

***“The Maiden and Death”*** dance suite for orchestra by *N.Skalkottas*  
*Analysis*

***Aspasia Nasopoulou***  
Thesis

Conservatorium van Amsterdam Composition department, Advanced Program

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## **1 Introduction**

Nikos Skalkottas is a unique case in the history of contemporary music. He is a Greek composer who died in 1949 completely unknown, leaving behind him an imposing *oeuvre*. (More than 110 works listed by J.Thornley). The development of his creative career reveals a powerful personality which was able to conceive and define its goal in the highest terms and proceed towards it along an unfailingly personal and original trail.

Being one of Schoenberg's' students, Skalkottas was a somewhat uncommon case. He worked simultaneously with tonal and atonal compositions over a long time span and developed a highly personal and original serial twelve-tone method, without in the same time, underestimating the presence of Greek folk material in his works.

*“The Maiden and Death”* was Skalkottas' first ballet composition. Dated around 1938 and remaining still unpublished (the original is lost and the only existing score is based on photos of lost microfilms), it was composed in an extended tonal language and is a highly challenging piece to analyze, for both historical and compositional purposes.

How did a more or less serial composer combine 'tonal' music with dance?

What are his choices and usage of material not only autonomously but also in relation to a traditional myth?

What kind of folk elements does he use and how?

This research attempts to provide answers to the issues raised above, which in combination with details from his life in the society of Athens and Berlin of '30's-'40's, form a very interesting puzzle.

## 2. Skalkottas' life in relation to his *oeuvre* (macroscopically-microscopically)

### a. Chronological table

<b>1904</b>	Born in Halkis on March 21 by Aleko Skalkotta and Ioanna Papaioannou
<b>1905 - 08</b>	(The family lives in Halkis)
<b>1909 -11</b>	Young Nikos starts violin lessons under the supervision of his father. He will continue with his uncle Kosta. Around this time the family will move to Athens.
<b>1912</b>	He studies violin in the Conservatory of Athens with Tony Sulze
<b>1913 - 19</b>	Still studies with Tony Sulze
<b>1920</b>	Acquires the violin diploma, awarded with the gold medal and the 'Andreas and Ifigenia Sigrou' money prize.
<b>1921</b>	His first written document (a letter to Neli Askitopoulou). He sets out to Berlin to study the violin in the Hochschule with Billy Hess.
<b>1922</b>	Renewal of his 'Averoff' scholarship. Probably his first composition lessons with Robert Kahn, Paul Giuon.
<b>1923</b>	Expiration of his scholarship. Turns to composition. Probably the date of the arrangement he made on the work of Mitropoulos: "The Cretan Celebration"
<b>1924</b>	Probably the time he started studying with Kurt Weil. His first composition: two dancing parts for two pianos which he sends to Mitropoulos.
<b>1925</b>	More financial problems, he works as a musician here and there in Berlin, reads a lot and makes plans for the future. His first mature work that was found: "Sonata for solo violin". He briefly stops his composition study and studies with Jarnach.
<b>1926</b>	Studies with Philipp Jarnach. His compositions (trio and quartet for strings- remain lost today-) are being performed in Germany. He works as an arranger in Odeon. He announces his composition turn to Greece and tries to get a scholarship for his composition studies.
<b>1927</b>	Wins the 'Benaki' scholarship. Two works for piano are saved: "Sonatina" and "15 small variations". He starts taking lessons with Schoenberg.
<b>1928</b>	Studies with Schoenberg. Brief visit to Greece. Potential compositions (lost). The birth of his daughter Artemis.
<b>1929</b>	"1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> Sonatina for violin and piano", "1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> (lost) string quartets", first version of the "1 <sup>st</sup> Symphonic Suite" for large orchestra. Probably more compositions that have been lost.
<b>1930</b>	Trip to Greece for the performance of his works in two concerts: "Concerto for wind orchestra", "Two Sonatines for violin and piano", and "three string quartets". Bad press reviews, expiration of his scholarship.
<b>1931</b>	Sends press reviews from the music life in Berlin to the magazine 'Music Life' in Athens. Composes the "1 <sup>st</sup> piano concerto" and "the Peloponnesian dance". Disagreement period with Schoenberg, performances of his works with reluctant reviews. He enters his first depression period and stops composing.
<b>1932</b>	He participates in the class of Schoenberg but only by doing exercises and not by bringing compositions.
<b>1933</b>	Returns to Greece. Composes three Greek dances and arranges folk songs. Works as a violin player in the orchestra of the conservatory of Athens.
<b>1934</b>	Cooperates with Merlie on the transcription of folk songs. Handwritten analysis of folk songs. Probably the date that he starts writing the 'musical articles'.
<b>1935</b>	"3 <sup>rd</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup> Sonatina for violin and piano", "3 <sup>rd</sup> string quartet", "string trio", "Concertino for two pianos". He rewrites the "1 <sup>st</sup> Symphonic suite". In the same period he writes the "Greek dances no. 4-12" of the first series.
<b>1936</b>	Second and third series of the Greek dances, "trio with piano", "1 <sup>st</sup> suite for solo piano".
<b>1937</b>	"2 <sup>nd</sup> piano concerto", "Small pieces for violin and piano"
<b>1938</b>	"Violin concerto", "The maiden and the Death", "8 variations based on a Greek folk song, for trio". Development of a personal, freer variation of the twelve-tone system.
<b>1939</b>	He works in orchestras of the capital city. He starts writing his dissertation 'Orchestration techniques' and composes works that are related to it: "3 <sup>rd</sup> concerto for piano and 10winds", "concerto for contra base and orchestra"
<b>1940</b>	Performance of "The maiden and Death" on May 10. "32 pieces for piano", "Sonata for violin and piano"
<b>1941</b>	Arrangements of folk songs. "16 songs"
<b>1942</b>	Probable date of the overture "The return of Ulysses"
<b>1943</b>	"Greek dance in a minor"
<b>1944</b>	Folk- drama tale: "May's Sorcery", one and a half month of imprisonment in the concentration camp of Haidari. "Concert for two violins" (first time that a 'rebetiko' tune was incorporated in a 'classical' composition)
<b>1945</b>	Orchestration of the four first parts of the "2 <sup>nd</sup> symphonic suite"
<b>1946</b>	Marries Maria Pagali. A new orchestration version of his work "The Maiden and Death" is performed. "Echo" for piano and orchestra.
<b>1947</b>	"Duo for violin and violoncello"
<b>1948</b>	"The Sea", music for the radio show "Henry the fifth"
<b>1949</b>	Orchestrates the folk-drama piece "May's Sorcery", "the Sea". Revision of "The 36 Greek dances". Composes "the small suite for violin and piano" and "pieces for violoncello and piano". Transcription of the overture "The return of Ulysses" for two pianos. He dies suddenly on the 20 <sup>th</sup> of October.

## **b. Particular analysis of important events-aspects of his life and his composition development**

It is necessary to focus momentarily on some facts of his life, which are closely related to his studies and influenced in one way or another, the course of his compositional process. These facts shall give us an explanation about the choices he made, the timing and reason, as well as the language he uses in his composition "*The Maiden and Death*".

There is no information available about the exact time that Skalkottas studied with Robert Kahn and Philipp Jarnach. However, the fact that Kurt Weill (4 years older than him) is named as one of Skalkottas' teachers makes us think that Skalkottas had approached the music "cycle" around Busoni. From 1927-1931 Skalkottas is a regular member of Schoenberg's class. He is bringing compositions in the classes which are performed from his colleagues and with Schoenberg's support he becomes known in the musical society of Berlin. This the period that Skalkottas forms his personal composition language.

In the end of 1930 he comes to Athens and conducts the local symphony orchestra with his "*Concert for wind orchestra*" being also included in the program. (23-11-1930)

The reaction of the Athenian press critics was totally disappointing.

Skalkottas will reply aggressive in the critics and returns to Berlin. From there he sends regularly references in the magazine Music Life.

The reaction of Schoenberg's circle is also reserved.

Skalkottas doesn't follow the conventional twelve tone methodology, his compositional thinking is more towards a "vertical" direction, making the use of jazz elements in the same time.

This year is placed his argument with his teacher in relation with his "*First concert for piano*".

The same year he composes his first Greek dance, in which we can trace the influences of D.Mitropoulos under Bartok's model, as well as an attempt of developing the pitch material with the twelve tone techniques but in a tonal context.

These two pieces are the last pieces from his Berlin period.

In 1931 Skalkottas will go through a period of depression (the career possibilities of a composer in Berlin but also in Athens are now too few.)

In 1933 he will return to Athens, leaving his compositions to his landlady for the rents he owed her.

Most of them will be lost but some of them will be found later in an old bookstore from G. Hatzinikos.

Skalkottas reaffirms his return to Athens with three Greek dances (a 'Tsamikos', a dance from Crete and one from Epirus), which are soon to be adopted from various music ensembles in Athens.

In this period he makes arrangements of Greek dances for wind orchestras and variations of folk songs and popular music.

He is still going through a depression but makes an effort to struggle through his life.

Skalkottas' arranging oeuvre -at least 15 long play LP's with folk music mainly from Crete, Sifnos, Rhodes and Athens-, brought him in close contact with very rare music material from the Greek folk traditional music. These elements led and influenced him to compose eight more Greek dances in 1935 and twenty four more (!) in 1936, completing in this way his cycle of "*The 36 Greek dances*" – a work that stands out amongst his others in the Greek audience.

1935 was the year that Skalkottas starts again to compose in the twelve tone system, and this occurs in a distinctive manner:

He starts by composing pieces in a way, utterly linked to his compositions from his 1928-29 period (in Berlin under Schoenberg guidance).

- a. Two sonatas for violin and piano (like in 1929)
- b. one quartet and one string trio (similar to his two quartets of 1929 but also to his quartet and trio of 1926)

c. The exact same “*1<sup>st</sup> symphonic suite*” for big orchestra in six parts that he had composed in 1929 while living in Berlin and had left it there along with other of his works (which he now composes again by memory!)

d. And a “*Concertino for two pianos*” (in the place of the “*Double concert for violin and piano*”) 1938 was a decisive year for his compositional development. Through two pieces the ballet *The maiden and Death*” and “*The 8 variations*” -on a Greek theme for piano trio-, Skalkottas forms two new idioms: an extremely expanded tonal language (an idiom that he never tries again in other pieces) and one more free variation of the twelve tone system, which leads him to an explosive liberation of his compositional forces which results on his later compositions – in small forms - of the years 1939 to 1941.

However in his works of the same period, composed in a larger form, he returns to more strict twelve tone idioms. (Like he does in the “*3<sup>rd</sup> concerto for piano and 10 winds*” as well as the “*4<sup>th</sup> string quartet*” which is an omen for his most ambitious composition –which is yet to come- the overture: “*The return of Ulysses*”, which is dated somewhere between 1941-43).

His work “*Concert for two violins*” (1944-45), seals the twelve tone composing period between the interwar and the German occupation in Greece. In this piece he uses for the first time in the contemporary history of Greek classical music, a melody from the ‘rebetiko’ song “*Paw ekei stin Arapia*” by Vasilis Tsitsanis.

His artistic ideas in the after war period are changing; the jazz element gradually disappears and the folk element is redefined by him as ‘popular’. He starts composing large form tonal pieces through which he tries to reflect some how the most enthusiastic aspects of the social realism movement of the time. This resulted in his compositions the “*Classical symphony for wind orchestra*” (1947), “*Symphonietta*” (1948), the ballet “*The Sea*” and “*The 4 pictures*” (1949), which are all tonal orchestral pieces. On the contrary the chamber music of that period is still composed in the twelve tone technique but in a more flexible manner: “*Duo for violin and violoncello*” (1947), “*2 small suites for violin and piano*” (1946 and 1949).

In 1946 he marries Maria Pagali and his life reaches a certain balance. The last year of his life was very active. He orchestrates some of his old pieces, reviews *the 36 Greek dances* and composes a cycle of chamber music pieces. Unfortunately he will meet his death very soon from a neglected strangulated hernia on the 20<sup>th</sup> of September, 1949.

His last handwritten articles which can be chronologically placed in the year of 1949 – the year which meets the end of the civil war in Greece-, show a composer that has sensed and surpassed the arrival of his death, transforming all his death coming visions into an optimistic activity and embracement of the future.

### 3. General analysis of his *oeuvre*

John G. Papaioannou has divided Skalkottas' music into four periods:

1. 1925-27 – the pre-Schoenberg period;
2. 1928-38 – the first mature period, noted for its strict observance of serialism although already inclined to experimentation and divergence
3. 1938-45 – the most prolific years of Skalkottas' development;
4. 1946-49 – the final period which represented a full in the composer's output although the works which did appear were often of a concentrated nature.

Shortly before his death he began another creative burst which included the orchestration of some earlier pieces, such as parts of the "36 Greek Dances". When the 'Skalkottas' Archives' issued their Summary Catalogue of Works (June 8, 1951), only 89 completed were listed which amounted to somewhat 4900 pages of manuscript; it was suggested that something like 120 or more works had increased to 113 of which 94 were preserved in the Archives. From Skalkottas' own catalogues and other documentary sources the total output is known to exceed the 150 works, which include choral and stage works and music for orchestra, concerted forces, chamber ensemble and piano. This is an astonishingly rich achievement in a creative span of less than 25 years representing more than the combined output of Schoenberg, Berg and Webern or the individual catalogues of such composers as Bartok and Stravinsky.

Skalkottas' principal vocabulary was serialism, but throughout his development he devoted attention to purely diatonic music, often related to the modal concepts of Greek folk songs, many of which he heard as a small child sung by his mother. The main non-serial works which are not influenced by the nationalist example date from the final period and include two four-movement works: "Classical symphony" in A for woodwind, two harps and basses (1947) and "Sinfonietta" in B flat (1948). Skalkottas' use of serialism developed in its essential details from Schoenberg but even before he began studying with him, Skalkottas had produced some unusual compositions which anticipated serial technique. Among those works which have survived is an assured and adventurous *Sonata for solo violin* (1925), in which the technical layout is as immaculate and virtuoso as might be expected from an artist with such a command of his instrument and its potential. Each of the four movements uses advanced chromatic idiom bordering on the 'pantonal' style of Schoenberg's second period. One can point to certain constant features in the main line of evolution of his serial works, which show the following chief differences from the 'classical' twelve-note system:

- a. The unique basic row is replaced by a basic complex of two, three, four, six, eight, or even twelve, sixteen or eighteen independent twelve-tone rows, which are correspondingly associated with each other within this complex either in horizontal juxtaposition or in 'counterpoint' with each other (up to four heard together in extreme cases).
- b. The usual rules for repetition of notes variation techniques for the rows are used more strictly in late Schonberg, but rows are usually presented in the original position. Inversion and especially transposition are usually avoided in order, as he said, "To keep rows more easily recognizable"; they are used only in exceptional cases for special reasons, while retrograde forms of rows are used more frequently.
- c. The main variation technique used by Skalkottas for his rows is what could be termed as 'group variation': the subdivision of rows into equal or unequal groups of usually three to five (sometimes two or six) notes is important and determines a 'neighborhood relationship, being strictly maintained. Every conceivable technique of variation regular or irregular is used within each group. Let it be noticed that Skalkottas disdained processes of variation that are too mechanical (inversion, use of mathematically regular combinatorial devices etc) and concentrated on what preserves relationships created by the 'audible vicinity' of sounds.

At the same time the use of more than one row as a basis provides not only a greater richness and variety in writing, but also additional articulation to his language, making use of the specific role or physiognomy usually attached to each one of the rows of the basic complex. Moreover this basic complex acquires a greater 'thematic' significance than the single row of classical twelve-tone works. The composition appears as a series of variations on it, superimposed over the traditional form of the piece (e.g. sonata, suite) and this interplay of two forms (e.g. sonata plus variations) provides an additional interest to its structure.

This approach to musical structure seems also to confer a more flowing unity on the formal complexes: whereas in classic dodecaphony difficult, bold, structural leaps (note-row-entire movement) are presented to the perceptive powers of the listener, Skalkottas subdivides this whole range into shorter, closer steps, so that it becomes easier to grasp the gradual growth of the form and its consecutive elements consciously or subconsciously.

In his subdivision of the complex into rows and of each row into groups and in the way he uses, varies and combines them, Skalkottas comes very near to the techniques used for example in the renaissance 'cantus firmus' masses; his highly polyphonic writing moreover is also more closely related to renaissance (and partly to late baroque) counterpoint conceptions than to those of any other musical era.

His characteristic critical acceptance or rejection of applied principles we find for example in the "*Octet*" (1931). He departs from the germinal idea of a single 'Grundgestalt' and uses several tone rows which in the outer movements of the work are only very approximately related to the two tone-rows (one of 11 and one of 12 notes), heard at the outset of the Andante cantabile which G.Hatzinikos in his introduction to the score argues are the kernel of the music. In fact he goes as far as claiming that the basic source is a three-note cell which gives rise to a serial pattern similar to Webern's methods (we could see something similar in "*The Maiden and Death*" -tonal piece -the 9 tone row which is used in one movement comes from the cell motive ).

Apart from the serial considerations of the music this piece shows a distinctive personality allied to implied overtones of Greek music (the three note idea is itself indicative of the character and recurs in several of Skalkottas' works), which is enhanced by the suggestions of 7/4 meter (rhythmic schemes of 2/2 plus 3/4) in the infectious finale. Impressive too, is the structural clarity and the directness of the rhythm and rhythmic figuration which avoids all suggestion of the diffuseness and angularity of pulse which distinguishes the music of Schoenberg or Webern.

In his use of several tone rows he was able to secure an effective contrast of material and he had the ability to write a long flowing melodic line. These factors helped towards creating much larger scale works than might otherwise have been possible within serial technique and Skalkottas shows in his work an increasing preoccupation with the renewal of the established form concepts and invention of the past, while acknowledging serialism as his fundamental vocabulary.

Tonality in the traditional sense is of course totally absent from his music. Yet two special instances might be mentioned:

a. In certain cases a kind of tonal centre is established by emphasis and frequent repetition.

b. In his last years a peculiar 'tonal quality' seems present even in his most violent atonal works. This curious contradiction is usually created by the use of melodies with a strong tonal feeling harmonized by every means possible to belie their tonality. Although harmonically no trace of tonal functions polytonality or even tonal centers can usually be found, the overall one impression despite the grating dissonances comes curiously near that of tonal music.

We could say that Skalkottas realized something similar to the hypothesis that a system of 'tonal' centers derived from serial principles. This gives his music a clear point of reference and also gives rise to the lucidity and logic of thought in his maturity.

A good example is afforded by the slow movement of the "*Third piano concerto*", a modified sonata-form structure in which the curtailed recapitulation introduces the expository material a fourth lower revealing an interesting harmonic balance. This throws fresh light on the adaptability of serialism to such procedures as sonata and fugue which depend for their balance on the relationships of different



keys. Skalkottas may have had keys at his disposal but he achieves much the same impact in his use of several tone rows in each work. The relationship of various pitches to each other and in turn, various tone rows represent the microstructure of a macrostructure of 'tonal' schemes in any composition.

The symphony stands as one of the finest of Skalkottas' achievements, both in terms of its structure and in the handling of the orchestra; a medium he understood clearly and imaginatively.

With the exception of "*The 36 Greek dances*", his previous orchestral works were the "*Two orchestral suites*" dating from 1929-35 and 1942-43 respectively. Both were serial in language and both had six movements conceived on a mammoth scale.

Another aspect worth noticing is the ethnical approach of his compositional development. Skalkottas had the identity of "a Greek composer"<sup>1</sup>, not only when he was staged in Greece but also in his previous period, while he was leaving in Berlin, studying in the class of Schoenberg.

His first composition is probably the "*Greek suite*" (1923-24). Its first part is based on one kind of 'Kalamatianos' dance. The Greek color is very much present also in the first part of "*The Sonatina for piano*" (1927).

He integrated Greek folk language into the twelve-tone "*1st string quartet*" (1929) and into the "*2nd Sonatina*" for piano (during his Schoenberg period!). We should also mention at this point that he uses the same compositional method in both of his works: "*1st concerto for Piano*" (dodecaphonic piece) and "*Peloponisiakos*" dance (both composed in 1931).

Realizing the above mentioned elements, the gradual course that led to his composing "*The 36 Greek Dances*" (which were realized during the years 1935-1936) is very logical. After "*The 36 Greek Dances*" his next step was the ballet "*The Maiden and Death*" and "*8 Variations based on a Greek song*" (both 1938), where the ethnic material (considered all the time as folk) is used in a more extended form.

From 1939-1944 Skalkottas turns towards a more 'popular' material: "*Concerto for two violins*", based on the 'rembetiko' song of Tsitsanis ("*Paw ekei stin Arapia*") and the ballet "*The Sea*" (1948-1949).

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<sup>1</sup> We can recognize the Greek origin of Skalkottas not only from the acoustic result of his works but also from the use of Pythagorean rules as well as the employment of the golden proportion in his compositions. Many examples of the presence of the above mentioned elements can be traced his pieces: "*Return of Ulysses*" as well as the "*32 pieces for Piano*".-first performed (after the composer's premiere) by Geoffrey Douglas Madge.

## 4. “*The Maiden and Death*”- Analysis

### 4.1 Movements

Moderato Maestoso            in 4/4

Allegro                        in 2/4

Andantino                    in 6/8

Tempo di Valse (Lento)    in 3/4

Allegro moderato            in 3/4

Lento                         in 3/4

Vivo                         in 2/2

Allegro                        in 2/2

Lentement                    in 3/8

Moderato Assai             in 2/4

Lento                         in 3/4

Allegro                        in 3/4

Lento                         in 3/4



## *Allegro*

Main material      theme (ex.7, table I)  
Intervals            4<sup>th</sup> perfect, 3<sup>rd</sup> minor

## *Lentement*

Main material      8 measure melody  
                         4 measure theme and its variations

The main material here is a melody in the centre of the movement (ex.8, table I) which originates from the original Moderato theme. The starting theme (the four measure theme) of this movement however, which is throughout the Lentement repeatedly varied, appears before and after the central melody mentioned before.

## *Moderato assai*

Main material 5measure theme (ex. 9 table I)

- We should notice here that the first two chords of the piece –basically one –(ex.10 Table I) will appear many times during the piece as persistent chord (death)

## Conclusions:

- The first theme (of the Moderato) has all the elements that Skalkottas uses in the following movements as cells for his motives, themes and melodies. Everything he uses throughout the whole work is a variation of this ‘kern’ idea.
- The first three repeating notes are the source for his [x]motive (in a textural and rhythmical aspect)
- The third minor relation which is always present from the [x] motive till the melodies and themes is presented first time here.
- The persistence on the interval of the 4<sup>th</sup> in the moderato assai theme originates from the ‘kern’ moderato opening theme.
- The coda of the ‘kern’ moderato theme (in combinations of tones semitone and thirds) is the source for the melody in Lentement.
- It could be said that the two intervals of major third that appear in the ‘kern’ theme of the moderato, serve the purpose of coloring and enforcing the existence of the third minor interval.
- The alternation of 3<sup>rd</sup> major -minor (already traced in the opening theme), gives a characteristic folk color to the quality of the theme. However, he will not use the third major in any motive or theme.

It could be noticed that there is a close relation between the pitches that he uses in the work (use of same pitches in the different themes or use of the same order of notes):

- *Moderato maestoso*: in the first theme, C is used as a central note followed by D and Bb
- *Allegro*: there is the same persistence (slightly varied) of the note C followed by Db and Bb (appearing twice in this order)

*{Keeping in mind that D, B are the two main notes that are used in the [x] motive.}*

- *Allegro*: the beginning of the row is G and F#, which is also the ending of the theme in Lento (G F#). Furthermore, the two last notes of the row F and Gb is the beginning of Andantino (F Gb)
- *Vivo*: at a certain point of the theme we can trace the notes Eb (D) C E b D Bb C, appearing in this order which is the same order that they appear also in the 'kern' theme of the Moderato movement (Eb C D Bb C)
- *Vivo movement's ending*: there is a persistence of the notes Db and Bb (appearing again in the same order)
- *Allegro theme*: It is no coincidence that here too, during the theme the note Db is followed by Bb
- *The motive of Lentemen*: is a variation of [x] motive, with D being the centre note of the motive and the note C being followed by A in the end of the motive.
- *The motive of Andantino*: D followed by Bb, but then immediately followed by Cb=B (giving again the D-B relation).

Concluding, Skalkottas can't escape his twelve-tone origins. An interior order of notes can be traced in any of the themes he creates. There are some generic cells that are very determinative for him and they persist with their appearance in one way or the other. In the same time these cells have an intervallic value which portrays the mood and character of the piece, a fact that is to be noticed in some of his other works as well.

The following cells: D B and C A /A C are present always in themes and motives.

We should notice that Skalkottas makes a game out of varying the inner order of his rows. Even in his works which are composed in strictly twelve-tone technique; he likes to change the order of the neighboring notes. This can be seen for example in the "*Sonatina No4*" for piano and violin. It's therefore not strange that we have the above mentioned cell C-A, appearing also as A-C.

### 4.3. 'Harmony'

It should be clear at this point that even if there are obvious tonal references throughout this work; there is no tonal establishment. The following harmonic progression is to be considered more as an environmental area that Skalkottas selected in order to build up his work.

#### *Moderato*

Progress:

C Aeolian - Ab - F - A - F Aeolian - Ab - C

Beginning C                      End C

We could say that the harmony mixes the function of the chords, simulating them with impressionistic models.

#### *Allegro*

Progress

G - C - A - F# - Ab - C Aeolian

Beginning A                      End C

There is persistence on the use of a half diminished chord.

#### *Andantino*

There is an Eb diminished chord environment (+ G major)

## *Tempo di Valse*

Progress

A Aeolian - F Aeolian

F# - G Aeolian

A- E / A - Aeolian

C# minor – A minor - D - A

A Aeolian / minor - A minor / Dorian - A

**A Dorian** (the dance)

A Aeolian

Beginning and End      A Aeolian

## *Vivo*

Progress

Centre                      C Aeolian- D Aeolian / minor

                                  C Aeolian

                                  F#

End                         C Aeolian

(Persistence on the notes Eb and Gb which are subsequently the beginning of the next movement).  
There is a combination of a C Aeolian environment with intense chromatism.

## *Allegro*

Progress

Chromatic line

Eb - D - C - Eb (F#)

Ab - G - F# (melody)

E - Eb - C# (bass)

E Aeolian - A Aeolian

G Aeolian

Eb Aeolian----→D

## ***Lentement***

Progress

D minor / G minor - Eb / F major - minor

Bb

Melody in the centre                      F Aeolian  
D minor

Beginning and End                      D minor

A duality in the tonal references can be noticed all the time.

## ***Moderato assai***

Progress

Introduction                      B - F# m → A Aeolian

Theme                      Eb major - minor  
Ab - A → C Aeolian  
Eb

End                      A Aeolian - Ab minor

## ***Lento***

End                      A Aeolian  
A major



## Conclusions

- a. Harmonic progress from movement to movement:  
C Aeolian - C Aeolian - Eb diminished - A Aeolian - C Aeolian - Eb Aeolian / Dminor - Eb major -minor / A Aeolian (Ab) - A Aeolian (end A).
- b. Skalkottas sets a distinctive Aeolian environment throughout the piece and introduces for one specific time a Dorian mode ('Tsamikos' dance =Konstantis' dance), which could be related in a way with the 'ethos' (man's pride).
- c. The main characteristic of this very personal use of modes and tonal references is that he establishes temporarily tonalities which are not apparent through the sounding result.
- d. The minor 3<sup>rd</sup> interval - used intact or placed within a harmonic sequence - has a dominant presence, expanding from the cell of the motive material, to the relation of the chosen tonal and modal environments. Taking in account many of his older compositions, we could conclude in a way that he has an fascination with this interval (taking as a starting point his "*Sonata for solo violin*" – a twelve tone piece composed in 1927- and going as far as his 1941 composition, the "*16 Songs for mezzo soprano and piano*" ). The unique element of this 'obsession' that he has with the minor 3<sup>rd</sup> interval, is that he uses it as a nuclear cell; without connecting it though to relations which define the 'axis system'. For him this nuclear cell has a massive function: just the pure value of the interval itself. That is the reason why we can trace persisting thirds even in combination with atonal chords. The presence of the minor 3<sup>rd</sup> interval is not chosen in order to influence or define a certain harmonic or non- harmonic environment; it is used solely in order to color the piece with its special emotional shade, in the way that Skalkottas perceives it.

## 4.4 Rhythm

The rhythm that Skalkottas uses in this piece -and not only in this piece for that matter- can be characterized as quite neoclassical. He sustains a clear pulse throughout and he scarcely changes the given meter and only in specific situations that he wants to complete properly a melodic line and to give a natural flow, or to create a small surprise to the auditor (e.g. measure 15 going from 3/4 to 4/4, measure 20 going from 2/4 to 4/4). One of his strong beliefs was that rhythm must always be as clear as possible and that particularly the rhythm of ballet music must be such as to be able to dance upon. It is interesting that the function of the 6/8 time signature in the andantino movement as well as the 3/8 time signature in the Lentement, is to give a dangly and in the same time more of a static feeling than just a fast pulse.

He perfectly combines the 3/4 'Waltz' feeling with the 3/4 folk pulse of the 'Tsamikos' (Lento -Allegro). Furthermore he often uses syncopated rhythms to dress repeating chords motives, a technique with very affective results.

Finally, his rhythmical motives are very simple and often in blocks -he doesn't mix them so much. He makes simple combinations of the values but with a great sense for the melodic and rhythmical line:

- a. Successions of **sixteen notes** like a bridge or background (measures: 54-60, 92-95, 536-537, 285-288 etc.)
- b. Successions of **eight notes** -even characteristic motives are organized in this form- (measures: 223-226, 544-559 etc).

*Examples of some of his most characteristic rhythmical cells can be found in Table II*

## 4.5. Form

*Moderato*

'Rondo'

*Allegro*

A - `A -[x], 'rondo' with variations'

*Andantino*

'Rondo'

*Tempo di Valse*

(Lento)

(Interior Allegro moderato)

(Lento)

Variations (in arch form)

A B A

Variations

*Vivo*

'Rondo variations' (with A - `A)

*Allegro*

'Rondo Variations'

*Lentement*

A B `B (+A elements)

*Moderato Assai*

A B A

*Lento –Allegro- Lento*

A B A

## Conclusions

**a.** There is no development in the thematic material. This gives a rondo character in the form throughout almost every movement.

**b.** There are very few transpositions of the motives-themes. Instead of transpositions, Skalkottas uses rhythmical and melodic variations, a technique that creates a very special form of rondo variations.

**c.** However, his preference for classical forms which he uses even in his atonal pieces is present also here. The idea of A B A or `A is hidden in the rondo form and there is a tendency to arrange the microform and the orchestration based on this pattern. In the centre of every movement (!) we can trace a B part which is differentiated from the first –A (by means of special orchestration choices, clear long melodic line, a folk dance etc.), in a way though that it doesn't give a completely new gesture and most importantly without breaking the rondo flowing.

We could therefore conclude that in this piece, Skalkottas creates a very personal form based on all of his favorite forms: a rondo variation form with an interior ABA organization.

## 4.6. Instrumentation

After a very detailed analysis of the orchestration in every movement the following results came up:

1. His orchestration is related to the plot of the ballet in two ways: directly (creating relations between instruments –heroes of the ballet) and indirectly with the mood, feelings and ideas which reflect the traditional myth.
2. The first presentation of the theme-motives generally is presented by no more than two or three instruments. Skalkottas chooses for a very thin texture for the beginnings of almost every movement (e.g. Andantino, Lentement). One of the only exceptions can be noticed in the Vivo where the exposition of the theme is assigned to five instruments (of the low families), which gives a special sound to the movement and really comes as a big surprise.
3. When he repeats the theme he usually adds trumpets (**trps**) (e.g. Allegro measure 42-55,84-87, Lento 133-139, Allegro 408-411 etc.)
4. In general the role of the **Harp** is crucial and quite special as far as bridging is concerned.(e.g.112, 218,437-438 etc.)
5. The combination of **Strings-Harp** occurs only twice (Lentement, m.428 onwards, Moderato Assai measure 544 onwards) and the use of only **strings** occurs again twice – both times in very special moments. (Tempo di Valse after the ‘Tsamikos’ dance measure 249, and in Allegro **before** the unison of xylophone-oboe measure 373)
6. There is a combination between tutti orchestral thinking and soloistic use of the instruments. For example, instruments like the **Oboe, English horn, Horn, and Clarinet** are given the role of the ‘protagonist’ in many different occasions.
7. The **Violoncello** is the second instrument which is presented with a bridging role, in a more melodic and functional way than the harp though.(e.g. m.140-142,
8. The **Viola** has a special role . We can notice it on two different occasions to present the whole theme solo, with the accompaniment of a very thin texture in the background. (m.181-195, m.544-565)
9. When the orchestra plays tutti, the instruments usually play in unison or in 3rds. (Keeping in mind that Skalkottas was indeed an excellent orchestrator, this choice that he makes must originate from the tradition that the melodies in folk songs are to be played by the different instruments in unison)
10. He uses some instruments in a very economic way, so that he can later grant them with a more important function (e.g. Horn m. fl.,m.).
11. He almost always uses the trumpets combined with violins.
12. He handles the use of the lower instruments from different families with great care, as he never uses them for exposition of themes (with an only exception as previously mentioned in the Vivo where the centre the theme is presented by Hrn-tbn-Tuba-Vcl-Cb)
13. The **trps-tbn-hrn** are assigned to play almost everywhere the repetitive chords-notes creating in this way a fatal environment.(eg.138-139)

14. By transferring the theme in a flowing way from instrument to instrument, he gives a very colorful dimension to the composition.(e.g.105-107, 416 onwards)
15. The combination of instruments: **Fl-Ob-Trps-Vln** is used very often (e.g. m. 239..)
16. He goes to extremes at moments that he aims to create a very special effect (e.g. In Allegro the theme exposed initially by Fl+B.Cl. and later by Ob+xylophone).
17. When he uses chromatic successions he supports them by lower instruments (e.g. In Lentement; Tbn + Hrn + Tuba + Cb. + C bassoon).
18. However, even when he uses lower instruments the sounding result is such of a very light character (e.g. In Moderato assai).

## 4.7 The plot in combination with: a. instrumentation b. rhythm c. movements

The ballet was a commission from the choreographer Loukia Sakellariou. The plot is written on the original score by Skalkottas himself (same in “*The Sea*” ballet) where he explains that the music for ballet, being a suite consisting of movements can be autonomous like a symphonic poem. The motif of the folk song is very well known to the popular tradition: the maiden is taken by Death and her beloved follows her into the other world to find her. The choreography follows the plot and differentiates after the part that the Maiden is taken by Death.

*Eugenoula the beautiful and young married  
was proud of not having fear for death.  
When Death heard of this, he became very angry.  
Black bird became like a wild swallow  
And hit the lonely maiden  
On the finger where she wore the valued ring  
And Konstantis appeared from far land on his horse  
Golden handkerchief arises he sees her to be dead.  
But Konstantis has the illusion that she is only asleep  
He holds her and the Maiden  
Spirit out of body, dances with him  
Obeying to the supernatural power of Love,  
They dance burned with love and the desire that touches them and defines them  
But Death is secretly looking at them.  
When Konstantis wakes up from visual love’s influence he feels that she is dead.  
Suddenly Death strikes to take her back. When he succeeds he marries her.  
Their dance is daemonic and savage.  
But suddenly the Maiden remembers again her beloved.  
With pain she asks to approach him.  
But Death impedes her.  
Konstantis having no other way to be with her passes the borders of his life  
And enters happy in the kingdom of Death.  
Then Death being satisfied with his achievement, he lets them come together.  
Now they are linked for ever, in death they find again their love.*

### a. instrumentation

The three characters are The Maiden, Konstantis and Death.

As archetypal figures, Skalkottas could represent them in an abstract way. But now he has to deal with a ballet where the characters are ‘alive’. It is an opportunity for him to use instruments as his voice in order to express his feelings on the optimistic idea about love beyond death.

According to the plot as written in the foreword by Skalkottas and in combination with the movements we come up with interesting observations.

**Konstantis** is ‘embodied’ by a combination of **Trumpets, Violins, Horns and Flutes**.

Interestingly enough, there are moments that Skalkottas uses all these instruments together while in other occasions he just places some of them on the surface based on the mood and the plot development.

**The Maiden** is represented by the **Oboe and English horn**

**Death** is expressed by the instrumentation of **Horn, Trumpets and Trombones** used together in almost all occasions.

Skalkottas uses the combination trumpets and horn both for the character of Konstantis and Death. This choice is based probably: a. on the fact that they are both male characters, b. on the fact that they both share a desire for the same woman and c. on the fatal future that is going to bind them together. (Konstantis will finally 'live' in the world of Death).

The flute is introduced to the combination of instruments which express the character of Konstantis only during his dance ('Tsamikos'). It's also very much present in a characteristic way in the movement of Lentement signing his sensitive but in the same time decided future.

There are a number of other instruments that have certain functions in the plot:

**Violoncello and Harp**: connecting –transitional role; used in order to help the story move on. The harp is also used sometimes to impersonate the illusive-dreamy word, a feature which is present throughout the whole piece.

The movement of Andantino corresponds to the moment of the plot where Konstantis has the illusion that the Maiden is just asleep. This is expressed by an interchange of the main motive from voice to voice. The static environment around C confirmed by the harp presents in the best way the Maiden's sleep.

The fragile use of the harp in the movement of Lentement underlines in a perfect way the Maiden's soul. While in Tempo di Valse, the participation of the harp in the strange instrumentation Fl, B.Cl and Hrp (measure 157), gives very intensely the dreamy feature of the dramatic situation (the couple is dancing ecstatically while Konstantis hasn't yet realized that the Maiden is dead).

**Vla** even is used just two times, has a basic narrative underlining role. It exposes the whole theme enforcing both times Konstantis' character. (15 measures in Tempo di valse before 'Tsamikos' and 22 measures in Moderato assai -Konstantis's decision.- This is a very long duration, if we exam the way that Skalkottas divides the motives and the themes between the instruments)

Vla plays the role of the external observer who follows the plot but describes-comments the situation only before the crucial presentation of Konstantis.

It is interesting to mention some combination of instruments and their rhetoric in the plot:

Oboe-Vln-Trp	Tempo di valse	connection between the feminine and masculine feature
Fl –Vln- Trp +Oboe	Tsamiko dance	man dance, but with the Maiden present in the scene
Hrn -Trp –Tbn	Tempo di valse, Vivo,(except from death)	they give the fatal chords (m...)
Oboe-xylophone	Allegro (II)	Maiden's youth –freshness feature

In the Moderato Assai movement which dramatically corresponds to the moment where Konstantis makes the decision to follow the Maiden in death, Skalkottas omits the instruments that impersonate his character through the piece; he saves them for the last dance where the presence of Kostantis has to be really intense and impressive.

The motive [x] in the final movement is presented by the oboe-maiden and is supported by the violins-Konstantis. While this motive appears throughout the whole work functioning as a statement fully orchestrated, here it is being presented in such a 'thin' way, that it makes it lose its dramatic previous function. It's totally new function is given to communicate the fact that Death and couple have accepted their futile joined fortune.

## b. rhythm

A. The use of repetitive notes, already in the introduction of the piece, as a first gesture in the theme is the 'fatal' element. This very characteristic rhythmical motive (ex.1 table III) which is placed almost in every movement (in the beginning of Moderato m.2 and also m.22-23, Allegro m.36, Lento m. 140, Vivo m. 338, Allegro m. 356, Lentement m. 485, Moderato assai in the theme and later in m. 538, etc), is used to impersonate Death, a person or sometimes a destiny that can't be changed. It's placed almost in every movement.

B. Death's attack in combination with Konstantis worries are given both in Allegro and Vivo with eight notes major 7<sup>th</sup> leaps (ex.2 table III).

C. The frequent successions of sixteen notes have a 'narrative-link' role

narrative bridge or comment	m. 54, m. 92, m. 283, m. 295
environment	m. 108-113
link	m. 118, m. 457, m. 590

## c. movements

At first sight, Skalkottas in his composition follows the plot; there is a development to be noticed in the story and a logical connection between the movements and the plot.

However the main part of the piece is occupied by Tempo di valse (Lento-Allegro-Lento) plus the intro (Andantino). So, we have 168 measures=504quarters in the beginning and also a repetition of it 3 times shorter, 56 measures (168 quarters)

As a conclusion, we could say that there is:

- A.** introduction of the plot (**Moderato**) + description of Kostantis –Death characters (**Allegro**)
- B.** the main story (Konstantis –Maiden love) (**Andantino-Tempo di Valse**)
- C.** -The description of the feelings of the characters Konstantis, Death, Maiden (**Vivo, Allegro, Lentement**)  
-Solution of the story (**Moderato**)
- D.** The confirmation that even in death they are together (**Lento**)

There is a similarity here: The Allegro movement ( 79 measures) before **B.** serves as a preparation (Konstantis is present without knowing exactly the fact)

Moderato assai ( 79 measures) serves too as a preparation before **D.** (but Konstantis has made the realization and has decided to go and meet her).



## 4.8 Movement relations

### **Allegro I**

### **Vivo**

- a) They have both a repetition (first ,second volta)
- b) They are both in rondo form
- c) They are both related with the death attack

### **Allegro I**

70 measures (till the repetition)

### **Allegro II**

70 measures

### **Moderato I**

### **Moderato assai**

- a) Similar use of the repetitive motive
- b) They use the same cell
- d) Persistence of the descending minor 3<sup>rd</sup> interval
- e) The alternation of the meters (4/4→3/4 and 3/4→2/4) appears in both movements
- f) Moderato assai is like a diminution of moderato (4/4, 2/4)

### **Allegro**

### **Moderato Assai**

- a) Both are 79 measures long
- b) They both serve as a preparation for the Lento

### **Lento (in the beginning)**

100 measures

### **Lento (in the end)**

21measures

(21measures =15 measures from 204-218)

*interior allegro:*

*interior allegro*

38= [16 + (4+10+8)] + 1

16+1

allegro =allegro( without 'Tsamikos' dance -10 measures- and the conclusive measures - 4+8 -)

Lento

15

Lento

18=15+3 coda

## 4.9. Folk elements

It's necessary to briefly explain in advance how Skalkottas deals with the folk material in other pieces in order to have a more intrinsic perception of the following analysis:

He sometimes supplements a folk theme with harmonies through which the chromatic scale is completed; he extends the folk theme through chromatic ornamentation leading in a sort of pseudo twelve-tone row; he composes the folk theme and harmonizes it in a very chromatic way or in some occasions he just employs the folk rhythm, without using the its melody at all.

In "*The Maiden and Death*" the only folk element is basically the A dorian melody = 'Tsamikos' dance (ex.1 table III) which is based on the authentic melody "*Enas Aetos*". ('Tsamikos I' in the "*36 Greek Dances*" is in A minor while 'Tsamikos II' is in C minor.)

The very first theme- which is used as a "kern" cell for the motives and melodies throughout the piece (ex.1 table 1) sounds very close to the traditional Aeolian mode melodies.

He avoids to use other typical folk elements but he 'replaces' them by setting a total Aeolian atmosphere.

Another important folk element in the piece derives from the orchestration choices that Skalkottas makes; setting the themes in unison and octaves, a practice that he came about to through his research on Greek folk music.

(ex.2, table III, 2m.Hrn+vln, 241m.fl+trp+vln)

We could say that the folk originating theme in the beginning and the 'Tsamikos' insinuate a music symbolism of the heroic element ('leventia'= gallantry).

The stylistic contrast between the Vales and 'Tsamikos' is quite adventurous. Two dances, both in 3/4 and very heterogeneous in their social origin: the Vales is related to cities and the upper class while the Tsamikos dance originates from a specific countryside area and is modal. Yet, Skalkottas manages to incorporate them through a very imaginative orchestration.

## 4.9 Number Relations

### Moderato (25 measures)

Phrasing division

4    5    4    5[+1syncopation]    5[2+3]

### Allegro (79 measures.70 till the repetition)

Phrasing division

7    7+ {2}    7[4+3]    5    7    35m  
 4    4    7+4    4    4    4    4    {4+4+1} coda    35m +9coda

The phrasing changes in the middle of the movement

### Andantino (14 measures)

Phrasing division

7[5+2]    7[5+2]

### Tempo di Valse (154=100 lento+ (38 +1) interior allegro, +15 lento)

Lento

Phrasing division

7[5+2]    7[5+2]    7[5+2]    3+4    4=[x] +1    21+7=28 +4 {[x] +1}

7[5+2]    8    5    20

7[3+4]    4    7    7    4    4    7    4    4=[x]    48

The phrasing changes in the middle again (28 before transition -4measures- and 28 after)

**Interior Allegro**

4	4	4	4	4	20
---	---	---	---	---	----

**(Tsamikos)**

4	4	2	10
---	---	---	----

4	4	8
---	---	---

**Lento**

7[3+4]	5[x+1]	12
--------	--------	----

4(coda)	20 +4coda
---------	-----------

The dance is placed exactly in the middle (20-10-20).

**Vivo (73 measures)**

4	4+2	4	4	4	4+2	28
---	-----	---	---	---	-----	----

4	4
---	---

4	4	4+2	4	4	4+2	28
---	---	-----	---	---	-----	----

There is symmetry to be noted again. The theme is exposed in the middle (4 measures)

Coda 1st volta	3	2	2	8
----------------	---	---	---	---

2 <sup>nd</sup> volta	3	2	3	+2link	8
-----------------------	---	---	---	--------	---

**Allegro (70 measures)**

6[4+2]	6[4+2]	2+6[4+2]	20
--------	--------	----------	----

5	5
---	---

2+2	4	4	4	4	20
-----	---	---	---	---	----

7[4+3]	6[4+2]	4	4	4	25
--------	--------	---	---	---	----

The 5 measure phrase has again 20 measures before after.

## Lentement

Exposition	7 [4+3]	5[3+2]	5[3+2] +4	21
Insert	5	5	5	15
Theme		3		3
Transition beginning of the melody 7 [4melody+3interruption]				4+3
Melody		4	4	8
Insert		5[3+2]	6[2+4]	4
Re-exposition	7[4+3]	3	4 2 4	7[5+2]
				27

The 3 measures which interrupt the melody basically must be added up to the first group, which gives us:

Before	$21+15+3+3=42$
Melody	$4+8=12$
After	$15+27=42$

The complete melody is situated again in the centre.

## Moderato Assai (79 measures)

A	6 (intro) / 5	5	5	5	/6 (intro)	32 measures (54quarters) + 12
`A	5	6	7	4		22 measures (48 quarters)
A	4	5	5	6	5	25 measures (48quarters) + 2transition

$$A=54$$

$$B=`A (48+12) + A (48) = 108=2x54=2xA$$

## Lento

	8[6+2]		5[3+2]		8[6+2]	21
Interior Allegro	4	4	4	4		16
Lento	1 transition	2	4	5	4	3
						19

## Interior symmetries:

1. Skalkottas situates in the middle part of every movement a special act: a change of the phrasing or important presentations (full melodies, the themes in conclusion form, new version of the motives, etc)  
E.g. He changes the grouping of the meters in allegro from 7 to 4 exactly in the middle part of the movement.

'Tsamikos' appears too in the middle of Allegro in Tempo di Valse (20 10 20)

2. We could even say that he organizes the phrases with an interior symmetry.

E.g. The 7 measures phrases in Andantino and Tempo di Valse are organized in 5+2.

The 5 measures phrases in Lentement and Moderato assai are organized in 3+2.

Going even further, we could say that in the very last movement he creates microscopically arches between the phrases and macroscopically an imperfect –done on purpose- arch for the whole movement.

{8 5 8- 4x4- 7(3+4) 5 7(3+4)}

The same can also be noticed not in the exact same way though in the other movements too.

E.g. Moderato Assai:

{6 5 5 5 5 6}

## Phrasing

It's very interesting to make a summary of the phrasing that he applies and the way he does it. Starting from the most common going to the less in use:

The number 7:

	Allegro	(first appearance, mainly in the first part)
	Andantino	
	Tempo di valseLento	(here is the main use of it, gradually it is diminished)
Fragmentary use:	Allegro (II)	(1 time)
	Lentement	(4 times)
	Moderato	(1 time)

The number 4:

	Moderato	(alternation between 5)
	Allegro	(in the second part)
	Tempo di Valse	(use in the interior Allegro: second part)
	Vivo	(catholic use of it)
	Allegro (II)	(use again in the second part)
Fragmentary use:	Lentement	(middle melody)
	Moderato assai	(2 times)
	Lento	

The number **5**: It appears with number 4 in the first movement and in the other movements it has a bridging used. Later it takes a more main function in the phrasing.

Moderato	(alternation between 4)
Allegro	(1 time just as bridge part)
Tempo di Valse	(1time, simile)
Allegro (II)	(1 time, simile)
Lentement	(used in special moments of the movement)
Moderato assai	(catholic use and gradually is diminished)
Lento	(2 times)

The number **6**:

Allegro II	(first and main use of it)
Lentement	(1 time)
Moderato assai	(2 times as introduction and 2 in the main movement)

The number **8**: He keeps two real phrases in 8 measures for the last movement

LentoII

Fragmentary use                      Lento I                      (1 time)

The number **3**: Very fragmentary but functional use

Tempo di valse	(1time the characteristic pattern of the repetitive notes)
Vivo	(twice in coda)
Lentement	(twice, both times a variation of the theme)
LentoII	(twice, completing the transition and coda)

1. The number **7**(in division of 5+2 and 3+4), is used in the ‘heart’ of the piece, Lento, and its presence is developing and disintegrating gradually. It’s a nice variation that he doesn’t use it in the repetition of Lento in the end of the piece; he even uses the same material. (The number 7 is replaced by 3 and 4 autonomous groups of measures):

Instead of	7	4	7	4
He uses	3	4	4	3

2. The different characters that the movements which follow Lento have are supported also by the use of different phrasing.

It’s not by accident that:

Vivo is developed in a clear **4** measures phrasing  
 Allegro II is dominated by **6** and later by **4**  
 Lentement (quite mixed) but still, **5** in combination of **7**  
 Moderato Assai based on **5**

## Exterior relations

Movements Meters Measures Quarters

Moderato Maestoso	4/4	25	100
----------------------	-----	----	-----

Allegro	2/4	79	158
---------	-----	----	-----

Andantino	6/8	14	42	
Lento	3/4	100		
Allegro moderato	3/4	39	100+39+15measures=462 quarters	462+42=504
Lento	3/4	15		

Vivo	2/2	73	292
Allegro	2/2	70	280
Lentement	3/8	96	144

Moderato Assai	2/4	79	162
-------------------	-----	----	-----

Lento	3/4	21		
Allegro	3/4	16	21+16+19 measures=168quarters	168=504:3
Lento	3/4	19		

1. Tempo di Valse /Lento-Allegro-Lento (+ Andantino as introduction) is the main corpus of the piece. Lento-Allegro –Lento appears again in the end of the piece three times shorter than the first Lento –Allegro-Lento. Both times they are preceded by movements in 2/4 signature that have a stretch of 79 measures (but Allegro is 4 quarters longer than Moderato Assai).



## General conclusions

“*The Maiden and Death*”, Skalkottas’ first ballet composition like almost his whole oeuvre is difficult to be defined with only one word or to be placed in a certain category of works.

-His language is for sure an extended tonal idiom placed in an Aeolian environment, but in the same time in a harmonious combination with a Greek ‘odor’.

By exposing only one single time an intact folk melody and by basing for the rest the whole work on his own composed kern theme (coloring it with a ‘folky’ shade), Skalkottas creates a very interesting puzzle.

-His rhythmical choices and the way in which he organizes the phrasing patterns, are perfectly interweaved, creating in principle a very natural flowing atmosphere which is at times interrupted by contrasting areas. In this way the phrases ‘speak’ like live characters.

-Skalkottas followed the plot in a very smart and sensitive manner, creating characters through the instruments and real scenes through the movements, without though making these relations in an obvious way. He manages to retain the illusion between real and supernatural situations through his excellent orchestration choices.

-Remaining consequent to his believes on what ballet music should sound like, his way of writing is clear, at times even transparent, with a strong sense of pulse, even in the slowest parts.

-Even though he believes that the ballet form addresses to a broader audience, Skalkottas doesn’t sacrifice his love to play with the form, numbers and technique.

He undertakes in this piece a very interesting form: rondo-variations with an exterior A B A shape, which he employed again later in a unique manner in his “*Symphonic Largo*”-part of the “*2<sup>nd</sup> Symphonic suite*” (1944)-where astonishingly the variations are structured in a superimposed sonata form!-

This form was not only a compositional experiment; it was a mean for Skalkottas to portray his characters. The archetypical figures of the plot (the maiden, death, love, the young man, destiny), were in the mind of Skalkottas, like cells which should perpetually run through out all the movements; apart from the fixed characters (the rondo-variations form, that basically doesn’t have any development, supports this idea perfectly).

-The number’s relations that Skalkottas uses, give a refined balance and symmetry to the piece. It gives an abstract archival shape, as a hand moving in the air, creating a curve.

## 5. “36 Greek Dances” (1933-1936)

### a. short analysis

### b. similarities-differences with “Maiden and the Death”

Making a reference to one of Skalkottas’ most important composition, the “36 Greek dances” (consisting of three series of dances), is quite essential, as although this work is irrelevant to ballet music it remains to be a very important source as far as understanding Skalkottas’ knowledge and use of folk material is concerned.

On a first level it’s important to examine the origin of the dances which are incorporated in this very famous work:

a. There are dances of known origin. These are the eight dances based on the folk songs transcriptions Skalkottas had done in 1930 and two that are based on the material extracted from ‘Roumelis’ songs’ by Melpo Merlie (who translated the melodies into notes in 1922). These are the dances that Skalkottas shows a clear preference for and which as we can also deduce stand generally higher than the others in the piece. Apart from these easily identified dances, we can not speak with certainty in defining the rest of the dances that are being used.

b. There are dances based on widely known folk melodies such as: “Zalogo’s dance” (A row/2), “We, the Little Cretan boys” (A row/2) and “One boat from Chios” (B row/8) which were an inspiration for Skalkottas in his composing of the “Chian”, “Cretan” etc dances.

c. Dances that are not based on traditional material, like for example the “Peloponnesian” (A row/4) and the “Arkadian” (C row/10) dance.

On a second level it is very interesting to examine if the “36 Greek Dances” are related in any way with similar works of other composers.

Going through the “German dances” of Mozart to the “Hungarian Dances” of Brahms and to the “Slovakian Dances” of Dvorak we arrive to Bela Bartok’s “Dances” which seem in a way to be the closest similar model at least to the “Peloponnesian Dance” of 1931.

In the time that Skalkottas was working on the “36 Greek Dances”, some other Greek composers are trying through their works to approach the Greek traditional dances: “Kithiraic dances” (1926) by Dimitris Mitropoulos, “Greek dances” (1931) by Manolis Kalomiris, “Suite for a white seashell” (1948) by Manos Hatzjidakis.

During the years 1934 and 1935 many composers turned their interest towards Greek dances due to research of Melpo Merlie and her commissions of arrangements. However, most of them (mainly members of Greek National School) absorbed the folk material not in order to use it for independent compositions but in order to incorporate it into other bigger compositional forms such as ballets, symphonies, concertos, suites, variations and fugues.

Kalomiris for example, didn’t use the Greek dance of ‘Zalogo’ to create the *Zalogo’s dance* but just used it in his ballet composition “*The Death of the brave heart woman*” (1943).

By these means, there is a big difference between Skalkottas and the rest of his contemporary Greek composers (the only exception is the composer Yannis Konstantinidis) as far as their perception of the substance of the folk material is concerned. Skalkottas understands the material in its context whereas this context in the other composers vanishes somewhere along the total compositional perception and philosophy.

It’s very characteristic that Skalkottas orchestrates the dances based on the ideal of the second school of Vienna about orchestration. The constant division of the thematic lines in the different groups of the

orchestra reflects the Schoenberg method of the interrupting process. Moreover, the clear orchestral sound bears great resemblance to the orchestra ideal that the serial composers share. (e.g. in the first orchestrations of the dances he uses the doubling of instrument to instrument and normally every voice is given only to one group of instruments.)

The doubling in octaves and in 15<sup>ths</sup> is widely used. (“Epitrapezios”, B row/10)

Worth noticing is the fact that Skalkottas avoids in a humorous way the use of augmented seconds (e.g. ‘Syrtos’ is traditionally based mainly on augmented seconds and yet he doesn’t use them), an action with which he probably intended to give a message to his contemporaries.

The two articles: ‘Folk song’ and ‘Development of music themes’, written by Skalkottas himself, are the best sources that reflect his ideas on the treatment of folk material and the composition of the “36 Greek Dances”. The main subject which is being dealt with in these articles is the meaning of ‘development’. The composer knows spiritually the substance of the folk song and tries to translate it in his contemporary music language without “*varying its original tendency, the beauty of his content and its powerful style*”

The technical aspect of the development is described in the other article where it is defined as the second parameter of the form beyond the theme itself: “*the development of every theme carries something similar, something special, something different into its architecture and into its shape*” and “*in every theme we are giving a development that bears from the beginning its own music and aesthetic value, without giving it a new added feeling or musical dynamic significance*”

Most of the above mentioned practices in compositional process and ideas on the use of folk material are also reflected in “*The maiden and death*” (the thin orchestra sound, the avoiding of , augmented seconds, the interchange of motives between different instruments and the doubling in octaves).

It’s very important to mention that his work “*The 36 Greek dances*” served as sources for some of his other compositions such as the “*9 dances for wind orchestra*” (1936) and “*9 dances for string orchestra*” (1938), while the dance of Kostantis, ‘Tsamikos’, which appears in “*The maiden and Death*” is actually the first dance from the first row of the “*36 Greek dances*” (but in A Dorian).

## 6. “Gnomes”-“The Sea”

### a. short analysis

### b. comparison with “The Maiden and Death”

## Gnomes (1939)

The ballet “*The Gnomes*” was written in 1939, the same year as the “3<sup>rd</sup> Piano concerto”. It is a suite for instrumental ensemble and consists of arrangements by Skalkottas of small piano pieces written by Bartok and Stravinsky as well as of three short pieces written by Skalkottas himself. It is a delightful score showing Skalkottas’ craftsmanship and originality.

At the time, Skalkottas was in collaboration with all of the pioneering ballet companies that were staged in Athens and that is when Koula Pratsika, the director of the ‘Pratsika Dance school’ and leading figure in the Greek ballet, asked him to work together in the production of “*The Gnomes*”, which was to be presented in a double Christmas performance on the 22<sup>nd</sup> December, 1939.

(See the original program.doc.1)

Pratsika had formed around her dance school a circle of eminent Greek artists, musicians and writers. Especially for the production of “*The Gnomes*” she had also commissioned Stratis Myrivilis, one of Greece’s most important twentieth-century writers, to write a free poetic narration on the ballets’ theme and symbolism.

As far as the music was concerned, Pratsika had initially formed a suite by making her own selection of pieces from Bela Bartok’s piano collection “*For children*” and had then asked Skalkottas to orchestrate them.

The Bartok pieces like all of the “*For children*” collection are based on authentic Hungarian and Slovakian folk-songs and therefore suited to the folk –inspired ballet’s subject. In the original printed program only Bartok was titled as the composer while Skalkottas was only listed as the arranger (in the manuscript score no composer’s name is mentioned not even Skalkottas’). However, there are some pieces in the final version of the suite which have been written by other composers apart from Bartok (although the main body -seven pieces- consists of Bartok’s compositions). It seems likely that as “*The Gnomes*” was taking its final shaping, there was more music needed than the one Pratsika had originally selected. Myrivilis’s poetic narration, divided into parts, was used as a frame for the ballet’s main action. It is therefore possible that a new introduction preceding the narration was needed, as well as some music to accompany the narration part.

For the introduction (no.1) a piano piece of Stravinsky was effectively used which -like the Bartok piano pieces- was also taken from a children collection “*The five fingers*”. Judging from the fact that Skalkottas favored Stravinsky, it’s highly possible that he was the one to suggest this piece. Skalkottas too composed three short pieces for the suite: No2, with a beautiful cello modal melody, as well as No.11 and 12.

No.5 is an unidentified piece of early music probably selected by Pratsika who frequently used baroque music in her productions. Appearing at first sight stylistically incompatible with the pieces of Bartok /Stravinsky/ Skalkottas, it was evidently chosen to provide a marked contrast, as it is the first and principal dance of the chaste Vestals around the Hearth against the pagan-country Gnomes. And thanks to Skalkottas’s witty use of material, the styles succeed convincingly creating an enjoyable mood. Before and after the Hearth dance in another stylistic diversion a traditional Greek Christmas Carol is heard (No4, repeated in N.6); it is played by solo oboe, an allusion to the sound of the Greek folk wind instrument ‘zournas’, accompanied by the traditional triangle, bells and percussion and without any harmonic accompaniment whatsoever.

The instrumental ensemble consists of flute (doubling piccolo), oboe (doubling cor anglais), trumpet, percussion and string quintet.

Skalkottas's instrumentation of the pieces by Bartok and Stravinsky is artful and very imaginative. His treatment captures the rusticity and verve of Bartok in a mood matching the folk character of the plot.

These pieces meant to be played by children are very simple written usually with a limited melodic range, so Skalkottas, writing for an ensemble of winds strings and percussion, sometimes enlarges the texture with doublings (in a higher or lower registers), or develops a texture with new inner lines and subsidiary motifs derived from the original's motive and harmonic substance.

This is clearly seen for instance in No.13 (the song of the Joy). Lusciously added doublings (the original melody is here in the upper melody), pedals and ostinati (connected with the original's motifs and continuous pedaling), punctuations by the percussion, new inner lines (often developed from the original ostinato syncopated bass), a cheerful counter melody in the trumpet heard in the middle of the piece, a new secondary motif in the timpani accompanying a nervous bass motif derived from it as a rhythmic augmentation and then transferred to 'con legno' violins and so on..

Skalkottas's imaginative ability to develop and explore musical material is evident. In the other Bartok pieces such procedures are more discreet; some of the pieces are transposed from a mellower to a brighter tonality (from F to D major), which is more appropriate for the ballet's sonority and is better for the tonal continuity in the suite.

In general Skalkottas is faithful to the originals and never alters anything of the original composition while developing new textures out of it.

Interestingly Stravinsky much later (1962) orchestrated the piece used in "*The Gnomes*" in his "*Eight Instrumental Miniatures*" an arrangement of all of "*The five fingers*". In his own instrumentation however Stravinsky recomposed the original piece by means of rhythmic rewriting, phrase regrouping, canonic (and polyphonic) elaboration and new modulation (as he stated himself), modifying also its expressive character to a certain extent.

Skalkottas' own small miniatures are beautifully integrated in the ballet. The expressive cello melody in No.2, in Phrygian mode and under a static modal chord in a piercing instrumentation, is evocatively combined with the narration. No.11, is a strictly two voice repeated phrase with an almost Bartok-mode bitonality creating a bittersweet feeling while the defeated Gnomes exit one by one. It is accompanied by bells intoning a pedal g. The bells continue in the ensuing minimal G major chorale; the obstinate g in the distant bells clashes with the cadencing dominant D major chord suggesting the ambivalence of dawn before the gradual rise of the song of Joy that follows.

## “The Sea” (folk ballet, 1949)

“*The Sea*”, is one of Skalkottas’s few purely tonal works. It was written in 1949 and was a commission by one of his friends, Polyxeni Mattei Roussopoulou (According to Eleni Kefalou Hors , - one of the three still in life first students of Pratsika-though, the work was a commission for the final exam of Koulas Pratsika’s student Aleka Katseli, who was later to become one of Greece’s most important actresses).

The initial concept of the work, was titled “*The Earth and the Sea*” and consisted of two parts, however, a bit later, Skalkottas separated the two parts into two independent compositions. The first, which had the title “*Earth*” or “*Four autumn Pictures*”, was completed in full orchestral form in 1948, while the second part with the title “*The Sea*” grew in dimension; its initial three tableaux form expanded into “*Ten images with an Introduction*” and the orchestra expanded to its full size with augmented sections of woodwind percussion harp and strings.

The meticulous calligraphy of the manuscript orchestral score is dated from the 29<sup>th</sup> of June, 1949, while the lengthy preface in the composer’s own dense handwriting, defines the work’s character and form as a ‘theatrical musical folk ballet’ and describes the pictures evoked by the music like a program.<sup>2</sup>

\_The ensemble that Skalkottas employs in “*The Gnomes*” consists of instruments which have a leading role also in his work “*The Maiden and death*” (oboe, trumpet, flute, string quintet and percussion).

\_His preference in using Oboe in a soloist way, giving a special character in “*Maiden and the death*”, is present in *Gnomes* as well. Probably Skalkottas has associated in his subconscious the western Oboe with the Greek traditional reed instrument, ‘*zournas*’.

\_The three pieces have different compositional languages:

- “*The Gnomes*”, based on pieces composed by Bartok, Stravinsky but also by Skalkottas himself, is an alloy of different influences, using from traditional Carols to bitonality similar to Bartok’s idea and even Phrygian modes.

- “*The Sea*” is a genuinely tonal piece.

- “*The Maiden and Death*”, is composed in a broadened tonality within a modal environment.

However, there are similarities which characterize Skalkottas’ taste and ideas concerning ballet music in relation to the traditional material and compositional processes:

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<sup>2</sup> Yannis G.Papaioannou, president of the society of ‘Skalkottas’s friends’ and responsible for main research efforts on Skalkottas. He is one of the greatest advocates of his compositions all over the world and gives a detailed account of the exceptional care and affection with which the composer treats the ‘twin’ scores - “*The Sea*” and the folk drama tale “*May’s Sorcery*”-that were completed during the period June to August, 1949.

“...*The art of calligraphy applies not only to the utmost care in writing the notes but also to the way of artfully placing the score on each page like geometry. Also noticeable is the special care for the stave paper quality as well as the use of a specially fine pen, the color of the ink (somewhat pale bluish), and most of all, the same millboard for the binding: brown color for “the Sea”, dark green for “May’s Sorcery”, as well as the artistic way of molding the titles, the preface notes and the other autograph notes...*”

\_All three plots are based on traditional material:

- the plot of "*Gnomes*", is based on Greek folk Christmas tales about 'the Gnomes' (Goblins)
- the plot of "*The Maiden and Death*", is based on a homonymous folk song (as it was transcribed in the "*Collections*" of N.Politis in the chapter "*Death songs*").
- the plot of "*the Sea*" in its main part, deals with 'Gorgon', a nymph of the 'Sea', who according to the myth, was the sister of Alexander the Great.

We could therefore deduce that Skalkottas shared a special interest about the Greek traditional heritage. Through his ballet music, which he believed to be an art form that is more approachable to an audience, he found a very nice way to deal with favored topics (and specifically with the Greek element), without becoming just another composer who employs non-western melodies in a western symphonic orchestra context.

\_Another similarity noticed in the works "*the Sea*" and "*The Maiden and Death*", is the fusion of two worlds, the real and the imaginary. As Skalkottas describes in the preface of "*the Sea*":

"...*the dream of the sailor recalls the memory of the Gorgon and creates an illusion...*"  
The same illusive feeling is also prevailed in his composition "*the Maiden and the Death*".

\_Taking into account the years of the composition of these three ballets, we could see an inner evolution and liberation of Skalkottas:

- With "*The Maiden and Death*" (1938), he tries to walk through a trail based on tonality (a language the he will never use again).
- His composition "*The Gnomes*" (1939), is being stirred by the Bartok-Stravinsky idioms but under his personal fantastic orchestration. His own composed 3 pieces interference, gives to the overall composition the mark of his style as well as his mood to enjoy and play with the composition processes without any hesitation on using simple folk material (integrating it in the context and character of the piece).
- The work "*The Sea*" (1949), is one of Skalkottas's very few, genuinely tonal pieces. Composed during the last year of his life, he doesn't hesitate to name the piece a 'folk Ballet'. Meanwhile, his commentary in the preface of the score, on his choices of the simple and very much danceable melodic and rhythmic material, evokes surprise in the critics circle.  
The course that Skalkottas has followed during these three works, demonstrates his capacity to move in every musical idiom with a unique manner.

## 7. Description and placement of his personality in the Greek and German society of the '30's-'40's

### 7.1 Social-political context

Greece was in an economical lock in during the '30s and '40s, a fact that diminished any possibility of free choices. However, it can be deduced from his more than 100 letters and from his autobiographical references which are included in his music, that Skalkottas being under a superficially stoic indifference, carried on with passion for his life and fortune.

He considered that his forced return to Greece was a catastrophic event in his life, a personal tragedy. His economical catastrophe gradually developed between the years 1930-1933 (the beginning of his downfall was the winter of 1933, when he performed in Athens his concert for winds). His mentor, Manolis Benakis, decided to seize his financial support probably under the influences of the negative feedback he got from the Athenian music society, but still gave him the chance of earning some money by selling rare musical scores by other composers in Berlin.

His health was not so good, his financial problems were still quite present and his family was asking him for help. However, the deterioration of the economical situation in Berlin made the purchase of scores impossible, so Skalkottas decided to use part of Benakis' money for his own needs with the idea to turn them back later. But this never happened and all his belongings including his compositions were vouched to his landlady for all of his unpaid bills.

In 1933 asked from the Greek embassy to help him return in Greece and although he managed to make it to the Greek airport his passport was confiscated. Back in Greece he had to face even worse conditions. In order to survive, he was forced to work as a player in an orchestra that he shared no respect for. But still, he was planning to save money so that he could go back to Germany while Hitler was already in power.

From the letters that he sent to Benakis, it is known that he was working on "*The Greek dances*" (Peloponisiakos) even from the period he was still staged in Berlin, having two goals:

- a. to gain financial support from people that had a vision for Greek music and to win back the public –that had heavily criticized him after the performance of his "*Concerto for wind orchestra*" and
- b. to enrich the folk music with the modern idiom.

However, after Benizelos' political defeat on March, 1933, the years of unbalance that followed in Greece led to the dictatorship of Ioanis Metaxas in 1936. The Greek economy almost collapsed and his job as violinist in the Conservatory Orchestra and as an arranger in the 'King Theater' didn't make it possible for him to realize his plans. This had a big influence on his character and his psychological state.

Noteworthy is the fact that during his short life, Skalkottas had the chance to listen to only three of his orchestral works being performed live –apart from his "*Concerto for winds*" which he conducted himself- ("*Dance suite*" on 23-3-49, "*Four Pictures*" on 2-5-49 and "*Ten sketches for strings*" on 13-4-49 -all performed during the last year of his life-).



## 7.2 Letters

### 7.2.1

*“...I still have in my ears that last Jazz rhythm. This time it’s not annoying. Today I needed noise, sounds, people, life, happiness... Today I’m no longer a violinist; I don’t study the violin anymore. Already since three years ago, I have come to the fact that my only work and my only ideal is composition; I think that I’m the only one who could know that I have more talent and future there. I would truly appreciate it if you would spread the news to everyone in Greece. Composition is the only ideal for me and my ideal is to learn how to compose...”*

(6/7/1925, 18/8/1926) letters to Nelli Askitopoulou

*“...I don’t care so much for my life as I do for my work. I wanted so much to write ten or twenty more pieces so that my country would have its own national composer. I hope to manage it even under these conditions and all the difficulties. I hope the circumstances will help me...”*

(16/10/1931) letter to Manolis Benakis

*“...Everyone can curse at me as much as he wants. Don’t’ call me no patriot, because this would be the biggest lie and the only one which would really hurt me...”*

(17-12-1937) letter to Manolis Benakis

*“...Can you imagine? I didn’t manage to put aside even one penny...and the reason for that is the bad rhythm of our times...”*

(10-11-1947) letter to Rudi Goehr

### 7.2.2

*“...You can’t imagine how things are going here in my country, by means of my health and my finances. With the hope that things will go better I’m working in an orchestra in order to survive (...) It’s truly so bitter and awful this period that I have a deep feeling of aversion for everything natural supernatural or whatever I see around me (...)*

*The best would have been to stay in Germany and work with Schoenberg. Here the working hours are a waste time, I can’t go on anymore. The general foolishness has increased incredibly (...) It’s almost a crime (...) I have refused whatever happens now (...) The only thing that any person -with dignity- in my place can do is to repeat again and again: Leave![die Route!]*

*When I left form Schoenberg and my friends I lost almost everything which a normal person has. It’s strange but abroad I felt loved and I had found a normal life simpler than here; as if it were something completely natural and felt loved almost by everyone without exception. Here I’ve lost everything. Nor the country nor the people are the suitable for me at this period of my life. The people who are involved in the music life play games how often the eyes of the artist are closed! ...”*

(27-11-1935) letter to Malta Temko (his beloved and mother of his daughter Artemis)

His opportunity to go to the USA was lost in 1925, when he had the invitation to be there. He was thinking of leaving even after the war.

*“...I would like to be there. Maybe later I could come under your protection and help...”*

(11-10-1945) letter to Rudi Goehr (when he was leaving in Hollywood)

Two years later, all his hopes are lost:

*“...It would have been better for me if I had moved to America years ago. But I couldn't take the decision to go on such a long trip, every time it was strange enough to me that I did the big trip to Germany...”*

Externally he was silent but inside the nostalgic desire of an escape was very much present. He had found the closest thing to a refuge in a kind of inner emigration. For the public he was the composer of “*The 36 Greek Dances*” and privately he set his daily resistance, composing the twelve-tone atonal pieces.

### **7.3 Skalkottas' thoughts, ideas and opinions**

*“The inventor with his twelve-tone system, didn't intend –as a lot of people believe–to the constant repetition of the 12 notes in the principal or secondary voices of one piece, but aimed to a rule similar to the 7 tones system: the legislation, the restriction and the gathering of the contemporary music material in a modern established system.*

*The main point of it is: a. the avoidance of the octaves, b. the clearness of the writing and the endless horizon of the use of the voices and harmony. It's not a medical receipt because a kind of this form would also be applicable to the 7 note system”.*

Article from Berlin which was published in the magazine ‘Music Life’ Athens, 1931

*“We should be concerned about the general good style and about the style which can also be understood by a non musician; here is the difficulty: for someone to recognize the right style of a large music work without being a specialist.*

*We could say that the music style is coming from the form of the composition and the sonority of all the sounds, but in the same time there is also something invisible (as there is also in painting), something that is not heard in the consonance of the sounds. The good music style is given through a composition that bears the most uniform music artworks. This strictness must be controlled by the composer; the good style is a demand of the audience as it has a great influence on the clarity with which a piece is perceived. In other words, music without style is less alive and sometimes empty”.*

From ‘Style’, 1936-38

*“The accidental orchestration is too an artifact of a very exact calculation. For this reason we should never perceive the strict orchestration rules to as random; or we couldn't state that a dense orchestration doesn't make sense just based on the fact that we are unable to understand it or just because we would tire our mind on a effort to follow it”.*

From ‘The technique of orchestration’ (around 1939)

*“Schoenberg's music for piano played an important role in his musical experiments. Here we could find the first no tonal piece in a composed clear twelve tone system. The evolution is very obvious. In the three pieces for piano op.11, the composer finds new paths with still unknown to that time potential and a new musical content; one mean for a continuous change and variation of the compositional manners and musical moods.*

*And this is what they called expressionism 15 years ago! Mainly for musicians, this is interesting music...”*

On A. Schoenberg's piano pieces Op.11 and Op. 21, performed by Elze Kraous, ‘Music Life’ March, 1931

*“The two Rhapsodies for violin and orchestra by B. Bartok were clearer and very transparent in an acoustic aspect. They are folklore pieces full in rhythm and orchestrated in a magnificent way. After Schoenberg, Bartok is without doubt the most interesting and serious musician of our times...”*  
‘Music Life’ April, 1931

*Many music critics believe that the music direction that Stravinsky creates will not leave a tradition for the future, a trail that the new musicians will follow.*

*I don’t agree and I believe that even if this is the truth, for me it is not a disadvantage.*

*Who were worthy successors of Bach or Beethoven?*

*And the ones that tried to be added to the masters’ work?*

*There is one truth: The Beginning (‘Prinzip’)*

‘Music Life’ February, 1931

## **7.4 What has been said and written about him**

*“Someone can tell from the construction of the composition, from the evolution and motivic development what I allow my students to do and what not to. He- for sure- overshadows”.*

Arnold Schoenberg, 1932

*“I’m not in the position to judge the value of Greek modern music which is not so familiar to me. But I did have the chance to follow the evolution of the contemporary music movement and its great personalities for many years and I would like to talk to the Greeks about a miracle that happened in this place (...)*

*I don’t know if such a thing has ever occurred in literature or in the theater but I know for sure that in music nothing like it has been witnessed: the amusing persistence of a person to compose a huge amount of works next to one another, extremely complicated and well done. For some of them he often prepared two or even three copies (handwritten), accompanied by analytical explanations on the combinations while he almost never got the chance to listen to his very idiomatic music being performed by a large orchestra. However, he still continued to compose up to the last moment even when his own life was endangered (when fights during the civil war were carried out next to his door). All this is a miracle”.*

Walter Goehr, ‘Everyday Newspaper’ (1.11.1952)

*“Skalkottas belongs to those that according to Nietzsche “owe to their teacher the fact that they didn’t just remain students all their lives”. He doesn’t imitate Schoenberg; he is not a prisoner of the twelve-tone method. His decisive and in the same time powerful music expression, where every instrument has a continuous conversation with the piano, reminds us of Bartok”.*

(Signature; cel, Sueddetsche Zeitung Munch 2-10-1953 on the 2<sup>nd</sup> piano concerto)

*“Passionate and dramatic, lyric and heroic, tender and fragile, the 2<sup>nd</sup> piano concerto is a direct charming work. Its spontaneous and powerful masculine character fights against the sadistic masculine complex and the stupor that governs many contemporary music works. It is a new and brilliant thought with an unexpected stylistic perception in every corner of the piece and at a certain moment we realize that this music has solved some of the most important issues of contemporary composition: the problem of the sonata, the problem of being fond of symmetries versus being against asymmetry, the problem of the concerto, the problem of the modern way of writing for piano, the puzzle of the twelve-tone method, for the tonality versus against the tonality and the historic dilemma anti romantic versus romantic. He solves these issues like a healthy organism solves the problem of his interior development in an environment that is hard for his upbringing”.*

Hans Keller, ‘The listener’ (9-12-1954)

*“In the concerts with the Philharmonic Orchestra of New York, I’m going to include pieces by the unforgettable composer Nikos Skalkottas, who unfortunately died too early being neglected by his country; and I say unfortunately because he didn’t leave behind him the oeuvre which he could have able to create”.*

Dimitris Mitropoulos, ‘the News’ (9-12-1954)

*“Skalkottas was maybe too modern for Greece of that time and not rough enough for the Schoenberg circle and the post war avant-garde, but his unique voice represents a composer whose time is already here now”.*

Benjamin Pernick, ‘Fanfare Magazine’ (USA July-August, 1998)

*“The orchestra used in the piece “Ulysses Return to his country” is too big but not unusual in comparison to the size used by the late romantic composers. His odor is not easily described. His harmonic treasure doesn’t have such dissimilarity from the one of Berg; however, Skalkottas’ language differentiates by not employing the sweet decadence that is to be found in Berg. “Ulysses Return to his country” could be said to be a kind of Greek “Lulu”.*

Ronald Kritston, ‘The Financial Times’ (24.6.1969)

*“.....In a psychological mood point of view, there is a similarity to be found with Berg’s melancholy. But this music appears to be more absolute and powerful in expression and not expressive with the meaning of the ‘expressionism’...”*

Roundolf Klein ‘Oesterreichische musikzeitschrift’ April, 1956

*“...Skalkottas’ total isolation led him to the greatest independence and originality of his oeuvre. In this way he managed to exceed the creative uncertainty of many of his contemporaries but also composers from the past...”*

D. Drew

## **7.5 How is his composition “Maiden and the Death” placed in this context?**

The “*Maiden and the death*” is a deeply human piece which colors the supernatural dimension of the human being with a very optimistic mood. It is a hymn to the idea of love in life but also beyond life itself.

The fight between life and death represents the daily fight of a person with himself and with his external environment having in the meantime fate as his constant follower.

Skalkottas was a strong believer of destiny and by composing the piece “*The Maiden and Death*” he wanted to create in a way an escape for himself too. During the time that Skalkottas was writing this work he was had resettled to a more optimistic way of thinking, after the shock that he had gone through with his return to Greece and the extreme depression period that had followed that. He had started to face life again and to seek and explore new ways of expression .He became more social and started collaborating with other artists in an effort to get over the refusing period that he was going through previously.

The composition of a ballet at that moment, in a language through which he could communicate to a more extended audience, based on a very well know theme, gave him the motivation to overstep his depression and equipped him with the drive and energy that was needed in order to go through the necessary transitional period that would pilot him to his new life. As a result, he started to get attached and create links with his country and simultaneously put his signature in the national ‘Greek music school’.

It's obvious that Skalkottas composed based on his very personal, private anxieties and visions about life as well as life beyond life death (overstep of death in "*The sea*" and "*The Maiden and death*") but within a worldly prism.

He had the ideals of the 'New' music as he had experienced it in Germany; he had the ideal of the 'National' Greek music as he had experienced during the interwar period and the ideal of the liberation and revolution of the people. He stopped composing when these perspectives seemed to get lost, which was the actually the deepest reason for the depression and refusal period he went through during the years 1931-1935.

## 8. An attempt to estimate his work

The most obvious or hidden argument that lead to the questioning of Skalkottas' oeuvre today, is the fact that he worked both with the biggest 'strictness' and 'freedom' in his compositions beyond the dipole ideas of his time (the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century). And more specifically that he composed twelve-tone (and atonal variations of the twelve-tone system) pieces next to tonal ones.

To identify his relation to Western European music we should start researching first from the line which connects him firstly to Bach and subsequently to Beethoven, Berlioz, Wagner and Mahler. A comparison to his contemporary composers could direct towards not only Stravinsky but also mainly to Bartok, Milhaud and Prokofiev. The influences he experienced from the jazz music of his time are still under research as are in the same the influences he got from the 'Buzzonni School'.

The easy correlation to Schoenberg and his connection more to Berg than to Webern are too general. He wasn't the only heretic figure in the twelve-tone circle (Dallapiccola, Marten etc. are some other figures that moved in that direction).

In the Greek scene, Skalkottas is related with the folk tradition and the Ionian island music tradition (first of all due to his birth origin and later due to his choices). Whereas that doesn't appear to be the case with the 'National Greek School' -it seems that he is far way-, however works like: "*The 36 Greek dances*", "*The Maiden and Death*", "*The Procession to Axerontas*" as well as "*The Sea*", can be considered as pieces of this tendency. His interest to the 'Rebetiko' existed already four years prior to Hatzidakis' lecture.

Skalkottas had very intensely the feature of contradiction in his writing system: one piece or a movement of the piece uses folk material or not, or it's tonal or not. In this way Skalkottas felt free to create within any given system. In this way he brings together absolute strictness with absolute freedom. To him, each system had a positive aspect that connected with its negative would help him achieve his goal.

E.g. the prohibition of the octave in the twelve-tone system finds its goal in the 'development of the new harmony'.

Skalkottas showed to have a very strict perception of the tonal system in his mature pieces, after *The 36 Greek dances*, even his tonal language is not compact. As we saw, the tonal language that he uses in "*The 36 Greek dances*" is different than the one employed in "*The Maiden and death*" and in "*The Classical Symphony*". Polytonality for him is more of a variation of the tonal system than a totally new system. E.g. "*Sonatina for piano*" (1927), "*Concertino in C*" (1948, 1949)

Generally he believed that the twelve-tone system was more strict and closer to the 'classical rules' (probably due to its 'calculated value of the pitches') than to the tonal system rules.

So, his different compositional periods (which often overlapped) have an evolution from the twelve-tone system (his strict composition beginning) towards the tonality (more free compositions). Another observation is that after the war he uses tonal language in his orchestral pieces and twelve-tone techniques in his chamber music pieces. Probably he was fascinated from the ideas of the 'popular art' and the 'power of the symphonic concerts' which were easy for the mass audience to follow and made him come to the conclusion that large sized orchestras supported by a tonal system of composing were more easier to communicate. His chamber music was addressed to another part of the public supporting simultaneously another musical vision.

As far as forms are concerned; it's obvious that he felt an attraction for the forms: sonata, sonatina, concerto and suite. The explanation is not yet so simple. This preference was not only due to a nostalgic reference to the neoclassicism of his Berlin period; it was also a reminder that he composed into a long tradition which leded from Bach to Schoenberg.

So, these forms in combination with the very neutral titles he used for his pieces (in general), was a way for him to calm down and to objectify his interior storm of feelings and worries which were desperately looking for a release.

Specifically if we were to go deeper into his inner world, we would see that the course from death to life, from loneliness to love, the unreal world power, the tragic aspect of his love, were issues that troubled Skalkottas intensely. The four pieces: "16 songs for mezzo soprano and piano", "Tale May's Sorcery", "The return of Ulysses" and the centre part of the piece "Concerto for two violins and orchestra"<sup>3</sup> (based on text that Skalkottas himself had chosen), reflect his anxieties and have hidden symbolisms and references from his life.

His compositions: "The Sea" and "The Maiden and Death" move between the real and unreal world in connection to death and 'life' after that.

In the music that Skalkottas composed in 1944, the contrast between the real (village and civilians) and the unreal world (exotic, fairytales etc.) is represented with the use of two different music idioms: the folk-tonal and the twelve-tone –atonal.

In the "The Maiden and Death" (1938) this contrast is not so direct, but is being presented mainly with special orchestration gestures (Even for *Death* he had employed a specific chord which is repeated always and for destiny the motive[x] which is running as we saw all over the piece).

There is another feature that we have to notice on Skalkottas' overall work which is also valid for "The Maiden and Death". Next to what has been already said, Skalkottas had a very strong sense of humor with an ironic side to it as well. His music and his theories are full of the belief that the music experience even when it is referring to a piece or a performance is a game of the imaginative and of the senses and serves the goal of satisfaction. His very human opinion is related to the interest he shared for so many music idioms and his ignorance of divisions between 'high' and 'low' class art and for success. He is often playful with the material he encompasses, the performer and the audience. {When he makes references to film music, dance music or theater music, he points out how important it is for the music to have a sense of clear and strong rhythm and to express by itself the total idea of the work be that choreography, movie or theater}.

It is very charming that during his youth he didn't perform only in concert halls but also in bars and cafés (improvising as well); he wanted to be in contact with jazz and dance music of his time.

It was very often that he played with the expectations of the audience; he raises the rhetorical question: what characterizes a piece to be called a 'prelude'? And in the same time he develops it and varies the material so radically creating a contemporary and revolutionary piece

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It is worthy to mention here that the use in the centre part of the "Concerto for two violins and orchestra" based on a (minor) melody from the Rebetiko song 'The Witch of the East' by Vasilis Tsitsanis, was a scandal for that time. ('Rebetiko' was the most underground music species, describing the pain of the low class and the people who live on the edges of the society). Skalkottas originating from a poor family of the countryside, felt more connected with this part of the society. In addition his captivation (1944-1945) in the concentration camp in Haidari (during the civil war), created a special social sensitivity in Skalkottas who had generally no political involvement.

This is achieved with the base of few melodic cells (like pitch class sets) which are used like a theme with a very methodic way changing always the music surface. This is used in "*The Maiden and Death*" almost in every movement (could you find where the theme is?)

His mood for games and a slightly ironic expression is more intense in the "*32 pieces for Piano*". First of all he chooses very characteristic titles and creates contradictions between them and the content. The '*child dance*' has a very dark mood and the repetitive notes sound more like small daemons.

The same we have already noticed in "*The Maiden and Death*". The decision and the entrance of Konstantis in the world of death are described by a very happy Moderato assai movement.

Skalkottas had always shared a great amount of respect towards the virtuosity of the performer. Many of his pieces are very demanding musically and technically. One of his trademarks is that even though music and performer are placed in a 'travel' through difficult passages, in the end they always conclude to a conventional V-I relation. (e.g. the "*1st suite for piano*" ends after a big 'adventure', in C. In "*The Maiden and Death*", after a total Aeolian environment he 'winks' at the audience by finishing in A).

It is quite interesting that after his marriage his compositional activity turned towards less complicated pieces and a more tonal idiom (such are: "*The symphony in A*", "*Concertino for piano in C*", etc.) with the hope that they could be performed even from the national orchestra. Probably in that very hard -for Greece- period, Skalkottas dreamt of an escape from the world of death and raised hopes that even a complicated piece such as "*The return of the Ulysses*" could have the success that the "*The 36 Greek dances*" had but on the long term. Or further he had the vision of uniting the three countries that he had in his soul; modern Greece (where he lived at the time in suffer), its idealized -in his fantasy- ancient version and the lost paradise of the pre-war Berlin.

So, for Skalkottas when a composer expresses an idea through a piece, it is already certain that the piece is original and directly connected with the historic moment; a moment that is being in one way or another created by the work itself. These ideas can be later collected and give birth to new works and they define the 'rules' on which the work is written. These rules refer to a system of choices -how the composer must deal with basic sound parameters- and they create the base on which the music is defined.

The dialogic relation of the 'ideas' which correspond to the 'content' of the music -beyond history but also as the historic reality- as well as the 'rules' which determine the music system and lead to the expression of these ideas, compose the musical canvas that Skalkottas used when writing his music.

## 9. Epilogue

From what we described already about Skalkottas' work, life and personality it's clear that the Greek music family and the audience didn't know how to accept and handle the 'Skalkottas phenomenon'. The first interest came from out of Greece; Walter Goehr (a colleague and friend of Skalkottas from his Schoenberg years), Hans Keller, John Thornley and Satorou Takakou (the academic teachers - researchers of Skalkottas' oeuvre) and the conductor Antal Dorati excited the general interest for this very unique personality of our music world.

If we are to place Skalkottas in a historical context within the progression of the 20<sup>th</sup> century musical thinking in Europe, his main contributions were: the introduction of 'tonal' centers and the conscious use of ethnic elements as new dimension of serialism. Nationalism represented a polarity complementing the more abstract theses of classicism, romanticism and futurism for which it may be generalized that Schoenberg, Berg and Webern stood respectively; an important factor which has been largely ignored.

In Skalkottas' best works however it is necessary to remember that such nationalist traits are notable for their essentially intellectual application rather than for any popular or regional significance and this places them beyond the restrictions of any frontier or race. The fundamental originality, concept and universal nature of Skalkottas' innovations, validate that his art belongs not so much to Greece as to the whole world.

Skalkottas' composition "*The Maiden and Death*" is one of those works and deserves to be placed amongst the other great ballet compositions of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.



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