

Overview of Miamon's Lyrids/Kyklos Violin Workshop

Hello everyone,

In the next few days, I'll make available the transcriptions for the two Greek island pieces we'll explore in the Zoom workshop. But before doing so, I'd like to provide a bit of context that hopefully will make the learning experience a bit more meaningful.

From a purely instrumental standpoint, the two syrtos have one important element in common: the traditional ensembles are string based. In the case of the Samothraki syrto, only two instruments are necessary: the violin plays the melody and the laouto provides both rhythmic and harmonic accompaniment. The traditional Zakynthian forces are a bit more complex because ideally there will be at least 3 instruments: a mandolin to play melody, a violin to play a 2nd melody (mostly a 3rd below the mandolin) and a guitar to play rhythmic and harmonic accompaniment.

For those of you who have played Greek music, whether from the mainland or islands, the Zakynthian piece is an anomaly for two reasons: the use of mandolins and the incorporation of a 2nd melody moving in parallel to the main melody primarily a 3rd below. Unlike so much of Greece that was historically influenced by the Ottomans, Zakynthos is in the Ionian Sea where for centuries Venice ruled the waves. Samothraki (Samothrace) is in the Aegean which up until two centuries ago had been ruled by the aforementioned Ottoman Turks.

I learned the Zakynthian piece about 35 or so years ago as part of a weekend workshop organized by Greek folk dancers in Los Angeles. They brought a dance teacher from that island and asked me to put together music (all on cassette) and musicians. In the intervening years, the cassette has long since disintegrated so the YouTube reference (graciously provided by Joe Graziosi) is as close to the transcription as we could have hoped for. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZKyM1KZdOME>

I transcribed the Samothraki syrto more recently (2013) when Lillian Vlandi was engaged to teach dance at Stockton. Lillian gave me a copy of the recording but because the cut was on her CD, I can't make it available for our use. However, once again Joe Graziosi has come to the rescue by finding two YouTube recordings that closely parallel the one used for the transcription.

"Platanisios" syrtos of Samothrakis with old-timer Kyriakos Stergiou

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tHNsPEUM5wM>

taverna dancing with live band including percussion

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EymaWhh0SKw>