why Skalkottas' works were not appreciated by his countrymen during his life time; in fact, the majority of his compositions were not performed until after his death. In order to make ends meet, he had to support himself by constantly in search of music scholarships and playing the violin in the Athens Conservatory, Opera and Radio orchestras.

### **Concerto for Two Harpsichords, Strings and Continuo in D Minor, BWV 1060**

*J.S. Bach (1685 – 1750)*

Johann Sebastian Bach was born in Eisenach, Saxe-Eisenach on March 31, 1685 to a family of musicians. His father, Johann Ambrosius Bach, was the director of the town musicians and all his uncles were all professional musicians. His father gave him lessons on the violin and harpsichord; one of his uncles, Johann Christoph Bach introduced him to the organ. Unfortunately, Bach was orphaned at the age of 10 and was raised by his oldest brother. Even though Bach was discouraged from studying music by his own brothers, he was

exposed to the music of established composers of the day such as Johann Pachelbel, Frenchman Jean Baptiste Lully and Italian Girolamo Frescobaldi. During this same period, Bach also had the opportunity to study Theology and learn foreign languages such as French, Greek and Latin.

In 1699, Bach was awarded a choral scholarship to study at the famous St. Michael's School in Lüneburg. It was during this period that Bach mastered his skills on the organ. Bach married Maria Barbara Bach, his second cousin in 1706, and of the seven children that they had, only two of his sons became accomplished composers: Wilhelm Friedemann Bach and Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach. While Bach was working for the Prince of Anhalt-Köthen, his wife Maria Barbara, suddenly passed away in July of 1720. He later met and married Anna Magdalena Wilcke, a young, highly gifted soprano 17 years his junior. Together they had thirteen children.

Johann Sebastian Bach passed away on July 28, 1750 in Leipzig. Contemporary scholars suspected that he died of a stroke complicated by pneumonia. He was buried in an unmarked grave and it was not until 1894 that his coffin was found. He is now permanently interred at Leipzig's Church of St. Thomas.

Bach wrote a total of 14 concertos for the harpsichord; no one in the history of western music has written more. There are seven concertos for one harpsichord, three concertos for two harpsichords, two concertos for three harpsichords and one concerto for four harpsichords. Scholars of Bach's music have long believed that these concertos were written for his three sons: C.P.E. Bach, W.F. Bach and Johan Gottfried Bernhard, who lived with him at the time, and also his student, Johan Ludwig Krebs. They were first performed at *Collegium musicum* in Leipzig where Bach was the music director. However, many of these concertos were transcriptions of other Bach's work and therefore, the authenticity of these works is a mystery on its own. In fact, one way that anyone can tell that they might be originally written for the harpsichord is by looking at the idiomatic writing styles. For examples, there are passages that were clearly written for the violin rather than for the keyboard or the key that the piece was written in. There is also a version of this concerto written for violin and oboe, BWV 1060R; may be you will be the judge to authenticate what instrument(s) the piece was actually written for.

In this concerto, Bach has written some very challenging passages for the two harpsichords and also some very interesting interplay between the two soloists and the orchestra. The music is extremely busy and it feels like all the instruments were competing against each other throughout the entire performance. However, the second movement is a joy to listen to as it is lovely a duet between two harpsichords with string accompaniment in the background.

***"Musical prodigies ... are probably no longer so rare; but what this little man can do in extemporizing and playing at sight borders the miraculous, and I could not have believed it possible at so early an age." "And yet you heard Mozart in his seventh year at Frankfurt?" (Carl Friedrich Zelter, German composer)***

### **String Symphony No. 12 in G Minor (1823)**

*Felix Mendelssohn – Bartholdy (1809 – 1847)*

Without Felix Mendelssohn, one might wonder if J.S. Bach's music will forever be forgotten. It was because of Mendelssohn's effort that Bach's music was once again performed in 1820 when he programmed his St. Matthew's Passion in one of his concerts that sparked the revival of public interest in the music of Bach.

Felix Mendelssohn was the son of Abraham and Lea Mendelssohn, and he has three other siblings including the famous woman composer, Fanny. He was brought up in Berlin and was surrounded by a cultured circle of family friends. His family organized concerts regularly at their home which gave Mendelssohn the opportunity to write music for various ensembles. It is widely believed that he wrote his string symphonies at this time between the ages of 12 – 14.

Even though Mendelssohn was a child prodigy, he did study with some prominent musicians of his time such as composition and counterpoint with Carl Friedrich Zelter, a person who had a tremendous influence on his development as a composer; piano with Ludwig Berger. Although Mendelssohn was considered a composer in the Romantic period, his musical style is rather conservative because he favoured musical forms of the Classical period.

As for his musical employment, Mendelssohn received his first paid position as the music director in Düsseldorf in 1833. In 1835, he was named conductor and director of the Gwandhaus Orchestra, a post which Johannes Brahms also held in later years. He also founded the famed Leipzig Conservatory.

Mendelssohn travelled extensively throughout Europe and England before he settled down in Leipzig. This is evident in his compositions as he has written in memory of his travels such the "*Fingal's Cave Overture*" and the "*Scottish*" Symphony (Scotland), the "*Italian*" Symphony. His other notable works include his famous *Octet*, Op. 20; Overture to "*A Midsummer's Night Dream*", Op. 21; piano showpiece "*Capriccio Brilliant*", Op. 22; eight volumes of "*Songs Without Words*"; *Violin Concerto in E Minor*, Op. 64, "*Reformation*" Symphony, Op. 107 plus several chamber works for piano and voice.

Mendelssohn began writing his string symphonies in 1821 when he was only 12 years old. Most of them, with a few exceptions, consist of three movements and follow a musical structure of fast-slow-fast. It is evident that these works prepared Mendelssohn in writing first full-scale symphony, op. 11 at the age of 15 in 1824. A fun fact about them is that percussions are used for symphony No. 11; this unconventional orchestration is for certain a new experience for the audience at the time.

Unfortunately, Mendelssohn died in Berlin at a very young age of 38 due to a series of strokes. It was also believed his sister's death in May of 1849 may also have contributed to his untimely demise. He was buried in [Dreifaltigkeitsfriedhof I](#) in Berlin; among the pallbearers was Robert Schumann.

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## **LYRICS**

### **Enas Kompos i Hara Mou** (*My Joy Is Just One Drop*)

Let me tell you once again  
about years foregone,  
about the songs that I love,  
the ones full of complaint.  
Just one drop - my joy;  
and yet, if you will come,

drop by drop, I will give it to you,  
so you can feel refreshed.  
Let me ask once again,  
what time will bring  
the sun and the lightning,  
have set up a trap for me.  
Just one drop- my joy;  
and yet, if you will come  
drop by drop, I will give it to you  
so you can feel refreshed.

*(Translated by agapoulla23)*

**I Xenitia** (*Exile*)

Alone I wander in a strange land  
Meeting bitter troubles

How often, mother, I thought of you  
As I endured those troubles abroad

To forget, mother, I take a drink  
And then I take a second and a third

It is a sorrow, mother, it is a great pain  
To wonder alone in a strange land.

**Nychtose Xoris Feggari** (*Night Without Moon*)

Dark moonless darkens is deep  
And yet a lad cannot sleep;  
I wonder what awaits from evening until morning  
To close the window illuminated by candle;  
Door opens, door closes with a heavy sigh  
We can guess his heart the yearning.

For more information on these songs, please visit  
[http://www.navonarecords.com/europeanfolkscapes/assets/europeanfolkscapes\\_digitalbooklet.pdf](http://www.navonarecords.com/europeanfolkscapes/assets/europeanfolkscapes_digitalbooklet.pdf)