

## **We Honor Mikis Theodorakis ...**

### **The Composer; the Man; and his contribution to the World of Music.**

Mikis Theodorakis was born on July 29th 1925 on the Greek island of Chios. Fascinated by music already as a child, he taught himself to write his first songs without access to musical instruments. In Pyrgos and Patra he took his first music lessons, and in Tripolis, he formed a choir and gave his first concert at 17.

After having been active in the resistance against the occupation troops and terribly tortured during World War II and later on, during the Greek Civil War, he studied at the Athens Conservatory in the class of Philoktitis Economidis and at the Conservatoire of Paris, where he studied musical analysis in the class of Olivier Messiaen and conducting under Eugene Bigot. The time in Paris was for him a period of intense artistic creation.

His first symphonic works, Concerto for Piano, First Suite, First Symphony, were internationally acclaimed. In 1957 he won the Gold Medal in the Moscow Music Festival; in 1959, Darius Milhaud proposed him for the American Copley-Music Prize as the Best European Composer of the Year after the performances of his ballet "Antigone" at Covent Garden.

Theodorakis went back to Greece and to his roots, to genuine Greek music, and with his song cycle "Epitaphios", he started a cultural revolution in his country. With his marvelous works based on the greatest Greek and world poetry: "Epiphania", "Little Kyklades", "Axion Esti", "Mauthausen", "Romiossini", "Romancero Gitan"... he gave Greek music back its dignity and, while developing his concept of meta-symphonic music, he was soon recognized internationally as a musician of genius, and, indeed, Mikis Theodorakis is undoubtedly Greece's greatest living composer.

He founded the Little Orchestra of Athens and the Musical Society of Piraeus and gave many concerts, while in 1963; he founded the Lambrakis Democratic Youth and was elected its president. In 1964, he became a member of the Greek Parliament.

During 1964, he wrote the music for the Michael Cacoyiannis film Zorba the Greek, whose main theme, since then, exists as a trademark for Greece. It is also known as 'Syrtaki dance'; inspired from old Cretan traditional dances, and became popular around the world. It is now commonly played and danced to in Greek tavernas. The film's track has since been recorded as a standalone song by many different musicians from around the world. Some of the more notable are listed below.

- Herb Alpert and the Tijuana Brass recorded a 4:25 version of the song (as "Zorba the Greek") for their 1965 album Going Places. Issued in edited form as the B-side of the group's "Tijuana Taxi" single, the song reached number 11 on the Billboard Hot 100 chart.
- The tune reached number 6 in the UK Singles Chart in August 1965, performed by Marcello Minerbi (Durium Records DRS 54001).

In 1967, a fascist Junta pushed its way to power. Theodorakis went underground and founded the Patriotic Front. The Colonels published Army decree No.13, which banned playing, and even listening to his music. Theodorakis himself was arrested, jailed, banished to Zatouna with his wife Myrto and their two children Margarita and Yorgos. Later he was interned in the concentration camp of Oropos. An international solidarity movement, headed by such figures as Dmitri Shostakovitch, Leonard Bernstein, Arthur Miller and Harry Belafonte managed to get Theodorakis freed and his sentence converted to exile in 1970.

In exile, Theodorakis fought for the overthrow of the colonels and the unity of resistance forces. World-wide, he gave some thousand concerts as part of his struggle for the restoration of democracy in Greece. He became a universal symbol of resistance against dictatorship.

After the fall of the Colonels, Theodorakis triumphantly returned to Greece, continued his work and his concert tours both in Greece and abroad. At the same time he participated in public affairs. He was later elected several times to the Greek Parliament (1981-1986 and 1989-1993) and for two years, from 1990 to 1992, he was Minister in the Government of Konstantin Mitsotakis. After that, he was appointed for another two years General Musical Director of the Symphony Orchestra and Chorus of the Hellenic Radio and Television.

Mikis Theodorakis has always combined an exceptional artistic talent with an intensely deep love of his country. He is also committed to heightening international awareness of human rights, of environmental issues and of the need for peace. It was for this reason that he initiated the Greek-Turkish Friendship Society together with the renowned Turkish musician and singer Zülfü Livaneli.

At G Kouzalis LLC, your lawyers in Cyprus, we have chosen 2018 to honor Mr. Theodorakis and his commitment and contribution to music, by having his songs as our hold music for this year. We will change our hold music in July for another 3 of his compositions.