

## Hellanion

**Stella Tsani (violin) - Elena Chounta (piano)**



**Subways Music/Eratio Odeon** in collaboration with the **Greek Composers Union** and its magazine "**Polytonon**" created "**Hellanion**", the first original album to be released free, before having first been circulated via record shops. "Hellanion" is offered for free together with issue #13 of "Polytonon".

In this, their second CD, Soloists **Stella Tsani** and **Elena Chounta** manage to fulfil their dream of making an album that covers, as far as possible, the musical moods of 20th c. Greek scholarly music.

Tendencies of the first half of the 20th c. are represented by the two main Greek composers of the period, **Nikos Skalkottas** (with his unique and demanding "Solo Violin Sonata") and **Manolis Kalomiris**, (with his masterpiece "Sonata for Violin and Piano") who lived parallel lives, but followed completely different musical routes. The former adopted the new musical trends of Central Europe, creating his own personal style, whereas the latter became the most important founder of the Greek National School, incorporating impressionistic and post-romantic elements.

**Theodore Antoniou** (to whose 70th birthday this CD is dedicated) is the person who, with his multi-talented creativity (as a conductor, composer, tutor and president of the GCU) and his international fame influenced all the big changes which took part in the second half of the 20th c. and is the artist who stands right between the old and new generation of composers. His wonderfully youthful "Sonatina for Violin and Piano" proves exactly that.

The new generation of composers is represented by two exceptionally creative and renowned members of the GCU, **Iakovos Konitopoulos**, whose activities mainly involve conducting, and **Leonidas Kanaris**, who is also known for his solo career as a guitarist. The colourful "Eroticon" of the former was picked for "Hellanion" as it expresses the more contemporary musical trends, whereas the atmospheric "Breakup Scene" of the latter represents the neoromantic-neotonic trends, as well as programmed music.

**Stella Tsani** and **Elena Chounta** dedicated themselves to finding the ideal performing style for each composer's work and worked closely with the living composers (Antoniou, Konitopoulos, Kanaris) both during rehearsals and recordings, which resulted in a CD of various different moods, yet with an overall homogenous feel and quality.

And an explanation: Hellanion is an ancient Greek word. It means Hellenic (Greek).

**Stella Tsani** started her musical studies at the age of 5. She tutored under great teachers, such as Robert Papavramis and Vangelis Papadimitriou, as well as soloist Tatsis Apostolidis, in whose class she studied with a scholarship of the Athens Conservatory, graduating with a "Unanimus Excellent" Mark and First Prize. Since then she has won awards, recorded for radio, television and albums, gave many solo and chamber music concerts and presented many works for the first time.

The last few years she has worked as a soloist for the Greek Composers Union and the Greek Ensemble of Contemporary Music under the directions of Theodore Antoniou, Gunther Schüller, Valery Oreshkin, Iakovos Konitopoulos and Michalis Oekonomou. Also, she spent 5 years as an exarch and soloist of the Paneuropean and Mediterranean Orchestra founded by the international cultural organisation ECUME.

On 7th March, 2006, she performed at the Athens Concert Hall (as a soloist with the Greek Ensemble of Contemporary Music under the directions of Theodore Antoniou) "A little Daneliade" for violin, string orchestra, piano and ad libitum percussion, by the great Georgian composer Giya Kancheli, in his presence.

As a soloist she has performed and toured in many countries, mainly in Southern Europe and the Mediterranean, appearing in many important places, such as the *Cairo Opera House*, the *Arabic Music Institute of Cairo*, the *Alexandria Opera House*, the *Alexandria Roman Theatre (Egypt)*, the *Jerash Roman Theatre*, the *Ancient Theatre of Amman (Jordan)*, the *Cultural Palace of Damascus*, the *Ancient Castle Theatre*, the *King Hall in Chaleb*, the *Azem Palace of Damascus*, the *National Museum of Tartus (Syria)*, the *Palace of Culture in Algiers (Algeria)*, the *Cathedral of St. Joseph in Beirut (Lebanon)*, the *Cathedral of St. Martin de Crau in Marseilles (France)* and the *Picadilly Theatre in London (UK)*, under the direction of important conductors such as Angelo Guarania, Solhi Al Vadi, Raad Khalaf, Amine Kouider, Guihad Daoud and others.

She is a founding member of the **Ellemis Piano quartet**, with which she has recorded her first album consisting of works by Johannes Brahms and Ernest Chausson, and which was released in 2004 and was highly acclaimed by the critics.

In November 2005 Subways Music/Eratio Odeon in collaboration with the Greek Composers Union released her CD entitled "**Hellanion**" where, with **Elena Chounta** on piano, she performs works by Skalkottas, Kalomiris, Antoniou, Konitopoulos and Kanaris.

She is also the first violin of the **L' Anima** string quartet, with which she has appeared - among others - at the Presidential Palace and the Maxim Mansion, invited by the Greek Presidency and Government respectively. The same quartet also appeared in April 2003 at the Attalus Arcade, during the ceremony of European Union expansion, in front of 25 leaders and delegations of all EU member-states, invited by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Greek Presidency of the EU.

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**Elena Chounta** was born in Athens. She started playing the piano at the age of five and studied at the Athenaeum Conservatory under Dora Bakopoulou. In 1994 she received her piano diploma, with "Excellent" marks and First Prize and she was awarded the Golden Medal of Athenaeum. She then followed piano perfection courses by internationally renowned professors, such as Lev Vlassenko, Gyorgy Sebok, Leon Fleisher and Vladimir Krainev. In 1995 she represented Greece at the Conferenza Musicale Mediterranea in Sicily, where she was awarded a scholarship. She also participated in artistic endeavours in Switzerland, within the "Gyorgy Sebok Masterclass- Ernen Musikdorf" context. Since then she has appeared as a soloist at the most well-known Greek concert halls (such as the Athens Concert Hall, the Athens College Theatre etc), participated in recitals and chamber music concerts in Greece and abroad and has performed as a soloist with Greek and international symphony orchestras.

She has had numerous collaborations concerning the chamber music genre, the most important being the founding of the **Ellemis Piano Quartet** in 2002. With Ellemis she has recorded her first CD, with works by Brahms and Chausson, which was published in 2004 by Subways Music/Eratio Odeon.

In November 2005 the same company, in collaboration with the Greek Composers Union, released her CD entitled "**Hellanion**" where, with **Stella Tsani** on violin, she performs works by Skalkottas, Kalomiris, Antoniou, Konitopoulos and Kanaris. Her recordings have been aired by television and radio on numerous occasions and she has performed works for the first time. She has also given concerts organised by the Greek Composers Union.

She has been noted for her talent in composition since a very young age. Her first appearance on a Greek television broadcast, performing her own music, occurred when she was only 11. She later took composition and orchestration courses under the Belgian composer and conductor Robert Janssens. Her works have been performed by Greek and international orchestras and choirs, by musical ensembles and chamber music groups, as well as renowned soloists. She is also heavily involved in teaching.