

CHAPTER 26

The Music, the Words, the Songs...

[Chapter 7 of the *Autobiography* of Markos Vamvakaris:]

That decade of the 1930s was a golden period for me. It was then that I was writing my best songs. My only big worry was the business with my first wife. It ate me up. But worry helps me in my work, because I write a bit better, a bit more easily, when I'm worried. And I was also continuously stoned, eh...?

When I used to get stoned on hashish, I had inspiration galore! No question! I was total inspiration. A lot of people used to come to see me, but I always wanted to be alone. Wherever I went, I always tried to be on my own, because either I had to write songs, or I had to hum a tune, eh...? I would sit myself down in some place, wherever I happened to end up, and I'd write.

I wrote the words first, in an exercise book – I always carried an exercise book with me – and I'd add the music later. I kept the music in my memory. These days I have my fellow-countryman Prokos, and that works well. He writes out the music for me. Prokos is a musician – I mean, he knows how to read and write music. From Syros. He came and found me and I tried to get him some work, to do something for him. In the meantime he works for other musicians, writing down their tunes and tidying them up. He also plays piano in the evenings, in the parks.

But at first, before I could get hold of someone who knew music, before I could show them how the tune went, I used to be scared of forgetting my tunes, because that's happened to a lot of my music, it just disappeared. The words I can write down, they don't disappear. But the tunes... there were some really nice tunes, I remember them... Or rather, I don't *remember* the tunes themselves, I just remember that I lost them...

Pictures, and words, and feelings, everything goes into words. That's the way it's been up till now. How can I describe the process? Maybe I go to bed, but then I find that I can't get to sleep straight away, because my mind's on the writing. Really stuck into the writing. But sometimes I make tunes in my sleep too, and as soon as I get up I take my instrument, my bouzouki, and I play it. I hear the tune like a song in my sleep. I dream the song while I'm asleep. And when I wake up I can hum it. And when I pick up the bouzouki, I get the tune straight away. It comes to me, you know what I mean? One time I wrote a couple of really tricky lines that way:

*Εγώ δεν είμαι ποιητής, τραγούδια να ταιριάζω
Και μου τα φέρνει ο αργιλές, και τα κατασκευάζω*

*I'm not a poet, for putting together songs;
It's the nargile that brings them, and I fit them togethr*

They come out ready-made, ready-made... I've never had to worry about writing a song, or about writing a tune. But when I'm a bit worried my mind works better. If I'm a bit worried about anything at all, the result comes out better... both the song and the music.

For me there's no problem, no difficulty in composing. I make a bit of music, and these days I have a tape recorder with me, so I can play it, and I write it down and record it. Done! And at the moment of recording it, I do it with made-up words. In other words, when I record it, it's not with the proper words. I sing whatever comes into my mind, so that I can see what kind of words fit with the song. "I love you...", "I like you...", "I miss you...", "I'm grieving for you...". Not the proper words. And later I write the proper words. The made-up words, I sing them so that I can get the metre, the metre for the song,

so that when I write the proper words I know what words to write. Measuring the words and the syllables. How many words in each line. Sometimes I record it with made-up words, and sometimes only the tune. I record it on tape, using made-up words with the proper tune. On another occasion, maybe it will be some time before I look at it again. Usually not a long time, but just what it needs. Later I listen to it, and think about it. What words does this song need? The ideas come to me, and I grab them and write them down.

Every now and then I hear a good *word*. Maybe you'll say something to me... or my wife, or some kid outside. Ah, I think, I should put that word into a song. For instance, yesterday I was sitting on my bed and I sang a bit which I didn't finish:

*Και με φιλιά και χάδια μου' χεις πληγώσει την ψυχή
Με τόσα πολλά ζαράρια...*

*And with kisses and caress you've wounded my soul
with so very many hardships*

I originally had *ρημάδια* [*rimadhia*], but I preferred *ζαράρια* [*zararia*]. It's a couplet, and I haven't finished it yet. There are all kinds of words that are good for songs, for instance *αγγελοκαμωμένη μου* and *λαμπαδοχότη μου*, in other words like the glass of a lamp...

Instruments

The bouzouki, and taxima, and its secrets, these aren't things that just anybody can know, not even if they're written in a book, because how's someone going to understand them without hearing how I'm going to play them for you now? But you can go ahead and write down whatever you understand. Anyone who has a bit of spirit (*μεράκι*) will understand, and everyone will see that this bouzouki, which the police hunted down for years – as if it was a crime – is a *big* thing... A big undertaking... It's not something that just *anybody* can pick up. I learned all these things from the old timers, in *tekkédhes* here and there, bit by bit, because I had a lot of *meráki*, and I spent a lot of time on the bouzouki. I sacrificed everything for this instrument. It ruled my life. But it also raised me up very high.

The bouzouki has its body (*σκάφος*), its front-plate (*καπάκι*), and its neck (*μάνικο*), which carries its frets (*τάστα*). This bit between the two frets does not have a name. At the top of the neck you have the turnkeys (*κλειδιά*) which carry the arrangement of strings (*κορδατούρα*), in other words the strings (*τέλια*) of the bouzouki.

To this day no instrument-maker has been found who can make a proper bouzouki, because they're not able to make the half-notes, and the half of the half, and the half of that half, so as to get the whole thing right, so that the *tachéra* (*ταχέρα*) or *scale* (*klímaka*) is correct. Out of all the instrument-makers, from the best to the worst, nobody has yet been found who can make the perfect bouzouki. Not one. This – this shortcoming – is something that I hear when I listen. Really. No matter how much you tune it, you can't get the right tuning out of it.

There are some bouzoukis that sell for 450 drachmas, and some that sell for 15,000 or 20,000 drachmas, but if the maker is good the only difference between these bouzoukis is how nice they look, with the various decorations that they put on them.

Q. Kyrie Markos, do you think that the bouzouki developed from the saz?

A. I don't know about all that. The saz is one thing and the bouzouki is another.

Q. Have you ever played a saz?

A. I've only *seen* one. I've never heard one. Only saw it. I went up to a man who was holding an instrument, and it turned out to be a saz. So now I would recognise it if I saw one.

Q. Kyrie Markos, are the fretting intervals (*διαστήματα*) the same on a bouzouki as on a laouto?

A. That's something I don't know, because I'm not a musical expert (*μουσικός*).

Q. Or are they like a guitar?

A. The guitar has one tuning, and the laouto another, and the bouzouki another, and the mandolin another.

Q. These frets, would you say that previously – during your lifetime, I mean – they had different intervals to what they have now?

A. No. The same.

Q. But were the intervals maybe smaller, or bigger?

A. That I can't say.

Q. When you came to Piraeus, were there bouzoukis without frets?

A. No.

Q. Has the bouzouki changed any of its basics, in the time that you've known it?

A. No. It's the same.

Q. Do you maybe know anyone who has a bouzouki that is different, as regards its intervals?

A. No – I've never seen anything like that in my life. I mean, never. But I've never travelled abroad, for instance to China, India, Egypt. I've not travelled, I've not seen, that's not something I can know.

Q. Do they have bouzoukis in those countries?

A. How can they *not* have? They surely have them, but I've never seen or heard them.

Q. OK. The bouzouki – in the old days – what strings did they have?

A. The same that they have now.

Q. And what are these strings?

A. Thin strings. I can't say what they are.

Q. The same as a guitar?

A. Guitar strings are a bit thicker.

Q. The same as a laóuto?

A. I have the impression that laóuto strings are like bouzouki strings, but there are more of them.

Q. Kyrie Marko, nowadays you can get strings for the bouzouki. But in the days before there were a lot of bouzoukis around, where did you get your strings?

A. I fitted out my regular bouzoukis with strings that came in little reels, thin wire, that were for bouzouki. I'd buy a reel for the job, and for the D-string I'd take a big string from here, a D-string for a guitar, and I'd put it here for the *bourgána* (*μουργάνα*), the last string, the bottom one. To fit it out (*να το αρματώσω*), in other words, to string it. The first ones, the E-strings, are thinner, both of them the same. These are the treble strings (*πρίμα*) of the bouzouki. The middle strings, a little fatter, and the two of them are the same size. I don't know their technical name. And the next string is thin, the same as the top strings (the E-strings), and then comes the thicker *bourgana* – in other words, the D-string of the guitar.

Q. So what is the tuning for a four-string bouzouki?

A. They have a C too. I've not used one myself. My boy Domenikos knows how to play them, D – A – D – C. The C is the lower string, so to speak. They put the same strings on. I

don't know how the boy fits them.

Q. Who discovered the 4-string bouzouki?

A. I don't know... was it discovered...? It wasn't a matter of someone new discovering it, because Manetas whom I was telling you that I'd heard, he played a four-course bouzouki. And someone else – Giorgos Skourtis, a printer in Athens, who's dead now – he was playing a four-course bouzouki in 1937-8. Other people probably played them too. Manetas played in the European style. He played with other instruments. He was European – in other words he plays waltzes, foxtrots, tangos, that kind of thing. That was what he played. He didn't play *laiká*.

Q. At what point were gut frets replaced with metal frets?

A. This was just a few years ago, when they started, and the bouzouki was making a bit of headway, and the instrument makers started making them better, and they stopped using gut frets and started using the metal frets that they use now. In other words, from the 1930s onwards. The bouzoukis that I used when I was playing for the record companies, they all had frets, but not of gut... of metal. [...]

And the friction pegs here, the wooden ones that you turned were replaced, again in the 1930s, when the bouzoukis started to make headway. But in Syros when I was a boy, I remember that they used friction pegs. For example, there was one man who played there, Stravogiorgis (Cross-eyed George), and a certain Maoutsos, and Manolis Stratodesiou, I recall them playing with friction pegs. *Tsivoúria*, they were called. Those men – Maoutsos, Stravogiorgis and “Three-and-a-half” (Trisimisis) – were old-style bouzouki players. They played, they had a group, they had another person playing *pagnáli*, which is a reed with 5-6 holes down below. They played various *syrtá* and *kalamatianá*, but no big stuff. They went round the tavernas, like I too used to go with my father, with the *dárbuka*. Some of them sang and some didn't.

In prison you used to have the prisoners making bouzoukis. Both for their own use, and also to sell, so's they could buy cigarettes, because they were in prison... They didn't only make bouzoukis, they made other instruments as well. They had the ability and they had the tools.

In the prisons the bouzoukis that they made were *carved*. These were the *gónata*. *Gónata* came from inside the prisons. The *gónata* are made from mulberry wood, the best wood.

Q. What were the names of the people that you know who made bouzoukis, and where was each of them from?

A. First I knew a fellow-countryman from Syros, who had done 20 years in prison. His name was Konstantis Délis. He made the best bouzoukis in these parts. He was an ace with bouzoukis. People are still buying the bouzoukis that he made, like they're Stradivarius violins. He made *gónata*, but also glued-wood bouzoukis. There were a lot of others too who made instruments, both guitars and bouzoukis. Anyway, when Délis came out of prison, I met him here in Piraeus in about 1930. When Délis got out of prison, he set up in Karaiskaki, in the square, where the hustlers were, and the prostitutes... don't even ask... He had a small shop, very small, and he started making instruments. He took on a young boy – Zozéf – as a helper. And he started teaching him, and telling him the secrets of his trade. And that went on for five or ten years, and then he died, and what was left was the skill which that same Zozéf now has. That's where the best bouzouki players go and order their bouzoukis, and the most expensive ones. Fine bouzoukis. A very fine craftsman, in other words. I have bouzoukis made by him, and my children have Zozéf bouzoukis too.

I had many bouzoukis made by Délis – I had them but I sold them. In the days when I was teaching bouzouki, people would come here. “Will you teach me bouzouki?” “Yes, I'll teach you.” “I need to buy a bouzouki.” “I've got a bouzouki for you.” I'd sell them, and get another one for myself. I didn't keep them. Now its been five or six years since I stopped, I don't buy them any more, because I bought a piece of mulberry wood from a

Turkish mosque. I brought it from Andros, where I went and played one time. I saw a woman there, and she was cutting some every day and taking it. I asked her: “What’s that?” She told me it was from a mosque. A big piece, very big. I’d say it was ten, maybe fifteen metres long. It was useful wood, thousands of years old. These bouzoukis here, the red ones, their wood is very old. Black mulberry. The older the wood is, the better it is. And after some hard bargaining I got a piece from her, and when I came here I made six bouzoukis from it... six. One was made for me by Zozéf, another by Grigóris. Grigóris – he was from Asia Minor too.

There are a lot of people making bouzouikis. There’s another one, an Armenian. Later I knew another one, here in the Chiotika of Piraeus, who had two boys, and they learned the trade. I’ve forgotten their names. They were from the Dodecanese, but from Asia Minor. They made bouzoukis and guitars. Good craftsmen. But they couldn’t touch Délis. And in Athens there were three or four who were making bouzoukis. The same makers made baglamádhēs as well, but mostly those were made by convicts in prison – carved – and they last for many years.

The douzénia

These tunings that I’m going to play for you now, not even all the good bouzouki-players know them. I told you that the ones I’m going to play, my brother (who is in America) knows them, and my children, too, because I’m teaching them at the moment, and Keromýtis, who knows them from his father, because he knew them and he taught him. Those are the people who know these things. But the others, when you tell them the tunings you want, and you ask them to play, they don’t know how to play.

I learned them from a variety of old bouzouki players who were playing in those years, because those people didn’t know how to play European-style, so this was the way they played, with these *douzénia*. In Piraeus I learned from Mimikos the Painter, and Yannis Four-Eyes (Yialias), and Cross-Eyed George (Stravogiorgis), and Manolako Three-and-a-half (Trisimisi), from various bouzouki players... the ones I referred to earlier... They played bouzouki, and of course they didn’t have metal tuning pegs but wooden ones. And instead of metal frets they had gut. That had gone by the time I came along. But I know about this stuff from my home town, where they used to call them *tsivoúria* [τσιβούρια]. By the time I started playing they were bouzoukis.

These *douzénia* [tunings] were played by the old bouzouki players. It was with those *douzénia* that I started when I began learning – the European scales were introduced later. From the time when I started, when I set hand on a bouzouki, they started with the European scales. Maybe it was a bit earlier, maybe in 1925 or 1920, because there were two of them. One of them was Manétas, the other was Zoumaítis, both of them played in the European style. Later all the bouzouki players started doing it, playing with the European tunings. As I told you, they don’t know the other *douzénia*. None of them. These were for the baglamá. *Baglamádouzénia* [μπαγλαμαδοζένια]. And the baglamádhēs that they have nowadays, they’re not really baglamádhēs, they’re half-bouzoukis. Baglamádhēs were the little ones, the *tzourádhēs* [τζουράδες] which I play, the *tzourá* with three strings and with seven *μπερτέδες*, and a small body, like the ladles that you use for lentils.

The first tuning I shall play open. In open tuning we play, for instance:

*Που 'σουν μάγκα το χειμόνα, βρε
Και το καλοκαίρι ακόμα.
Ήμουν βασιλιάς στα βράχια, βρε,
Στις δροσιές και στα ρουμάνια.*

That was *yiouroukiko* [γιουρούκικο] tuning. So we did the *taxim* on open strings.

The second *douzéni* is what is known as the *karadouzéni* [καραντουζένι], in which we play:

Σα πας Μαρούσα για νερό
Εγώ στη βρύση καρτερώ
Να σου τσακίσω το σταμνί
Να πας στη μάνα σ' αδειανή
Νε σε μαλώσ' η μάνα σου
Μαρίτσα που 'ναι η στάμνα σου.

That was *karadouzeni* tuning. It has a road [maqam, *δρόμος*] but I'm not a musician to be able to tell you what *tónos* [key, *τόνος*] it's in. I can't play another maqam in *karadouzeni*. Another song in *karadouzeni* is:

Είχα δέκα τάλιρα και τὰ 'παιξα στο ζάρι,
Φράγκο δεν μου έμεινε να πάρω ενα ντουμάνι.

A third one is the *syrianó*, a heavy *zeibékiko*. For instance:

Χήρα μαυροφορεμένη, βρε,
Την καρδιά μου πως κραδαίνεις, βρε,
Την καρδιά μου πως μαραίνεις, βρε,
Χήρα μαυροφορεμένη.
Χήρα με τα μάυρα μάτια, βρε,
Την καρδιά μ' έχεις κομμιάτια.

Another one in *syrianó douzéní* and again a *yiouroúkiko zeibékiko*, is the:

Μάυρα μάτια και μεγάλα, βρε,
Ζυμωμένα με το γάλα.

A fourth is the *arabién* [*αραμπιέν*] tuning. Here it plays *huzám* [*χουζάμ*]. For example the *zeibékiko* dance, the *yiouroúkiko*:

Αχ βρε Μάρκο μου στουρνάρι
Ποιά κοπέλα θα σε πάρει.
Έρχομαι μέσα στον κήπο, βρε,
Δεν μπορώ να σε πετύχω.

Yiouroúkiko means *yiouroúkiko zeibékiko*, you see, there is no *yiouroúkiko taxim*. In all these *douzénia* the *yiouroúkiko* is also playing. It's a *zeibékiko* tune. For instance:

Τα ματόκλαδα σου λάμπουν, βρε,
Σαν τα λούλουδα το κάμπου.

You tune the bouzouki differently. From the way it's tuned in the European way, I take it and I bring down both the higher D and the middle one, I bring them down and I get it so that all three strings are playing in the *mástori* [*μάστορη*], in the first *mástori*. And I play *yiouroukiko*, in other words heavy *zeibékiko*. All these things that are called *yiouroukika*, *aptálíka*, *kotsékíka* [*κωτσέκικα*] are all *zeibékíka*. The *kotsékíka* needs another tuning, separate from the *yiouroúkíka*. The *aptálíko* is another [...]. It doesn't need a different tuning. The *aptálíko* is based on the rhythm, but it'll be a *zeibékíko*. The *yiouroúkíka zeibékíka* are danced with the same *tónos*. As I said, the one is the same as *zeibékíko*, the other is, so to speak, a little [...], with more *peniés* [*πενιές*] but the same. The *yiouroúkíka* are tunes which are usually played with the bouzouki and the baglamá. And more played with the baglamá. In fact, these days, those four-chord bouzoukis can't play these tunes, only the three-course bouzouki and the baglamá can.

Q. OK, now in the European style you can play a lot of roads, and *taxims*. Are all these *taxims* played in the *yiouroúkiko* tuning?

A. No. And if it was to be so played, it would be wrong.

Q. What is heavy *zeibékíko*?

A. It's tastier, it's far more handsome, and people like it better.

Q. Can *hasápika* be heavy too?

A. Of course. A heavy *hasápiko* would be, for instance, *Φραγκοσυριανή* [“Frankosyrianí”] or *Μ’έκαψες τσαχπίνα μου ωραία* [“Μ’έκαψες tsachpína mou oraía”] or *Κάθε βράδυ θα σε περιμένω* [“Káthe vrádhī tha se periméno”].

Q. But can there also be a heavy *hasaposérviko*?

A. No. And an *amanés* [αμανές] cannot be heavy either.

Q. But there can be a heavy *tsiftetéli*?

A. Of course. But I can’t give you a picture of these *tsiftetélia* because that’s not my kind of work, and I don’t know them in the way somebody specialised in *tsiftetélia* would know them.

The specialist instruments for *tsiftetélia* are the violins, and the uds. Nowadays the bouzoukis play *tsiftetélia*, but not like the violins played them. The *tsiftetéli* is for the violin. And now there are bouzouki players that play them, but they can’t get that caprice that the violin players have, the playfulness, the sweetness, and all that. The fifth one is the *rast douzénī*.

Q. So are *douzénia* and roads (*dhrómi*) the same thing?

A. No. The *douzénī* is a tuning, the modes are what you play. There’s also the *rast* mode.

Q. For instance, in the *arabién douzénī*, are you able to play all the modes? Can you play *hijaz*, and *ousak*, etc?

A. No. For that, you’d play *huzam*, which is its mode.

Q. So each tuning has its own mode?

A. What have I been telling you... they don’t know how to play these things nowadays? But even I have now forgotten the *rast douzénī*. I’ve forgotten it! I don’t use these things any more now. Will you believe me if I say that I haven’t picked up a baglamá for 20 years? And what baglamá I used to play, what baglamá...! Who could touch me when I picked up the baglamá! I’d tune the baglamá, and I’d start with my hand, and what did I play? What did I play? I don’t even know myself. I made the baglamá like it was a whole piano. And I had serious fingernails too. I played with my nails, I didn’t use a plectrum with the baglamá. These things aren’t baglamádhēs. Baglamá was with seven frets, *berdédhes*. And with those seven *berdédhes* you could play all the solos, whatever you wanted to play. But the players nowadays, they have the scale, and up there. You think that they’re playing baglamá? The baglamá was played with the fingernail. And there were people who were a lot better than me. There was one man, Andrikákis, in Syros. When he picked up the baglamá, it was amazing what he played. They had three strings, the baglamá was fitted with thin strings like this, and with wooden tuning pegs.

Those were the *taxims*, and the *douzénia*... things that they don’t know about these days.

And now we have the European tuning too, the D-A-D. That started with the piano. The bouzouki took the D of the piano and played with the piano’s D. From the time when the new bouzoukis came on the scene – for instance from the time when I started playing – I also tried tuning to the piano, so that it could accompany me, regular-style. In other words, when I began with the bouzouki, they used to be playing those baglamá *douzénia* that I was talking about, and later I learned from a man called Manétas, who tuned his bouzouki D-A-D. Where did he learn that? I have no idea. But he played more in the European style than *laiká*. And Batis always tuned his baglamá D-A-D. But as I told you, the baglamá that they play nowadays isn’t a baglamá – it’s a half-bouzouki.

As I said, the baglamádhēs in those days were with seven *berdédhes*. They were *tzourádhes*. They were not tuned D-A-D. The same way that I now tune my bouzouki with an open tuning, that’s how they were tuned, with open tuning. *Karadouzénia*, *syrianá*,

arabién. They tuned *baglamádhodouzénia*, which the bouzouki players who have played up until now have not been able to master. Few, only a very few, are those who have learned that tuning. They are: my brother, my children (whom I'm teaching at the moment) and Keromytis. They all know these things. But the new players who've come onto the scene, they don't know these things.

I think that the D-A-D started with those who were playing in groups with a piano. When we went in a company that didn't have a piano, there was a santouri. We tuned D-A-D with the santouri. The regular tuning, European. I'd ask the santouri player to give me a D with his santouri. He'd give me a D and I'd tune to that, European-style, and we'd play. All those instruments had the same D-A-D. When I played with a guitar, we took the D from the guitar.

Q. Who discovered this tuning?

A. Well, I suppose there must have been someone who thought up that D-A-D tuning, but I never knew who it was. There must have been someone who did that. And for sure he must have been a musical expert (*μουσικός*), in other words able to read music, and write it.

Q. Kyrie Marko, can you play *primo-secondo* [in thirds] with the old *douzénia*?

A. No, they can only do accompaniment.

Q. How do you mean?

A. We play open, down below, eh? You'll accompany in the *mástora* [*μάστορα*], there where its tuned, in the same tuning. But – now listen to what I'm saying – it may be that on these down below the other one doesn't accompany... but the others, the santouri and so on, they accompany. They find which *tónos* it is. For instance, there with the open tuning it's G. Accompaniment in G. These are low *douzénia*. But it's not real *primo-secondo*.

The *primo-secondo* has always been mostly the *mandolinádas*. Now, me, I've never done that in my life, I've never played with that kind of thing, not since 30-40 years ago. I used to hear *primo-secondo* from guitars, but not from other instruments. Nowadays other instruments also play *primo-secondo*, for instance violins and the bouzouki. And from the time when I started playing bouzouki, we played *primo-secondo*. In fact the guitars played with the bouzoukis from way back. Two bouzoukis couldn't play together. To accompany the bouzouki in E. When they had the baglamá as well, then the same thing happened, baglamá, guitar and bouzouki. Myself, rather than having a baglamá playing, to have the baglamá keeping the accompaniment, it's better to have the guitar, to have a proper accompaniment from the guitar. That's the way I prefer it.

When I first started playing I had the baglamá with the bouzouki, and a little string of worry beads. These beads I had here, on the button of my waistcoat, and I kept the rhythm using a glass. The glass hit on the beads. One person would do that. When I went round with the bouzouki here and there, before I started making records, I'd go and find someone who played guitar, and I'd tell him: "Sit down so's we can play a little." And he would accompany me on the guitar. Any of my friends would do, and his job would be to do the *mandolinádha*, so to speak.

Modes and *taxímia*

So now let's move on to the European tuning. The open strings play D-A-D, and with that tuning we play all the modes [*δρόμους*], the modes of *sabach*, *nihavent*, *hijaz*, *huzam*, *kiourdi*, *piraiotiko* (which is a bit like *hijaz*).

Q. What's the difference with *hijaz*?

A. Just a bit. These things, you'd have to be a musical expert to explain them. I can't tell you what *hijaz* does, and what *piraiótiko* does. My son Domenico, who goes to the Odeion [music academy] knows these things, but Stelios doesn't. Another mode is *rast*, and there's *hijazkiar*, and *usak*. There are various other modes too, but I don't know what they are. I

don't remember.

Q. Are you familiar with *husseini*?

A. I know it, I've heard it. I don't remember it though, I don't know if its major or minor. It's probably like *piraiótiko* – major.

Q. And what about *set arabién*?

A. I've heard it, I know it. The late lamented Karípis taught me. I don't know how to play it. I couldn't play it.

Q. And *nevá*?

A. Yes, I've heard that too, but I haven't played it. Samiotakis sang in that many times. The others, the older players who were older* than me, they used to say "Give us a *nevá*. I've heard it, but I wouldn't know it to sing it.

Q. And *siúrf hijazkiar*?

A. I've heard it. Certainly. Peristeris used to play it... a lot of people did. In fact I have songs in *siúrf hijazkiar*. I don't remember it at all now, though. I wrote songs before the war, which I put out on records. I wrote songs in *siúrf hijazkiar*. Maybe they're still around, and if I were to hear them I would remember. I haven't learned other modes. I know most of the modes. Other bouzouki players don't know them. These modes, there's about 60-70 of them, these are Turkish things, or Egyptian.

Anyway, as for myself, most of mine are in *nihavent*. A fine mode. All the modes are fine, but, I don't know... this one somehow fits with my voice. For me none of the modes is difficult, but this one, the *nihavent*, is better and sweeter. Kiourdi isn't ugly either. A nice thing. The song *Τα ζηλιάρικα σου μάτια* ["*Ta ziliárika sou mátia*"] which I wrote in around 1930 was in *nihavent*.

1. Τα ζηλιάρικα σου μάτια μ' έχουνε τρελλάνει ["*Ta ziliárika sou mátia*"]

*Τα ζηλιάρικα σου μάτια μ' έχουνε τρελλάνει.
Δε λογάριασα παλάτια σκλάβο μ' έχουν κάνει.
Μαραζώνω σαν το κεράκι λυώνω
Με παιδεύεις γιατί δεν μ' αγαπάς.*

[Complete song]

Most of my *hasápika* are in *nihavent*. That's the mode that fits my voice, and I used it when I sang. Other singers, maybe I wrote the piece, and they would sing it in another scale. Instead of *nihavent* they would sing it in D minor, or F, or C minor. My voice is best suited for singing in D. When I first started out, all my songs were sung in D – D minor for the *hasápika* and D major for the *zeibekika*. They were a bit [?shrill], but with the passing of time the note came down and I ended up in Bminor, which was where I sang most comfortably. I also sang in different scales, [?no problem]. There may be a song which can't be sung in D minor, nor in B minor. I'll sing it in C minor. Like when I sing "*Αχ, κακούργα, πόσο με πληγώνεις*" ["*Ach, kakourgha, póso me pligóneis*"]. I've sung that in C minor.

None of the singers who followed me, still none of them can replace me. Eustathiou went to do something, but he couldn't, because I go right up there, high, in a high voice. I go up, up, and then I suddenly come straight down again, bass, real bass.

Of the *maqams*, the *nihavent*, *sabah*, *kiourdi* and *ousak* are minor. *Hijaz*, *houzam*, *piraiotikos*, *rast* and *hijazkiar* are major. The same with the songs that we play, someone takes a violin, or whatever instrument he plays, and he'll say we'll play a song, let's go. And he starts. And he knows whether it is going to be minor or major, he knows it from the song, from the tune. Now listen to this: there are some songs that are major. But in the *maqam* of the song it also has minor in it. And we play it. It's mixed.

Q. The *taxima*, the maqams, what role do they play in the creation of the music?

A. For example this one here is *nihavent*. It starts with a *taxim* in *nihavent*. The *taxim* is the start of the piece. The violin starts in and it plays in the maqam *nihavent*.

Q. Are the *taxim* and the maqam the same thing?

A. Each maqam – *nihavent*, *rast*, *hijaz* etc – has its own *taxim*. And once you've played the *taxim*, that's it – finished. But the maqam is the mode of the piece.

Q. Isn't the *taxim* influenced by the song which you play after it?

A. Of course, the *taxim* is influenced by the tune of the song that is about to follow. For example, if I'm going to play "Frankosyriani", the song will influence the *taxim*. You hear, it's in *nihavent*.

Q. Supposing that you started "Frankosyriani" with a different *nihavent*?

A. There is no different *nihavent*. There's only one *nihavent*.

Q. Alright, let's take "Frankosyriani" and "Ta matokladhá sou lámboun". Both of them are in *nihavent* maqam. First you start with the *taxim*, and then you sing "Frankosyriani". Then you play "Ta matokladhá sou lámboun" – but first you play the *taxim*. Will the *taxim* be the same?

A. The same and unchanged. In no respect does it change. It will only change if it is in 9/8 or 2/4 (2/4 is the *hasápika* and 9/8 is the *zeibekika*).

Q. Are there some maqams that fit better with *hasápika* and others for *zeibékika*?

A. No, they're the same. In *hijaz* you can do *hasápiko*, but you can also do *zeibékiko*. In *nihavent*, both *hasápiko* and *zeibékiko*. The same with all the maqams.

The songs

Anyway, ever since I started playing the instrument, I've always been writing songs, all the time. And even now, when I'm sick and old, that's what I busy myself with. But during those ten years, between 1930 and 1940, I was writing all the time, and I was writing for the record companies too. I had a lot of hits. I had the mania for it in those days, and I would sit and write. But since then another thing has taken me over – I want to write stories, and books, and to write my autobiography, which I have started. And later I wrote *Ο κατάδικος ευεργέτης* ["The Benefactor Condemned", "Ο Κατάδικος ευεργέτης"], a novel.

Up to this point, most of the songs that I have referred to in this book, my story, were written more or less during those ten years. Now I shall sing as many of them as I can remember, because, like I say, there were a lot of them, really a lot, and I've forgotten a lot of them by now. But anyway, I'll sing the ones that I remember:

2. Δεν θέλω πλούτη και λεφτά ["Dhen thélo ploúti kai leftá"]

*Δεν θέλω πλούτη και λεφτά, μόνο σε, κυρά μου,
να σε κοιμίζω με φιλιά μες την θερμή αγκαλιά μου.
Να σ' έχω στο κονάκι μου λουλούδι στην αυλή μου,
στολίδι να 'σαι μοναχό στο δόλιο το τσαρδί μου.
Να παίζω το μπουζούκι μου για σε να τραγουδάω
και τη μποέμικη ζωή μαζί σου να περνάω.
Dhen thélo ploúti kai leftá*

*I don't want riches and money, I just want you, my lady,
to lay you down, with kisses, in the warmth of my arms.
To have you in my house, the flower in my garden.
You will be the only ornament in my poor home.*

The music, the words, the songs...

*I'll play my bouzouki, and sing for you
and together with you I'll live the life of a bohemian.*

That song was sung by Strátos Payoumtzís. The maqam is *hijazkiar*. The bohemian life is the street life, in other words, dancing, having fun, all that. But first a man earns his money, and only then does he lead the bohemian life, because if he doesn't work, how can he do it? By working he gets the money etc, to be able to live that kind of life.

3. Μ' έκαψες, τσαχπίνα μου ωραία ["M' έkapses, tsachpína mou oraía"]

*M' έκαψες, τσαχπίνα μου ωραία,
μ' έκαψες τσαχπίνα μου τρελλή,
μ' έκαψες και λυώνω ολόενα
με τ' ολογλυκό σου το φιλί.
Με τα ολόξανθα μαλλιά σου, φως μου,
τσαχπίνα μου ' χεις κάψει την καρδιά
μ' έκαψες κι ενα φιλάκι δως μου
θέλω απο σε παρηγοριά.
Εσένα αγαπώ τρελλή ζανθιά μου,
έλα στη δική μου αγκαλιά,
έλα να μου γιάνεις την καρδιά μου
με τα ολόγλυκά σου τα φιλιά.
Σ' έχω μεσ' στο νου μου όλη μέρα
τσαχπίνα μου το ξέρεις πως πονώ,
έλα για να πάρει ο νους μου αγέρα
με το γλυκό φιλί σου το στερνό.*

*You burned me up, my beautiful tsachpína,
You burned me up, my crazy tsachpína,
You burned me and I'm melting all the time
with your sweet kiss.
With your blond hair, my lightness,
my beautiful tsachpína, you've burned my heart
You burned me up, so give me a little kiss.
That will be a consolation for me.
I love you my crazy blond girl.
Come to my arms.
Come to heal my heart
with your sweet kisses.
You are on my mind all day long,
my beautiful tsachpína, and you know how much pain I'm in.
Come to me, to give my mind a breath of air,
with your last sweet kiss.*

I wrote that one in 1936, and I recorded it with Odeon. And now it's been reissued by Music Box with the twelve songs, with me singing again. Anyway, as to what the song is about, it happened that I knew a woman who was a prostitute, Marika was her name, with blond hair, a good-looking woman, and she loved me, but later she had a cousin of mine, and her love was hidden. She was in a brothel, you went in and you gave 25 drachmas and you screwed her. I kept my distance from my relation, but we were friends, not in a bad sense, eh? Anyway, she used to go out with her friend, and me as well. Anyway, one fine day my friend goes and dies. So that's where I come into the picture. We used to go round the *tekkédhes* together. We both smoked – both her and me. She liked the hashish. She liked my company a lot, you can't imagine... I loved her and she loved me, and almost all the *manghes* of Piraeus knew her and looked after her, because she was a generous woman. She'd go into a *tekké*, and she'd say to the *tekketzís*, "Give the lads a smoke," and she would pay. A good woman.

How did it happen that such a fine woman fell so low? Does it take a lot for a good woman to become bad? It takes a lot. One time she told me that she had a mother who was her step-mother. Her own mother had died, her father had died, and she was left with the step-mother. But the step-mother had other children, and she looked after her own children. She didn't care about the woman. To such an extent that she was obliged to take the first man she set eyes on. She told me that this was all because of her step-mother. She was from Kaminia in Piraeus. I stayed with Marika for 5-6-7 months. Then one day she told me: "I'm getting married, Markos." I told her, "Go ahead and marry, Marika." What was I supposed to say? "What are you waiting for, go ahead." And she got married, to a man from Thebes. And then the years passed, maybe seven or eight years, and I'd forgotten her, and it happened that I went to Thebes to play. Anyway, when I arrived there she came to find me. And I tried to avoid her. She was married there, so I had no business with her... But she invited me. "Come to my house... I've separated from my husband." So I went to her house, and she told me this and that, about her husband, and how he had left her. A lot of things. Anyway, after that I didn't see her again. Whether she's still alive, still there in Thebes, I have no idea. And so I wrote that song, wrote it for her.

There some people in this world who are so pitiful and mean-minded that they like to ruin women. Like I told you, all the women I have had relationships with, I have looked after them and loved them, never beat them, never spoken badly of them, I treated them with respect. But I always felt sorry for those women, and still do, right up till today. But the one who really was a whore, that was my first wife. She shouldn't have treated me the way that she did. Because, OK, at first we were poor, but afterwards why didn't she see the light? Didn't I look after her? When I first took her, I was poor, but we were like honey and sugar. I was working in the slaughter-houses, and I made sure that she had decent clothes and enough to eat, because I had good parents. I had my father, who, if I wasn't working, because of my bouzouki, my father would sort things out for us, so that neither she nor I went hungry. But my father told me that he and my mother were worried. My mother was a sharp woman, and she understood my wife. So anyway, as long as we were poor she was OK, she wasn't worried about me working with the guts etc. But as soon as they started calling me in and I started making records, and I was starting to make money, and bought her shoes, and dresses, and crosses, and rings, and bracelets, and beads, and all that, then she decided that she wanted to go and find someone else to fuck. Was that my fault? I was making loads of money, I was sitting pretty with 2-3 thousand drachmas coming in every month, and they were making me two or three suits a year, and a new overcoat every year, and I was very happy with things. Didn't she see that our life had changed, and I was making money? She was living on big money now. So why did the woman have to go and do that to me? To go and take someone she thought was better than me, more good looking... what a load of shit...! I was a handsome lad, you know – I had a lot of women running after me. She shouldn't have done it. But she was a very bad woman, a piece of shit...

Because the man she went after, he was an idiot and a half, an idiot and nothing more. A mess. He pretended to be a *mangas* but he was a fake *mangas*. You'll say that I'm just putting him down. No, I'm telling you the simple truth. He wasn't the man for that kind of woman. She did some pretty terrible things to him, too. Supposing she didn't get what she wanted from him – then she'd go to someone else... She was just using him as a cover.

Was I at fault in any of this? The truth is, I did my best to set her up as a lady. I mean, by now she would have been Mrs Vamvakaris, just as my present wife, my real wife, is now. Now, when she sees my wife she gets the creeps. But what can she say against me? Myself, I'm old now, so what the hell... But I worry about my wife. My wife sees her around and she worries about her. Later the woman sees the kids that I've had, and she gets angry. Forget it, bitch... I had you for so many years...

Do you know how many spells she used to put on me, slipping them under my door? And let me tell you, it's still going on today. Spells so that Vangelió will die, endless death curses, one after the other... a lot of things... And if she saw Vangelió out in the street, she

would turn and go the other way. By now she's a woman seventy years of age. But in those days she was beautiful, and I loved her – she'd taken my heart.

4. Χαράματα, η ώρα τρεις... ["Charámata, i óra treis..."]

*Χαράματα, η ώρα τρεις, θα 'ρθω να σε ξυπνήσω
κρυφά 'πο τη μανούλα σου, να σε χαρώ, να βγεις να σου μιλήσω
Δε θα μας δει άλλος κανείς, μονο το φεγγαράκι
έβγα στο παραθύρι σου, να σε χαρώ, για να σε δω λιγάκι.
Τη μυστική αγάπη μας μην τηνε φανερώσεις,
ο, τι και να σου κάνουνε, να σε χαρώ, να μην τηνε προδώσεις*

*At dawn, at three in the morning, I shall come and wake you.
Secretly, so that your mother doesn't know. To enjoy you,
so's you can come out and we can talk together.
Nobody else will see us, only the moon.
Come to your window, so's I can enjoy you, so's I can see you for a bit.
Don't tell anyone about our secret love,
Whatever they do to you, so that I can enjoy you – don't betray our secret.*

That's a good song. I recorded it with Odeon. It's a fine *hasápiko*. A handsome song. Refined... but I wrote that song for that cheap slut – like I told you, in the old days I used to go and knock on her window, the whore, so that I could see her. You might be wondering what that was all about... Well, that was how my fancy took me.** I wrote one other song for the woman too – *Τα μπλε σου παράθυρα* ["Ta blé sou paráthyra"], but apart from that I never wrote anything else for her, nothing... Why should I write anything that made her look good...?

5. Εγώ για σε, βρε πονηρή... ["Egó yia se, vre ponirí..."]

*Εγώ για σε, βρε πονηρή, θα πάω να μαστουριάσω,
μες' στο δικό σου μαχαλά με όλους θα μαλώσω.
Επτά η ώρα μου 'χες πει για να σε περιμένο,
ψεύτρα γιατί με γέλασες δε σε καταλαβαίνω.
Μέσα στη συνοικία σου με όλους θα μαλώσω,
κι απο το σόι που 'μπλεξα γρήγορα θα γλυτώσω.
Μ' έμπλεξες συ κι η μάνα σου γιατί 'χα παραδάκια
Σκύλα πως με κατάστρεψες, με πότισες φαρμάκια*

*I'm going out to get smashed, and all because of you, you sly bitch.
I'm going to come and pick fights with the people in your neighbourhood.
You told me that you'd meet me at seven –
Why did you trick me, you liar, I don't understand.
I'm going to start a row with everyone in your neighbourhood.
And I'm gonna get shot of your family, 'cos they've only caused me trouble.
You conned me, you and your mother, 'cos I had loads of money
You destroyed me, bitch, and you poisoned my life...*

That one came out before the War, with different words, but I had to change it straight away, because it wouldn't have got through the censorship otherwise. It went:

6. Θέλω να γίνω ίσχυρος ωσάν το Μουσολίνι ["Thélo na gíno íschyros"]

*Θέλω να γίνω ίσχυρος ωσάν το Μουσολίνι
ωσάν τον Χίτλερ ζόρικοσ π' ούτε ψιλή δεν δίνει
Σαν τον Κεμάλ που έκανε μεγάλη την Τουρκία
και κάνουν κόζι οι Έλληνες κι έχουνε απορία.
Και συ βρε Στάλιν αρχηγέ, του κόσμου το καμάρι,
όλοι οι εργάτες σ' αγαπούν γιατ' είσαι παλικάρι*

*I want to be a strong man, like Mussolini;
Like Hitler a tough guy, he doesn't give a damn!
Like Kemal that made Turkey so great
And the Greeks just stare and wonder.
And you, hey Stalin, leader and pride of the people
All the workers love you, because you're a hero.*

Imagine me putting something like that in front of Metaxas! So I dumped it of my own accord, and gave it the words of *Εγώ για σε, βρε πονηρή...* ["Egó ya se, vre ponirí..."].

A nice *hasápiiko*. It did very well in 1936, and about four or five years ago Michális Chatziantoníou recorded it for Music Box.

There aren't many of my songs that I remember why and how I wrote them.

There was another one that was a hit before the war, *Στης θάλασσας την αμμουδιά* ["Stis thálassas tin amvoudhiá"]. This one is in *hijazkiar*.

7. *Στης θάλασσας την αμμουδιά* ["Stis thálassas tin amvoudhiá"]

*Στης θάλασσας την αμμουδιά, βρε αμάν αμάν,
είχα καφενεδάκι
κι ερχόσουνά κάθε πρωί, βρε αμάν αμάν,
κι έσπαγες νταλγκαδάκι.
Δύο χανουμάκια έμορφα πάντοτε μεθυσμένα
ένα πρωί τα τράκαρα στην άμμο ζαπλωμένα.
Πλησίασε ντερβίση μου και κάθησε κοντά μας,
και άκου τραγούδια του σεβντά βγαλμένα απ' την καρδιά μας.
Παρ' το μπαγλαμαδάκι σου λίγο να μας γουστάρεις,
άναψ' το τσιγαρλίκι σου και κάτσε να φουμάρεις.
Γεμίστε μου τον αργιλέ να πιώ να μαστουριάσω,
ύστερα χανουμάκια μου τον μπαγλαμά να πιάσω.
Να σας πατήσω αργιλέ με τουμβεκί σπαχάνι,
στον μπάρμπα Γιάννη τον τεκέ μεσ' το Πασαλιμάνι.*

*On the sandy seaside beach, vre aman aman,
I had a small café
And you used to come every morning, vre aman aman,
to let your pain out
One morning I came across two beautiful hanoúmises
[Turkish women]. Both drunk
Just lying there on the sand.
"Come closer, you dervish, and sit with us,
and listen to these painful songs coming from our hearts.
Grab your baglamá and get your kicks,
And light your spliff. Sit and have a smoke."
"Fill up my nargilé to smoke it and get stoned
and then, my haním, I'll grab my baglamá.
I'll load the nargilé for you, with finest toubekí from Isfahan,
In Barba-Yanni's tekké, down in Pasalimani [the Zea harbour]."*

A fine song, which can't be put out on a record nowadays because of the censorship.

It was recorded with those words before the censorship. The censorship came with Metaxás. As soon as Metaxás got in, then we immediately had censorship. Before that, however you wrote the song, that was how they issued it. That's why we were able to write whatever we wanted. These songs were written before the censorship. Afterwards the censorship banned them. And the same thing again nowadays – if we take this song to the censors, they'll dump the whole thing.

If it was just a matter of a couple of bad words that had to come out, then they [the censors] could have taken them out. But if there was a lot, they banned the song entirely. You don't lose the music – they don't ban that, only the words.

8. Έτσι σε θέλω κούκλα μου... [“Étsi se thélo kούkla mou...”]

*Έτσι σε θέλω κούκλα μου, να 'σαι γλεντζού τσαχπίνα
κι ας πάει και το παλιάμπελο που έχω στη Ραφήνα.
Τι να τα κάνω τα λεφτά και τα ψηλά παλάτια,
τίποτα δεν αξίζουνε μπρος στα γλυκά σου μάτια.
Όσα κι αν έχω στό 'χω πει όλα θα τα πουλήσω,
φτάνει μονάχα ταίρι μου εσένα ν' αποχτήσω.
Ένα φιλάκι πεταχτό όσο κι αν πεις αξίζει,
γι' αυτό 'γω σ' αγάπησα κι ο κόσμος ας με βρίζει.*

*That's the way I want you, doll, to be a fun-loving tsachpína.
To hell with the old vineyard that I've got in Rafina.
What do I want with money and big palaces,
They're worth nothing, compared to your sweet eyes.
Whatever I own, I've told you, I'll sell all of it –
All that matters, my heart's delight, is that I have you.
Give me a quick kiss, for what it's worth,
Because that's why I love you, and so what if the world curses me...*

That one came out with Columbia, and I did a second version too, but I don't remember how I happened to write it. But like I told you, all my songs are spontaneous – I can't remember what sparked it, why I wrote it, that kind of thing. I see something, or something happens, and I write about it. That's the way it goes.

9. Μήν περάσεις απ' τη γειτονιά σου [“Min peráseis ap' tin geitoniá sou”]

*Μήν περάσεις απ' τη γειτονιά σου
μάγκα μη σε ζαναδώ μπροστά μου
έμαθα πως στο Πασαλιμάνι
αγαπάς μια μόρτισα βρε αλάνη.
Τράβα βρε μάγκα και αλάνη,
τράβα για το Πασαλιμάνι.
Απ' τη μόρτισα γλυκά φιλάκια
κάθε βράδυ γλέντι και χαδάκια
κι έτσι την περνάς μαζί της φίνα
και ξεχνάς ν' ανέβεις στην Αθήνα.
Τώρα βρε μάγκα για να ξέρεις
μ' έχασες για πάντα δεν θα μ' έβρεις
θα γλεντάω μεσ' το Καλαμάκι
κάθε βράδυ μ' ένα χασαπάκι.*

*Don't come round your neighbourhood, mangas,
Don't let me catch sight of you.
I heard that down in Pasalimani
you're in love with a chick, you bum.
Go on, vre mangas, you bum,
Go on down to Pasalimani.
Sweet kisses from the chick,
every evening partying and caresses.
And you're having a great time with her,
and you forget about coming back to Athens.
Now, vre mangas, just so's you know,*

*you've lost me for ever... you won't see me again.
I'm going to be out every night in Kalamaki
partying with a butcher boy.*

A nice *hasárikó* from that period.

10. Η φλογερή σου αυτή ματιά [“I flogerí sou aftí matiá”]

*Η φλογερή σου αυτή ματιά και το γλυκό σου γέλιο
μού 'χουν ραΐσει την καρδιά, Χριστίνα μου, μ' έκανες και σε θέλω.
Έχεις μεγάλη τσαχπίνα κι όλους μας φοβερίζεις
με τη γλυκιά σου ομορφιά, τσαχπίνα μου, πολλές καρδιές ραΐζει.
Ψαράδες και μαναβήδες, Χριστίνα μου, και τους καλοκοιτάζεις.
Σκέψου τη γνώμη άλλαξε και πρόσεξε λιγάκι
γιατί ο κόσμος άλλαξε, τσαχπίνα μου, τρελλό μου Χριστινάκι.*

*Those flaming eyes of yours, and your sweet smile
Have crushed my heart, Christina. You've made me want you.
You've got great style, and you frighten us all.
With your sweet beauty, my beauty, you break a lot of hearts,
Fishermen and marketmen, Christina, when you smile at them.
Think about it a bit, and be a bit careful
because the world has changed, my beauty, my crazy Christina.*

That one is a *zeibékiko*, in the major key. I recorded it for Odeon in 1938. I never had anything going with anyone called Christina. Just a name – I took it, grabbed it, wrote the song.

11. Εγώ είμαι το θύμα σου [“Egō eimai to thýma sou...”]

*Εγώ είμαι το θύμα σου γλυκιά μου μαυρομάτα
κατάκαρδα με πλήγωσαν το ολόγλυκά σου μάτια.
Όπου γυρίζω για να ιδώ νομίζω οτι είσαι μπρός μου
σταυροκοπιούμαι ο δύστυχος χάνω το λογισμό μου.
Για πές μου τι σου έφταιξα και δε με θέλεις τόσο
γιατι δεν έρχεσαι και συ λίγο να σ' άνταμώσω.
Έλα λοιπόν μικρούλα μου και κάνε μια θυσία
προσφυγοπούλα μου απ' τη Μικρά Ασία.*

*I am your victim, my sweet black-eyed girl.
Your sweet eyes have wounded me right to the heart.
Wherever I turn my head to look, I think that you are there.
I cross my heart, poor man that I am. I'm going out of my mind.
Tell me what I've done wrong that you don't want me.
Why don't you just come round for a bit, so's I can see you?
So come to me my little girl, it's just a small sacrifice,
My sweet refugee girl from Asia Minor.*

12. Γιατί μικρούλα μου, γιατί καρδούλα μου... [“Yiati mikroula mou...”]

*Γιατί μικρούλα μου, γιατί καρδούλα μου, θέλεις να με παιδεύεις
ας τα ναζάκια σου και τα κολπάκια σου για πές μου τι γυρεύεις.
Γιατί για σένανε διώχνουν εμένανε και με κατηγορούνε
με μαραζώνουνε, με φαρμακώνουνε, κάνουν πως με αγαπούνε.
Γιατί για σένανε βρίζουν εμένανε για πές μου τι να κάνω
με βασανίζουνε και με σκοτίζουνε δεν ξέρω το να κάνω.*

Why do you want to torture me, my little heart, my little girl?

The music, the words, the songs...

*Stop playing your tricks on me and tell me what you want.
Because of you I am persecuted and accused
They waste me, they poison me, pretending that they love me.
Because of you they abuse me; please, tell me what I must do.
They're torturing me, they're killing me, and I don't know what to do.*

That's one of my earliest songs, an old *hasápiko*, which I think I recorded for Columbia. It's in a minor key, in *nihavent*, and in the same session, on the same record, I put out another *hasápiko* in *nihavent*, which went like this:

13. Με τις μυρωδιές σου ["Me tis myrodiés sou"]

*Με τις μυρωδιές σου με τις γλυκές ματιές σου
μ' έκανες να λυώνω και έχω για σένα πόνο.
Πές μου γλυκά λογάκια να φύγουν το φαρμάκια
που έχω στην καρδιά μου μονάκριβη κυρά μου.
Ξέρεις μεσ' τη ζωή μου σε αγαπώ κουκλί μου
πές μου τι άλλο θέλεις, πάψε να με παιδεύεις.*

*With your sweet scent and your sweet looks
You made me melt, and I'm in pain for you.
Tell me sweet little words so that the pain will go away,
(The pain) that I have in my heart for you my precious lady.
You know how much I love you in this life my doll.
Tell me what else you want, and stop this torment.*

14. Φοράς φουστάνι βυσσινί ["Forás foustáni vissiní..."]

*Φοράς φουστάνι βυσσινί, κουκλίτσα μου, από μετάξι φίνο
στις πιέτες του μπερδεύτηκα, μανίτσα μου, κι απ' τον καημό μου σβήνω.
Φουστάνι σκανταλιάρικο, κουκλάκι μου, με βιολετί σκαρπίνια,
σε κάνουνε, πως να στο πά, μικράκι μου, μια ζωντανή κουκλίτσα.
Το φουστανάκι σου αυτό, μανίτσα μου, αν το ζαναφορέσεις
θε να σε κλέψω μια βραδιά, κουκλίτσα μου, γιατί πολύ μ' αρέσεις.
Το φουστανάκι σου αυτό, κουκλάκι μου, βγάλτο πανάθεμά το
γιατί μου φέρνει το μυαλό, μανάκι μου, δυο πόντους παρακάτω.*

*You wear a cherry-red dress, my doll, made from fine silk
I got trapped within its folds and now I am fading for you cause I've got the blues.
Your naughty dress, my doll, and your violet shoes
Make you – how can I put it, little girl – like a doll that's come to life.
If you ever wear this dress again, baby
I shall come to steal you* one night, my doll, 'cause I like you so much.
Take off this dress, my doll, take it off god damn it
'Cause it's doing my brain in...*

[* i.e. they will elope to get married, against her family's will. A common practice in Greece of the past century.]

The latest person to sing this one was Κόκκοτας, on the big record that was put out by Columbia. He told the papers that he never understood any other musician [apart from me]. In other words, he was saying that I'm the one. He said it everywhere. As soon as he sees me he'll go crazy. I wrote this one in 1937-8, and I recorded it for Odeon.

15. Μια όμορφη μελαχρινή ["Mia ómorfi melachriní..."]

*Μια όμορφη μελαχρινή, ναζιάρα και σκερτσόζα,
τόσο πολύ με τυραννεί και μου κρατάει πόζα.
Θα σε ζυγώσω μια βραδιά και θα την αρωπήσω*

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πως γίνεσαι τόσο κακιά, για σένα θ' αρρωστήσω.
Τα κατσαρά της τα μαλλιά, τα μάτια της τα μαύρα
μες' τη δική μου αγκαλιά θα σβήσουν κάθε λαύρα.

*A beautiful dark-haired girl, so flirty and tricky,
is torturing me so much and plays hard to get.
I will approach her one night and I'll ask her
"How can you be so mean? I'll get sick for you."
Her curly hair and her black eyes
Will extinguish all this fire in my heart, when she's in my arms.*

A *hasáriko* in *nihavent*, which I recorded myself.

16. Με πλάνεψες μποέμισα ["Me plánepses boémisa"]

Με πλάνεψες μποέμισα με την τρελλή ματιά σου
με τα πολλά τα χάδια σου και την γλυκιά μιλιά σου.
Γιατί μικρό μου να σε ιδώ γιατί να σ' αντικρύσω
εσύ δεν ξέρεις ν' αγαπάς κοντεύω πιά να σβήσω.
Όταν σου λέω σ' αγαπώ γελάς και κοροιδεύεις
σ' αρέσει να με τυραννάς σκληρά να με παιδεύεις.
Μποέμισα, μποέμισα, σκέψου πως θα γεράσεις
και γρήγορα τα νειάτα σου σαν όλες θα τα χάσεις.

*You fooled me, bohemian girl, with your crazy looks
With your caresses and your sweet talk.
Why did I have to see you, my little girl, and set eyes on you?
You don't know what love is and I am fading away because of you.
When I tell you that I love you, you laugh and mock me.
You like torturing and taunting me so hard.
Bohemian girl, bohemian girl, just think that you'll very quickly grow old,
And, like every woman, you will lose your youth.*

That one I sang in 1936, with Abadzi, in other words the sister of Rita Abadzi.

At that time I also wrote *Ζηλιάρα* ("Ziliára). A tormented song. I had a lot of worries when I wrote that one. I wrote it in 1936, on a ship, while I was going to Syros... that was after I'd been away for about twenty years. But afterwards I used to go to Syros regularly. I'd go, then two or three years later I'd go again, and again, and again. I went there four, five, six times for work. And I wrote that one. Afterwards, when I got back to Piraeus, I wrote the music. Didn't I tell you that when I'm worried all the time I write better? Who can explain that? It's not just me – other composers are the same. I've heard people saying that.

17. Θα πάω στην Αμερική ["Tha páo stin Amerikí"]

Θα πάω στην Αμερική και πλούτη θ' αποκτήσω
Αμερικανούς και Ρωμιούς θα τους ευχαριστήσω.
Τ' άστρα θα δώ του σίνεμα με τα μεγάλα ματια
στου Φράνκ Σινάτρα θ' ανεβώ στα μαγικά παλάτια.
Ακόμα και στο Χόλλυγουντ θα βάλω το ποδάρι
μου ν'αι στρωμένο μάλαμα και με μαργαριτάρι.
Κι αν θέλει χαιρετίσματα κανένας να του στείλει
κρυμένα τά'χω στην καρδιά και κόμπο στο μαντήλι.

*I'll go to America, and I'll earn big money.
I'll bring pleasure to Americans and Greeks alike.
I'll see the stars of the movies, all starry-eyed.*

The music, the words, the songs...

*I'll go to Frank Sinatra's magical palaces.
I'll go to Hollywood
Where the streets are paved with gold.
And if anyone wants to send him greetings.
I'll keep them hidden in my heart, and a knot in my handkerchief.*

I sang it before the war, a fine *nihavent*, and one of my first *hasárikos*. At the time I sang “I’ll go up into the magic palaces of Anna Odra”, because she was well-known at the time. Nowadays I sing “Frank Sinatra”, and that’s the way it needs to be.

18. Για σένα μαυρομάτα μου [*“Yia séna mavromíta mou*]

*Για σένα μαυρομάτα μου χαράμισα τα νιάτα μου
κακούργα με κατάστρεψες κι ύστερα μ’ απαράτησες.
Μαζί σου σαν τυλίχτηκα μάνα κι αδέρφια αρνήθηκα
πλανεύτρα στην αγκάλη σου με τρέλλαναν τα κάλη σου.
Και κάθε βράδυ ξενυχτώ τα πίνω και παραπατώ
εμέθυσσα ξεμέθυσσα και μαύρο δάκρυ έχυσα.*

*For you, my black-eyed girl, I wasted** my youth.
You wicked one – you turned me upside down and then you ignored me.
When I got involved with you, I turned away from my mother and brothers.
In your arms, your beauty drove me crazy.
And every night I stay awake all night, I drink, and I walk about.
I got drunk, very drunk, and I shed a black tear.*

That one was a big success. It came out on Odeon, pre-war.

19. Άχ μ’ αρνήθηκες δε λυπήθηκες [*“Ach m’arníthikes dhe lypíthikes...”*]

*Άχ μ’ αρνήθηκες δε λυπήθηκες τόσα χρόνια που σε αγαπούσα
με μαράζωσες και με σκλάβωσες μεσ’ τους δρόμους τώρα πονεμένος τριγυρνώ
Α θα στό πώ θα στό πώ δε μπορώ
ξαναγύρισε στην αγκάλη μου παιχνιδιάρικο κουκλί
στην φωλίτσα μας δώσ’ μου το φιλί.
Κούκλα γόησα σαν σε γνώρισα ήσουν ενα κορίτσι φίνο
ξεμυαλιστηκες και μ’ αρνήθηκες και στον Μάριου το καπηλειό τα πίνω.
Α θα στό πώ θα στό πώ δε μπορώ δε μπορώ
παιχνιδιάρα μου μη με θραννάς την αγάπη μη ξεχνάς
ορκιζόσουν πως θα μ’ αγαπάς.
Πριν τα γηρατεία έρθουν τα σκληρά και τη γνώμη σου μικρό ν’ αλλάξεις
έλα να χαρείς τώρα που μπορείς φεύγουνε τα νιάτα φώς μου και διαβαίνουν.*

*Achhhh, you denied me, didn't you feel sorry for all those years that I loved you
You broke my heart, enslaved me and I am painfully wandering in the streets
I have to tell you this, I can't take this any longer,
Come back to my arms you playful doll
Come to our nest and give me a kiss.
My charming doll, you were such a fine girl when I first met you
But you got carried away and denied me and now I am drinking in Mario's taverna
I have to tell you this, I can't take this any longer,
My playful girl don't torture me and don't forget our love.
You swore that you would love me.
Before harsh old age comes and you have to change your mind
Come to me to enjoy your passing youth, now that you still can, my light.*

A fine *hasaposérviko* in *nihavent*, recorded in 1937-8.

20. Θέλω να σε δώ το βράδυ [“Thelo na se dho to vradhi”]

Θέλω να σε δώ το βράδυ μιά στιγμούλα στο σκοτάδι
να σου πώ το μυστικό μου και τον πόνο τον δικό μου.
Σαν με δείς και σου σφυρίζω πέτα το κλειδί ν’ ανοίξω
να βγείς για να σ’ ανταμώσω ένα γράμμα να σου δώσω.
Θές να δείς πώς σε λατρεύω τη ζωή μου κινδινεύω
ντερμπεντέρισα κυρά μου θα σε κάνω πιά δικά μου.

*I want to see you tonight, for a little while in the dark.
I want to talk to you about my secret, and my pain.
When you see me, I shall whistle to you.
Throw down the key, so’s I can open the door
So’s you can come out and I can meet you, so that I can give you a letter.
You will see how I worship you – I am putting my life in danger.
My lively lady, I shall make you mine.*

That one’s in *huzám*, a *zeibékiko*, *yiouroúkiko*. “Derbentérisa” means lively, wide-awake.

21. Κάποιο βράδυ με φεγγάρι [“Kápio vradhi me fengári”]

Κάποιο βράδυ με φεγγάρι είδα τη δική σου χάρη
κι από τότε σε λατρεύω μέρα νύχτα σε γυρεύω.
Όπου πάς κι όπου γυρίζεις τριαντάφυλλα μυρίζεις
έχεις μέση δαχτυλίδι μαύρο μάτι μαύρο φρύδι.
Κάν’ την έτσι τη λιγνή ψιλή σου μέση
να τη δώ να τη θαυμάσω και τον πόνο να ξεχάσω.

*One moonlit night I saw your charms,
And I have worshipped you ever since. Day and night I look for you.
Wherever you go, you leave a scent of roses.
You have a slim waist, black eyes and black eyebrows.
Move your slim waist,
So’s I can watch and wonder, and forget my pain.*

That’s another one *huzám*, *yiouroúkiko*

In 1935, for a girl in Syros I wrote *Φραγκοσυριανή* [“Frankosyriani”]. In 1936-39 I was writing all the time, I had a lot of inspiration in those days. I was also writing in 1940 – 42 – 43, but I wasn’t putting out records then because of the Occupation. And I was always writing about girls, that kind of thing. What else would I have written about, since I was a young man? If it wasn’t love songs, what else would I have written, seeing I was a kid of 25-30? I did write a few other kinds of songs, but they all came back to love too. I also wrote three songs about professions, but I don’t remember them... you’ll find them on records...

22. Χασάπη μου, με την ποδιά [“Chasápi mou me tin podhiá”]

Χασάπη μου, με την ποδιά, που σαν τη δέσεις πίσω
Όταν σε δω, χασάπη μου, τώρα θα ξεψυχήσω
Χασάπη μου, όταν σε δω, τώρα θα ξεψυχήσω

*Γυαλίζουν τα μαχαίρια σου, στη μέση που τα βάνεις
Με την ποδιά την κόκκινη, εσύ θα με τρελάνεις
Με την ποδιά την κόκκινη, εσύ θα με τρελάνεις.*

*Αστράφτουν τα μαχαίρια σου, λάμπει και το μασσάτι
Λάμπουν τα μαύρα μάτια σου, μαγκίτη μου χασάπη
Λάμπουν τα μαύρα μάτια σου, μαγκίτη μου χασάπη.*

*Παλεύεις με τα αίματα, μα δεν πονεί η καρδιά σου
Σε αγαπώ, χασάπη μου, μ' αυτή τη λεβεντιά σου
Χασάπη μου, σε αγαπώ, μ' αυτή τη λεβεντιά σου.*

*My butcher man, with your apron tied behind you,
When I see you, my butcher man, I feel like I'm about to faint.
Your knives shine and glisten in the sheaths at your waist.
With your red-stained apron, you'll drive me crazy.
Your knives glisten, and the whetstone flashes.
Your eyes flash too, my butcher man, my mangas.
You struggle in blood, but your heart does not grieve.
I love you, my butcher man, in all your manhood.*

23. Μες στην χασάπικη αγορά [“Mes stin chasápiiki agorá”]

*Μες στην χασάπικη αγορά ενα χασαπάκι
με την ελίτσα και τα φρύδια τα σμιχτά
όταν με βλέπει και περνάω απο μπροστά του
τη μαχαιρίτσα του στο κούτσουρο χτυπά.
Τα μαγούλα του κοκκινίζουν και με σφάζουν
η ομορφιά του μ' έχει κάνει σαν τρελλή
με γοητεύει, με μαγεύει, με παιδεύει,
τον εσυμπάθησα μανούλα μου πολύ.
Έχει ενα μβόι λεβεντιά σαν τη λαμπάδα
να ξέρεις μάνα μου τρελλά τον αγαπώ,
και όπως πάω αν δεν τον πάρω θα χτικιάσω
γι' αυτόνε μάνα μου στη μαύρη γη θα μπώ.*

*In the meat market a young butcher,
With his beauty spot and bushy eyebrows
When he sees me passing by in front of him,
He strikes his chopper on the chopping block.
His cheeks blush and they drive me crazy,
His beauty makes me go mad,
Enchanting, bewitching and torturing me.
I've fallen for him completely, mother.
He has such a manly bearing.
You should know, mother, I love him like crazy.
And if I get him to be my husband, I'll be plagued
And be buried in the black earth.*

I also wrote other things. For instance “Οι πρωθυπουργοί [“I prothypourgí”], Το Χαιδάρι [“To Chaidhári”] and Ο γρουσουζής [“O grousouzís”].

24. Βρε γρουσουζή [“Vre grousouzi”]

*Βρε γρουσουζή όλη νύκτα κάθεσαι και μεκροπίνεις
και στο σπίτι τα παιδιά σου θεονήστικα τ' αφήνεις.
Μεθυσμένος όλη μέρα που γυρνάς και μεκροουλιάζεις
και την οικογένιά σου απ' την πείνα την τaráζεις.
Κοίταξε ν' αλλάξεις γνώμη να μαζέψεις το μυαλά σου
να σου μείνει μια δεκάρα να την φέρνεις στα παιδιά σου.
Σαν εγώ δεν σου αρέσω κοίταξε άλλη να πάρεις
δεν μπορώ πιά ν' αντέξω να 'σαι μεκκράς και γκρινιάρης.*

*You jinxer, you sit here all night getting drunk,
And you've left your children hungry at home.*

Markos Vamvakaris

*You go round drunk all day, and you hit the bottle.
And you leave your family to waste from hunger.
Wake your ideas up, get your mind in order,
And make sure you have a few pennies left, to give to your children.
If you don't like the look of me, go and find another woman –
I can't stand you any more, with your drunken grumbings.*

My first songs were hashish songs. I don't remember them. They're lost and gone. For instance:

25. Είμαι αλανιάρης ["Eimai alaniáris"]

*Είμαι αλανιάρης τους δρόμους τριγυρίζω
κι απ' την πολλή τη σούρα μου κανένα δε γνωρίζω
κι απ' την πολλή μαστούρα μου το νού μου δεν ορίζω.
Íme alaniáris*

*I'm a bum. I wander round the streets.
And from being so drunk, I don't even recognise people,
And from being so stoned, I can't even think straight.*

That one's lost and gone. I don't remember either the other words or the music. Later there was another one which went like this:

26. Σαν μαστουριάσω ["San mastouriásō"]

*Σαν μαστουριάσω και γενώ τρελλός απ' την μαστούρα
ξεχνώ όλα μου τα βάσανα και όλη μου τη σκοτούρα
Με πίκρες και με βάσανα με προίκισε η φύση
κι όλα περνούν και χάνονται μονο με το χασίσι.*

*When I get stoned, and I get crazy from being stoned,
I forget all my troubles, and all my depression.
With bitterness and with torments nature has blessed me,
And the only way I can get rid of all that is with the hashish.*

And later:

27. Κάντοτε ντερβισόμαγκα τον αργιλέ ["Kantone dervisómanga ton argilé"]

*Κάντοτε ντερβισόμαγκα τον αργιλέ να τρίζει
και με φωτιές του θυμαριού να πιώ και να σφυρίζει.
Kantone dervisómanga ton argilé*

*Stoke up the nargilé, dervish-mangas,
with incense fire, so that I can smoke and xxxx*

And another one:

28. Έπρεπε να ερχόσουνα ["Éprepe na erchósouna"]

*Έπρεπε να ερχόσουνα βρε μάγκα στον τεκέ μας
ν' ακούγες τον μπαγλαμά και τις διπλοπενιές μας.
Να κάτσεις να φχαριστηθείς ν' ακούσεις και λιγάκι
και τις πενιές που άκουγες από το μπουζουκάκι.
Ν' ακούσεις και το αραπλί και το καραντουζένη
και σε λιγάκι θα 'λεγες ο αργιλέ να γένει.*

*You should come to our tekké, my mangas,
To hear the baglamá and our instrumentals.*

The music, the words, the songs...

*Sit down, enjoy yourself, and listen a bit,
So as to hear the playing of the bouzouki.
So that you can listen to araplí and karadouzeni,
And in a little while you would say that the nargilé has xxxx.*

In those days I had to smoke a whole *nargilé* to get the words and the music. That was my work, continuously. And going to give performances. I had no other work. When I didn't have other work, I would sit outside my house and, taking it easy. That's where people used to come to find me, like they do now, at my house. Because a lot of people come and visit me at my house now.

29. Κάποτε ήμουνα και 'γώ παιδάκι [“Κάποτε ήμουνα και εγώ παιδάκι”]

*Κάποτε ήμουνα και 'γώ παιδάκι από το φίνα
και η καρδιά μ' επόνεσε για μια γλυκειά τσαχπίνα.
Όταν την έπαιρνα μαζί ο κόσμος με κοιτούσε
μ' αυτή μου την αμόλησε και με άλλονε γλεντούσε.
Κι από το ντέρτι το πολύ θολώνει το μυαλό μου
και η ψυχή μου η δύστυχη σπαράζει από τον καημό μου.
Και από τότε πιά και 'γώ καμιά πιά δεν γουστάρω
την τζούρα μου πάντα τραβώ και άργιλε φουμάρω.*

*I was a good-looking kid too, one time,
And my heart was in pain because of a good-looking woman.
When I took her around with me the people used to look at me,
But then she left me and took up with another man.
And from my great bitterness my brain is bursting,
And my poor soul in breaking from my grief.
And from that time I have no taste for women.
I carry my suffering** around with me all the time, and I smoke nargilé.*

All my first songs were hashish songs. From 1934, which was the beginning, they were all like that. And they came out on records. But I've forgotten them. I wrote a lot, up till 1936. Then Metaxás took over, and we wrote differently. They summoned me to the censorship office and they told me: “You will stop this kind of writing, you will not write things like these.” I don't know who they were, in that censorship office. They were part of the state. I don't know who they were, nor what ministry they came under, even though [I've had to deal with them] for so many years now. They know me well, because I've been writing for so many years.

At the start they used to give me guidelines, and they would say: “Markos, you have to write better. And if you can't do that, bring them [the songs] here and we shall write them.” A musician by name of Psaróúdas (long life to him if he is still alive, and if he's dead may God have mercy on him) told me: “My boy, you bring them here, and I'll sort them out for you.” But I didn't go to him. I stopped. I wrote the things that I was supposed to write. At that time I wrote my songs differently, I toed the line, and I didn't go to them. I never needed to go to them, never. In other words, where previously I had been writing heavy *mángas* songs, really heavy *mángas* songs eh, very *mángas*, I sat down and started writing more... I mean, they were hunting down the words, they weren't concerned with the music. I couldn't act any differently. That was the law. Whatever Metaxás said, that had to happen. At that time – a little while before the censorship began – I wrote *Οι πρωθυπουργοί*

30. Οι πρωθυπουργοί [“Οι prothypourgi”]

*Επέθαν' ο Κονδύλης μας πάει και ο Βενιζέλος
την πούλεψε κι ο Δεμερτζής που θα 'φερνε το τέλος.
Όσοι γενούν πρωθυπουργοί όλοι τους θα πεθάνουν*

τους κυνηγάει ο λαός απ' τα καλά που κάνουν.
Βάζω υποψηφιότητα πρωθυπουργός να γίνω
να κάθομαι τεμπελικά να τρώω και να πίνω.
Και ν' ανεβαίνω στη βουλή εγώ να τους διατάζω
να τους πατώ τον αργιλέ και να τους μαστουριάζω.

*Our Kondýlis is dead, and Venizelos is going too.
And Demertzís has kicked the bucket too, xxx.
All those who become prime minsters, they'll all die.
The people chase after them, for all the good they do.
I'm going to put in an application to be prime minister,
So that I can sit around lazily, eating and drinking.
And I'll go up to Parliament and lay down the law,
And tamp up their nargilés and get them all stoned.*

The censorship can chew up your songs for a number of reasons, for different meanings that they don't like. Take a look at this one. I have a song with the censors at the moment:

31. Χαράματα η ώρα τρεις ["Charamata, i ora treis"]

*Χαράματα η ώρα τρεις ο κόσμος ησυχάζει
μια μάνα κλαίει κι οδύρεται και βαριαναστενάζει.
Κλαίει και χόνει δάκρυα για τ' άρρωστο παιδί της
φωτιά ανάβει στην καρδιά και καίει το κορμί της.*

*It's three in the morning, dawn, and the world is at rest,
But a mother is weeping and grieving and sighing.
She weeps and sheds tears for her sick child.
A fire burns in her heart and her body burns.*

I'm worried that they're not going to let that one through, because it's a mournful song, the kind of song that they've thrown out before. The censorship office has thrown out some of my songs, wiped them out.

32. Τα βάσανα πληγώνουν την καρδιά μου ["Ta vásana pligónoun"]

*Τα βάσανα πληγώνουν την καρδιά μου
και μου μαραίνουν τη ζωή δεν μου 'μεινε πνοή.
Σαν συλλογούμαι τα βραδιά δεν κοιμούμαι
γιατί με ζώνουν οι καημοί καθ' ώρα και στιγμή.
Μεσ' το κελί μου, θα λυώσει το κορμί μου
ώσπου να βρώ τη λευτεριά μανούλα μου γλυκιά.*

*Torments wound my heart
And ruin my life, and I can hardly breathe.
When I think about things in the evening, I can't sleep,
Because sorrows surround me every hour, every moment.
My body will waste away in this cell of mine,
Until I get my freedom, mother of mine.*

That one was four years ago, on RCA. The censorship office passed the song, so I recorded it, with myself singing, but then they went to RCA and stopped it. And remember that this happened under the Papandreou government.

I watch out. The songs that are unlikely to get through, I don't send them. I'll put a different word into the song, so that it gets through. I try not to go making songs that they're going to reject. This business doesn't bother me at all. From the moment that the censorship began, I never write anything without this in mind. It's something that I just don't do. Why should I write something, go to all that effort in writing a song, and then

The music, the words, the songs...

have them reject it? I only write for records nowadays – when else am I supposed to do? I don't get any profit from this work [if] I don't write it. When I feel like it I write a line, whatever takes my fancy, and whatever comes out of my mind is OK. Those first songs of mine, before Metaxás, that's the way they were. Whatever I wanted to write, I wrote, without censorship. Afterwards I stopped. I ended that kind of writing, and wrote what I was supposed to write. So that I could go to the censorship office and they would pass them. I wrote better.

Translation: Ed Emery 2005