

**Jani Christou's *Strychnine Lady* (1967):  
the development of an interpretative strategy in  
the context of the interdisciplinary ideas surrounding  
its genesis**

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A Thesis submitted for the Degree of PhD in Music

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**Declaration of Authorship**

I, Maria Yerosimou, declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and have been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

Signed: .....

Date: .....

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## Abstract

The present thesis offers a holistic analysis of *Strychnine Lady*, a work created by the Greek composer Jani Christou (1926–70) in 1967. This work belongs to Christou's last compositional period, during which he experimented with a personal art form that involves stage performance, mythical archetypes, dramatic elements and avant-garde materials and means. At this time, he also introduced new concepts, such as metapraxis and protoperformance, in order to engage with elements of the unconscious, influenced, in particular, by the field of analytical psychology as shaped by the Swiss psychologist, Carl Jung (1875–1961). The thesis works on two levels: one, an analysis of primary material referring to archival findings and the score of *Strychnine Lady* itself; and two, the identification of links with the theories of others via my own use of secondary sources towards a clarification of the relationship of these theories to the work.

Hence, I aim at situating Christou in the 1960s through a comparison between him and two other well-known composers of that era who appear to have similar practices, John Cage (1912–92) and Mauricio Kagel (1931–2008), as well as offering a comparison between *Strychnine Lady* and the experimental music-theatre of the 1960s. Furthermore, I seek to clarify Christou's compositional concepts with reference to *Strychnine Lady* through an in-depth analysis of his personal writings found in his archive, and I present connections with other, non-musical theories by which, I argue, he was influenced. These theories predominantly concern the concepts of Jung and Mircea Eliade. Furthermore, this study argues that these areas of thought, commonly regarded as 'non-musical', become, in an important sense, musical in Christou's late works. In addition, I identify spiritual elements in *Strychnine Lady* and present links between several of its aspects and spiritual practices. Finally, the thesis also provides an extended critical analysis of the work's score, which follows Christou's new, personal and ground-breaking music notation system.

It is important to mention that this is the first dedicated study to explore *Strychnine Lady* both holistically and critically, and one of the very few attempts thus far to research Christou's output in depth. Hence, its importance lies in the concern to confirm the composer's posthumous reputation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century via research that will, it is hoped, make a significant contribution to improving understanding of the composer's late works.

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## Introduction

It was in 2006 that I first discovered the composer Jani Christou; until then, I had never come across his name, unlike other composers of Greek modernism and post-modernism, such as Xenakis and Constantinidis. I was in my second year of undergraduate studies, coming from a strictly classical music background where all I knew about 20<sup>th</sup>-century music was only in theory. On that day, I was walking in the hallway of the Music department of the University of Macedonia in Greece, when I suddenly noticed a poster, referring to a concert dedicated to a composer called Jani Christou, whose works had some weird titles, like *Strychnine Lady*. Among the other titles, my eye caught *6 songs on poems by T.S Eliot*, who I greatly admired; Eliot was the reason I actually thought of going to the event. The concert was going to start one hour later, close to where I was; lectures for that day were finished and I began asking my classmates if they were interested in going. None of them were, so I decided not to go either. However, as I was leaving the building, I made a left-turn and I actually walked down the hall where the event was taking place: I could never guess that this turn would actually change my world.

The concert had started with *Latin Liturgy*, and then continued with the *6 songs*; a very interesting experience and music that made me hold my breath. Nevertheless, it was the last work, the one with the weird title *Strychnine Lady* that opened this new world to me. I sat for more than 20 minutes watching this bizarre performance, in which actors made ceremonial movements with a red cloth, a viola soloist barely played any music at all, hiding behind a metal sheet construction, and musicians walked on stage and used toy cars and toy aeroplanes; all these things happening with a strange lack of

communication which, however, managed to communicate with my deepest, inner places and awoke sentiments from a deeper level, sentiments I didn't even know existed. The performance finished; people were clapping and the performers were smiling and bowing and I was still trying to understand what had happened. This continued for days – it felt as though I was in a dream unable to wake up. It was then that I said to myself: this is what I want to do in my life.

The next months found me searching, mostly online and in the library, for information about Christou and especially this particular work. I discovered very little general information about the composer and almost nothing on *Strychnine Lady*. The most integrated source I found was Anna M. Lucciano's book, *Jani Christou: the work and temperament of a Greek composer*, which introduced me to Christou in more detail, yet *Strychnine Lady* was outlined only briefly, with no further information. In the meantime, I registered in modules related to 20<sup>th</sup>-century music, which became my core subject and gave me the opportunity to engage with similar works. Yet nothing would exceed the experience that I had with Christou and *Strychnine Lady*, and for this reason this particular work eventually became the subject of my dissertation, an experience that helped me gather material and discover more things both about the composer in general and this work in particular.

I continued my studies in the performance field, completing an MA in Performance Arts. Subsequently, I decided that I wanted to complete a PhD in Performance, in the form of a Practice as Research personal project; I wrote my proposal and sent applications to universities. At the last moment, I made a 'left-turn' again and wrote a proposal for a PhD in Music, exploring *Strychnine Lady* in more detail, as I could still

not get beyond the fact that I hadn't yet unlocked the secrets of the work. Hence, the present thesis is the result of an inner necessity and original research curiosity, which became a way of living for me, as any research should be.

The following chapters illustrate the process that I followed in my effort to 'solve the mysteries' of *Strychnine Lady*, always based on arguments, facts, observations and material, trying to stay away from the myth created around Christou's name as an alchemist and mystic. The first chapter aims to introduce Christou and his general work, in order to gain a better comprehension of his general output. Due to the general lack of published sources and substantive research in the field, a great amount of information and material has been gathered from the composer's personal archive in Athens, after his daughter Sandra kindly gave me permission to access this. The secondary sources are outlined in Chapter 2, in the form of a literature review.

Christou – especially in his late works, created between 1965 and 1970 – developed a completely personal and innovative compositional system that drew on ideas and concepts related to psychology and the theory of archetypes, spirituality, drama, theatre and avant-garde materials and means. It is crucial to mention that he also invented a new music notation system with the aim of recording these ideas in the score. Hence, the main body of the thesis, Chapters 3 to 10, concerns analyses of these concepts with regard to *Strychnine Lady*, the core subject of the study.

The purpose of the thesis, which is the first extensive research to be conducted on *Strychnine Lady* and generally one of few such pieces on any of Christou's works, is

firstly to identify and secondly to clarify all the different areas that influenced the composer in creating the work, with the aim of providing a better understanding of the work itself and also to enrich Christou studies with a new dimension. The significance of this thesis lies in the fact that it is the first to suggest and follow those research paths in Christou's output, which concern what are frequently termed non-musical areas. The present thesis illustrates how these non-musical areas do, in fact, become musical in Christou's compositions, a crucial argument in the realisation of his compositional thought and its application to the actual works.

## Notes to the reader

In order to facilitate the reading process of this thesis, I would like to draw attention to some points:

1. There are particular quotations by Jani Christou that are repeated throughout the thesis; this is due to the fact that in every instance they are examined from a different perspective. These quotations mainly concern the composer's description of *Strychnine Lady* in a letter to Rhoda Lee Rhea, the composer's letter to Rufina Ampenoff, and Christou's writing under 'The Lunar pattern'. Hence, for example, the letter to Ampenoff is quoted first in Chapter 1, 'Introduction and context', focusing on its content in reference to the periodisation of Christou's oeuvre; then is quoted again in Chapter 9, 'Music notation', this time focusing on notions of musical notation.
2. All quotations not originally written in English are presented in my translation, unless stated otherwise.
3. The transcriptions of the archival material use Christou's own punctuation. On that note, {...} replaces passages that are illegible.

## Chapter 1: Introduction and context

In a car accident on the 8<sup>th</sup> January 1970 the contemporary music world lost one of its most unusual and thrilling talents: the composer Jani Christou. Christou was a major composer and philosopher whose unusual yet promising career was brought to an end after his untimely death at the age of 44. Especially in his late works, Christou brought into conjunction, in quite remarkable ways, his deep immersion in philosophical and psychological studies, including the ideas of Carl Jung and alchemy, with avant-garde musical and dramatic materials and means. These works were described by the composer himself as stage-rituals and they aim, through the conception of ‘metapraxis’, to lead the performers and audience to a transcendent state in order to communicate primeval and archetypal elements of the unconscious. It is crucial to note that the composer invented a completely personal and ground-breaking music notation system in order to describe his concepts vividly and thoroughly.

Christou’s challenging and speculative output intrigues a young generation of music scholars; however, his work remains imperfectly and only patchily known and understood, especially outside Greece, and his name is not usually heard within international music communities. Ironically, at the time of his death, the most ambitious project of his music career – a large-scale contemporary opera based on Aeschylus’s *Oresteia* (1967–70) – was about to be premiered at the prestigious English Bach Festival in London in April 1970; performances were also scheduled to take place in Japan, France, Scandinavia and the USA. Hence, despite the fact that he was greatly honoured in contemporary music circles in the 1960s, Christou’s unfortunate and premature death brought to an end a promising career and a remarkable output.

## Biography

Jani Christou was born of Greek parents at Heliopolis, northeast of Cairo, in Egypt, on 8<sup>th</sup> January 1926. As a child, he was well educated, taking his primary education at the English Victoria College in Alexandria. He started having piano lessons in 1931 and for a period of time he studied with a famous pianist of the time, Gina Bachauer, who introduced him to music theory. Christou started composing at an early age. In 1945, he moved to King's College, Cambridge, to study philosophy and formal logic, probably under Ludwig Wittgenstein and Bertrand Russell,<sup>1</sup> and obtained an MA degree in philosophy in 1948. He also followed a course in economics at his father's request, who hoped that Christou would take over the family business. Although he gained his diploma, he never concerned himself with economics again.

Simultaneously, he also started studying music on a private basis with Hans Redlich, who was a well-known musicologist and had been a student of Alban Berg. Christou later went to Rome to study orchestration with Angelo Francesco Lavagnino. During 1951–54 he travelled widely across Europe, ending with a short stay in Zürich where it is believed that he met Jung and attended several of his lectures in psychology, although this information has not been confirmed with evidence. Christou's brother, Evangelos, who himself was a student of Jung, had greatly encouraged his studies in psychology.

Christou returned to Alexandria, Egypt, in 1951 where he established a home studio and devoted himself to composition. In 1956 he married his childhood friend, Theresia Horemi, an exceptional young painter from the island of Chios. Theresia provided

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<sup>1</sup> It is believed that Christou studied under these two great thinkers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; nevertheless, there is not enough evidence to confirm this information yet.

extensive support and assistance to Christou in all of his aspirations during their lives together. In the same year, his brother was killed in a car accident, an event that had a deep effect on Christou. Christou considered Evangelos his spiritual mentor who had a great role in his creative thinking, and his death had a traumatic effect. Evangelos's book, *The Logos of the Soul*, was edited by Jani himself after his brother's death. In 1960, due to the regime of Gamal Abdel Nasser and the exodus of Greeks from Egypt,<sup>2</sup> Christou moved permanently to Greece. He divided his time between Chios and Athens before eventually settling in the capital due to the increasing requirements of his professional music life.

Christou was greatly admired by in Greek musical circles and he made acquaintances that helped him perform his works at an international level. One example was Yannis Papaioannou, an important figure in Greece during the years of the Cold War,<sup>3</sup> who promoted modern music and new composers. Christou was also introduced to Lina Lalandi, a Greek harpsichordist and founder /director of the English Bach Festival from 1963 until her death in 2012. Lalandi had a deep interest in modern music and she promoted composers such as Iannis Xenakis, Oliver Messiaen and Karlheinz Stockhausen (McCarthy 2012). Christou, invited by Lalandi, presented the premiere of his work *Tongues of Fire* (1964) at the English Bach Festival; his large scale opera

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<sup>2</sup> The exodus of Greeks from Egypt begun with the revolution of 1952 and the regime of Gamal Abdel Nasser. It is estimated that between 1957 - 1962 most of the Egyptian Greeks were forced to leave the country, a major tragedy for the Greek Diaspora.

<sup>3</sup> Cold War influenced the establishment of the Greek-avant garde music. In the context of the cultural competition in these years, many scholarships were given and young Greek composers and musicians had the opportunity to become familiar with and promote new music. IN 1952 USIS (United States Information Service) inaugurated concerts in Greece that were crucial in the later blossoming of events related with modern music, and the works of new composers such as Iannis Xenakis, Christou and Theodore Antoniou became widely known, with the help of important figures such as Manos Hadjidakis and Yiannis Papaioannou (Romanou 2003).

*Oresteia* was also going to be premiered at the same festival in April 1970, a premiere that never took place due to his unfortunate death earlier in that year.<sup>4</sup>

Christou and his wife Theresia were killed in a car accident on the 8<sup>th</sup> January 1970, after celebrating the composer's name day. Christou died at the age of 44 on his birthday, already one of the leading composers of his time. His compositional and pre-compositional work is kept in his personal archive in Athens and is managed by the composer's daughter Sandra.

### **A brief account of Jani Christou's output as a whole**

Christou's output has been separated into compositional periods by two major Christou scholars: first, Yannis Papaioannou in 1970, and then George Leotsakos in 1976. Papaioannou (1915–2000) was a Greek well-known musicologist; Leotsakos (1935–) is a renowned music critic and musicologist. Both were acquainted with Christou. In fact, Leotsakos had been a very close friend of the composer for the last seven years of his life. However, these two writers differ as to the number of periods into which the composer's output should be divided. Papaioannou separates it into six, as follows:

- First Period (1948–53) 'Twelve-tone system towards serialism'
- Second Period (1953–58) 'Twelve-tone system towards serialism'
- Third Period (1959–64) 'Meta-serial technique of large forms and introduction of electronic music'
- Fourth Period (1965–66) 'Composition with patterns and wide use of electronic music'

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<sup>4</sup> The English Bach Festival 1970 was partly dedicated to him, whilst the English Bach Festival 1971 included the premiere of his *Tocatta* (1962).

- Fifth Period (1966–68) ‘Free composition with patterns’
- Sixth Period (1968–70) ‘System of programmed permutations and synthesis of para-musical patterns’

Leotsakos, on the other hand, in observing just three periods, comments on Papaioannou’s periodisation that

Christou’s oeuvre presents a continuously evolving unity, which can be detected even in such stylistically discrepant works as *Phoenix Music* and *Enantiodromia*. Papaioannou (*MGGI*) described six periods in Christou’s output, but it is more appropriate to condense these into three moderately distinct phases illustrating his evolving philosophy and attitude to art: from *Phoenix Music* (1948–9) to the *Symphony no.2* (1957–8), from *Patterns and Permutations* (1960) to *Tongues of Fire* (1964) and lastly from *Mysterion* (1965–6) onwards.

(Leotsakos 1980)

Papaioannou updated his biography in 1980, ten years after it had first been published. In the updated version, he states that the six periods of which he originally wrote were provided by the composer himself, but now made the suggestion that they should be separated in two larger categories: a ‘serial phase’ (1948–64) and a ‘synthetic phase’ (1965–70). According to my own research, Christou did not in fact provide any official list of works following a separation into different periods; thus the possibility remains that neither of these divisions was actually sanctioned by the composer himself, though

of course he could have made his views on this matter known directly to either or both writers.

It is interesting that Anna Lucciano, whose book was first published in 1987, does not comment directly on either of these solutions, and neither does she suggest any further alternative. However, she implies a division by dividing her book into two parts, which she calls the ‘Phoenix principle’ and the ‘Lunar pattern’. Between these two parts, she inserts an ‘interlude’ concerning the composer’s music for the theatre; this decision is justified by the fact that Christou referred to this aspect of his output as only a sideline in his compositional work and, in his own writings, never chose any item from it as representative of his general output (Lucciano 2000, 56). Lucciano further states that the layout of her book ‘was dictated not by an all too fanciful imagination, but by the composer’s own concept of his entire output’ (Lucciano 2000, xiii). She also mentions that, although this division and the titles of the two parts were intuitive on her part, this proved to be valid, since the composer suggested this separation in his last letters, and in particular in a letter to Rufena Ampenoff, dated 7<sup>th</sup> June 1969. Lucciano does not, however, provide any further information on this matter. As already mentioned, she does not raise any issues with regard to the previous separations of the composer’s output: a surprising omission, given that these periodisations are, even today, dominant in the description of Christou’s entire compositional work – especially Papaioannou’s six-part separation.

I came across the above-mentioned letter while studying one of the archival files referring to *Anaparastases*; all the notes included in there are dated 1968–69. Thus far, this is the only finding in the archive suggesting that Christou did separate his output according to the changing nature of his philosophical thinking. This letter, as mentioned

earlier, is addressed to Rufina Ampenoff, from the London office of the music publishers Boosey & Hawkes. In the letter, Christou divides his compositions into three different phases; this discussion is then followed by a list of works and explanations of concepts, divided into just two categories: an earlier period and a recent period.

This letter was written just seven months before the composer's death; hence it is appropriate to conclude that it may be the last available account of Christou's own view of his work as a whole. In this document, he provides some useful clarifications with regard to his compositional thinking. Although just a few pages long, the letter is, I would argue, very important, as it constitutes the only instance in which Christou provides direct descriptions of his output according to different phases.

Christou, as understood from the letter, had been asked to send scores representative of various stages of his output; thus he was in a position in which he had to provide explanations. The first phase he discusses starts in 1948–49, with *Phoenix Music*, which is interestingly described by the composer as a 'student effort'; during that period, according to Christou, 'music is taken for granted, and is technically unquestioning' (Christou 1969). The second phase seems to correspond to the works created in 1965 and 1966, in particular to *Mysterion* (1965) and *Praxis for twelve* (1966); during this period, the composer is led 'to a questioning of musical processes in general, and of the attitudes and expectations which music-making seems to imply' (Christou 1969). Finally, the third phase starts with the works created in 1967 and 'it is centred in a climate of ritual'. It is a little confusing to observe that the composer describes three phases in the actual letter, whilst he provides two chronological categories in the work list that accompanies it. The assumption, made here, is that Christou describes the development of his compositional attitudes in three phases, yet he considers his works

to belong to two different categories. We should note that there is a discrepancy in the size of these periods, as indicated by the years involved: The first period begins with *Phoenix Music* in 1948 and ends with *Tongues of Fire* in 1964, whilst the second lasts from *Mysterion* in 1965 until the unfinished works of 1969.<sup>5</sup> However, we should take into consideration that Christou's premature death interrupted his compositional evolution that started with this second period in 1965.

I was especially fascinated when I found this list in the archive, since I had always considered Christou's output to be separated into two chronological periods: his praxis and his metapraxis. The praxis and metapraxis pair forms perhaps the most important axis of the composer's entire output. Praxis in Greek means 'action', which the composer defines as an act in the context of the norm, whilst metapraxis, meta-action, is the surpassing of the norm, going beyond what is logically expected. Hence, in terms of the composer's oeuvre, the pre-1965 compositions might consist of Christou's praxis, whilst the post-1965 compositions his personal metapraxis.<sup>6</sup> This is because 1965 is a turning point in the composer's conceptions, ideas and beliefs; it is when he starts to use unconventional notation, rejects previous aesthetics and forms a personal system of compositional axioms. Christou was intrigued by the idea that transformation could be achieved by challenging and going beyond the limits of conventions. He had started his compositional career with *Phoenix Music* (1948–49), a remarkably mature work for a self-taught twenty-two year-old. His following works had considerable success in Greece and abroad, and he could easily have had a good career as a mainstream composer. Nevertheless, he chose to follow a personal path, staying professionally independent all his life (see Lucciano 2000, xxi), and challenging his own

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<sup>5</sup> See Appendix I, catalogue of works.

<sup>6</sup> The pair praxis and metapraxis will be discussed further in later parts of the thesis.

compositional limits; in other words, he was following a journey towards his own metapraxis.

To return to the compositional periods themselves: in the aforementioned archival list, Christou explicitly separates his output into two categories:

- 'Earlier period: Phoenix patterns and praxis'
- 'Recent period: Lunar patterns and metapraxis'

The composer explains this separation according to his approach to composition and the idea of patterns,<sup>7</sup> an idea dominant in his entire output. Hence, as he himself describes,

Earlier period: 'Phoenix' patterns and praxis

Works written up to 1964 correspond more or less to the 'action' approach. The type of pattern-manipulation during this period did not make it necessary to depart from a traditional notation and more or less established forms using 'musical' parameters according to the 'phoenix' principle (beginning – drama – end/beginning). Representative works of this period are:

PHOENIX MUSIC

6 SONGS ON POEMS BY T.S. ELIOT

PATTERNS AND PERMUTATIONS

TOCCATA FOR PIANOFORTE & ORCHESTRA

TONGUES OF FIRE

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<sup>7</sup> Patterns refer to the formation of different sound events, which 'proliferate through various types of repetition and are multiplied in time' (Christou 1969), and their components originate from serial techniques; it is actually Christou's way of organising sound.

Recent period: ‘Lunar’ patterns and metapraxis

The meta-action approach begins with MYSTERION in 1965 and extends up to the present (1969). This approach to patterns made it necessary to abandon traditional notation and to develop another notation: SYNTHETIC NOTATION. This consists of a synthesis of various signs giving a total pictorial impact of the pattern action. The term also serves to underline the difference between this form of notation and ANALYTIC notation – used (particularly in part-notation) whenever synthetic notation is such as to necessitate decoding.

This approach introduces the ‘uncalculable’<sup>8</sup> [*sic*] factor operating upon the multiplication of patterns, and on all parameters generally (and opening up the way towards a music using para-‘musical’ components). This is represented by substituting the term ‘lunar pattern’ for ‘phoenix principle’: because although the lunar pattern also expresses the recycling process implied by the phoenix principle, there is an additional component: ECLIPSE, the symbol for the irrational interruption of the pattern action, a root image of the potential menace threatening all forms, all actions. Representative of this phase, in different ways, are:

MYSTERION

PRAXIS FOR 12

THE STRYCHNINE LADY

ENANTIODROMIA

EPICYCLE

ANAPARASTASIS (a cycle of over forty works)

(Christou 1969)

The above extract from the archive is considered crucial here to developing an understanding of how and why Christou made such a separation of his output. It clearly illustrates the ideas of praxis and metapraxis in terms of the compositional process

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<sup>8</sup> This is probably typos for the word incalculable.

itself. My own perception is that Christou considered his late works to be his own metapraxis, his own surpassing of his compositional conventions. The only further comment I would make here with regard to the above extract would be related to providing further attempts at definitions and explanations of the composer's terms. This exercise seems more appropriately placed in the chapters to follow, where these matters will be gradually clarified. The aim of the current section is simply to present the way in which Christou himself divided up his compositions.

Christou used different files for his correspondence; why, therefore, is this letter included in a file concerning his 'Thoughts'? The hypothesis made here is that the composer was trying to separate his output into compositional periods, and that the importance of this activity proved sufficient for him to have included the letter in one of the files relating to his 'Thoughts'. Apparently, the letter's aim was simply to supply some information to accompany the scores that he was sending to a publishing company that may have expressed an interest in taking him on as a composer. Nevertheless, it was perhaps the first occasion on which he felt the need to articulate how he saw the separation of his compositions into chronological phases, and to provide clarifications; this is probably the reason why he kept a copy in this particular file.

Thus we can conclude from the archival findings that, for Christou, the crucial factor that determines how his compositional periods should be viewed is the move from more or less conventional forms to a state of what we might now describe as ritual re-enactment. Neither Leotsakos's nor Papaioannou's divisions seem to agree with the composer's view. For although, in 1980, Papaioannou separated Christou's output into two larger stages, he kept the six subdivisions, something not implied by the composer; and although I agree with Leotsakos that 'Christou's oeuvre presents a continuously

evolving unity' (Leotsakos 1980), we cannot ignore the fact that there was a great change in the post-1965 works, which in, my view, marks a vital turning point. Hence, since there is a clear distinction between the pre-1965 and post-1965 compositions, in terms of technical means as well as aesthetics and approaches, I would personally consider it more appropriate to consider Christou's oeuvre in a division of two large chronological periods.

### **The issue of the lost (?) works.**

In the official catalogue of works, which can be found in the appendices, there are several works with the indication 'lost'. This is an issue first raised by Leotsakos and it has, since then, caused confusion in musicological circles. Leotsakos blames Christou's mother, Lilika Tavernari, for the disappearance of these works from the archive (Leotsakos 2000); however, in order to be able to consider these works as firstly completed and then lost, a close examination of the matter is essential.

The only testimonies regarding these works are unfortunately oral since nobody has really seen a completed score. Lucciano (2000), referring to *Psalms of David*, *Gilgamesh* and *The Breakdown*, believes that these works were not completed and they remained in sketch form. She also presents valuable information provided by the composer's secretary, Athina Schina. In particular, Schina states that the *Psalms of David* remained in sketch form, and claims that she had seen two or three versions of *Gilgamesh*; however she wasn't able to confirm if these were complete (Lucciano 2000). In addition, for *The Testament* she contends that 'It is probable that the concepts of an older incomplete work that the composer had in mind passed transformed and newly worked into the final part of *The Strychnine Lady*' (Lucciano 2000, 175).

Furthermore, Lucciano also refers to *The Breakdown* as an incomplete work whilst she states that the Concerto for piano and orchestra is probably the same work as the Toccata, which was occasionally referred to by Christou as a ‘concerto’ (Lucciano 2000). Papaioannou (1980), after excluding all the possible ways in which these works could be lost, states his belief that these works were never written on paper.

Hence, on the one hand there are the oral testimonies, mainly these of Leotsakos referring to his conversations with Christou about the lost works; on the other hand, there are oral testimonies of the composer’s secretary who was extremely familiar with his archive and his compositions, and the observations of one of the most important Christou scholars, who don’t believe that the works were ever complete. Unfortunately, we cannot be sure about anything, since there is no evidence to support either view. But this is also the reason why we should be very careful in both recording the works in the official catalogue as lost, as well as excluding the possibility of them actually having been composed.

My personal impression is that it is difficult for a work from the archive simply to disappear. Christou carefully noted any thought, concept or idea and this was filed in relevant folders, according to the current work and/or period of time. He would later return to these files to gather material for new works, and he would even mark his notes with the new date and the title of the new work each time. One example of this is a 1964–65 file that contains general ideas, notes and concepts but that does not refer to a particular work. Some of the notes in the file suggest that the composer returned to it years later in gathering material for the *Anaparastases*, as I found notes dated 1964 and then re-dated 1967 and indicated as material for *Anaparastases*.

In conclusion, I would consider the matter of the lost works as unresolved, since there is not enough evidence to suggest that these works actually existed in a complete state. Hence, we should be very careful in regarding them as part of Christou's catalogue of works, at least until more research proves differently.

## Chapter 2: The Research

### About this thesis

As mentioned in an earlier section, this thesis focuses on *Strychnine Lady*, one of Christou's late works. Some basic parameters define my approach towards clarifying the different aspects of this composition:

1. The work is fundamentally interdisciplinary; as a consequence, it deals very little with musical materials as these are conventionally perceived.
2. The score is written in the composer's personal notation system, which is suggestive of pictographic gestures and symbols; traditional music notation is only rarely found.
3. The work is composed according to an approach that draws on Christou's own extensive writings about philosophical ideas and concepts, mostly related to the fields of analytical psychology, alchemical studies and spirituality.

The above parameters are the starting point for my analytical approach to *Strychnine Lady*. As one might understand, this approach will not involve traditional music analysis methodologies or focus on music per se; rather, it will seek to identify and examine the aspects that might define what 'music' may be said to involve in this instance. The central aim of the present thesis is to offer a realisation of the work through an interdisciplinary research approach based on its components. All the

research directions that this thesis follows, and the research decisions made, arise directly from aspects suggested by the score itself, the archival files and, finally, Christou's own writings with respect to music and its function.

## **The issues and challenges**

### **The lack of previous research**

Almost forty-five years after his death, Christou remains largely unknown to the international music community; little has been published about his output, which has been only patchily explored, and his name does not enjoy the reputation that, in my opinion, it ought to have. This situation raises several critical questions prior to the commencement of any actual research. For example, since Christou is considered a distinguished composer in Greece, why has there been no extensive research on his output until today? During discussions with musicologists who are not familiar with the composer's works, the argument often arises that he might not be worthy of such research. Yet how valid could such an argument be? There are many cases of composers who were largely forgotten for years before being rediscovered and appreciated. In addition, Christou managed to enjoy great acceptance by musical communities internationally while still alive, a fact suggesting something about the perceived artistic value as well as the contemporary reception of his works. On the other hand, there is the argument that this might merely show that Christou's work had a limited 'shelf life'. Yet during the last decade, Christou has been taught in Greek universities as one of the most important Greek composers; and, in addition, there is recent interest in the performance of his works in Greece, a fact demonstrating that Christou's output is now

regarded as relevant once more, in a way that was evidently not the case in the later part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

However, a question that still remains unanswered concerns the lack of current activity in Christou studies. This is a quite complex issue so, below, I aim to identify the possible reasons for this situation, based on my own experiences as a Christou researcher.

Firstly, there is a special relationship between Christou's musical compositions and other non-musical systems of thought. The latter include Jung and archetypal theory, Mircea Eliade and anthropology, and Ludwig Wittgenstein and the philosophy of language. Any attempt to offer a detailed account and critique of Christou's achievements that is not based on extensive acquaintance with and understanding of such areas cannot be considered valid, since Christou's works cannot be thoroughly analysed and appreciated via traditional musicological methodologies. For a comprehensive analysis of the works, one must explore the relationship between all these elements. Thus, musical knowledge alone is insufficient, and a researcher should be prepared to study extensively other, non-musical and performance areas. This problem alone seems likely to have reduced the range of researchers prepared to tackle this topic. Although interdisciplinarity is nowadays encouraged by academic institutions, we still live in an era of specialisation, and this limits the possibility of interdisciplinary research.

Secondly, since there is insufficient published material, perhaps the most significant single source of information is the composer's own archive. This is based in Athens, and undertaking any serious research there generally requires a lot of travelling and sufficient funding. In addition, the archive is kept in Sandra Christou's apartment; hence, there is no standard timetable for visits, which must be made by prior arrangement. The archive is highly valuable, since it gives the researcher direct access to original material from the beginning of Christou's output, and all findings come straight from the original source. Also, there is an exceptional fascination in exploring all this material and in trying to find what is useful and what is not. It feels like solving a puzzle, trying to match the right pieces just to get a part of a picture. This fascination aside, however, this could also be a trap: any attempt to make sense of this mass of data can easily cause the researcher to become lost in the material, spending large amounts of time only to end up with a few useful outcomes.

Thirdly, Christou had a highly personal system of philosophy and composition. His archive contains extensive writing about his musical and extra-musical thoughts on his compositional process. It is notable that he wrote so much on each of his works. He describes his thoughts in detail on a range of subjects, working on a number of intricate and unusual systems simultaneously without providing sufficient explanations. His ideas are complex and unconventional and most of the time they are hard to clarify, a fact that makes interpretation and discussion necessary. This challenge is partly the reason that most of the existing articles, essays and writings are limited to the composer's particular point of view.

What we may now term Christean<sup>9</sup> concepts are widely acknowledged in the field of Christou studies and are generally accessible, as they are included in several available sources, such as Anna Lucciano's book *Jani Christou: The work and temperament of a Greek composer* (2000), the composer's official Jani Christou website: [www.janichristou.com](http://www.janichristou.com), and Andriana Minou's PhD thesis, *Sibyl's Leaves: understanding musical performance issues in Jani Christou's Anaparastasis III and Epicycle* (2010).

These concepts were shaped by the composer's deep immersion in philosophy, psychology and the theories of depth psychology, alchemy, anthropology, and religious studies. Yet although the representation of Christou's thinking in some secondary literature has inevitably drawn on ideas from these disciplines, their application has not always been thoroughly analysed and interpreted. For example, Lucciano presents the concept of protoperformance in the composer's own words, declaring that this is influenced and inspired by the psychoanalytical theories of Jung; however, she does not go any further in examining this hypothesis and does not present any examples to validate her suggestion. Hence, there is now a whole community of people interested in Christou's works who believe that it is in some important sense Jungian, yet who are usually unable to justify their reasons for this statement. In a similar way, on the official Christou website there is a declaration that 'Christou's musical and artistic philosophy was essentially, if not entirely, Jungian in concept, and is detectable even in the earliest acknowledged composition *Phoenix Music*' (The official Jani Christou website 2014) then the composer's text concerning the concept of protoperformance is quoted without any further examination in relation to Jungian theories. Of course, what is observed here

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<sup>9</sup> The term 'Christean' was firstly introduced by Andriana Minou in her PhD thesis *Sibyl's Leaves: understanding musical performance issues in Jani Christou's Anaparastasis III and Epicycle* (2010)

can be seen as the difference between journalism and scholarship; my intention, however, is to show the reader that, with the notable exception of Minou's doctoral thesis of 2010, important contributions to the secondary literature on the composer have failed to provide the arguments to support a statement such as this one.

### **As a conclusion: the approach of this thesis**

Considering this situation, I realised that there was a need for further examination of the subject, and for valid research that aims, as thoroughly as possible, to test all assumptions concerning Christean concepts and other disciplines, such as Jungian theories. Therefore, during my research I decided to question these hypotheses and to undertake extensive research and study in extra-musical disciplines, as suggested by the findings in both the composer's published writings and unpublished materials in the archive, and in the scores of the works themselves – and *Strychnine Lady* in particular. Hence, the findings of the present research ultimately turn out to validate some of the previously existing assumptions; nevertheless, they also shed light on other areas, suggesting and confirming other suppositions towards different directions.

### **Research sources**

In this section I aim to present the most basic sources I used for my research. It is very interesting to observe the diversity of these sources, a fact that suggests the interdisciplinary nature of *Strychnine Lady*. As the reader will notice, the sources concerning Christou exclusively are limited; the lack of research in this area is an issue already raised and is the reason why it became essential first to identify and second

clarify the interdisciplinary influences, elements and concepts in the work, by studying relevant primary and secondary sources. On the one hand, this was an especially interesting and exciting experience, yet on the other, I was very often in danger of being lost in the material, or trying to become a ‘specialist’ in the different areas I was exploring. Nevertheless, the process proved to be especially rewarding, as my research in all these diverse disciplines provided me with another view of Christou’s *Strychnine Lady* and helped me to gain a better understanding of its structure, meaning and significance.

The next sessions will present and describe shortly these sources. I didn’t separate my sources according to books/papers/online sources etc, nor according to their significance in my research; my separation aims to illustrate what work has been done until now and what I will try to do. Therefore, I start by demonstrating the sources I found useful for my research. First I present those that deal exclusively with *Strychnine Lady*, then I move on to those dealing with other works of Christou or his output in general,<sup>10</sup> and then I present sources related to music theatre. Subsequently, I present non-musical material that is not directly related to Christou, yet which is very important to the realisation of the composition.

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<sup>10</sup> One of the sources concerning Christou’s output in general is Varvara Gyra’s PhD thesis *Aesthetics and compositional principles in the work of Jani Christou* (2008). This thesis could not be accessed, as it is not published online and the process of visiting the university’s library was especially hard due to being unable to read French. However, I contacted Gyra, and she mentioned that she was in the process of preparing translations of parts of her work. She also kindly informed me about portions of her thesis that have already been translated into Greek and English; I have been able to read these and add them to my bibliography.

## 1. The Jani Christou Archive

The composer's archive is in Athens and is essential for any research on Christou, considering the lack of published sources that deal with the composer and his work. It contains Christou's personal notes – including the so-called 'Dream Files', in which he used to record his dreams – and details of his pre-compositional processes as recorded in the files for each work, as well as video tapes, recordings and photographs. Responsibility for the archive lies with Christou's younger daughter, Mrs Sandra Christou, who has been especially helpful in finding information during my various visits to the archive. Crucial to the first steps of this research were two files with the title 'Thoughts' and they contain, as the title indicates, thoughts, concepts and ideas of the composer. Part of these files is published on the official Jani Christou website<sup>11</sup>, which is contributed to by Christou admirers under Mrs Sandra Christou's supervision; its aim is to gradually become an electronic version of the archive.

Very useful are those files that record the pre-compositional and compositional process of each work. The composer's notes on and thoughts about each work in all stages, from the initial state to the final result, are carefully filed in the relevant folders. This filing is particularly helpful to the research of any single work, as one can observe the whole compositional process and discover elements that are suggestive of research directions. The files used in the present research concern *Strychnine Lady* (1966–67), *Anaparastasis I* and *Anaparastasis III* (1969), as well as an untitled file (1964–66) that did not concern any particular work yet which included compositional ideas mostly related to alchemy and spirituality.

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<sup>11</sup> [www.janichristou.com](http://www.janichristou.com)

Unfortunately, I was not given access to the ‘Dream Files’ as they were – understandably – considered too personal. *Strychnine Lady* incorporates one of the composer’s dreams, and I considered access to his description of this dream of particular importance; however, I discovered a separate description of it in the *Strychnine Lady* file, so in the end no access to this folder was necessary.

## **2. Jani Christou’s scores of *Strychnine Lady***

There are two scores for *Strychnine Lady*: The first concerns the composer’s manuscript and was the one used for the premiere of the work; this score can be found in the archive. The second is the official published score by J. & W. Chester in 1973, copied and edited by Nicos Avgeris. The musical material in both scores is the same, with a difference in the verbal instructions, made on the initiative of the editor: many of the explanatory footnotes that were used mainly for the premiere have been removed from the score and are included in a forty-page appendix. For my research, I used both scores with the aim of realising Christou’s intentions. The published score was easier to read as it did not include Christou’s detailed performance directions, and it provided me with a better and more direct general understanding of the composition. On the other hand, the manuscript with its meticulous directions could be more useful in the context of a performance; however, it helped me get deeper in realising the composer’s intentions relating to the work and the ‘contract’ he was trying to establish with his performers.

**3. Giorgos Sakallieros & Konstantinos Kyriakos: ‘Musical conception, para-musical events and stage performance in Jani Christou’s *Strychnine Lady* (1967)’.**

As mentioned above, Lucciano’s is the only published book that deals with the composer in any comprehensive way. The other sources are limited to articles, reviews and short writings about the composer, and most of these are merely repetitions of what the composer says in his own writings.

However, during my research I discovered a paper that refers to *Strychnine Lady* under the title of ‘Musical conception, para-musical events and stage performance in Jani Christou’s *Strychnine Lady* (1967)’.<sup>12</sup>

Although it is short – just eight pages long – I consider this to be one of the most useful sources I dealt with. It is important to observe that Sakallieros has a musical background, whilst Kyriakos has a theatrical background. This is the first text I found that refers directly to the important interaction of different disciplines, such as music and theatre, with respect to *Strychnine Lady*. According to the paper’s authors:

As we define the musical and para-musical parameters of Jani Christou’s *Strychnine Lady*, we aim to clarify the composer’s art-conception, elements of musical structure and means of stage performance in correlation to trends of post-war western European experimental music theatre of the 1960s and 1970s. The procedure focuses on analytical aspects of the score, definition of compositional-aesthetic terms given by the composer himself (patterns, praxis,

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<sup>12</sup> This paper was presented at the fourth Conference on Interdisciplinary Musicology (CIM08) which was held in Thessaloniki, Greece, from 3rd–6th July 2008, and is by Giorgos Sakallieros (Department of Music Studies, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece) and Konstantinos Kyriakos (Department of Theatre Studies, University of Patras, Greece)

metapraxis, lunar pattern etc.) and commenting on the intermediate phases (mainly concerned with philosophy, occultism and psychology) that are important for a stage realization of the work. Since the composer informs us that para-musical events (gestures, actions, theatrical fragments) do not always coincide with musical activities, we also aim to define the meaning of music material into the score, in terms of music analysis, but also out of the score and into the stage, in terms of teatrological research, performance, and audience perception.

(Sakallieros & Kyriakos 2008, 1)

Such an approach is appropriate in my view, given that an analysis of *Strychnine Lady* that does not include aspects of the performance as a stage result could not be valid. The authors divide the essay into parts including body issues, vocal issues, stage, space and performer aspects, all of which are handled separately from the distinct musical analysis. This essay was especially important to my research as it gives a valuable stimulus for further research on these important elements, which cannot meaningfully be excluded from any analytical attempt to get to the heart of Christou's own practice. The paper gives a holistic approach to a work that involves many disciplines, ignorance of which could lead to a deficient apprehension of the work. Finally, there is a great amount of bibliography relevant to the subject.

**4. Leontios Hadjileontiadis: 'Η κυρία με τη στρυχνίνη (1967) του Γιάννη Χρήστου Συσχετισμοί, αναλογίες και διαφοροποιήσεις με το ευρωπαϊκό και αμερικανικό πειραματικό μουσικό θέατρο των δεκαετιών του 1960 και του 1970' [The *Strychnine Lady* (1967) of Jani Christou. Relations, analogies and**

**differentiations with the European and American Experimental Music  
Theatre of the decades of 1960 and 1970]<sup>13</sup>**

This is the second of two sources to deal exclusively with *Strychnine Lady* and it is written by Leontios Hadjileontiadis, a Greek composer.<sup>14</sup> Hadjileontiadis, based on the analytical fields suggested by the aforementioned paper of Sakallieros & Kyriakos on *Strychnine Lady*, provides correlations with as well as differentiations from the experimental music theatre of the 1960s and 70s. The paper does not provide further analysis of the work, but it manages to situate Christou within a general movement and therefore endorses my argument with regard to Christou's relation to experimental music theatre.

**5. George Leotsakos: 'Strychnine Lady and the Great Castrated  
Mediterranean Goddess-Mother... or: some formulating factors of the psycho-  
synthesis of Jani Christou and the enigma of his "lost" [?] works'<sup>15</sup>**

George Leotsakos is a well-known musicologist and music critic in Greece, a personal friend and huge admirer of Jani Christou. After the composer's death he was one of the people who tried to keep Christou's work alive and respected. The title of this paper refers to a lecture that Leotsakos gave at Ionian University in 2000, dealing with some

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<sup>13</sup> The original title is in Greek; the translation in English is found in the English section of the Journal's website.

<sup>14</sup> This paper is published in the journal *Polyphonia* (issue 17).

<sup>15</sup> The original text is in Greek; here is provided in Andriana Minou's translation, found in her PhD thesis *Sibyl's Leaves: understanding musical performance issues in Jani Christou's Anaparastasis III and Epicycle* (2010).

works that he considers to have been lost after the composer's death, as well as the title of *Strychnine Lady* and its reference to the composer's relationship with his mother. Although the title is very promising and I expected that the paper would deal at some point with the work, it is in fact an extremely emotional piece of writing that makes no academic arguments to support its statements. Leotsakos clearly accuses the composer's mother of the loss of these works, and he lays blame on her for having a negative effect on Christou's psychological integration. He refers to personal opinions and experiences that make the shaping of any academic argument from his position difficult. (For example, he states that *Strychnine Lady* represents Christou's mother and reflects her negative influence on Christou, yet no argument is offered in support of such a statement.) The lecture is published online, and although it is exceptionally personal, it still contains some important information.

Leotsakos has dealt at length with the collection of information about Christou's lost compositions, an issue that remains unresolved, and in order to do this he travelled to Zürich and London. During this particular research, he had the chance to meet with three of the four Jungian psychoanalysts who met and analysed the Christou brothers. Leotsakos met one of them in London, Dr Mari-Denise Tuby, who pointed out that Christou's opera, *Gilgamesh*, one of his lost works, was inspired by a seminar on the ancient Mesopotamian epic poem that took place at the Jung Institute and was attended by Evis, Jani Christou's brother. Unfortunately, Leotsakos does not include more information with regard to his trip and the material collected.

**6. Anna-Martine Lucciano's *Jani Christou: the works and the temperament of a Greek composer*.**

The first and, according to my research, only book that deals exclusively with Christou is Anna-Martine Lucciano's *Jani Christou: the works and the temperament of a Greek composer of our era*.<sup>16</sup> Lucciano's study is a general overview of the composer's life and work, and although it doesn't go deeply into theory and analysis, it is an extremely useful guide for further research. It has general information about Christou's biography and a chronological overview of his works. It is also a useful tool for discovering the composer's interests and studies that had an influence on his creations, and it sets the basis for further research. It may be considered a gathering of information found in the archive rather than a critical analysis of findings; in other words, the purpose of the book is not to give a critical commentary according to the author's point of view, but to present the composer's work and philosophy as these are reflected directly in the materials of his archive.

The book is very practical for the first steps of research and for anybody who wants to become familiar with Christou's personality and work, or even for use as a general guide. However, in my case, and for anyone who wants to go deeper into the late works, it is not so helpful since, while Lucciano thoroughly analyses such early compositions as the *Six T.S Eliot Songs*, she gives very little information about any of the late works. *Strychnine Lady* itself is described in just a few paragraphs, relying heavily on what the composer says about it in his writings and in some letters.

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<sup>16</sup> Lucciano is a musicologist and professor of music history, aesthetics and analysis at the Conservatoire d'Aix en Provence. She was the first to conduct extensive research in the composer's archive, studying his writings, drafts and notes. In 1987 she published this book. It was translated into Greek and in 2000 into English, published by the Harwood Academic Press. This monograph was the first significant source that I found when my interest for Christou was initially raised. After a while, I realised that it was the only published book to deal with the composer.

**7. Andriana Minou's *Sibyl's Leaves: understanding musical performance issues in Jani Christou's 'Anaparastasis III' and 'Epicycle'*. PhD Thesis.**

One of the most helpful sources for me has been a PhD thesis by Andriana Minou<sup>17</sup> that concerns two late works by Christou, *Anaparastasis III*, *The Pianist* and *Epicycle*. At present, it is the only source with an insightful and critical approach to any of Christou's scores, covering many aspects and offering interesting outcomes. Minou examines and critically analyses the selected works in relation to the composer's theories and writings found mostly in his archive; but she goes beyond this, giving her own point of view, especially regarding *Epicycle*, and making allowance for the non-musical systems that affected Christou's work. She also raises several important questions around performance topics that may form the basis for further research, such as the issue of stylising performances of Christou's work, in other words creating a 'Christou style', something that does not agree with the composer's point of view around performances and which he strongly rejected. Christou's works mostly concern a way of thinking and experiencing, rather than the reproduction of stylised events and gestures. Minou strongly supports the latter approach, referring to important aspects of Christou's theories, such as that of 'Metapraxis'.<sup>18</sup> Minou states that 'the use of such elements in contemporary music is not only common but also even expected by the spectator nowadays (in other words they often become praxis)' (Minou 2010, 63–64), setting the

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<sup>17</sup> The thesis was completed at Goldsmiths, University of London in 2010

<sup>18</sup> 'Whenever an action is purposefully performed to conform with the current overall logic characteristic of the art, that action is a 'praxis', or a purposeful and characteristic of action. But whenever an action is purposefully performed so as to go beyond the current overall logic characteristic of the art, that action is a 'metapraxis', or a purposeful non-characteristic action: a 'meta-action'(...) For instance, a conductor conducting during a concert is a praxis, but if he is also required to walk about, speak, scream, gesticulate, or perform any other action not strictly connected to conducting, that could be a metapraxis' (The official Jani Christou website 2014).

basis for further discussion on the subject with the aim of providing valid clarification of the concept.

### **8. Anaparastasis: the life and work of Jani Christou**

The above title refers to a recently released documentary that concerns the life and work of Jani Christou; it contains interviews with people close to the composer, friends and collaborators, who provide information about the composer and his work, the rehearsal process with him, and their discussions with him. It thus offers information derived directly from their acquaintance with Christou on different levels. In addition to this, Christou's work is discussed by specialists, who support his exceptionality as a composer. The documentary also contains rare video recordings, mostly from rehearsals. Costis Zouliatis, the director of the documentary, is a Christou scholar and researcher in the archive for more than ten years and one of the people who, in my view, has an inside understanding of Christou's oeuvre as well as of his archive. Hence, the documentary is based on careful research and patient gathering of material. Although the documentary is not yet available for public viewing, Zouliatis kindly arranged a private screening, during one of my visits to Athens.<sup>19</sup> Hence, I was able to gather valuable testimonies with regard to Christou's output in general, and some to *Strychnine Lady* in particular, which I used for the purpose of this thesis.

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<sup>19</sup> I also had the opportunity to watch the documentary again in London, during the international Christou conference that took place at Goldsmiths, University of London on 16 November 2013.

### 9. Yannis Papaioannou's article, *Jani Christou and the Metaphysics of Music*

This is a memorandum written by well-known Greek musicologist Yannis Papaioannou. It was written right after the composer's death in 1970 and its aim was to provide general information on Christou's life and output. This was updated by its writer in 1980, providing further biographical details, as well as offering a commentary on the issue of the lost works. The memorandum should have been useful in the 70s, since it provided the reader with a general overview of Christou's biography and output at a time when not many sources referring to him were available; however, it was not very useful, as the general information could be found in more enriched form in later studies. There is, nevertheless, a section in the 1980 updated version concerning the late works, which helped me shape arguments about this issue.

### 10. Klaus Angermann: *Im Dunkeln singen*<sup>20</sup>

This text is only available in German, and so due to my poor knowledge of the language I had to read this with people who are familiar with it. The exception was Angermann's paper, which has been translated into Greek by Panos Vlagopoulos (2001). However, I agree with Minou (2010) that, although the titles are promising, the papers are mostly descriptive, as they were addressed to an audience that did not know Christou. Hence, this collection was not especially helpful to the research process and the development of my arguments.

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<sup>20</sup> This is a collection of papers, edited by Angermann, presented at the symposium of the Hamburg Music Festival in 1993. It contains articles by W. Giesler, J. Papaioannou, T. Schafer, G. Leotsakos, K. Trappmann, H. Koch, A. Lucciano and K. Angermann.

## 11. Christou: Sound and Video Recordings

In 2001, fourteen historical audio recordings were published in four volumes by Sirius, a recording company in Greece. With the term ‘historical’ I mean recordings that were made while the composer was still alive and that he supervised and edited himself. None of these recordings were published before Christou’s death in 1970, and seven of them were here made available to the public for the first time. It is also worth mentioning the excellent supporting materials of these volumes, with fifty-four pages of booklets, both in Greek and English, containing texts by musicologists such as Leotsakos, and much information required for a general understanding of the works. Finally, the volumes also contain four large posters, illustrating parts of the scores of *Epicycle* and *Mysterion*.

These volumes therefore have value, but are not crucial for my research. Works such as *Strychnine Lady* and *Anaparastasis I & III* cannot be thoroughly understood without being able to see their staged performance – something not possible in a CD recording. Although a very important project, fundamental for establishing Christou as an important figure in the Greek avant-garde scene, the recordings weren’t very helpful for my research.

There are no officially published video recordings of Christou’s late works; but there are some YouTube links to various performances, mostly of *Anaparastases I & III* and just one of *Strychnine Lady*. Regardless of whether they are considered good performances these were vital for my research, since they show a complete realisation of these compositions that is very important in appreciating their visual as well as audio manifestation.

## 12. The experimental theatre of the 60's: towards a definition.

### Adlington and Heile

In my efforts to situate Christou in the general movement of the 60s, I focused on sources that would offer a definition of the term, in order to specify whether Christou's late works could be characterised as pieces of the experimental music theatre. The sources I used towards this direction are briefly presented below:

- 'The Music Theatre of the 60s' by Robert Adlington, a chapter included in the book *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century Opera* (2005). This source was especially important for my thesis, being a consistent synopsis of experimental music theatre in English. Adlington offers considerable information concerning composers and works, gathered and interpreted in a scholarly way. This relatively short writing is particularly important to the effort of offering a definition of experimental music theatre, and points towards ways of clarifying the common states, characteristics and practices those composers share.
- 'Recent Approaches to Experimental Music Theatre and Contemporary Opera', a review article published in 2006 and written by Bjorn Heile. Heile's intention in this writing is clearly not the definition of the term, however he raises some questions concerning the lack of scholarly writing in the field and furthermore provides some common characteristics between works of this particular trend. Hence, this was valuable for my effort towards a definition of the movement.

### 13. Jung's influence and the archetypal theory

The Swiss psychoanalyst Carl Jung is a key figure concerning the realisation and perception of Christou's late works. It is believed that Christou himself attended several of Jung's lectures, although this has not been confirmed (Lucciano 2000, 56). However, the composer refers directly to Jung in some of his own writings, such as *The Lunar Experience* (Christou 1968 in Lucciano 2000, 88) and he even uses Jungian terms to describe processes and facts related to his works.

Furthermore, especially in *Strychnine Lady*, he uses Jungian elements as performance material. The text which is recited by actors, refers to the story of Beya and Gabricus, as described in the alchemical text *Rosarium Philosophorum*, published in Frankfurt in 1550. This story is also included in Jung's *Psychology and Alchemy* (1952). Jung states that the union of Beya and Gabricus is a symbolic incest of the conscious that descends into the unconscious (Jung 1952, 323).

One should be familiar with Jung's theories in order to recognise the influence these psychological aspects had on Christou's thinking and output. Thus, apart from the obvious source that is directly connected with Christou, *Psychology and Alchemy*, I needed to become familiar with other books of Jung, such as *Man and his Symbols* (1964) and *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious* (1996); both books were vital to understanding archetypal theory and the concept of the collective unconscious. *Mysterium Coniunctionis* (1963) was also of particular importance for my research, as well as *The Psychology of Transference* (1969), both of which contain direct references to *Rosarium Philosophorum* crucial to understanding the meaning and symbolism of the Beya and Gabricus story, one of the central axes of *Strychnine Lady*.

Jung's *Modern Man in Search of a Soul* (1957) has strong connections with Christou's own writings, especially those referring to protoperformance (Christou 1968, in Lucciano 2000, 86) in which he outlines the essentially Jungian fundamental principles and driving forces behind his creative thinking. In Chapter 8 of Jung's book entitled 'Archaic Man' Jung describes Archaic – in other words Primitive – Man as having connections with his Soul, contrary to Modern Man, who has to find his Soul in order to achieve a totality. Jungian Archaic Man has a lot of correspondences with Christou's Primitive Man as described in the composer's own texts.

#### **14. Mircea Eliade and the sacred time**

Eliade was a historian of religion, a fiction writer, a philosopher and a professor at the University of Chicago. He developed a range of theories referring to myths, symbols, sacred pictures and the nature of ritual. Christou's 'Thoughts II' file, found in his archive, includes around fifteen pages concerned with points raised by Eliade. Although Christou does not mention particular books by this writer, I found Eliade's *The Myth of the Eternal Return* (1955) as well as *Images and Symbols* (1961) valuable to my comprehension of ritualistic and mythical hypostasis in Christou's work, especially in understanding how Christou deals with these qualities and how they exist in his works.

In particular, Eliade states that 'by recounting or re-enacting mythical events, myths and rituals "re-actualize" those events' (Eliade 1955, 90) in what he terms 'sacred time': the only time that, according to the author, has value. 'If the Sacred established all valid patterns in the beginning, during the time recorded in myth, then the mythical age is sacred time — the only time that contains any value. Man's life only has value to the

extent that it conforms to the patterns of the mythical age' (Eliade 1955, 92). All of the aforementioned can be seen as influences on Christou's own writings and his practice in his works. For example, according to Christou, his own practice constitutes an example of 'PROTO-PERFORMANCE – re-enactments of the original proto-pattern – the master-pattern; re-enactments in terms of corresponding mythic imagery; key-performances re-vitalizing 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' (Christou, *Protoperformance* 1968, in Lucciano 2000). There is certainly a strong connection between Christou's ideas and those of Eliade, suggesting the need for a deep comprehension of the latter's concepts and theories.

## **Conclusion**

As the reader can realize, the bibliography is restricted, as the only extensive studies are Lucciano's monograph and Minou's PhD thesis, whilst the others are mainly conference papers and journal articles. In addition, there are only two papers that refer to *Strychnine Lady*. All this highlights the need for further research on and extensive study of Christou's work in general, as well as *Strychnine Lady* in particular, in order to provide the music world with a better understanding of Christou as a composer and to clarify his oeuvre's contribution to the 1960s.

## **Chapter 3: Christou and the 1960s**

### **Christou: A pioneer or a myth?**

Christou is a composer whose name is surrounded by a myth, chiefly created after his death; a myth that, I will argue, often obscures his real substance as a composer and misleads with regards to the reasons for his significance. The myth often refers to him as a mystic, an alchemist, a philosopher outside the space and time of reality, an almost unreal human being devoted to his dead brother and balancing his life between spiritual practices and extraordinary activities. Yet his photographs bear witness to a handsome young man who paid attention to his looks, and was very well dressed according to the fashion trends of the time; and his biography suggests a sophisticated and cosmopolitan man, who seems to fit well with the reality of his time. Looking at his photographs and reading his biography, I try to discover the links between the myth and the man in the photographs, to find the point where the myth ends and the reality starts – or the other way around.

Most writings concerning Christou focus on the mystery that give rise to this myth, presenting him as a pioneer composer, yet without providing any other arguments supporting this position besides his unusual interest in spiritual practices and studies. These writings refer to Christou without situating him in a broader context, presenting him as a composer who composed works mixing elements and means with approaches that are seen for the first time in the history of music, and who invented an unconventional music notation system unlike any that had come before. In other words,

Christou is not often situated in the 1960s, the time in which he mostly composed his works; and this leads to several issues, which must now be addressed.

The most important issue concerns the composer's significance. The fact that he has not been properly situated in the general avant-garde movement of his time, and that his significance is usually highlighted through his metaphysical concerns, could well lead to underestimations of his substance as a composer. Among those critical of Christou's status, discussions doubting his output's importance are frequent, especially between musicologists who are not familiar with his works. The argument is that, if we take out the myth and the mystery, Christou did not achieve anything that wasn't already happening elsewhere. Hence the question that arises is: was Christou truly a pioneering composer? And subsequently: what is the meaning of the term pioneer?

On the other hand, it remains neither sensible nor realistic to disconnect Christou's output from the various extra-musical dimensions included in his works, as these form integral parts of his compositions. Yet it is vital to identify the influences on Christou of the era in which he lived and composed. An approach that does not situate Christou in the 1960s cannot be valid, in my understanding.

Christou is certainly not a pioneer because he conceived an experimental kind of music theatre, nor because he invented an unconventional system of music notation -even if his approaches are unique and unusual. It could be argued that, according to what was happening elsewhere, he was a latecomer in both these and other areas. His first work to include dramatic elements was only composed in 1965, many years after the first

examples of music theatre occurred in Western Music, such as John Cage's *Water Music* (1952), Harry Partch's *The Bewitched – A Dance Satire* (1955) and Karlheinz Stockhausen's *Originale* (1961). In addition, his unconventional notation was first used in his post-1965 compositions; again, this occurred later than in the outputs of other composers, such as Earle Brown, Cage, Morton Feldman and Christian Wolff in the USA, and Pierre Boulez and Stockhausen in Europe, who also started using personally devised approaches to notation as early as the beginning or middle of the 1950s. Thus far, in terms of musical language and compositional forms, Christou did not provide the musical world with anything that was new. However, is novelty the main criterion that defines the uniqueness of an artwork?

Christou was certainly influenced by the new trends of the 1960s. This is not a hypothesis, but a conclusion, as we know for sure he was travelling a lot, having the opportunity to be engaged with the new ideas of this period. This is clearly manifested in his archival files, where he kept programmes of concerts. In addition, Christou was reading newspapers from abroad and kept in his files newspapers extracts that referred to new music. Below I present an example referring to an extract from the *New York Herald Tribune*, Paris, dated 2–3 October 1965.

This article by Jan Maguire, about the French actor and mime, Marcel Marceau (1923–2007) focuses on notions of silence in Marceau's performance, which the writer takes further by referring to perceptions of silence in the field of music. As is evident from the underlined sentences, Christou appears to have been particularly interested in the passages in the article referring to music; in particular, rests, echo effects and sustained notes. Christou also underlined a sentence about musicians moving on stage, in the

context of a musical composition; and Maguire provides examples of this trend, by making reference to the composers Henri Pousseur and Mauricio Kagel. The author also mentions the names of John Cage and Arnold Schoenberg, presenting quotations concerning their views on silence. This annotated article, found in Christou's archive, demonstrates the composer's awareness of the new trends of his time and, therefore, endorses the suggestion that such trends were known to Christou and were likely to become an influence on his compositions

New York Herald Tribune, Paris, Saturday-Sunday, Oct. 2-3, 1965—5

## Marceau Never Wanted To Utter Stage Sounds

By Jan Maguire

PARIS, Oct. 1.—During a farewell luncheon given Marcel Marceau on his departure to the United States today, he said that he has never had the desire to utter sounds on stage. He is the master of silent expression and needs no sound to accompany his pantomime.

One journalist pointed out what a great pleasure it is, during his performances, to get away from the myriad noises that make up daily life today, like the pleasure of putting twenty cents in the juke box for three minutes of silence.

John Cage says in his book "Silence" that there is no true silence. "Try as we may to make a silence, we cannot. Sounds occur whether intended or not; the psychological turning in the direction of those not intended seems at first to be giving up everything that belongs to humanity, but one must see that humanity and nature, not separate, are in this world together, that nothing was lost when everything was given away."

### Hall of Silence

And in this spirit we "listen" to Marcel Marceau as he composes his silences. Someone has recorded the hall in which Marceau is performing. There is absolutely no other hall that sounds like it.

Silence has always been a tricky question for musicians. Schoenberg admired the composer who could resist writing music, that is, who knew how to use rests. Modern music uses rests for echo effects, sustained chords, when the listener hears the aftermath of accumulated sounds.

One of the trends of contemporary composition is human movement in a musical composition. Henri Pousseur has his players walk from one instrument to the other, in silence, as part of the composition. Mauricio Kagel wrote a piece for mime, speaker, bass and three percussionists and pianists in which the mime has the biggest part and the score looks like a theatrical director's sketch-book.

Even more poignantly, listening

to Marcel Marceau's silences brings one around to accepting, with John Cage and others, what has always, up to now, been considered nonmusic within the musical structure.

### Small, Inner Sound

We are coming to realize the importance of the small, inner sound called silence in music and the mime is showing it to us.

Marcel Marceau will tour for five months in the United States, with an entirely new program. He will pantomime sketches of some of his pet peeves, such as bureaucracy and the ill fate of the artist. He will portray the seven deadly sins in detail and his program will finish with Bip, the soldier, with a background of 17 minutes of army noises and music, as if to dramatize the effect of the silence of his other numbers.

Mr. Marceau hopes to obtain government assistance in order to found a regular mime company along with the school he already has. He has never benefited from state support, but firmly maintains that it is the only way the arts can flourish these days.

"We have no benefactors as you do in America. We need the state," he vehemently proclaimed with a rich, flourishing vocabulary that he reserves for private occasions only.

### Unwelcome Seal

BAYEUX, France, Oct. 1 (Reuters).—A seal has appeared off Omaha beach near here—the traditional portent of a hard winter.

## ART EXHIBITIONS

### GREAT BRITAIN

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MERCURY GALLERY, 26 Cork St., London W.1. REG. 7800. COLLECTORS' GRAPHICS—signed and editioned works for the connoisseur. Daily 10-6. Saturday 10-1.

## BOOKS

Example 1. Extract from *New York Herald Tribune*, Paris. Found in the Jani Christou archive.

It is clear that the composer was in touch with at least some of the latest practices with respect to music and performance art in the 1960s. Thus, his output in these areas could be considered to some extent typical of their time. Lucciano shares the same view:

Christou integrated these diverse ideas completely into his compositional process and exploited them simply as a means to an end; in this respect, his creative work may be regarded as typical of the 1960s. This idea may be taken significantly further by considering the dialectical relationship that existed between these stylistic manifestations of the time and Christou's musical development. That is, if the composer had not had these idioms at his disposal, or if he had lived at a different time, he would have had to conceive liberating music of a completely different kind. Nevertheless, it should be remarked that in aiming to overthrow a centuries-old musical tradition associated with western music, Christou did not revert to a style of composition that would seem to be its logical opposite, namely, oriental or other pre-existing styles that would have created a new musical sound and represented a revolutionary approach for a western composer. For although Christou felt the imperious need to renew his entire musical language, he chose to exploit the immediate achievements of the elite of his own time in order to create a personal approach to expression, and it was in this that his genius lay.

(Lucciano 2000, 118–19)

The last sentence of the above quotation seems to sum up Christou's contribution to the field of 20<sup>th</sup>-century music, which, I would argue, goes well beyond the introduction of mere novelty with regard to materials and means, in order to engage in what Lucciano

calls a ‘dialectical relationship’ with the influences by which he sought to surround himself. However, Lucciano only situates Christou in the general 1960s movement in her conclusion, without providing any further evidence to support the argument she proposes. This thesis takes that proposition further, by providing evidence to confirm it. This is mainly done through a comparison between Christou, Cage, and Kagel, in the following section, as well as a comparison between Christou’s compositional work with the experimental music theatre of the 1960s, in Chapter 6.

As mentioned above, the composer’s significance lies in the way in which he used the achievements of his era, yet still invented a personal language of musical, and musico-dramatic, expression. I argue that, for Christou, this was the apposite approach to any form of musical creation, as the latter is clearly manifested in his ‘A Credo for Music’ (1966), and particularly in its last three points:

(viii) Every age experiences transformations within an aesthetic characteristic of that particular age.

(ix) The obvious transplantation of an aesthetic of one age to another or even a generation to a generation is not only futile and invalid but is also a declaration of spiritual bankruptcy.

(x) Contrary to what is commonly held against music of our day, its frequent jarring and shock-provoking methods can be symptoms of the necessity for liberation from an inherited aesthetic and worn-out patterns of thought.

(Christou 1966, in Lucciano 2000, 93)

Therefore, the composer's aim was not to invent a Christou school, nor merely to introduce innovations concerning the materials and means that he used for his compositions. On the contrary, he selected some of the attainments of his time and he developed these into a personal manner of expression; this is where his significance as a composer lies. Moreover, while originality could lie in sheerly radical ideas, this could also be achieved via a synthesis of elements. In this latter case, the individual musical and performance components would not necessarily be in themselves totally new; nevertheless, their synthesis could accomplish an original outcome, as I argue is the case with Christou. The present thesis will describe and evaluate this personal compositional language through a holistic approach to *Strychnine Lady*.

### **Comparison: Jani Christou, John Cage, and Mauricio Kagel**

This section presents a comparison between Christou, and John Cage and Mauricio Kagel, two eminent composers who composed music in the same era, at least at some points of their career, and who appear to encompass similar practices. The aim here is to identify similarities between them, and thus to situate Christou in the 1960s, as well as locating the differences that would help identify Christou's own particular contribution.

John Cage experimented and questioned the nature and function of sound, and pushed the boundaries of music, aiming at what he called an exploration of non-intention. His wide oeuvre includes a category of theatre pieces. In those works musicians are called to stage a music performance away from the classical concept of a music concert; these works are of particular interest to the present study.

The Argentinean composer Mauricio Kagel was also an avant-garde composer who challenged the boundaries of music performance and created a personal form of music theatre. His compositional work contains a period during which he wrote compositions for musicians with dramatic elements and high theatrical demands.

The common aspect in the work of all three composers is their experimentation with the boundaries and challenges of music performance as it was shaped in the previous decades.

### **Musical conception**

In view of the fact that the three composers are often regarded as having similar practices, it is important to outline each one's musical conception and define the similarities and/or differences that they might have.

Perhaps the most usual question that a composer asks himself or herself is 'What is music?' or 'What is sound?' Cage dealt a lot with the latter question and it became a determinant of his work. According to Cage, 'Everything we do is music.' Elements of Cage's experimentations with 'chance' and 'indeterminacy' can be linked to surrealism and the Dadaist movement in France (Pritchett 1993); elements that are seen in Kagel's work as well (Laskewicz 1992). Yet, although the two composers appear to have common references in their work, and even if Kagel was influenced by Cage (Laskewicz 1992), both their artistic results and starting points have many differences.

The function of music and particularly the matter of music and communication is something that all three composers dealt with. For Cage, ‘music doesn’t really communicate to people. Or if it does, it does it in very, very different ways from one person to the next’ (conversation with Cole Gagne & Tracy Caras (1980), in Kostelanetz 1988, 120). Hence the purpose of music, for Cage, was certainly not self-expression or communication. On the other hand, Kagel states that every composer wants to communicate through music (Nyffeler 2000), and theorised three ways of communication:

First, music written to get an immediate response from the public. Second, music which is tailor-made for particular interpreters and instruments. And third, a contemporary abnormality that didn’t exist before: music by composers for composers.

(Nyffeler 2000).

Moreover, Christou considers music as a communicative means that re-enacts archetypes that exist in the collective unconscious, based on Jung’s archetypal theory. The states and beliefs mentioned above define each composer’s starting point for music and artistic conception. Hence Cage, influenced by the philosophy of Zen, prefers to set questions instead of answers and to receive rather than create sounds. Thus, sounds are not manipulated by the composer; indeed they become independent objects of evaluation and observation (Kahn 1997). Kagel, on the other hand, does not focus on

sound as an independent existence, but deals with issues of music performance. Particularly, as he states, his goal is a 're-humanization of music-making' (Kagel 1970). This contrasts with Cage's conception of the independent existence of sounds and the non-communication of music. It could be said that here there is a de-humanization of music-making. Christou, like Kagel and in contrast with Cage, does not deal with the nature of sound, but uses sound as a means to express his ideas and beliefs. While for Cage sounds are independent objects of evaluation and observation, for Christou sounds are sound energies that are transformed into music, where music is a function of our possibility of experiencing those transformations. It is thought-provoking to observe the different words that each composer used to define similar practices.

Cage deems music as a method of changing the way of thinking. He deals with music as an activity of sounds in which the artist must find a way to let the sounds be themselves and in this way open the minds of the people that produce them or who listen to them in ways that they never thought possible. In Cage's words:

Art may be practiced in one way or another, so that it reinforces the ego in its likes and dislikes, or so that it opens that mind to the world outside, and outside inside. Since the forties and through the study with D.T. Suzuki of the philosophy of Zen Buddhism, I've thought of music as a means of changing the mind. I saw art not as something that consisted of a communication from the artist to an audience but rather as an activity of sounds in which the artist found a way to let the sounds be themselves.

And, in being themselves, to open the minds of people who made them or listened to them to other possibilities than they had previously considered.

(conversation with Bill Womack (1979), in Kostelanetz 1988, 42)

Thus, since the issues of communication, personal expression and intention are not valid any longer, there is nothing but sounds, nothing but music as the composer perceives it.

### **Performance conceptions**

There were several avant-garde movements of the 60s that used extra-musical material and elements as alternative tools of expression, in excess of the known expressive techniques of the time. Theatricality and dramatic settings are some elements of these movements. Firstly, it should be mentioned that all three composers have the tendency to alter the perception of musical performance. Cage, Christou and Kagel required from their performers a wide range of performance approaches (movement, speech etc), instead of just playing their instruments in the normal way. The difference in each composer's case lies in their intention. Nevertheless, similarities could be recognised externally, especially if it is considered that all three of them created performances that involved not only the 'ear' but also the 'eye'. According to Kagel:

Music has also been a scenic event for a long time. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century people still enjoyed music also with their eyes, with all their senses. Only with the increasing

dominance of the mechanical reproduction of music, through broadcasting and records, was this reduced [to the] purely acoustic dimension. That's why my music is a direct, exaggerated protest against the mechanical reproduction of music. My goal: a rehumanisation of music-making!

(Kagel in Heile 2006, 38)

In my view, the above statement could match Christou's and Cage's work as well. In Cage's theatrical pieces the actions and the awareness of the performer's body is usually strongly related to the intention of unconventional sound-production, a condition that finally gains a dramatic substance. For example, in 'Water Walk' the performer has to squeeze a rubber duck. In the first instance, the aim is to produce sound; but then this action goes beyond that state, requiring all of the associations related to a rubber duck to be presented. According to Mount (2010, 7) a 'recording of a rubber duck would not command the same whimsical associations'. This is a situation that could be seen in the work of all three composers. Their works are incomplete if they are only listened to.

In performances of Cage's compositions one may observe direct references to everyday objects, settings and actions, contrary to Christou's case. Christou uses unconventional movement, sometimes extremely slow or incredibly fast, yet always non-realistic. Movement in Christou's work refers to an unconventional movement that resembles ritualistic practices. Kagel, like Cage, often refers to everyday life, though in a different way: he usually presents realistic actions (for example *Match*, which refers to a tennis

session) in an ironic and humorous way, in contrast with Christou, whose works are concerned with the sacred and have a spiritual essence.

Going further on the subject, Cage's and Kagel's compositions bear a resemblance to musical happenings whilst in Christou's case they resemble spiritual practices. Christou's works and their mythical and mystical dimensions lead to other zones of experience apart from the realistic level, to communicate elements of the unconscious.

Another important factor is the notion of theatricality in relation to the works of the three composers, especially when we compare the compositions of Kagel and Christou. In many of Kagel's works, such as *Entfuhrung*, the musicians must have a minimum of theatrical ability. As Minou (2010, 69) states, 'they must be prepared to mask themselves in a double way (act like musicians and actors), instead of transcending the conventional limitations of musical expression itself (act like musicians who are humans)', something that is fundamental to Christou. Christou does not require conventional theatricality from his musicians, but an experience of things and inner processes that leads them to the performance result. In other words, he does not require them to perform the score, but to experience what the score suggests, 'a performance of a cathartic artistic ritual' (Minou 2010, 69).

### **The metapraxis issue**

Praxis and Metapraxis are terms introduced by Christou in his post-1965 works. 'Praxis' is the Greek word for 'action' and it does not refer to any other interpretations of the word. This is observed in Christou's writings in which he sometimes uses the

terms ‘action’ and ‘meta-action’. The most well-known explanation of the term is the following, given by the composer himself in the appendices in the score of *Praxis for 12* (1968):

A conductor conducting during a concert is a praxis, but if he is also required to walk about, speak, scream, gesticulate, or perform any other action not strictly connected to conducting, that could be a metap Praxis. On the other hand, if an actor, say or a dancer, is called upon to perform during a "mixed-media" piece, and he is required to scream, laugh, move about, dance, gesticulate, or whatever, he could merely performing a praxis, and not a metap Praxis.

(Christou, 1968)

There is an issue concerning whether the term metap Praxis refers to something new or if it is a term applied to an already known practice of what is called experimental music theatre. In a later chapter this issue will be discussed in detail; at this point, however, it will be presented synoptically in terms of the comparison between the three composers.

Two questions arise:

1. Experimental music theatre and the other movements of the avant-garde have already introduced practices and works requiring new performance approaches beyond the conventional way. Consequently, is metap Praxis different in Jani Christou’s work? If yes, in what ways?

2. Could Cage's and Kagel's artistic practice be called 'metapraxis,' or is it just a term that refers particularly to Christou's musical conception?

### **Cage, Kagel and metapraxis**

Cage and Kagel, like other composers of the experimental music theatre movement, ask musicians to perform actions beyond the norm, when the norm mainly refers to playing their instruments in the context of a concert. A first view of the situation, according to the description of the term metapraxis as given by Christou, would be that Cage and Kagel's work could consist of metapraxis. However, a more careful look is required first in order to define what praxis is, always in relation to the era in which each artistic creation was born.

It is observed that all three of the composers follow a general movement in which music performance is questioned and enriched with new elements, usually borrowed from other performance disciplines such as drama; the difference in Christou's case is that through metapraxis the composer does not imply a function of performance art, but he invites the performer to break their limits, to go beyond what is logically expected. According to Minou (2010, 42) 'it [metapraxis] does not imply an *extension* of the expressive media used in a work of art, but a *challenge* [to] expressive conventions'. Metapraxis is an inner process of experiencing the logic of a situation and its characteristics, and being led to a necessity of going beyond, transcending that situation; and this is what makes metapraxis a term that could not be applied to any similar practices.

To sum up, Christou introduces a new term related to expression; on the other hand, Cage does not deal with expression intentionally, whilst Kagel enriches his works with a dramatic dimension. Cage and Kagel's dramatic elements are constitutional components of the composition and their performance could be the same even today, and still valid; Christou's metapraxis is opposed to praxis, with the aim of transcending it; hence, since praxis, the norm, is constantly changing, this implies that metapraxis should constantly change according to the expressive conventions of each era. Metapraxis is an inner process of experiencing the logic of a situation and its characteristics, and being led to a necessity of going beyond, transcending that situation; this is what makes metapraxis a term that could not be applied to any similar practices.

The metapraxis issue will be analysed in more depth in the next chapter, which will give the reader a better understanding of this concept, which is only synoptically developed in this section in order to illustrate its distinctiveness. The conclusion is that metapraxis is not an aesthetic element in Christou's work and it is certainly not a term that could describe similar practices.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, it could be said that even though the three composers use common elements and in some cases have similar aims (e.g. the alteration of perception of music performance), it is clear that each one's artistic result follows different approaches, according to the ideas and beliefs outlined above. Moreover, it is certain that Christou, like Cage and Kagel, uses avant-garde materials and means, yet in a personal way; the most important example of this is the conception of metapraxis. Hence, Christou is in

accordance with the 1960s and other composers that lived and composed in the same era, such as Cage and Kagel; but the fact that he synthesised these materials in his personal way, is what makes him a great composer. Cage and Kagel have been considered here exceptional representatives of the 1960s with the aim on the one hand of confirming Christou's position in the movement, through similarities, and on the other, of illustrating the differences with the intention of substantiating his competence as a composer.

## **Chapter 4: Jani Christou's theories and their philosophical implications**

### **Introduction**

My aim in the present chapter is to present the core concepts of the Christean compositional system as they have been formed and presented by the composer himself. Even though – with the exception of metapraxis – they are extensively interpreted in subsequent chapters, I considered it necessary to present them together as parts of the same picture, as they are subsequently analysed in a different context. In addition, I attempt a short description of the composer's oeuvre in terms of these concepts, with the aim of simplifying terms and ideas, in order to provide a thorough understanding of his approach.

It should be pointed out that my intention is only to clarify and define these concepts and not to thoroughly analyse them in the context of a general analysis of Christou's philosophy as embodied in his entire output, since an attempt at this would need years of research exclusively on the topic. In particular, my aim here is to provide an interpretation of these concepts, in order to give the reader information on, and elucidation of these ideas necessary to form a wider and deeper understanding of *Strychnine Lady*.

## **Theories and philosophy**

Christou's compositional work includes the integrated philosophical thoughts of the composer, as well as concepts and notions conceived, developed and introduced in his works. His method goes beyond the usual musical-composition standards, referring to a very particular relationship between ideas, concepts and music, and he resorts to new, non-musical areas for generating material. His late works in particular brought into conjunction, in quite remarkable ways, his deep immersion in philosophical and psychological studies, including the ideas of Jung and alchemy, and avant-garde musical and dramatic materials and means. The late works are described by the composer himself as stage-rituals and aim, through the concept of metapraxis, to lead the performers and audience to a transcendent state where primeval and archetypal elements of the unconscious can be communicated. These compositional concepts will be investigated as they are embodied in the graphic score of the work and in material found in the composer's archive.

As will be examined later, Christou used to spend a lot of time on finding a satisfactory philosophical concept on which to build a project. Subsequently, he would process the material and compose the work entirely in his mind; this is proven from the files in the archive and further analysed in next chapter. He believed that one's attempt to create art only has meaning if it originates from an overwhelming inner necessity based on philosophical and metaphysical concepts (Papaioannou 1970). Based on this belief, he created a whole system of philosophical ideas that constantly offered him new paths for his innovative creations.

The core concepts of this system will be outlined in the next sections of the present chapter. I considered it important to have an extensive analysis on the concept of ‘metapraxis’, which in relation to the other concepts is outlined here at greater length; this is because its realisation is crucial for the general understanding of the present study.

### **The realisation of these ideas in Christou’s output**

An attempt at describing and at least beginning to evaluate Christou’s oeuvre according to his compositional concepts might look like this:

<b>Pre-1965 works</b>	<b>Post-1965 works</b>
Phoenix principle	Lunar principle
Praxis	Metapraxis
Music: technically unquestioned	Music: technically and aesthetically questioned, new notation
Patterns: technical, emphasis on the physical proliferation of material according to patterns	Patterns: concern with what lies at the root of a pattern, at the root of proliferation of events in general <div style="text-align: center;">↓</div> A concern with ‘proto-performance’, the performance of what is at the origin

**Table 1. Overview of Christou’s entire output, according to his conceptions.**

The above is the result of my effort to decode complex concepts as well as to match together different findings in the archive. The table was first created to help with my realisation of Christou's compositional system; however, due to its basic information and simplification of concepts, it was considered a useful guide for the reader as well, and so it is included here.

As seen in the table, and as mentioned in a Chapter 1, Christou's output may be separated into two periods, according to the two basic principles that he followed in his compositions: the Phoenix and the Lunar. During the period in which he follows the Phoenix principle, music is not questioned technically, and he therefore uses conventional music notation. In addition, his philosophical thought is only applied technically to the patterns he used in his compositions. In simple terms, patterns are the formation of different sound events, which 'proliferate through various types of repetition and are multiplied in time' (Christou 1969, in Lucciano 2000, 44), and their components originate from serial techniques; they are Christou's way of organising sound. During this period, Christou does not go much far beyond the conventions of his time and he does not challenge the limits of expression; hence his output is considered as praxis.

There is a turning point in the second period, in which the compositions follow the Lunar principle. This is the time in Christou's output when music and music creation in general are questioned, technically as well as philosophically. 'Yet, later, this was to lead to those darker, perhaps unfathomable questions about the redemption of one's material, however formally justifiable whether the material which one produces so smugly relates to one's self, whether it is "meaningful", or relevant' (Christou 1969).

Patterns in this period start to have a metaphysical hypostasis, with Jungian and spiritual references. Now the aim of music is to achieve protoperformance, the archetypal expression of performance, its origin. The purpose of protoperformance is to re-enact a Master-pattern. The following quotation explains the relationship between protoperformance and Master-pattern:

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.

(Christou 1968)

Christou refers to a time before human history during which man looked upon everything taking place, including the manner in which nature functions and the processes of life, as repetitions of a Master-pattern, an original pattern that was created during the sacred time, during which all the archetypes were created. All things happening in life were only realised as repetitions of this Master-pattern, otherwise they did not have any meaning. One such pattern, for example, is the lunar cycle. The Master-pattern has to renew itself and this only happens through ‘rituals of renewal’, that is, protoperformances.

In terms of Christean compositions, the Master-pattern is actually the principle that the compositions follow. In his second compositional period, during which these concepts were developed, this is the Lunar pattern. Hence, in the Christean perception of music, his works were composed to achieve protoperformance when they were performed, with the aim of re-enacting the Master-pattern – in this instance the Lunar pattern, a symbol of endless renewal. During his second compositional period, Christou goes beyond the conventions of his time and challenges the limits of performance and expression; hence, he achieves his personal metapraxis. The following sections provide the reader with more information on the concepts mentioned above.

### **The Phoenix principle**

According to mythology, the phoenix is a bird that is constantly reborn from its ashes. This myth has appeared in many cultures since antiquity, including those of Egypt, Greece, Japan and India; it is interesting to observe that the Phoenix is the sacred symbol of Heliopolis in Egypt, where Christou was born and raised. The Phoenix

principle symbolises the cycle of life: birth, growth, destruction, death, and rebirth. This pattern is introduced with his opus 1 (*Phoenix Music*) and later enriched in his post-1965 works. The principle does not refer to extra-musical content, but uses the myth of the phoenix to follow the course of the musical material itself, which is constantly reborn through its transformation. In simple words, Christou does not describe the phoenix myth musically as in a piece of programme music, but he uses its principle of a perpetual circle to handle and develop his material macroscopically. Finally, the Phoenix principle is mostly applied in more technical terms; with regard to the second phase of his output, Christou enriches this principle, leading to the Lunar pattern, which is not only concerned with the material on a technical but also on a philosophical basis.

### **The Lunar experience and the Lunar pattern**

The Lunar pattern refers to the succession of the moon's phases as a primitive symbol of the regular destruction and renewal of bio-cosmic processes. Consequently, the Lunar experience not only refers to man's aspiration to maintain this Lunar pattern but also involves the primitive fear of an unexpected interruption to the cycle of renewal corresponding to the 'threat' of a lunar eclipse.

In his later compositional period, Christou developed the Phoenix principle, transferring the birth–growth–destruction–rebirth pattern onto another basis, the Lunar experience. He calls this pattern the Lunar pattern. In fact, he enriches the pattern of rebirth from the Phoenix principle with the fear of its interruption (Lunar experience – eclipse) (Vlagopoulos 2006). He first introduces this particular pattern in his post-1965 works; hence *Strychnine Lady*, created in 1967, is a work whose progression is based entirely

on this pattern. The following table, from Sakallieros & Kyriakos (2008), shows this progression.

Rehearsal mark	Lunar cycle
0	Birth
1 - 26	Growth
26	[ <i>Culmination</i> ]
27 - 35	Destruction
36 - 42	Cessation
43	(Re)-Birth
43 - 64	Growth
65 - 69	ECLIPSE! (total darkness on stage)
70	Full moon - <i>culmination</i> (lights on, again)
71 - 80	Destruction
81	Cessation

**Table 2. *Lady Strychnine*. The Lunar Pattern (Sakallieros & Kyriakos, 2008)**

The composer's manuscripts contain an explanation of the Lunar experience and its meaning:

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. So lunar mythology suggests. So a large luminous object in a dark sky, visibly waxing and waning, and disappearing altogether – to reappear only days after, for a repeat performance – must have made a point thousands of years before man could ever have had the opportunity of recognising the pattern at work in vegetation (...) Nor is it hard to picture what the response of those minds could have been to the moon's most spectacular performances of all: its eclipse. For early man, with nothing even remotely resembling a sense of primitive astronomy, this was an IRREGULARITY and it could have caused much terror, even panic. While the threat of yet another eclipse must have hung like some dread prospect in

the firmament of man's dawning consciousness, a constant menace of sudden doom, impossible to tell when it would strike next. There seems to be a good case for selecting the lunar eclipse as the archetypal image of some calamity which one fears, and fears the more because there is no telling when it may break out. A root image for the feeling of impending doom on a giant scale. If the normal succession of the moon's phases can serve as the image of the general phenomenon of the regular renewal of bio-cosmic processes, then the term LUNAR PATTERN may be used to describe this phenomenon, i.e. the pattern of renewal: generation followed by growth followed by destruction followed by cessation, repeated endlessly (...) the nascent moon becoming the full moon becoming the dying moon swallowed up by dark, in regular succession, on and on.

(Christou 1968, in The official Jani Christou website 2014)

According to the above quotation, the Lunar plan describes the normal succession of the phases of the moon, which, from the depths of human prehistory, served as a pattern for the constantly repeated vital processes of life: birth–growth (culmination)–destruction–cessation. The lunar process can only be interrupted by an eclipse, a threat of sudden doom that is impossible to predict. The lunar eclipse is perceived as an archetypal image of disaster that one fears mostly because there is no telling when it may break out (Sakallieros & Kyriakos 2008). Vlagopoulos (2006, 2) indicates that Christou perceives the eclipse element as an insane interruption: 'His music now reflects the horror of the sudden interruption of the cycle.' By this interruption Christou means death; in other words, he transposes the eclipse element to the metaphysical fear of death.

Going further, the Lunar pattern and the Lunar experience concern an inner, archetypal experience which Christou tries, through his works, to re-enact. He recognises the need for such experiences since the world in which we live is materialistic and full of ‘fantasies’ that we have created to justify phenomena that, according to the archetypal point of view, are purely sacred. Hence, Christou aims to awaken a primeval state and a realisation of the sacred that cannot be understood with science or our everyday perception, which is materialistic and soulless. The next quotation demonstrates this in Christou’s own words:

We may have come a long way since man’s prehistory, having travelled down paths of the spirit and down paths of the mind to get to where we are today, but there are times when all our achievements really do seem to add up to so much litter along our journey through history, monumental irrelevancies, because most of the indications are that maybe we have not been travelling down at all; or perhaps, yes, a round trip, back to square one, looking up again at the moon in a dark sky, wondering whether it will be renewed after being swallowed up by the dark, and all the time afraid of that constant menace – very real now – a sudden and total eclipse. As never before perhaps, we are all in the grips of the LUNAR EXPERIENCE, and there simply does not seem to be much we can do about it, except perhaps to take refuge in fantasy (myth’s poor relation, or substitute). Fantasies about ideal societies and technological paradises. Fantasies about controlling the course of our political evolution, and fantasies about controlling our environment through science. But occasionally some of us may be allowed to retaliate, by attempting to recreate something of the climate of effective myth. Not a mere descriptive activity involving the invocation of fossilised myths, but activity itself, with its energy, like the energy released by those deeper dreams which somehow do not need to be explained rationally in order to be understood. Because effective mythic activity is man’s spontaneous response to the numbing terror of his lunar experience: nature’s way of coming to terms with nature’s terrors – or

man's terrors. And what lies at the root of his natural response of nature at work in man is his natural capacity for soul.

(Christou 1968, in The official Jani Christou website 2014)

It is clear from the above that Christou believes in a particular way of perceiving and realising things, outside of human everyday logic. This concerns another type of logic, perhaps what he describes as 'the logic of a dream', the inner experience of archetypal patterns such as the successions of the moon, the re-enactments of such patterns, which already exist in our collective unconscious. More on this topic and an extensive analysis of the terms used in this paragraph will be given in Chapters 7 and 8.

As discussed earlier in this section, Christou's Lunar pattern actually concerns the enrichment of the Phoenix principle with the fear of the interruption of the circle; that is, the eclipse. However, it is interesting to observe that he not only enriches a principle, but also uses it differently with respect to the composition of his works. Therefore, while the Phoenix principle only concerns the purely musical material, with the Lunar pattern he goes further and characterises the central ideas of his works. This is particularly true of *Strychnine Lady*, a work written solely on this pattern. This is not to say that he creates programme music, but he is not only concerned with the musical material itself, but with the general function of music.

## **Praxis and metapraxis: the metapraxis issue**

### **The issue**

The pair praxis (action) and metapraxis (meta-action) is possibly the most discussed and questioned idea introduced by the composer, yet is also his breakthrough concept. The most common explanation of the term is given as below, in Christou's words:

A conductor conducting during a concert is a praxis, but if he is also required to walk about, speak, scream, gesticulate, or perform any other action not strictly connected to conducting, that could be a metapraxis... On the other hand, if an actor, say or a dancer, is called upon to perform during a 'mixed-media' piece, and he is required to scream, laugh, move about, dance, gesticulate, or whatever, he could merely [be ?] performing a praxis, and not a metapraxis.

(Christou 1966)

There is an issue concerning whether the term metapraxis refers to something new or if it is a term given to an already known practice in experimental music theatre.

Considering the latter, several questions have arisen:

- i. Experimental music theatre and other movements of the avant-garde have already introduced practices and creations with new demands from musicians, rather than just playing their instruments in the conventional way.

Consequently, is metapraxis different in Jani Christou's work? If yes, in which ways?

- ii. Could artistic practices by other composers be called 'metapraxis', or is it just a term that refers solely to Christou's artistic creations?

These questions are part of what I call 'the metapraxis issue'. I started investigating the subject after a conversation with a musicologist, several years ago, who insisted that Christou had introduced a term for practices that had already been initiated by other composers of the time. Although I strongly believed that this wasn't the case, I did not have well-built arguments to support my belief and I began to consider seriously the paths I would have to follow to prove, firstly to myself, that metapraxis was an innovative concept. In an attempt to elucidate the matter I present below my interpretation of the concept in relation to the composer's own writings on the term.

### **The concept**

Metapraxis was a term first introduced in Christou's work *Praxis for 12* (1966). Christou included a commentary in the score, explaining what he considers as praxis and thus, metapraxis.

Praxis stands for action belonging to a certain logic. Metapraxis stands for action which threatens that logic, perhaps transcends that logic. They are opposites and imply each other, so that the title 'PRAXIS FOR 12' implies the possibility of a metapraxis for 12.

(Christou 1966)

As seen above, Christou considers an action in a specific context as praxis; this action is expected in that particular context, as it belongs to the general logic of it. To describe this in an example, Christou raises the case of the conductor conducting in the context of a concert. This is considered praxis; however, when the conductor does other actions that are not expected, such as speak and scream, this action is considered metapraxis. This example given by Christou himself is the point where the misunderstanding starts, as people usually rely on this pattern to describe what metapraxis is. The dissociation of this example from its context has led to a great confusion about what metapraxis is. I will therefore make an effort to examine metapraxis not only on the basis of the previously mentioned example, which is the usual explanation of the term, but also through a clearer argument of my position, through a detailed examination of the complete commentary included in the score of *Praxis for 12*.

Reading the quotation above, it is clear that Christou does not explain metapraxis as a function of performance, but as the transcendence of a specific logic. Praxis according to the composer is an action that originates in a specific context. In the 60s, regardless of the avant-garde and other artistic and musical movements that had developed by that time, asking for extra-musical materials and actions from musicians was not the norm, especially in Greece. Thus, the logic of a concert was to have a conductor conducting a musical work and not doing other actions, which is why Christou illustrates this as a case in point. A metapraxis is an action that threatens, or even transcends, that logic. In the case of the conductor, this would be an action that does not belong to that specific context, something that goes beyond that; therefore, a metapraxis would concern a

conductor doing actions other than just conducting. Christou goes further on the topic as follows:

Any living art keeps generating an overall logic fed by a collectivity of characteristic actions. Whenever an action is purposefully performed to conform with the current overall logic characteristic of the art, that action is a 'praxis', or a purposeful and characteristic of action. But whenever an action is purposefully performed so as to go beyond the current overall logic characteristic of the art, that action is a 'metapraxis', or a purposeful non-characteristic action: a 'meta-action'. Thus, in the performing arts, any action which requires its performer to go beyond the current logic of the medium to which he belongs, requires him to go beyond the logic of his world of action, as it were. That action is a 'meta-praxis', and it is purposefully 'non-characteristic'. Conversely, an action which does conform purposefully with the current logic of that medium is a 'praxis' as long as it is purposefully 'characteristic'.

(Christou 1966)

The living art in Christou's case would be music, and the characteristic actions would concern the musicians performing on their instruments. Everything that happens on stage in the context of a musical concert as it is normally perceived shapes the 'collectivity of characteristic actions'. An example of this is the case of a classical concert, where there are specific rules with reference to the entrance of the orchestra and the entrance of the conductor. These are actions that are deliberately characteristic of a normal concert, as they follow a firm logic. On the other hand, metapraxis is the

transcendence of these actions and their transposition to a level beyond the logic of praxis. It must be clarified that metapraxis does not have to do with free improvisation, as people normally perceive it; Christou explains that the praxis–metapraxis pair is tightly linked and in fact, they consist of a pair of opposites.

One can put it in various ways. For instance, the relationship between praxis and metapraxis corresponds to the relationship between physics and metaphysics. This is not to say that metapraxis is ‘metaphysical’ only that just as metaphysics cannot be experienced in terms of the logic of physics, so metapraxis cannot be experienced in the terms of the logic of praxis. Metapraxis is ‘beyond’ praxis, yet not independent of praxis. And this points to the conclusion that just as metaphysics, if at all meaningful, is so only because of the ‘opposite’ concept of physics, so metapraxis is meaningful only by virtue of its ‘opposite’: praxis. Another instance of opposites illuminating each other or, at least, implying each other. And here one could add this: just as physics, when provoked, has a tendency to break through into metaphysics, so praxis, when provoked has a tendency to break through into metapraxis.

(Christou 1966)

Consequently, metapraxis is valid only in the context of praxis and it does not concern the actions, but the process to be followed in the performance of these actions. For instance, a violinist does not necessarily perform metapraxis if he/she starts reciting a poem; besides, this could be considered as praxis, especially in the present time. The latter suggests that metapraxis is not a performance technique or a task which follows

specific rules. Metapraxis cannot refer or relate to actions that are embodied in the praxis of a work of art. According to Minou (2010, 42) ‘it does not imply an *extension* of the expressive media used in a work of art, but a *challenge* of expressive conventions’. Metapraxis is an inner process of experiencing the logic of a situation and its characteristics, and being led to a need to go beyond and transcend that situation. In fact, this is what makes metapraxis a term that could not be applied to any apparently similar practices, unless they share the same principle of transcending one’s limits. I will give another example in order to better explain my statement. If a composer asks a violinist to walk while playing, this is not necessarily metapraxis, as the violinist could perform this action as another requirement of the score. More to the point, many composers have provided directions with similar actions for their performers, but these actions are not metapraxes. Christou does not ask for a technical performance of his directions, nor theatrical expression; he invites his performers to participate in an inner journey of experiencing the rules of a situation and he wants to lead them to a breakthrough that means they would need to go beyond the current situation. The extract below describes this clearly:

The last example suggests that a metapraxis is not a function of mixed media. A metapraxis is an implosion, a tension under the surface of a single medium which threatens that medium’s meaning barrier. An assault on the logic of the performer’s relationship to his own particular medium. A violation within a single order of things. Or, a subtle pressure against the barrier of meaning which any system generates for its own preservation.

(Christou 1966)

The above is what makes metapraxis a special concept that cannot be applied to any music theatre piece, as its characteristic, as explained before, pertains to an inner experience rather than a stylised performance direction. Metapraxis has a predominately psychological substance and its stage performance is the result of an ‘inner implosion’. This is why the actions of a metapraxis do not follow any aesthetic rules and are not characteristic of an event or state. It might be argued that the example of the conductor, given by the composer and illustrated earlier in this section, would not be valid nowadays, as the overall logic of a music performance and music perception has significantly changed. However, Christou is aware of the variations in music perception in different periods of time and states that:

The implication is, of course, that as the logic of the medium keeps changing in sympathy with the dynamics of the worldwide parameters of history, the manners in which metapraxis could be expressed must be constantly readjusted.

(Christou 1966)

I am positive that had Christou lived longer, he would have made many changes to the performance of his works and that he would be open to suggestions with regard to metapraxis. According to Minou,

Christou would probably have no objection to contemporary musicians performing metapraxis in his pieces in ways which are different to the way metapraxis was performed when the pieces were first performed. Actually, such an attitude would be much more loyal to Christou's ideas, rather than a mere reproduction of the performances that he had set up when he was still alive.

(Minou 2010, 42)

At this point, there is an issue raised a propos performances of the composer's works today. Since the rules of music performance today are different – one could argue that there are no rules, but that's anyway a rule – how can a performance of metapraxis, as suggested by the composer, be valid? Adjusting a performance according to what we think the composer might have wanted to do is risky, although perhaps closer to the composer's philosophy and beliefs. But even if we decide to continue performing detailed and precise scores such as *Strychnine Lady* in the way that the composer originally suggested, we could be led to a different stage: of the union of praxis and metapraxis. This is how Christou concludes on this matter:

Continuing the parallel, an ultimate realization could be the identification of praxis with metapraxis in a union of opposites, so that a metapraxis has no further reason to be any different to 'praxis'. The statement, of course, is an

obvious target for questions of this type: ‘then why this whole business of metapraxis in the first place?’ To which the only answer is, just as obviously, silence.

(Christou 1966)

Of course, these are mostly performance issues, with which this thesis does not fundamentally deal. Yet, with the union of praxis and metapraxis as another allusion to the union of opposites in spiritual alchemy, we may be led into a new, transformed stage of performing Christou in our era.

## Chapter 5: *Strychnine Lady*: Introduction and context

### General information about the work

In 1967, Jani Christou composed one of his most well-known works, one that is also the main subject of this study: *Strychnine Lady*. According to the composer, the work is written for ‘a solo woman viola player, two groups of massed strings, brass, percussion (including pianoforte), magnetic tape, a metal sheet construction, sound-producing objects and toys, a red cloth, five actors and a conductor’ (Christou 1967, in The official Jani Christou website 2014); as will be seen later, these details are all as described by Christou himself.

The implications of the work are clear from the above description. First, it is evident that this is basically a work for the concert hall, as it has an instrumental soloist and groups of musical instruments; however, the description suggests some other paths, as it also involves a group of actors, an element that belongs to other disciplines, although still in the area of performance. What is most thought-provoking, nevertheless, is that the composer also includes in his description sound-objects – a red cloth and a metal sheet construction – a fact that leads to the assumption that these elements form an integral part of the performance and are not just underlying elements to the main events of the work. Why does the composer consider such objects to be so important?

The description of the work marks the starting point of any research about *Strychnine Lady*, as in order to define its most interesting aspects some key points have to be ‘unlocked’; these objects are just a few of these key points.

Furthermore, this particular description shows clearly that the work does not involve a conventional form of musical composition as people normally perceive it. Thus, any research on the work should be done via an approach that will not be concerned purely with the music, and is open enough to cover all the matters arising from its diverse aspects.

### **Christou's published writings about the work**

The present text aims to show the steps taken in order to unlock the secrets of *Strychnine Lady*. What could anyone learn about *Strychnine Lady* in the first steps of researching the work? As there is a general lack of information, any potentially relevant material seems to be valuable; but what information is provided outside this field, and how useful is it with regard to the research directions that one should follow?

The only online published writings of Christou concerning *Strychnine Lady* can be found on the composer's official website. There, just one note and one extract from a letter can be found. The note is a description of the work by the composer himself, dated 1967:

The work is written for a solo woman viola player, two groups of massed strings, brass, percussion (including pianoforte), magnetic tape, a metal sheet construction, sound-producing objects and toys, a red cloth, five actors and a conductor. The para-musical events (gestures, actions, theatrical fragments) do not always coincide with the musical activities. In other words, the music proper may exist without these other events and vice versa. Basically, there is no 'communication' between the two – Nor, and this is more important, is there any 'communication' between components within the same type of event. It is rather like individuals caught up in a crowd; they act with the

crowd but do not communicate with each other. And if there does seem to be a relationship between components of a particular group, this is because they are reacting to identical signals, not because they are establishing a relationship with each other.

(Christou 1967, in The official Jani Christou website 2014)

The other item is an extract from a letter to Rhoda Lee Rhea, dated 10<sup>th</sup> February 1967. Rhea was the violist who premiered *Strychnine Lady*. The quotations below, like all the quotations of Christou's writing in this thesis, are transcribed exactly as written, including their punctuation.

The work is not descriptive, but it does share certain states in common with the 'mortificatio' state: (Dionysus as Zagreus. – the dismemberment is one of the many instances)/ The logic here, if you can call this logic, is that of a dream in which states melt into other states with no apparent outward reason.

(Christou 1967, in The official Jani Christou website 2014)

At first glance, these two quotations seem to be unrelated, but there is a word mentioned in the second item that leads to several hypotheses and might suggest a research path: mortificatio. Mortificatio is a stage of the alchemical process of transforming base metals into gold or – in Jungian psychology, which employs this process as a metaphor – a process of personal transformation through the union of the unconscious with the conscious. Mortificatio is associated with chaos, deconstruction, lack of communication

and so on. Christou's relation with alchemy as well as Jungian psychology will be analysed further and in detail in the next chapters of this study.

However, this partly validates the assumption of Christou's relationship with alchemy. It is important to pursue a direction such as this via valid observations and not to base commentary solely on the 'myth' created around Christou, which gives information that is not supported with valid arguments. Alchemy is a great example of this: the Internet is full of writings that refer to Christou's relation with alchemy but do not support those statements with any arguments. Christou represents a case of a composer around whose name a whole 'myth' has been created, referring to his personal interest in topics such as metaphysics, religions, rituals and other similar matters that give rise to people's fantasies and can too readily seduce Christou enthusiasts.

As mentioned before, the central aim of the present section of this thesis is to show the research direction of this study and how the research decisions have been made; hence, any decision in relation to the research of an extra-musical discipline, in this case alchemy, is always based on observations made from the composer's writings or on the elements included in the score itself.

### **Concept and sources of inspiration**

The concept of *Strychnine Lady* is related to various extra-musical factors that have connotations with the composer's study of, and interest in, the disciplines of psychology, occultism, philosophy and all the other areas mentioned in previous paragraphs. The work is actually the result of a process that has been developed for

many years and, according to Sakallieros & Kyriakos (2008), stems from three discrete sources of inspiration, according to three different versions of its conception.

The first source of inspiration concerns a dream that the composer had. In it, he sees an anonymous advertisement that refers to a lady who supplies strychnine and unusual experiences. He sets up a meeting with her, only to find himself in an impersonal hotel, in the middle of a crowd (Sakallieros & Kyriakos 2008).

The second source of inspiration refers to a quotation from the book *Psychology and Alchemy* (1968) by Jung. In this particular excerpt, which is actually a Latin alchemical text, a woman called Beya embraces Gabricus, her son, with such love that she absorbs him completely into her womb and the two are combined to form a new creature. According to Jung, this bizarre union is an entirely symbolic incest of the descending of the conscious into the unconscious (Sakallieros & Kyriakos 2008). More on this particular extract will be outlined in other chapters of this study; the influence of Jungian theory is discussed in Chapter 7, whilst the Latin text and its meaning are analysed in Chapter 8. It is worth noting that the Latin text is heard in many different phases of the work, spoken by the actors as clear text, each time at different speeds, or as scattered words.

The third source of inspiration has a more private character and refers to the complicated and perhaps distressing relationship between Christou and his mother. George Leotsakos (2000) describes the composer's mother as a problematic personality, and he states that the exposure of the composer to her intense and sometimes violent outbursts led the composer to the concept of metapraxis. Leotsakos also recognises what he calls the 'Great Castrating Mediterranean Mother Goddess' in *Strychnine Lady* –

represented by the viola soloist. The ‘Great Castrating Mediterranean Mother Goddess’ is part of the title of an article written by Leotsakos; according to him, this was the exact description of Christou’s mother made by Laylard,<sup>21</sup> who met the Christou brothers in London; this is information that Leotsakos gained from James Hillman (1926–2011), a renowned Jungian analyst, who met both Christou brothers.<sup>22</sup>

To return to Leotsakos’s comparison between *Strychnine Lady* and Christou’s mother, we should consider that this refers to private territory that has not been clarified. Moreover, these mentions represent Leotsakos’s own opinion and point of view and his line of enquiry concerns an attempt at a psychoanalytical explanation rather than a clear source of inspiration; thus, this study does not consider this connection as a source of inspiration, merely as suggestive of one possible dimension of interpretation on offer here.

Moreover, it should be clarified that the sources of inspiration appear to concern the final stage of the creation of the work and not its starting point. In the next section, I will attempt to illuminate Christou’s compositional methods, and evidence showing that this work was in fact created over many years.

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<sup>21</sup> Leotsakos does not provide information regarding who Laylard is; it is most likely that he refers to John Willoughby Layard (1891 – 1974), an English anthropologist and psychologist.

<sup>22</sup> Hillman met Evangelos Christou at the C.G. Jung Institute in 1953; he met Jani after Evangelo’s death, when both worked on the posthumous publication of Evis’s *Logos of the Soul*.

## **Compositional material**

### **Pre-compositional thinking and extra musical material**

*Strychnine Lady*, as stated above, does not involve a conventional musical work in concert form. It derives from various extra-musical areas and personal interests of the composer and forms a type of experimental music theatre. This is stated clearly in the analyses of Sakallieros & Kyriakos (2008) and Hadjileontiadis (2010); it is also supported in Chapter 6 of this study, where comparisons are made between Christou and the experimental music theatre of the 1960s.

The hypothesis of this study is that Christou did not compose a musical work that also used extra-musical material, as it appears at a first glance, but that he created a musical work as a result of his philosophy and thinking. His work goes beyond the traditional musical aesthetics, since what is considered important is not the sounding result but the transmission to an inner redemptive and transcended state, through sound and other events. Furthermore, *Strychnine Lady* does not use extra-musical elements as inspiration for or to enrich the work; rather, the work itself re-enacts these elements through music. Thus, we are dealing with a rare case of a musical work in which all these extra-musical elements become ‘musical’. In addition, Christou’s music acts as a means rather than an artistic result, considering that, in Christou’s case, music is the vehicle for the composer’s aim, which is to waken elements of the unconscious and to reach what he calls protoperformance.

In order to assess the meaning of *Strychnine Lady*, the composer’s thinking, philosophy and writing have to be clarified. This study makes wide use of Christou’s archive in order to elucidate a complete philosophical system and its sources. In the following

chapters the following concepts, theories and philosophies are outlined and carefully analysed in comparison to Christou's works and particularly to *Strychnine Lady*:

- Christou's relationship with the field of depth psychology and, in particular, the revolutionary theories of Jung related to the collective and personal unconscious, myths, and alchemy's relation to modern psychology.
- Christou's studies in spirituality and Mircea Eliade's concepts with regard to the history of religions, rituals and mythical archetypes.
- Christou's relation to dramatic elements, the experimental music theatre of the 1960s and ancient Greek theatre.
- Christou's concepts as stated in his writings, both archival and published.

### **Before *Strychnine Lady***

*Strychnine Lady* is a work whose reputation derives, among other matters, from the belief that it was created after a dream; nevertheless, the work is the result of a process that had been developed over many years. In particular, there are findings in the archive confirming that Christou planned to compose other works in a theatrical form that would also have references to alchemy, psychology and metaphysics. These findings are included in a file that is not dedicated to any actual work, but contains general notes, sketches and thoughts by the composer. The notes in the file are dated 1964–65, a few years before the composition of *Strychnine Lady*; this particular file is illustrated in more detail in Chapter 8. A few examples of notes from the file are shown below, in an effort to support the proposition that *Strychnine Lady* was the result of a process that had been going on for years and was not the result of an instantaneous inspiration following a dream. The latter does not imply that the composer's dream was not important in the development of the work and its dramatic sequence; it was crucial, but

it was not what actually led to the creation, as it gave a ‘soul’ to something that already had a body – or, perhaps, the other way around.

**Note on Alchemy Theatre, dated 21/08/1964**

Alchemist  
 Alchemist daughter  
 Prince  
 Prince’s son  
 MERCURY

Chorus groups: alchemist 5, wise men  
 Nobles  
 Court women [as Nature]

Grand chorus: mixed

The people [as chaos -]

The above note is found in the aforementioned file and appears to include the dramatis personae of an ‘alchemy theatre’. It is dated 1964, a few years before the main work on *Strychnine Lady*, and it refers to symbolic alchemical representations that were intended to be used in a theatrical composition under the general title of ‘alchemy theatre’. This particular note shows clearly that the composer was involved in alchemical studies before *Strychnine Lady*, and even before the earlier *Mysterion* (1965). Moreover, there is an attention-grabbing mention of the word chaos, which is also a word associated with *Strychnine Lady*. More information on the association of the word chaos and the work can be found in Chapter 7.

### Note on Alchemy-Theater Music [or ‘Opera’] dated 21/08/1964

There need not be a story on the conscious level: no tale in the normal sense of the word:

Rather: An unconscious ‘story’ = that is – a sequence of events whose connection is with one another and whose ‘direction’ or ‘purpose’ not understood (conveyed) in terms of ordinary story telling.

This what appears on the surface to be a [*sic*] mere sequences of ‘scenes’ –may have a purpose– in the sense that dream sequences have a purpose. My first step is to liberate myself from the story expectation.

One scene I see is a gathering of alchemists – barbing at each other in argument [...]. Occasionally technical words are heard –maybe there is a ‘dominant’ word = MERCURY= heard over and over again.

Here there is a note that refers to a ‘theater’ music work or opera under the title Alchemy. This is further evidence that Christou had the idea of composing a work that would draw on Alchemical concepts and, in fact, goes further as it indicates a few points related to consciousness and unconsciousness, storytelling and dreams. One specific sentence is worth noting: ‘what appears on the surface to be a [*sic*] mere sequences of ‘scenes’ –may have a purpose– in the sense that dream sequences have a purpose’. In 1965, two years before the conception of *Strychnine Lady*, Christou is thus already dealing with ideas concerning dream sequences and how these could be reproduced in a composition. With regard to *Strychnine Lady*, the composer commented in his letter to Rhoda Lee Rhea that ‘The logic here, if you can call this logic, is that of a dream in which states melt into other states with no apparent outward reason’ (Christou 1967).

This particular note also illustrates several other interesting points, allied with the conscious–unconscious pair: ‘There need not be a story on the conscious level: no tale in the normal sense of the word: Rather: An unconscious “story” = that is – a sequence of events whose connection is with one another and whose “direction” or “purpose” not

understood (conveyed) in terms of ordinary story telling'. This excerpt indicates that Christou intended to create a work on the unconscious level whose dramatic sequence does not follow the rules of perception with regard to conventional storytelling on the conscious level. *Strychnine Lady* was created precisely according to this sense, since although it has dramatic sequence, there is no conventional logic as far as the cohesion of events is concerned. I should also point out that *Strychnine Lady* includes an alchemical story that is in fact an allegory of the union of the conscious with the unconscious.

#### **Note on Alchemy – Colour, no date, possibly in 1964**

Red – Rubedo = {...} redness may mean the dawn –the rubedo in alchemy-which as a rule {...} preceded the completion of the work  
 and a quotation for the shrieking woman:  
 'abeo quod nigramcandamhabetabstineterrestriumenimdioriumest' (keep your hands off that which has a black tail, for it belongs to the gods of earth)  
 p.167  
 footnote

The above note is of great importance, as it proves that the colour of the cloth in *Strychnine Lady* is far from casually chosen: red, as noted by the composer, is correlated with Rubedo, which is an alchemical stage. More on the colour will be outlined in the next chapter, and in particular in Chapter 7; however, it is vital to notice the date of 1964. In the file in which the notes were found, the content refers to compositional material, and it is notable that Christou noted the colour red as an element three years before the creation of *Strychnine Lady*.

The assumption to be made from all the above mentioned is that Christou intended to compose a staged work that would draw on alchemical concepts and communicate a

story on the unconscious level where the logic is that of a dream. These intentions were clear to him from 1964, three years before the conception of *Strychnine Lady*, which appears to have been prepared a long time before its final creation. The purpose of this section of the thesis is to demonstrate how Christou used to work and to clarify that he used to spend long periods –sometimes years – before finally arriving at the final creation of some compositions.

### **The *Strychnine Lady* archival file**

During my first visit to the Jani Christou archive I decided that it was best to concentrate on the composer's general thinking as organised in two files under the name 'Thoughts', as well as the file that concerned *Strychnine Lady* itself. I was expecting to come across a treasure-trove of findings in this file and to discover the directions I had to follow in order to solve some of the 'mysteries' of the work. Yet, I have to admit that I was especially disappointed after detailed examination of the notes included there. Considering Christou's extensive writing, I hoped to have found direct references and clear explanations with regard to the dream involving the strychnine lady, the alchemical story of Beya and Gabricus, the Lunar pattern and how it guides the final composition, and general elucidations for all this composition's various elements. However, the file was extremely difficult to read thanks to the composer's handwriting, which is disordered and sometimes chaotic. Unlike other folders of the archive, these notes were messy, not carefully placed in chronological order and not all dated.

In addition, the file – with the exception of a small section at the start, which seemed to be linked mainly with the composer's general concepts and his famous 'Credo for Music' (1966) – concerns predominantly the organisation of the material, its notation and mainly its practical features (space, playing techniques, sequence and so on). In a file of more than four hundred pages, the alchemical story of Beya and Gabricus which

is of great importance to the work, was only included in two of them: one with the Latin text and its translation and another with a quotation concerning Jung's interpretation of the story. There was no explanation as to why this particular story was chosen, or of its role in the work. The same goes for the alchemical stage of mortificatio, with which the composer links the work, as no explanation of this term generally or in relation to the work is made in the notes of the *Strychnine Lady* file. As for the dream, excluding a few general mentions concerning the dream as material, the only finding which may be considered important are the two pages outlined below:

#### **Note on *Strychnine Lady*, dated 19 Oct 1966**

The 'strychnine lady' [*sic*] is a character ~~appearing in a dream dreamt in October 1966.~~ According to the dream she who has placed an advertisement [*sic*] in the Paris edition of the New York Herald Tribune [*sic*] {...} certain experiences to all those interested in acquiring a drop of her ~~strychnine~~ {...}.

The work does not describe any ~~particular specific episode but~~ Her connection with the present work does not imply any {...} more that the work was conceived at the same time.

The work does not describe any specific episode in which she is involved but does shares {...} common climate of associations.

Chios 19 Oct 1966

(following last night dream)

So this is the title of the viola/orchestra work

At this point, I considered my whole study of this huge file to be worthwhile just for the discovery of this messy piece of writing. The question that arises after reading this note is: Was the work inspired by the dream or the dream by the work? The above note gives the impression that Christou had already planned to compose a work for solo viola and orchestra that linked the climate of associations to the dream that he had on 19 October 1966. Hence, this validates the assumption that *Strychnine Lady* was prepared over a

long time and that the dream was in fact not the starting point, but a final stage. What is interesting is that Christou seems not to want to create any links between the work and the dream. In the above note, the reference to the dream is crossed out, whilst in another description I found in the same file, months after the dream, nothing in relation to this is mentioned; in contrast, the composer states that the title is derived from ‘one theatrical fragment’, with no further explanation as to what he exactly means by this.

**Note in *Strychnine Lady* file, dated March 1967**

The title is derived from one theatrical fragment in which mention is made of a ‘Strychnine Lady’. Although it would be easy to develop any number of ‘meanings’, no symbolism is intended and any attempt at literacy explanation is pointless.

The above note is dated four months after the composer’s dream which is surprisingly not mentioned here; all of the above quotations are evidence that the composer’s intention was not to link the work with his dream, but to use the dream to enhance a work that he was already composing.

One final note is dated 11<sup>th</sup> Oct (probably 1966), and has the title ‘The work for viola’. It definitely concerns *Strychnine Lady*, as it is contained in the relevant file and the sketches contained correspond, in terms of orchestration and stage setting, to the final version of *Strychnine Lady*. This note is dated just a few days before the composer dreamt of the strychnine lady, and it shows clearly that Christou was composing a work for a viola soloist before he had the dream that inspired the title of the piece, and, hence, confirms the assumption with reference to the process of the composition and the dream, made in the above paragraphs.

Finally, referring to the archival file of *Strychnine Lady*, an assumption has been made: the file concerns mainly the practical aspects of the work. After extensive research in the archive and in many different folders, my hypothesis is that Christou had already carefully chosen all the compositional material, as shown by the aforementioned general file of notes and sketches, and when composing *Strychnine Lady*, he was only dealing with teasing out this material and its notation to create the final work. The general file, with its carefully dated notes, all in chronological order – in comparison with the *Strychnine Lady* file, which is messy, with hasty notes that are not always dated, shows that the composer spent a lot of time carefully selecting the material for his compositions and the ideas that would stimulate his work, and when he was ready he would compose a work in the heat of his own excitement.

### ***Strychnine Lady* in the 1960s – *Strychnine Lady* today**

#### **First performance and audience perception**

The world premiere of *Strychnine Lady* was held at the Athens Hilton Hotel on the 3<sup>rd</sup> April 1967, at the 2nd Hellenic Week of Contemporary Music. The conductor was Dimitris Agrafiotis and Rhoda Lee Rhea was the viola soloist. An announcement was made before the start of the work by Yiannis Papaioannou, a renowned musicologist of the time. He was a figure with whom the audience was familiar, and thus they did not realise that this announcement was actually part of the work. After the actress's protest and the subsequent events, some of them started laughing. Christou, who was behind the scenes, when the musician Mimis Rodousakis told him anxiously that people were laughing, remained calm, saying that that's what he wanted: for the audience to express

themselves (Zouliatis 2013). All of the above information is based on the verbal testimonies of people who were at the performance, as recorded in Costis Zouliatis' documentary (2012). The audience included distinguished people from the art and literary scenes in Greece, such as the Nobel Prize-winning poet George Seferis, the music critic George Leotsakos and the musicologist Phoivos Anoyiannakis. The work was well received by the audience, which was impressed. Anoyiannakis wrote a review published in the well-known newspaper *Ethnos* in which he praised the work. This review is included in the *Strychnine Lady* archival file and Christou had marked it as 'description', possibly because the composer considered Anoyiannakis' review a good portrayal of his work. Parts of it read as follows:

Now here, and as from the very first moment, the listener-spectator is caught up in a totally different world. A world in which 'para-musical' and musical events combine, attracted to each other by some dark force, like that which brings seemingly unconnected things together in dreams. This world is both illogical and logical. Nightmarish, yet subtly luminous, even lyrical. A world in which subtle motions oscillate between states of dreaming and of painful awareness. [...]. All these things together with certain motions, gestures and attitudes, may seem not to be logically related to each other.

Yet the listener-spectator gradually begins to recognize something of his own self in these things, and with this strange realization the feeling that he is participating in some curious ritual grows stronger and stronger. [...] Not only is one overwhelmed by the strange power of the various events as separate entities, but one is simultaneously alive to the magic worked as they combine to form an organic totality.

[...] The music itself is beyond serialism, it has, in fact, nothing to do with serialism. Neither has it anything to do with 'aleatoric' (chance) music, since the musicians are called upon to produce acoustical events and sound patterns

of varying complexities but always according to a strictly-predetermined manner with all technical details minutely specified by the composer [...].

In other words the music is also the action, while the action becomes the music. Yet the two are separate, and in this peculiar manner both form a whole in which the boundaries of music and theatrical action are impossible to define.

(Anoyiannakis 1967)

The review included in the archival folder was written in English and there is no indication as to who provided the above translation, considering that the original review was probably written in Greek. Perhaps the above is a translation by the composer himself.

### **Second performance and unusual events**

The second performance of the work<sup>23</sup> was marked by an unusual event during the concert. According to the newspapers of the time, and oral testimonies of people in the audience, a foreign violinist entered the hall and started playing unrelated music, while the work was being performed (Zouliatis 2013). In fact, one newspaper described this event on its front page, under the title ‘The mischief violinist’. Many people suppose that this was actually a ‘farce’ organised by Christou himself, among them Costis Zouliatis, who is a Christou researcher and director of the only documentary on Christou’s work and life. Zouliatis, who has undertaken extensive research in the composer’s archive for more than twelve years, supports the argument that this ‘farce’ was actually organised by Christou himself, since the audience was already familiar

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<sup>23</sup> I was not able to track the exact date of the second performance. All the information I gathered come from the documentary of Costis Zouliatis and oral testimonies that he collected.

with the start of the work and something different should happen in order to break its normal sequence (Zouliatis 2013). Otherwise, what is the logic of a professional violinist entering the hall of a concert and supplying entirely unrelated music to the sequence of a performance?

Although there is no evidence to support who organised the above-mentioned ‘farce’, there is an important question to be raised in relation to the start of the work: since the composer intended to create a sort of a happening at the start, how could this be performed today since the audience, especially in Greece, is already familiar with the work? The possibility of a real happening is seriously diminished. And, in a similar manner, we are driven to the next section, which focuses on the start of the work proper and its performance issues.

### **The beginning – happenings and performance issues**

*Strychnine Lady* is a work in which the musicians and the conductor are required to have great knowledge, experience and skills in avant-garde performance, which means that they should first possess great technique as well as a broad knowledge of the potential uses of their instruments. They also need to have the ability to read highly sophisticated pictographic scores. The female viola player must not only give a demanding performance in a theatrical set and as notated in the score, but also follow ‘a strict sequence of body positions and gestures, facial expressions and laryngealised voicing’ (Sakallieros & Kyriakos 2008). In other words, *Strychnine Lady* is a composition that appears to have a quality of freedom in performance, yet on a closer look is actually a strictly directed performance piece. The only part where this is not the case is the start of the work, which has a completely different character.

In particular, *Strychnine Lady* starts with an announcement addressed to the audience by an actor, who states that the composition will not be performed for technical reasons. In place of the work programmed, there will be another one by the same composer. Before any other comments on this replacement, an actress sitting in the audience protests. Subsequently, two other actors enter the stage and start performing a sequence of ritual movements, including the placement of the red cloth in the middle of the stage, which creates feelings of impatience and curiosity in the audience. The start of *Strychnine Lady* can have many possible outcomes, according to the reactions of each audience. Sakallieros & Kyriakos (2008) compare this relation of the performers with the audience to John Cage's stage works. That will not be the case in the present study, because although the general concept of the performer–audience relationship seems to have similarities, the conceptual starting points and the artistic results are totally different in the case of each composer's work.<sup>24</sup> Another aspect to be noted is that the start of *Strychnine Lady* may also be compared with the artistic movements of the time: Fluxus and Happenings.

However, in order to make a valid comparison between the Fluxus and Happenings movements and *Strychnine Lady*, a definition of the characteristics of these movements is required. Sakallieros & Kyriakos (2008) presented a number of key features of Fluxus and Happenings, as originated by Allan Kaprow (Berghaus 2005, in Sakallieros & Kyriakos 2008); hence, they observe that some key characteristics coincide with the beginning of *Strychnine Lady*, and some others, however, do not. The two categories are presented below:

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<sup>24</sup> A critical comparison between John Cage and Jani Christou can be found in Chapter 1.

Features that coincide with the start of *Strychnine Lady*

- A happening should be flexible and open to improvised, unpredictable situations.
- The dividing line between performer and audience is flexible and both are participants in a happening.
- Happenings express people's innermost feelings in an intense and playful manner.

Features that do not coincide with the start of *Strychnine Lady*

- Fluxus pieces are simple, natural, unpretentious and easy to produce.
- Fluxus pieces are ephemeral and can only be experienced in the here and now.
- On a practical level, Fluxus performances do not rely on a complex technical apparatus.
- The scores are short and describe straightforward tasks, which just about anyone, especially non-artists and ordinary people can perform.

(Kaprow 2005, in Sakallieros & Kyriakos 2008, 4)

It is interesting to notice that the first set of characteristics that coincide with the start refer to Happenings and the second to Fluxus. Hence, it could be assumed that the start of *Strychnine Lady* shares some common states with, and is in the form of a Happening but not with a work of Fluxus. Although many people do not make such a strong distinction between Happenings and Fluxus, there is a suggestion that they form different categories. Dick Higgins states that 'the dichotomy is clear: the expressive and symbolic elements of Happenings [...] are opposite in character with the 'unsymbolistic', 'anti-expressionistic', 'form-free' elements of Fluxus' (Higgins 2002, 111). Therefore, if we follow this dichotomy, it is even clearer that *Strychnine Lady* with its symbolic character coincides with the character of a Happening. It is worthy of note that in 1969, the journalist John Davies referred to Christou by saying that hippies are not the only ones that make Happenings, considering that a Happening premises, by definition, the spontaneous expression (Davies 1969, in Gyra 2009, 319).

Today, forty-seven years after *Strychnine Lady* was created, there is an issue concerning whether the beginning of this particular work could be performed as a Happening. In view of the fact that the work is one of the composer's most popular, at least in Greek-speaking communities, the start is already known to the majority of the audience. Hence, it is realised as a part of the work and not as an unexpected event, a fact that limits the possibility of an interaction between performers and audience and could change the nature of the start of the work.

This raises some performance issues that need to be defined and then analysed in order to achieve the requested 'Happening' character of the start of *Strychnine Lady*. This may be an addition of events, always related to the work, or maybe a change to the beginning. Of course, this also requires a deep understanding of Christou's work in general and especially of *Strychnine Lady*. Furthermore, it may be a dangerous approach as it could change the character of the work, since it would involve other people's realisations. Finally, there is the issue of the 'expected action', meaning that any attempt at achieving a Happening could turn out not to be valid since the audience will expect a sort of Happening in any case and will realise any actions towards this as a part of the work.

## **Conclusions**

This chapter introduced the reader to *Strychnine Lady* and the process followed so far as the present research is concerned. The progress of the research felt like unravelling a puzzle, since I had to gather all the information, put the pieces together and try to see the whole picture. This picture demonstrates a need to define notions of alchemy and

psychology, as well as compositional and performance material, through extensive research in various sources, some found directly in the archive and some only indicated in the archival findings. Hence, the next chapters will attempt to analyse Christou's *Strychnine Lady* by taking further the ideas outlined above and demonstrating others discovered in the process.

## Chapter 6: Theatrical and dramatic aspects

### Introduction

Christou's late works are characterised by their intense theatricality. In particular, *Mysterion* (1966), *Strychnine Lady* (1967), *Anaparastasis III – The Pianist* (1968) and *Anaparastasis I – astronkatidhanykteronomighyrin* (1968) make unusual dramatic demands on the musicians involved, who are challenged to break the conventions of musical performance expected of the time and to go beyond the usual actions required in a typical music concert. This chapter will examine the theatrical and dramatic elements and aspects of Christou's late works. It is divided into three sections, each one of them focusing on a different aspect. The first section will discuss the theatrical dimension of these works by examining and pointing out some of the elements that define their dramatic substance; the second concerns a critical comparison of Christou's late works with the experimental theatre of the 60s, in an effort to confirm that these works fall under this category; and finally, the last section examines Christou's music for stage and the influence of his collaboration with Karolos Koun, a renowned Greek theatre director of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## **Christou and theatricality**

### **The involvement of the 'eye'**

Christou's late works are composed as stage works, meaning that they cannot be thoroughly perceived only if they are listened to; their performance has also a visual aspect, since various dramatic/theatrical actions are taking place. Thus, the works are not concerned solely with producing sound, since they have a kind of a narrative sequence and scenic action. At this point, it seems appropriate to look into the term 'theatre'. According to Erica Fischer-Lichte (2014, 7) the word 'theatre' is derived from the ancient Greek θέατρον (théatron, 'a place for viewing'), which comes from θεα (thea, show) and θεάσθαι (theásthai, to see, to watch, to observe, to look on). Hence, theatre involves viewing and observation, so in this sense these four particular late works could be said to be theatrical.

### **Theatricality**

In the first performance of the work *Anaparastasis III – the pianist* (1968), Christou chooses a painter and actor, his friend Gregory Semitekolo, as a soloist, a surprising fact since Semitekolo was not a pianist. Christou asked Semitekolo to emphasise the theatrical aspect (Gyra, 2008), and the fact that he didn't give this work to a real pianist shows the non-necessity of a professional musical training and skills for this work. According to Varvara Gyra (2008), the theatrical dimension of the composition is very much connected with the definition of the word 'anaparastasis' (this is a Greek work,

meaning representation or re-performance), which is the title of the work. As she explains:

It is about a performance [Greek: παράσταση/parastasis], i.e. a presentation, through stage action, of an action that combines, among other elements, music, movement and speech, that is repeated. Therefore, it is about the revival of an 'action' that has been already presented in the past and that is repeated in the present.

(Gyra 2008, 1)

In *Strychnine Lady* Christou uses four actors who are required to act as characters following directed actions. This adds to the theatricality of the piece, since the actors give the play a dramatic dimension and suggest a performance that does not merely concern music, but is actually extended in a dramatic state with theatrical requirements.

### **Dramatic sequence**

As mentioned previously, in Christou's late works the performers are required to perform theatrical actions. All these works also have a dramatic stage sequence; they follow a story that indicates a series of actions:

- *Mysterion* (1965–66): This work is based on several texts of the Egyptian ancient 'Book of the Dead'. In *Mysterion* Christou revives in nine stages a ritual

that takes place in the Tebot-Netoru-S, the eighth circle of the underworld through which Afou-Ra passes on during the eighth hour of the night.

- *Strychnine Lady* (1967): This work involves a dream by the composer, in which he reads an announcement about a lady supplying strychnine and unusual experiences. The work is, according to Christou, a ritual for a dream that follows the state of the alchemical 'mortificatio': in simple terms, a state of deconstruction mainly followed by the solo viola player who represents the dreamed-of strychnine lady. More information with regard to the alchemical mortification can be found in Chapter 7.
- *Anaparastasis III – The Pianist* (1968): This work concerns a solo pianist coming on stage to perform a piece. She/he tries to play, but 'an insuperable barrier of incommunication separates her/him from the instrument' (Lucciano, 2000: 112).
- *Anaparastasis I – astronkatidhanykteronomighyrin* (1968): This work is for a solo baritone and it uses part of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*. As Lucciano describes it, these are 'words that the baritone seeks to express, but is unable to pronounce them. They appear only in a distorted, unintelligible form' (Lucciano, 2000: 112).

### **Theatrical aspects and matrixed performances**

All of the above works have soloists representing someone other than themselves, a practice usually related to theatrical performances. This contrasts strongly with the usual role of musicians, as they represent themselves when playing a piece of music. Michael Kirby refers to these two different cases as matrixed and nonmatrixed performances. Considering the matrixed performances he states that

the performer always functions within (and creates) a matrix of time, place, and character. Indeed, a brief definition of acting as we have traditionally known it might be the creation of, and operation within, this artificial, imaginary, interlocking structure. When an actor steps onstage, he brings with him an intentionally created and consciously possessed world, or matrix (...) the relationship of mood and atmosphere to situation and plot is retained, and the emotions and ideas expressed are obviously not those of the singer or dancer himself (...)As part of the place-time continuum of the play, which happens to include a stage and the actual time, they “play roles” without needing to “act.” They cannot escape the matrix provided by the work.

(Kirby 2005, 5)

The soloists and actors in Christou’s previously mentioned late works appear to represent a case of a matrixed performance, since, according to the quotation above, they do not appear on stage as themselves and they do not express their own thoughts and feelings; this is usually found in theatrical performances and does not concern a traditional musical performance which is nonmatrixed:

A great variety of nonmatrixed performances take place outside of theatre. In the classroom, at sporting events, at any number of private gatherings and public presentations there is a “performer-audience” relationship. The public speaker can function in front of an audience without creating and projecting an artificial context of personality. The athlete is functioning as himself in the same time-place as the spectators. Obviously, meaning and significance are not absent from these situations, and even symbolism can exist without a matrix—as exemplified in religious or traditional ritual or a “ceremony” such as a bullfight.

(Kirby 2005, 6)

There is a clear distinction between the two categories above, which concerns the intentions of a performance. The soloists and actors in Christou’s late works represent a case of a matrixed performance, contrary to the musicians in a classical music context. In a traditional musical performance a player performs an action for the audience. In the case of theatrical performance, a player performs an action for the audience as someone else other than himself/herself. The difference of these two instances is clearly stated in the quotation below, in which Kirby discusses the case of musicians and actors in the context of matrixed and nonmatrixed performances.

But the musician is not acting. Acting might be defined as the creation of character and/or place: details of “who” and “where” the performer is are necessary to the performance. The actor functions within subjective or objective person-place matrices. The musician, on the other hand, is nonmatrixed. He

attempts to be no one other than himself, nor does he function in a place other than that which physically contains him and the audience.

(Kirby 2005, 27)

This distinction between musical and theatrical performance leads us to the assumption that the four late works with which this section deals could be described as theatrical and dramatic in a sense. All of these works suggest matrixed performances, which as seen above, are mostly related to theatre practices rather than music, the performance of which is nonmatrixed.

### **Theatrical action and movement**

Christou uses dramatic actions and movements to develop the sequence of the work. He gives detailed instructions through his pictographic scores and he demands from musicians that they go beyond their usual actions and break the limits of a conventional music performance. Furthermore, he gives detailed pictographic directions concerning the movements of the musicians and soloist-characters. Hence, the three choral ensembles in *Mysterion* participate in a dance-like ritual, while *Strychnine Lady* goes even further, indicating the exact movements of the viola soloist, actors and musicians. In particular, performers follow specific directions with regard to body movement and scenic place; hence, this can be characterised as a theatrical action. The gestures, movements and speech include, among other things, the reciting of an alchemical text, the announcement of a lady who supplies strychnine, actors smoking casually and a viola soloist who follows a process of deconstruction through an intense physical movement.

The pianist in *Anaparastasis III* attempts to communicate with the piano: the soloist violently shuts the piano lid, bends on his knees and starts a dialogue with the piano, crawls under the piano and kisses it, licks it, threatens it, begs it. He does anything required to express his tragic situation in a manner resembling scenes of ancient Greek tragedy (Gyra 2008). The musicians produce secretive sounds and the conductor recites a text written by the composer (Minou 2010, 57). The pianist also attempts to communicate with the audience through 'slow ritualistic movements' and 'occasional cries of intense effort' (Christou 1971). This attempt turns out to be futile and adds to the tragic situation of the soloist.

The same situation of lack of communication and futile attempts towards this is found in *Anaparastasis I* (1968). The baritone soloist, as with the pianist in *Anaparastasis III*, has an issue with communication and fails to express himself through a musical medium (Minou 2010). The soloist enters the stage, following directed movements and actions, only to find himself helpless in speaking and communicating.

### **The use of extra-musical materials**

In several of Christou's late works we may see an interesting use of extra musical materials. *Strychnine Lady*, according to the description given by the composer himself, is a ritual for a dream for female solo viola, five actors, instrumental ensemble, tapes, various sound objects, a metal sheet construction and a red cloth (Christou 1967). It is clear from this description that Christou considered these objects crucial for the performance of the work. It is important to mention that the red cloth, the metal construction and the other objects are clearly used as scenic objects and not as means of

sound creation. The red cloth is used to cover the viola player at the end of the work's and its meaning may point in various directions and express many symbolisations. It may recall pictures from ancient theatrical performance practices that were connected with rituals of sacrifices – and therefore red could represent blood.<sup>25</sup> This notion strengthens the theatrical hypostasis of the red cloth and stresses the great attention that the composer gives to objects that have a scenic substance.

In the case of *Mysterion* special attention is given to costumes and masks. Christou wanted to create a mystical and ritualistic condition and the body and faces of the performers are covered, in order to convey the mysticism embodied in the whole work. The mask has a symbolic quality and it is an integral element of primeval rituals. In primeval cultures, masks were used as a means of protection against bad spirits, but they were also associated with entry into the spiritual world. In different parts of the world, a mask symbolises the ancestors who are incarnated by the person that wears it (Gyra 2008). In *Mysterion* the mask is connected with the embodiment of the spirits found in the Egyptian 'Book of the Dead'.

### **Jani Christou and experimental music theatre**

The nature of these works by Christou resembles some characteristics of the avant-garde and other movements and practices of the 1960s, the era in which they were composed. These works are often described as 'experimental music theatre' pieces; however, no scholarly text gives exact reasons or support for this designation. If this is taken as a starting point to define these pieces, then the term 'experimental music theatre' has to

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<sup>25</sup> A more detailed analysis of the colour red is included in Chapter 7. See also the previous chapter.

be explored and clarified, first on its own and second in relation to Christou's late works.

### **(Experimental) music theatre: scholarly sources**

The term 'experimental music theatre' is complex and concerns a type of 'theatre' that marked the 20<sup>th</sup> century, by challenging and questioning the limitations of classic musical performance of the time. During that period of time, many composers developed personal forms and systems of composing. The 20<sup>th</sup> century advancements<sup>26</sup> in many aspects encouraged them "to pursue a greater individuality and to experiment with the language of music, expanding its resources to accommodate a wider expressive range" (Hearn 2010, 16); hence complicating how the resulting works might best be categorised. For the purposes of my research I used two scholarly sources I found in English, which are outlined in the next paragraphs.

The first is a chapter included in the book *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century Opera* (2005), written by Robert Adlington, who gives his interpretation of the music theatre of the 1960s. This is a significant chapter, being one of the very few reliable and scholarly overviews of experimental music theatre in English. Adlington explores this movement of the 1960s, referring to particular composers and works of the time and examining their common statements and characteristics. Although a dense text – taking into consideration that it must work within the confines of a book chapter – it gives important information concerning composers and works, gathered and interpreted possibly for the first time. Among those composers are mentioned important names such as John Cage and Mauricio Kagel who are well known for their works involving

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<sup>26</sup> These advancements concern, between else, technology, the rise of democracy, the discovery of exotic cultures, the discovery of the inner self (Hearn 2010, 16).

performance in ways that go far beyond the confines of the Western classical music stage.

The second source is a review article, published in 2006 as ‘Recent Approaches to Experimental Music Theatre and Contemporary Opera’, written by Bjorn Heile. In the article Heile reviews three volumes published in German referring to contemporary opera and experimental music theatre. According to the author, the term ‘experimental music theatre’ is in fact a translation from the German term, ‘which is indicative of the larger role played by music theatre in German music studies [...] They all [the volumes reviewed in the article] share the word Musiktheater in their titles, which in German is an umbrella term that encompasses opera as well as alternative forms of music theatre’ (Heile 2006, 4). Even though Heile’s intention is not the definition of the term, he nonetheless raises some questions concerning the lack of scholarly writing in the field. Furthermore, he provides some characteristics of this particular trend that correspond to Adlington’s chapter, mentioned above.

### **Experimental Music Theatre: The term**

According to Heile (2006, 4), quoted above, the term experimental music theatre can be applied to many different works sharing common states. The most important aspect of these works is the tendency to alter our perception of what is considered a classic musical performance. Bornoff, in 1968, states that ‘we have a duty to welcome new forms of expression to help the creation of works which do not conform to conventional patterns, to place means at the disposal of those who wish to tread new paths, and where necessary to transform theatrical institutions so as to adapt them to the use of new stage techniques’ (1968, 16). This testimonial shows the need to create new performance languages and it confirms the issue of alteration of the classic practices of the time.

There are many possible paths towards this, some of which will be discussed in the following paragraphs, mostly on the basis of Adlington's chapter.

- Use of extended techniques

A common characteristic of works that might fall under the category of experimental music theatre is the use of extended techniques. Unlike conventional musical performance, musicians may – or in some cases must – perform in ways other than just playing their instruments. This may involve experimentations with their voice, new ways of instrumental playing and a general break in the conservative perception of musical performance. Adlington indicates that 'these works frequently experimented with extended instrumental and vocal techniques; the theatrical element of all musical performance was thus enhanced as a performer set about his or her instrument in ways that intruded upon and transgressed the "neutral" codes of the concert ritual' (Adlington 2005, 225–26).

- Anti-realist approach different from opera

Works characterised as experimental music theatre pieces are usually anti-realistic. This is to say that in contrast to opera, music theatre does not intend to follow a story, although it might have a narrative sequence. Additionally, it does not resemble, or intend to describe, any realistic event. According to Adlington (2005, 229), 'in some ways this propensity for anti-realism is a better criterion for distinguishing between music theatre and other genres'. Heile shares the same view, stating that in experimental music theatre, 'there is often no external reality which is represented by scenic action, and there frequently are no continuous dramatic roles which are enunciated by singing' (2006, 15).

- Musicians and actors: spatial arrangement and space as a fundamental concern

In more conventional performances of music and drama, the musicians and the actors perform on separate spatial levels and the role of music is mostly to support the story and the singing. This separation is negated in the case of experimental music theatre, case and there is a change in the role of music. The music is now part of the action; as Heile describes it, ‘music-making is the dramatic action’ (2006, 15) and more performance tasks are demanded of the musicians, who now act as performers who not only accompany the performance, but also form part of the dramatic sequence. Adlington adds that

in some instances the instrumentalists actually become ‘dramatic personae’, crucial to the action [...] Alternatively, sharing a stage simply allows a type of interaction not possible when instrumentalists are placed in a pit [...] Breaking down the barriers between instrumentalists and actors or singers is one important respect in which music theatre encourages a rethinking of standard performance arrangements.

(Adlington 2005, 237)

The works in this category are composed in order to be staged, meaning that they have a visual as well as a sonic aspect. They often involve dancers and/or actors, and in most cases also musicians, who perform bodily movements and staged actions that make the sound dependent on the space. According to Adlington:

Bodily movements occur in space and it is perhaps a matter of personal predisposition whether it is the body, or the space articulated by that body, that

is seen as primary. The same could be said of sound's relation to space: a sound is qualitatively dependent on the space in which it is made and heard.

(Adlington 2005, 240)

Hence, the space in works belonging to music theatre is an essential factor, providing opportunities to composers in experimenting with unconventional stage placements. Examples of composers who have experimented with space include Karlheinz Stockhausen (1928–2007) and Harrison Birtwistle (1934–), who are also leading figures in such experiments (Adlington, 2005), as well as many others.

### **Conclusion**

Having explored experimental music theatre and outlined its characteristics, Christou's late works could be said to fall into this category. All of the aforementioned characteristics may be found in *Strychnine Lady*, which can thus be characterised as an experimental music theatre work. Exploring the sources that refer to experimental music theatre, I found many similarities between these works by Christou and those by other composers. Christou's compositions certainly bear a resemblance to the defining characteristics of experimental music theatre: works such as *Strychnine Lady* and the *Anaparastases* use a range of extended techniques, they are definitely anti-realistic and there is a holistic approach to performance that leads to a union of the musicians and actors on stage. Lastly, space is a fundamental concern for Christou, whose late works cannot be adequately interpreted if their spatial aspect is ignored.

Finally, Heile's view of experimental music theatre seems to correspond with Christou's towards performance: 'Experimental music theatre therefore perfectly illustrates the kind

of holistic understanding of music which music studies on the whole seem to be striving for' (2006, 2). This holistic understanding, in my opinion, concerns an approach to musical performance that involves all of its aspects, including the visual, but also the fact that there are no boundaries to the artistic and, particularly, to the musical inspiration. This approach certainly resembles Christou's view of musical and artistic creation and is evident in his late works.

## **Jani Christou: Music for theatre and Karolos Koun**

### **Introduction**

In 1965 Christou collaborated with the theatre director Karolos Koun, who asked him to write music for the ancient Greek tragedy *The Persians* by Aeschylus (525/524 BC – c. 456/455 BC). The work was first presented on 20<sup>th</sup> April 1965 at the Aldwych theatre in London, as part of the drama festival 'World Theatre Season'. This acquaintance was a crucial point in the composer's creative progression. It should be mentioned that this was not the first time that Christou had composed music for the theatre, as he wrote music for *Prometheus Bound* in 1963, a production of the Greek National Theatre directed by Alexis Minotis. However, although the composer gained a lot from this very first composition for theatre, it was his later collaboration with Koun, and especially the music that he composed for *The Persians* in 1965, that was crucial for his future creative work. Before discussing this collaboration further, it is essential to explain Koun's work and significance in the area of contemporary Greek theatre and his involvement in the revival of ancient Greek drama.

### **Karolos Koun – Contextual information**

Karolos Koun (1908–87) is a legend in Greece. I am not sure where I heard his name for the first time and I belong to a generation that didn't have the chance to watch his legendary theatrical performances. However, his name is well known to all Greeks, appearing next to almost every reference to Modern Greek theatre.

In the context of my research and in my effort to identify Koun's influence on Christou, besides reading about this director, I have watched many documentaries and television programmes dedicated to him. The most powerful description that stayed in my mind came from an interview that he gave in 1976 to Freddy Yermanos, an important journalist of the time, on Greek National Television. The interview was held in the space of Theatro Technis ('Art Theatre'), a basement that housed the activities of Koun and his team in Athens. Yermanos had brought together many ex-students of Koun from as far back as the early 1940s, without him knowing anything about this gathering. Koun only knew that he was going to give a simple interview to a journalist, and once he entered the theatre and saw his students, they all welcomed him with such joy in their faces; they were all hugging and kissing, sharing a special relationship that was very clear to see. A part of a lecture Koun gave in 1943 came instantly into my mind:

We don't do theatre for the sake of theatre. We don't do theatre for living.

We play theatre for our souls, to make ourselves better, for our audience; and all together, to help creating a wide, emotionally rich, and unimpaired culture in our country [Greece]. Everybody is helpless on their own. [...]

Together we might be able to do something. Theatre as an art form gives

us the possibility of communicating with each other, being inspired, feeling each other, feeling the truth together. This is why we chose theatre as a form of expressing our inner world.

(Theatro technis 2014)

I believe that the above quotation defines in the best way Koun's whole philosophy, which concerns a form of theatre that shapes personalities and enriches souls. The impact of it could be seen clearly in the faces of the actors that were trained at Theatro Technis when talking about Koun and their training. A more detailed outline of Koun's life and the work that established him as a great theatre director will be offered in the following paragraphs.

### ***Life and work***

Koun was born in Bursa, Turkey, in 1908, into a very wealthy and aristocratic family. His parents were regularly absent from home and they were finally divorced. Koun was a lonely child, growing up in an upper-class environment with a nanny, a priest and a piano teacher amongst other teachers responsible for his home-based education (Theatro technis 2014).

The teenage Koun was a student in Rovertios, a boarding school in Istanbul, together with other Balkan students. After the Asia Minor catastrophe (1922), the Greek community in the school ceased to receive any education in their mother language, Greek. He graduated in 1928 and he left for the Sorbonne, in Paris, to study aesthetics.

In 1929 he moved permanently to Greece with his mother. He worked as an English teacher at Athens College, where he started making his first theatrical performances with his students, based on short theatrical texts of his own creation. At the same time, he gave English lessons to the society of the National Bank to earn extra money, since after the war his father was financially ruined.

In the meantime, he met Fotis Kontoglou, a significant writer and painter, one of the most distinguished Greek intellectuals of the generation of the 30s – a generation that sought its Greek identity through the rediscovery of the roots of Greek culture, that is, Ancient Greece. According to Koun, this acquaintance was vital as it helped him feel the need to return to his Greek roots (San simera 2014).

In 1933, Koun, together with Yannis Tsarouhis and Dionisios Devaris, founded Laiki Skini ('Popular Scene'). This was actually an effort to transfer onto stage this need to return to Greek roots. Laiki Skini was housed in an abandoned dressing room of the Municipal Theatre in Athens, where the core troupe was created. During its two-year life, Laiki Skini staged around five plays, some of them by Greek writers, such as *Erofili* by Georgios Hortatsis (1550–1610) and *Alcestis* by Euripides (485–406 BC).

In 1938 Koun left the college and his job as a teacher and started collaborating with well-known theatre groups, such as the troupes of Mrs Katerina and Marika Kotopouli. Nevertheless, his dream was to create his own, permanent and devoted team, to train actors who would see theatre as a social function and not merely as a profession. His dream became reality in 1942 when he founded, during the German occupation, the legendary drama school and theatrical troupe Theatro Technis. In a small room in the

yard of a house, he started rehearsing *The Wild Duck* by Henrik Ibsen with students of the drama school and himself as actor and director of the play. They performed in various theatres at first as they didn't yet have a dedicated space for their performances.

The activities of Theatro Technis were inhibited in 1950, due to its bad financial situation. At the same time, Koun was asked to collaborate with the Greek National Theatre, where he staged five works by writers such as Anton Chekhov and William Shakespeare. Theatro Technis was reopened in 1954, launching its glorious path in theatre. From this year Theatro Technis was housed in its own space, a basement refurbished by Koun and his students. From the 'wonder-basement', as it is often called, and under the wise and inspired direction of the 'Great Teacher', as his students often called him, some of the greatest actors, directors, writers, musicians and scenery designers in Greece at this time emerged.

In 1959 Theatro Technis participated in the Athens Festival, presenting *The Birds* by Aristophanes under Koun's direction. The performance was interrupted and then stopped by loud protests from the audience, during a scene in which Koun presented an Orthodox priest in the work. Although the audience reacted only during this particular scene, the play was considered sacrilegious and further performances were banned by Konstantinos Tsatsos, Minister of Public Administration (Shows I loved 2014). Three years later, Koun's production of *The Birds* was included in the Festival of the Nations in Paris, where it won the first prize and received enthusiastic comments. The same performance was presented in London in 1964, 1965 and 1967, receiving congratulatory reviews in the press, and in 1967 Koun was invited by the Royal Shakespeare Company

to direct *Romeo and Juliet* in Stratford, a performance that gained excellent reviews (Kounenaki 1999). In fact, this production was characterised by English newspapers as the best performance of Shakespeare of the last decade (San simera 2014). Two years later, Koun was invited again to the UK to offer his productions of *Lysistrata* by Aristophanes, and *Oedipous Rex* by Sophocles. The reviews were excellent once more and his reputation in Europe established.

Karolos Koun died in 1987, at a time when he had started to enjoy the recognition that had come as a result of his fifty years of work. His death occurred on exactly the same day, 14<sup>th</sup> of February 1987, as the premiere of his new production of Loula Anagnostaki's *The Sound of the Gun*.

### **Karolos Koun – Significance**

Koun's significance in contemporary theatre is huge. In Greek culture, reference is frequently made to a 'pre-Koun' and a 'post-Koun' era; Koun trained several generations of actors, including some of the great names of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, including Yiorgos Lazanis and Mimis Kouyioumtzis; furthermore, he created a platform for composers, scenery designers and directors to grow and make their own mark on the history of 20<sup>th</sup>-century Greek theatre.

One of Koun's most important contributions to Greek theatre is his introduction to Greek audience of contemporary theatrical movements, totally unknown to Greeks at the time, making known writers such as Eugène Ionesco, Samuel Beckett and Harold Pinter. In addition, he promoted new Greek writers such as Iakovos Kambanellis, Loula

Anagnostaki, George Skourtis and Kostas Mourselas, and brought to attention a whole generation and movement in Greek theatre, which was totally condemned and underestimated by the Greek intellectuals of the time.

Perhaps his most significant contribution was his rejection of the tradition of performing in a highly declamatory and manner; he insisted on a simple, more realistic way of revealing a theatrical character, a fact that changed dramatic acting in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Greece.

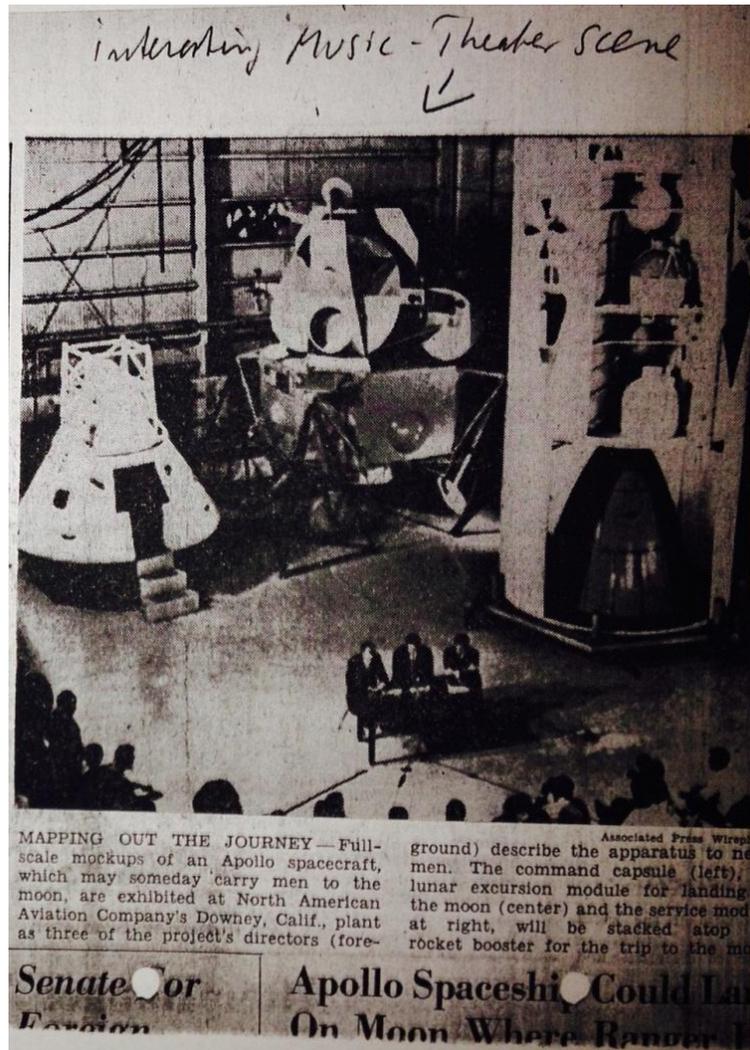
Koun's research on the revival of Ancient Greek Drama is considered one of the most valid. His productions of *The Birds* and *The Persians*, in particular, became exemplars for new directors. He was searching all the time for new ways to perform ancient Greek drama, based on his research and his ideas; but the most important aspect of this work is that he established a more permanent basis for it by creating a 'Koun school' for this particular area. Finally, it is worth mentioning that Koun used to say that even two lives are not enough to research in sufficient depth the interpretation of performing ancient Greek Drama (San simera 2014).

### **Jani Christou and music theatre**

Christou's interest in music theatre goes back to his earlier compositional periods and the early 1960s. This is obvious from the material found in his archive. In particular, there is a file named 'Project File', dated 1964, in which material such as notes and stimulating ideas and various articles and items from newspapers can be found, all of which were kept for future compositions. These articles concern the musical movements of the time, including music theatre. It seems that the composer was contemplating the

composition of an opera or music theatre piece, as he describes in his notes included in this file; but instead of creating the ‘alchemy opera’, his first intention, he ended up with *Mysterion* in 1965, and *Strychnine Lady* in 1967, and his notes for this work of opera/music theatre are very similar to some of those to these particular works. There is also a discovery in his archive that shows the composer’s interest in music theatre as early as 1963; in the ‘Project File’ I found a piece of paper with a published article referring to ‘an Apollo Spacecraft, which may someday carry men to the moon’. The article is accompanied by a picture showing the command capsule on the left, the lunar excursion module for landing on the moon in the centre and the service module on the right. In front of all these, the three directors of this particular project are sitting in front of a table and describing the apparatus to reporters, who form an audience in front of the directors in a semicircle. Christou marked the photo as ‘interesting music – theatre piece’; the illustration of this extract is presented on the next page. Hence, it is obvious that the composer had an interest in music theatre and in staging works before his collaboration with Koun and his completed compositions for the theatre.

However, we cannot ignore the fact that the composer started composing experimental music theatre pieces like *Strychnine Lady* (1967) only after his collaboration with Koun. Christou and Koun both had similar concerns about art and artistic creation, a fact that led to an explosion of inspiration during the creation of *The Persians*. According to Costis Zouliatis, they were both taking material and inspiration from the same source (the primitive world of instinct and an exploration of the roots of Ancient Greek drama) but each of them established a personal creation of their own (Zouliatis 2013).



**Example 2. Extract from newspaper. Found in the Jani Christou archive.**

The production by the National Greek Theatre of Aeschylus's work *The Persians* in 1965 was considered a crucial point in the modern history of theatre performance in Greece. This has a lot to do with the involvement of Christou, who was not only in charge of the composition of music for this performance, but also had under his entire responsibility the chorus, which he used as a way to reproduce the original material of ancient tragedy, which is the primordial, basic thrill. The result was the creation of 'a performance within the performance', creating a long 'Parodos'<sup>27</sup> of the chorus lasting 20 minutes, much longer than a standard 'Parodos' in other performances of Greek Ancient Drama (Zouliatis 2012).

<sup>27</sup> 'Parodos' is a term referring to Ancient Greek theatre and it is used to describe the ode sung by the chorus on its entrance, usually at the beginning of the work.

Koun states that his production of *The Persians* belongs to Christou as much as it belongs to him (Paraskinio 2008). He gave Christou complete freedom to experiment with and create the chorus, which Christou treated as a site for experimenting with people who were not musicians. According to Koun, he was able to create ‘sounds for voices that were prepared to accept these’ (Zouliatis 2012), something that he couldn’t do with singers and musicians who had already developed their own techniques and were often cautious about damaging their voices. In other words, the actors who had not received singing training formed a pure foundation on which Christou could experiment with a pure and unadorned voice, not technically developed in terms of singing but closer to speech and, hence, more authentic.

### **Koun, Christou and the ritual**

The process of composing for the theatre and, more specifically, for Ancient Greek tragedy brought Christou closer to ritual, which he began to study at this time and develop as a phenomenon ‘as something alive which means something for the modern man’. The ritualistic aspect was also central to Koun’s approach to his artistic creation. Referring to ancient tragedy, he states that his inspiration was born of ritual. Christou’s contact with Koun gave him the opportunity to utilise and develop a unique dramatic dimension in his work, progressing beyond the theoretical level that he was already preparing to its application on stage. Christou noted that for such a task, inspiration at rehearsals is essential and indispensable. He characteristically says that ‘Koun became inflamed and that was communicative. Passages that seemed affected and soulless suddenly began to sparkle. Throughout the rehearsals, new ideas came to us and we tried different things as we went along. It was a completely liberating experience’ (Christou n.d. in The official Jani Christou website 2014).

Christos Leontis (1940–), another composer who collaborated with Koun, discusses the importance of music for Koun's work in a thirty-one-page collection of articles written in honour of Koun by his collaborators. Leontis' article is the only one that concerns music and it is impressive that he mentions Christou as a significant influence on Koun. In particular, he writes that

The musician that influenced him a lot was Jani Christou. He was searching for elements of the music of eastern cultures and he embodied them in his creations. For example, the music for *The Persians* had influenced Koun a lot. [...] He [Koun] used to talk to me often and with great admiration about the ideological constitution and the philosophical thought of Jani Christou. This was reasonable because Christou was an exceptional personality. He was the artist that was thinking, researching and expressing questions through his art.

(Leontis 1999, 27)

Christou and Koun admired each other greatly and they shared a concern with issues of ritual in their art, the return to the roots, and the primeval world of the instinct. In his article Leontis points out that

instinct was guiding the multi-layered research of Koun. He was searching everywhere for the roots of theatre, music, scenery. He was interested in primeval material, as he thought that his mission was to discover the human roots and the roots of the art that humans created.

(Leontis 1999, 27)

This quotation corresponds perfectly to Christou's approach to his own artistic creation and it is not surprising that their collaboration was such a success. Particularly notable in the surviving documentation of their collaboration is a passage in which Christou talks about the music of *The Persians*, its context totally matching Koun's approach:

In writing music for *the Persians* I wasn't interested in creating simple music accompaniment. I was attracted to the possibility of using the chorus as a means of reproduction of the first material of tragedy – the primeval, basic thrill.

(Lucciano 2000, 45)

The assumption here is that both Christou and Koun shared the same views on performance in relation to ritual and primeval elements, which led to a collaboration that is considered a crucial point in both the history of ancient drama in performance and music for ancient drama in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### **Koun's significance for Jani Christou**

The two men made an instant connection and had a similar approach to their artistic creation, a fact that was very influential and took their work further. In an interview that Koun gave to the Greek National Television, he mentions that there was an interaction between them that was stimulating. He goes further, pointing to what he calls the exceptional 'speech orchestration' that Christou did and that he himself could never do again. By speech orchestration, Koun means the process of articulating speech in rhythmical and musical terms. For *The Persians*, Christou created sound motifs by placing words and expressions in such a way that they would create sound effects that

included a variety of texture. There are also places where some members of the chorus are reciting different parts of the text, at the same time and with different dynamics (Lucciano 2000, 74).

In the same interview, Koun refers to ancient Greek tragedy as sonic and plastic, meaning that its sonic parameters – what is actually heard – are as important as its visual ones. He describes himself as a specialist in plasticity and he points to Christou as the sonic specialist. It is obvious that this collaboration was far-reaching as the two parts completed each other.

After the composer's death, Christou's mother asked Koun: 'And now what will you do?' (Shows I loved 2014), indicating the special relationship between the two men. Koun very wisely confesses a tragic truth about Christou's death: 'We didn't understand what we lost. In this place [Greece], it takes a lot of time to understand what we missed'.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter discussed theatricality and dramatic elements in Christou's late compositions, including *Strychnine Lady*, and to present the way in which these were developed and applied in the post-1965 works. I used examples of other works and not just *Strychnine Lady* to confirm the element of theatricality in the composer's post-1965 works, and to confirm that *Strychnine Lady* not only belongs to a broader category of works composed by Christou, but also marks the starting point of such creations, as it was the first work composed by him and performed in the form of a music theatre piece.

As seen in the different sections of the chapter, Christou's involvement with theatre music and especially his collaboration with Koun were extremely important, as they gave the composer ideas about dealing with issues such as music in relation to voice and text. The chapter also presented evidence confirming Christou's dealing with ideas related to music theatre compositions. It demonstrated how Christou began composing staged works only after his practical involvement in writing music for theatre performances and especially after his collaboration with Koun, which opened paths that led him to the works of his late compositional period, in which he combined his new discoveries with his previously formed concepts.<sup>28</sup> Finally, the chapter supported Christou's contribution to the experimental music theatre of the 1960s by providing a comparison between Christou's late works and this movement and a discussion of how these works bear resemblance to its defining characteristics.

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<sup>28</sup> See Chapter 4.

## Chapter 7: Jani Christou and Carl Jung

### Introduction

Christou's work in general has strong connections with theories developed by the Swiss psychologist and psychiatrist, Carl Jung. In the following pages I will try to clarify these and their influence on *Strychnine Lady*; the primary sources I used mainly concern Jung's books *Psychology and Alchemy* (1952), *Man and his Symbols* (1964), *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious* (1996), *Mysterium Coniunctionis* (1963) and *The Psychology of Transference* (1969).

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first is an introduction to those of Jung's theories that appear to be linked with Christou's own ideas and practices. The first section does not make explicit reference to Christou's own ideas; it is, however, essential for a general understanding of the theories of Jung and also of Jungian terms to which reference will be made in the second and third sections. The second section demonstrates how Christou interprets Jungian aspects in his own writings, as found in his archive in Athens; and the third section attempts to identify and clarify Jungian elements in *Strychnine Lady*.

### Important theories of Carl Jung

Jung was the founder of analytical psychology. Areas such as the collective unconscious, the extroverted and the introverted personality, and archetypes are among his major explorations, along with contemporary dream analysis and symbolisation –

which are deemed as milestones in the field of Jungian psychology – and in addition, his works in which he devised the theory of the ‘individuation process’. Jung devoted most of his time to exploring adjacent areas of psychology like the concepts of Eastern and Western philosophy, sociology, alchemy, literature, astrology and the arts; he studied these entire phenomena alongside his clinical practice and his work as a scientist. Among his major contributions are theories in which he used alchemical processes and symbols to interpret dreams.

### **The collective unconscious**

There are three parts to the Jungian psyche. One of these is the ego, which is recognised through the conscious side of the person. The second part is the personal unconscious, which is determined by the experiences and memories of every individual, the elements that one tries to suppress. The third part is the collective unconscious, and it is this that distinguishes Jung’s theory of the unconscious from other theories. The collective unconscious is like a pool because it holds everything we do and experience as human beings along with the knowledge contained inside our DNA ever since we were born. Moreover, our collective unconscious casts a great impact on our emotional orientations as well as behaviours. We come across references to the collective unconscious in the myths, legends and traditions of different cultures with matching pictures and patterns. However, the collective unconscious cannot be accessed except through observation of one’s emotions and behaviours. There are significant differences between the personal unconscious and the collective unconscious. According to Jung, ‘the contents of the personal unconscious are acquired during the individual’s lifetime, [whereas] the contents of the collective unconscious are invariably archetypes that were present from the beginning’ (Jung 1981, 8).

Jung used the term 'collective unconscious' for the first time in 1916 during a speech at the Zürich School for Analytical Psychology. *Archives de Psychologies*, published in 1916, included the translated version of Jung's speech in French and it here that the term was written for the first time. It was Jung who suggested that primordial and inherited images, along with the archetypes, contribute the most to the collective unconscious. We can realise them through consciousness of the experiences that are associated with our emotions and behaviours. The emergence of the collective unconscious into the area of consciousness causes a number of transformations in the conscious self; the Jungian concept deems that all human experiences from the beginning to the end are held in the collective unconscious.

In 1909 Jung was on board a ship with Freud, returning from the United States, when he had dreamt of a house that had a basement that was below the usual level of a basement and, below this, there was a depository of prehistoric pottery, bones, and skulls. It was this that gave him the idea of the collective unconscious. He states that 'I thought, of course, that he [Freud] would accept the cellars below this cellar [i.e., the personal unconscious], but the dreams [during the writing of his first book, from 1910 to 1912] were preparing me for the contrary' (McGuire 1989, 76). Freud believed that the primordial inherited patterns are just ancestral qualities present in all individuals; for Jung, however, there are wide disparities between the external world and the collective unconscious, as for him they are opposites to each other. The collective unconscious can be determined through one's 'ego' and through the 'anima' or 'animus', whereas the 'persona' is used to access the external world. 'Anima/animus', 'shadow', 'ego' and 'persona' are archetypes that will be analysed further in the next section.

## Archetypes

A close look at the etymology of the word archetype is extremely interesting: the word comes from the Latin noun *archetypum*, the latinisation of the Greek noun ἀρχέτυπον (*archetupon*), an adjective that is used to suggest ‘first-moulded’. It is a compound of ἀρχή (*archē*, ‘beginning, origin’) and τύπος (*tuπος*, ‘pattern, model, type’, amongst other meanings). Having considered the etymology of the word we can now attempt to define the archetype. In terms of Jungian psychology the archetypes spring from the collective unconscious, which implies that they are outlines dating since the time of our birth. It can be said that the archetypes are myths, pictures, symbols and legends that are used to associate a person with the collective unconscious. The archetypes possess an inclination towards having certain experiences in a certain way.

Jung states that there is an inexhaustible number of archetypes. The Jungian psyche can be better understood if one can comprehend several of the most important archetypes: the persona, the shadow, the anima/animus, and the self. The psyche is influenced by each of these archetypes in a specific way.

### *Persona*

The persona is a mask that we create in order to comply with the outside world. In particular, it is the way we view ourselves to society and the way we want it to depict us. It is not really us, and one might fall under the illusion that he is his own persona. In Jung’s words, ‘the Persona is a complicated system of relations between individual consciousness and society, fittingly enough a kind of mask, designed on the one hand to make a definite impression upon others, and, on the other, to conceal the true nature of the individual’ (Jung 1992, 192).

### *Shadow*

The Shadow is the repressed inferior layer of the personal unconscious. All of our fears, hates and denials of ourselves are collected in the shadow. Jung explains: ‘by shadow I mean the “negative” side of a personality, the sum of all those unpleasant qualities we like to hide, together with the insufficiently developed functions and the contents of the personal unconscious’ (Jung 1992, 66). Realising one’s shadow means conquering all of its contents and growing fully and emotionally conscious of all these drawbacks. By contrast, people who don’t realise their shadow tend to deny it and find ways to project it through other objects of blame that they create.

### *Anima/Animus*

In simple words, we can say that the anima is the female soul image of a man and the animus the male soul image of a woman. Jung describes them as follows: ‘an inherited collective image of woman exists in a man’s unconscious, with the help of which he apprehends the nature of woman’ (Jung 1992, 190). Moreover, ‘Since the anima is an archetype that is found in men, it is reasonable to suppose that an equivalent archetype must be present in women; for just as the man is compensated by a feminine element, so woman is compensated by a masculine one’ (Jung 1981, 14).

Jung is certain that the person’s soul image is of an opposite gender. Being at peace with one’s anima/animus one can be a cherished messenger among the unconscious and the conscious.

### *Self*

The Self is the archetype that signifies the individuation, the union of the conscious and the unconscious, the human psyche in wholeness: the integral personality. In Jung's words,

When we now speak of man we mean the indefinable whole of him, an ineffable totality, which can only be formulated symbolically. I have chosen the term 'self' to designate the totality of man, the sum total of his conscious and unconscious contents.

(Jung 1966, 81)

Some other well-known archetypes include the child, the hero, the great mother, the wise old man or sage, the wise old woman/man, the Devil or Satan, the mentor and the warrior.

### **Jungian psychology and alchemy**

Jung had a special interest in alchemy and spent a large part of his life studying the subject. His interest arose from an intense dream he had about an ancient library full of obscure books. Alchemy, in a symbolic form, revealed the same symbols and images that Jung had observed during his practice in neurosis, psychosis, dreams and imagination. He describes these experiences as follows:

I noticed to my amazement that European and American men and women coming to me for psychological advice were producing in their dreams and fantasies symbols similar to, and, often identical with, the symbols found in the mystery religions of antiquity, in mythology, folklore, fairytales, and the apparently meaningless formulation of such esoteric cults as alchemy.

(Jung, 1953, prefatory note)

It was a strong belief of Jung's that nobody can understand the psyche in a conceptual way, but only through living images or symbols. Alchemy as a metaphor considers the process of personal transformation as the process of transmuting base metals into gold.

In Jungian thought, the central aim of the alchemist – which was the transmutation of base metals into gold – was a metaphor for the psychological process of an inner transformation, which was projected onto the practical alchemical process of metal transformation. As Jung states, the alchemists were usually not aware of this projection and they actually believed that they could transform base metals into gold. The symbols that were used in the alchemical process are identical with the symbols of the process of individuation. Jung states that individuation 'must not be understood as a linear development, but as a circumambulation of the self' (Jung 1963, 196).

For Jung, one of the main characteristics of the path towards individuation is the constant conflict of opposites. The opposites have to come to a union in order to succeed in individuation. In psychology, the two opposites are the conscious and the unconscious and from their integration emerges the Self. The alchemical term for this union is coniunctio which can be symbolised many different ways in alchemy. One of the most well known is the hermaphroditic union of 'the Red King' and 'the White

Queen', the union of opposites, and more specifically, the union of 'anima' and 'animus', which represent the male and female aspects of the unconscious.

### **Christou's interpretation of Jungian theories**

Jung's influence on Christou and Christou's involvement with Jungian theories are well-known and frequently repeated in articles and writings about the composer. Most of them refer to Christou as a student of Jung's, but during my research I discovered that this is just a misunderstanding.

The truth is that Christou was introduced to Jungian psychology by his older brother, Evangelos, whom Christou considered to be his mentor. Evangelos was himself Jung's student, and studied at the Jung Institute in Zürich during the period 1949–54 (Lucciano 2000, 45). Jani visited his brother in Zürich during this time and it is believed that he attended some of the lectures that Jung gave (Lucciano 2000, 46). Unfortunately we have no further information on Jani's attendance at the Institute's lectures, so we can't refer to this as a fact. Lucciano refers to it as a possibility not a certainty, since there is no supporting evidence. The key aspect here is, however, not the composer's attendance at the Jung Institute's lectures as such, but his interest in Jungian theories.

George Leotsakos states that these lectures at the Jung Institute were the main inspiration for some of the composer's works (Leotsakos 2000, 3). As mentioned earlier in the thesis, Leotsakos has dealt at length with collecting information about Christou's lost compositions, an issue that remains unresolved, and in order to do this he had to travel to Zürich and London. During this particular research, he had the chance to meet three of the four Jungian psychoanalysts who met and analysed the two

brothers. Leotsakos met one of them in London, Dr Mari-Denise Tuby, who pointed out that Christou's opera *Gilgamesh*, one of his lost works, was inspired by a seminar on the ancient Mesopotamian epic poem that had taken place at the Jung Institute and was attended by Evangelos (Minou 2010, 14). Christou's interest in Jungian theories and Jung's writings about psychology and alchemy was confirmed by Dr James Hillman, who knew the two brothers and also worked with Jani on the publication of *The Logos of the Soul*, Evangelos's book that was published by his brother after his death. Unfortunately, Leotsakos does not refer further to these meetings, although details of these might be very helpful and could play an important role in research on the composer; the psychoanalysts obviously provided information concerning compositions and Christou's interests that might have helped to clarify the precise extent of the composer's involvement with Jungian theories.

According to the official Jani Christou website<sup>29</sup>, which is updated by Christou researchers responsible for the composer's archive, 'Christou's musical and artistic philosophy was essentially, if not entirely, Jungian in concept, and is detectable even in the earliest acknowledged composition *Phoenix Music*'. Jungian influence can be seen in the theories and concepts that he developed and recorded in writings found in his archive. According to Lucciano (1987, 215), these texts are written through a Jungian perception of the world. Furthermore, Christou's music is Jungian in its philosophical principles. One of these texts is the 'Lunar Experience', dated June 1968, in which the composer thoroughly analyses the concept of protoperformance, a term that he invented and that is fundamental in the creation of his late works. Before going further on the concept of protoperformance, it is important to mention that I consider it crucial to understanding the concept to quote substantial parts of the composer's own texts. In the

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<sup>29</sup> [www.janichristou.com](http://www.janichristou.com)

present text Christou writes about the existence of what he calls a Master-Pattern and refers to protoperformances as re-enactments of this Master-Pattern, once its cycle is exhausted. In particular, protoperformances signify the rituals of renewal that were performed in prehistoric times – according to Andriana Minou, ‘the time during which the Jungian archetypes of the collective unconscious were formed, the era of myth’ (Minou 2010, 44). Christou explains protoperformance as follows:

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.

(Christou 1968)

There is an evident influence here of Jungian theories that consider the world of myths, patterns, rituals and mythic imagery, all of which are connected with the collective world of archetypes and our understanding of the primeval people who lived before the start of historical time. Protoperformance, according to Christou, is the root of art and thus does not follow any rules of the era of human history. The same stands for Jungian archetypes, which are the root of the soul.

There is an observable connection between the Christean Master-Pattern and Jungian archetypes. Christou's approach resembles Jung's writing on 'Archaic Man', the eighth chapter of his *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, first published in 1955. Here, Jung describes the so-called primitive man and the way in which he experienced the functions of life. At this point I have to make clear that the terms, 'archaic' and 'primitive', both have the same meaning and in this text are used in the same way as Jung uses them. I believe that there is a connection between the above quotation from Christou and Jung's conception of archaic man. Christou refers to Fate and to an understanding through repetitions of the Master-Pattern, as well as a strong connection between man and nature. Jung's primitive man also believed that forces dominated his existence, just as Fate does for us according to Christou. The Jungian primitive man long ago adapted himself to nature insofar as it conforms to general laws. These laws are of course various functions of life that help him to understand the world around him, whether these laws are archetypes or Master-Patterns.

Furthermore, Jung's primitive man considers himself merely 'an interchangeable unit in a social collective, not really a unique individual at all' (Jung 1957, 148). This suggests a strong relationship between humans and nature that can also be found in the Christou quotation. The last sentence of this suggests that the pattern has to keep

on renewing itself so that man and nature can follow this process. This consideration of man as a part of nature – in other words a unit in a social collective – can be seen in the following quotation from the same essay by Christou, in which primitive man is, for the composer, part of the total environment:

Such rituals were vital acts of re-affirmation, of participation and identification with the master-pattern. Through these 'properformances' man related – connected – by activating a process of feedback 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. So, with this feedback fueled by sacrifice during ritual, life continued. Life passing into the master-pattern from that which was sacrificed in ritual, and back-lashing a thousand fold as life renewed for all.

(Christou 1968)

Christou talks about a relationship between the man and the Master-Pattern that is strongly connected to the relationship between man and the Jungian archetypes. The composer continues in the same Jungian approach, with clear references to the symbolic, archetypal world of myths. There is another aspect that recalls Jung's archaic man: like Jung, Christou refers to man and the numinous. Jung's primitive man believes that everything can be explained by magical powers, that nothing happens that is not intended by some outside force. Primitive man is looking up to the numinous, a power that is magical and bigger than him, and in this way explains the world.

Christou explains his views and terms in a personal way; thus, we should be careful in trying to define the term protoperformance. However, any explanation should, in my view, refer to the primitive realisation of life and the world through patterns that are repeated and that renew themselves in order for life to be renewed. Thus, protoperformance represents the rituals of renewal: in other words, the re-enactments of the original proto-pattern. Christou explains Protoperformance by giving the example of the Lunar experience, which is actually a protoperformance found in nature. He describes the effect that this repeating pattern had on primordial man and on the form – and meaning – of his rituals:

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. So lunar mythology suggests. So a large luminous object in a dark sky, visibly waxing and waning, and disappearing altogether – to reappear only days after, for a repeat performance – must have made a point thousands of years before man could ever have had the opportunity of recognising the pattern at work in vegetation. For originally he was a hunter, and an incredibly long stretch of time had to pass before he could

settle down to agriculture, upon which his survival was eventually to depend. But the moon was there always.

(Christou 1968)

Hence, according to Christou, the lunar plan describes the normal succession of the phases of the moon, which, from the depths of human prehistory, served as a pattern for

the constantly repeated, vital processes of life: birth – growth (culmination) – destruction – cessation (Lucciano 2000, 217). The ‘Lunar pattern’ is the succession of the moon’s phases as a primitive symbol of the regular destruction and renewal of bio-cosmic processes. Consequently, the ‘Lunar experience’ refers to man’s aspiration to maintain this pattern but, as we will read below, also involves the primitive fear of the unexpected interruption of the cycle of renewal that corresponds to the ‘threat’ of the lunar eclipse. This fear is found in Jung’s primitive man: everything out of the ordinary frightens him and the unexpected causes fear (Jung 1957, 136).

Nor is it hard to picture what the response of those minds could have been to the moon’s most spectacular performances of all: its eclipse. For early man, with nothing even remotely resembling a sense of primitive astronomy, this was an **IRREGULARITY** and it could have caused much terror, even panic. While the threat of yet another eclipse must have hung like some dread prospect in the firmament of man’s dawning consciousness, a constant menace of sudden doom, impossible to tell when it would strike next. There seems to be a good case for selecting the lunar eclipse as the archetypal image of some calamity which one fears, and fears the more because there is no telling when it may break out. A root image for the feeling of impending doom on a giant scale. If the normal succession of the moon’s phases can serve as the image of the general phenomenon of the regular renewal of bio-cosmic processes, then the term **LUNAR PATTERN** may be used to describe this phenomenon, i.e. 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.

(Christou 1968)

It is clear that the lunar process can only be interrupted by an unpredicted eclipse, a threat of sudden disaster. As mentioned in an earlier chapter, the lunar eclipse is realised as an archetypal image of catastrophe as there is no way of envisaging when this may occur (Sakallieros & Kyriakos 2008, 4).

There is, however, another very interesting point in the eclipse phenomenon in relation to Christou, and that concerns its metaphorical perception. As mentioned earlier, in this part of the essay Christou showed a special interest in Jung's writings about alchemy in relation to psychology. According to Jung's *Mysterium Coniunctionis* (1963, 76), the eclipse for the alchemists represents the disappearance of Gabricus into Beya's womb. In other words, it is a metaphor for a story that is included in Jung's *Psychology and Alchemy* and that Christou actually uses in *Strychnine Lady*<sup>30</sup>. Unfortunately my research on the alchemical perception of eclipse has been restricted; even in the *Mysterium Coniunctionis* (1963, 76) there is just a one line referring to this representation of the eclipse. However, the alchemical point of view of the eclipse is of particular importance for *Strychnine Lady*'s realisation and even this single line provides links between Jungian theories and those of Christou.

I will move on by quoting another part of Christou's writing on the Lunar experience that I consider to be especially Jungian:

As never before perhaps, we are all in the grips of the LUNAR EXPERIENCE, and there simply does not seem to be much we can do about it, except perhaps to take refuge in fantasy (myth's poor relation, or substitute). Fantasies about ideal societies and technological paradises. Fantasies about controlling the course of our political evolution, and

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<sup>30</sup> More information with regards to the story will be provided in a following part of this chapter.

fantasies about controlling our environment through science. But occasionally some of us may be allowed to retaliate, by attempting to recreate something of the climate of effective myth. Not a mere descriptive activity involving the invocation of fossilised myths, but activity itself, with its energy, like the energy released by those deeper dreams which somehow do not need to be explained rationally in order to be understood. Because effective mythic activity is man's spontaneous response to the numbing terror of his lunar experience: nature's way of coming to terms with nature's terrors – or man's terrors. And what lies at the root of his natural response of nature at work in man is his natural capacity for soul. One could say that soul formation and myth formation are aspects of the same thing, the same process, both emerging out of man's deepest experiences acquired through his confrontation with the facts living and the facts of dying throughout countless thousands of years. The capacity for souls means the capacity to experience these facts in depth, to feel the weight of humanity's compounded experience bearing down on one's own individual experience. And these are the indelible impressions which stamp man's soul with the substance of myth.

(Christou 1968)

This quotation contains a direct reference to Jung and, in particular, to 'Archaic Man'. Like Jung, Christou points out the irony of modern man, who believes he can master the world; he believes in science and laws that states he has discovered and can manipulate to his own advantage. Modern man believes that he can dominate nature completely.

The Jungian and Christean primitive man, on the other hand, is the complete opposite; unlike modern man, primitive man does not feel that he can master nature in any way. All that he has is always given or taken away by superior powers and his existence is dominated by outside forces.

There is an apparent Jungian reference here, not in the reference to modern and primitive man, but in the realisation that modern man needs to find his soul and will achieve this only by discovering his primeval self. According to Jung:

Every civilized human being, whatever his conscious development, is still an Archaic Man at the deeper levels of his psyche. [...] the human psyche is (likewise) a product of evolution which, when followed up to its origins, shows countless archaic traits.

(Jung 1957, 126)

The Jungian way of finding the archaic man within us is through the connection to our collective unconscious and, furthermore, the myths and archetypes that lie within it. Through this process we discover our soul, the formation of which, according to Christou, is the same as the myth's formation, and thus belongs to the primordial cosmos of primitive man.

### **Jungian elements in Jani Christou's *Strychnine Lady***

Following an exploration of Jung's influence on Christou's theories and concepts about music and art, it is important to ask if Jungian thinking directly influences the final result, the works themselves, or if it is just a theoretical aspect of a personal compositional system. There are particular parts of *Strychnine Lady* that show Jungian influences and direct and/or indirect reference to Jungian elements.

*Strychnine Lady* seems to be related to Jungian aspects. It was written in 1967. According to the composer's autographical note, dated March 1967 (Lucciano 2000, 177) the work is more of a 'ritual dream' than a work of music theatre. As mentioned before, it is written for a female solo viola player, two groups of strings, brass, percussion (including piano), magnetic tape, a metal sheet construction, sound-producing objects, a red cloth, five actors and the conductor. The following paragraphs are divided into three sections, each of which follows a different aspect that in my view is related to Jungian theories.

### **The dream**

The composer was inspired to create this work after a dream he had, in which he read an anonymous announcement in the newspaper about a lady who 'supplies strychnine and unusual experiences'. In his dream, he sets out to find the lady, only to find himself 'lost in a hotel amidst a crowd of people' (Sakallieros & Kyriakos 2008, 1). The dream is used as performance material, and can actually be heard spoken by the actors at rehearsal mark 33.

Influenced by the Jungian theory about the collective unconscious Christou used to write down his dreams. Jung noticed that people who came to him for psychological advice were producing in their dreams and fantasies symbols similar to, and sometimes identical with, the symbols found in mysterious religions of antiquity, in mythology, fairytales and alchemy. Thus, he was led 'to postulate a 'collective unconscious', a source of energy and insight in the depth of the human psyche that has operated in and through man from the earliest periods of which we have records' (Jung 1953, prefatory note). It is interesting to read that the process of dream archiving was suggested by Jung to his patients:

I urge my patients to keep a careful record of their dreams and of the interpretations given. I also show them how to work out their dreams . . . they can bring the dream and its context with them in writing to the consultation. At a later stage I get them to work out the interpretation as well. In this way the patient learns how to deal correctly with his unconscious.

(Jung 1974, 98)

To conclude, it is now more evident that Christou's Dream files cannot be unrelated to the Jungian suggestion of a dream archive.

### **The cloth**

As mentioned before, the red cloth is included in the composer's description of the work;<sup>31</sup> Christou gives it special attention, and considers the cloth to be part of the dramaturgy of the work and not a simple performance object.

From all the objects included in the composer's description the cloth is the only one that does not produce sound, thus, some important questions are raised. What is the cloth's meaning? Why is it red? Why is a cloth part of this performance and in what way? Is it used as a symbol?

According to page 2 of the score, two actors 'go through the ceremony of displaying the red cloth' (Christou 1968). The word 'ceremony' for the displaying of the cloth and the fact that the cloth is actually displayed give an importance to the cloth that needs

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<sup>31</sup> See Chapter 5.

clarification. I consider the red colour of the cloth to be a key to the understanding of its use.

Red has a range of symbolic meanings, including life, health, vigour, war, courage, anger, love and religious fervour. All these have in common a passion and a life force that they need, which is blood – and blood is red.

Colours were so powerful in traditional cultures that red objects were believed to convey health through their colour. For example, most red stones such as garnets and rubies were believed to have health-giving and disease-preventing qualities. In Rome, children used to wear red coral as a pendant to protect them from diseases, and for similar reasons, children in China had to wear a piece of red clothing (Conroy 1996, 6). It is significant also to note that red, throughout the development of civilisation, has had connotations with the sacred. From ancient times red is associated with ceremonies of human or animal sacrifice and usually represents blood. But the most important symbolic meaning of the colour for this study is associated with alchemy and links with the previous connection of the work to the alchemical story of Beya and Gabricus.

Red plays an important role in alchemy. It is the colour of the ‘Philosopher’s Stone’, a symbol of perfection, said to be capable of transforming simple stones into silver or gold but also believed to be a panacea for all diseases and a source of immortality. There were four processes that the alchemists followed to discover the Philosopher’s Stone, and each was represented by a colour:

the original colours mentioned in Heraclitus: melanosia (blackening), leucosis (whitening), xanthosis (yellowing) and iosia (reddening) . . . [But] later, about the fifteenth or sixteenth century, the colours were reduced to three, and the xanthosis . . . gradually fell into disuse or was seldom mentioned.

(Jung 1953, 13)

In the framework of Jungian psychology these four steps are analogous to the process of achieving individuation. Edward Edinger, an analyst and writer on Jung's concepts, refers to the Philosopher's Stone and the individuation process: 'The goal of the individuation process is to achieve a conscious relation to the Self. The goal of the alchemical procedure was most frequently represented by the Philosophers' Stone. Thus, the Philosopher's Stone is a symbol for the Self' (Edinger 1992, 261). It is clear that red is the culmination of the four stages, the Self in 'wholeness', the point where each individual discovers their own true nature.

Furthermore, there is another symbolic meaning of red, also related to alchemy. It symbolises the masculine principle and is the colour for the 'King', whilst white is the colour for the 'Queen'. There are many descriptions and alchemical pictures that represent the 'Red King' and the 'White Queen', figures identified with Gabricus and Beya.

### **The Story**

There is another, more direct reference to Jung in *Strychnine Lady*. A rehearsal mark 9, the actors recite a Latin text that refers to the story of Gabricus, as described in the medieval alchemical text *Rosarium Philosophorum* of 1550. There, Beya embraces

Gabricus with such love that he is absorbed completely into her womb and transformed into many invisible pieces. Beya is sometimes portrayed as Gabricus's mother. However, in the original myth and in the second version of the Vision of Arisleus in the *Rosarium Philosophorum* (Jung 1972, 246) where this story is found, Beya is Gabricus's sister-wife. The myth implies a maternal aspect with regards to its context, although the story itself does not suggest a mother-son theme. Also, it is interesting to observe that in alchemy Beya represents the maternal sea (Jung 2013).

In *Mysterium Coniunctionis* (1963), Jung refers to many versions of this particular story. One of them is the version of Isis who, after the death of Osiris, married her son Gabritius and according to Jung is identified with Beya (Jung 1963, 19). Another version concerns the Rex and Regina, where the king is in need of a renewal and has to 'transform himself into the prima material in the body of his mother' (Jung 1963, 283).

The meaning of this story is quite complex and needs clarification in relation to Christou and his choice of this text as a compositional and performance material. It is very important to ask: Why did Christou choose this particular story? Why this particular version? How is this story related with Christou and why? And in which ways is it, or is it not related to *Strychnine Lady*? The answers to these questions will help unlock '*Strychnine Lady*'s well-kept secrets' (Sakallieros & Kyriakos 2008, 2) and help with hermeneutical aspects of the work.

First, the choice of the story is not casual; Christou was exceptionally careful in every aspect of his compositional process and would not choose a story simply because he liked it. His compositional process is recorded in detail and can be found in his archive. There is at least one file for each work that includes all the notes and the compositional

process and its development. The file for *Strychnine Lady* includes a few notes about the Beya-Gabricus story; in particular the Latin text from Volume II of the *Artis Auriperæ, Rosarium Philosophorum*, published in Frankfurt in 1550, as well as the translation of this, which reads as follows:

Then Beya mounted Gabricus and enclosed him in her womb, so that nothing at all could be seen of him anymore. And she embraced him completely into her own nature and divided him into invisible parts. (Wherefore Mercurius says:)

Through themselves they are dissolved, through themselves they are put together, so that they who were two are made one, as though of one body.

(Christou 1967)

In the same file of the *Strychnine Lady* Christou mentions page 323 from Carl Jung's *Psychology and Alchemy*, which contains an alchemical story that Christou describes as the King's mortificatio (Christou 1967). This term is also used in an extract from the composer's letter to Rhoda Lee Rhea, of 10<sup>th</sup> February 1967:

The work is not descriptive, but it does share certain states in common with the 'mortificatio' state: (Dionysus as Zagreus. – the dismemberment is one of the many instances)/ The logic here, if you can call this logic, is that of a dream in which states melt into other states with no apparent outward reason.

(Christou 1967, in The official Jani Christou website, 2014)

The important term to notice in this extract is ‘mortificatio’. Mortificatio is a term used in alchemy and refers to the death of the product of the union of opposites. The alchemists understood the return to chaos as an essential part of the alchemical process. It was the stage of nigredo and mortificatio (Jung 1963, 197). In the *Mysterium Coniuntionis*, Jung refers to the return to the chaos as follows:

In order to enter into God’s kingdom the king must transform himself into the prima material in the body of his mother, and return to the dark initial state which the alchemists called ‘the chaos’. In this massa confusa the elements are in conflict and repel one another; all connections are dissolved. Dissolution is the prerequisite for redemption. The celebrant of the mysteries had to suffer a figurative death in order to attain transformation. In the Arisleus vision, Gabricus is dissolved into atoms in the body of his sister-wife [Beya].

(Jung 1963, 283)

To return to the extract from Christou’s previously mentioned letter, the composer himself stated that the work shares certain states in common with the state of mortificatio. Hence, should we consider the whole work as the King’s – that is, Gabricus’s – mortificatio? A hermeneutic approach according to mortificatio could lead to many different ways to reach a deep understanding of the work.

In my opinion, *Strychnine Lady* refers to the process of individuation and parallels the Beya-Gabricus story; it represents the alchemical conjunction or coupling, the union of the opposites, and focuses on the mortificatio state of this enosis. Hence, the start represents the absorption of Gabricus into the womb of Beya; in other words, the

descent of the conscious to the unconscious. There are some characteristics of the work that are similar to the characteristics of this conjunction. There is no connection between the soloist, the actors and the music; most of the time, the events and gestures taking place are in conflict. These are certainly situations that could be characterised as chaotic. In addition, the soloist carries out actions that lead to dissolution, the *mortificatio*. These characteristics of the work share common states with the *massa confusa* in the return to chaos, as described in the above extract from Jung. The soloist also follows a deconstructive procedure, which parallels the dissolution of Gabricus into atoms in Beya's body.

Nevertheless, the connection between *Strychnine Lady* and the *mortificatio* state, needs more investigation, even if it appears to be valid. For its clarification it is important to ask:

- What is the role of the viola soloist, who seems to represent the dreamed *Strychnine Lady*?
- Why is a woman the central concern of the work and why does she follow a process of self-destruction?
- Does gender play an important part?

According to the composer the work describes the *mortificatio* state that in the alchemical story of Beya and Gabricus symbolises Gabricus' dissolution in Beya's womb.

The key aspect of the composer's state is the *mortificatio*, which is the process of dying (*mors* = death), of the breakdown of form and structure. It is a powerful form of

transformation in which a body is broken down, returning its components to their source (Levine 2009, 102–103). Christou's main concern was to transform music and music perception in order to discover the 'musical' – and the human through music – Philosopher's Stone, in a way similar to the psychological and alchemical process of transformation. Thus, the Beya and Gabricus story symbolises this process, which Christou reassigned to the process of music transformation and human transformation into music. Gender does matter and *Strychnine Lady* symbolises a state of mortification; when referring to Dionysus Zagreus, whose story represents the mortificatio stage in alchemy, Christou himself states that 'the terror & the ecstasy must be feminine – otherwise it is mere formula –mere ... 'ritual'.<sup>32</sup> Going further into the subject of gender, *Strychnine Lady* represents an archetype and is crucial for the notion of transformation. This concerns a female archetype and its representation is of particular importance.

### **The archetype: 'The old hag' – 'the mother'**

In terms of Jungian dream analysis, the lady who provides strychnine and unusual experiences in Christou's dream is actually a projection of an archetype. The dream lady is a projection of the old hag archetype, which is also a form of the bad mother archetype. According to Jung (1970, 15), the mother archetype encompasses both positive and negative representations, also known as the loving and the terrible mothers. In a negative representation, the mother archetype has symbols such as the witch and the old hag who gives poison or drugs, seduces and devours (Neumann 1955, 74). These symbols often appear in myths and fairy tales. One famous projection of the old hag

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<sup>32</sup> This is an extract from a note found in the composer's archive, dated 1964. For more information see Chapter 8.

archetype is the stepmother in the story of Snow White, who offers the poisoned apple to the girl.

This archetype is of particular importance for the realisation of *Strychnine Lady* and the unfolding of her well-kept secrets. Erich Neumann's book *The Great Mother, An Analysis of the Archetype* (1955), says that the mother archetype in its negative form has a transformative character. Neumann analyses the transformative mysteries of the mother archetype as follows:

Medicines as well as poisons are numinous contents that have been acquired and communicated in mysterious ways [...] The character of spiritual transformation is most evident in connection with intoxicants, poison and medicine. The feeling that he is transformed when he imbibes one of them is one of the deepest experiences of man. It is significant, however, that such a transformation is experienced not as corporeal but as spiritual. Sickness and poisoning, drunkenness and cure, are psychic processes that all mankind relates to an invisible spiritual principle, by whose action the personality is changed.

(Neumann 1955, 59 – 60)

And furthermore:

She transforms nature into a higher, spiritual principle, which she has power to distill from the natural substrate of matter [...] she was the inventor of the first healing potions, medicines and poisons [...] Thus the transformative character of the Feminine rises from the natural to the

spiritual plane. The culture-bringing primordial mysteries culminate in a spiritual reality that completes the mystery character of the Feminine.

(Neumann 1955, 286 – 287)

The transformative character of the great mother archetype was a great discovery, since it is strongly connected with other aspects of *Strychnine Lady*, most importantly with the alchemical Beya–Gabricus story and the composer’s statement that the work represents the previously analysed mortificatio state. This approach clarifies the relationship between the different elements of *Strychnine Lady*. Christou was inspired in creating this work by his previously mentioned dream and he decided to include an alchemical story in his composition. Furthermore, he refers to the work as the state of mortificatio. Is there a relationship between the three? By approaching the work according to the transformative character of the mother archetype, we can see that the whole work concerns transformation, and we come to the conclusion that all the elements are related with the composer’s apparent desire for inner transformation. It is important to consider Christou’s relationship to Jung and the files in which he used to record his dreams. It is evident that he paid significant attention to his dreams and I believe that he was also analysing his dreams according to Jungian theories. It seems that Christou was very conscious in choosing the elements included in *Strychnine Lady* and even though they don’t look to be connected at first, we can reach the conclusion that they exist in the work under the same desire for transformation, a key word in the realisation of Christou’s works.

## Conclusion

It is evident from this Jungian approach that such an approach is crucial to a deeper understanding of *Strychnine Lady*. A dream about a lady who provides strychnine, a red cloth, an alchemical story about a woman who absorbs a man in her womb and a description of the work by the composer as the state of mortificatio: all seem to be unrelated at first. However, this research has found that all these elements are representations of Jungian theories and, particularly, of the idea of transformation. Christou consciously and very carefully chose the elements that would comprise one of his major works, in which he expresses his deepest need for personal transformation through music.

## Chapter 8: Jani Christou and spirituality

### Introduction

Christou's works are often characterised as having a spiritual dimension. However, it is especially difficult to support this view in an academic sense, and very challenging to shape arguments related to a topic that does not belong to the secular world and the contemporary way of perceiving experiences and concepts. Nonetheless, there are specific parts of *Strychnine Lady* that seem to be related to spiritual practices, such as ceremonies. Moreover, items in the composer's archive show clearly that Christou had a special interest in spirituality: books related to religions, ancient cultures, mysticism, alchemy and depth psychology; personal notes and pre-compositional thinking recorded in files referring to spirituality; religious objects such as a statue of Buddha and an illustration of the Virgin Mary; testimonials of his family about his advanced practices in meditation. All of these are not of course proof of the spiritual dimension of Christou's works and particularly of *Strychnine Lady*, but they provide evidence to unlock key points that may lead to a deeper understanding of the composer's work and its substance.

This chapter attempts to identify and clarify elements of spirituality in *Strychnine Lady*: first, by offering a definition of the term 'spirituality'; second, by presenting material found in the archive and its association with the work, and by analysing some of the composer's writings that refer to spirituality; and finally by examining selected parts of *Strychnine Lady* that appear to have spiritual dimensions.

## The term spirituality

There is an issue in using spirituality as a term, as it does not have a single established definition. In fact, the term is used in many different contexts and to describe sometimes different things. However, as Snyder (2007) states, the contemporary social sciences suggest that *spirituality* as a term refers to the inner search for the sacred; that is, that which is set apart from the secular world. Although spirituality used to be strongly connected with religion, in modern times there is a tendency to separate the two (Wong & Vinsky 2008), as spirituality 'is used to refer to an apparently incoherent collection of spiritual ideas and practices varying from holistic health, reincarnation therapy and spiritual 'healings' to channelling, astrology and (neo) paganism' (Aupers and Houtman 2009, 4). Furthermore, Richard Gorsuch and Edward Shafranske refer to spirituality as follows:

This dimension (the transcended) is discovered in moments in which the individual questions the meaning of personal existence and attempts to place the self within a broader ontological context. This aspect of human experience [...] may be conceptualized as a spiritual dimension.

(Gorsuch & Shafranske 1984, 231)

Finally, the present study uses the term to refer generally to any practices, thinking and research that does not concern the secular world, and that wants to reach the transcended dimension in search of the sacred.

## **Mircea Eliade and relevant archival findings**

As mentioned earlier in this study, there are not many published sources or extensive studies on Christou. This makes the archive even more valuable as a source of material for developing an understanding of the composer's oeuvre. With regard to the topic of this chapter, there is a quantity of material that shows this dimension of Christou's work; in particular, a file with the name 'Thoughts' contains notes and completed writings, including many texts concerning the composer's thoughts, ideas and beliefs. Included in this file are ten pages under the title 'Eliade's points' and fourteen pages under the title 'Thoughts on Eliade's points'. The points here seem to be notes by the composer concerning Mircea Eliade's books and important theories. This finding suggested that I should conduct research on Eliade, in order to understand these particular notes made by the composer, and to examine whether they have any connections with Christou's own works, his pre-compositional thinking and his writings.

Eliade (1907–86) was a Romanian historian of religion whose research concentrated on, among other subjects, the history of religions. He amassed an extensive body of writing concerning religions in different cultures, myths and their interpretation, and sacred symbolism. Eliade is most renowned for his work on alchemy, yoga, shamanism, myth and symbols, and what he himself called 'eternal return'.

It is clear from the archival notes that Christou researched Eliade's work extensively. The points referred to in these notes concern keywords from Eliade's most important theories: numinous prototypes, labyrinths and mysteries, repetition, holy fury, eudaimonia, the atemporal and the terminal, chaos, ritual and ceremonies, catastrophe, destruction and reconstruction, the eternal return, suffering and redemption, and

theophanies and negative theophanies, to name just a few. One interesting aspect is that Christou not only had a general interest in these theories, but also made his own interpretation of them, going beyond and noting some thoughts on Eliade's points. This shows clearly that Christou took Eliade's writings into serious consideration and did not just read a few books out of curiosity. He read widely and made notes, together with a personal interpretation of these notes, a fact that confirms a deep interest in, and serious personal work on, Eliade's theories, followed by his deep interest in personal and compositional development.

### **Books in the archive**

Christou's profound interest in personal development in terms of spiritual practices can also be seen through a close examination of the books contained in the archive. His daughter Sandra, in discussions that we had during my visits to the archive, spoke of Christou as having a particular interest in religions, ancient cultures and Eastern traditions. She kindly showed me some of the books that the composer had in his archive; among others, their titles included *The History of Civilization*, *Hindu Psychology: Its Meaning for the West*, *The Primitive Mind and Modern Civilization*, and *Psyche*.

I was very intrigued when I saw these titles concerning Eastern traditions, myths, exploration of what is called the psyche, anthropological psychology, primitive thought and so on. It then became clearer to me that Christou was a person who was seeking knowledge about anything with connections to the non-secular world; that is, the sacred and, moreover, spirituality.

Before going any further, I should mention that the archive is valuable not only for the writings and the books it contains, but also because of Sandra Christou herself, who generously shares experiences and kindly discusses her father's works. Mrs Christou showed me a book with the title *Long Pilgrimage: The Life and Teaching of Sri Govindananda Bharati, Known as the Shivapuri Baba*; she told me that Shivapuri Baba was a spiritual teacher of Christou in meditation. This was evidence that Christou engaged in spiritual practices themselves, as well as reading about them. When discussing this particular book about Shivapuri Baba, Mrs Christou mentioned that the composer practised meditation and that he had reached a high level in yoga exercise. According to her, Christou took meditation seriously and he had a very strict schedule, with hours of yoga every morning in a room that no one was allowed to enter during the meditation time. Christou would then continue his strict schedule by composing his works.

### **Christou's writing**

Christou is a composer who wrote extensively not only about his own works, but also about his thoughts, views, concerns and music in general. With regard to the spiritual aspect examined in this chapter, it is interesting to note the words and definitions used by the composer in his writings: they usually suggest aspects of spirituality and spiritual practices. The text outlined below is an example of how Christou uses the words *soul* and *myth* in a few lines in which he states his view of the function of 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 soul, music sustains it.

(Christou, 1968)

*Soul* and *myth* are both words that have links with spirituality. The above example shows clearly the composer's beliefs with regard to the function of music: it is to create what he terms soul. Hence Christou, in contrast with other composers who saw music as the final result of their artistic creation, saw music as a means to create something more than sound. For him, the root of soul is the myth and, thus, the use of this particular word is not unintentional; myth is a fundamental term in spirituality and spiritualistic practices. According to Eliade, by whom Christou seems to be much influenced here, myths refer to a time that is profoundly different from historical time as humans perceive it: notably, what humanity experiences as normal time. Eliade states that 'myths describe [...] breakthroughs of the sacred (or the "supernatural") into the world' (Eliade 1963, 6); and also, 'the manifestation of the sacred ontologically founds the world' (Eliade 1959, 21). Hence, the mythical age concerns the sacred time when all patterns were created:

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.

(Christou, 1968)

The above quotation could be connected with Eliade's concept of the *sacred time* when the structure of the world was set. Eliade's traditional man sees time as an endless repetition of mythical archetypes, in contrast with modern man who has abandoned mythical archetypes and entered linear, historical time (Eliade 1955). Christou's statement that 'the early archetypal point of view did not know history' emanates from Eliade's concept regarding sacred time. The above quotation and that below from Eliade seem to have similarities, as both speak about a time different from normal time as modern man perceives it. In addition, they both describe the formation of a pattern, or an archetype and its repetition by primitive man:

In such societies (primitive and archaic) the myth is thought to express the absolute truth, because it narrates a sacred history; that is, a transhuman revelation which took place at the dawn of the Great Time, in the holy time of the beginnings (*in illo tempore*). Being real and sacred, the myth becomes exemplary, and consequently repeatable, for it serves as a model, and by the same token as justification, for all human actions. In other words, a myth is a true story of what came to pass at the beginning of Time, and one which provides the pattern for human behaviour. In imitating the exemplary acts of a god or a mythic hero, or simply by recounting their adventures, the man of an archaic society detaches himself from profane time and magically re-enters the Great Time, the sacred time.

(Eliade 1968, 23)

According to Eliade, many traditional societies believe that the origin of something is what defines its power. He states that ‘it is the first manifestation of a thing that is significant and valid’ (Eliade 1963). Therefore, the assumption is that something’s value is defined by its first appearance. It is clear then that with regard to Eliade’s concepts, what has value is only the sacred and things in their first appearance. ‘Primitive man was interested only in the beginnings [...] to him it mattered little what had happened to himself, or to others like him, in more or less distant times’ (1968, 44). Eliade suggested that the latter is the reason for ‘nostalgia of the origins’, or of a lost ‘primordial Paradise’ and the desire to return to it. This can be found in many religions; for example, in Christianity it is symbolised by the fall of Adam and the desire to return to the primordial Paradise of Eden. In Eliade’s words:

Periodically, the most important events were re-enacted and re-lived: thus, one recited the cosmogony, repeated the exemplary gestures of the Gods, the deeds that founded civilization. There was a nostalgia for the origins; in some cases one could even speak of a nostalgia for the primordial Paradise.

(Eliade 1968, 44)

It is notable that all the above seem to inspire Christou, who wrote:

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 centre of every moment in time. This certainly is 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.

(Christou, 1968)

Here Christou introduces the term protoperformance, which is crucial to understanding his works. The composer seems to be inspired by Eliade's concept of sacred time and the mythical age; he not only derived material for his compositions from these concepts, but also adapted them into musical terms. With regard to protoperformance, Minou states that

Christou's conclusion appears to be that proto-performance might be connected to primitive rituals, but this does not mean that it is a condition which is gone forever and impossible to approach again in our time. Its patterns have always been and still are around us and in our collective unconscious. The only requirement is to break away from the conventions of history and embrace myth; the composer, of course, is not suggesting a mere reproduction of rituals, but a redefinition of performance in general, its reattachment to the needs of contemporary people, its return to its function as a cure for the cruelty of everyday life.

(Minou 2010, 48)

This quotation shows the composer's possible intentions as much as it concerns his compositional concepts. Moreover, from the composer's writings it looks as though Christou, inspired by the concepts of Eliade outlined earlier in this chapter, wanted his performers to achieve, through his works, a primitive state of music and performance, a state where the first performance was created, and to enter the sacred time where all the patterns and archetypes were born.

To conclude, Christou uses specific words and terms that have connotations with the concepts of Eliade. Considering the composer's interest in and study of these concepts, a clear connection can be found in the terms and words and their contextual meaning as introduced by Eliade in the context of the history of religion and by Christou in the context of music as a means of reaching a sacred point. Sacred time and myths both belong to a state of spirituality; hence Christou endorse through his writings the spiritual character of his work as a composer. Finally, as Dorin David states, 'if one takes "spirituality" in the main sense: of something belonging to the human spirit, i.e. human culture, one can easily realise that probably any of Eliade's works is, more or less, about human spirituality' (David 2012, 61). On this verdict, Christou's interest in Eliade expresses an intense and vital interest in spiritual itself.

### **Alchemical notes and references to spirituality**

In the previous chapter concerning Christou and his relationship to Carl Jung's ideas, the composer's engagement with alchemy was examined and demonstrated through the example of *Strychnine Lady*. Based on the evidence that Christou dealt with alchemy, some assumptions can now be shaped, considering that alchemy in psychological terms

is considered to be a spiritual process and not simply the process of transforming stones into gold; all of its aspects are metaphorical and they refer to the process of becoming a 'whole' person. All of these ideas have been explained earlier in the previous chapter; the following paragraphs will take these assumptions further.

During one of my visits to the archive I discovered a file containing extremely interesting notes. This file didn't concern any particular piece of work but was mainly general transcripts. In the file I found notes with references to alchemical concepts, and as I explored in more detail I established that the composer was planning to compose an 'Alchemy Opera' – although for unknown reasons he didn't. However, the seeds of ideas for future works such as *Mysterion* and *Strychnine Lady* are evident from these notes. Furthermore, they are evidence of the composer's studies in alchemy.

This file also contains material on the subject of the ancient Egyptian *Book of the Dead*. Christou made extended notes on the book and often quoted from it; moreover, he used this knowledge to compose his later work, *Mysterion*, which is based on texts included in the *Book of the Dead*, a fact that expresses clearly a spiritual dimension.

The notes in the file are dated 1964 and 1965; however, the composer returned to these writings in 1967 when he identified parts of them as material for the *Anaparastases*. Hence, it is possible that Christou returned again also for *Mysterion* (1965), and *Strychnine Lady* (1967). Some of the notes included in this file will be presented and outlined below. It should be mentioned that dealing with the archival material was in some cases very difficult, as the notes are rough and sketchy; therefore the writing is not very clear and some of the words cannot be read. I chose a few pages that endorse the notion of spirituality in Christou's works. For each of the following eleven pages from the archive, I have supplied a heading; the order in which they are discussed reflects

their ordering in the file itself, which Sandra Christou told me may be exactly as the composer left it, although we cannot be certain of this.

#### **Note on Alchemy, dated 23/09/1964**

Gold was denied the highest philosophical honour, which fell instead to the LAPIS PHILOSOPHORUM. For the transformer is above the transformed –and transformation is one of the magical properties of the marvelous stone.

‘For our stone, namely the living western quicksilver which has placed itself above the gold and vanquished it, is that which kills and quickens’ See Alchemy-Jung-p 76(top)

In the above note there is a clear reference to Christou’s alchemical studies. The composer seems to explore the notion of transformation in Alchemy, which, as seen in previous chapters is the fundamental concept of *Strychnine Lady*. He also notes quotations from Jung. I found this quotation in Jung’s book *Dreams* (2002, 152), a volume in which Jung provides analyses of dreams by his patients and makes correlations with spiritual alchemy. Christou was very much concerned with the idea of transformation, as mentioned in a previous chapter, and this note is further evidence of Christou’s interest and studies in Jungian spiritual alchemy. Although the quotation does not concern compositional material purely, we should take into account that Christou used to record any ideas or facts that could form material for the composition of his works.

#### **Note on Alchemy Theatre, dated 21/08/1964**

Alchemist  
Alchemist daughter  
Prince  
Prince’s son  
MERCURY

Chorus groups: alchemist 5, wise men

Nobles  
Court women [as Nature]

Grand chorus: mixed

The people [as chaos -]

This page refers to the possible characters of an Alchemy Theatre. Christou did not in the end compose this particular work; nonetheless, it is interesting to have a closer view of the characters: the Alchemist, the Alchemist's daughter, the Prince, the Prince's son and Mercury. All of these characters have a symbolic aspect and they are references to Alchemical stories. For example, in the words of James Glass, 'the Prince figure suggests a therapeutic power bringing about a transformation which fundamentally alters the structure of the political order' (Glass 1976, 13). Furthermore, Mercury is a word that often appears in Christou's notes in this file. Mercury holds a crucial place in the alchemical process, which in its spiritual essence, is concerned with spiritual transformation. Mercury's alchemical symbolisation refers to its transformative substance, which is essential in the alchemical process. It is clear that the term and its symbolisation are quite complex; instead of thoroughly explaining the alchemical realisation, I will focus on its importance in the alchemical process and emphasise its transformative essence, with the aim of confirming that Christou was concerned with the idea of transformation, an idea that characterises *Strychnine Lady* and its realisation.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> The idea of transformation is discussed in depth in Chapter 7.

### **Note on Alchemy-Theater Music [or ‘Opera’], dated 21/08/1964**

There need not be a story on the conscious level: no tale in the normal sense of the word:

Rather: An unconscious ‘story’ = that is – a sequence of events whose connection is with one another and whose ‘direction’ or ‘purpose’ not understood (conveyed) in terms of ordinary story telling.

This [*sic*] what appears on the surface to be a mere sequence of ‘scenes’ –may have a purpose– in the sense that dream sequences have a purpose. My first step is to liberate myself from the story expectation.

One scene I see is a gathering of alchemists – barbing at each other in argument (...). Occasionally technical words are heard –maybe there is a ‘dominant’ word = MERCURY= heard over and over again.

Here, the composer notes ideas about a work he was thinking of writing. Generally, it looks as though Christou had the idea of composing a work based on alchemy and similar concepts; in the file there are scenes described, as well as instrumentations for works he was considering. Almost all of his ideas, as contained in this file, have alchemy as a centre, and they appear to concern a staged work with particular characters, instead of a clearly musical work. In many cases, these characters involve alchemists and alchemical symbols in the form of a character (see the Prince in the previous note).

Christou has the idea of creating a story on the unconscious level so that it does not need to be understood in the normal sense and whose purpose would be like that of a dream sequence. This is connected with the general idea of *Strychnine Lady*, as the composer describes it: ‘The logic here, if you can call this logic, is that of a dream in which states melt into other states with no apparent outward reason’ (Christou, 1967). Moreover, the word *mercury* appears again and endorses the hypothesis of an alchemical character in Christou’s writing, since mercury, as stated above, concerns an alchemical term.

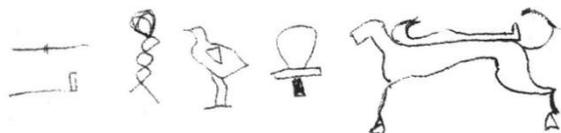
**Note on Alchemy – Colour, no date, possibly in 1964**

Red – Rubedo = {...} redness may mean the dawn –the rubedo in alchemy–which as a rule {...} preceded the completion of the work]  
 and a quotation for the shrieking woman:  
 ‘abeo quod nigramcandamhabetabstineterrestriumenimdioriumest’ (keep your hands off that which has a black tail, for it belongs to the gods of earth)  
 p.167 footnote

This is a very important note, as it validates the assumption that the red cloth in *Strychnine Lady* has connotations with alchemy, as suggested in Chapter 7. Rubedo in Latin means redness, and as we have already seen, it was described by the alchemists as the fourth, final and most important stage, since redness would suggest success in an alchemical process.

Furthermore, there is yet another link with *Strychnine Lady*: the use of Latin in performance. In the above note there is a quotation in Latin that is intended for a ‘shrieking’ woman; this is possibly a description of a scene. The content of the text refers to alchemy and more specifically, to the colour black, which in alchemy represents the stage of nigredo. Christou is playing with ideas around the alchemical stages, which are all represented by different colours. As seen in the previous chapter, Latin is used in *Strychnine Lady* to describe the alchemical story of Beya and Gabricus. The above quotation appears to be the seed idea for the red colour and the use of a Latin text with an alchemical context, which are applied later in *Strychnine Lady*.

**Stimulating idea – The Sahu, dated 13/09/1965**



A body which has attained to a degree of knowledge and power and glory, whereby it becomes henceforth lasting and incorruptible. It could hold converse with the soul, and could ascend into Heaven & Hell & dwell with the beatified. The Sahu, or spiritual body through the prayers which were said, and the ceremonies which were performed at the tomb or elsewhere, by duly approved and properly qualified priests.

(in this spiritual body dwells the Khu – spiritual soul: The soul which under no circumstances could die=) Compare Sahu – Khu – to Ka {...}

P47 Book of the Dead

Much of the writing on the page from which this is quoted is illegible, and there were many words I could not read at first, so I needed to examine it for a long time. The top of the page contains hand-written symbols, the origins of which I could not at first locate; however, they look like hieroglyphs from Ancient Egypt. The page was written under the title ‘Sahu’, and the content of the text seemed to be spiritual. Sahu refers to *The Book of the Dead* and concerns the spiritual body. In fact, the symbols are the word Sahu in hieroglyphics. The above is more evidence of Christou’s relation with spirituality.

### **Note on Magical texts, dated September 1965**

Eg. Heaven and Hell Vol. 3 p.37 {...}

The divisions of Paradise

Each gate had a name: a tremendous name which was more like a sequence of words.

‘It will be noted that the names of the Ten gates are in reality long sentences, which makes sense and can be translated, but there is no doubt that under the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty these sentences were used as purely magical formulas or words of power, which, {...} the disclosed {...} how to pronounce them, there was no great need to understand ‘

Their use was magical, i.e. they were ‘words of power’

The above was what I read when I was trying to ‘decode’ the content of this text. After further research, I found out that the text is a quotation taken from *The Egyptian Heaven and Hell*, written in 1905 by E. A. Wallis Budge, and should be read as follows:

It will be noted that the names of the Ten Gates are in reality long sentences, which make sense and can be translated, but there is little doubt that under the XVIIIth Dynasty these sentences were used as purely magical formulae, or words of power, which, provided the deceased knew how to pronounce them, there was no great need to understand.

(Budge 1905, 37)

This quotation concerns the magical formulae and ‘words of power’ that the deceased had to know in order to obtain happiness in the afterlife. Budge, based on certain findings and the Egyptian *Book of the Dead*, also mentions that

it is quite clear that, according to one view, Sekhet-Aaru, the land of the blessed, was divided into seven sections, each of which was entered through a Gate having three attendants, and that, according to other traditions, it had sections varying in number from ten to twenty-one, for each of the Gates mentioned above must have been intended to protect a division.

(Budge 1905, 37)

Christou is very much interested in ‘words of power’ and he underlines the part saying that ‘there was no great need to understand’. It is interesting to note that he later uses ‘words of power’ and material from *The Book of the Dead* in his work *Mysterion* (1965–66). However, a vital observation that is that Christou wants to experiment with the idea of an irrationality that also makes sense, as in dreams; he firstly applies this to *Mysterion* and later to *Strychnine Lady* (1967) and the works that follow. The introductory text to *Mysterion* confirms this:

Mysterion unfolds with the logic – or, rather, the lack of logic – of a dream, of dream dreamt today, tomorrow... Events are superimposed on other events. Words are articulated but their meaning cannot possibly be clear. The text is not meant to be ‘followed’. After all, it consists entirely of magical formulas articulated in the original. And even if the words were of our own age, the distortions would still be the same. Here words do not describe anything. They are, perhaps, exclamations, and as in exclamations it is the tone of voice which counts most.

(Christou n.d. in The official Jani Christou website 2014)

Christou’s intention is clearly to create a musical situation that follows the logic of a dream and uses text in the same context as the ‘words of power’ mentioned in *The Book of the Dead*. He applies this idea in a similar way in *Strychnine Lady*, providing a Latin text that is obviously not intended to be conventionally understood, but that instead develops a logic that follows that of a dream. In comparing the use of text in *Mysterion* and *Strychnine Lady* with the above note in the archive, the assumption is that Christou was influenced by his studies in *The Book of the Dead* as to how to include and handle text in his late works. The note below provides further evidence supporting this assumption, and also illustrates the way in which he was inspired to use this material.

### **Stimulating Idea, dated 14/08/1965**

The Book of the Dead  
Words of power to be used

By the deceased in the underworld as magical aids ensuring his progress in the underworld {see Budje Preface etc}  
I notice that the Book of the Dead was used in Egypt for a period of 5000 years – whereas our Bible (for Europeans) for hardly 2000. I mean, how much experience has been lived around the Book of the Dead.

{The point for me, though, is not to imitate – but to reorganize the experience within my own individual reality}

As stated previously, Christou sought to create a condition in which words appear as ‘words of power’. As the above note shows, he did not want simply to reproduce a situation, but to restructure a similar experience according to his own reality. Hence, whilst in the *Book of the Dead* the ‘words of power’ were used to open the Gate of Happiness to the afterlife, Christou’s ‘words of power’ offer, via his own compositions, the potential to open a gate to the primitive and the unconscious.

### **Note on the Future, dated 12/09/1965**

I see my works gradually becoming so many different rituals. I shall build up a ‘Religion’ in the time sense of the word –i.e. applicable to myself alone –a ‘religare’ – integrating of the various experiences of my race and those beyond my race but connect [sic] to all humanity –an integrating of all these things with my contemporary experience of the world around me. In so doing there will be the Hope of redeeming The Material (my experience) = of redemption.

The above text is vital to the general understanding of Christou’s works, and in particular to their spiritual dimension. The composer’s statement that he considers his works ‘to be gradually becoming rituals’ validates the notion of spirituality in his works, considering that ritual is an expression of spirituality.

### **Note dated 08/02/1965**

Two stages NB

- 1) The creation of (musical matter). This is the unknown. Avoid prima material  
Here this is the world of technicality laws, calculations, – even aesthetics–This is the creation of OBJECTS. Basically permutations etc – NOW ALL GOES COLLAGES.
- 2) The alchemical process: The transformation of (musical) matter into a work – into the ‘philosophers stone’ – the ‘acquapermaneus’ – the ‘φάρμακον’  
Here there are various shapes: But the basic realization in this connection is that the transformation is not a result of the type of calculations valid in (1) – But is of another logical and qualitative order = compare to the growth of a plant = up to the flowering – life from within– nothing we can do to force life – it happens – Therefore the technique is one of lament active meditation – a voluntary capitulation of intellect (once its job is done) and an invocation of the spirit of creating, of those dark, nupterious powers.

- 3) Shunning the conventional focus and expectations as these tend to veil the dark powers with the world of connection {...} hence the shocked treatment – the shock of collages etc and of the ‘illogical’

The writing here is again somewhat illegible; however, what seems to be the vital part can be read properly and concerns stage 2, ‘the alchemical process’. Christou refers to a transformation of the musical material in alchemical terms, something that not only shows his interest in spiritual alchemy but also – and most importantly – how he applied these theories to his actual compositional method. In addition, the above quotation validates in Christou’s own words the assumptions made in Chapter 7 regarding the alchemical transformation in musical terms, and in particular the composer’s aim to discover the Philosopher’s Stone of music. Hence, as seen above, Christou considers the actual work to be the Philosopher’s Stone, whilst the alchemical process is ‘the transformation of (musical) matter into a work’: the compositional process. Evidently, Christou extends the spiritual metaphors of the alchemical process to a musical level with a spiritual dimension.

#### **Note on Dionysus dated 27/09/1964**

Dionysus is the abyss of impassioned dissolution (of conscious values) –where all human distinctions are merged in the ANIMAL DIVILITY of the primordial psyche – a blissful and terrifying experience [Jung alchemy p86]

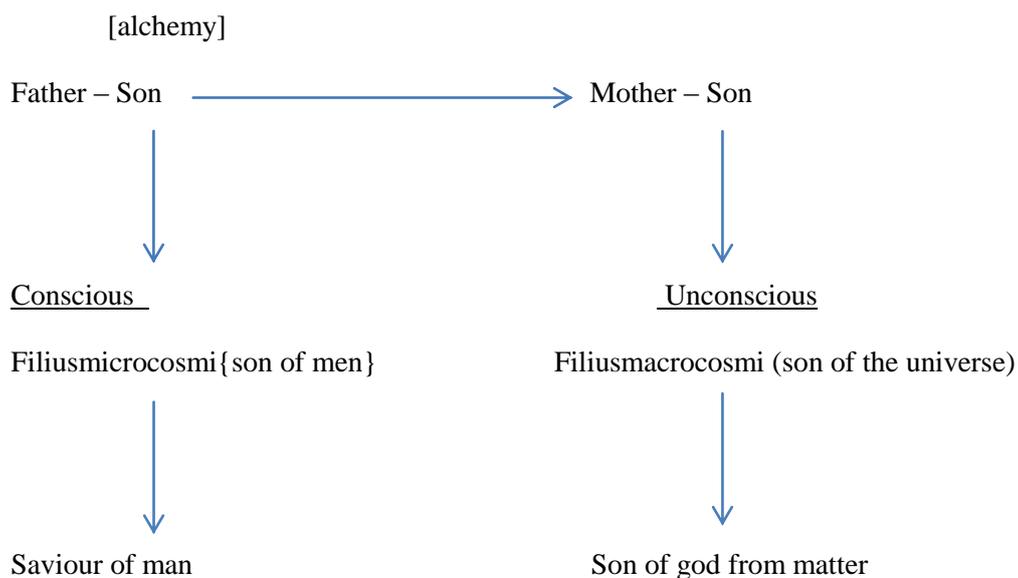
##### Some thoughts

The fate of Zagreus –to be the bloody dismembered while in the form of an animal – is a necessary ‘experience’ prior to wholeness & redemption. This dismembered = the dissolution (or dismembered) of consciousness ritually & therefore a willing sacrifice for the sake of future redemption. If the components of the whole psyche are to be integrated – such a sacrifice by intellect and such a ‘death’ is necessary – and then can man’s connection with his ‘natural ancestry’ be established (see ‘Safyr play’ p.80 Jung). ‘play of goats’ which turns to tragedy

For this to be valid – the terror & the ecstasy must be feminine –otherwise it is mere formula –mere ...’ritual’ – connect to the ‘crucifixion’ and the death by nailing and piercing between two thieves (representing lower class membership of social abyss).

Dionysus Zagreus refers to an ancient Greek myth in which Zagreus, son of Zeus and Persephone, is torn apart by the Titans and reborn as Dionysus. This myth is often compared with the mortificatio state in alchemy, which, as seen earlier, refers to the death of the product of the union of opposites, and is also very important to the transformation process. Christou himself makes this comparison in his letter to Rhoda Lee Rhea of 10<sup>th</sup> February 1967: ‘the work [*Strychnine Lady*] is not descriptive, but it does share certain states in common with the “mortificatio” state: (Dionysus as Zagreus. – the dismemberment is one of the many instances)’ (Lucciano 2000, 108–109). This is also the first time that I found something in Christou’s notes related to gender and, more specifically, to the feminine; this is connected with *Strychnine Lady* since it is written for a female viola player. In conclusion, this quotation not only is an indicator of Christou’s relation with spiritual alchemy, but also contains, again, seeds of material that was later used in *Strychnine Lady*.

### Stimulating Idea, dated 18/08/1964



Alchemy did not simply produce the opposite to the Christian conception of the male deity Father – Son –It produced the compliment – another son – a son issuing faith out of the PRIMA MATERIA {The mother}  
 See Jung: alchemy p.24 (Introduction)

In this final text, Christou notes stimulating ideas within an alchemical context and references to Jung, one further example of him dealing with alchemy. Here, he plays again with the conscious–unconscious pairing of Jungian alchemy which, as seen in the previous chapter, is of primary concern with respect to *Strychnine Lady*. This note pertains to very detailed Jungian elements and, possibly, Christou’s interpretation of them. The aim of quoting this note here is not to explain its context in detail, but to provide more evidence of Christou’s engagement in Jungian ideas, and to further endorse the notion of spirituality in his compositions. Hence we observe an intense interest in, and a serious study of, Jungian ideas by Christou, whose apparent intention was to apply these rather complex concepts to his compositional process and to the musical works themselves.

### ***Strychnine Lady* – a close reading in the context of the composer’s spiritual concerns**

In addition to Christou’s writing and pre-compositional thinking, elements of spirituality can be identified in his actual works, including in *Strychnine Lady*. Spirituality in Christou’s works appears in ritualistic aspects and elements that resemble spiritual practices. A few parts of the score of *Strychnine Lady* have been selected as they appear to have connotations with spiritual practices.

**Cue 9–13**

This section will attempt to describe and analyse the passage between cues 9 and 13 of *Strychnine Lady* (see Example 3). This particular passages has been chosen as they appear to include some interesting elements that need to be defined regarding a frame of mind. In particular, there may be references to mystical, mysterious and ritualistic qualities.

Between cues 9 and 13, the viola player is required to play one continuous B. Christou gives the following instructions:

- deeply meditative
- soft
- unreal

A few moments later, four actors enter the stage slowly in a row and start reciting a Latin text, each at a different speed. They slowly move towards the piano, reciting the Latin text in a crescendo that leads to a shout across the strings of the piano.

This brief passage appears to have several elements of interest. Firstly, the instructions that the composer gives to the solo viola player are quite unusual; they concern an ambience rather than a playing technique. In other words, the viola player has to enter a meditative mood and set her playing of the particular note in the specific space. A question arises about why the composer uses these particular words in describing the playing of the viola note. The words ‘unreal’ and ‘deeply meditative’ are usually used to describe facts and situations that are commonly related to the extraordinary. There is also a connection between the word ‘meditative’ and the viola’s continuous playing of

just one note; it resembles eastern meditation practices, such as mantras, that are based on just one note, creating harmonics and vibration on specific frequencies. It may also be connected with the Byzantine 'ison'; in the Orthodox Church, the 'ison', that is, the chant of one continuous note, is perhaps the strongest characteristic of Byzantine music and the Orthodox tradition.

The entrance of the four actors also contributes to the creation of an unrealistic atmosphere, connected to the extraordinary. They move slowly in a row, a scene that relates to movements drawn from ancient ceremonies. There are many scenes in various ancient cultures that this movement resembles. One might be the entrance of the chorus in ancient Greek tragedy, a scene tightly connected to ritualistic practices. The picture in Example 4 shows the chorus in ancient Greek tragedy, as illustrated in pottery.

During their entrance, the actors recite a Latin text. The use of the Latin is especially interesting. To begin with, Latin is no longer commonly used; it is, in other words, a 'dead' language, and it seems as though Christou is bringing back to life something from the past, going many centuries back. This awakes a mysterious spirit, since there is a transfer of the past into the future, creating a strange but still interesting redefinition of time. The broad characterisation of Latin as 'dead' creates on its own a weird sense of bringing the world of the 'dead' into the living world, a fact that creates an atmosphere connected with ritual.

In relation to spirituality, another important aspect of Latin should be mentioned. Latin is the language used in many kinds and types of ceremonies and rituals throughout the centuries, including the Roman-Catholic liturgy. It is the language used in exorcisms, alchemical texts and mystical ceremonies. It is also believed to have a divine nature

(Sheridan 1994). As mentioned earlier in the thesis, the text used in this section of *Strychnine Lady* presents the story of Beya and Gabricus, as described in the ancient alchemical text *Rosarium Philosophorum* (Jung 1952). In the story, Beya embraces Gabricus with such an overwhelming love that she absorbs him completely into her womb and transforms him into many invisible pieces. After this union, the formerly two different persons are now combined, forming a new creature. The content of this bizarre story also relates to the extraordinary and follows the same atmosphere as the previous elements outlined, an atmosphere that could be characterised as ritualistic, mysterious and potentially mystical. These characterisations are supported by the context of the text.

Christou's relationship with alchemical studies was outlined earlier through the findings in his archives. Expanding on this topic, the practice of alchemy appears to be rather ancient. The Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, Chinese and early Arab cultures all engaged in alchemical investigations. Alchemists had a number of goals in their work. Several of them were seeking a process that would turn base metals like lead into gold or silver. In addition, they had as a goal a panacea, or cure-all, which would, in theory, extend life for an indefinite period. In Europe, alchemy experienced resurgence during the medieval period, a result of an interest in translating ancient texts that exposed people to its concepts. As well as an exploration of chemistry, medieval alchemy was also concerned with philosophy and metaphysics, and as chemistry began to emerge as an independent discipline, the study of alchemy became metaphysical. People who view alchemy as metaphysical consider alchemical terms as metaphors, and not factual references to substances.

9 15" 10 22" 11 13" 12 30" approx. according to action 13

Vlni A  
Viola A  
Celli A  
Cbass A

Piatta f  
Pfte (playing the instruments next to him) f  
Ded f

I.v.  
I.v.

as in cue 8  
simile

simile

Vlni B  
Viola B  
Celli B  
Cbass B

Solo

deeply meditative  
3" approx.  
soft, unreal<sup>1</sup>  
p sempre

volume and tension increase .... gradually by very fine degrees

WHISPERED SPEECH<sup>3</sup>

Moderate speech  
Nam Beya ascendit super Gubricum, et includit eum in suo utero, quod nil penitus videri potest de eo. Tantoque amore amplexata est Gubricum, quod ipsum totum in sui naturam concepit, et in partes indivisibiles divisit. Per se solvuntur, per se quoque conficiuntur, et duo qui fuerant, unum quasi corpore fiunt.

Fast speech  
Nam Beya ascendit super Gubricum, et includit eum in suo utero, quod nil penitus videri potest de eo.

Fast speech  
Tantoque amore amplexata est Gubricum, quod ipsum totum in sui naturam concepit, et in partes indivisibiles divisit.

Fast speech  
Per se solvuntur, per se quoque conficiuntur, et duo qui fuerant, unum quasi corpore fiunt.

... advancing always very slowly towards piano

as before<sup>3</sup>

as before<sup>5</sup>

as before<sup>3</sup>

as before<sup>5</sup>

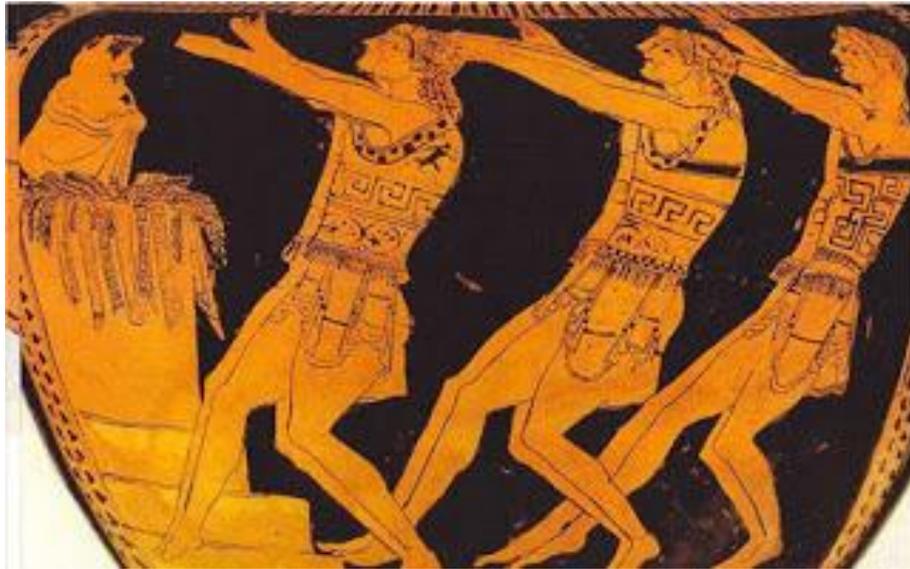
as before<sup>3</sup>

as before<sup>5</sup>

ppp tutti  
the group of 4 actors reciting while advancing slowly towards piano<sup>2</sup>

1st  
2nd  
3rd  
4th

Example 3. Jani Christou, *Strychnine Lady*, cue 9-13.



**Example 4. Red-figured columned-krater in the mannerist style, 500–490 B.C.E.**

**Choristers in front of the altar of Dionysus.**

Thus, a very important aspect of Alchemy is strongly connected to and fundamentally deals with the basic mysteries of life and transcendental mysticism, something that strengthens the mystical dimension of this particular part of the *Strychnine Lady*. Jung states that this bizarre union is an entirely symbolic incest of the conscious that descends into the unconscious (Sakallieros & Kyriakos 2008). Jung will not be analysed further in the present chapter, as it has been discussed elsewhere in this study. I will conclude the present section with a reference to the Jungian world of symbols and the unconscious, a reference that awakes, as do the previously mentioned elements, the sense of the mysterious and the mystical.

**Cue 76–78**

Another section of the work could be characterised as ritualistic. This passage covers cues 76 to 78 (see Example 5). Cue 76 begins with ‘a desperate, human-like cry’ played at maximum volume by the horn and the trombone. The viola soloist lies on the floor,

covered with the red cloth whilst three actors are smoking ‘casually’, ‘pensively’ and ‘relaxed’. At the same moment, four trumpeters advance ‘excruciatingly’ slowly, as if hypnotised, gravely towards the covered viola soloist. A fourth actor has bypassed the viola soloist, and is gazing fixedly, giving the impression that he is advancing also ‘excruciatingly-slowly-hypnotically’. By cue 78 the trumpeters have reached the viola soloist and now stand over her, in a circle, looking down at the cloth.

The above scene closely resembles a funeral ceremony. The viola soloist is collapsed on the floor and is covered with a red cloth. As previously shown, the choice of red for the cloth is not unintentional. Red is considered a sacred colour and can be connected with many symbols. Throughout the development of civilization red has had connotations with the sacred and has been associated, since ancient times, with ceremonies of human or animal sacrifice and usually represents blood. It is also the colour of fire, another sacred symbol and is very often used in funerals, a fact that relates to the ‘funereal’ feeling of this passage. Furthermore, and as shown in the findings from the archive, red also concerns a stage of the alchemical process, *rubedo*, which means redness and indicates success; thus, the product of the alchemical process, namely the Philosopher’s Stone, is also connected here.

The slow movement of the trumpeters towards the red cloth-covered viola player and the desperate, human-voice cry of horn and trombone might also be associated with images of a funeral march, at which people move slowly and desperate cries accompany the whole ceremony. In addition, the movement of the trumpeters resembles images of sacrificial processions, of which music was crucial part. Examples 6 and 7 provide two pottery illustrations of such ceremonies.

This page contains a musical score and stage directions for cues 76 through 79. The score is divided into four measures: 76 (6" approx.), 77 (4" approx.), 78 (16" approx.), and 79. The musical notation includes staves for Violins I, II, III, IV, Viola, and Cello, as well as Piano (Pfte) and Pedal (Ped). The score features various dynamics such as *p* and *sfz*, and performance markings like *as in cue 71*, *fast as possible*, and *sentito*. Stage directions are illustrated with drawings of musicians and their actions: Trombones (Trombe) moving towards the stage, a Horn (Corno) playing a "desperate, human-like cry" at maximum volume, a Trumpet (Tbne) playing "smoking casually, pensively, relaxed", a soloist being "frozen", and a soloist "gazing fixedly always" while giving the impression of "advancing, excruciatingly slowly - hypnotically". The final direction at the end of cue 79 states: "the four trumpeters now standing over viola soloist, looking down at the cloth".

Example 5. Jani Christou, *Strychnine Lady*, cue 76-79.



**Example 6. Four musicians, two auletes and two kitharists, in a sacrificial procession on a belly-amphora. Found in Nordquist (2003).**



**Example 7. Four musicians, two auletes and two kitharists, in a sacrificial procession on a belly-amphora. Found in Nordquist (2003).**

## Conclusions

Christou's works have been often characterised as having a spiritual dimension; however, until now, these were assumptions mostly based on the 'myth' created around the name of the composer, as being 'mysterious' and having connotations with the 'extraordinary' and the sacred. However, the present chapter has examined material found in his archive, and through the composer's pre-compositional thinking as recorded in his notes, has outlined and supported the assumption of this spiritual dimension in Christou's works. The material presented in this chapter pertains to notes interpreted and presented for the first time. From these notes, it is clear that the composer had a special interest in studies of spiritual alchemy; in the mysteries of Ancient Egypt, through the *Book of the Dead*; and in spirituality, through the works of Mircea Eliade. As shown in previous sections, all of these stimuli can be observed in actual works and particularly in *Strychnine Lady*. The significance of this chapter lies in the fact that it has elucidated the spiritual dimension in Christou's *Strychnine Lady*. In particular, this chapter has provided evidence confirming the composer's interest in such areas and showed how he enacted this interest in his actual works. The conclusion made here is that Christou's output was both influenced and characterised by spirituality.

## **Chapter 9: Music notation**

As discussed earlier, a significant turning point in Christou's compositions occurred after 1965; this involved several aspects, including his notation practice. In his pre-1965 works Christou used traditional music notation, a compositional period during which music was, in his words, 'technically unquestioned' and that 'more or less established forms' were used. Nevertheless, in his second compositional period, from 1965 onwards, he developed a new, personal notation, not only in order to record his ideas and concepts, as regards his compositions, but also to provide a holistic score that covered all the parameters of the performance of his works, which after 1965 encompassed a scenic dimension and involved dramatic, choreographic and psychological elements. All these will be discussed in this chapter.

The chapter is divided into four sections. The first provides the general context of this new music notation, whilst the second section offers an outline of this; the third focuses on *Strychnine Lady*'s music score; and the last section discusses aesthetic and practical aspects of this system. The central aim here is to present and critically assess Christou's notation, in order to help in the understanding of his intentions and to provide clarification as to the function of such scores.

### **Jani Christou's music notation after 1965**

In his post-1965 works Christou used and developed a new ground-breaking notation system to meet the needs of his compositions. This applies in particular to *Mysterion*

(1965–66), *Praxis for 12* (1966), *Strychnine Lady* (1967), *Epicycle* (1968), *Anaparastasis I – The pianist* and *Anaparastasis III – The baritone* (both 1968), and *Enantiodromia* (1967–70). In discussing *Mysterion*, Lucciano suggests that the development of this notation is related to ‘a complete abandonment of all previous European or western culture (and of all traditional types of notation in particular)’ (Lucciano 2000, 100). This abandonment is recommended in the composer’s ‘A Credo for Music’, which was written in 1966; this is the year of the turning point in Christou’s compositional development and the creation of this new notation system is closely connected to this.

Between 1951 and 1970 traditional music notation proved insufficient for the needs of some composers, and during this period important breaks were made with established notation systems (Stone 1980). Hence, it is argued that Christou’s notation belongs to the experiments of this era.

Christou was aware of the new notation issues being discussed with particular intensity elsewhere, and he never stopped developing his system until his death in 1970. This is obvious from the fact that he sometimes rewrote his works, for example *Praxis for 12*, which was rewritten twice, first in 1968 and again in 1969. According to Lucciano (2000, 125), in the 1969 version ‘the notation is presented in a more synthetic form and the overall organisation of the score is more simple’. She also mentions that Christou aimed to create a notation that wouldn’t need any verbal indications, yet he was also aware that for a valid interpretation of the score, the reader would need a code. Lucciano also tells us that the composer started writing the Introduction and Appendices to the score of *Praxis for 12* in December 1969, shortly before his death, and that these were almost complete before the tragic accident of 8<sup>th</sup> January 1970.

The above information can also be found, and in more detail, in the editor's notes of the *Praxis for 12* score by Nikos Avgeris. The score was published by Chester Music, London, in 1970 after the composer's death. In Avgeris's words:

*Praxis for 12* was composed three times: 1966, 1968 and 1969. There are differences not only in the purely musical part, but also in the notation. The notation in the first two versions is the same, whereas it is basically different in the 1969 version. This last version is more synthetic, the patterns lean more towards the optical and the arrangement of the score generally is simpler. The writing out of the score on tracing paper was completed in November 1969. The composer was examining and correcting it up to his death on 8<sup>th</sup> January 1970. These corrections together with other comments were either found on the tracing paper or among the composer's notes. The score was corrected in February and March according with his wishes. The only departure from the composer's intentions is in the present explanations and directions for performance in the score. The composer had envisaged a score without words. But he always bore in mind that both conductor and scholar would need a code in order to understand the notation of the score. To this effect, in December 1969, he began writing the foreword and the Appendixes to the score. Both these sections were found almost completed. In the foreword the only part that remained unwritten was the basic section on 'Specifications', and from Appendixes the section entitled 'Patterns and Continuums' and 'Continuums and Events'. The 'Specifications' would have been the main key to the score.

(Christou 1970)

The above paragraphs show that Christou was much concerned with the issue of notation from the early score versions of his 1965 works until just before his death. The assumption made here is that the composer was trying to perfect a precise and detailed music notation system that in its ideal version wouldn't need verbal instructions.

Unfortunately, his premature death did not allow this to happen and regardless of the composer's intention, as suggested by Lucciano and Avgeris, any analysis of the scores should consider the fact that in their final stage they include verbal instructions; this is the approach the present thesis follows.

## **Outline of the system**

Christou's notation system is formed of three different types of notation. These are:

1. Synthetic notation, related to the visual realisation of the work.
2. Proportionate<sup>34</sup> notation, in which time is notated spatially instead of symbolically.
3. Measured notation, presenting pitch and duration symbols as in traditional Western music.

Information with regard to these three types of notation can be extracted mainly from the published scores of the works *Praxis for 12*, *Strychnine Lady*, *Epicycle*, *Anaparastasis I: The pianist*, *Anaparastasis III: The baritone* and *Enantiodromia*. These scores were published between 1970 and 1973 by J. & W. Chester, London, and were all edited by Nicos Avgeris. All the publications include appendices with the composer's notes and explanations; however, the main information concerning the notation is included in the appendices of *Praxis 12* and *Enantiodromia*. The appendices of these two works contain the same text, with the difference that in *Enantiodromia*, the third type of notation, measured, is not included, since the composer did not use it in this particular work.

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<sup>34</sup> This type of notation is usually described in other cases as 'proportional'; however, since Christou describes it as 'proportionate' I have decided to use this in the present text.

Below I will attempt to outline and discuss the three types of notation according to the composer's notes.

### **Synthetic notation**

In the appendix of *Praxis for 12* there are extensive notes concerning synthetic notation. Before looking at the contextual framework of this type of notation, it is worth observing the word 'synthetic'. 'To synthesise', according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, means to make a form of 'synthesis', that is, a combination of components or elements to form a connected whole. The word provides a key to understanding the context of this notation. According to Houliaras, this notation aims to achieve a total 'codification' of the actual work, providing a direct visual approach to the reader with regard to the progress of the work (Houliaras 2005). Christou describes synthetic notation as follows:

Synthetic notation is used for characterising patterns optically. Elements of more or less familiar notational material expressing components of a pattern are assembled into a pictorial synthesis of marks that suggest the nature of the end-result.

(Christou 1970)

Patterns are a vital element in realising Christou's compositions in general. According to the composer, a pattern is

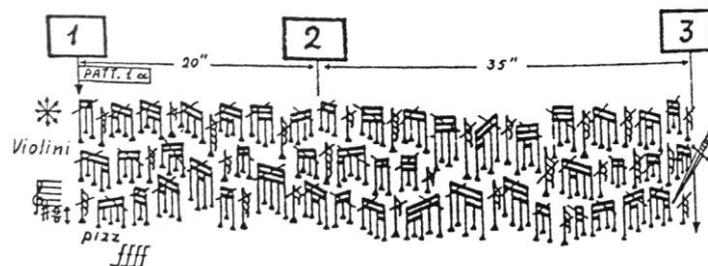
the constant regrouping of the same or different aspects of the same components of a musical statement. The regrouping of these components is determined by sequences of permutations, so that no two expressions of the basic statement are ever identical.

(Christou, in Lucciano 2000, 44)

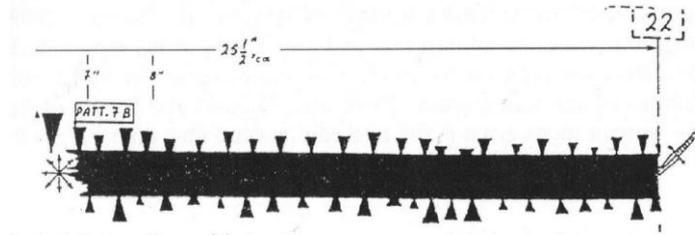
In simple terms, patterns are the formation of different sound events which ‘proliferate through various types of repetition and are multiplied in time’ (Christou 1969), and their components originate from serial techniques; it is actually Christou’s way of organising sound.

Synthetic notation aims to present patterns in a visual form in order to achieve a better understanding of the ‘end-result’ – the work itself in its various processes. Synthetic notation, as its name suggests, refers to various elements of a pattern that are represented visually by pictorial characters, which form a synthesis of the final result. For the sake of comprehension, Christou provides the reader with two examples, accompanied by short descriptions. These are given below:

1. The individual hailstorms of short figures plucked uninterruptedly at breakneck speeds is suggested by a thick collective torrent of closely packed grouplets of fast heavy notes.



2. [...]The accelerating hammering effect of instruments furiously delivering their individual outbursts of random chords is suggested by the appearance of a thick collective mass into which chords seem to be nailed.



(Christou 1970)

Christou's verbal explanations of the patterns use extra-musical terms to describe a sound event. Concerning the first example, the keywords are 'hailstorms' and 'torrent' suggesting sounds related to natural phenomena. Houliaras suggests that by using these particular words the composer describes the expected sound result through the pattern, 'accompanying in a way the sound with the picture, since "hailstorm" expresses the expected sound result, whilst "torrent" expresses the pictorial design of this expected sound result' (Houliaras 2005, 23). The same approach also applies to the second example, in which Christou uses the word 'hammering' to describe the sound and uses the pictorial representation of this, 'a thick collective mass', to enhance the expected sound result.

The composer does not rely only on these examples and goes further in a more extensive clarification of synthetic notation:

*Instant pattern recognition*

Contrary to proportionate and measured notation, which are both analytic with respect to their horizontal lay-out (in that they specify how the separate components of a given pattern unfold in time in relation to each other), synthetic notation is not analytic and is therefore not intended to mirror occurrences on a one-to-one basis in time. In short, synthetic notation does not read normally. Designed primarily to communicate general characteristics, synthetic notation creates a picture, as it were, with visual impact conveying the essence of a pattern immediately as a whole, and not analytically in stages.

(Christou 1970)

Christou's purpose here is to define the functional role of synthetic notation in comparison with the other two types, which he terms measured and proportionate. The composer also makes clear that the purpose of synthetic notation is instant pattern recognition through a visual, rather than analytical, representation of its elements as a whole. Hence, synthetic notation contrasts generally with the other types of notation that are more specific due to their analytic nature. Christou continues his outline of these concerns by discussing issues of economy related to space in the score; he explains that synthetic notation, due to its general characteristics, can be economical in space, since there is no need for separate lines in the score:

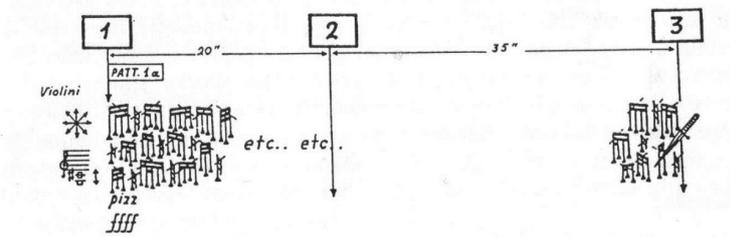
Concerned as it is only with general characteristics, and not specifics, synthetic notation has no use for a separate line for each 'divided' member of a group caught up in the same pattern. One notational 'picture' is shared by the group as a whole, so that there is a substantial economy on the length of the score page. Economy is, of course, not the main concern of synthetic notation. Depending on the circumstances, the other types can be far more economical. For instance,

patterns proceeding in scatter motion (see ‘scatter signs’) ipso facto eliminate any possibility for a separate line for each member of the group involved, no matter what notation is used.

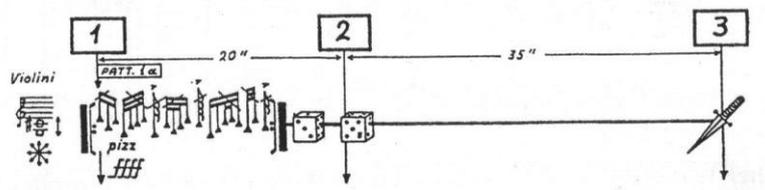
(Christou 1970)

He subsequently gives one example in support of this last point. This involves two different versions of the same extract from *Praxis for 12*; the first is notated following proportionate notation whilst the second uses synthetic notation.

*Example:* because of the operation of the scatter sign, the ‘divided’ collective string pattern in cue 1 can be analytically notated along a single ‘line’ as follows:



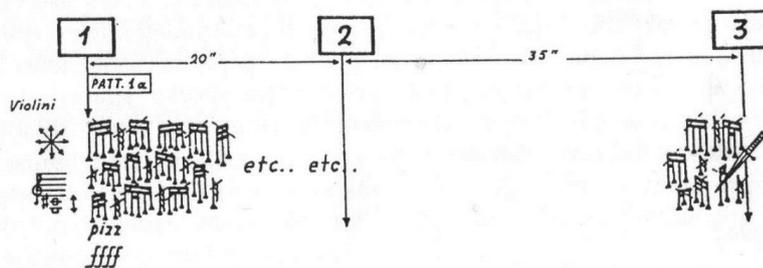
This is of course, much more economical than the synthetic lay-out in the score, where the acoustic thickness of the collective activities is suggested optically by a thick torrent of notes, extending, moreover, right through to the pattern’s ‘switch-off’ at cue 3



But the economy of the analytic expression does away with a substantial part of the pictorial element, and this impoverishment reduces the possibilities for 'listening with the eye' to the total effect of any point at the score.

(Christou, in Lucciano 2000, 127)

With the above example, the composer emphasises the vital functionality of pictorial representations. It is very interesting to notice the expression that he uses to highlight this: 'listening with the eye'. In an almost poetic way he stresses the importance of the involvement of the eye in synthetic notation and he follows this with the notion of 'optical control over the score', an advantage provided by this type of notation:



The advantage – it is hoped – of synthetic notation is that by providing instant pictorial identification of events, any moment in the score, no matter how complex, becomes optically intelligible at a glance, and in as compact a space as possible. While in force for larger forces, and with a plurality of separate overlapping patterns and other events, the advantage of such optical control over the notated page are even more apparent.

(Christou, in Lucciano 2000, 128)

Houliaras (2005) suggests that synthetic notation has a philosophical background and could be connected with a passage of the Austrian philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein's

*Tractatus–Logico–Philosophicus*, first published in 1921. The passage concerns proposition 4.011:

At first sight a proposition – one set out on the printed page, for example – does not seem to be a picture of the reality with which it is concerned. But neither do written notes seem at first sight to be a picture of a piece of music, nor our phonetic notation (the alphabet) to be a picture of our speech. And yet these sign-languages prove to be pictures, even in the ordinary sense, of what they represent.

(Wittgenstein 2013, 23)

Houliaras relates the above proposition, which is concerned with the problem of the visual notation of reality, with Christou's synthetic notation and use of pictographic representations (Houliaras 2005, 25). He suggests that Christou wanted to resolve this problem by visualising sound events and thus, through this type of notation, to create a 'picture of music'. He continues by claiming that this means of notation, as well as its context, is more easily understood, even by non-musicians. In particular, and in the composer's own words, the de-codification – in other words the interpretation – of the synthetic notation is a 'simple process':

*Decoding Synthetic Notation*

Obviously, to be fully understood, the 'pictures' of each synthetically notated pattern must be 'unscrambled': Decoded by reference to the corresponding specifications in analytic notation which precede the score proper. As will be seen, this is a simple process.

(Christou 1970)

### **Proportionate Notation**

‘Proportionate’ is Christou’s term for proportional notation, which refers to notation in which time is notated spatially instead of symbolically, and is thus also known as spatial notation. Kurt Stone (1980, 136) defines spatial or proportional notation as follows:

Spatial or proportional notation is a system in which durations are ‘translated’ into horizontal distances instead of duration symbols (as in traditional notation) so that if, for example, the duration of a half note is made equal to one inch horizontal space, a quarter note equals half an inch, and so forth.

In short, all durations must be notated in spatial relationship to each other. Consequently, all duration symbols (white and black note-heads, beams, flags, prolongation dots, rests etc.) become irrelevant. Note-heads now are needed only as pitch indicators (black notes are preferred), and only the kind of horizontal line (either a single beam, or an extension line at the level of the note-head) is needed to show the durations of sustained notes. Blank spaces mean silences (rests).

(Stone 1980, 136)

Like other composers, Christou uses this type of notation in his own way. He states that contrary to the general components of synthetic notation, proportionate notation is analytic and can read as normal without any re-codification needed. His intention, of course, is to show how components are developed through time. In addition, he states that proportional notation in his system is used only to indicate the time factor and not any other parameters, such as pitch (Christou 1970). For Christou, proportional notation is visual:

This is an optical operation: long notes are shown as occupying longer space, short notes shorter space, on the space = time principle [...] Either way, built-in time relationship between separate values do not exist, neither are these desirable. The use of notes with seemingly built-in values [...] does not imply any fixed value relationships, only approximate. [...] In principle, the use of ‘approximate’ value-notes is superfluous, since spatial characteristics alone could convey the same information. Nevertheless such ‘suggestive’ use of ‘value-notes’ may on occasion be useful, whenever for structural reasons, or because of the total layout of the score page, additional optical clarity is required within any given passage.

(Christou 1970)

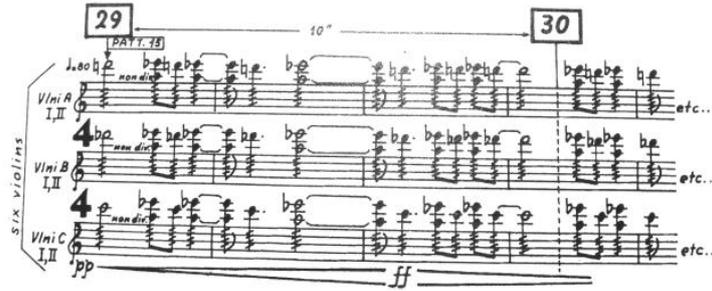
Christou’s definition of proportional notation is similar to Stone’s and, unlike synthetic notation – which as we have seen has more extensive notes – is much simpler to realise. As seen in the quotation above, the composer enriches the proportional logic of his notation by adding approximate note values whenever this is necessary and only for the sake of clarity.

### **Measured Notation**

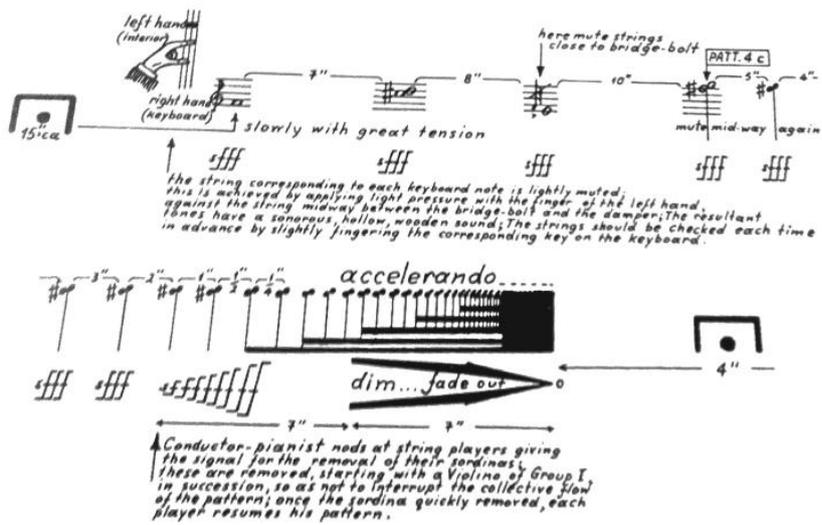
The third type of notation used by Christou is termed measured and it forms the more conventional part of the composer’s notation system. It predominantly concerns the notation of pitch and duration symbols as in traditional Western music. The composer declares that measured notation, as with proportional, is analytic, and yet measured notation gives specific time values, unlike proportional notation, which indicates them only approximately. In Christou’s words, ‘measured notation gives a specific value for

each component independently of the lay-out' (Christou 1970). The composer articulates two types of this notation and he describes them as follows:

Type i: this is the familiar notation with built-in values bearing a fixed relationship to each other.



Type ii: this is a type of notation in which the time values do not bear a fixed relationship to each other, but are specified independently throughout the score.



(Christou 1970)

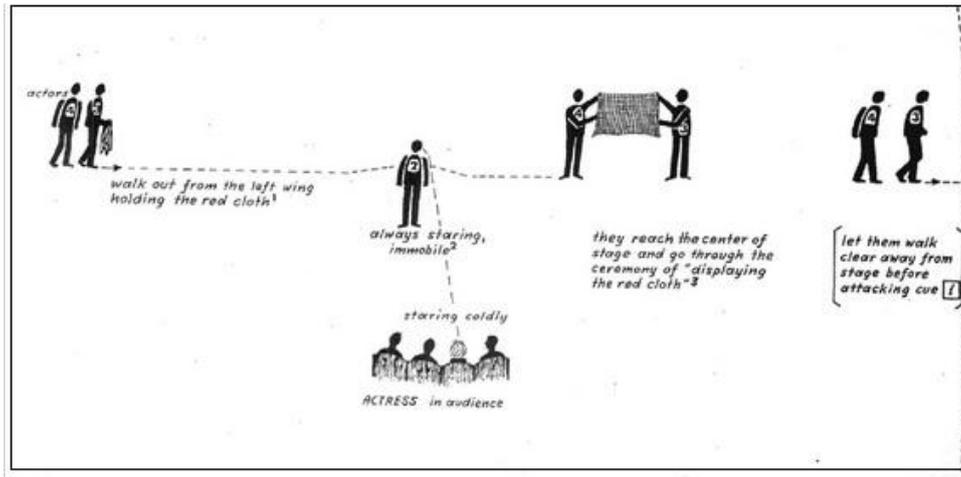
## **Conclusion note**

The aim of this section was to acquaint the reader with the three types of notation used by Christou in his personal notation system: synthetic, measured and proportionate. He describes these three systems of notation in the appendices of the late works. The next section focuses on the score of *Strychnine Lady*, and presents the basic information that is included there, together with the assumptions that can be made by studying the score. This mainly concerns the assumption that Christou also used a fourth type of notation: action-based.

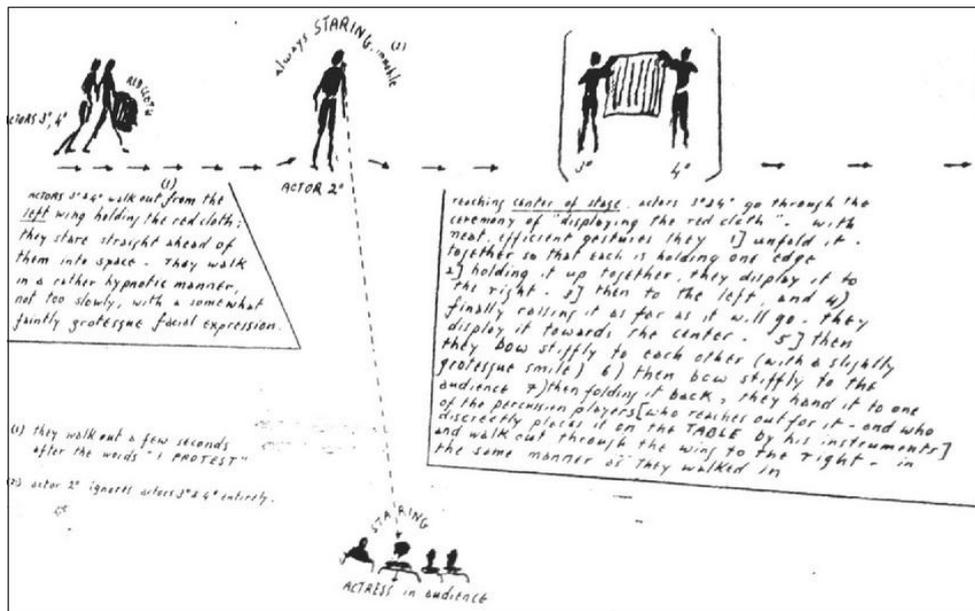
## **The score of Strychnine Lady**

### **Introduction**

There are two scores for *Strychnine Lady*. The first is the manuscript written by the composer, which was used at the premiere of the work. The second is that published by J. & W. Chester in 1973, copied and edited by Nicos Avgeris. The two scores do not differ in terms of the musical material. There is, however, a difference in the verbal instructions, made on the initiative of the editor: many of the explanatory footnotes that were mainly used for the premiere have been removed from the score and are included in a forty-page long-appendix. In view of Christou's aim to reduce the verbal instructions, as mentioned in an earlier section, the editor considered this a good choice in terms of making the score more comprehensible. Avgeris added direct references to link every note with the part of the score it concerns. Examples 8 and 9 illustrate a part of *Strychnine Lady* as notated first in the published score and then in the original manuscript.



Example 9. Jani Christou, *Strychnine Lady*. The start: published score.



Example 8. Jani Christou, *Strychnine Lady*. The start: original score.

As seen in the illustrations, the published score does not include the verbal instructions, which are mostly concerned with performance directions; yet, the two scores are similar.

The Introduction to both scores is the same and contains a text by the composer. This is divided into different sections and its aim is to give the reader vital information for

realising and decoding the score. Some of the sections are the same as for the introductions to *Enantiodromia* and *Praxis for 12*. These sections are:

1. The Score
2. Key: Patterns and Energies, Praxis and Metapaxis<sup>35</sup>
3. Energies and signs: Traffic signs, Continuity signs
4. Overall specifications
5. The orchestra

### **The score**

‘The score’ is the title of the first section of the Introduction. Here Christou provides information regarding first the functional role of the score and, second, the types of notation used. The composer states that he uses synthetic notation for the score in order to create a visual representation of the material as a ‘whole’. Moreover, the visual representation of a pattern helps in its direct perception without the need to analyse the different stages of its components. However, the material in the parts is notated with more analytical types of notation, when other information is provided using continuity signs, pitch indicators and psychological factors. The latter will be explained in the following paragraphs.

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<sup>35</sup> In this section Christou explains the pair praxis and metapaxis. Since definitions and discussion on this can be found extensively in Chapter 4, no further explanations are required in this section, which aims to explain the more technical aspects of Christou’s notation system.

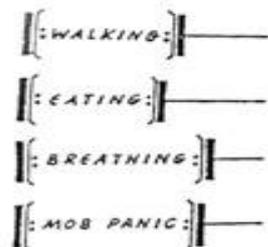
### Technical key: Patterns and energies

This section describes an aspect of the patterns that is closely related to the ‘energies’ of the performers as well as their actions during the performance. The performers and their energies develop and sustain patterns that ‘should be understood in terms of forms for action requiring a constant feedback between a pattern’s possibility and the participant’s energy’ (Christou, 1970). In the composer’s view, this relationship between patterns and performers (participants) differs from what he calls ‘the self-evident relationship between a notated form and the action necessary for its performance’. The composer implies ‘something other’ than this:

What is ‘something other’ can only be suggested here by amplifying the proposition that a pattern should be understood in terms of action (2i) with the statement that a pattern’s justification of its function as a dynamic form of eliciting the participant’s energy and canalising this into characteristic types of action – Whatever these types may be, a process which may, just as it may not, involve sound itself.

For example:

Silent patterns involving gesture only (...). Moreover, the above definition of pattern covers any ‘life pattern’ in which sound occurs only as a by-product.

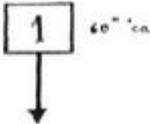


(Christou 1970)

### Technical key: Energies and signs

Christou uses special signs to provoke, develop and control the energies required for developing and sustaining a pattern: these are Traffic signs and Continuity signs. Traffic signs aim to order and indicate directions of movement for the performers as both individuals and groups. Continuity signs aim to show how events included in a pattern will be developed throughout in the 'pattern's continuity'. Examples 10 and 11 give examples of these signs provided by the composer in his introduction:

1. TRAFFIC SIGNS

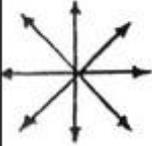


60" ca

**AREA-MARK**

*The score is divided into "areas of duration". The area-mark indicates the beginning of each 'area of duration' and encloses its cue number. The duration of each area is given in seconds (whenever a fixed or approximate duration can be given)*

*The conductor signals each successive area with a clear downward gesture of the right hand. An assistant-conductor, or mechanical conducting-aide, may be resorted to for help in displaying each successive area-mark number.*



**SCATTER**

*This applies to a group performing the same pattern. The sign directs each member of the group to carry out the pattern's specifications on his own, to go his own individual way along an independent path of his own spontaneous invention.*

*The main characteristic aimed at with the scatter process is the proliferation of constantly shifting, indeterminate relationships, achieved by compounding the unique activities of each individual caught up in a collective pattern, like the chirping of many birds, the murmuring of a crowd, the sound of hail, the trumpeting of a flock of geese, the uncoordinated movements of people in a public square - or the sound of their panicking*



**SYNCHRONISE**

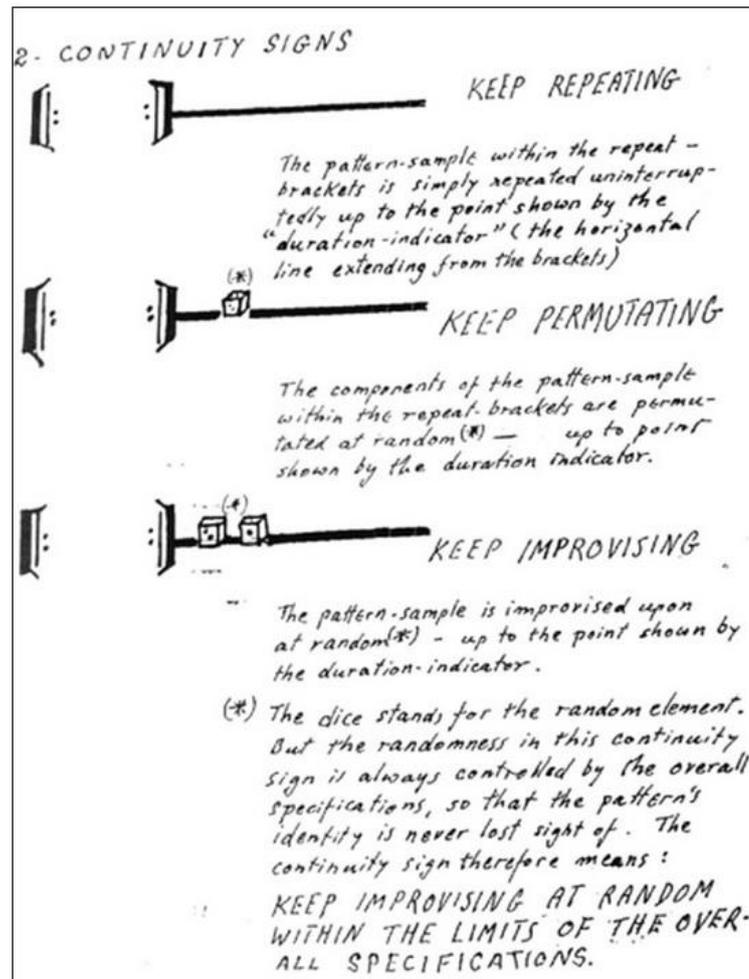
*The opposite of "scatter". The sign calls for synchronised delivery.*



**STOP DEAD**

*The cut must be sudden, with no trailing of unfinished material: an abrupt and total "switch-off"*

Example 10. Traffic signs.

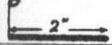


**Example 11. Continuity signs.**

### Overall specifications

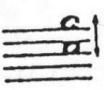
This section is subdivided into three fragments: Structural characteristics, Pitch-areas, The psychological factor.

In the first fragment, Christou offers information about his patterns with regard to their structural characteristics. He opposes these to what he calls structural descriptions. Hence, we are informed that structural descriptions are particular whilst structural characteristics are general. In support of this point, he gives the following example of the components of a pattern:

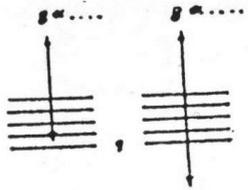
COMPONENT	STRUCTURAL DESCRIPTION (particular)	STRUCTURAL CHARACTERISTICS (general)
A 	very fast grouplet of 3 reiterated notes	very fast grouplet of reiterated notes
B 	fractional pause	fractional pause
C 	note sustained for 2 seconds	sustained note (short)
D 	pause of 1 second	short pause
E 	very fast ascending figure of 2 accented notes	very fast and short figure of accented notes

Example 12. Structural characteristics.

After defining the structural characteristics of a pattern, the composer refers to the pitch indicators – the signs that describe the pitch or the pitch area of a pattern. Below are a few examples.



Each member of the group keeps performing the pattern throughout the range specified, including the limit notes.



Each member of the group keeps performing the pattern throughout an extensive range, as suggested: middle to acute, entire range, etc.



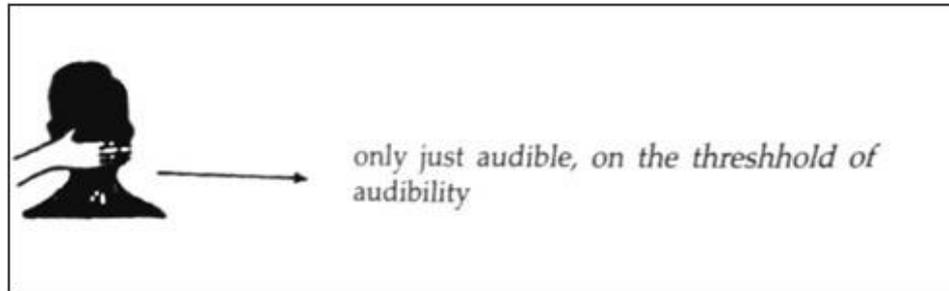
Each member of the group plays more than one note within the specified cluster, but not all the notes.

Example 13. Pitch indicators.

**The psychological factor**

Christou’s notation includes special signs that are related to the psychological factor of the performance of a pattern. These are not related to the usual music signs; specifically, they concern pictographic illustrations that the composer uses to elicit the required

psychological state from the performers. One example is illustrated below in which the composer uses a visual image in order to describe the desired sound result.



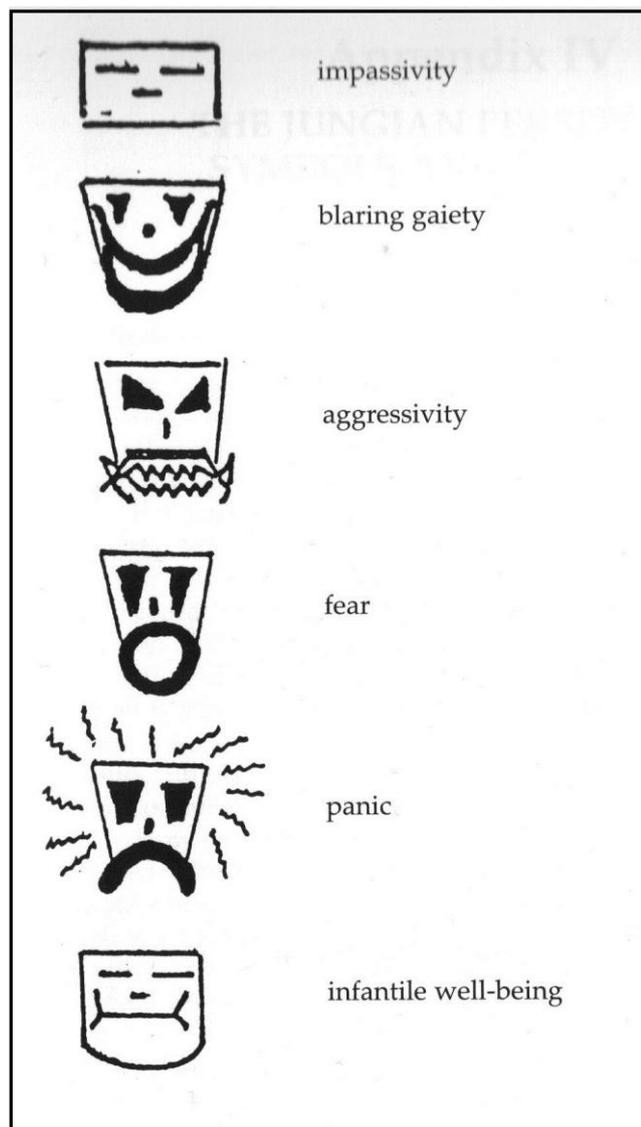
**Example 14. The psychological factor, example i.**

Several signs in this category resemble ancient masks. Considering that masks have been widely used in ancient ceremonies, rituals and religious practices this leads to a subconscious association with an archaic emotional state related to spirituality. Christou uses facial expressions as psychological directions, yet the ‘faces’ he draws do not have the usual shape of head, eyes, mouth and so on; rather they have the shape of masks, and in particular they resemble ancient masks from various cultures. Below I present these signs as well as pictures of ancient masks from Greece and Africa, with the aim of demonstrating this correlation. I won’t go further on the subject of masks, as my aim here is to suggest an influence and not an intention, since, as far as known, there is no evidence that the composer used mask signs for a particular purpose. However, there is evidence of Christou’s interest in and studies of ancient cultures and the use of masks,<sup>36</sup> hence the assumption made here is that these particular signs reflect such influences.



**Example 15. Ancient masks.**

<sup>36</sup> Christou used masks in his earlier work, *Mysterion*, as outlined in Chapter 6.



**Example 16. The psychological factor, example ii.**

### **Special notation-soloist and actors**

Christou uses a different notation for the viola soloist and the actors. The various gestures and movements are illustrated in detail through a series of symbols suggesting choreographic and directed movement. Thus, in addition to the three types of notation the composer uses for the instrumental players, it is argued that he uses a fourth type of notation, so-called action-based notation. According to Juraj Kojs:

Action-based music emphasizes the artistic exploration of mechanical actions which are used to control all aspects of composition, including its conception, form, instrumentation and instrumental design, performance and score. [...] The composer prioritizes exploration of performative actions as opposed to investigation of particular sonic parameters in the creation of this music. [...] While performing action-based music, the player is, in fact, often instructed about how to and what to perform rather than what sonic effect to achieve. [...] Graphical choreography of actions in the notation often mirrors the physical movement of the performer. As opposed to the graphic notations that symbolize the type of sounds to be produced (e.g. in music of Earle Brown and Krzysztof Penderecki), the notations of these composers tend to suggest choreographies of movements to be performed.

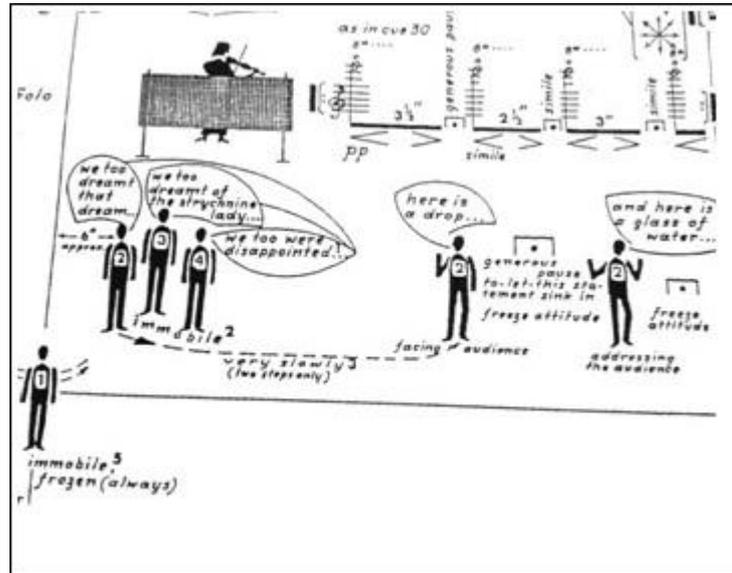
(Kojis 2009, 286)

The above definition of action-based music corresponds to the soloist's and actors' parts in *Strychnine Lady*; their notation suggests their physical movement, as they are instructed in meticulous detail as to what actions they should do and how should they perform them. Christou directs hand position, body posture and movement of the head, through a choreographic series of symbols followed by verbal instructions. This also coincides with a common aspect of action-based notation.

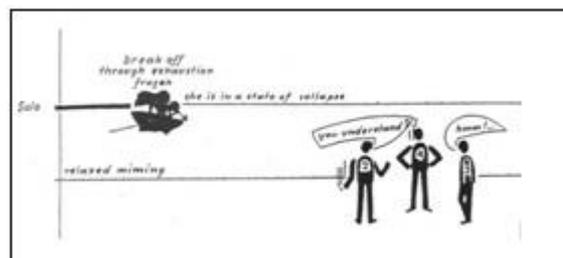
Such notation engages symbols capable of suggesting at once the means (hands, forearm, etc.) and the approach (open fingers, side of hand, etc). Action choreographies are frequently displayed through transparent graphics and verbal instructions.

(Kojis 2011, 65–66)

The following examples from *Strychnine Lady* serve to illustrate this:



Example 17. Jani Christou, *Strychnine Lady*, cue 31.



Example 18. Jani Christou, *Strychnine Lady*, cue 58.

### Jani Christou's music notation: Aesthetic and/or practical intent?

An important question is raised when considering any unconventional new music notation system: is the system invented with the purpose of establishing an aesthetic intent, or does the system simply concern practical matters that ease the performance and the actual realisation of the work? Certainly, this question applies in the case of Christou's unconventional music semiographic system. It should be acknowledged that

these two purposes may not form a straight either/or proposition. Both will be closely examined and discussed below.

In the case of Christou, it is difficult to discuss the aesthetic position because he strongly rejected aesthetics as a concern in his works. He seems to use the term to describe something in particular and does not necessarily use it with its common function. Before discussing any aesthetic position or/and practicalities in the composer's music notation system, I should examine the composer's 'A Credo for Music', in which he declared his views with regard to music; some of his points are related to aesthetics. But what does the composer mean by aesthetics?

### **Aesthetics and 'A Credo for Music'**

As already stated, Christou first conceived his new music notation system in 1965. This is an important date in Christou studies, since it marks the start of a new compositional period in which the composer established his concepts and deepened the substance of his patterns with ritualistic and archetypal aspects. In addition, his works from this date on no longer concern music purely, but form an amalgam with other elements.

These points are supported by the composer's publication in early 1966 of a clear thesis concerning music, in the form of a manifesto titled 'A Credo for Music'. This text was published in the journal *Epoches* on the request of his friend George Leotsakos. After an introduction, Christou classifies his beliefs in ten points concerning the music of his time, the aim of music and music in general. Although the text is mostly concerned with Christou's music in general, there are, however, some points that are related to Christou's development of his notation:

(iv) For both listener and composer the danger is of being seduced by the whore of decoration and aesthetics.

[...]

(vi): ‘Decoration and aesthetics have been and are powerful negative factors in music’.

[...]

(viii): ‘Every age experiences transformations within an aesthetic characteristic of that particular age’.

[ix]: ‘The obvious transplantation of an aesthetic of one age to another or even a generation to a generation is not only futile and invalid but is also a declaration of spiritual bankruptcy’

[x]: ‘Contrary to what is commonly held against music of our day, its frequent jarring and shock-provoking methods can be symptoms of the necessity for liberation from an inherited aesthetic and worn-out patterns of thought.’

(Christou 1966, in The official Jani Christou website 2014)

These points reveal, amongst other things, that Christou was aware of the need to reject previous aesthetics, in order to discover a new musical language that would not be a simple reproduction of previous views. Therefore, he rejected, in his own way, the axioms of previous ages, including music notation. Conventional notation, which belonged to another era, wasn't sufficient to meet the needs of his works, which were created on new concepts; Christou felt a need to escape from this situation and so he invented a new, personal system of notation. However, it may be argued that this is also an aesthetic position. It is difficult to believe that Christou, a former philosophy student at Cambridge and an enthusiastic philosophy scholar up to the end of his life, would confuse this terminology, especially given that this particular text was published. How, then, does he define the term aesthetics?

It is interesting to note in the previous quotation that the composer uses the words ‘decoration’ and ‘aesthetics’ in the same sentence. In particular, he declares that decoration and aesthetics are negative factors that seduce composers as well as listeners, like a ‘whore’. Yet, he recognises that every age has its particular aesthetic characteristics, through which it experiences transformations; the latter concerns the transformation of acoustical energies into music, and according to the composer in the same text, ‘the meaning of music is a function of our possibility of experiencing such transformations’. The fact that Christou recognises that each era has its specific aesthetic characteristics and that transformations are experienced through them contrasts with his rejection of aesthetics. This does not indicate that Christou didn’t know what he was talking about, of course, but that he wanted to communicate his specific and well thought out view. I will explain this statement in the following paragraphs.

It should be remembered that Christou lived in Greece, where during the 1960s music education in music schools was strictly concerned with classical harmony and the classical forms of music. There were certainly people with progressive ideas and composers who experimented with new compositional directions; nevertheless, this was not a situation that generally characterised the Greek art scene. In his Credo, Christou openly supported the new movements. In my view, when he is discussing aesthetics here, Christou is concerned with the aesthetics of previous ages that were – and it could be argued still are – reproduced over and over. Classical aesthetics concerns a special attention to the beauty of sound, and a compositional process that is based on forms and perceptions of music belonging to past ages. This involves ‘worn-out’ patterns of thought that cannot achieve transformations. Hence, a music based on an aesthetics of the past is pointless, unoriginal and only acts as a decorative sound event. This is clearly seen in the extract below, from the same text:

A manipulation of acoustical events which fails to generate the transformatory energies achieves nothing other than the more or less aesthetic and decorative saturation of acoustical space. Even 'beautiful' music can leave one nauseated.

(Christou 1966, in The official Jani Christou website 2014)

Through his statements, Christou recognises the situation that existed in Greece in the 1960s and suggests that his generation should find its own way of artistic expression, free from the rules, forms and aesthetics given to them from previous ages. Furthermore, every age, according to him, has its own aesthetic characteristics, and people should experience their transformations through it, rather than reproducing past patterns of thought that are no longer alive and functional. By recognising every age's aesthetic characteristic, Christou shows that he does not reject any aesthetics in general, but only a limited meaning of the term.

### **The notation system**

Having clarified the meaning of aesthetics in Christou's text, I will return to the central topic of the present chapter: music notation. The question asked before was whether Christou created a notation system to fulfil purely practical needs, or if he did so in order to state an aesthetic position. By aesthetic position, I mean a position based on philosophical thought and a statement as the result of that; by no means am I referring to aesthetics as in the aspect of beauty in music.

I argue that Christou created a new, personal compositional system to fulfil practical needs, but only as these needs were shaped by his philosophical thought. Hence, this system is built both on practical necessity and an aesthetic statement.

As discussed in previous chapters, Christou's aim was not to compose works for their own sake, but to create compositions that would have a deep effect on both listeners and performers that were related to the archetypal world of the unconscious and the primitive elements therein. Hence, the final outcome for Christou did not relate to the works as sounds or pieces of art, but rather their ability to act as vehicles for communicating elements of the unconscious. This is an aesthetic position in relation to the nature and function of music, but at the same time it creates some practical necessities. One of these is the need to notate sufficiently the compositional material and its sequence, so as to transfer all the ideas and thoughts on which the composition has been based.

Going further, conventional notation was no longer able to record Christou's complex ideas, philosophical and musical concepts. This can be seen in a letter, in which Christou provides information about his output and explains what compositional necessities led him to the creation of his semiographic system.

From his opus one, *Phoenix music* (1949), up until his late works, Christou dealt constantly with the concept of patterns. In a letter found in the *Anaparastasis I & III* file, dated 1969, he explains this to Rufina Ampenoff, to whom he sent some of his works. There is no indication as to why Christou sent a letter to this person; it seems, however, that it concerns a professional correspondence. Christou starts the letter by saying that it was nice to have met her in Athens and by apologising for the delay in sending his scores. He mentions Yannis Papaioannou, who is apparently the link between the two, as he refers to the latter's suggestion of sending Ampenoff scores from various periods of his compositional output. Christou seems to be in the uncomfortable position of having to explain his works and their conceptual framework:

I normally feel uncomfortable with too many explanations, which so often are unconscious – or conscious – camouflages for weaknesses of the music itself. But since you are getting so many scores, some sort of an introduction may prove helpful. I shall try to be brief, but I'm not certain that I won't be falling into the same trap myself.

(Christou 1969)

The above shows that Christou didn't feel comfortable in explaining his works, which is odd considering his extensive writings concerning his philosophical and musical concepts. He is even apologetic and criticises his own compositions. However, this letter is useful as it presents the composer in a condition in which he has to write something general and explain his output, from the early works up to 1969 – just months before his tragic death. Hence, we are able to have a summary of Christou's most complete view of his own work.

Christou deals with the concept of patterns from his early compositions until his last works. Regardless of the various changes in his compositions and their notation, the concept of patterns is his 'one direction':

The selection represents periods beginning with my first student effort (1949) up to 1968. Yet although my techniques kept evolving, or, at any rate, changing, they did so along a single direction – I think! There is some consistency, in that throughout I am concerned with the concept of PATTERN, the phenomenon whereby events proliferate through various types of repetition and are multiplied in time, according to the 'phoenix' principle (beginning – drama – end/beginning). Nothing new here! Only growing awareness of this phenomenon.

(Christou 1969)

In the above extract, Christou identifies clearly the importance of the concept of patterns with regard to the development of his compositional processes. This is an important aspect to note, since all of the changes in his compositions were made in the direction of patterns. A major evolution in Christou's compositional work was his new, personal musical notation. As will be seen in other extracts from the same letter, this is also related to patterns, which Christou considered the way of 'becoming' a composer, of producing music material.

The approach to this concept [patterns] kept changing, even considerably. At first, music is taken for granted, and is technically unquestioning. There seems to be an emphasis on the physical proliferation of material according to patterns, from elementary forms of multiplication (repetition) to more complex types involving permutations of several factors simultaneously. Not that I thought that that was the object of music. Rather, that was how I could produce material, become a 'composer'! This attitude, of course, did not yet make it necessary to depart from more or less established forms.

(Christou 1969)

In this extract, Christou is discussing his early compositional periods, when he still used conventional notation. During these periods, conventional notation and other technical issues were not questioned, as his central aim as a composer was to explore how to generate material according to the concept of patterns. In fact, the works of his early periods are built upon the first processes of patterns, which concern the more technical aspects; it may be said that these processes consist of the birth of the concept of patterns and the early stages in their 'growth'. The latter is gradually developed in the later

compositional periods, within a mood of rejection and questioning. This leads to the need of invention of a new, more personal and unconventional music notation system, as the composer explains:

Yet, later, this was to lead to those darker, perhaps unfathomable questions about the redemption of one's material, however formally justifiable whether the material which one produces so smugly relates to one's self, whether it is 'meaningful', or relevant. And this, amongst other things, leads to a questioning of musical processes in general, and of the attitudes and expectations which music-making seems to imply.

At about this point it became necessary to develop a personal notation (MYSTERION, 1965, AND PRAXIS FOR 12, 1966 [*sic*]) are representative of this stage).

(Christou 1969)

It is evident that the development of patterns in the works of 1965–66 led naturally to the invention of Christou's notation system. The composer went further from the more technical aspects of patterns and enriched their concept with deeper questions related to their meaning. 1966 is the year in which Christou writes his so-called 'Credo for Music'<sup>37</sup> and it was a determining moment as from here on he established his concepts more clearly and enriched his compositions with extra-musical elements and musical concepts based on his philosophical thought. It is likely that during this period Christou created his personal notation in order to be able to record all the new elements and express the evolved substance of his patterns.

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<sup>37</sup> See above.

Another factor that shows how Christou's notation system was created, as well as its nature and function, is the fact that this system was not static; it constantly changed and was always enriched with new aspects according to the requirements of each work or each compositional period. For example, after the works of 1965–66, Christou developed his compositional methods even more, with the patterns growing to gain a completely archetypal and philosophical substance; the works after 1966 take the form of rituals and are staged in a dramatic form.

I will probably be even more awkward with my description of the present phase. Briefly, it is centred in a climate of ritual. The concern with the pattern is now a growing concern with what lies to the root of a pattern, at the root of proliferation of events in general. Not that this is a concern to discover some 'ultimate key' (a rather common misunderstanding). But is a concern with what I describe – for want of a better word – as 'proto-performance', the performances of what is at the origin, a re-enactment of something that strikes one as a key-event (and anything, however common, may be seen as an expression of a key-event), a master-pattern, something like the central, numinous event of a myth, a timeless gesture, a timeless drama, or fragment of a drama.

(Christou 1969)

Hence, the composer starts to use pictorial representation of the participants (actors, soloists etc), leading to the addition of action-based notation, in order to express the new dimension of his works: stage performance.

The assumption made here is that Christou invented his personal music notation system in order to serve the practical needs of his works, as these needs were formed by his

ideas and thoughts about music and composition. His aim was thus to express more completely his complex ideas regarding the development of the patterns, which was the most crucial aspect of his compositions. This is obvious from letter quoted in this section, in which the composer seemingly for the first time outlined his output and the basic ideas behind his compositions and notation.

### **The nature of the 'contract' that Christou attempts to establish with his performers**

After discussing how Christou's notation system was developed, in response to what needs, and how it was based on his philosophical system, the next question concerns the functionality of the system and its relation to the performers. Christou was deeply affected by his experience in writing music for theatre, where he had the chance to work with actors. The process of the rehearsals and the actual theatre performances apparently gave him important clues as to how he felt music should be performed. Actors learn their roles through their personal work in learning their lines as well as through collective work during rehearsals. During rehearsals they practice, they act, they interact and in fact they build the work. Up to this point, the process is similar to that of preparing a music performance. The only difference is that actors don't follow any instructions while performing, unlike musicians who have their music scores and can read the music. While on stage, there are no more guidelines; only memory and built reflexes. According to Christou, this is how musicians should work too. The following quotation illustrates this suggestion:

The way I notate music now, and the use of random effects (in controlled overall plans) means that rehearsals are more like theatre rehearsals; the players practice together trying out various possibilities. Ideally, the instrumentalists should learn their roles, like actors. They should avoid using

their orchestral parts during a performance... The use of textures or patterns for groups suits this purpose, as these are easy to memorize, and each player has only to recall one or two basic requirements. He is then stimulated by the conductor and by his own involvement (and the 'memory' acquired during rehearsals).

(Christou 1966, in Lucciano 2000, 97)

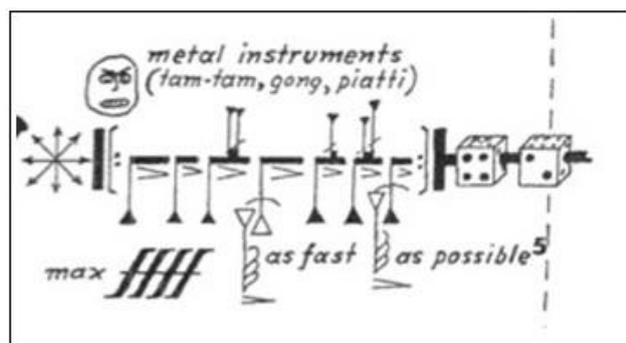
Evidently, Christou's notation is closely related to his view of the performance of music. His late works are no longer dealing with music per se, but they involve other elements, such as drama, with the aim of a 'ritual re-enactment'. It is reasonable why Christou should consider a performance without any scores as the ideal: participation in a ritual cannot be successful while reading and carrying out tasks, it requires an authentic experience of the specified situation and some reflexes built during rehearsals. This means that music scores are not only no longer needed, but are indeed obstacles; just as in theatre performances and, indeed, rituals.

Hence, Christou realised the importance of inventing a notation that would act as a rehearsal guide and not a performance score. This notation gives certain clues, in a generally controlled situation, that provide some elements of chance as well as elements determined by personal interpretation (an example of this is the visual representations in the score). Henceforth, musicians can actually work as actors: they can work on different interpretations, try out various possibilities, define and learn their parts and, finally, create a performance. According to Christou, this is a liberating process for the performers – and for the composer as well:

Why the non-conventional writing? Answer: to free the performer (and composer) from inhibiting complexities and to provoke an uninhibited delivery of the event as ‘suggested’ by the pictorial or optical layout. (Graphic, and, [much less so] optical notation are a step nearer to the composer’s original idea).

(Christou 1965, in Lucciano 2000, 96–97)

Christou identifies a freedom in visual representations pertaining to synthetic notation. In the performers’ case freedom lies in the direct, first unconscious and then conscious, visual experience, which will be unswervingly translated into a sound by the reader-performer. In the composer’s case, freedom lies in the possibility of drawing something in the way in which it was originally conceived, without any need to describe it using music terminology or notation. This is a process of limitation that risks shifting from the initial idea. Example 20 illustrates the above points and is taken from cues 26 and 27 of the *Strychnine Lady* score. I will also focus on shorter fractions of this page, with the intention of discussing the implications of visual representations. Example 19 shows a detail from cue 27, percussion part.



**Example 19. Visual representations, example i.**

Although Example 19 only constitutes a short segment of time, it includes a variety of different visual representations. First, the composer draws a face, showing the temper in

which this passage should be performed and creating an immediate visual impression before the performer has even read any words. There are no other instructions that refer to the temper and the ambiance of this passage, and the composer communicates immediately what he has in mind without translating it into musical terms and thus provides the original idea without any interventions. Besides, it is extremely difficult to describe in musical terms, as well as generally in words, an ambiance. The impact on the performers is also immediate, as they experience this instruction visually, without having to interpret standard musical instructions that are then frequently stylised and performed in an established way. Therefore, the only medium between the instruction in the score and the actual performance is the performer's perception; this gives rise to each individual's fantasy, adding to an original performance, which is one of the composer's central intentions.

Example 21 is taken from the parts of the actors and the viola soloist. At this point, the violist is standing behind a metal sheet whilst the actors stand in front of it, frozen. They suddenly unfreeze and start shouting words from the previously heard Latin text, while they take a pair of drumsticks each, from the floor, and beating furiously on the metal sheet.

The effect of the visual representations here serves the same intention: to convey the initial idea as directly as possible. Therefore, the illustrations aim to direct the movement of the actors and the viola soloist, without needing to describe it in verbal detail. They provide the picture as it was in the composer's head.



Hence, the performers can instantly see what they should produce without following detailed verbal instructions, which in this case could lead to ambiguity. Let's not forget that, as mentioned in earlier sections, *Strychnine Lady* is performed in a generally controlled environment, conveyed by the composer himself with instructions like these. The composer states clearly where and when there are elements of improvisation and chance, and to what degree, and in the same way he provides the performer with detailed instructions, such as the above visual representations, in order to demonstrate the exact way in which a passage should be performed. Where is the freedom, then? The freedom the composer suggests lies in the way in which he notates, liberated from the use of standard instructions. In the performer's case, the freedom pertains to the process of understanding the composer's instructions clearly and being liberated from unnecessary and confusing instructions, which can lead to uncertainty and vagueness.

Christou's works notated using this personal system are very clear and comprehensible. The composer gives detailed instructions as to how to use the score; nonetheless, the score itself is a meticulous guide to unlocking the performance of the work. The score provides all the information about what happens in each stage, by whom and when. The synthetic notation gives visual representations, which help the performer, whilst the measured, more conventional notation provides exact details when these are necessary. The proportional notation is helpful in realising the narrative process of the work, and the action-based notation follows the movements of the actors and soloist on stage. The performers also empowered by the way in which Christou puts all these types of notation together: he only notates when required and when a group or an individual performs something. This way, the clues are much clearer and the pages only contain what is necessary, a fact that eases reading. An example of this is illustrated in Example

22. Here, no individuals or groups of instruments are required to play; the score only contains the actions that are actually taking place at this particular place of the work.

This method of notating also provides the reader with a detailed pre-performance of the work. The fact that the reader can only see the events and gestures taking place at each stage of the work creates a strange visual engagement with it. It feels like ‘watching’, in a way, the performance of the work, page by page, event by event, gesture by gesture. With each page every musical event comes and goes, while we watch a series of actions taking place among the actors and soloists, following their extremely detailed pictographic representations. The reader of the music score, and in particular, that of *Strychnine Lady*, can immediately understand and visualise the final result of the work.

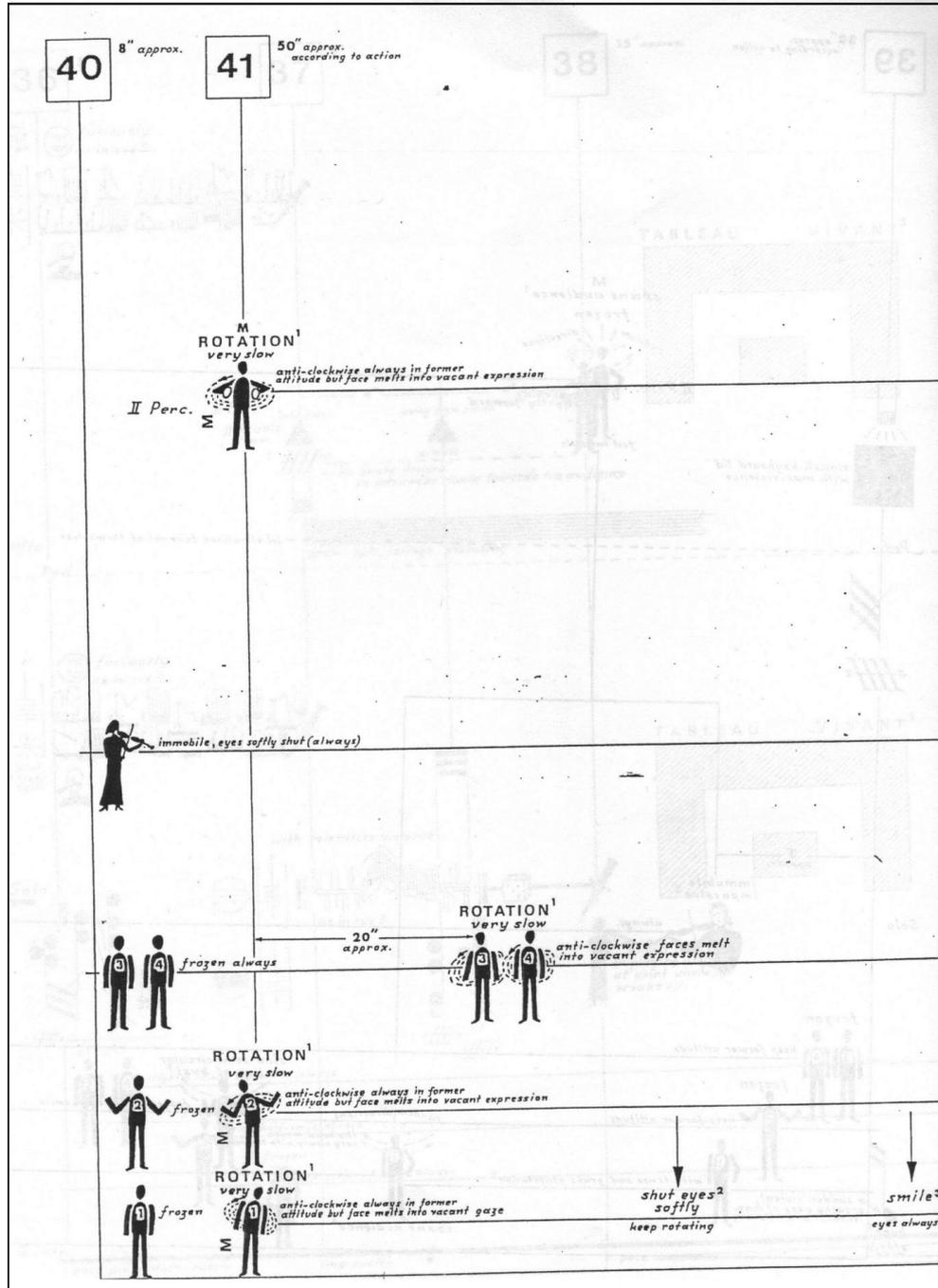
### **Christou’s music notation and his philosophical thought**

Finally, there is another philosophical concept concerning Christou’s compositions, which is related to the invention of this system: the concept of praxis and metapraxis. Although definitions and an extended analysis of these concepts have been given in earlier chapter, I present a short explanation below for the sake of greater understanding:

Any living art keeps generating an overall logic fed by a collectivity of characteristic actions. Whenever an action is purposefully performed to conform with the current overall logic characteristic of the art, that action is a ‘praxis’, or a purposeful and characteristic of action. But whenever an action is purposefully performed so as to go beyond the current overall logic characteristic of the art, that action is a ‘metapraxis’, or a purposeful non-characteristic action: a ‘meta-action’. Thus, in the performing arts, any action which requires its performer to go beyond the current logic of the medium to which he belongs, requires him to

go beyond the logic of his world of action, as it were. That action is a 'meta-praxis', and it is purposefully 'non-characteristic'.

(Christou 1968)



Example 22. Jani Christou, *Strychnine Lady*, cue 40–41.

If we consider conventional notation as a characteristic action of the time, as it conforms to the overall logic characteristic of the art in the 1960s, then it is argued that Christou's invention and use of a new notation is his personal metapraxis. Of course metapraxis, as seen earlier, is a Christean concept concerning performance; hence, the intention here in using the word metapraxis, is to show through its meaning an excess in music notation, and not to suggest that metapraxis as a term could be applied in notation practice. On that note, Christou went beyond the conventionally expected and created something different. But at the same time it was tightly connected to the conventional. This lies in the various ways in which Christou recorded his ideas, which share common states with conventional notation: he records his ideas on paper, he creates a music score, this score is read from left to right, it contains notes, and so on. The metapraxis is related to going beyond all of these; in other words it concerns a personal excess.

Certainly, many composers in the 1960s were also exploring new notations, so it could be argued that the metapraxis of new notation was rendered into a praxis as it became more widespread. However, during that period, new notations were not the norm; hence, they did not become praxis until much later. Perhaps, then, we could speak of a general metapraxis of music notation in the 1960s, of which Christou was a part.

## **Conclusion**

The aim of this chapter was first to present and clarify Christou's music notation system, as this was applied in his late works and in particular *Strychnine Lady*, and furthermore, to critically discuss its various aspects. This discussion led to several assumptions; the first, is that Christou invented a new, personal music notation system

out of practical necessities, although these were formed by his new philosophical thought. The latter was supported by an examination of Christou's 'A Credo for Music', a manifesto-text in which he outlines his views in art, published in 1966 when he began to use this new notation. Therefore, this invention concerns both practical necessities and an aesthetic-philosophical position. Moreover, Christou, while outlining his notation system, discusses three types of notation; nevertheless, this study suggests, for the first time in the field of Christou studies, that Christou used a fourth type of notation: action-based. Finally, it is argued that Christou's notation system was his personal metapragmatics.

## Chapter 10: Conclusions

This final chapter aims to summarise the main findings and arguments articulated in the previous chapters, and to assess the contribution of these to our understanding of Jani Christou's work and his significance as a composer in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As mentioned in the first chapter, Christou presents a case of a composer whose reputation could be described as having been embryonic since the time of his death in 1970, until the recent interest of a young generation of scholars brought him once more into the light. Hence, one of the major aspirations of the present thesis is to elucidate some of the unknown, or little known, aspects of his ideas and his output, and to provide evidence either to confirm or to challenge some hypotheses frequently encountered in Christou studies. Via a close reading of *Strychnine Lady*, my strategy is thus to attempt to identify and clarify the nature of this work's significance for us today.

My approach has followed several principles. A fundamental one was to stay away from the myth created around Christou that regards him as a mystic being: this is a reputation that has sometimes led to the dissemination of unjustified assumptions. I have tried to discover direct and verifiable links between *Strychnine Lady* and disciplines related to spirituality, Jungian psychology and alchemy. I have therefore, first questioned the composer's posthumous reputation, the journalism around Christou that has helped to fuel this reputation and, generally, any source that does not support its statements with arguments. Second, I have undertaken extensive research based on the direct connections suggested by the work itself to the archival material to which I have had access. I have, by these means, been able to confirm some of the associations

previously made between *Strychnine Lady* and other disciplines with properly evidenced and justified arguments.

The findings of the above approach are illustrated in Chapters 7 and 8. The thesis provides the reader with a close reading of particular parts of *Strychnine Lady* and presents connections between this work and the ideas of Jung, including the theory of archetypes. Chapter 7, in particular, not only validates some assumptions previously made by others, but goes further and deploys Jung's theories to open up an interpretation of the score of the work itself.

In the same way, I have investigated the relationship of *Strychnine Lady* to theories and practices falling under the umbrella term of 'spirituality'. Before any analysis or correlation with such discourses, I have first developed a close reading of specific passages in *Strychnine Lady* that have led me to particular assumptions, and I have subsequently explored how these relate to the composer's unpublished writings. As a result, I have attempted to prove the work's correlations with spirituality as observed in Christou's own study of the theories of Mircea Eliade, and in spiritual practices such as rituals, as suggested by writings found in the archival files.

It is of particular importance to highlight the significance of the archival findings to the present research since, as stated in earlier chapters, there is a lack of published research on Christou in general, and in particular on *Strychnine Lady*. Any analytical

attempt that excludes findings from the archive would be severely diminished and might actually contain errors. My research has included extensive work in the Christou archive, from where I gathered information from various different folders, analysed these findings and discovered associations with *Strychnine Lady*. Without the archival material, it would be extremely difficult to validate some of the assumptions made on the research paths followed in the thesis. In addition, it was through ideas suggested by the archival material that I was able to identify the way in which Christou worked in composing *Strychnine Lady* and, hence, to provide new data to elucidate new knowledge in the field of Christou studies.

A particular instance of the above approach can be found in Chapter 3, in which I challenge current assumptions regarding the source of this work's inspiration. Existing sources state that *Strychnine Lady* was created following a dream that the composer had; however, my research in the archive proves that the work had been sketched out over a period of several years prior to the occurrence of this dream, thus giving the dream itself the role of what we may term the 'soul' within the 'body' of the composition. The importance of this repositioning of the dream's function in Christou's compositional process lies, not least, in the insights that it gives into the composer's working methods; proving that, for Christou, the composition of a work could be a lengthy matter, as ideas gestated over what could be several years until he was ready to create exactly what he had in his mind.

Another important aspect of the thesis is the further analysis of Christou's compositional process itself, including discussion of his complex concepts and also the

invention of his personal music notation system. The present thesis is one of very few attempts to provide an examination of this conceptual territory, which often presents challenging connections with philosophy and psychology. An example of this concerns Christou's concept of metapraxis, familiar from many earlier writings on the composer; in the present thesis, this is openly questioned in the course of a comparison between Christou and two major composers and thinkers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, John Cage and Mauricio Kagel. Here I attempt to highlight the distinctiveness of metapraxis as a concept by providing an in-depth analysis of the composer's writings referring to the subject.

Going further on the subject of comparisons, there is, in addition, an account of the comparison between Christou's late works and the experimental theatre of the 60s in Chapter 7; this is undertaken in an effort to clarify another dimension of the composer's contribution to broader currents in 20<sup>th</sup>-century music. This chapter also describes some of the composer's earlier work in the theatre, and assesses the significance of this involvement, and its impact on *Strychnine Lady* and his late works in general.

Concerning the issue of Christou's notation, the thesis seeks to clarify the thinking behind his system of notation, using the composer's 'A Credo for Music' (1966) as a guide. It also explores more generally his thoughts as recorded in texts written during the period in which he invented this system. My research shows that Christou created a personal notation system to fulfil the new needs of his post-1965 compositions; however, this approach to notation also corresponds more generally to the aesthetic

stance articulated in 'A Credo for Music'. As a consequence, I argue that these practicalities were shaped by aesthetic considerations; and that, therefore, the invention of this new system involves aesthetic issues as well as practical ones. The present research is the first, so far as is known, to attempt to provide an account of Christou's intentions in inventing a new notation system for himself, and one of the few commentaries on the composer's music notation to include any detailed analysis of it.

Finally, the thesis also proposes directions towards further research. Each chapter suggests topics for further examination, since an initial attempt at a holistic analysis of *Strychnine Lady* such as that contained here could not possibly be comprehensive. However, the importance of the present thesis ultimately lies, for its author, in its search for a valid and solid basis on which to build the Christou scholarship of the future.

## Appendices

1. Chronological list of works
2. Letter to Rufena Ampenoff (the Jani Christou archive)
3. Note from the Jani Christou archive: The dream.
4. Note from the Jani Christou archive: The work for viola
5. Note from the Jani Christou archive: Red colour and Rubedo
6. Note from the Jani Christou archive: Christou on performing musicians
7. Note from the Jani Christou archive: The dream as compositional material

## App. 1 Chronological list of works

### Early Works (not acknowledged by the composer and now lost)

*Fantasia* for piano 1943 1<sup>st</sup> perf: H. Hickman, Cairo, Oriental Hall, 26<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1944

*Sonata* for two pianos 1<sup>st</sup> perf. J. Christou, Gina Bachauer, Alexandria, Cinema Royal, 4<sup>th</sup> June 1944

*Everyone sang a poem* for soprano and piano (1944)

Prelude and Fugue for two pianos (1944?)

*Allegro quasi una fantasia* in E flat major for piano (1944)

Untitled piece for ensemble and two pianos (date unknown)

### Works acknowledged by the composer

*Phoenix Music* for orchestra – five movements (1948–49) 1<sup>st</sup> perf. New London Orchestra, cond. A. Sherman, London, Royal Opera House, 5<sup>th</sup> March 1950

*Symphony No. 1* for mezzo-soprano and orchestra (1951) 1<sup>st</sup> perf. S. Houston, sop. New London Orch. cond. Sherman, Albert Hall, 29<sup>th</sup> April 1951

*Latin Mass* for mixed chorus, brass and percussion (1953) see also *Symphony No. 2* 1<sup>st</sup> perf. Salonika Chorus, Greek Contemporary Music Group, cond. Y. Mandakas, Athens, Rex Theatre, 26<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1971

*Six Songs on Poems by T. S. Eliot* (1955–57) for piano and mezzo (orchestrated 1957) 1<sup>st</sup> perf. A. Gabbai mez. P. Guarino pf., The British Institute, Alexandria, 13<sup>th</sup> Jan 1956

*Symphony No. 2* for orchestra and mixed chorus (1954–58)

1<sup>st</sup> perf. The Symphony Orchestra and Chorus of the Hellenic Radio. Conductor:  
Miltiadis Caridis. Herod Atticus Theatre, Athens, 4<sup>th</sup> August 1987

*Patterns and Permutations* for large orchestra (1960) 1<sup>st</sup> perf. Athens State Orch. cond.  
A. Paridis, Athens, Rex Theatre, 11<sup>th</sup> March 1963

*Toccata* for Piano and orchestra (1962) 1<sup>st</sup> perf. G. Pludermacher, RPO, cond. E.  
Shapira, Oxford Town Hall, 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1971

*Prometheus Bound* for orchestra, tape and actors (1963) 1<sup>st</sup> perf. Epidaurus 16<sup>th</sup> June  
1963

*Greece : The Inner World* – Music for the television program, by Robert Graves (1963)

*Agamemnon* for orchestra, tape and actors (1964) 1<sup>st</sup> perf. Epidaurus, 27<sup>th</sup> June 1965

*Tongues of Fire* for soloists, chorus and orchestra (1964) text – Greek New Testament  
1<sup>st</sup> perf. I. Kolassi-Mez, Gerald English, K. Paskalis, English Bach Festival Chorus and  
Orchestra, cond. Guarino, Oxford, St. Mary, 27 June 1964

*The Persians* for instruments, tape and actors (1965) 1<sup>st</sup> perf. London, Aldwych Theatre,  
20<sup>th</sup> April 1965

*Mysterion* – an oratorio for narrator, three choruses, tape, orchestra and actors (1965–  
66) 1<sup>st</sup> perf. Athens 13<sup>th</sup> June 1974

*The Frogs* after Aristophanes (1966) 1<sup>st</sup> perf. Athens, Herod of Atticus Theatre, 19<sup>th</sup>  
July 1966

*Praxis for 12* for 11 strings and one pianist/conductor (1966) 1<sup>st</sup> perf. Accademia  
Musicale Napoletana Chamber Orch, cond. Guarino, Athens, Zappeion Building, 18<sup>th</sup>  
April 1966

*Strychnine Lady* for solo viola, five actors, IE, tapes, toys and a red cloth (1967) 1<sup>st</sup> perf.  
Rhoda Lee Rhea, Hellenic Week of Contemporary Music Ens. cond. D. Agrafiotis,

Athens, Hilton Hotel, 3<sup>rd</sup> April 1967

*Oedipus Rex* (Sophocles) Film Score 1967–68

*Anaparastasis III: The Pianist* for actor, instrumental ensemble and tapes (1968) 1<sup>st</sup> perf. Grigoris Semitolo, Studio fur neue Musik, cond. Antoniou, Munich, Musikhochschule, 12<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1968

*Anaparastasis I astronkatidhanykteronomighyrin* (I have become familiar with the nightly concourse of the stars) for baritone, viola and instrumental ensemble (1968) 1<sup>st</sup> perf. Spyros Sakkas, Studio fur neue Musik, cond. Antoniou, Munich, Musikhochschule, 12<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1968

*Epicycle* (1968) variable instrumentation 1<sup>st</sup> perf. Zouzou Nicoloudi Dance Group and others, Athens, Hilton Hotel, 20<sup>th</sup> Dec 1968

*Enantiodromia* for orchestra (1965–68)

### **Works considered as lost**

*Psalms of David* for baritone, chorus and orchestra (1953)

*The Conception of St. Anne* for mezzo-soprano, chorus and orchestra (1955)

*La ruota della vita* (The Wheel of Life) Trilogy of Operas (libretti: de Paulis)

1 - *Una mamma*

2 - *Savitri*

3 - *Il trionfo della morte*

*Gilgamesh* (oratorio) (1955–58)

Piano Concerto (1962)

*The 12 Keys* (based on medieval alchemical texts) for mezzo-soprano and ensemble

(1962)

*The Ship of Death* for mezzo-soprano and orchestra (1963)

*The Breakdown* (opera) (1963–64)

*The Testament* for mezzo-soprano, flute, contra-basso and piano (1964)

### **Incomplete works**

*Anaparastases:*

‘Stoning I (Lapidation I)’ for instrumental ensemble (1966)

‘The Ship’ ritual music based on ancient Egyptian customs for instrumental ensemble (1966)

‘Walk I’ for instrumental ensemble (1966)

‘Advertisement’ for instrumental ensemble (1966)

‘Continuity’ for instrumental ensemble (1967)

‘Anaparastasis II (the ritualization of eating)’ for instrumental ensemble (1967)

‘Clock’ for one actor and instrumental ensemble (1967)

‘Dream’ for instrumental ensemble (1967)

‘Aspirin’ for one actor and instrumental ensemble (1967)

‘Water Music’ for electronic music and instrumental ensemble

‘Piano I’ for one pianist-actor (1968)

‘Lecture I’ for one male speaker and tapes (1968)

‘Lecture II’ for one pretty female speaker and instrumental ensemble (1968)

‘Stoning II (Lapidation II)’ for film (optical sound) (1968)

‘Piano II’ for one pianist-actor (1968)

‘Anaparastasis IV (The Screaming Mother)’ for two actresses (1968)

‘Consecration’ without music (1968)

‘Prosodion’ with or without music (1968)

‘Pattern’ for instrumental ensemble (1968)

‘Pattern and Antipattern’ for singer-actor and instrumental ensemble (1968)

‘Piano III’ for one pianist-actor (1968)

‘Dissociation’ for instrumental ensemble (1968)

‘The Death of Calchas’ for two actors and instrumental ensemble (1968)

‘Have you cut of her hands?’ for instrumental ensemble (1968)

‘Pendulum’ for instrumental ensemble (1968)

‘Walk II’ for instrumental ensemble (1968)

‘Music Evoked’ for one actor (1968)

‘Praxis and Metapraxis’ for solo pianist (based on Toccata of 1963) (1968)

‘Silent Praxis for instrumental ensemble’ (1968)

‘Let me try, too’ for two actors-musicians Sins for a group of actors

‘Moving my arms in an unusual way’ for instrumental ensemble (1968)

*Oresteia*. Designed by the composer as a ‘contemporary opera’ based on the Aeschylean trilogy in a free adaptation for soloists, actors, instrumentalists, chorus, orchestra, tape and visual effects.

## App. 2: Letter to Rufena Ampenoff (the Jani Christou archive)

Forwarding address:

Miss Rufina Ampenoff,  
Beesey & Hawkes,  
295 Regent Street,  
London, W.1

7th June, 1969

Dear Miss Ampenoff,

It was nice seeing you in Athens. Please forgive the delay in sending you a few of my scores. Things do keep piling up and I don't seem to be coping efficiently!

But I will now arrange for a selection of scores to be forwarded, before I leave for Copenhagen next week - where the TV production of my MYSTERION (world premier), in masks and costume, will occupy me for the rest of the month of June.

Mr. Papaioannou has asked me to send scores representative of various periods of my output so far, so you will get some seven scores, I'm afraid.

I normally feel uncomfortable with too many explanations, which so often are unconscious - or conscious - camouflages for weaknesses of the music itself. But since you are getting so many scores, some sort of an introduction may prove helpful. I shall try to be brief, but I'm not certain that I won't be falling into the same trap myself!

.....

The selection represents periods beginning with my first student effort (1949) up to 1968. Yet although my techniques kept evolving, or, at any rate, changing, they did so along a single direction - I think! There is some consistency, in that throughout I was concerned with the concept of PATTERN, the phenomenon whereby events proliferate through various types of repetition and are multiplied in time, building up larger forms, larger patterns, according to the "phoenix" principle (beginning - drama - end/beginning). Nothing new here! Only a growing awareness of this phenomenon.

The approach to this concept kept changing, even considerably. At first, music is taken for granted, and is technically unquestioning. There seems to be an emphasis on the physical proliferation of material according to pattern, from elementary forms of multiplication (repetition) to more complex types involving permutations of several factors simultaneously. Yet that I thought that that was the object of music. Rather, that was how I could produce material, became a "composer"! This attitude, of course, did not yet make it necessary to depart from more or less established forms.

-2-

Yet, later, this was to lead to those darker, perhaps unfathomable questions about the redemption of one's material, however formally justifiable: whether the material which one produces so snugly relates to one's self, whether it is "meaningful", or relevant. And this, amongst other things, leads to a questioning of musical processes in general, and of the attitudes and expectations which music-making seems to imply. At about this point it became necessary to develop a personal notation (MYSTERION, 1965, and PRAXIS FOR TWELVE, 1966) are representative of this stage).

I will probably be even more awkward with my description of the present phase. Briefly, it is centred in a climate of ritual. The concern with pattern is now a growing concern with what lies at the root of pattern, at the root of the proliferation of events in general. Not that this is a concern to discover some "ultimate key" (a rather common misunderstanding). But it is a concern with what I describe - for want of a better word - as "proto-performance": the performance of what is at the origin, a re-enactment of something that strikes one as a key-event (and anything, however common, may be seen as an expression of a key-event), a master-pattern, something like the central, numinous event of a myth, a timeless gesture, a timeless drama, or fragment of a drama.

This way of looking at patterns leads one away from history, or, rather, there is a struggle to see through history. Not as an escape, at least I don't think so. Because time, history becomes <sup>both</sup> burningly relevant (it produces "events", material) and burningly irrelevant (it dissolves). So that anything is both part of history and out of history. This double feeling is what my present work <sup>is</sup> about.

And this involves re-enactments: certain gestures, actions, become music, while the activity of "performing" becomes a re-enactment, and takes on the type of importance ~~that~~ participation in ritual. One of course should be careful with the comparison, ~~and~~.

Of the scores which I am sending you, ANAPARASTASIS\* (which means re-enactment) and EPICYCLE (a one page concept-score) are representative of this latest development, both written in 1968.

.....

*This is one of some forty pieces belonging to the same group.*

-3-

Finally, with regard to notation, you will notice that I have selected two types of scores: those written in conventional notation, and those with a different notation.

As far as pattern-manipulation is concerned, these scores written in conventional notation correspond to an earlier period in which patterns are fully worked out in advance according to systems ranging from simple repetitive devices to complex systems involving multiple permutations of several musical parameters. As representative of this earlier period I have selected:

- ✓ PHOENIX MUSIC (1949)
- ✓ PATTERNS AND PERMUTATIONS (1960)
- ✓ TONGUES OF FIRE (1964)

These scores using a different notation correspond to a later period in the development of pattern-manipulation. This is characterised by the introduction of the component of chance: the random factor takes its place alongside the set of specifications operating the multiplication of patterns. But not in the sense that a pattern is not being controlled. On the contrary, this chance component enhances the pattern action by creatively involving the physical perpetuator of the pattern: the performer. A "KEY", enclosed in ENANTIODROMIA, explains further. These considerations are amongst those which made it necessary for me to develop another notation. As representative of different aspects of this later period I have selected:

- ✓ PRAXIS FOR TWELVE (1966)
- ✓ ENANTIODROMIA (1968)
- ✓ ANAPARASTASIS (1968)
- ✓ EPICYCLE (1968)

.....

You should also be getting some tapes. Those easiest at hand are PATTERNS & PERMUTATIONS, TONGUES OF FIRE, ANAPARASTASIS, which should be sent off with or shortly after the scores.

Yours sincerely,

  
Jani Christou

Patterns

There is the concept TIME. This is approached through another concept: PATTERN, seen as the phenomenon whereby events proliferate through various types of repetition and are multiplied in time, building up larger forms, larger patterns, according to the "phoenix" principle (beginning - drama - end/beginning).

Amongst others, there are two approaches to these concepts: action (praxis) and meta-action (metapraxis).

Action (praxis) determines the multiplication of material through the manipulation of patterns, and this includes the formal processes ranging from elementary types of multiplication (repetition) to more complex types involving simultaneous permutations of various factors. (HISTORY)

Meta-action (metapraxis) is concerned with reaching out beyond "action", and this leads to PROTO-PERFORMANCE: the performance of "master-patterns" lying outside time, but which provide the "model" for patterns in time. There is a connection here with central "events" in myth: a "timeless" word, gesture or drama lying within the centre around which time revolves, as it were, spinning similar events in the environment and in history, proliferating patterns in time. (NON-HISTORY, "MYTH")

Earlier period: "Phoenix" patterns and praxis

Works written up to 1964 correspond more or less to the "action" approach. The type of pattern-manipulation during this period did not make it necessary to depart from a traditional notation and more or less established forms using "musical" parameters according to the "phoenix" principle (beginning - drama - end/beginning). Representative works of this period are:

- PHOENIX MUSIC
- 6 SONGS ON POEMS BY T.S.ELIOT
- PATTERNS & PERMUTATIONS
- TOCCATA FOR PIANOFORTE & ORCHESTRA
- TONGUES OF FIRE

Recent period: "Lunar" patterns and metapraxis

The meta-action approach begins with MYSTERION in 1965 and extends up to the present (1969). This approach to patterns made it necessary to abandon traditional notation and to develop another notation: SYNTHETIC NOTATION. This consists of a synthesis of various signs giving a total pictorial impact of the pattern action. The term also serves to underline the difference between this form of notation and ANALYTIC notation - used (particularly in part-notation) whenever synthetic notation is such as to necessitate decoding.

This approach introduces the "uncalculatable" factor operating upon the multiplication of patterns, and on all parameters generally (and opening up the way towards a music using para-"musical" components). This is represented by substituting the term "lunar pattern" for "phoenix principle": because although the lunar pattern also expresses the recycling process implied by the phoenix principle, there is an additional component: ECLIPSE, the symbol for the irrational interruption of the pattern action, a root image of the potential menace threatening all forms, all actions. Representative of this phase, in different ways, are:

- MYSTERION
- PRAXIS FOR TWELVE
- THE STRYCHNINE LADY
- ENANTIODROMIA
- EPICYCLE
- ANAPARASTASIS (a cycle of over forty works)



C.C. Papanicolaou

## App. 3 Note from the Jani Christou archive: The dream.

Title:

The "strychnine lady" is a character appearing in a dream dreamt in October 1966.

According to the dream <sup>who</sup> she has placed an advertisement in the Paris edition of the New York Herald Tribune promising certain experiences to all those interested in <sup>acquiring a drug of poison</sup> ~~her~~ strychnine.

~~To meet her~~

The work <sup>does</sup> not describe any <sup>specific</sup> particular episode but

Her connection with the present world does not imply ~~that anything other~~ more than that the work was conceived at the same time.

envelope

The work does not <sup>describe</sup> depict any <sup>specific</sup> particular episode in which she is involved but does. On the other hand it shows ~~rather~~ a common climate of associations.

(his 19 Oct 1966)

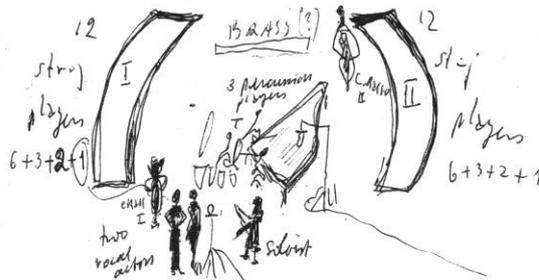
(follows last night dream)

So this is the title of the viol/orchestra work!

App. 4: Note from the Jani Christou archive: The work for viola

The work for viola

original.  
lay out  
also  
positions  
of several  
instruments.



lay out in score

archi I

BRASS

PERCUSSION

PIANO FORT

archi II

Soloist

ACTORS

chamber group version

VI	1	1
	2	2
	3	3
	4	4
	5	5
	6	6
vln	1	1
	2	2
	3	3
vl	1	1
	2	2
c' bass		c' bass

full-phy version

vl, 12	vln 12
vln 4	vln 4
cello 4	cello 4
C' bass 2	C' Bass 2

## App. 5 Note from the Jani Christou archive: Red colour and Rubedo

Alchemy : [00036 Personals]

Colour :

Red- Rubedo = [P180 - redness may

mean the dawn - like rubedo in  
alchemy - which as a rule immediately  
preceded the completion of the work]

and a quotation for the striking

woman :

" Ab eo, quod nigram caudam habet  
abstine, terrestrium enim  
deorum est" ( keep your  
hands off that which has a  
black tail, for it belongs to  
the gods of the earth ) .

P 167  
footnote

**App. 6 Note from the Jani Christou archive: Christou on performing musicians**

Athens Feb 8<sup>th</sup> 1967

Thought

performing musicians should ~~not~~ also act to get across - just as it is inconceivable to produce a play in which actors simply read their parts - so is it inconceivable that performing musicians only "read" their music - This holds good ~~not~~ for all interpretation of music (I don't mean act outwardly, ostentatiously, & finally ridiculous; but rather as a result of identification - there may be no outward show - but a re-living of an experience)

### App. 7 Note from the Jani Christou archive: The dream as compositional material

12/7-02/04

there is this announcement -

- Young woman supplies strichine and undertakes to provide unusual experiences!" -

I follow this up and arrangements are made for me to meet her - I am taken to a large faceless hotel large faceless hotel coming and goings - there is the sound of music - of the shuffling of feet - a planned tour - everything prearranged "it had to be that way" she said "it had to be that way!" the announcement had to be startling! "it had to raise wild expectations!" "you wouldn't have come here otherwise" she said "you wouldn't have come would you? would you? you wouldn't have would you? neither you nor the others?" a large faceless hotel the others the others

dots



human  
propelled  
but when  
increases

to continue greatly

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