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ANTIQUITIES AND MODERNITY:  
A MUSICOLOGICAL ANAMNESIS OF ANTIGONE

*I would like to play the harp myself,*  
.....  
*Snatch up my soul from its despair*  
.....  
*My song should conquer night and pain*  
Anna Freud, 1918

INTRODUCTION

In 1984, when Professor Eero Tarasti launched the Music Signification Project in Paris, Lawrence Kramer published his first musicological work that included Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalysis as a method of interpretation. At the turn of the century, Charles Rosen referred to the *New Musicology* as a transformation “into a field as up-to-date as recent literary criticism ... out of its isolation” (2000, 256), but not without reservations: “The limitations of Kramer’s writings become apparent when he tries to submit these multiple layers of cultural history to ‘close reading’” (257). Notwithstanding, we know of psychoanalytic studies on music that date back to Freud’s *Psychologische Mittwochs-Gesellschaft*. The distinction between both forms of psychoanalytic

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music research, as Susanna Välimäki (2005) calls it, “is not always workable, nor even possible” (28). We may nevertheless consider that one form of research stems from the humanities and the other from clinical theory applied to objects outside the consulting room. Still, on the present occasion, one author is a clinical practitioner and the other is a practicing composer. Therefore, the result is somewhat closer to the academic exchange that took place in 2008, when a debate between a composer and a psychoanalyst was published in the *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*. Bonnie Litowitz (2008) summarized it: “we readers are overhearing a musical dialogue between two persons who listen in a very special way” (1190).

The present paper is somehow a sequel to “Oedipus Goes to the Opera” (2020) and “Oedipus Returns to the Opera” (Röhe 2022), both published at the *International Forum of Psychoanalysis*. If before the list of selected musical plays considered operas that were based on the myth of Oedipus (Röhe 2022, 175), now we have considered those based on the tragedy of his daughter Antigone. The research initially followed the same methodology as the preceding papers. Thus, after a survey of *The Oxford Guide to Classical Mythology in the Arts, 1300-1990s* and *The Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama*, more than 50 different musical versions were identified. Furthermore, if previously Freud’s *Die Traumdeutung* (*The Interpretation of Dreams*) was considered the chronological dividing line for the selection of operas, now we rely on Freud’s *Der Witz und seine Beziehung zum Unbewußten* (*Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*) for it was in this work alone (apart from a few letters) that Freud mentioned Antigone.

Nonetheless, the reader may have difficulty situating the present essay as part of a trilogy. Likewise, Sir Richard Jebb (1891) highlighted that Sophocles’ “two tragedies which accompanied the *Antigone* were unrelated to it in subject. Even when ... read in the order of the fable, they do not form a linked trilogy in the Aeschylean sense” (xliv). Jebb refers here to the other known plays from the Theban cycle, namely *Oedipus Tyrannus* and *Oedipus in Colonus*. *Antigone*, the third play, but the first one to be written, includes a motivic innovation by Sophocles. The theme of the “refusal of burial was evidently an Attic addition to the story” (ix) and reflected the new Solon laws where “[d]enial of the rite of burial constituted an act of *hybris* against the dead” (Garland 1988, 8). Sophocles introduced the theme of burials in the opposition between the old laws from oral tradition and the new written laws, between the family (οἶκος) and the state (πολιτεία). In the following sections, we will demonstrate how antiquities and modernity were musically explored

by composers of different *Antigones*. We will begin with Felix Mendelssohn's version and the influence it had on Sigmund Freud—the latter being, in a sense, also concerned with the antiquities and modernity when he created psychoanalysis. Next, we recall Camille Saint-Saëns's version, which belonged to Freud's *Zeitgeist* in his Paris days. After that, we proceed to Greece itself though not without a direct reference to Saint-Saëns, since the latter anticipated Theodorakis' revolutionary work. We conclude the analysis with a version of *Antigone* from the 21st century that was performed in the Ancient Theatre of Epidaurus.

#### THE "ANTIK? OH NEE..." ISSUE

Freud (1905) once referred to a Berlin production of *Antigone* to address the psychological and sonorous aspects of a class of jokes, namely the sound-jokes (*Klangwitz*), more specifically the joke "Antiquities? Oh no..." ("Antik? Oh nee..."; our translation, 31). Though being hardly translatable without loss of meaning, it certainly refers to the lack of antiquities in the Berlin production. A neglected fact is that Freud was referring to Glaßbrenner's parody of the Sanssouci production in which Mendelssohn, like Freud later on, used Donner's translation, written in accordance with Sophocles' Ancient Greek meter.

Not only did Freud indirectly refer to Mendelssohn's version; both faced a similar (if not the same) issue. Jacob (Freud's father) gave his son a Philippon Bible when he reached the age of 35. Such version followed the Haskalah Judaism that had Felix's grandfather as the main authority—Moses Mendelssohn's ideas had "wider resonance in the debates about the ruptures and continuities between antiquity and modernity in the eighteenth century" (Leonard 2012, 23).

Both Felix and Sigmund struggled with a dejudaization paired with an identification with Greece. Freud referred to Moses—the one depicted by Michelangelo—not as a Jew, but as an Egyptian. In addition, he wrote of Antigone in a letter to Hungarian psychoanalyst Sándor Ferenczi, when he called his daughter "my loyal Antigone-Anna" (Freud 2000, 352)—and his complex was that of Oedipus, not only related to his *Zeitgeist* but also to issues that lie in the intimacy of his family history.

Moreover, Miriam Leonard highlighted that Haskalah Jews could be "as self-critical as the most rationalist of Protestants" (2012, 40). Felix's father had Lutheran ideals when he asked his son to change his name from Mendelssohn

to Bartholdy. Felix nonetheless rejected such plea while embracing the transitional aspect of the name Mendelssohn (after Mendel Dessau)—in such transition there was Felix’ “growing devotion to Protestant music” (Steinberg 1991, 142).

Furthermore, Mendelssohn’s *Antigone* was “a legitimate evocation of the Attic poetic—metric—and cultural origins” (146) of Greek shorelands. Notwithstanding, while some agreed that relying on Donner’s Greek metric would bring proximity to what was heard in Sophocles’ premiere, others were resistant to that hypothesis. The harp (example 1) at the *parodos* (πάροδος; Sophocles, *Antigone* 100–61) represented an “effort to lend the music a certain air of antiquity” (Geary 2006, 190). In addition, “Mendelssohn’s use of choral recitative as part of an effort to evoke certain defining elements of the original” (208) was consonant with the state of the art of classical philology.

The image shows a musical score for Felix Mendelssohn's *Antigone*, Opus 55, MWV M 12. The score is in G major and 4/4 time. It features a vocal line for Coro II and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line begins with the lyrics "Ue - ber" and continues with "un - se - rem Dach um - gähnt' er den sie - ben - tho - ri - gen Mund mit blut -". The piano accompaniment includes a harp part (Arpa) and a bass part (Bassi). The tempo is marked "Tempo I." and the dynamics are "mf".

Example 1. Felix Mendelssohn, *Antigone*, Opus 55, MWV M 12. Harp music for the *parodos*. See also Soph. *Ant.* 117–19

Nevertheless, Mendelssohn certainly did not aim at Antiquity only. Already in the *parodos* we may hear tones of modernization: “Mendelssohn’s use of a wind-band accompaniment ... is clearly meant to draw a connection between the

celebration depicted in the play and the festive occasions of his own time” (Geary 2006, 219). The wind band was paired with allusions to the *Männerchor* that Carl Dahlhaus related to the amateur choral gatherings that encapsulated French Revolution ideals. Geary further observed that Mendelssohn was quoting his *Festgesang* for the 400th anniversary of the Gutenberg Press.

### THE FRENCH TURN

François-Auguste Gevaert was conscious of the resistance against the reproduction of ancient music. In contrast with the plastic arts, Gevaert highlighted that we are in want of resources on ancient music. Still, when Gevaert quoted Seneca’s notes on music, he observed that Ludwig van Beethoven’s chorus of dervishes in *Die Ruinen von Athen* is representative of what the Stoic was referring to. For Kramer, Beethoven’s Turkish chorus “lay claim to an anti-European musical space and hold it with defiant tenacity” (1998, 86).

Steven Huebner (2021) remarked that Mendelssohn’s initial reception in France took place in Paul Meurice’s and August Vacquerie’s translation from the Greek. Just half a century later, they invited Saint-Saëns to create a new score. Upon its performance at the Théâtre Antique d’Orange, Provence’s most distinguished poet, Frederic Mistral, applauded it.

Huebner’s comparison between Mendelssohn’s and Saint-Saëns’ versions drew on Richard Taruskin’s distinction between *authentistic* and authentic music. The German version was authentistic for it aimed at the spirit of the original and not at the sonic characteristics of the ancient version. The French turn, much inspired by the École Française d’Athènes, was towards the authentic.

Fauré, Saint-Saëns’ pupil, collaborated with Theodore Reinach, President of the Société Française de Musicologie—like Mendelssohn and Freud, Reinach was of Jewish origins and deeply involved with Classical Studies. Samuel Dorf (2019) remarked that in 1893, in Delphi, a 1st century BCE fragmentary vocal and instrumental score was discovered. Reinach’s reconstruction of it was grounded in logical reasoning that included the analysis of the most frequent notes in the remaining evidence. Nonetheless, the performance of *Antigone* represented more than such an archaeological reconstruction of Ancient Greece relics. It was a reanimation of Provence’s cultural heritages—it is said that Provence loves more its *Vènus d’Arle* than the Milos version.

ETHNOMUSICOLOGY AND PSYCHOANALYSIS  
(ANTIGONE IN GREECE, PART I)

Saint-Saëns wasn't only involved with archaeology and the Félibrige movement that praised the Théâtre d'Orange as the symbol of Provençal heritage. His score for the *L'hymne à Eros* (third *stasimon*; στάσιμον; Soph. *Ant.* 781–800) had a commercial purpose and was sold separately. For it, Saint-Saëns was inspired by Bourgault-Ducoudroy's ethnomusicological research in Greek music: “the hymn ... imitates a traditional Greek song brought from Athens” (our translation). Therefore, Saint-Saëns' *L'hymne à Eros* precedes Theodorakis' involvement with Greek popular music.

At the 150th Frédéric Chopin anniversary in Athens, Manolis Kalomiris lectured on Chopin's double national ties as a justification for his Greek music project. Kalomiris embraced the Demotic Greek much like Mistral defended the Provençal, whereas he also declared “traditional music ... both analogous to, and a potential ally of, the vernacular language” (Samson 2013, 304). Like Manos Hadjidakis and Theodorakis after him, Kalomiris was deeply involved with living Greek writers.

With Hadjidakis, *rebetiko* (a form of Greek traditional music) “was proclaimed to be the only ‘true’ music to express the Modern Greek life” (Konstantinidis 2014, 317). Theodorakis embraced both the Demotic and the *rebetiko* to create Art that was based on sophisticated poetry such as Yannis Ritsos' *Epitaphios* (Επιτάφιος), and yet sounded like music played in the streets. The maestro once wrote: “In my case, the Stravinsky-Bartók reference covers only one part of myself. That of our common heritage in folkloric music with idiosyncratic personality: Russian, Hungarian, Greek” (Theodorakis 2016, 199).

Theodorakis' immersion in Greek folk music spearheaded a revolutionary relation of music to society, proving that “the ordinary Greek people had resources, in particular musical and poetic resources, that, they, as bourgeois Greeks, had never suspected” (Holst-Warhaft 1999, 7). As Konstantinidis (2014) noticed, *rebetiko* “reminded them [the emerging middle class], of their parent's musical taste” (320). At this point, a psychoanalytic interpretation should be allowed: When we listen to the music our parents listened to, we may evoke memories of them—and, necessarily, the affect that lies in our Oedipus complex.

In his Seminars on Antigone, Lacan (1992) related the cathartic effect of tragedies to the “hot jazz (*le hot*) or le rock 'n' roll” (288). Although we may

not disagree with Lacan's statement as to the psychological effect of music, his musicological commentary contrasts with the well-known Theory of Musical Continuity. Moreover, Lacan observed that even those who never heard Sophocles' third *stasimon* in Greek heard of it in one way or another: “Ἔρωσ ἀνίκητε μάχων” (“Love, invincible in battle”; Soph. *Ant.* 781; Holst-Warhaft 1999, 24). Lacan noticed that the chorus reacts to these words singing the *imeros* (ἴμερος) that relates to Zeus' desire for Ganymedes—as depicted in van Loo's *Die Einführung des Ganymed in den Olymp* (*The Induction of Ganymede in Olympus*). In Theodorakis' portrayal of the scene, an acquainted audience will recognize his style with “poignant falling notes of the minor third ... [in *Antigone*] he makes the synthesis of his popular and classical composition most transparent” (Holst-Warhaft 1999, 24).

#### A CONTEMPORARY GREEK VERSION (ANTIGONE IN GREECE, PART II)

An approach to *Antigone* by one of the authors was presented in 2016 at the European Cultural Centre of Delphi (Goyós, n.d.) and later at the Epidaurus in a National Theatre of Greece production directed by Stathis Livathinos and based on a modern Greek translation by Dimitris Maronitis. The chorus, made of veteran male and female actors and four young singing actresses, represented the women, children and elderly people remaining inside city walls after the first Theban war. Similar to Mendelssohn's version, three wind players constituted a small, anachronistic military band, a remnant of the accomplished battle.

Most of the text was spoken by the elderly choristers; the women provided musical context through vocalization and sung text fragments. This created an unusual *Antigone*, sung primarily by young women rather than the old men demanded by the play. They represent a symbolic multiplication of the figure of Ismene, a more conventionally submissive type illustrating the impulse for civil obedience against whom *Antigone's* ethical figure might make a stronger contrast.

This version's main stylistic axes are military music, folk polyphony, and traditional children's songs built on five or fewer tones. Mediating between children's and adult worlds as well as between voices and brass is a rhapsodizing solo clarinet (doubling saxophone) evoking the composer's adolescent memory of listening to the saxophonist Jan Garbarek in Epidaurus in 1993.

All of these are chosen for their universalizing, rather than Greek, qualities, combining modern and premodern stylistic traits.

The play starts in a dry manner and ends up drenched in music. Important musical elements introduced early (see example 2) are the octatonic scale, parallel perfect intervals and the seventh chord. The first *stasimon* (Soph. *Ant.* 332–75) adds the insistent interval of a fourth (b) mirrored by quartal (e) and seventh harmonies (a):

Example 2. Kharálampos Goyós, *Antigone*, first *stasimon*

The commenting Garbarek clarinet appears next, using the octatonic scale (c); the insistent horn *appoggiaturas* (f) will return in a different context at the end (example 3):

Example 3. Goyós, *Antigone*, first *stasimon*



As in the Saint-Saëns and Theodorakis versions, the centrally positioned hymn to love functions as a lyrical centerpiece. It is set as an extended AA-BAABA form, showcasing a cascading motif of alternating major and minor chords which, after Antigone's death sentence, will be inverted into a negative minor-major sequence (see example 4). Note the fourths (d1) and interlocking octatonic scales (c) in dialogue with folk-like ornamentation by the Garbarek clarinet:

The musical score consists of seven staves. The Soprano (S.) part begins with a box labeled 'A' and a measure number '9'. It features a melodic line with a 'c (tone-semitone alternation)' and 'd1' (fourths) indicated. The Soprano 2 (S2) part features a similar melodic line with a 'c (semitone-tone alternation)' and 'd1' indicated. The Alto 1 (A1) and Alto 2 (A2) parts provide harmonic support with sustained chords. The Clarinet (Cl.) part features a complex, ornamented line with a 'c (semitone-tone alternation)' indicated. The Horn (Hn.) and Trombone (Tbn.) parts provide harmonic support with sustained chords. The entire score is marked 'pp' (pianissimo).

Example 4. Goyós, *Antigone*, third *stasimon*

This is imitated by the vocal quartet, addressing the god of love (see example 5):

Example 5. Goyós, *Antigone*, third *stasimon*

In *Antigone*'s following lament, known as the *kommos* (κομμός; Soph. *Ant.* 806–82; see example 6), the quartet erupts in full-scale folk heterophony, starting on the subdominant (with its traditional connotation of the hereafter) and ending with *glissandos* and Picardy cadence:

Example 6. Goyós, *Antigone*, *kommos*

The fourth *stasimon* (Soph. *Ant.* 944–87) takes its cue from the choral address “ὦ παῖ παῖ” (“O child, child”; our translation, Soph. *Ant.* 949). Although the Jebb and Maronitis translations render *παῖ* as *daughter*, we preferred the gender-neutral interpretation of *child*, in line with current Greek usage. The music (example 7) deploys children’s song material and, again, the interval of a fourth (b):

X. 7 **A**  
 Τό 'πα-θε κι η Δα-νάη, —  
 iambic tetrameter (unstressed-stressed)  
 - / - / - / - /  
 Σ' έ - να κε-λί σαν τά - φο, σε φυ-λα-κή χαλ-κό-δε - τη —

Example 7. Goyós, *Antigone*, fourth *stasimon*

Rhythmically, this motif makes use of a characteristic iambic tetrameter from Greek folk poetry as well as an unexpected reference: Kurt Weill’s “Salomonsong” from *Die Dreigroschenoper* (*The Threepenny Opera*; see example 8) with its echoes of Antigone’s fourth *stasimon* and its cautionary cataloguing of catastrophic outcomes in the lives of exceptional beings, powerless in the face of fate.

iambic tetrameter (short-long)  
 U — U — U — U —

**Andantino** (♩. = 46)  
*p*

Jenny

1. Ihr saht den wei - sen Sa - lo - mo, — ihr wißt, — was aus — ihm  
 2. Ihr saht den küh - nen Cä - sar dann, — ihr wißt, — was aus — ihm

(In der Art eines *Leterkastens*)

Harmonium  
*p*  
 [sim.]

Example 8. Kurt Weill, *Die Dreigroschenoper*, “Salomonsong,” © 1928 by Universal Edition; iambic tetrameter

New elements are gradually added: chromaticism, associated with the oracle Tiresias, and a composite meter (3+2+2+2+3/8) for the paean to the God Dionysus. The *exodos* (ἐξοδος; Soph. *Ant.* 1155–352) presents recitative-like material and, for the first time, a more sentimental triadic style associated with Eurydice, Creon’s wife, and her wordless mourning theme—later transformed into a self-contained instrumental postlude. In the tragedy’s aftermath, musical significations shift; the listener’s ear, retrained in a triadic idiom, perceives the quartal and seventh chords as sighing appoggiaturas (*f*) within a more conventional harmonic milieu. *Glissandos* and ornamentation make an awkward cadential appearance; a motif formerly sung brightly by young women’s voices is buried in the nether regions of the music, immobilized—just like Antigone’s unhappy, lifeless body (example 9).

The musical score for Example 9, Goyós, *Antigone*, *exodos*, is presented in three systems. The first system (measures 50-54) features a Clarinet (Cl.) part with a melodic line marked *mf*, and Horn (Hn.) and Trombone (Tbn.) parts with sustained notes and a dynamic of *f*. A 'L' marking is present above measure 50. The second system (measures 55-57) continues the melodic development in the Cl. part, with Hn. and Tbn. parts providing harmonic support. The third system (measures 58-60) begins with a *rit.* marking and shows a more complex melodic line in the Cl. part, with a dynamic of *f* in the final measure. The Hn. and Tbn. parts continue with sustained notes and some melodic movement.

Example 9. Goyós, *Antigone*, *exodos*

## CONCLUSION

To conclude that Mendelssohn's *Antigone* was a source of inspiration for Freud when he coined the Oedipus complex might cause a negative reaction in the reader. The reason being that Freud supposedly had an aversion to music. One of the pieces of evidence that *proves* such an aversion is the piano used by his sister Anna—Freud asked for it to be removed from home when he was around ten: “Either the piano goes or he goes” stressed one biographer (Whitebook 2017, 54). Still, to state that “none of his children ever studied a musical instrument” (55) might be an incorrect statement—Antigone-Anna had singing lessons from Hedwig Hirschmann, soprano at the Wien Oper (Young-Bruehl 2008, 72). The piano issue could be a case of jealousy, one that was contained until a turning point in Freud's relationship with his sister.

Conversely, the Pleyel piano at Reinach's Villa Kérylos “hides the present from the past” (Dorf 2019, 23). Its antique cabinet fits with the decor while hiding the modern presence of the piano—there's no aversion to music implied, only a contrast between Antiquity and Modernity. Likewise, positing Freud's aversion to music as the single explanation for the piano event isn't in accordance with his musical life. Therefore, his family life could help us understand Freud a bit more, especially if we consider that, without the piano, there would be a return to a previous state of affairs in the family life—a successful piano player would require Freud to share part of the love he received from his parents. Furthermore, in the present paper we argued that Freud was deeply involved with the Mendelssohns, which is a step further from the perhaps saturated debate around Mounet-Sully's (who collaborated with Meurice and Vacquerie) influence on him.

On his first visit to the Acropolis, Freud (1964) described this derealization, where “a piece of reality” was “strange to him” (245). Such “little understood” (244) phenomena of the mind are likely to take place in modern audiences attending performances of the Classics. Nikos Galenianos' *Theogony*, Giorgos Kyriakakis' *Persephone* (*Περσεφόνη*) and Calliope Tsoupaki's *Oidipus* are modern representatives of a refashioned Greek national style. Such is also the case with Goyós' *Antigone*, which could indeed be described as an instance of Post-Neoclassic Enlightenment. Stepping away from Theodorakis' ethnomusicological approach, Goyós' *Antigone* is pathogenic when relying on the composer's own memories and affective experiences. Nevertheless, its trust in the pure Epidaurus acoustics undoubtedly gives it a touch of Antiquity. Analogously, Professor Eero Tarasti's idealization of Musicology

in the Music Signification Project, now on its 40th anniversary, is, in a sense, also refashioning itself with a new approach that recently began to take shape in Syros Island, the jewel of the Cyclades.

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A MUSICOLOGICAL ANAMNESIS OF ANTIGONE

Summary

Deemed by the Romantics as the greatest work of art, *Antigone* is still performed two millennia after its premiere. Sophocles' work inspired many composers and Freud's psychoanalysis. Furthermore, Mendelssohn's *Antigone* much likely influenced Freud when the latter coined the term Oedipus complex, especially when we consider Freud's dejudatization and identification with mythical characters from Antiquity. In the paper, we studied not only the *Antigone* that influenced Freud, but also later compositions, such as Saint-Saëns'. The latter anticipated Theodorakis' version by references to not only Greek cultural heritages from Antiquity, but also to modern ones by means of an ethnomusicological approach to composition. A more recent Greek musical version of *Antigone* by Goyós distanced itself from the use of Greek popular music towards a more personal and contemporary approach. Nonetheless, Goyós' *Antigone* heavily relied on the acoustics of Epidaurus thus creating a musical atmosphere very similar to that of Sophocles' premieres.

**Keywords:** Antigone; Musicology; Psychoanalysis; Oedipus Complex