

Mikis Theodorakis (b. 29 July 1925)

Greek composer of Cretan origin. Mikis Theodorakis has composed all kinds of music: operas, symphonic music, ballroom music, oratorios, ballets, church chorus music, music for ancient drama, theatre, cinema, folk songs and oratorios, as well as what is probably the most internationally recognizable Greek tune, the “Zorba” syrtaki (1964).

In addition, he is a former politician and minister, 4 times elected to the Greek parliament and an activist, being the 1983 Lenin Peace Prize laureate.

From a young age it was apparent that his life’s work would be divided between music and humanitarian causes.



After the second world war, the civil war breaks out. Theodorakis is persecuted for his progressive ideas by the police junta. He is finally arrested and exiled, first to Ikaria and later to the Macronesus death camp.

In 1954 he studies briefly in Paris, having been granted a scholarship by the Conservatoire. The years 1954-1960 marked a very productive period for Theodorakis in the field of European music.

In 1960, Theodorakis returns to Greece. In September, ‘the Epitaph’ is first recorded, which opens a new path for Greek music, not only because it marks a substantial change in form, but because it combines contemporary folk music with Greek poetry.

On 21 April 1967 he becomes an outlaw and makes the first call for resistance against the dictatorship. In May, he co-founds the first resistance organization, PAM, and is elected president.

He is arrested in August 1967, and is subsequently jailed, put in solitary confinement, goes on a hunger strike, is hospitalized, released and put under house arrest, transported to Arcadia with his family and finally imprisoned in a concentration camp. During all this he never stops composing. He manages to send much of his new work overseas.

After the end of the dictatorship in Greece, 1974, Theodorakis lives and works in Greece.

