JOHN WILLIAMS
MARIA FARANDOURI
THEODORAKIS
SONGS OF FREEDOM
And Guitar Pieces
Seven Songs of Lorca; Three Songs;
Four Epitafios for Solo Guitar
Mikis Theodorakis

Born in 1925, Mikis Theodorakis came of age during the Nazi occupation of Greece. He was first arrested as a young student for resistance activities against the occupation forces. After liberation and during the Civil War, he was again arrested, this time by the Monarchist regime, and sent to an island prison. When freed, he left for Paris and continued his musical studies (started in Athens) at the Paris Conservatoire. Between 1953 and 1960 he lived in Paris. The one or two best-known pieces (symphonies, sonatas for piano and violin, suites and ballet music) he returned to Greece in 1960, founded a folk orchestra, the "Athens Little Symphony Orchestra" and the Symphony Orchestra of Piraeus, and started a new movement in Greek popular music. His work, drawing on the Byzantine roots of traditional folk music and a new form of Greek modern music, was, from the beginning, immensely popular, despite the fact that it was banned by the State-controlled radio. He also tried to bring public attention to the relationship between art and the problems of Greek society through numerous lectures, seminars and articles.

In 1963, Theodorakis founded a political organization called "Lambrakis Democratic Youth" (named after the left-wing deputy assassinated in that year, whose story has been shown in the film "Z"). In 1964, he became a deputy of the left, until 1967 when the military coup d'état obliged him to go underground. A few months later he was arrested, tortured in the infamous Bublina Street police station and then imprisoned. He was released in 1968, arrested a few months later, and sent into exile in a remote village at first, and later in a prison camp. His health badly deteriorated and the Colonels, giving in to international public pressure, were obliged to release him in 1970, on condition that he went into exile. He has since been a protagonist in the fight against the Junta both through his music and his political activities.

Maria Farandouri

Maria Farandouri started singing at the age of sixteen and was discovered by Mikis Theodorakis, who found in her the ideal interpreter of his music. She became very popular in Greece, being a leading member of the movement started by Theodorakis in the 1960's that completely transformed Greek popular music. The cultural and political significance of this movement for Greece was immense, not only because it returned to the Byzantine roots of Greek music and revived folk music but also because it was linked to the best contemporary Greek poetry, a large part of it being openly political. It was through these extremely popular songs that the Greek public came to know and enjoy the best of its traditions. It is estimated that some two to three thousand copies of their books, yet their poems became known and sung by millions as a result of this movement.

Maria left Greece in 1967, when the military regime banned Theodorakis' music. She held over 300 concerts and sang his banned music in all the Western and Eastern European and Northern American countries, reminding the world of her country's plight. For the last few years she has been living in London, where she has sung at the Albert Hall, the Royal Festival Hall, the Elizabeth Hall and the Plaza, Saville and Cambridge theatres.

SEVEN SONGS OF LORCA

The seven songs from Federico Garcia Lorca’s cycle of poems "Romancero Gitano" were set to music by Theodorakis in March 1967, a month before the military coup. They were freely translated into Greek by Odysseas Elytis, a major contemporary Greek poet.

1) "He with the Song" (Tou Pikramenou)

On August 23, go and tell the man of sorrow: Tonight come out in your garden and cut all your flowers, sign a cross on your door and write your name underneath. Take candles, learn how to cross your hands, and, in the wilderness, taste the night’s coolness, because in less than two months you will wear the dress of death.

2) "Capture of Antonio el Camborio on the Road to Seville" (Antonio Torres Xiponti I)

Dark as a green moon, he walks slowly and gracefully. His shining blue-black curls fall to his eyes. Halfway on his path, he plucks rose-colored thorns from his straight hair. A gentle wind blows them into the water till he makes it liquefied. And half-way, the Guardia Civil takes him away, under the branches of an elm. The gypsies, who used to go alone on the mountains, have now disappeared! The old knives are rusty under the dust. At nine in the evening, they take him to prison while the sky shines like a fool’s flanks.

3) "Death of Antonio el Camborio" (Antonio Torres Xiponti I)

Voices of death rang out of voices that besides a virile carnival voice. He dug a dog bites into their boots. In the struggle, he made little feet like those of a dolphin. He stepped his scarlet tie in enemy blood, but there were four daggers and he had to succumb. Antonio Torres Heredia Camborio, dark as a green moon, virile carnival voice, who has taken away your life! Ah Antonio el Camborio, worthy of an express! Remember the virgin because she is going to die. And another slaps him on the back and says: Guardia Civil! He spits blood three times and dies on his side. A Gypsy angel rested his head on a cushion. Others, in weary shape, lit a candle...

4) "Lost Through Love" (Xamos Apo Agapi)

What is shining in the high galleries? Shut the door, my son, it has struck eleven. The trembling night knocks at the window panes, pursued by the thsousand dogs that do not know her, while a smell of wine and amber comes from the garden. Breezes and winds of ancient ears in the broken arch of midnight. Sadly, the women of the valleys carry the blood of the man, calm blood of cut flower, bitter blood of young thigh. Seraphs and gypsies play the accordions. Seven cries, seven bloods, seven double poppies, the dull mirrors break in the high galleries...

5) "The Gypsy Nun" (I Kalogia I Tsingana)

Silence of chalk and myrtle. Mallows in the grass. The nun is embroidering wallflowers on a straw-colored canvass. How beautifully she embroiders! The young nun in the convent would like to embroider flowers of her own fancy. Two knights are galloping in the nun’s eyes. A dull noise loosens the vest of her bosom, and, as she looks at clouds and mountains in the wild distance, her heart breaks. Her desire flows on rivers in space. But she goes on with her flowers, while standing in the breeze, the light plays on the slats up above, in the shutters...

6) "The Wind and the Gypsy Girl" (Tou Anemou)

Dressed with the moon’s silver, gracefully dancing, the young gypsy girl comes from the wilderness. But the never-sleeping wind, the wild man, sees her and starts to sing to her: “My little one, let me raise your skirt and touch your sweet belly.” Frightened, she runs and he, with a shiny sword, runs after her. “Listen to the wave moon as the valley becomes pale and the shadow plays the flute in the dark air. Run, little gypsy, run, the wind will get hold of you.” She enters the first house and recounts her story as the wind, like a wild animal, runs in the cold in and, in his rage, beats the house and bites the roof-tiles.

7) "Pandermi" (I Pandermi)

The cocks’ crow dig in search of the dawn, as Soledad Montoya comes down from the black mountain. Her copper-yellow flesh smells of horses and shadows. Her breasts, anivils of light, moon round songs. "Soledad, are you looking for me alone at this hour? “I’m looking for the one I want, but tell me, what does it matter to you? The man I’m looking for is my joy and my person.” “Soledad, what pain, what agonizing pain you suffer!” "What immense pain! I run about the house like a mad-woman, dragging my plaits from kitchen to bed.” “Soledad, wash your body with larks’ water, and leave your heart in peace! Down there the river sings, fetsoons of sky and leaves. Oh, pain of gypsies, pure and ever lonely pain! Oh, pain of hidden river-bed and far-off dams.”

"Greek translation of the Spanish word "Soledad." It is difficult to translate into English, meaning the woman who is isolated, left completely alone.

FOUR EPIPHALYS FOR SOLO GUITAR

Epitafios 3, 4 and 5

The four songs from the cycle "Epitaph" are:

1) "Locks of hair," "One day in May," "You have set, my star," "You were standing in front of the window."

The background is as follows:

Greece, May 18, 1936. The tobacco workers’ strike has spread to the whole country. At Salonika, seven thousand strikers march toward the Prefecture when, suddenly, the police open fire on the procession with machine-guns. Thirty workers lie motionless on the ground—murdered in cold blood. Dozens of wounded groan. In the midst of them, a mother, kneeling over the still-warm body of her slain boy, utters heart-rending cries, strokes him gently and weeps floods of tears. (Theodorakis has set to music the lyrics that the Greek poet Y. Ritso dedicated to this event.)

THREE SONGS

1) "The Smiling Boy" (To Yelasto Pedi—Theme from "Z")

(Thereodakis has set to music a number of passages from the verse-drama "The Hostage" by the Irish writer Brendan Behan. Although "The Hostage" deals with the Irish troubles, the Greek people applied the songs to their own struggle against the tyranny set up in Athens after the fall of the 11th of July, 1946, and, in particular, "The Smiling Boy" was taken as referring to the death of Lambrias.)

One August morning, before dawn, going out to take the air, I saw a girl crying on the flowery ground. "My heart is broken, the smiling boy is gone." Cursed hour, cursed moment. Our people have killed the smiling boy. The ad was beside the commander, if he had been killed by an English bullet or by the hunger strike in prison he would have been an honor to have lost him.

2) "Silva"

(The following song was written by Theodorakis in his cell in Bublinas Street police station. It is part of a wider collection written at the same time (September-October 1967) that he has named "The Sun and Time." Silva is a woman’s name. She was imprisoned in another cell and tortured for her participation in the Resistance.)

Rivers of the skies, underground torrents noisily fall—Street of Dreams, Omonia Square, Silva. Their waters blonde, two mattresses blonde, two mattresses green. In the middle, I, Red ray of light, feathers, harmonicas, sound of water, moons that dip and sink and drown. Bars, prison bars, Silva, Silva.

3) "The One Who Was Taken by the Road" (Irrhan I Anthroipo)

(A song from the cycle Arkadia II, composed in January 1969 to the verses of a Greek poet, M. Eleftheriou. Theodorakis was at the time in political confinement at Zatuna, a remote mountain village.)

The law took the one and became cloud and smoke. The road took the other, and he became everybody’s sorrow. People in black came with darkness in their hair and those with rain in their hands and thunder in their glance. Laws have taken our life and our songs have become smoke. Our dreams were taken by laws, and roads have taken our life and our love. They search the soil and the trees and then they search into my heart. But, they find the wound still open in my eyes and tears.

This is a literal translation. A possible interpretation is the following: The persons referred to in the first two lines represent those who have been arrested and those who have simply disappeared. Others mourn their loss, but feel that one day they will avenge this loss. The current rulers of Greece have made laws that have sapped the very life of the people. By means of these laws the rulers hope to control the people, to know them completely. But they do not need to look so closely into the hearts of the people to find sorrow at these events; it is apparent in their faces.)

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