

Representations of Mediterranean nature in Giorgos Koumendakis' piano and harpsichord cycle *Mediterranean Desert*

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ABSTRACT / RESUM / RESUMEN

The Greek composer Giorgos Koumendakis (1959) inspired by the Mediterranean landscape and sea started composing in 1998 a cycle of pieces for piano and harpsichord under the general title *Mediterranean Desert*. The pieces refer mostly to species of the flora and fauna of this region. Although nature in music is a difficult concept to theorize, we believe that it should not be neglected since it has been an important theme for the composer himself in many compositions, and for this reason it will help the listeners apprehend the ecological concept of his music. Koumendakis' composition unfolds a variety of styles and historical references in order to manifest the diversity and particularity of natural forms. The musical expression of the various aspects of nature in this musical work will be approached by different ways. First, we consider that nature can be reflected in music as direct mimesis, since musical sounds can represent the actual sounds of nature. The second approach involves linking sounds to nature through connotative musical metaphor. Finally, structural elements, texture, use of registers and timber are to be examined because they can also represent abstractly nature.

Representacions de la natura mediterrània al cicle *Mediterranean Desert*, per a piano i clavicèmbal, de Giorgos Koumendakis

En 1998, el compositor grec Giorgos Koumendakis (1959), inspirat pel paisatge i el mar Mediterrani, va començar a compondre un cicle d'obres per a piano i clavicèmbal sota el títol genèric *Mediterranean Desert* (*El Desert Mediterrani*). Els temes fan al·lusió, principalment, a espècies de la flora i la fauna d'aquesta zona. Tot i que la natura és un concepte difícil de teoritzar, no pot passar desapercebuda, ja que pel mateix compositor és un tema cabdal que regeix moltes de les seves composicions, la qual cosa pot ajudar els oients a comprendre el concepte ecològic de la seva música. La composició de Koumendakis desplega un gran ventall d'estils i de referències històriques per tal de manifestar la diversitat i la particularitat de les formes naturals. L'expressió musical dels diferents aspectes de la natura en la seva obra musical s'ha d'enfocar des de perspectives diferents. D'una banda, la natura pot reflectir-se en la música com a mimesi directa, ja que els sons musicals poden representar-ne els de la natura. De l'altra, els sons poden lligar-se amb la natura mitjançant la metàfora musical connotativa. I per últim, s'han d'examinar, també, els elements estructurals, la textura, l'ús de registres i el timbre, atès que tot plegat és susceptible de representar-la de manera abstracta.

Representaciones de la naturaleza mediterrània en el cicló *Mediterranean Desert*, para piano y clavicémbalo, de Giorgos Koumendakis

En 1998, el compositor griego Giorgos Koumendakis (1959), inspirado por el paisaje y el mar Mediterraneo, empezó a componer un ciclo de obras para piano y clavicémbalo con el título genérico *Mediterranean Desert* (*El Desierto Mediterraneo*). Los temas hacen alusión, principalmente, a especies de flora y fauna de esta zona. A pesar de que la naturaleza es un concepto difícil de teorizar, no puede pasar desapercibida, ya que para el mismo compositor es un tema capital que rige muchas de sus composiciones, lo que puede ayudar a los oyentes a entender el concepto ecológico de su música. La composición de Koumendakis desarrolla un abanico de estilos y referencias históricas para manifestar la diversidad y la particularidad de las formas naturales. La expresión musical de los diferentes aspectos de la naturaleza en su obra musical se debe enfocar desde perspectivas diferentes. Por una parte, la naturaleza puede reflejarse en la música como una mimesis directa, ya que los sonidos musicales pueden representar los de la naturaleza. Por otra parte, los sonidos pueden ligarse con la naturaleza mediante la metáfora connotativa. Y por último, se debe examinar, también, los elementos

¹ Actes del Congrés Internacional La música a la mediterrània occidental: Xarxa de Comunicació intercultural (València, 23-25 de juliol de 2014).

estructurales, la textura, el uso de registros y el timbre, dado que todo es susceptible de representarla de manera abstracta.

KEY WORDS / PARAULES CLAU / PALABRAS CLAVE

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The beauty and singularity of the Mediterranean nature has inspired many composers of various origins and eras. As it will be shown in this article, Nature holds a significant role in the compositions of the contemporary Greek composer Giorgos Koumendakis (born in Rethymnon of Crete in 1959) and especially in his cycle for piano and harpsichord² entitled *Mediterranean Desert*. Koumendakis is a prolific composer, between the more renowned of his country, having composed more than a hundred works for solo, chamber, vocal and orchestral music, music for dance (Symeonidou, 1995: 198), theater, video-art, operas, and his music has been interpreted by famous ensembles and orchestras worldwide (Kalogeropoulos, 1998: 290). Among other distinctions he was awarded the 'Prix de Rome' Prize in 1992 and directed the musical part of the starting ceremony of the Olympic games of Athens 2004. During his career, he was influenced by several compositional currents and styles, contemporary or historical, but nature has impregnated his memories:

I remember the times my father grabbed herbs and aromatic plants and gave them to me to scent them. The memory of the scent (sense) is very strong. I remembered unbelievable details of my childhood while reading Proust's *In search of lost time* [...]. I'm asking myself several times how a man can exist without listening to Mozart or Beethoven. I wonder the same think about the sensations that offers the contact with nature. The beauty of the water, the sea, the rocks, the sounds; the supreme pleasure; from the waves and the wind, the rustling of the plane-tree's leaves, the scents of the sage, the mint and the ditanny (Koronaki, 1998: 5).

From his earlier works like *Iphigenia on the Bridge of Arta* (1994-5) till the more recent opera *The Murderess* (2011-2014), there is an evident appeal to natural elements (water, wind, earth) and beings (birds, plants, animals) within his compositions. However, the work *Mediterranean desert*, a cycle started in 1998, still ongoing and standing out already as one of his most performed works,³ is undoubtedly his largest *hommage* to nature so far. Composed initially in order to inspire and accompany a mute video-work (Kordellou, 2009), this cycle has later been performed independently of the visual part.

The parts of the cycle can be divided as shown at the table below (table 1). Their programmatic titles indicate the species they refer to. In some cases there are one-word titles, but some pieces have more explicit indications. They could be characterized as *Charakterstücke* or «miniature tone poems»⁴ as it was said about Couperin's analogue pieces for harpsichord, since from other aspects too, Couperin's pieces were an inspiration for Koumendakis. Generally, all basic categories of flora and fauna are included, going from the smallest to the biggest, from the simpler to the most composite forms of life. Considering the extra-musical text (titles) we remark that the composer indicates the precise rank and species of each being in Latin, in order to distinguish those which live in the Mediterranean. Each species takes a particular place in the center of each keyboard piece as the composer aims at presenting not only external features but also the personality, the uniqueness, the psychological characteristics of each creature: «the rainbow-wrasse, the grouper, the seaweed began gradually revealing their psychological features. I began charting psychical particularities to the skilful movements of the garfish» (Vlavianou, 2000).

² With the exception of 'A Black bird in the Cricket's Gorge' (2013), for ww[1.1.1.1.] and hn.

³ According recital programs of the following artists: Georgios Konstantinou, Lorenta Ramou, Giorgos-Emmanouil Lazaridis, Alexandra Papastefanou, the *Mediterranean Desert* has been partially or totally performed not only in Greece but also in Spain, England and the U.S.A. (Carnegie Hall etc). The pieces 'Sage', 'Mint', 'Thyme' of the cycle have been also recorded (Works of Greek composers for piano, Lyra, 2003).

⁴ <http://www.baroque-music.com/couperin.html>

Introduction: From the Tethys to the Mediterranean				
Herbs - Plants	Insects-reptiles	Birds	Fishes	Animals
-Thyme -Mint -Sage -Anemone (anemone pavonina) -Bee and wild tulip (a bee visits tulip sylvestris)	-Praying mantis (Empusa fasciata) -The Caterpillar and treble-bar of L. van B. (aplocera plagiata) -Dragonfly (harps.) (orthetrum cancellatum) -Damsel fly (harps.) (agrion virgo) -Slow-worm (harps.) -Fly (harps.)	-Sparrow (passer domesticus) -Cormorant -Two black vultures and their terrifying dance -Little egret and hunter by the banks of Strimonas river -The Cormorant of Iannis Xenakis	-Rainbow-wrasse -Grouper -Gar-fish	Horse (harps.)
Most recent pieces				
The Silk Road (2002) Couple (Ζευγάρι) (2004) A Cricket in the Black bird's Gorge (2012), 3 pianists on a pf A Black bird in the Cricket's Gorge (2013), ww[1.1.1.1.] and hn				

Table 1: *the pieces of the cycle Mediterranean Desert*

Is this composition an attempt of anthropomorphic presentation of nature? As we will see, research, observation and knowledge of biological aspects concerning each creature involved can be revealed beneath each case. Moreover, humans do not preoccupy Koumendakis in this composition: The only reference in the first pieces is the hunter in the piece 'Little egret and hunter by the banks of the Strimonas' reminding mostly of the hostile face of humans towards nature. The later piece entitled 'The couple' suggests mostly the mating procedure than human nature.

Although natural elements have often been appealed and imitated in music by several composers (e.g. Sibelius, Mahler), seeing nature through a musical prism, as the cycle suggests, «demands conceptualizing one mental domain in terms of another», a process that according to Lakoff «is the locus of metaphor» (Spitzer, 2004:15). Consequently, what we propose in this paper is an examination of the ways Mediterranean nature is presented musically by means of three principal parameters: a. the use of sound imitation, b. the exam of musical metaphors referring to nature and especially c. the demonstration of the compositional tools employed to this purpose.

Before we proceed in our presentation, we should discuss the theoretical framework that defines our approach. Metaphors are borrowed from narratives, thus they cannot be excluded from the arguing and questioning about the possibility of describing musical facts in terms of narrative, linguistic or semiotic methods.⁵ However, the theories supporting metaphorical approaches and analysis of music kept arousing.

⁵ See for example the criticism of Cumming (1994): «Metaphor in Roger Scruton's aesthetics of music», en POPLA A. (ed.) (1994): *Theory, analysis and meaning in Music*, Cambridge University Press, 5-28; Zbikowski (2008): «Metaphor and Music», en GIBBS, R. W. Jr. (ed.) (2008): *The Cambridge Handbook of Metaphor and Thought*, Cambridge University Press, 502-524; Kivy (2009): *Antithetical Arts: on the ancient quarrel between literature and music*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, (part 1); and Klein (2013): «Musical Story», en KLEIN M. et al. (ed.) (2013): *Music and Narrative since 1900*, USA, Indiana University Press, 2013, 3-13.

Marion Guck had suggested that we should «recognize the importance of metaphors to modern analytic discourse as an alternative to structuralism or 'scientific' descriptions of music» (Linsley, 2011: 20), while Lakoff and Johnson argued that «music allows us to map our understanding of a familiar domain onto an unfamiliar domain» (Spitzer, 2004:10). Spitzer himself stated that «our understanding of music is permeated with cross-domain mappings, as witness concepts as “tone painting”, “tone poem” and “character piece”» (Spitzer, 2004:11). The use of metaphors in relation to music analysis lies also beneath the baroque *Figurenlehre*, the concepts of *Ursatz* (Schenker) and *Grundgestalt* (Schoenberg) and has inspired theories of models based on metaphors of music motion (Johnson and Larson), musical forces (Larson) or musical gestures (Linsley, 2011: 21-3).

These theories began to gain space and expand and in the last decades it finally seems that an agreement was made that a. «the metaphor cannot be eliminated from the description of music because it defines the intentional object of the music experience», (Scruton, 1997: 92), b. «narratives lends us a set of metaphors for understanding music», (Klein, 2013: 24) and c. «metaphors tell us something important about the way we conceptualize music and thus play an essential role in music analysis» (Linsley, 2011: 20). However, many of those important theories are based primarily on the study of tonal music, tonally functional music, dating before 1900. What about modern music, music of the twentieth and twentieth-first century which does not depend on functional harmony, or what about music that embraces tonality, but has also discovered and evolved different ways of articulating musical discourse, like Koumendakis' music? Several studies edited in a collection by Klein and Reynald are leading us to the result that on what concerns at least four basic metaphor fields involving agency, temporality, musical plot and existence of a narrator in musical works «these metaphors may use tonality as a signifier, but tonality alone does not signify narrative» and that «running through the discussion of these four narrative metaphors is a caveat against considering functional tonality as the sole determinate for any of them» (Klein, 2013 : 15). Meelberg argues that «contemporary non-tonal music narrations, in particular, can make explicit certain features that are characteristics of music listening» (Meelberg, 2013:272).

Pursuing now our discussion, we will refer to the first nature representing tool that is sound imitations in the *Mediterranean Desert* cycle. In Koumendakis' *Mediterranean*, musical sound mimics the buzzing of the bee and the fly, the singing of the sparrow, the blowing of the wind and the calling of the cricket, the waves of the sea. The timbre of the harpsichord is proved to be quite helpful in the case of the insects' imitation; special percussion instrument is used for the 'Cricket'.⁶ Of course the choice of rhythmic and melodic motifs is also important to the sounding result. The alternation of the piano register on the other hand evokes the singing of the sparrow; the muddy timbre of the piano through continuous pedaling on fast demisemiquavers' figures stands for the wind in the piece 'Anemone'. The role of imitations as representational tool is not random. It should not be neglected because as Hatten and Almen observe imitations can work as «topical allusions» (Hatten, Almen, 2013:63) as indices for narrative interpretation. They can provide a clue of who is acting or what is the action involving.

As far as metaphors are concerned, the programmatic titles provide information on agential metaphors. By agency we mean the character, here natural being, that takes action or has the leading part in each piece. However the question here lays on what is Koumendakis' conception of nature and how it can be expressed through musical metaphors and particularly in what way external or psychological characteristics of animals

⁶ The percussion instrument known as 'cricket'.

and plants are to be indicated by music. As it is not possible to describe the total of the cases we will present the most important ones from this point of view.

Let's take as example the introductive and longest piece, 'From Tethys to the Mediterranean'.⁷ As the title indicates the piece aims at describing the transformation from Tethys to contemporary Mediterranean (see example 1).⁸ At the beginning we remark a. the slow tempo, b. long measures 6/4, 5/4 etc c. the loose harmonic rhythm d. the use of the low piano register e. the pedal tone E leading to tone C, turning also on pedal tone, a tone that from Bach's era evokes nature and earth according to M. Spitzer f. harmonic instability calming temporarily on tonal chords and g. the characteristic interval of ascendant fourth. The fact of this instability reaching for balance by steps or semi-steps in a slow rhythm and low register could evoke the movement of the plates creating the new landscape. Harmony actually keeps oscillating between pedal tones of E, C, C#, C, while we hear the tonalities of A major-A minor-G minor-C minor and major. Gradually, the initial material is getting elaborated and transformed in a more rapid process and richer contrapuntal textures, evoking the intensification of the transformative process concerning the Mediterranean basin. The element of water is insinuated by a waving motif of demisemiquavers emerging on top of the initial aggregate. The timbre of the piano here reminds of the sound of *santouri*, an old greek traditional instrument, a percussive string instrument. Analogue motifs will reappear on the pieces for fish. As the process moves on, moments of tranquility and balance get more restrained and are followed by more explosive gestures towards the higher registers: the contrast between the surface and the tethyan floor in a accelerating tempo (*piu mosso*) leads to the concluding calming section. The discordance created by D# and E is embodied in the final aggregate. The instability even in the deep bottom remains still present, that is what anti-teleological structures in this introduction try to say. Nature here is presented as transformative energy that needs to be balanced. Nature being as it is, the instability and transformation are part of it.

Example 1: G. Koumendakis: From the Tithys to the Mediterranean, mm 1-5

The introduction provided the image of a temporal macro-plan concerning the creation of the Mediterranean. The following pieces of the cycle on the contrary are devoted to the particular characteristics of natural species and of nature in general. One of them is:

A. Motion. Nature moves and acts. Motion has various forms in Koumendakis' work. A first one is (i). flying.

⁷ Tethys was an ocean. According to Wikipedia «The western arm of the Tethys Sea was the ancestor of the present-day Mediterranean Sea. Other remnants are the Black, Caspian, and Aral Seas (via a former inland branch known as the Paratethys). Most of the floor of the Tethys Ocean disappeared under Cimmeria and Laurasia. Geologic evidence can be seen in the Alpine orogeny of Europe, where the movement of the African plate raised the Alps. Greece and the Levant also retain many units of limestone and other sedimentary rocks deposited by various stands of the Tethys Ocean».

⁸ All musical examples included in this article were provided by the composer with his kind permission.

Flying is expressed through a variety of compositional means: timbre, tempo, rhythmic and melodic motifs, development, form and tonal references. In the case of the 'Fly' for example the plucked sound of the harpsichord sounds more rough and 'natural' than the piano's. Tempo and rhythmic motifs are quite rapid (example 2). The development is based on reoccurring figures with slight variations without any interruption. The piece is turning around the tonality of E (at times minor, major or modal) with interesting alternations and the free form has no clear closure (probably insinuating endless motion), as in the cases of 'Damsel fly' and abruptly ending 'Slow-worm'. Through the description of motion, behavioral aspects of the insects can be easily guessed. The persistence or stubbornness of the fly, the mechanical-organized spirit of the dragonfly, the spontaneous and dancing temperament of the damselfly, the inquisitive, unquiet and restless character of the sparrow, the nervous but sometimes also proud of the horse, the busy one of the bee.



Example 2: G. Koumendakis: Fly, mm 4-8

(ii). Another form of motion is the dance-battle. The best example here is given by the 'Two black vultures and their terrifying dance' (example 3). The pattern of this natural dance lies on keeping a small face to face distance moving slightly around and then the two vultures attack each other until the one quits. The opposition between an almost mirrored triplet movement and simultaneous demisemiquavers' movement by thirds, a difference of texture and rhythm, implies a survival-or predominance fight between two vultures. It also reminds of several face-to-face Greek dances that have a character of concurrence. Extravagant difference of registers and dissonance stimulate the hostile atmosphere of this conflict. It is easy to observe at what level the secondary compositional parameters as timbre, texture, tempo and loudness rise on importance in Koumendakis' pieces. The reason could be that, as Rebecca Leydon states, «secondary parameters, in their role as anaphones for aspects of the natural world, enhance music's capacity for vivid description» and by that «they immerse listeners in a more vivid and sensuous musical present» (Leydon, 2013: 309). Contrarily on what was the result of the introductory piece where temporality involved mostly the past, the previously mentioned pieces are likely aiming at presenting a contemporary view of nature, like if someone was actually observing those beings.

Example 3: G. Koumendakis: Two black vultures, mm.1-3

(iii). Survival struggle and death (as end of motion). Here the piece of reference is the ‘Little Egret and hunter by the Banks of Strimonas River’. The piece begins with the sneaky movement of the hunter. Chromatically descending, low-registered and followed by a pedal tone on D, the hunter’s leitmotiv reoccurs three times in this piece in order to insinuate the mortal danger (example 4). The egret on the other hand comes frivolously on motifs of demisemiquavers. Suddenly, the tempo changes and tonic triads unfolding again on motifs of demisemiquavers begin a breathless spinning between several tonal poles which don’t get conjured (example 5), while modal fragments are introduced as well. The agony of the hunted bird is to revive two times again before its final breath. The *piu lento* final section comes as an invitation to philosophical introspection.

Example 4: G. Koumendakis: Little egret and hunter by the banks of Strimonas river, mm.1-2

Example 5: G. Koumendakis: Little egret and hunter by the banks of Strimonas river, mm. 37-8

B. A second aspect of Koumendakis’ music is the role of the divine presence in nature and ‘In praying mantis’ piece, polytonality holds probably the key of the metaphor. At the beginning of the piece already, the ambiguity created from the first aggregate leaves a big question mark. This ambiguity, this two-faced tonal reference actually wants to reveal the character of the little insect, an insect that is named in greek Holy Mary’s little horse and seems to be harmless, but in fact is a quite greed creature, which kills the male after mating. The illusion of the praying style of the right hand on the upper register, is contradicted by the left one, until a dynamic (forte) monophonic melody supported by a B pedal-tone interrupts the «praying». The

melody will interfere in total three times (symbolical number) and will dominate at the end. This melody taken from a byzantine chant,⁹ accompanied only by a pedal tone lying on the base of the mode, in fact evokes the divine presence that will correct the evil. The intervention of this melody corrects also the musical «problems», since it purifies the harmony.

C. Another aspect of nature is metamorphosis/transformation. This procedure involves not only the lifeless environment –as we have seen it in the introduction- but living species as well. A wonderful example of Beethovenian inspiration (example 7), ‘The caterpillar and the treble-bar of L. van Beethoven’ in an A-A' form with A having a tripartite structure, is based on the opposition between the movement by crotchets of the right hand and the stretching motifs of semiquavers on the left. Tonality here functions as a shell which keeps inside the egg trying to come out first as caterpillar and later as treble-bar (what the form insinuates as well).

Example 6a and 6b: G. Koumendakis: Praying mantis, mm. 1-2 and mm. 15-7

Example 7: G. Koumendakis: The caterpillar and the treble-bar of L. van Beethoven, mm. 7-10

D. Cooperation-the cycle of life. The piece ‘Bee and wild tulip, a bee visits the tulip sylvestris’ is indicating the cooperative spirit between natural species. The tulip sylvestris is a pollinator friendly to the bee, that is, it provides proteins to the bee. The bee is not very friendly in the music piece as it seems, it disturbs with her noise (chromatically moving motifs of demisemiquavers) the well-being of the wild tulip (the primary playful atmosphere vanishes as soon as the insect approaches), but afterwards the tulip returns to its loneliness.

E. The mysteries of the sea-life. How can one describe musically something fluid as the sea or the fishes? Someone may have knowledge of fishes and especially the rainbow wrasse, the grouper and the gar-fish. The first one is a smart fish which cannot be easily hooked, because it ruins the bait. A large section with a

⁹ The repertory of monophonic liturgical chants of the Greek Church.

contrapuntal two-voiced texture characterized by syncopated motifs of demisemiquavers sometimes closely bound and other times spaced by means of a large-register difference, gives the impression of a pursuit incident. The danger approaches, timbre and low register -more than melodic or rhythmic patterns- evoke the fish's habitude to bury itself in the sand when it feels threatened (example 8). On the other hand, restless, ready for battle, fast and living on the surface, the gar-fish in Koumendakis' piece gets hooked as the repeated pedal-tone E keeps holding the whirling melodic line representing the fish (example 9). Finally, it seems the gar-fish escapes (melodic descending motif) to the bottom of the sea.

Example 8: G. Koumendakis: Rainbow-wrasse, mm. 25-7

Example 9: G. Koumendakis: Garfish, mm. 11-3

F. The familiarity of the scents of sage, mint and thyme. Simplicity's beauty, tonality, transparency, baroque-pastoral style indicate some of the herbs' characteristics. This is the way the composer chooses to demonstrate how familiar we are with those herbs in our life. Three little pieces which in fact are three variations of the same compositional idea since as the composer argues «they scent very alike, that is very confusing».¹⁰

Some complementary points of the Mediterranean nature -and nature in general we could admit- are completed with the newer pieces. The couple, first appearance of human beings in a natural way, is about the pleasure of mating (G). The vivid dance-like 3/8 rhythm –followed by several dancing rhythms as 6/8 –greek folk dances mostly, the small phrases which reoccur with small variations, the reiteration of the first bar nine times before the conclusion give the impression of a dance on high spirits. H. Mediterranean cross-roads are evoked by the 'Silk Road' which «refers to the famous route where trade and cultural exchange took place between East and West during the first and second centuries AD».¹¹ The whole idea however is connected with the effort to import a non Mediterranean species that is the silk-worm from the East. A steady quaver mostly oscillating movement like steps on the left hand and eastern melodic elements –the three semitone characteristic interval-show that the long silk-road was often traveled bringing foreign elements to it. The rhythmic differences which should be respected according to the composer underline the various elements this transport brought. The abrupt end signifies probably the radical abandon of this trajectory.

As we may understand although classical and romantic elements are to be found musically in Koumendakis particular work, the perspective on Mediterranean is likely an anti-romantic one and shows clearly that Nature for Koumendakis is not simply a form of musical iconicity of nature-ness but a question of paying respect towards natural forms and an attempt of understanding and demonstrating their singular beauty. His approach and esthetic orientation thus, avoiding personalization/personification (Scruton) of nature, differs in many aspects from historical views of nature in music presented by Arthur Lovejoy 50 years earlier (1948) according which nature in music expresses (Wallmark, 2010):

[...] human nature, the cosmic order, imitation of nature, truthfulness, objective beauty, simplicity, symmetry, balance, the primacy of emotion, spontaneity, naïveté, primitivism, irregularity, avoidance of symmetry, the expression of artist's voice, the fullness of human life, the savage, the fecundity, evolution [...].

Koumendakis' work gives special attention to each little creature, even when the difference is hard to be seen e.g. between the damselfly and the dragonfly. A musical frame is in every case found to reveal the uniqueness, singularity, beauty, mechanisms, ways of living of each species and on the same time bring on surface the natural laws of breeding, transformation, evolution, motion, cross-roads, love. Is there an ecological meaning to be found in Koumendakis' *Mediterranean Desert*? Actually there is no clue that the music insinuates something like «do not pollute», or «respect the environment». But there are two things which can be noticed: one thing the title's play on words. Long ago, the Mediterranean basin was a desert. It could be again in the future. Secondly, as the composer confesses «I wanted to show the beauty of each species so that people would want to preserve it».¹²

¹⁰ Interview of the writer with the composer, 10/2/2009.

¹¹ This phrase of the composer accompanies the edition of the piece by The Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music, c2002.

¹² Interview of the writer with the composer, 10/2/2009.

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Cita recomanada

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