GROUP 2 – WORK 1

COMPOSER: SOLON MICHAELIDES

WORK TITLE: *Suite Greque for Violoncello and Piano*: I Allegretto

Composed in 1963

Suite Grecque was composed in 1963 when Solon Michaelides was residing in Greece. It is a Suite in four movements: *Allegretto, Andantino, In Memoriam* and *Allegretto non troppo e giocoso.*The first movement, *Allegretto*, has a 2/4 time signature and is in A Aeolian mode. Its main theme is based on a traditional folk Cypriot song named "Foni Tillirkotissa"[1].

The movement is in ternary form (ABA'):

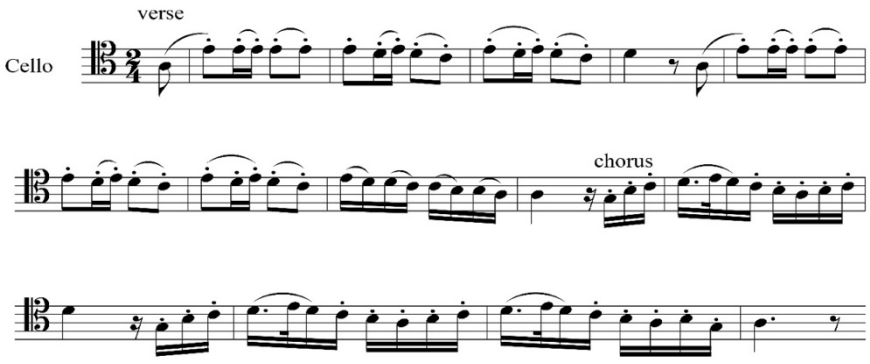
Section A: bars (measures) 1-18 – *main theme appears*

Section B: bars (measures) 18 [last quaver]-61

Section A': bars (measures) 61-76 – *main theme reappears*

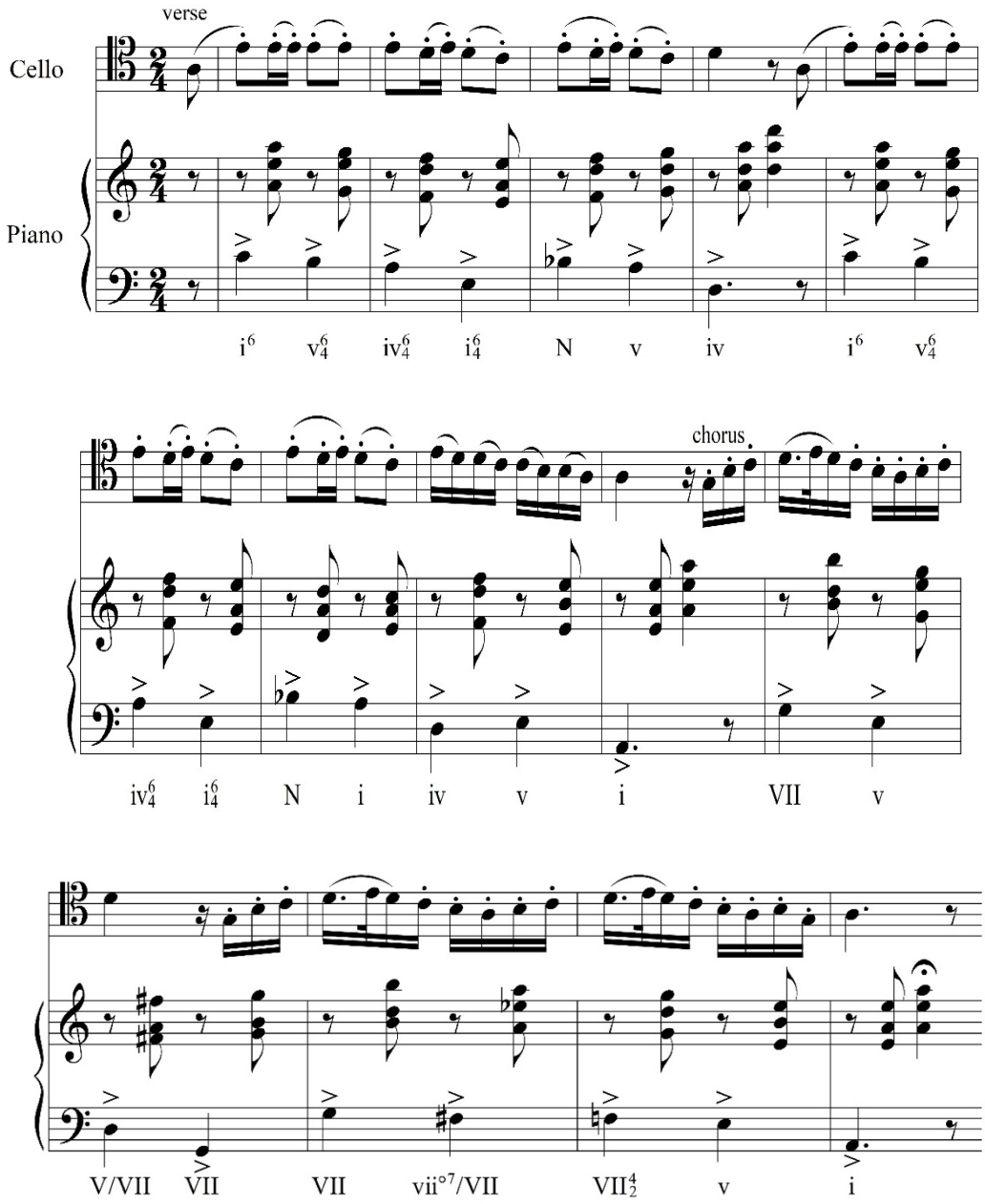
Section A – b. 1-18

Section A starts with a four-bar introduction in the piano part and then the main theme (Verse and chorus from the song "Foni Tillirkotissa"[1]) appears in the cello part. The opening ascending interval of a 5th, the characteristic rhythmic patterns, the repeated notes and the melismatic character of the melody are typical of Cypriot folk music. Listen to an interpretation of the Cypriot song Foni Tillirkotissa: https://youtu.be/enpnd76ChnU?feature=shared



[1] "Fones" (voices, plural of the word "Foni") refer to different melodies that are characteristic in different areas of Cyprus. "Tillirkotissa" refers to a woman who comes from Tillirea, an area in the northwest Cyprus.

The piano accompanies the melody. The harmony of the piano part is very different to that of the original song which has only primary chords, I, IV and V chords. Michaelides uses an alternative modal harmonic pattern, its progression being:

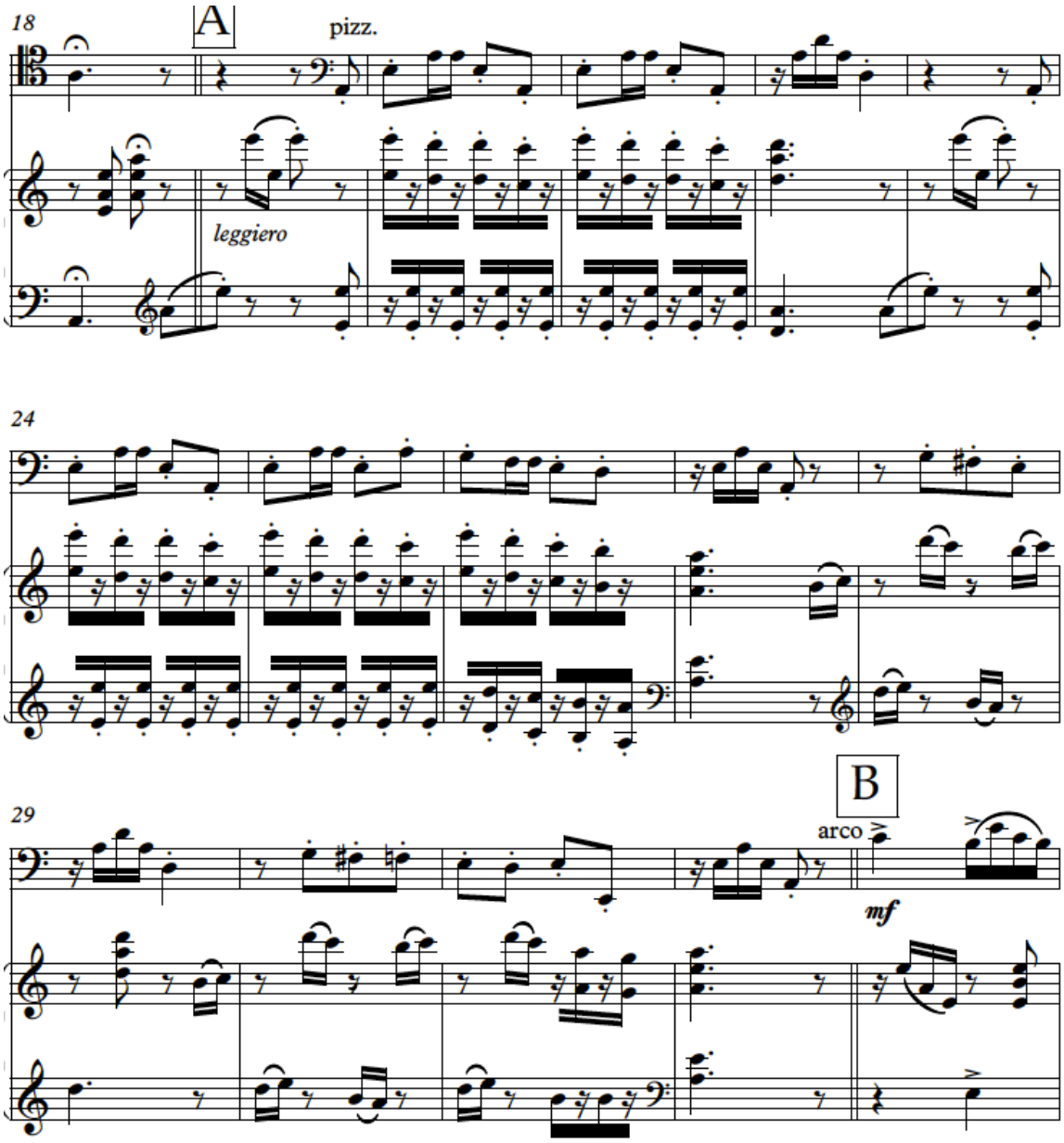


It is worth noticing that in several instances throughout the movement Solon Michaelides uses chords that consist only of the root and the fifth of the chord, without thus being able to be identified as major or minor (*please see bars 18, 22, 27, 29, 32 & 33 in the excerpt that follows in the next page*). This is in fact a reference to the way of playing chords on the Cypriot lute (*laouto*) which is one of the characteristic musical instruments of Cyprus.

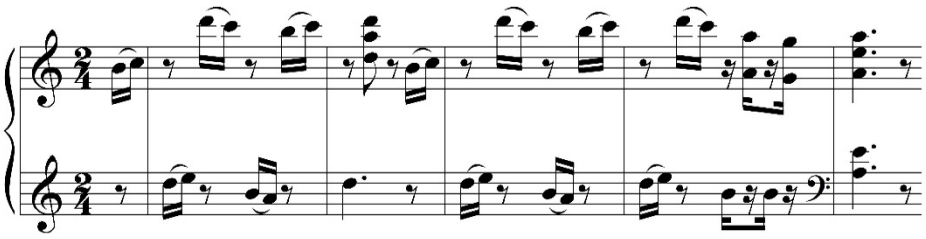
Section B – b. 18 [last quaver]-61

In section B, Michaelides chooses to remain at first in the home key and uses segments of the main theme in different variations.

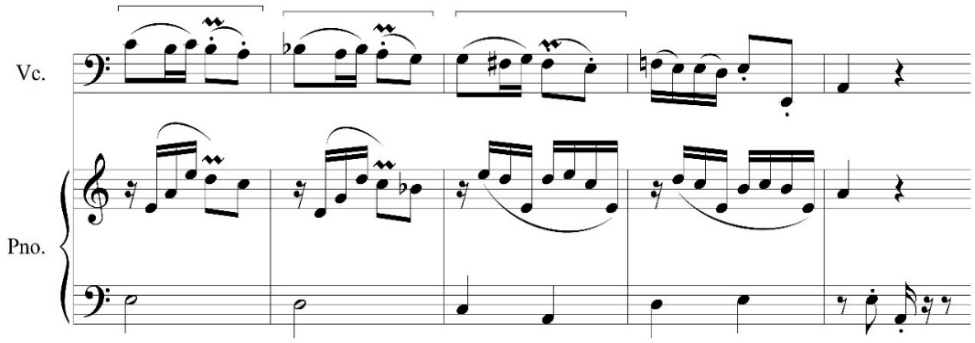
For example, in bars 18-22, the piano plays a segment of the main theme in staccatos by alternating the right and left hand while the cello plays a variation of the opening motif. This variation is repeated in bars 22-27.



In bars 27-32, the piano plays the chorus of the original melody split in the left and right hands alternatively. Please see the excerpt above and the piano part below:

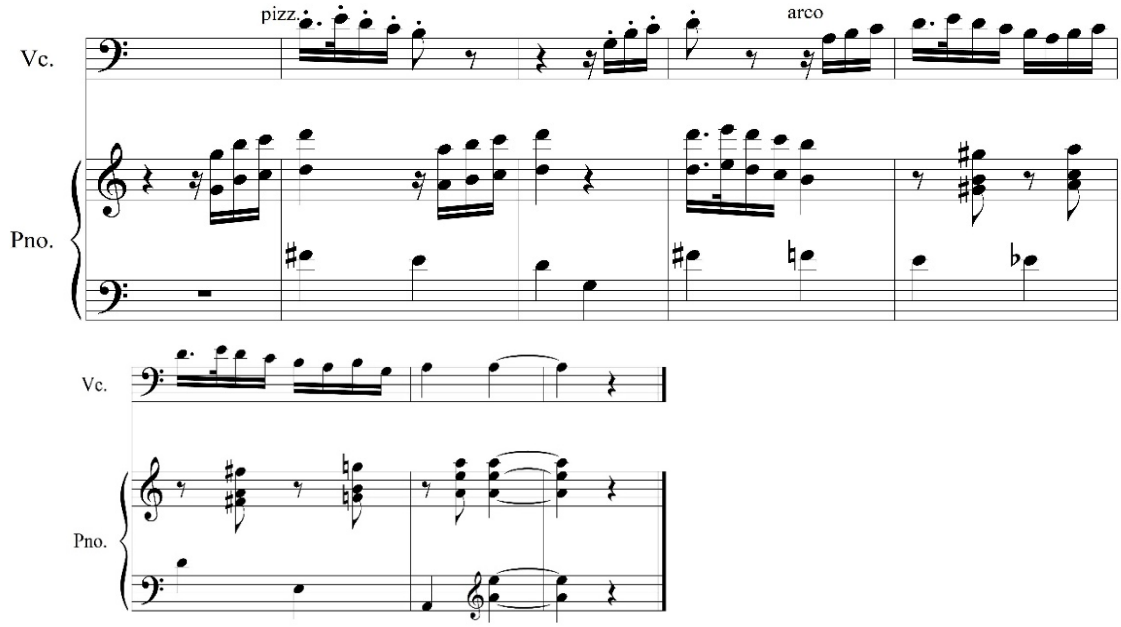


Another example of variation is in bars 37-41, where a segment of the main theme is used in a harmonic sequence:



Section A' – b. 61-76

The opening bars of this section (b. 61-69) are the same as those at the beginning of the piece (bars 4-13). Then, the melody of the chorus is split between the piano and the cello in alternation:



Video recording: https://youtu.be/GfLp8nUJv18?feature=shared (0:00-1:53)

Duration: c. 2'

BIOGRAPHY – SOLON MICHAELIDES (1905-1979)

Solon Michaelides was one of the most important Cypriot composers of the 20th century as he introduced massive changes and innovation to the musical life of the island.

Born in 1905 he started learning to play guitar and mandolin in primary school and later attended violin and Byzantine music lessons. He studied remotely at Trinity College of Music (London U.K.) and later continued his studies in Paris at the Ecole Normale de Musique where he studied harmony, counterpoint and piano. He also studied composition at the Schola Cantorum of Paris. After finishing his studies in 1934, he returned to Cyprus with the intention to improve the musical life of the island. He founded the Limassol Conservatory and its orchestra, and later the "Aris" mixed Choir, which is still active until today. Michaelides was the first musician to conduct live classical performances in Cyprus.

Michaelides' compositions were performed on various radio stations in Athens. He also wrote a harmony textbook called *The Harmony of the Contemporary Music* and the *Encyclopedia of Ancient Greek Music.*

In 1957, he became director at the Thessaloniki State Conservatory in Greece where he taught advanced music theory classes. In 1959, the Thessaloniki Symphony Orchestra was created and had its first performances under the baton of Michaelides. He also conducted other orchestras in Greece and other countries like France, Switzerland, Germany, Romania, America etc.

Michaelides composed a variety of works for which you can find information at

https://www.limassol.org.cy/uploads/e102269304.pdf

where there is an extended biography with life and work details.

The Cultural Foundation 'Solon Michaelides', founded after the composer's death in Limassol, has established an instrumental competition named after him, honouring his contribution and oeuvre to the Cypriot and Greek School of Composers of his time.