



Tre etyder över ett tema av Iannis Xenakis (1922–2001)

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Abstract

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Ten years after his death, Iannis Xenakis (1922–2001) is generally acknowledged as one of the most influential composers of the recently past century, working in all genres of modern music – from acoustic to electronic, from strings to percussion, from solo pieces to orchestral works. He is also renowned for his spectacular audiovisual installations – from the Philips Pavilion at the 1958 World Exposition in Brussels, to the *Diatope de Beaubourg* conceived for the inauguration of the Centre Pompidou in 1978 – as well as for his architectural projects, both on a cosmic and a more quotidian scale. Last but not least, Xenakis was a highly productive theorist, expounding his compositional techniques and philosophical visions in numerous writings and interviews. It is first and foremost with the latter aspect of his work that this dissertation is concerned. Not only is it the first book about the composer in Swedish, but also the first study in any language to grapple with the full range of his aesthetics.

In an attempt to tease out the creative tension in Xenakis' thinking, the dissertation begins by painting a consciously contradictory picture. On the one hand, his demand for an originality verging on amnesia, his rationalist emphasis on mathematical abstraction, his research into the underlying architecture of music, and his controversial application of computer technology to artistic creation add up to the notion – widely held at the time – of Xenakis as a formalist. On the other hand, his harrowing memories of war-time anarchy, his many-sided aesthetic sensibility, his fascination with nature's spontaneous organization, and his almost obsessive invocation of oceanic imagery all contribute to the conception – equally common today – of the composer as a vitalist. These are the two aspects of Xenakis' work, the two faces of his Janus mask. But how do they hold together? In trying to answer this question, the dissertation makes its most significant contribution to the current state of research. Written in a lively and engaging style, it will be of relevance to fans and scholars alike, to the nascent field of artistic research – and to anyone with an interest in music, mathematics or both.

KEYWORDS: Iannis Xenakis, aesthetics, music, philosophy, the postwar period, history of ideas, artistic research