

An Exploration of Greek Language and Byzantine Music  
(A Combined Language Study – Research Summer Program in Thessaloniki)

The project took part in Thessaloniki, between July 16 and August 26. It consisted of two parts - a language program, which was organized by the Institute of Balkan Studies in Thessaloniki, and a research project exploring Byzantine music in Greece - its nature, present state, and relationship to the music of other neighboring countries, in particular to that of Bulgaria. The project was intended to be a continuation of a previous summer project, which took place again in Thessaloniki in the summer of 2005 and resulted in the completion of the eleventh class of the language program mentioned above, as well as in a research project that explored the present state of classical music in Greece and the possibilities for collaboration in this field between Greece and Bulgaria. Thus, the present project is, in a way, a continuation of the previous one, as it includes the completion of the last and most difficult level of the language program offered in Thessaloniki (the twelfth class), as well as an exploration of the present state of Byzantine music in Greece and the possibilities for collaboration between Greece and Bulgaria. The research project consisted of a three-fold approach - first, information about the nature of Byzantine music was collected from different sources - textbooks, books, specialists; then, different churches in Thessaloniki and the area were visited; and finally, interviews with several musicians were taken. The findings of the research project will also be used for a musical composition which will represent a senior project in Composition - one of the requirements of the Intensive Music major in Composition at Yale College.

In the year of 2005, section 11 was attended by the participant at the 33rd International Summer Program for Greek Language, History, and Culture, organized by the Institute of Balkan Studies in Thessaloniki. Attending the same program this year enabled the participant to attend the last, most advanced, twelfth class and thus to obtain not only a diploma for participation in the program but also a certificate for passing the highest possible level of the program, which was attended by university students majoring in Greek Language, as well as people who teach Greek language to small children. The lectures took part every day (from Monday to Saturday, including Saturday), between 8:00 a.m. and 11:30 a.m. Work in the twelfth class involved the exploration of a work of literature, as well as writing a literary paper based on this work. The language program took place at the "Xenia Ilios" Hotel in Peraia, between July 30th and August 26<sup>th</sup>.

The research project involved collecting information about the nature of Byzantine music from different sources, visiting different churches in Thessaloniki and in the area around the city, and finally, taking interviews with different musicians specializing in the study or the performance of Byzantine music. The information was collected from textbooks, music magazines, CD's, and works by different musicians. Different musical examples of the style will be presented on a CD, which will also feature performances by Bulgarian musicians. Details about the nature of the music and its place in the daily church practice were gathered, and some of this information will be used for the composition of a senior project in Music at the Yale College. The present state of Byzantine music in Thessaloniki and in Greece in general - the performance practice, new trends in composition that are related to Byzantine music, the opportunities for public performances of the music in both

Greece and Bulgaria - was one of the topics discussed during the interviews. As a result, it was found that Byzantine music is practiced daily in many Greek churches, and hence it reaches a very wide audience there. Moreover, it is performed also by some contemporary musicians and choirs, and it has recently been used as a basis for composition by different contemporary composers in Greece. This music is also thoroughly studied in the Seminary, the Greek equivalent of a Divinity School.

Another topic of interest was the collaboration in this field between Greece and Bulgaria - which serves also as a continuation of the project completed with the help of the "Stavros Niarchos Foundation" in the year of 2005, where the collaboration between Greece and Bulgaria in the field of classical music was explored. It was found that, once again, there are many different ways in which Greece and Bulgaria, as well as some neighboring countries, such as Macedonia, have become good partners in such collaboration. The musical church traditions of Bulgaria are largely dominated by music written in the Byzantine musical style, which sometimes is combined with music written in the Russian Choral style. In Bulgaria, there are even some examples of mixtures between the two styles, but the music used for everyday church practice is written in the Byzantine style. Thus, many performers and priests from Bulgaria have been invited to perform in Greece on different occasions, and some professional Bulgarian musicians who specialize in this music have also been invited for concerts to Greece. As was noted in one of the interviews, although the language is different (Bulgarian music is written in the Church-Slavonic language), the music is written in the Byzantine traditions, and such invitations and collaborations have proven to be very successful. Moreover, there are different scholars who study in the seminaries and come from different countries – such as many Bulgarian students who study in Greece, as well as some Greek students who study in Bulgaria. In general, there are many examples of collaboration in this field (although, naturally, the field of Classical music, explored in the previous project, has proven to provide even more examples of such collaboration), as well as many possibilities for such collaboration in the future, mainly in the field of education, as well as in that of performance practice. For example, many students from Greece could come to Bulgaria to study the Bulgarian traditions in the performance practice of Byzantine music, and many students from Bulgaria could study this music in Greece. The same could be done with different teachers, and the present collaboration between performers in the two countries must be continued in the future, as well.

The participant would like to thank the “Stavros Niarchos” Foundation for providing him once again with the wonderful opportunity to study Greek language in Thessaloniki, as well as for making the completion of the above-mentioned research project possible. As a result, some of the findings related to the nature of Byzantine music will be used in a senior project in Music involving the composition of his own work, and a CD with different performances of Byzantine music will be compiled. Thus, with the help of the “Stavros Niarchos” Foundation, the participant was able to continue some of the trends established in the summer project for the year of 2005, as well as to explore a new field that offers to produce results of a different nature.