

The Formal Speech of George Katralis at the Concert Hall of the Athens Conservatory on Friday January 14, 2005

The music community in Greece most often glorifies the major composers or creators on the day after the fair, as they are certainly mentioned and adorned with bombastic words of praise for their artistic magnitude during events of honor and memory.

This hypocritical and self-righteous attitude of our society against creative Greeks, gives the book and the events which follow the spirit of repentance and forgiveness, as we all reflect on the greatness of the honored man, standing in awe in front the power of knowledge and considering the time spent in error unable to reconcile our personal responsibilities. "Besides", says the great absentee of tonight's event Takis Kalogeropoulos, "history is not a memorial service for the dead but inspiration for the young".

Greece, with the value system that it has embodied in its cultural portrait, became the haven of the mediocre, the kingdom of talentless people who were transformed in factors that tormented K. C. and dozens of other composers. This had caused 50 years ago the outburst of the great Arcadian composer Marios Varvoglis who dared to express in those very difficult times the indignation of the Greek composers, as he talked about the "gravediggers of the Greek music, the Kreontes of a new tragedy worthy of Sophocles." As if not a single day has passed since then, the same could be said today expressing the current reality. What should we do, how should we move on, we dare ask, but who will tell us?

Let us not fool ourselves. Only everything in our power we can do and this is right in front of you today: The Biography and Work of our compatriot C. Kydoniatis envisioned by the Atticon Conservatory of Tripoli and finally published by the Municipality of Tripoli after many adventures.

We the people of Tripoli are re-establishing the great composer and teacher, giving rise to a new cultural starting point based only on personal unselfish toil, far from institutional frameworks, funds and state grants.

C. K. loyal and ardent lover of the ideal called Athens Conservatory felt from his school years that this was the center of the earth. Many things started here, while others stopped but they eventually found shelter in other musical institutions and they all constitute the pride of the musical culture of our country. The Conservatory of Athens was the beacon, the Prytaneum, the sacred place. "This fifth line would be considered as wrong, or this harmonious relationship would not pass to the Athens Conservatory", said Kydoniatis often, thus awarding his highest honor to the Foundation which he served and loved passionately for half a century.

Many of you know him better than me, even if I have described his life. Perhaps, bearing in mind some tedious works of his, one would get the impression of a marginal, conservative and classically educated composer that simply perpetuates the old aesthetic values. But is this so? C. K. was captured in the literary background of the National School and has linked himself to a degraded role, unacceptable for his genius: To dress in Harmony monophonic greek songs, as the Arcadian composer and music critic Vassilis Papadimitriou ironically commented. But is this true? I assure you that no, it isn't.

Even if half of his works are of greek reference, there are dozens of others on

which he turned his talents, so many other forms of aesthetic expression and personal style as Sonatinas, Toccatas, Symphonies and Religious works or songs that have never been performed.

C. K, real lord by nature as well as by actions, a humble man who refused to be stacked in political offices in order to find funds to present any of his works. Some of his former students who owed him their advancement or their power and positions, turned their back on him. All doors were closed for him, except the door of knowledge and talent. And it flowed in abundance.

His human and musical virtues mustered the envy and jealousy, humiliating those vested by the mediocrity trapped in their ego. These largely determined the future of C.K. who in the absence of incentives stopped dreaming of experimenting and composing for large ensembles at the age of 50.

A book with living actors and fanatical descendants of the deceased is in fact a difficult task.

I avoided mentioning (even though I knew the depth) the many improper actions of his fellows, the unacceptable attitudes and behaviors of students he tutored during his artistic life. I tried to maintain balance between biography, art chronicle, musical analysis and social reporting.

I think I covered his life and actions and I tried cautiously to penetrate his composition work in my own emotional way. I moved the moral issues that weigh on the musical life and I tried to reform the errors and illusions of our country's culture.

There are dozens of people who helped my efforts. I mention them in the introductory note of the book. Each one has contributed as much as I who took up the heavy task. Special mention I owe to one of your children, the gifted and talented violinist and researcher Chris Kolovos who classified and edited an exemplary and detailed list of works by the composer. I cannot forget his selfless perseverance, his scientific training but mainly his passion.

He literally visited all the neighborhoods of Athens in order to find C. K.'s colleagues and students, to be able to elicit the slightest detail. Chris Kolovos, a brilliant and combative personality of the new generation, has been the mainstay of this publication and I want to publicly express my gratitude for his help.

We also thank the Athens Conservatory Director Mr Garoufalis, the Music Club Apollo and all the distinguished speakers and soloists participating in this event.

Last but not least, I mention the wonderful Jean Kydoniati, wife of the composer. Thanks to her culture and objectivity, she was able to relate his life to me, without any empathy nor melodrama. In her own subtle way, she guarded me against many pitfalls and managed my enthusiasm with wisdom and insight.

In his house, a huge library holds about 105 works of his works. Teachers and students of the Athens Conservatory, all of you are requested to continue our efforts of unveiling one of the greatest artists of the 20th century. The Lord of Arcadia, Constantine Kydoniatis, the one described in this book.

I THANK YOU