

The Role of Music in Maintaining Cultural Identity: The Paradigm of a Greek Island

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The paper seeks to present a brief yet alluring portrait of a “living tradition”, a unique Mediterranean music culture, namely, the Karpathian. It will explore musical practices of the island as well as the traditional music in general, the musicians and the local handmade musical instruments. A strong cultural identity is going to come to light through the primary body of fieldwork via methods of ethnomusicological research. As a final point, an attempt is made to illuminate the immutable role the Karpathian diaspora has played in maintaining cultural identity.

Keywords: Karpathian music, local instruments, instrument construction, musical practices, diaspora, cultural identity, Karpathian history

Introduction

Karpathos is an island in the Mediterranean that has a rich cultural and musical tradition. It is on the northeast side of Greece between Crete and Rhodes and it has a population of around 5,000 residents. It has 12 villages and it is divided geographically but also culturally to the “upper” and “lower” villages, which means the north and south equivalent. The locals nowadays are mainly involved in tourism, which blossomed after 1980, and a few are involved in fishing and livestock farming.

Historically, Karpathos received a lot of influences which it finally managed to isolate and to retain its discrete cultural identity. From 1837 to 1912, Karpathos belonged to the Ottoman Empire. The Turks, despite their long stay, did not manage to change the culture and especially the language spoken on the island. From 1912 to 1945, Karpathos came under Italian occupation. The Italians tried to Italianize the Karpathians by inflicting the Italian language as the main language. The influences were many, however, the Karpathians’ strong cultural identity remained intact regardless of the fact that some elements were incorporated in their culture. Moving on with the island’s history, from 1945 to 1947, arrived first the Germans and then the English until the end of 1947 when Karpathos and the whole Dodecanese was incorporated to the young Greek nation. The history continues and is characterised with the locals’ emigration, which had already begun at the end of the 19th century and reached its peak from 1947 until the mid-70s. From 1980 and onwards, a new scenery is created on the island. More and more immigrants return and start investing on the island. As a result, the tourism blossoms and the island is projected, mainly overseas, as a “traditional” touristic resort. Up until today, Karpathos attracts many tourists as the idea that a “traditional” island with “authentic” and “genuine” inhabitants is not yet another

touristic trick. As far as the musical tradition is concerned, the island has maintained its traditional character as this is recognised in sources since the end of the 19th century, without there being any evidence of modernisation or change throughout the 20th and 21st centuries.

The key *raison d'être* for an ethnomusicological research is undoubtedly the fact that traditional music remains to a large extent untouched through time in addition to the unique cultural identity of the island. In an attempt to define the term "Mediterranean music", Plastino (2003) mentioned in the introduction of his book:

... The Mediterranean has been regarded and put forward as an area which unites the countries bordering upon it: meaning that, tautologically, the term *Medierranea* applies to every form, performance and musical instrument of the Mediterranean countries, even in the absence of relationships or exchanges between them, whether evident, claimed or invented. (p. 8)

As far as the research method is concerned, it involves fieldwork, combined with interviews and videorecordings. The sample of informants was mainly instrument players, manufacturers of musical instruments, singers, as well as older people who proved to be an important source of information on the island's history. Most were men and only a few were women, as women seem to have played a less important role in the musical tradition of the place.

The Traditional Music of Karpathos

As characteristically highlighted by the Swiss musicologist Samuel Baud-Bovy (1938), "in Karpathos we find a kind of musical variety that is not even met in Rhodes, the biggest of the Dodekanese, and it is characterised by various linguistic idioms, and also various musical idioms" (p. 225).

The island's traditional music can be grouped around the following three categories¹: (1) songs: with or without instrumental accompaniment and are about the circle of life and the island's traditions; (2) dances: always accompanied by traditional musical instruments and according to the occasion a specific order is being followed; and (3) *skopous*² (tunes): instrumental melodies that accompany *mantinades* (improvisational rhymes of various content).

The Songs

The songs in Karpathos are not just documents that are retained or lost in time (some have not been recorded by historians, travellers or folklorists) but mainly consist an important source of the island's history and provide knowledge of the past and evidence of historical incidents.

"As song is described the folklore poem that has many verses and a specific text that has been retained through the oral tradition"³ (Makris, 2007, p. 61), most songs are inspired by the locals' experiences and most of them are about the circle of life. A dominant theme is love and emmigration, but there are also songs about historical events or events related to specific local customs. Depending on the role they have in the various musical practices they are divided in the following types:

¹ Rudolf Brandl (1992) has done fieldwork research after Baud-Bovy in order to record and analyse the Karpathian music, using also the recordings made by Baud-Bovy in 1930 as a continuity to his work.

² The noun "*skopos*" in the Greek language is for the singular type, "*skopoi*" is for the plural type and "*skopous*" is the accusative of the plural. It is the same word but used in different gradient depending the sentence.

³ The oral tradition is still alive on the islands of the Dodekanese, which are the most distant and isolated areas in Greece, and comprises even today a means of communicating music and customs from one generation to the other.

(1) The epitrapezia⁴ songs or “tavlas” (table) songs

These are always sang at the beginning of any entertainment⁵ and after ecclesiastical hymnes⁶, mainly by the best singers following a ritual order and every formality. The melodies are slow and not accompanied by musical instruments and the content is about heroism⁷ or love.

(2) The syrmatika

The “syrmatiko” or the syrmatika songs are undoubtedly the dominant symbol of the Karpathians’ musical identity. They are accompanied by instruments (lyra-laouto) and are sung in iambic decapentameter verse with a characteristic melody⁸, that is, however, not strictly defined as it might—depending on the performer—contain many musical variations.

(3) Marital or “of lalimatou”

These are the songs that are connected with the wedding custom⁹. They have a characteristic melody accompanied by instruments and escort first the groom and then the bride to the village church where the wedding ceremony will take place (see Figure 1).



Figure 1. A Karpathian wedding at Pyles village, 1962.

(4) Carnival songs/“apokriatika”

These songs are connected with the carnival custom, and have a specific melody that does not alternate and the text is due to the custom spicy and satyric, which often contains swear words and is quite often vulgar¹⁰.

⁴ The term refers to the ritual of entertainment as the participants—mostly men—sit around a table and sing.

⁵ Entertainment can be formal, like weddings, christenings and namedays, or informal, like occasional glendi or get-togethers in which people find a reason to enjoy themselves.

⁶ Before any kind of entertainment mainly men get together around a table where the glendi will follow (food—wine—singing—dancing) and the priest chants ecclesiastical hymnes alone and any of the participants who know the hymnes can follow. This action signals the opening of the “sitting glendi” and it is followed even today but mainly on the northern part of the island, especially in the village of Olympos.

⁷ The content of these songs may be about the years of Italian occupation (1912-1945) and the actions of the war heroes. In these songs are included those which are called “historical” and describe in a poetic way the whole history of the nation.

⁸ Particularly for the melody of the syrmatiko as “skopos” there is more information in the chapter that is about the “skopous”.

⁹ They belong to that group of songs that cannot exist independently as they always gain meaning from the custom for which they have been created.

¹⁰ Specially for that day mainly men disguise themselves in vulgar women costumes; they sing and dance all day. This custom is mainly met in the “lower villages”/“kato horia”, on the southern side of Karpathos and has its roots on the Dionysian rituals. Particularly in Othos, under the name of “piperi”, it is relived until today following a specific ritual that even nowadays remains unaltered.

Apokriatika songs are sang on one specific day only, around three weeks before the Greek Orthodox Easter, as it would be inappropriate but also forbidden to sing them on another occasion.

(5) Horeftika¹¹

These are the songs that accompany specific dances. Their content varies, but is mainly about love. They are always accompanied by musical instruments, mainly lyra-laouto but also lyra-tsampouna-laouto or tsampouna-laouto, but other combinations are also possible.

The Dances

Dance in Karpathos is closely linked to the cultural identity and the locals' habits. It reflects not only the dancer's ability but also his social class, his family's power as well as his personal status in the local community. The performance in the art of dancing is a social value and quite often it designates the dancer as an eligible future partner. Within the dance circle, personal relationships are being cultivated and pre-marital deals are being coordinated. As highlighted by Cowan¹² (1990, p. 234) in a similar research study, "the dance event is an arena not only of creativity, exaggeration and release but also of norms, conventions and sanctions".

On that day both men and women care after their appearance in order to attract the person they are interested in and to find the chance to dance next to them and so to express their love by dancing effusively or through various dance acts. Despite the fact that in every village dancing consists a special characteristic that culturally differentiates each local community, in all the villages in Karpathos, however, it follows a specific ceremonial order (see Figure 2).



Figure 2. The girls from Olympos are waiting in front of the church for the dance to begin, 2007.

Respect to hierarchy defines a man with prestige and eminent position in the local community as leading dancer, for example, this could be the priest, the teacher or the doctor. Similarly, the value and the privilege of the

¹¹ To the songs that accompany dances are also included the "songs of the zervos dance" and the "songs of the gonatistos dance". But as there are cultural but also musical differentiations through the dance in the "pano" and "kato" villages of Karpathos, these are not mentioned as two separate categories.

¹² About the "dance issue" please see more in chapter 7 "Ambivalent Pleasures: Dance as a Problem for Women" in Cowan 1990, pp. 188-205.

elderly to lead the dance is recognised as a deed of honour. The elderly dancer will then give his place to the younger men.

The women's place in the dance, especially in the northern villages of Karpathos, follows certain constraints and rules. An unmarried girl has a special place in the dance that allows her to be exposed and thus get married. She must, however, be accompanied by another member of the family who usually chooses her dance partner, depending on the family's expectations. The selected dance partner must dance with her even though she may not be the one he desires, so not to offend the girl or the family. On the other hand, a married woman should respect the rules in every village: She is permitted to dance either with her husband or with a relative, but her husband should always consent, as her role as mother and wife requires her to be serious, prudent and moral so that the family will not be criticised negatively from the rest of the village as this would undermine the family's balance.

A woman's social role is strictly defined by moral rules that are mainly dictated in small and isolated societies. These rules tame any personal desire a woman might have and any inappropriate behaviour that might jeopardise her public image. The same rules apply to the following groups of women: those whose husbands live abroad, those who are divorced and those who are widows. The women in the Karathian society must preserve the moral values inflicted on them by the society and owe to care for their public image (Kritsioti & Raftis, 2003, pp. 140-151).

Nearly all the dances have the shape of an open circle and are danced following a right direction. In most dances the dancers hold hands in a "hiasti" (crossed) position. In the centre of the circle on an elevated stage, sit the instrument players, so that the music can be better heard, but this position also allows the instrument players to monitor the dance. Near the instrument players' stage, sit the good singers and the men who are famous as "good glentistes"¹³. Around the dance circle are areas for those who will not actively participate in the dance but will only watch (see Figure 3). This position layout of the dance can be changed depending on the place but also on the event, part of which is the dance.



Figure 3. "Kato horos", "hiasti" position. Olympos, 2007.

¹³ The term "glendistis" refers to a man who knows and strictly follows the ceremonial order of every local entertainment and is also a good singer.

In every dance event, the following dances have a special place and always follow this order: kato horos, gonatistos, pano horos and sousta. Kato horos functions as a warm up both for the dancers and the singers. Here, the men improvise and sing mantinades through which they comment on people and events by bringing alive the daily life and the current affairs of every village. There is special preference—beyond the initial wishes for the good outcome of the dance—for the immigrants and those girls of the dance whose virtues are praised on that day. The first dance is static and slow and may last a few hours until the singers complete their mantinades.

The next dance, the gonatistos (from “gonato”, Knee), has its own melody and the songs are sang by men who know the lyrics. A special characteristic—as its name reveals—is the fact that the men who dance slightly bend their knees in every step. The gonatistos is a bit faster than the previous dance and does not last long, as its main role is to prepare the dancers’ body and mood for the next dance that is more intense.

The transition from this dance to the next one is achieved by the instrument players who perform a faster instrumental piece in attempt to synchronise the faster music with the dancers’ movement. This procedure cannot be interrupted, as this would mean that both the dancers and the instrument players failed; the transition has to be achieved smoothly.

The next dance, the pano horos, is the peak moment of the dance act. Here the dancers demonstrate their skill but also their stamina. Main characteristic in performing this dance are the simple fast movements and the small faint steps where the feet are not raised from the floor. Although the body is active, the feet are barely moved. In pano horos, the most suitable instrument is the tsambouna, as the loud sharp sound stimulates the dancers so that their movement has more tension.

Finally, the sousta, is a quieter dance; it is a round relaxing dance, where the body moves smoothly without jumping and is therefore preferred by women.

Both in sousta and in pano horos the music is instrumental because the fast rhythm and the intense sound of the instruments do not favour singing and the synthesis of mantinades.

Beyond the main Karpathian dances, there are other dances of semantic value that are mostly connected with a custom and are performed on a specific moment in time as part of the circle of life. It is worth mentioning two dances: arkistis and foumistos.

Arkistis is common in the north part of Karpathos and is danced (not that often nowadays) at the end of a wedding to indicate the end of the celebration. It is a dance executed in pairs and it is performed by two men who jump doing cross steps on dangerous spots, like benches, roofs or high walls. The aim of arkistis is to indicate the bravery, the beauty and the strength of the man so that the girls of the village are impressed and the dancer is therefore an object of admiration and lust. Those men who were rivals in love, find the chance to compete in their ability to balance, in briskness, flexibility and skill. Their ally in this combat is the acute sound of the tsambouna whose volume leads the dancers to an ecstasy able to make them stretch their abilities to an extreme level until the winner can be announced.

Foumistos, on the other hand, is a ceremonial wedding dance. According to the custom, during the wedding meal the lyres play and the singers sing “painemata” (compliments) for the couple and their parents. After the meal, the couple and the relatives arrive at the area where the dance will take place and under the special melody of foumistos they start dancing, each having on their side people who represent their generation and the order is determined by the degree of kin. The term foumistos comes from the verb foumizo which means compliment and

praise, and this is reflected in the function of the dance during which the couples' generations are projected. What is important here, is, for each to project with the dance, the value of the generation they come from and to encounter with the social setting. So, the *foumistos* designates the status of every generation and it justifies or doubts the alliance contracted by the two families.

Every dance in Karpathos represents the microcosm of the local community and it comprises a means of expression and communication by projecting in a special way the cultural identity of the island that may vary from north to south, which makes the island look special. Here the author would like to mention Magrini's (2003) study that focuses on "the relationship between music and the dynamic of gender", particularly in the Mediterranean musical cultures.

The "Skopoi"

Skopoi in Karpathos are a major chapter in musical records. They are the characteristic melodies that accompany the improvised *mantinades*. The exact number of skopoi is not documented, but according to evidence provided by the informants, it varies from village to village as others say they are 45, others 70 and others 82. What is worth mentioning is that the skopoi do not always have easily recognisable names and the villages have come up with various ways for adopting them. Quite often a skopos is referred to with the name of the singer or instrument player who preferred it in the *glentia*. So we have the "skopos of Hapsis" or the "skopos of Parou" or depending on the village it had the local name so to be recognised as their own. Other skopoi are named after the village there are usually played in and so express their origin, like "Othitikos" (from the village of Othos) or "Voladiotikos" (from the village of Volada). Other skopoi are named after the occasion they describe, like "tou fevgou" (departure) which is played when they want to see off an immigrant.

A great number of skopoi have a special history and are known with the composer's name, like "the skopos of Marigo of Lahana" that came from a mother's lullaby to her son, who—a well-known instrument player—was inspired a tune influenced by the lullaby's melody and so named it after his mother.

However, quite often a skopos that is named in a village may be met in another village under a different name, and this makes it hard to record and study the skopos of Karpathos. In fact, even today, there is a controversy among villages regarding not only the origin and the naming but also the number of skopoi in Karpathos, as there is no official academic musical recording of skopoi.

Every skopos (instrumental melody) comprises of different "girismata" (partial little melodies, that differ among each other and in a rather predetermined succession compose the skopos). In addition, the skopos is embellished through various "doxaries", namely, various melodic themes that depend on the instrument player's skill and are defined by the name of the instrument player who composed them and used them repeatedly.

Before more information on skopoi is mentioned, it would be advisable to make a reference on the "mantinades" that the skopoi accompany and are a characteristic inextricable part of musical expression in Karpathos.

The *mantinades* (metrical improvised rhyming couplets in iambic decapentameter) comprise the Karpathians' poetic means of expression in every moment of their life. There are also local publications that use the *mantinades* in their writing. Their value is symbolic, as it is a main means of expression and communication. They are of emotional value to the composer and performer but also to the addressee who in turn has to reply in the same way. The singer must reply using a *mantinada* that is appropriate not only in topic but also in the musical skopos played

by the instrument players. What is more, the participants in the glenti ought to respect each singer's turn and also to keep the topic that is sang alive. The content of the mantinades varies according to the occasion. It might be a wish, dance compliments, words of love, teasing or satyre (Mihailidis-Nouaros, 1932, pp. 26-57).

They might also tell the story of an immigrigrant or express the worries of the mother, wife or sister left behind. In addition, the mantinades are of extraordinary significance and happen to even solve differences the men might have during the glenti or express their dissatisfaction or dispute on any subject that under different circumstances would not be possible to discuss. The mantinades are also used to purify anything evil or a sickness that "struck" a home. Herzfeld (1985) mentioned that the same events also take place in the neighboring island of Crete especially to what regards performance and also the semantic value of mantinades.

Especially the mantinades about immigrigrants are of dramatic value to the locals as they are the means to express not only their pain for the forthcoming separation of a beloved person, but also their happiness when the immigrigrant returns home (Kavouras, 1992, pp. 52-53).

Undoubtedly, the mantinades possess huge emotional power, and cannot be denied by any Karpathian, as their text are composed on the instant and each time express the thoughts and emotions of those singing them.

Skopoi and mantinades compose the special structure of Karpathian traditional music and form the most characteristic part of the cultural identity that can be found unalterable on the island even today.

Musical Instruments in Karpathos

The following are the traditional musical instruments¹⁴ in Karpathos.

The Karpathian Lyra

The karpathian lyra is a pear-shaped string instrument with three gut strings that is played with a horsehair bow decorated with little bells (see Figures 4-5). It is the main solo instrument of the island and is produced only by local instrument manufacturers who are not only mainly carpenters but also professional lyra-players.



Figure 4. A Karpathian lyra, made in 1928.

¹⁴ The traditional musical instruments of Karpathos and especially details about their manufacture constitute the main part of ethnomusicological fieldwork that is still being conducted by the writer. In this paper only selective information are mentioned in order to help the better comprehension of the instruments' shape and function.



Figure 5. Karpathanian lutes, made after 1990.

The lyra is made of mullberry or walnut wood. The craftsman, after cutting the wood in the appropriate size, usually in September when humidity levels are low, dries the wood in a shadowy place and starts working on it two-three years later. The length of the instrument is about 53-55 cm and the width about 16-18 cm. The lid front part (“kapaki”) is of particular significance regarding the sound quality, and according to the locals it should be made of katrani (aged Libanon cedar) (Anogiannakis, 1991, p. 256).

Katrani denotes the relationship Karpathos had with Turkey and specifically with the coasts of Asia Minor during the 19th century and the early 20th century. Epochal immigrants would go to Asia Minor to work for six months in the winter, then go back on the island from spring to October. In other words, they would plant seeds on their land in Karpathos in October, leave, go back on the island and harvest during the summer and again six months in Asia Minor and six months in Karpathos. This was happening even before 1900 up until the Asia Minor Disaster. In that way, the commerce was developed and generally any kind of transactions with the neighbouring country as all the old houses have been build with katrani that has been transferred from Turkey.

With katrani, which was used as skid or supporting beam in the houses, the manufacturers made and still make the front part of the instruments (the “kapaki”). They even sometimes plunder half-ruined houses in order to get possession of the much desired wood.

The thickness of the kapaki is not more than three mm and its elaboration and placement determine the final sound quality of the instrument. On the kapaki, two similar holes, the “eyes” as they are called, are made which aid the sound to come out of the sound box. On the eyes, the kavalaris is placed that holds the strings together and supports the stylos or the psyche of the lyra, a small round vertical piece of wood that rests on the kavalaris on one side and on the inner part of the lyra on the other side and has the role of sound transmitter. It has exactly the same function as the psyche of the classical violin. The locals also call it “evilwood” as such a little piece of wood determines the volume and quality of sound of the lyra. On the lyra’s neck the tongue (glossa) is placed, which is made of hard and durable wood, as the instrument players’ nails might damage it during play. The lyra has three strings, two gut strings and a wire string that are tuned on la-re-sol.

The Karpathanian lyra is played with a 48 cm long bow made of natural horse hair. On the bow’s wood, a small wire with little bells is placed that aid the instrument player with musical beat. This instrument has a lot of similarities in manufacture with the old type Cretan lyra.

Regarding the technique of lyra playing, the instrument player touches the strings with the nails of his left

hand. The melody produced is constraint to the notes of the first string and the other two strings are less used.

The Tsambouna

The tsambouna is a wind instrument whose main part is made of animal skin, usually goat skin; it is played by blowing into a wooden pipe (see Figure 6). It is also a solo instrument and due to its volume, it usually accompanies dances rather than songs.

The tsambouna is a kind of askavlos: a folk wind instrument with two parallel pipes, like the clarinet type, with a leather sack. Apart from Karpathos, where it is played in the north villages and mainly in Olympos, it is used (with variations in shape, in playing techniques, in name and in repertoire) in the traditional music of most islands in the Aegean (Georgiadis, 1981).



Figure 6. The Karpathan tsambouna.

The craftsmen are locals, mainly shepherds or instrument players, who after a special treatment use the skin of a young goat to make the askos that forms the main part of the instrument. On the askos the mouthpiece and the skeleton with the pipes¹⁵ are placed.

The Karpathan tsambouna has two parallel cylindrical pipes made of cane; they are of the same length and are placed side by side on a wooden frame. The left pipe has five holes and the right one. Each pipe produces a note for every open hole and one more with all holes closed, i.e., 6 + 2 notes¹⁶ from both pipes. The two pipes are tuned so that with the same holes open they produce the same sound. The mouthpiece is a tube made of cane in which the instrument player blows in order to inflate the askos. Once the askos is filled with air, the remaining air comes out of the pipes and this is how the instrument is played. In the part of the mouthpiece that is inside the askos there is a makeshift valve that prevents the air from coming out of the askos through the mouthpiece. In that way, when the instrument player stops for a moment to blow, the valve blocks the air and the askos does not deflate. Because of the askos whose sound is continuous, there are namely no pauses to take breaths as this happens with other wind instruments. The tsambouna, though regarded as a solo instrument, in Karpathos it coexists with the lyra, also solo instrument, so to together produce the particular sound that certifies the Karpathan sound.

The Laouto

The laouto is a string accompanying instrument with four double strings. It was introduced in Karpathos

¹⁵ Skeleton is the corrugated base on which the two pipes are placed. It is a wooden pipe whose top end is placed in the askos and its other end ends in a “kampana” (bell shape). There, the two pipes are placed.

¹⁶ One pipe gives six notes: sol-la-si-do-re-mi, and the second pipe gives two notes: sol-la which are always heard simultaneously with the notes produced by the first pipe.

during the first half of the 20th century and it accompanies the two main solo instruments mentioned above.

The laouto appears in Karpathos around 1920 or a bit earlier from a Kaprathian immigrant—various names are mentioned by the informants—and it is certain that he brought the instrument from Asia Minor. It is an accompanying instrument and it gets easily incorporated with the local music aiming at enriching the two solo instruments existing up to that moment.

The laouto is not manufactured in Karpathos, but is manufactured after special order in Crete or Athens. Nevertheless, a few manufacturers have slowly started an amateur effort to manufacture a laouto with the aim of becoming autonomous in instrument manufacture. The laouto has four double strings (mi-la-re-sol), moving frets (“bertedes”) that aid the best tuning of the instrument and its flexibility in various repertoires and it is played with a special plectrum.

The Violin

The violin is a string solo instrument that is played only in some villages of Karpathos and it might rarely replace the lyra or accompany it.

From a Karpathian informant, it is mentioned that the violin first appears in Karpathos through a Karpathian immigrant who came from Egypt around 1908. Its presence is particularly evident during the Italian occupation and blossomed in the mid-20th century. It is mainly met in the south villages (kato horia) of Karpathos and nearly never in the north villages (pano horia), where the absolute presence of the tsambouna outshined any “foreign” musical instrument that would—according to the locals—denature the traditional sound. The violin brought to the village the European repertoire was added to the locals’ repertoire and for some decades they danced the waltz or the tango. It did not overshadow the local instruments and it never dominated as a solo musical instrument as this was the case in most greek islands of the Mediterranean. The main reason for this was the strong Karpathian character that inflicted the sounds of the lyra and the tsambouna as representative of the local musical identity and thus, rejecting anything foreign that would distance the locals from the original celebration of the customs that are closely linked with the musical tradition.

Nevertheless, the violin contributed to the embellishment of the ways of playing the musical instruments as the capabilities of the instrument led the instrument players to improve their technique not only in playing the violin but also in playing the lyra mainly through adding embellishments that highlighted the skill and the imaginativeness of the talented instrument player.

Instrument Combinations

The way the instruments are combined varies according to the occasion and the place, but there are also differences among the various villages. However, the most common combinations are the following: (1) lyra and laouto; (2) tsambouna and laouto; (3) lyra, tsambouna (also called “lyrotsambouno”); (4) lyra, tsambouna and laouto; (5) two lyras and one or two laoutos; and (6) violin, lyra and laouto (a vary rare combination).

Quite often in the panigyria¹⁷ in Karpathos where there are no restrictions, one can even find three to four lyras playing together the same tune and being accompanied by a tsambouna and two to four laouta. In the panigyri, regardless of the village that organises it, all the musical instruments of the island are invited and they

¹⁷ The term “panigyri” in Karpathos but also throughout Greece refers to mass celebrations in memory of a saint or generally to a religious celebration that includes religious festivities but also outdoor entertainment with music and dance.

can perform in any possible combination as long as the instrument players match. What is important here is the volume of the instrument ensemble and not so much the virtuosity, as it takes place outdoors (usually during summer in the church yard or in the village square) and the music has to be heard throughout the village adding life and pleasure on that day (see Figure 7).



Figure 7. “Panigyri” of Saint George at Lefkos, 2007.

Large instrument ensembles are also met in wedding celebrations. The couple invites nearly all the instrument players not only of the village but also of the nearby villages so no one feels dissatisfied. The locals’ relationship with the musicians is scrupulous and it is not considered wise to disturb it, especially when entertainment, but also the ceremoniousness of the customs depend on it. So, in a wedding, they might be playing simultaneously or in shifts varying from two to 20 instruments thus not only highlighting the status of the host but also adding an impressive timbre that the locals will never forget.

Musical Practices

Musical practices in Karpathos reflect the structure of life of the local society during the 20th century. As it is expected, musical practices have been influenced by the cultural contacts Karpathos had with the nearby Dodecanese islands, the coast of Asia Minor through the commerce transactions, and the immigration flow that redefined the contemporary image of the island.

Despite all that, the triptyque music-dance-song remains an inextricable part of social life and operates as a liberating tactic of art expression and human communication that includes individual or group experience. As Hudson (2006) has observed, “music has been linked to issues of well-being as well as those of identity (...) it provides strong memories of and associations with a person’s life” (p. 630).

Throughout the years, various musical practices are activated that favour the social assembly of the residents, are expressed through music and in that way they preserve the cohesion and the identity of the community. Such practices are a wedding, a child’s birth, immigration, carnival, carols and glenti organised by a group of men and many more.

Let us take for example the popular in Karpathos *kathisto glendi*¹⁸ (see Figure 8). The performance of the

¹⁸ The term “glendi” describes the kind of entertainment that includes food, drink, music and dance.

glendi concerns only men who have entertain themselves sitting around a table in such an arrangement that enables them to maintain eye contact. It is about a ceremonial procedure of communication and dialogue that is achieved through the improvisational composition and singing of *mantinades*. A dialogue is developed with improvisational *mantinades* that follows strict rules that contribute to a successful glendi.

Every glendi starts when the instruments (*lyra-tsambouna-laouto*) play the *sirmatika* songs that are usually sang by an older man and the rest follow. After the songs that are known to most of the participants and have the role of warming the group up, the *mantinades* on various topics start. The topics are selected depending on the occasion. So if the glendi is organised because an immigrant has come back, then relevant *mantinades* on his honour, for his life and his feelings will be sung. If the glendi is organised because of an engagement of one of the men, then the *mantinades* will be about the joy, the new beginning, and wishes and compliments for his loved one. However, after the opening topic, more topics follow depending on the group's feelings and inspiration.



Figure 8. "Kathisto glendi". Olympos, 2007.

The topic can only be changed only if the previous topic has been completed, i.e., everyone has said what they wanted in a determined order (first the older men and then the younger ones). Each topic is touched collectively and no one is allowed to monopolise with unnecessary *mantinades* but compose as many needed to reply to the *mantinada* that was addressed to him. The man-singer who will change the topic begins with another *mantinada* that he can sing either following the tune of the previous topic or in a new tune, depending on what he prefers. Every new topic is the reason to compose new *mantinades* and to keep the participants alert.

What is of paramount importance here is the instrument player's role as he should not only know each singer's "favourite" tunes but also monitor the smooth conduct of the glendi. The leader—instrument player—should prevent any possible misunderstandings that might be caused if someone does not respect the order and the topic, or is simply provocative in behaviour after having consumed too much alcohol. His aim is to keep the fun undiminished by trying with his playing, skill and knowledge to satisfy the participants.

The value of the glendi lies on the interpersonal communication that reaches its peak when it manages to arouse inner feelings and thoughts that can only then, during the glendi, come to light and thus liberate the person who communicates the *mantinades*. Therefore, anyone who might attend such a glendi should not be surprised if

they see after some time the men break into tears as a result of a unique emotional charge.

Once the situation gets back to normal again and the end of the glenti is defined in the early hours of the morning, quite often the group of men accompanied by the instruments walk in the streets of the village singing mantinades in the various neighbourhoods. (Pavlidis, 2004, p. 48)

Another interesting musical practice in Karpathos is known as patinada. The patinada used to be a way to express their love to the girls for the young by passing outside their house and singing mantinades with a particular content. As characteristically mentioned by a Karpathian informant: "... Love then was not an easy thing, one loved with his eyes. You would pass from her house and sing two mantinades, she understood...". The patinada would also take place outside the houses they knew had either immigrants or people who had newly arrived on the island. Moving words and compliments that thanked the host who opened the door and treated the instruments, and thus showing his appreciation to the group of men who had honoured his house (see Figure 9).



Figure 9. Laouto-tsampouna-lyra-laouto.

The village's residents today miss the patinades that nowadays only rarely take place by the new instrument players, namely, only when they wish to relive the custom in the same special way. The author mentions here Merriam's (2000) position who looked into "music as a symbolic behaviour" and said that: "Music reflects the social and political organization, economic behaviour, religious activity and other structural divisions of society, and in this respect it is, in a sense, symbolic of the formal aspects of the culture..." (p. 248).

The musical practices preserve and support the characteristic cultural identity of the Karpathians as they are practiced not only by the locals who live on the island but also from the immigrants who even though live far from their home, whose main care is to preserve and continue their tradition to the younger generations.

The Karpathian Diaspora

During the end of the 19th century, the Karpathians had already started to immigrate to Sudan and other African and Middle East countries, like Egypt, Abyssinia, Irak and Persia. At the beginning of the 20th century, they started to immigrate in large groups to America. The first immigrants settled in Canonsburg, New Castle, New York, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and generally in areas with factories or mines where they could be hired as workers. In 1924, the new immigrant law "per quota" limited the numbers of immigrants from Karpathos to

America. The situation on the acritic island becomes harder after the Second World War is declared: Survival becomes martyric, forcing many Karpathians to travel to America illegally. Large groups immigrate to America after the war is over and especially after 1950. On the one hand the island becomes depopulated, and on the other hand the first strong communities are created in various American states.



Figure 10. The immigration boat.

So which is the role of the diapsora to preserving the Karpathian cultural identity in the years to follow up until today? In order to capture a comparable sense, Hall (1990), explained: “culture identities are the points of identification or suture, which are made, within the discourses of history and culture” (p. 394).

From their first years of staying abroad, the immigrants of the diaspora will found societies aiming at putting together a minority that would act as the nucleus of organising the Karpathians. In that way, they achieved the bonding and the strengthening on the local cultural element that was in danger of alienation from the foreign multicultural influences that blossom that time in America.

In 1928, “KEPA” (Karpathian Educational & Progressive Association) is created, the oldest active Karpathian brotherhood in America, Pittsburg. More brotherhoods are created in the years to come. In New Jersey, the biggest Karpathian community in America, both in number of residents and in enterprises, the “Pankarpathian Foundation”, is founded in 1981, and in 1992 it creates the “Karpathian House of America”.

The cultural societies are initially formed with the aim to financially support the families left behind on the island and the island in general. With the years, their main aim was to preserve the tradition, the customs and generally their cultural identity that defines their way of life and constitutes a point of reference and unbreakable bondage among them. This is also highlighted by Sieber (2005): “Emigrant communities can have often nostalgic motivations and resources for conserving older, more traditional identities” (p. 124).

The answer to the fear of alienation is provided through the familial and cultural nexus that start to bloom among the continuously growing brotherhoods. In America, the brotherhoods organise various events in order to attract the locals: Traditional music is taught to the youth; the customs are being kept as if they were living at home; traditional dances are taught and the Karpathians wear the local costumes at every meeting. The traditional dancenights (choroesperides) organised by each brotherhood might seem to the foreigners just a Karpathian celebration, but in fact, they are something more important that is held in order to secretly promote

an oasis of their familiar place. In these dancenights, they sing traditional Karpathian songs, play the local instruments and dance till dawn reminiscing memories and feelings. The dancenights constitute a meeting place for the youths who have the task of preserving their national conscience and of promoting their cultural heritage through the newly-created family nexus. The cultural brotherhoods are their own “locality”, where they themselves have created and have managed to impose within the foreign country. They constitute their “island” which has been created from the nostalgia for their homeplace, from the memories that are still alive and cause pain and sorrow, from the pictures they refuse to forget; they manage through their strong will to keep away any foreign influence, and generally any influence coming from the American way of life. Nettl’s (1996) approach to the subject was that “the world’s societies survive by tying the present to their own past, and in this, music plays a significant and sometime indispensable role”. In addition, regarding the role of music in the diaspora, Bohlmann (1996) stated that, “not only does music distinguish these communities from the world around them, thus strengthening the feeling of diaspora, but it encodes the essential narrative of the community’s history”.

Most Karpathians of the diaspora go back on their homeland sooner or later. They themselves and also their children, manage to integrate in the present reality of the island even though in their memories some things still are kept alive in past times.

However, the musical tradition is still linked with the island’s particular image and is supported both by the locals as well as the immigrants.

What is more, as highlighted by Laliotou (2006), “theatre, music and the consumption of folk culture have added a circle of action where immigrants could project their national, minority and cultural identities within the new framework of the diaspora” (p. 266).

Concluding Thoughts

As Stokes (1997) simply concluded, “a sense of identity can be put into play through music by performing it, dancing to it, listening to it or even thinking about it” (p. 24). Music, dance and speech are the most powerful identity symbols of any society. Particularly in Karpathos, they have not only been preserved unharmed through time and the various socio-political circumstances but have also been transferred to the next generations by means of oral tradition. The flow of immigration has strengthened the traditional image of the island as the memory and the strong nostalgic feelings of the immigrants did not allow any outside influences of modernisation to penetrate their cultural habits. “Diaspora cultures work to maintain community, selectively preserving and recovering traditions” (Clifford, 1994, p. 317).

What is more, the main local musical instruments (lyra-tsambouna) have survived thanks to the persistent dedication of the local musical society to the traditional way of manufacture. This, in combination with the limited musical abilities, mainly due to their primitive manufacture that does not allow improvements or additions, had as a result that the Karpathian music did not accept any foreign influences that might denature the traditional sound identity.

Nowadays, in connection with all the above, the need to project Karpathos as an “originally traditional society” with an intact cultural identity drives the local representatives of the younger generation to wonder and also to agonize about the continuation and preservation of the local culture.

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