

SMARO GREGORIADOU INTERVIEWED

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SMARO GREGORIADOU The incessant birth of the classical

The musical research lives and breathes, having as receivers not the frowning specialists or the dust of the libraries, but the ears and hearts of the listeners.

“It is impossible for us as interpreters to reproduce older sound idioms in full precision. But we could very well attempt a “reinvention” of the guitar’s sound, using modern means and approaches that, after having sufficiently assimilated the tradition, can convey wonderfully our present”.

Smaro Gregoriadou belongs to that special sort of artists of the Renaissance era, when an artist’s personality was structured on studies, ideas, research, but also on their high performance on many and different arts. In our days, when everybody embraces specialization and unfortunately art suffocates in a sterile partiality, such a many-sided personality consists of a rarity. Smaro Gregoriadou, with her recent cd entitled *Reinventing guitar*, provides a proof of that. Guitar soloist, composer, researcher. She interprets guitar works by Bach, Scarlatti, José, Kertsopoulos and her own (first world presentations of Kertsopoulos Aesthetics). Alongside with her quest concerning ways to convincingly interpret early period compositions, her research covers the field of the musicality of ancient Greek language and drama. This led her to create –together with the actor Aris Biniaris- the *Echoes Theatre*

Company (present name: *Choriambus*). In her extraordinary studies a great accomplishment is added: she followed intensive master classes worldwide led by distinguished authorities of our time: guitarists Paul Galbraith, Roberto Aussel, Jesus Castro-Balbi; composers Theodore Antoniou, Dinos Konstandinidis; and pianist-conductor George Hadjinikos, whose illuminating teaching has been an important inspiration and influence on her way.

Question 1: You have many occupations that you hold in affection. Which one has really conquered you?

I cannot really distinguish. Those activities function as communicating vessels in my course and nourishing one another they compose my artistic identity. I cannot conceive myself secluded in the narrow path of an “expertise” and I try hard so that all my occupations cooperate in harmony for my development.

Question 2: On the occasion of your new cd release, please explain to us more about this new guitar project entitled “Kertsopoulos Aesthetics”.

It is a pioneering musical proposition conceived by the guitarist, constructor, researcher and writer of *Space-Time Theory* George Kertsopoulos, in relation to the revival of all historical types of the instrument from its distant past to the 20th c. The strings of new technology that it proposes, offer to the contemporary guitarist a vast range of timbre combinations, doubling and trebling selections and playing techniques that have been lost in the course of time. Furthermore, in response to the demanding standards of contemporary concert halls as of modern repertory, Kertsopoulos Aesthetics introduces new constructional suggestions, such as pedal systems for the enhancement of volume, new body shapes etc.

Question 3: You express a very specific approach that is summarized in the term “reinventing”. Why an instrument with such a long tradition like classical guitar should need something similar?

Our familiar classical guitar did not sound in the same way in all the stages of its long history. From Middle-Ages until 1948, when Segovia established his own guitar aesthetics by introducing the nylon strings with which it is played since, guitar possessed a plethora of sound characteristics that it is impossible to be reproduced today. Consequently there is internationally a necessity of redefining, i.e. retrieving or restoring the sound and technique of the classical guitar. This is the essence of the word “reinventing” that constitutes the core of my effort. For example, in my cd I interpret Bach’s Lute Suite BWV995 on a triple-double-single stringed guitar that resembles the baroque lute in timbre and tuning. The Scarlatti’s Harpsichord Sonata L23 is performed on a high-pitched tuning and brilliant tone approaching the sound colors of the original instrument. Modern works are interpreted with new sounds. It is impossible for us as interpreters to reproduce older sound idioms in full precision. But we could very well attempt a “reinvention” of the guitar’s sound, using modern means and approaches that, after having sufficiently assimilated the tradition, can convey wonderfully our present.

Question 4: In your cd two of your guitar compositions are been presented for the first time in discography. Have other compositions of yours been played elsewhere?

Yes, several works of mine written in various instrumental combinations have been interpreted by contemporary ensembles including ALEA III (Boston), Ensemble Octandre (Bologna), Helsinki Chamber Ensemble (Helsinki), Lomvriiz Theatre Company (Madrid) and Echoes Theatre Company (Athens).

Question 5: What is your connection to the ancient Greek drama?

Ancient Greek drama was an artistic genre based principally on musical foundations. I therefore study its rhythmical and melodic texture. I seek a new compositional universe of musical laws, structures, rhythms and vibrations that attempts to activate the healing representative power of drama, using modern means. A “reinvention” then here again! Furthermore I try to explore the relationship of tragedy with Greek traditional folk song, since it is in there that the ancient poetic rhythms (iambus, anapest etc) have been sheltered during the centuries. So, for example, the ancient Greek choriambus identifies with *tsamikos* and Homer’s heroic dactylic hexameter is identical to *syrtos kalamatianos*, both subsequent neo-Hellenic rhythm dances. This stirring affinity determines the core of my compositional research. In this difficult attempt I go along with a remarkable Greek actor, Aris Biniaris. In 2006 we created the Echoes Theatre Company (today Choriambus) with first production the “Sophocles’ Antigone” in the original ancient Greek text. We pursue with “Euripides Bacchae” in ancient and New Greek that will be presented in the winter 2010 in Athens with five performers.

Question 6: You mention quite often your teacher George Hadjinikos.

A colossal musical genius, a music master of extraordinary knowledge, lucidity and inner depth and in parallel a simple and ordinary man. He is an acclaimed authority as a pianist, director and pedagogue worldwide. I think that his comprehension of the classics’ transcendental depth consists of a universal cultural contribution, in spite of the malfunctions of today’s musical act, known to everybody. I feel grateful to the destiny that brought me so close to this great master.