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Five Paths into the Present

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Contemporary music becomes especially compelling when its experiments lead towards recognisable human experiences. Memory, belonging, confinement and imagined refuge provide the foundations of “Five Paths,” the TETTTIX concert opening the Greek National Opera’s Contemporary Music Days under the musical direction of Kornilios Selamsis, the ensemble presents works by Nikos Galenianos and Yannis Kyriakides.

It also brings works by Michalis Paraskakis, Eleni Ralli and Jani Christou. The programme promises not a demonstration of stylistic novelty, but an exploration of the places we inhabit through sound. The organising idea is topoi: places that may be real or invented, recovered through recollection or approached through imagination. The five compositions also represent paths taken by TETTTIX since its beginnings in 2017. This gives the evening a persuasive double perspective. It is both an inquiry into musical space and a portrait of an ensemble’s developing identity. Repertoire becomes a record of artistic relationships, suggesting how musicians accumulate their own histories through the works they choose to revisit.

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“Eva’s Dream,” drawing on John Milton’s “Paradise Lost,” is described as an allegory of everyone’s paradise. Its premise opens a fertile tension between a shared cultural narrative and the private landscapes individuals construct within it. For a contemporary-music audience, the interest lies in how an inherited text might become something more unstable than illustration: an occasion to examine desire, loss and the difficulty of imagining a place of complete belonging.

“The Musicians of Dourgouti” turns towards a specific urban memory, taking the musical life of the district during the 1950s as its starting point. The area is identified in the programme with present-day Neos Kosmos in Athens. This local grounding offers an illuminating counterpart to Milton’s imagined paradise.

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A neighbourhood, too, can become a place accessible only through traces. Music potentially restores something of its social presence while acknowledging that recollection always transforms what it attempts to preserve.

“Certain Sensations are Slumber” approaches the subject from a more inward direction. Its central figure is a confined woman who produces sounds through which she experiences times and places beyond her immediate circumstances. The concept gives musical invention an urgent psychological function. Sound is not merely an expressive accompaniment to captivity; it becomes a possible means of exceeding it. The listener is invited to consider how an apparently restricted environment can contain an expansive, complicated interior world.

“Hide Yourself Behind the Curtain” shifts attention towards communication between musicians and their surroundings. Its announced search for routes through space suggests that the concert environment itself becomes part of the artistic question. Where does a musical gesture seem to originate? To whom is it addressed? What changes when listening acknowledges distance, concealment or direction? Without presuming particular staging choices, the premise encourages an alertness to performance as a physical encounter rather than an exclusively abstract arrangement of sounds.

The ensemble’s instrumentation strengthens this prospect. Flute, clarinet, bassoon, double bass, percussion, harp, electric guitar, piano and accordion accompany a vocal presence that includes Michalis Paraskakis, soprano Niki Lada, Kristia Michael and Elias Maniatopoulos. Saxophone, trombone and violin further extend the listed resources. These contrasting instrumental identities offer considerable possibilities for differentiation: not simply greater colour, but alternative relationships between breath, resonance, attack and sustained tone. Their actual balance, however, remains a matter for the performance itself.

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