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*MUSIC: A MELODIC METHODOLOGY INTO  
TEACHING AND LEARNING*

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# Greece

Songs: not only tunes, but the  
mentality of a nation



A People's History, national identity, background, culture, is portrayed in a nation's musical and literal heritage, nobody can deny this.

This is revealed through poetry turned into songs sometimes clearly, sometimes allegorically.

Our students have made a survey and decided that eight of the most representative Greek songs that reveal aspects of our Nation's History are the following.

# 1. «Άξιον Εστί» (Axion Esti)





## ΤΗΣ ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣΥΝΗΣ ΗΛΙΕ ΝΟΗΤΕ

Της δικαιοσύνης ήλιε νοητέ  
και μυρσίνη συ δοξαστική  
μη παρακαλώ σας μη  
λησμονάτε τη χώρα μου!

Αετόμορφα τα έχει τα ψηλά  
βουνά  
στα ηφαίστεια κλήματα σειρά  
και τα σπίτια πιο λευκά  
στού γλαυκού το γειτόνεμα!

Τα πικρά μου χέρια με τον  
κεραυνό  
τα γυρίζω πίσω απ' τον καιρό  
τους παλιούς μου φίλους καλώ  
με φοβέρες και μ' αίματα!

## Notional sun of justice

Notional sun of justice  
and you glorifying myrtle  
don't please don't  
forget my homeland!

It has eagle-shaped high  
mountains  
terraced vineyards on the  
volcanoes  
and the whiter houses  
in the neighbourhood of the blue!

My bitter hands with the Thunder  
I turn them before Time  
I'm calling my old friends  
with threats and blood!

The poem was written by the Nobel Prize awarded Odysseas Elytis and the music was composed by Mikis Theodorakis.

Elytis himself talks about how he got the inspiration: "It was the years of '48-'51. War, occupation, civil war, everything was destroyed. I remember the day I was heading to get my plane. A dozen of kids were playing in an open field. They were literally ragged. Pale, dirty, bony, with deformed knees, skeletal faces.

They were wandering around the field in piles of rubbish. This was the last image I was getting from Greece. Less than 24 hours later, I was in Switzerland, reading by a lake near a forest. Suddenly I heard gallops and happy voices. It was the Swiss kids, finishing their daily horse riding. Those kids, for more than five generations, had not known what fight, war, hunger or what sacrifice meant. They had rosy cheeks, they were smiling, they were dressed as royalty, and their escorts wore uniforms with gold buttons. They went past me, leaving me with a feeling of more than just indignation. It was awe before the tremendous contrast, devastation before this tremendous injustice, I felt like crying and praying rather than complain or scream... [...]. ...And this is how «Άξιον Εστί» was born".

It is well known that the *Axion Esti* is lengthy composition in three parts: The first part, *The Genesis*, poetically records the birth of the poet and of the world, or rather the birth of world through the poet, since the world exists as long as man exists.

Especially here, however, the world is not only created but also molded by the poet. In the second part, *The Passion*, the suffering of the poet is interwoven with the suffering of Greece during WWII, and commences with the Italian attack against his homeland.

The third part, *The Gloria*, is a praise of the Hellenic world, as seen through Elytis' lucid Hellenic poetic gaze. First, the solitary but within society. Second, the angelic and divine nature of the poem with its *acheiropoieton* (not hand-made) writing, which points to the conception of the eternal through the spiritual poetic course. Third, *logos-language* as the manifester of things, and as the creator of the world and of the poet.

Fourth, the suffering of the poet and of Greece during World War II and the identification of the undying rose (the Virgin Mary) with Hellas (Greece).

Fifth, The Gloria of Holy Mother Hellas. Sixth, the music of Mikis Theodorakis. All this leads to the conclusion that a correlation between the two Axion Esti exists not only in the title, but also in many essential elements.

“Axion Esti” is a masterpiece and makes every Greek shiver. “I plea you, please, don’t forget my country” certainly depicts exactly the personal experience of Elitis when he felt that the whole world had forgotten about the Greeks living in poverty and pain, when he saw the Swiss people who had not experienced any suffering for more than 500 years...

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o1l\\_VGP4gFY&list=RDo1l\\_VGP4gFY&start\\_radio=1&t=0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o1l_VGP4gFY&list=RDo1l_VGP4gFY&start_radio=1&t=0)





## 2. Άρνηση



Giorgos Seferis, **Nobel** laureate and one of the greatest poets of the 20th century, regardless of nationality, continues to be a beloved poet to the present day. Seferis passed away on September 20, 1971. At his funeral in Athens, the crowds of mourners following his coffin sang the Mikis Theodorakis arrangement of his poem Arnisi (Denial) which was banned at the time by the junta. “I am a man without any political affiliation, and I can therefore speak without fear or passion. I see ahead of me the precipice toward which the oppression that has shrouded the country is leading us. This anomaly must stop. It is a national imperative.” Seferis stood up against the oppression and became a hero to those resisting the dictatorship, censorship, and the political imprisonments and torture.



Don't ask who's influenced me. A lion is made up of the lambs he's digested, and I've been reading all my life.

(Giorgos Seferis)

Στο περιγιάλι το κρυφό  
κι άσπρο σαν περιστέρι  
διψάσαμε το μεσημέρι  
μα το νερό γλυφό.

Πάνω στην άμμο την ξανθή  
γράψαμε τ' όνομά της  
Ωραία που φύσηξε ο μπάτης  
και σβήστηκε η γραφή .

Με τι καρδιά, με τι πνοή,  
τι πόθους και τι πάθος  
πήραμε τη ζωή μας· λάθος!  
κι αλλάξαμε ζωή.

On the secret seashore  
white like a pigeon  
we thirsted at noon  
but the water was brackish.

On the golden sand  
we wrote her name;  
but the sea-breeze blew  
and the writing vanished.

With what spirit, what heart  
what desire and passion  
we lived our life; a mistake!  
So we changed our life.

Denial is a poem interpreted in various ways. The seashore indicates the young age, which is innocent just like a white dove.

The thirst refers to the desires, the ambitions of young people, however there is an obstacle, since life denies to fulfill all their wishes.

The thirst exists, but the water is somewhat salty, so the thirst remains.

This could be interpreted as a thirst for Democracy, for Freedom, since at that time there was Junta regime in Greece.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FlgZ07xyOcY>





### 3. Το Τρελοβάπορο (THE CRAZY BOAT)



Βαπόρι στολισμένο βγαίνει στα βουνά  
κι αρχίζει τις μανούβρες «βίρα-μάινα»

Την άγκυρα φουντάρει στις κουκουναριές  
φορτώνει φρέσκο αέρα κι απ' τις δυο  
μεριές

Είναι από μαύρη πέτρα κι είναι απ' όνειρο  
κι έχει λοστρόμο αθώο ναύτη πονηρό

Από τα βάθη φτάνει τους παλιούς  
καιρούς  
βάσανα ξεφορτώνει κι αναστεναγμούς  
Έλα Χριστέ και Κύριε λέω κι απορώ  
τέτοιο τρελό βαπόρι τρελοβάπορο  
Χρόνους μας ταξιδεύει δε βουλιάξαμε  
χίλιους καπεταναίους τούς αλλάξαμε

Κατακλυσμούς ποτέ δε λογαριάσαμε  
μπήκαμε μέσ' στα όλα και περάσαμε

Κι έχουμε στο κατάρτι μας βιγλάτορα  
παντοτινό  
τον Ήλιο τον Ηλιάτορα!

A boat adorned and decked sails out for  
mountains oh and there begins maneuvers  
with heave-to, heave-ho  
weighs anchor by a pine tree grove and takes  
aboard a cargo of fresh mountain air  
She's made of blackest stone, she's made of  
flimsy dream her boatswain is naive, her  
sailors plot and scheme she's come from the  
deep depths of ancient bygone times and here  
unloads her troubles and her trembling sighs.

O come my Lord and Jesus,  
I speak and am struck daft on such a loony  
vessel  
On such a crazy craft we've sailed for years on  
end,

And still we've kept afloat we've changed a  
thousand skippers on this balmy boat we never  
paid the slightest heed to cataclysms but  
plunged headlong in everything with  
optimisms  
and high upon our lookout mast  
we keep for our one and only sentry  
the sovereign Sun.



This is another poem by Odysseas Elytis. The music was composed by Dimitris Lagios, who unfortunately died very young. It is completely allegorical.

The boat is Greece and starts the voyage in a paradoxical way, from the mountains and anchors in the pine trees, not the sea. It loads its cargo, which is fresh air, in abundance in Greece, and the boat is made of black stone and dream.

The sailor is the Greek people, who are plot, clever, but the boatswain (the governments) is naïve. It implies that the people who rule the country are complete incapable of doing so.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hxA6XOy5XfA>



# 4. ΤΣΑΜΙΚΟ (ΤΣΑΜΙΚΟ )



Στα κακοτράχαλα τα βουνά  
με το σουράβλι και το ζουρνά  
πάνω στην πέτρα την αγιασμένη  
χορεύουν τώρα τρεις αντρειωμένοι.  
Ο Νικηφόρος κι ο Διγενής  
κι ο γιος της Άννας της Κομνηνής.

Δική τους είναι μια φλούδα γης  
μα εσύ Χριστέ μου τους ευλογείς  
για να γλιτώσουν αυτή τη φλούδα  
απ' το τσακάλι και την αρκούδα.  
Δες πώς χορεύει ο Νικηταράς  
κι αηδόνι γίνεται ο ταμπουράς.

Από την Ήπειρο στο Μοριά  
κι απ' το σκοτάδι στη λευτεριά  
το πανηγύρι κρατάει χρόνια  
στα μαρμαρένια του χάρου αλώνια.  
Κριτής κι αφέντης είν' ο Θεός  
και δραγουμάνος του ο λαός.

Up on the rough, steep mountains,  
With the flute and the syrnaty,  
On the sacred stone  
Three brave men dance: Nikiforos and  
Digenis and the son of Anna Komnini.  
They own a peel of land,  
But you, my Christ, bless them,  
To rescue this peel  
From the jackal and the bear.

Look at the way Nikitaras is dancing  
And tambouras turns into a nightingale  
From Epirus to Moria (Peloponnese)  
And from the darkness to freedom  
The feast has been going on for years  
In the petrified fields of Death Judge  
and Master is God  
And His mediator is the people.





The poem was written by Nikos Gatsos and the music was composed by Manos Hatzidakis, in 1976. Nobody can deny that it is one of the greatest songs ever written and it is full with the sound, color, flavor and scent of Greece. It is all Greece, from the beginning till the last note.

**The rough mountains:** They symbolize the fight and the freedom. Mountains are typical of the Greek landscape. This is where the Greeks hid during the Turkish occupation

**The Dance:** Three emblematic figures of the Greek History are dancing. Nikiforos Fokas who freed Crete from the Arabs, an Emperor who set the foundations for the fight against the Bulgarians (10th century, Byzantine Empire).

**Vasilios Digenis Akritas** is the one who defended the Greeks against the Muslims and the Arabs. Only Death beat him. He is the unonymous Greek who sacrificed himself for his country and freedom



The son of **Anna Komnini** was the son of a Princess who remained in history as well educated and cultivated woman. Her father, **Alexios Komninos the 1st** (end of 10th -11th century), wisely ruled the Empire.

**Nikitaras** was an exceptional hero of the Greek Revolution of 1821. He was named 'Turk-eater', he lived with dignity and without making any money on the expense of his country, which he loved till the end of his life.

**A peel of land:** Our land is very small. But the Greeks, with the help of God, try to maintain their land from the jackal (the sly enemies) and the bear (the big enemies). Greeks have always overcome fear, no matter how few they are

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8oUHeQkn\\_34](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8oUHeQkn_34)

**The Feast has been going on for years:** The fight for their freedom is like a celebration for the Greeks. Our land gives us joy and courage to overcome our fears.

# 5. 40 ΠΑΛΙΚΑΡΙΑ (40 BRAVE YOUNGS)



Σαράντα παλικάρια  
από τη Λει-. από τη Λειβαδιά. Πάνε  
για να πατήσουνε  
την Τροπο-, μωρ' την Τροπολιτσά

Στο δρόμο που πηγαίνουνε  
γέροντα, μωρ' γέροντ' απαντούν.

Ώρα καλή σου γέρο  
καλώς τα τα, καλώς τα τα παιδιά.  
Πού πάτε παλικάρια  
πού πάτε βρε, πού πάτε βρε  
παιδιά.

Πάμε για να πατήσουμε  
την Τροπο-, μωρ' την Τροπολιτσά

Forty brave youths  
From Livadia,  
Are on their way to step into  
Tripolitsa

On their way, an old man  
they meet..

“Greetings, old man”

“Welcome, my boys”

“Where are you off to,  
where are you going, ya' boys?”

“We are off to step into  
Tripolitsa”





It is a folk song, which means that the creator is unknown and it was handed in from generation to generation, from mouth to mouth.

For this reason there is a variety in verse, there are even more detailed versions. In the song bravery is obvious.

Since the Greek Revolution has started, the young men are off to help, they are going to Tripolitsa (Tripoli) in Peloponnese, where the fight against the Turks first started, to help the rest of the Greeks in their fight for freedom.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ydx0QSb22E>

# 6. ΘΟΥΡΙΟΣ ( THOURIOS )



Ως πότε παλληκάρια, θα ζούμε στα στενά,  
μονάχοι σαν λιοντάρια, στες ράχες στα  
βουνά;

Κάλλιο είναι μιας ώρας ελεύθερη ζωή παρά  
σαράντα χρόνους, σκλαβιά και φυλακή.

Σπηλιές να κατοικούμε, να βλέπουμε  
κλαδιά, να φεύγωμ' απ' τον κόσμο, για την  
πικρή σκλαβιά;

Κάλλιο είναι μιας ώρας ελεύθερη ζωή, παρά  
σαράντα χρόνους, σκλαβιά και φυλακή.

Να χάνωμεν αδέρφια, πατρίδα και γονείς,  
τους φίλους, τα παιδιά μας, κι όλους τους  
συγγενείς;

Κάλλιο είναι μιας ώρας ελεύθερη ζωή, παρά  
σαράντα χρόνους, σκλαβιά και φυλακή.

Till when will we be living in the alleys,  
Alone, like lions on the slopes?

Better one hour's freedom  
Than 40 years of slavery and prison.

Living in caves, seeing tree branches  
Leaving this world for bitter slavery

Better one hour's freedom than 40 years of  
slavery and prison.

Losing brothers, country, parents

Our friends, our kids and all our relatives

Better one hour's freedom  
than 40 years of slavery and prison.



“Thourios” is a patriotic Hymn That Rigas Feraios wrote in 1797 and sang in gatherings, in order to encourage the Greeks towards rebellion against the Turkish occupation.

It was not just a song but it was clearly an invitation to a revolution, a moto for a revolutionary alarm in all Turkish-occupied territory of the Balkans.

It does not mention any foreign allies, which means that the Greeks have started to realize that only by themselves, with their own strength, can they regain their freedom. «Θούριος» (Thourios) is an Ancient Greek adjective used by Attic poets, especially by Aeschylos, Sophocles and Aristofanis, and it means impetuous,frantic

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=78OcEBJPmgM>

# 7. ΠΑΙΔΙΑ, ΤΗΣ ΕΛΛΑΔΟΣ ΠΑΙΔΙΑ BOYS, CHILDREN OF GREECE





Μεσ' τους δρόμους τριγυρνάνε οι μανάδες  
και κοιτάνε ν' αντικρίσουνε,  
τα παιδιά τους π' ορκιστήκαν στο  
σταθμό όταν χωριστήκαν να νικήσουνε.  
Μα για 'κείνους που 'χουν φύγει και η  
δόξα τους τυλίγει, ας χαιρόμαστε, και ποτέ  
καμιά ας μη κλάψει,  
κάθε πόνο της ας κάψει, κι ας ευχόμαστε:  
Παιδιά, της Ελλάδος παιδιά, που σκληρά  
πολεμάτε πάνω στα βουνά, παιδιά στη  
γλυκιά Παναγιά  
προσευχόμαστε όλες να 'ρθετε ξανά.  
Λέω σ' όσες αγαπούνε  
και για κάποιον ξενυχτούνε και  
στενάζουνε, πως η πίκρα κι η τρεμούλα  
σε μια τίμια Ελληνοπούλα, δεν  
ταιριάζουνε.

Ελληνίδες του Ζαλόγγου  
και της πόλης και του λόγγου και  
Πλακιώτισσες, όσο κι αν πικρά πονούμε,  
υπερήφανα ασκούμε σαν Σουλιώτισσες.

In the streets wandering mothers, seeking  
to see their boys, who swore at the station,  
when they parted, that they would win.  
But for those who are gone  
And the glory wraps them let's be happy  
and no mother should cry, every pain she  
should burn and let's wish:

Boys, boys of Greece, who fight hard up in  
the mountains,

Boys, we pray to our Sweet Virgin We all  
pray that you come back.

I tell to those who love and stay up and sigh  
for him, that bitterness and shivering's  
are not appropriate for an honoured Greek  
girl.

Greek women of Zaloggo and of the city and  
of the countryside and Plaka

No matter how much we ache,  
we must proudly act like the women of

Souli



The song was written and composed by Michalis Sougioul and Mimis Traiforos in 1940. It was sang by Sofia Vembo, who was named the “singer of victory”, because her songs encouraged and uplifted the morals of the Greek men fighting at the front, against the Germans and Italians during WW II.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l8JzuSXs0GU>

The song explains exactly what was going on at the time. All men had gone to war, but the Greek women should not cry, because it is not appropriate for the Greeks. Glory for those who have died for the country, and our prayers to Panagia, Virgin Mary, who was a mother too, will help.

There is a reference to Zaloggo. It was the place of a heroic act of Greek women during the Turkish occupation. The Turks seized the town, and the future was clear. But the Greek women chose to die rather than be raped or killed by the Turks. Therefore, one by one they threw their kids off a cliff near Souli, Zaloggo and then they jumped too, so that they would not surrender to the Turks.

# 8. ΣΥΝΝΕΦΙΑΣΜΕΝΗ ΚΥΡΙΑΚΗ GLOOMY SUNDAY



Συννεφιασμένη Κυριακή ( Cloud covered Sunday) was written by Vasilis Tsitsanis. He was born in Trikala on January 18th,1915 and died on the same day in 1984.

ΣΥΝΝΕΦΙΑΣΜΕΝΗ  
• ΚΥΡΙΑΚΗ •

$\text{♩} = 50$

G G Am  
G C G Am D7 G D7 G  
G Am D7 G D7 G  
C Am D7 G D7 G  
Am D7 G Am  
G C G Am D7 G D7 G G



He is one of the greatest Greek composers. In one of his interviews, Tsitsanis explains how he got the inspiration: “I remember the Germans had blocked a small koutouki (like a small tavern, in Greek) and we did not know if we would get out of there alive. They made me play till dawn.

Συννεφιασμένη Κυριακή,  
μοιάζεις με την καρδιά μου  
που έχει πάντα συννεφιά,  
Χριστέ και Παναγιά μου.

Όταν σε βλέπω βροχερή,  
στιγμή δεν ησυχάζω.  
μαύρη μου κάνεις τη ζωή,  
και βαριαναστενάζω.

Είσαι μια μέρα σαν κι αυτή,  
που 'χασα την χαρά μου.  
συννεφιασμένη Κυριακή,  
ματώνεις την καρδιά μου.

Cloud covered Sunday  
you seem like my heart  
that is always overcast  
Christ and Holy Mary

When I see you rainy  
I become restless  
darkness you bring to my life  
and deeply I moan and sigh

You are a day like the one  
when my happiness was gone  
cloud covered Sunday  
you bleed my heart profusely





Then, they let us go. Everything was snow-covered and as I was going home I could see scattered pools of blood in the snow.

In the dim light, I saw a young man, he had been executed. I went home and wrote the song .I wanted to scream out loud the desperation that we all suffered back then.

And the motive was one of the tragic events going on in my country during the German-Italian occupation. There was hunger, misery, fear, oppression, arrestings, executions. The occupation was a gloomy period of constant cloudness.”

On the day of his funeral the crowds of people following the coffin were singing this song.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hPJSqnMPno4>

I   
GREEK SONGS

**GREEK MUSIC**



