

Univerzita Karlova v Praze  
Pedagogická fakulta

BAKALÁŘSKÁ PRÁCE

2015

Ioannis Ioannou

Univerzita Karlova v Praze  
Pedagogická fakulta  
Katedra hudební výchovy

BAKALÁŘSKÁ PRÁCE  
Traditional wedding customs in Cyprus  
Tradiční svatební zvyky na Kypru

Ioannis Ioannou

Vedoucí práce: Mgr. Anna Romanovská Fliegerová, Dipl. Um.  
Studijní program: Music oriented at education  
Studijní obor: Musical instrument oriented at education

2015

I hereby confirm that this is my own work; the use of all materials from external sources has been properly and fully referenced and acknowledged. I agree with the storing of my work in the library of the Faculty of Education of Charles University, so as to be available for educational purposes.

Prague 2015

.....

Ioannis Ioannou

## **ANOTACE**

Tématem mé bakalářské práce jsou tradiční svatební zvyky na Kypru. V zemi, ze které pocházím, byl tento svátek ještě donedávna jednou z největších událostí nejen pro celou rodinu, ale i obec. S obřadem bylo spojeno mnoho hudebních tradic, svatebčané oblékali sváteční oděvy a tančili svatební tance za doprovodu tradičních nástrojů. Ve své práci tyto konkrétní svatební zvyky podrobně popisuji.

Veškeré poznatky jsem čerpal nejen z knih a internetu, ale především od svého dědečka, který se jako hudebník mnohých takovýchto obřadů sám zúčastnil.

## **KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA**

oděv, nástroj, nevěsta, svatba, tanec, ženich

## **ANNOTATION**

I have decided to choose this topic as my thesis, because the musical traditions and the musical customs of my birthplace, Cyprus, are nowadays in a constant decline.

I have written about the traditional Cypriot wedding, as it is the biggest musical custom and festivity in Cyprus. I write about the most important traditional dances, which are always accompanied by the traditional attire and by the musical instruments playing the tunes during the festivity.

My aim is to reveal and describe the Cypriot wedding tradition. To compile this work, I have conducted research using books, internet and other resources referenced in the bibliography. The great source of knowledge was my grandfather, who has lived through the era when these traditions were still alive.

## **KEYWORDS**

bride, dance, garment, groom, instruments, wedding

## Index

1. Introduction .....	7
2. Traditional Cypriot wedding .....	8
2.1 Bride’s preparation .....	11
2.2 Groom’s preparation .....	12
2.3 Wedding ceremony .....	13
2.4 The wedding party .....	14
2.5 After – wedding .....	15
3. Traditional dances .....	16
3.1 Male Dances .....	17
3.2 Virtuosity dances accompanied by objects .....	20
3.3 Female Dances .....	25
4. Musical instruments in Cyprus .....	27
4.1 Pithkiavli .....	28
4.2 Lute .....	29
4.3 Tampoutsia .....	30
4.4 Violin .....	31
5. Cypriot garments and attire .....	33
5.1 Men’s Garment .....	34
5.2 Women’s Garment .....	37
6. Conclusion .....	39
7. Summary .....	42
8. Attachments .....	43
9. Bibliography .....	50

## **1. Introduction**

Cyprus, otherwise known as the island of Aphrodite, is an independent island state in the eastern Mediterranean, placed at the crossroads of three continents: Europe, Asia and Africa. Due to its strategic position and natural wealth, Cyprus was constantly under various conquerors, amongst which Franks, Venetians, Turks and the British, until the declaration of independence in 1960. The year 1974 is the most difficult one of Cyprus' recent history. Following atrocities between the communities that inhabited Cyprus, Turkey, invaded Cyprus militarily, on July 20 1974 and is illegally occupying 37% of Cyprus' territory since then. This event has left a deep scar on the modern history of Cyprus, which stands unhealed until today.

I introduced my work with this short description, because I wanted to give the reader an idea about what Cyprus has gone through; nevertheless, despite it has been conquered and invaded so many times, Cyprus managed to preserve through the centuries its own musical heritage and customs. The Cypriot tradition and music has spread by word of mouth and through the various social and religious ceremonies, which people took part in.

When choosing the subject area of the work, the first thought was to present a part of the Cypriot musical tradition; and as the reader will realize, this is the thought that prevailed!

This work is divided into four main chapters. The first is a description of the Cypriot traditional wedding, which is perhaps the grand and most known Cypriot custom. The second chapter deals with the Cypriot traditional dances according to the genre. I paid particular attention to the other two chapters, where the Cypriot traditional musical instruments and costumes, which are directly related to our musical tradition, are described.

## 2. Traditional Cypriot wedding

The wedding in the Cypriot tradition<sup>1</sup> is the religious ceremony through which a union between couple is recognized and established, which in turn, gives the couple the blessing to have children; this union will lead to the creation of a family. In other words, marriage is an ordinance and is defined as a socially recognized union of two people, who become spouses.

The Cypriot wedding is the most widespread custom which survives on the island throughout the years. It is the best example which portrays and transmits the morals and habits of the island.

The Cypriot wedding is a huge ceremony. In the older years there was a ritualistic element in all aspects affecting a wedding. For example, in order for the day or the wedding to be decided, the parents of the engaged couple were waiting for the orbit of the moon to be completed (from its first appearance until the full moon) and then they would gather to decide on which Sunday the engaged couple would be married. In this way people were holding the belief that the couple would always be happy.

The preparations for the wedding start one month before. The groom and his father are responsible for the cleanliness and the preparation of the house which will host the celebrations, which had to be ready and cleaned by the day of the wedding. This preparation is very important for them, since on the wedding day they are supposed to

---

<sup>1</sup> Can see here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3dssPg5DgTA>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iUwhZELKoPs>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=etKgnLdn-mQ>



host their in-laws and all the guests. Also, according to the custom, the groomsmen and bridesmaids are responsible for certain aspects of the preparation. The former are responsible for the gathering of wood which will be used to cook the food for the party, while the latter are responsible for washing sheep's hair in a well in the village, which will be used for the traditional ceremony of the 'sewing of the bed'. The hair is washed and is put outside to the sun to be dried, until the wedding day.

One week before the wedding is due the relatives of each family are knocking door-to-door in the village, with freshly baked breads, wine and rose water or citrus scented water, with which they spray the people, thus, inviting them to the ceremony which will take place on the following Sunday at the village's church.

The day before the wedding, and particularly on Saturday, musicians arrive from a neighboring village carrying their traditional instruments, such as violins and lutes. The relatives and children are welcoming them with enthusiasm and they all head to the bride's family house, where the traditional ceremony of the 'sewing of the bed' will take place.

With the word "bed" we refer to the mattress on which the newly married couple will sleep. The procedure has elements of a "ritual". Under the sounds of happy traditional songs played by the musicians, the unsewed, empty mattress, is placed on the floor and is filled in, either with cotton or with the freshly washed hair of the sheep which the bridesmaids had washed. Seven to nine women, married only once, are then sewing the mattress, putting on its corners four crosses made out of red ribbon. The groomsmen, bridesmaids, relatives and friends then come along and throw money on the new mattress (this procedure is called *ploumisma*) for the bride's dowry and pay the musicians who are playing the songs. When the sewing and *ploumisma* are finished, people roll a young child on the mattress and wish that the couple will be able to have many children. Finally, the groomsmen and bridesmaids take the mattress on their shoulders and with the accompaniment of music they dance around the house.

After the sewing ceremony it is necessary that the bride's parents show to the groom's relatives the room where the newlyweds will stay after the wedding and the dowry they will offer to the couple. Usually dowry was referring to the most precious things that the family had, such as embroidery, furniture and glasses.

## 2.1 Bride's preparation

On Sunday morning, at the bride's house, the bride's dressing starts always accompanied by the music (the violin and lute), which is a sweet melody written in 2/4 meter and scale G major, Andantino and first verse saying: (*see p.42*)

*"This is a good and golden time this time is now blessed,  
may this work that we started, be placed on strong foundations.*

*Today the sky shines, today is a shining day,  
today an eagle, is crowned with a dove"*

The bride's friends help her to prepare herself and make sure that she is as beautiful as possible. Before the dressing starts, the priest of the village blesses the bride's dress and all of her jewelry, which are placed in a traditional tray made out of a dried plant's leaves, called *tsestos*. When the priest is done with the blessing, three friends of the bride, the bridesmaids, dance around the bride and wrap a red scarf, which symbolizes virginity, around her waist and head. This dance is performed on a fast music, written in meter 7/8 Allegretto, in D major scale. After the dressing and the preparation is done, the parents and relatives give their best wishes. This is a very touching moment for all parents, since they feel that the time has come for their child to set off from their stand start a new life away from them.

## **2.2 Groom's preparation**

In the meantime, the groom's preparation takes place in his house again in the morning. Once again the priest comes and does the same procedure as before with the bride. He blesses the groom's clothes and he gives the best wishes to him. With songs accompaniment, which are the same as the songs sang at the bride's house, the groomsman starts by shaving the groom and then dressing him. Back in the day, people were wearing traditional costumes but now this has been overcome. The traditional costume included traditional breeches made out of black cloth. The breeches had a longer cloth extension at the back, like a tail, which was tied and fastened around men's wrist and did not obstruct their dance. On foot they were wearing black high socks and black leather shoes. On the top they were wearing a silk shirt accompanied by a silky decorated vest. During the ceremony of the groom's preparation, the relatives were greeting the groom while the musicians were singing the respective lyrics.

When everything is ready, the groom and bride with their friends and relatives leave from their houses and head to the church, accompanied by music. The musicians in this case play a march written in 2/4 meter Allegro in D minor gypsy. The fellow villagers who did not manage to come to the dressing ceremonies, are standing outside their house and spray the participants of the procession with perfume. As the custom demands, the groom has to wait by the church entrance for the bride to arrive for the ceremony.

Before the bride leaves her family house to go to the church, she takes some bread that her mum gives her, in order to take it to her new house after the wedding. In this way, people were holding the belief that the couple's happiness and blessing would be reassured. A donkey, decorated with new and colorful clothes is carrying the bride who leaves her house with her relatives, to go and meet the groom who is waiting for her, anxiously for their wedding ceremony.

### 2.3 Wedding ceremony

Before the ceremony a new couple signs a paper through which they declare their will to proceed with the wedding. The couple wears a crown made of olive branches and wrapped in gold ribbons and they drink wine from the same glass. That indicates that from now on the couple will leave a peaceful life, during which they will share everything, whether happy or sad.

During the wedding ceremony in the church, the couple dances the well known *Isaiah dance*. The custom of dancing the *Isaiah dance* derives from a Christian psalm which is chanted during the orthodox wedding ceremony. During the *Isaiah dance*, the groomsmen and bridesmaids throw to the couple almonds, rice, wheat and rose petals. This custom is ancient and it refers to couple's fertility (to have many children and multiply like the grain of rice) and happiness (walk a path in life, paved with rose petals). Additionally the couple accepts friendly hits on their back from different relatives who attend the ceremony.

After the ceremony all the guests accompanied by the priest of the village as well, form a procession and head to the house where the couple will start its new life. The church's bells ring joyfully along the way and people throw countless flowers and seeds from their windows and balconies. Additionally the women of the village burn dried olive leaves in censers, considered to be a blessing.

When they arrive home the groom throws with power, a pomegranate on the front door. This action has a symbolic meaning, since people believe that when doing that they ensure the blessing of fertility and abundance of goods. In many villages instead of a pomegranate the groom slaughters a rooster. This action wanted to pass the message that the man is the boss of the house. Later on, this custom was diminished.

## **2.4 The wedding party**

Preparation for the wedding party starts early in the morning. The guests join the party and each one of them brings their food and drinks in order to contribute in the amusement but also, in order to not burden the new couple financially. The feast lasts until midnight and the atmosphere calms down when the instruments enter and the dance starts.

## **2.5 After – wedding**

The next day, early in the morning, the bride with other girls of the family prepares pasta for the new big celebration which is called the “after-wedding”. The groom with the groomsmen goes around the village, giving a chicken to every family home, in order to thank them for attending and supporting the marriage.

During the after-wedding, the relatives and friends greet the newly weds and are seated to the table to enjoy the feast. After everyone finishes their food, the couple has to show to everyone what dowry they were given from their parents and they again publicly vow that they will stay together forever.

After the party, the groomsmen and bridesmaids knock down the fireplaces and ovens where the food was cooked and dirty their clothes in order to show that the cycle of marriage has come to the end.

The customs and habits of the traditional Cypriot wedding are uniformed and are applied across the whole island. Undeniably there are some differences and some habits which are modified according to the times and the conditions prevailing on the island. However, in no case the core elements of the traditional Cypriot wedding change.

### **3. Traditional dances**

The Cypriot traditional dances were invented by the Cypriot people and they reflect their lifestyle and customs, the island's historical landmarks and geographic position, as well as the social status that women and men had. The Cypriot traditional dances are a part of the island's musical heritage. They are a vital part of various festivities and family feasts; they are even a part of people's everyday working routine.

Dances are divided into three categories:

- a) Individual dances of virtuosity, which are mainly performed by men who use an object such as a scythe, a knife or cups to accompany their dance
- b) Male dances, performed solely by men
- c) Female dances performed solely by women

In Cypriot traditional dances men and women do not dance with each other. The only dance where mixing of a man and a woman is allowed, is the dance of the groom and the bride during their marriage. However, earlier evidence indicates that in some cases the married couple danced separately. The bride danced with bridesmaids and the groom danced with their groomsmen.

While dancing the body must be in a characteristic position. Must be erect and proud not humped; the hands should be at head height and not lower. Moreover, another characteristic element of Cypriot dances is the dancers' improvisation. Cypriot dances have a strong improvisation element; they are usually composed by two people and are danced in a strongly competitive and comparative atmosphere.



### 3.1 Male Dances

The male dances are cheerful and live and give the opportunity to dancers to show their virtuosity, their movement abilities and sometimes even their singing abilities. As a good dancer is perceived the one who is able to dance in a small limited space, such as a small marble, and to keep constantly the rhythm during his performance.

The main characteristics of the male dances are the competitiveness, the movements of the arms which are usually extended sidewise, strong hits of the feet on the floor and the drum of their fingers which helped them to keep the rhythm. Dancers adopt a smiling and proud style while dancing, in order to inspire and communicate confidence to their audience. It is worth-mentioning that many of the dancers use to gather dust from the floor before they start to dance because this makes the sound of their fingers drumming even louder. Many dancers are characterized by this action and as a result they are distinguished even from a long distance. Generally all the movements of men show bravery. The best reward was mainly an admiration of the girl and the world around.

*Kartzilamas*<sup>2</sup> comes from the Turkish word *karsisinda*, which means “opposite”. *Kartzilamas* is a popular folk dance originating from Turkey. The main concept of it, as the name indicates, is two dancers dancing opposite each other, facing each other. The dancers are not following specific moves, they just perform based on elements and figures they have either been taught from their elders, or moves deriving from improvisation. It is common that *Kartzilamas* figures differ depending on the region; it is a dance mainly performed in wedding ceremonies and celebrations.

---

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EaZwEVO6XhA>

*Kartzilamas* is composed in four parts: the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th *Kartzilamas*. The dances always start with the 1st *Kartzilamas* which is the most cheerful, lively and difficult; it is written in scale A minor, Allegro in compound meter 9/8 (3+2+2+2) and is danced by 2 men who stand opposite from each other, with the hands spread in the air, at a distance of about 1-2 meters. The 2nd *Kartzilamas* follows. This is also written in a compound meter 7/8 (3+2+2) in scale E minor, Allegro. The 3rd *Kartzilamas*, is written in scale D major, Allegro in a simple meter 2/4. Usually these dances are danced consecutively and as a result they are perceived as one dance. The 4th *Kartzilamas* is written in E minor, Allegretto and in a compound meter 9/8 (3+2+2+2); in some areas, this dance has a different name and is called *Mpalos* (in Greek Μπάλος). *Mpalos* differs from the previous dances in the sense that during the dance, one of the two dancers stops dancing and starts to sing, while at the same time, the other dancer continues to dance. However, in the last decades the 4th *Kartzilamas*, or *Mpalos*, is suppressed because of the lack of dancers who can combine dance and singing.

*Zeibekiko*<sup>3</sup> is a Greek dance and is one of the most popular and beloved dances and rhythms, written in a compound meter 9/8 (4+2+3). It was introduced in the Greek mainland around 1922 from regions of Asia Minor (today's Turkey) as a result of the trade and good relations this area had with mainland Greece. It was very soon introduced in Cyprus as well, where it was modified and adjusted and traditional elements were added. Thus, the Cypriot *zeibekiko*, as opposed to the Greek one, is written in meter 9/8 (2+2+2+3). It is a dance known for its vivid way of dancing and its figures. During the

---

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b1xhUoNdtxQ>

dance, the dancer can easily create and perform his own figures and show his virtuosity more than in any other of the Cypriot dances.

*Zeibekiko* often follows after the *Kartzilamas* dances. The main concept is that one of the two dancers will perform a solo dance, while in the meantime the other dancer, along with other people, will surround the dancer and clap their hands to the rhythm and encourage the dancer. This role will later on be reversed. There are dancers who are famous for their special performance of *Zeibekiko*.

### 3.2 Virtuosity dances accompanied by objects

*Sickle dance*<sup>4</sup> was one of the main tools which the Cypriot farmers were using in the fields and in their daily work. By the end of April, the good farmer daily routine was to harvest the crops from early in the morning. The harvest of the crops (mainly wheat) was a hard and tiring task which required motivation, effort and time. When farmers were about to finish the harvesting, they were leaving a part of the harvest field uncollected and they would then dance around it, so as to express their happiness for the completion of their work. As time passed by, this custom was added in the traditional dances of Cyprus. Therefore during the sickle dance, skilful dances show this historic procedure of the harvesting of the crops.

The dancer, while holding a sharp sickle, performs in characteristic moves such as to move the sickle around his body and above his head. Also, in a move resembling the cutting of the crops, the dancer crouches and pretends to cut grains, without stopping the dance. Although this dance may be dangerous, it is at the same time very impressive and shows the excellent virtuosity of the dancer with the object. People are often worried in the sickle slipping from the hands of the dancer and injuring somebody from the crowd. The dance consists of two parts; the first one is written in meter 2/4 and the second in 5/8 in scale A minor dorian, Allegretto.

---

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L1cuPWHv2YA>

*Tatsia* (in Greek: Τατσιά)<sup>5</sup> is a circle-shaped sieve that Cypriots use in their daily life for the sieving of flour. *Tatsia* is made of a wooden frame and a metallic base which has several small holes for the sieving of the unwanted parts of the wheat that are left in the flour. As time passed, the *tatsia* was also recognized as an individual dancing object. The *tatsia* dance is an impressive dance which requires the dancer to have skills, virtuosity and full control of his hands.

The dancer dances holding the *tatsia* sideways, (vertically) by placing his four fingers on the inside perimeter of the *tatsia* and his thumb on the outside perimeter. After performing some moves, the dancer, while still holding the *tatsia* vertically, places a glass of wine or water on the bottom of the inside perimeter of the sieve and continues to dance. The dancer performs by moving and turning the *tatsia* with speed and grace around his head and close to his body, forming a big 8, while always being very cautious to not drop the glass that is on the inside perimeter of the *tatsia*. Depending on his experience, the dancer can add even more glasses to his *tatsia* while always being very careful of the glasses not to fall or the wine to spill. In this case, the dance becomes more and more spectacular.

*Tatsia* is a solely male Cypriot dance of virtuosity which can be danced in order to either impress a woman or in the context of competition between the dancers. The dance is written the same rhythm as the dance of sickle and has two parts, 2/4 and 5/8 in the same scale as well.

---

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ac5Uc7Mz3mE>

*The glasses dance*<sup>6</sup>: The dancer who performs the glasses dance is called to show his abilities and to provide a great show to his audience. The glasses dance is written in a G major, Andantino. The dance can either have a short or long duration; this depends on the dancers. Therefore the musicians who accompany the dancer's performance continue playing a variety of songs until the dancer completes his dance.

The dancer covers a half full glass of water with a handkerchief, which he then turns upside down and places it over his head. The dancer tries to dance while balancing the glass on his head, without using his hands. The dancer performs for a while, does some moves and then kneels so that people can place extra glasses (without water this time) on the top of the other glass, on the dancer's head. This is repeated throughout a

dance until the dancer overcomes his personal record of glasses placed on his head. At the moment, the biggest number of glasses that a dancer managed to balance on his head is 32 vertical glasses. The glasses dance is a really impressive dance but is at the same time a really tiring one.

---

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i8ionpgTJWc>

*Knife* is an impressive Cypriot dance written in meter 2/4, which alters to 5/8 by the end of the dance. Usually, Knife's melody is the same with *Tatsia* and Sickle's dance melody, with some musicians adding their own improvisations to differentiate themselves from others. It's called "Knife dance" because it is performed by two men who are pretending to fight each other, with one of them holding a knife.

The dancer holding the knife, moves it rhythmically around and above his dance partner and then he stabs the knife on the ground. With his dance partner's help, the dancer bends and takes the knife with his teeth and stands again to continue the dance. The dancer, while performing, moves the knife really close to his dance partner's face and around his body, with a great virtuosity. The dancer with the knife is never allowed to get hold of the knife with his hands; in case he does, the dance is perceived as a failure and he is making fool of himself. Sometimes, the dancer with the knife becomes really dashing and risky and the audience worries whether the dancer will make a clumsy move and hit his dance partner by accident.

As the dance moves on, the dancer 'stabs' his dance partner and lifts him up in his arms to show that he is the winner of the fight. After the end of this tragic demonstration, the dancer obviously satisfied with his skills, leaves the stage dancing, accompanied by the musicians in a quick rhythm of 5/8 with different improvisations.

The knife dance used to be performed a lot in Cypriot weddings and it was a show of young dancer's skills to the audience and especially to women who were there watching the show. Unfortunately, this dance has been forgotten as the years went by and many young people do not know about its existence anymore.

*Nikolis*<sup>7</sup> (a Cypriot man's name) is a comic dance which differs from the other dances. *Nikolis* is danced by a funny male dancer who has a paper tail attached on the back of his *vraka* (traditional male costume, in Greek: βράκα). The dancer starts to dance and he challenges the people who are attending the show to set fire on his tail, if they can; this is difficult, since he is moving his body right and left really quickly.

At the end of the dance, somebody pretends that he holds the dancer and keeps him still and immobilized, so that people from the audience get the chance to set fire to the dancer's paper tail. When *Nikolis* realizes what happens, he shouts "fire, fire" and leaves the stage running, making the audience laugh hard. This dance is written in scale C major, Andantino in a meter 2/4.

---

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Al9TNCYhDzQ>



### 3.3 Female Dances

Cypriot female dances are totally different from the male ones. Women in Cyprus are used to do the housework, to sew, to do hand embroideries and to be responsible for the children's upbringing. All these habits had an influence to female dances, thus shaping them in a particular way. Cypriot female dances are characterized by modesty, calmness and seriousness. All those characteristics show once again how the female gender used to be under the command of the male one. Compared to the male dances, the female dances are missing the exaggeration, the sudden moves and the moving of the hands. This is a way for the female dancers to show respect to their audience.

The female dancers create an imaginary square in their minds and each dancer performs 'in her own square'. Their arms take limited positions; usually the one hand is held against their waste and the other hand either hanging down or being at shoulder height, holding/waving a handkerchief. These dances take different forms in different areas. For instance in some villages in Cyprus women are also dancing in a circle as a group.

*Women's Kartzilamas*<sup>8</sup> has four separate phases (The First, Second, Third and Fourth *Women's Kartzilamas*, same like men's *Kartzilama*). These dances are mainly performed after the wedding.

The 1st *Women's Kartzilamas* is written in a scale A minor, Andantino in meter 9/8 (2-3-2-2). It is performed by women who dance face to face with each other in an approximate distance of two measures. Their hands are balanced high at shoulder height. In some

---

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CG8XMaC41w>

Cypriot regions women have their hands crossed in front and close to their body or they dance with their hands loose next to their body.

Later on follows the 2nd women's *Kartzilama* known as 'the waist dance'. This dance is named as such, because in the beginning of the dance the dancers have their hands placed on their waist, at attention position with their right hand usually holding a handkerchief. The dance is written in a scale E minor, Allegro in meter 7/8.

After the end of the second dance the 3rd women's *Kartzilamas* follows, which is also known as the "dance of the couple". This is the only case in Cypriot dances where a man and a woman dance together. The 3rd *Kartzilamas* is written in a scale D major, Allegretto in metre 2/4. The groom, usually wearing a silk scarf around his neck and a twig of basil placed on his ear, admires the bride who holds a white handkerchief in her hand. With small rhythmic steps, the groom approaches the bride and starts dancing with her. The white handkerchief that the newlyweds hold symbolizes the eternity for which the couple will live together. The dance becomes more fascinating when the people attending the ceremony, such as parents, relatives and children, start the *ploumisma* (in Greek: *πλούμισμα*) which is actually the pinning of banknotes on the groom's costume and on the bride's wedding dress. The *ploumisma* or the pinning of banknotes on the newly-weds clothes developed as a tradition after the Second World War, when people were poorer and this was a way to help the new couple in starting their new life.

After the *ploumisma* is finished, the bride and her bridesmaids, dance the 4th Women's *Kartzilama* which is written in scale E minor dorian, Allegretto in metre 9/8. Women face each other and with limited rhythmic moves of their hands and by holding a needle, they demonstrate the sewing and how they made the embroideries on their bed. With this dance women show once again their modesty and dedication to their home and family.

#### 4. Musical instruments in Cyprus

The main musical instruments of Cyprus fall under three categories: the strings instruments - the violin and lute, the wind instrument called *pithkiavli* and percussion instrument *tampoutsia*. History indicates that the *pithkiavli* is one of the oldest traditional instruments of Cyprus which was crafted by Cypriots to accompany the cycle of wedding songs as violin and lute do now.

Previous information portrays that string instruments were brought to Cyprus by different conquerors of the island and have since then remained, to be the most basic instruments of Cyprus. The violin completely replaces the *pithkiavli* and the lute took place in the Cypriot orchestra because it has the ability to accompany the violin with rhythm and chords. Thus an integrated Cypriot folk music group consists of the violin playing the melody, the lute playing the harmony and the fillings, and completed by *tampoutsia* which keeps up to the rhythm.

Nowadays various other instruments are introduced and added in by small group of musicians, in order to fill in and enrich the Cypriot traditional music. Although some of them are consistent with Cypriot musical style, some others are not, thus bands try to maintain and promote those instruments that have the Cypriot traditional element.

#### 4.1 Pithkiavli

The *pithkiavli* is the predominantly traditional instrument of Cyprus. It is a type of flute. It is mainly made of cane and rarely by wood of 20-25 centimeters. *Pithkiavli* has six holes on its front side and one at the back, for the thumb and it gives intervals of a diatonic scale. *Pithkiavli* can often be found decorated with engraved designs or with snakeskin. Dried snake skin was believed to not only protect the *pithkiavli* from the damage caused by cracks, but also from the damage caused by bad spirits. *Pithkiavli* was mainly played by shepherds while their animals were grazing. Shepherds were virtuosos in crafting and playing the *pithkiavli*. They had sensitive hearing and they were tuning their instrument according to the jingling of the bells of their herd, in order to be tuned in the same scale.

The *pithkiavli* is an instrument of improvisation and this is the reason why it cannot be easily introduced in an orchestra. Each *pithkiavli* has its own tuning which cannot be altered. It is a unique instrument which has a magical and sweet melody, like a bird's chirping.

## 4.2 Lute

Nowadays, the lute is one of the main accompanying instruments in Cypriot folk music. Until about the mid–20th century, there were factories producing string instruments in Cyprus, which unfortunately, gradually disappeared because of the importation of foreign instruments and music, at the expense of Cypriot traditional music.

The Cypriot lute has 98 centimeters of length and is fitted with four double chords. Its tuning fifth: C, G, D, A, and tuning an octave lower than the violin. It is played with a special key, which is made from a raptor bird's feather. It is a great honor and pleasure for lute players when someone gives them this kind of feather, especially an eagle's one.

The older lute players, who accompanied the violin, were usually playing the tonicity and rarely other chords and they were keeping up to the rhythm by hitting the sound box. After the Second World War they began using the chords of west harmony. Until today, the lute is a purely accompanying instrument.

However, there are also excellent lute players who play the lute as a melodic instrument without having the need of the violin; in the highest string they mostly play the melody and in the other strings, the accompaniment. Most of the times, within the traditional Cypriot orchestra, the lute players have the additional role of singing while playing the songs.

### **4.3 Tampoutsia**

*Tampoutsia* belongs to the percussion instrument family. It was initially used by Cypriots as a kitchen utensil, as a way to transfer goods such as food, from one place to another. It was also used during the wheat harvest. However, when people realized that *tampoutsia* could also be used along with musical rhythm and traditional dance, they incorporated it into their musical instruments.

*Tampoutsia* is circle-shaped, with a diameter of 40-60cm. It is a frame made of wood, which is covered on the one side by leather nailed on the wooden frame. Often, due to humidity, the leather loosens and it thus must be warmed up so that it gets back to its normal size and be usable again.

Year after year this kitchen utensil became a custom of the Cypriot dances and through festivals and ceremonies it was integrated into the Cypriot traditional orchestra, of which it has become one of the basic instruments.

#### **4.4 Violin**

The violin is a string instrument of worldwide fame. The violin appeared during the 16th century in Italy and was created from big manufacturers families such as Amati, Guarneri and Stradivarius. Those families crafted wonderful instruments which are unsurpassed until today.

It is estimated that the violin arrived in Cyprus in the beginning of the 18th century and it is since then, the most basic instrument in the Cypriot traditional orchestra, which is necessary in every feast, wedding and celebration. In Cyprus, musicians who play the violin are grouped into two categories: the “violinist” who is the typical musician who plays the classical music and the “violaris” who is the musician who only plays traditional music (The latter, learn how to play the violin through listening, through a procedure called “auditory learning”).

In the old days when a young person wanted to become a professional “violaris” he had to go to the “mastro” (this is how teacher was called then). The lessons were daily and they were sometimes taking place twice a day, once in the morning and once in the afternoon. Teaching was practical without books and notes; in other words the teaching was not based in theories. The teacher would play one piece of music. The student would listen to it and then repeat it. After the lesson, the student would go home, practice and reflect on what he was taught. The following day he would perform that piece to the teacher and if he was found to have played satisfactorily, the teacher would teach him another piece. It was often the case, that the teacher would be very strict if the students did not learn their taught music pieces.

Having this approach of learning, meant that in a year’s time, a good student would have learnt the violin’s technique and a big part of the Cypriot musical repertoire. If the teacher judged that his student was good enough, he would send him to play the violin alone at a wedding or at another feast, in order for the student to start creating his own musical networking. In the meantime, the student would continue taking the lessons as

usual, until he became a really good and skilled violaris. The teacher was paid either per month or per lesson and the price of the lessons was depending on how popular and how skilful the teacher was.

A truly good violaris, who was worthy of his reputation and worthy of his teacher, should know the whole of Cypriot musical repertoire. It was perceived to be insulting should somebody ask from a violaris to play a musical piece, which he would not be in a position to perform.

The aforementioned description indicates the way in which the violin was taught in Cyprus in the olden days and depicts how the Cypriot traditional music passed from generation to generation. However, as the years passed by, most of the musicians began to seek a higher and more theoretical education. This knowledge and this improvement on their skills introduces a new era for the Cypriot traditional music.



## **5. Cypriot garments and attire**

Cypriot people give special attention to their traditional garment. Each garment is a composite piece of art which shows not only the techniques of weaving and decoration, but also shows the virtuosity and the emotion of its creator. The use traditional garment gradually declined and was finally driven to extinction by the end of the 19th, beginning of the 20th century. This gradual decline was due to the importation of foreign garments, especially during the English colonial era. It was also due to the fact that, compared to the Cypriot garments which were handcrafted with great detail and attention, the imported garments were cheaper and they did not need as much time to be tailored. The Cypriot traditional garment is famous for its comfort and its prettiness. It is mainly made of silk and cotton. The characteristic material used for the garments' decoration is the woven cotton, using which, the tailors tailored slim vertical or crisscross stripes, in a combination of traditional colors such as deep red, green, orange, yellow and blue. The traditional costumes are very closely related to the Cypriot music; it is, thus, often said that the traditional Cypriot attire carries a sense of musicality.

## 5.1 Men's Garment

The main part of the men's garment is the *vraka* which was worn by men across island. *Vraka* is traditional, inflated trousers made by thick white cotton cloth. Once the *vraka* was tailored, it was dyed by local specialized dyers, in black for older people and in blue for the younger ones. Depending on the region, there were many different kinds of *vraka*. The good *vraka* was the one which was very wide and comfortable.

On a *vraka's* upper part there was a long lace which was used to tie the trousers. The lace was typically made of wick and it was usually called *vrakozoni*, or more rarely in some other regions *fakarona*. On a *vraka's* bottom part there were two holes for the legs to pass through. On the back of a *vraka* there was the *vakla* which was a cloth looking like a tail. Its purpose was to keep the *vraka* tied up during the dance, helping the dancers perform without any disturbances. This part was called as such because *vakla* in the Cypriot dialect means "tail of the sheep". As mentioned above, a *vraka's* shape differed from place to place. For instance, in the areas of Cyprus where people used to work outside in the fields, *vraka* used to be longer and was worn with shorter or flat shoes; on the contrary, in the mountain areas, the *vraka* was shorter because people were wearing boots to the height of their knees. Thus, the shape of *vraka* varied for practical reasons, since people had jobs in respect to the place they lived in. Underneath the *vraka*, men were wearing white cotton underwear which looked like a smaller *vraka* and it was running down to the knee. On the underwear's edges there were laces which were tied around the knees. It is worth noting that the *vraka*, was a complex piece of clothing to tailor, handle or maintain, as well as to wear. In order to show this complexity, Cypriots wrote a song for the *vraka*, in A minor scale in 2/4 meter and fast paced Allegretto. And the first verse is:

“Your beautiful vraka, which sounds as triki-traka,” (referring to a rhythmic sound which the vraka would produce if made from a different material)

“and who you wash your vraka in the lake,  
and who will stretch it out in the sun to dry,  
and who is that person who is so worthy of ironing it,  
your beautiful vraka which sounds as triki-traka.”

On top, to accompany the *vraka*, men were usually wearing a shirt, which was different depending on the occasion. For instance, during formal occasions such as weddings and other festivities men used to wear a white silk shirt which had a variety of sewing and decorations. In their daily lives and during work, men used to wear dark striped shirts which had different quality and they were much cheaper. Initially, men's shirt did not have collars but gradually this changed and non-collar shirts were replaced by those with collars.

On top of the shirt, men were wearing a vest which was worn as the jacket of the costume. There were two kinds of vests: the sleeveless one which was mainly worn during the summer hot days and the sleeved one which was worn during the winter. The vest was made out of either black woollen cloth or velvet and it had an embroidered simple decoration. The formal vest was made out of dark or red velvet cloth which was decorated with colourful embroideries of birds and other shapes.

On their waist, men used to wear the well-known *zostra* which in the Cypriot dialect literally means “belt”. The *zostra* was a long and narrow woollen cloth, which normally had black color and red stripes on its edges. Its width was around 20cm and its length was around 2 meters. This belt was worn around men's waist, not only to keep their *vraka* tied but also in order to appear as well dressed. On this belt, men used to tie their wallets, their keys and a knife. Interestingly, in the olden days if somebody would leave his *zostra* to fall on the floor, it meant that he wanted to challenge somebody who was there to a

fight. If that person would accept the challenge, he had to just pick up the *zostra* from the floor.

Most men used to wear socks or *klatses*, as they are called in the Cypriot dialect, so as to keep their feet warm. Their socks were made of black simple cloth which would come up to the knee; some socks were knitted out of wool, but those socks were mainly worn during the winter time.

The shepherds and farmers used to wear boots known as *podines* which were specifically made for their jobs. Underneath these boots there were thick nails which were assisting those people to grip and cope with their job's difficult conditions. For instance, those nails helped them to grip and balance when walking on slippery ground. Because of the way those boots were crafted and the materials used, they were very heavy. These boots were crafted using goat's leather and their sewing was made using waxed pig hair. It is worth mentioning that there was no right or left boot and so they could be worn on any of the two feet. Another kind of shoes was *skarpes*. *Skarpes* were short, thick,

leather shoes without laces, which came up to just the height of the ankle. Those shoes were worn by the men whose working conditions were not that difficult.

In the Cypriot wardrobe, there was a variety of hats that men used to wear, depending on the occasion and the historical period. During the English colonialism, men were obliged to wear the *fesi* (cap with a red tassel) and underneath it, they used to wear a white cotton skullcap to hold the sweat. Another kind of hat was the fabric hat which men used to wear for the special occasions and also the straw hat which was worn by people who were working outdoors, under the sun.

## 5.2 Women's Garment

There are three different women's Cypriot garments: the *sagia*, the *foustani* and the *astiki*.

The *sagia* was the garment worn during the 19th century. This word originates from the French word *sayon* which means fabric and it was established during the Frankokratia (=rule of the Franks in Cyprus).

The *sagia* was a three-layered outfit. The piece worn on top, was open at the front; underneath it; women used to wear a long shirt which run down to just above their ankles, decorated with colored beads. Underneath the long shirt, they used to wear a white *vraka* (the female trousers); thus, their legs were totally covered. The white *vraka*'s edges, around the ankles, were decorated with embroideries which were made by women themselves. The *sagia* was made of precious silk striped fabrics. This dress did not differ much from place to place; it was more or less uniform, apart from the small details on the embroideries that women were making. This garment reflects the conservative character of this era when women had to cover their whole body.

The *foustani* (=dress) was a long dress, worn across Cyprus with some color variations, depending on the region and its use. It had a vivid color, it was made out of a silk fabric, and it was dyed using natural paints in yellow, orange, green and brown colorations. Underneath the dress, women were wearing a silk shirt which had a discreet decoration on its sleeves and on the chest, which indicated women's respect to breastfeeding. To accompany the dress they were usually wearing an embroidered apron, which was used for their daily chores.

The *astiki* (=urban) garment was established during the second half of the 19th century. It consists of a wide silk skirt, a snug long-sleeve jacket and a long shirt, similar to the *saya* garment. On their head, women were wearing a scarf which would their hair tied. The scarf was tied in a bow shape and it was often decorated with a flower.

Another characteristic of the Cypriot women's attire was women's hair styling. Normally, women used to have their hair plaited either in two plaits, which they would leave loose, or tie around their head, or in just one plait, left on the side, both of which they covered with a colorful scarf. During this period of time, it was really important that women had long hair and it was perceived as bad and unethical when they had it short.

Around their waist, especially when working outside in the fields, they were wearing the *zwnari* (= belt made of fabric), similarly to men. The difference in the women's *zonari*, was that it was a colorful square fabric which looked like a big scarf, was folded diagonally and tied around their waist; it was used predominantly as an extra scarf for their hair.

The women's wedding garment is the same as today; a silk white dress embroidered with gold thread and pieces of colored felt. This was always accompanied by a red scarf around their waste so that the bride would be distinguished from all the rest of the women who were attending the ceremony. This garment was accompanied by different jewels like gold chains, earrings and bracelets.

## 6. Conclusion

During the course of research and through the compilation process of my work, I had the chance to learn a great deal regarding the musical tradition of my birthplace.

I decided to write something in relation to the Cypriot wedding in particular, because a wedding, or the union of a couple, is considered to be a joyous event in all the cultures irrespective of religion and religious beliefs. Every civilization and culture has created very own traditions and customs in respect of weddings, dances, music and attire, depending on its history; as such, in Cyprus, people have created their own musical traditions. I have come to realize, that the Cypriot wedding is not a mere ceremony; it is a grand event. It is an event which lasts for more than a week, during which all the friends, relatives and the residents of a village participate in the joy of the newly weds.

This grand event was preceded by a range of preparatory actions; all those actions have something to say about the way of life of Cypriots; they have developed over time in response to needs that arose from the ordinary, everyday life of the people.

Through this research, I was driven to write about the Cypriot dances as well; these dances are a key component of the Cypriot tradition and are distinguished and unique to any other type of dance in respect of rhythm. These dances derive from the everyday life of Cypriots. By dancing these dances during several festive, or other, gatherings, people reveal a plethora of emotions: love, happiness, relief, sorrow, flirt, affection; and the list goes on endlessly. I am amazed particularly from the individual virtuosity dances; I am intrigued by the procedure through which they came into existence as well as I am impressed with the objects used to perform these dances.

Undeniably, I could not omit to write about the traditional organs. They form a vital part of the Cypriot way of life. Two of them derived exclusively from Cypriots and their way of life and are unique in their kind, in the way they are constructed, as well as in the way

they were taught. Particularly, the teaching of the violin was conducted in a way which we rarely come across nowadays.

An other point which amazed and intrigued me, was the traditional attire. It is not just any attire; it is an attire made to the measure of the Cypriot way of life. It is a tool, utilized in such a way, as to serve people and their needs. During the tailoring of the Cypriot traditional garments, so much attention to detail is paid, that I believe I would not be exaggerating if I claimed that every part of the Cypriot traditional attire, as well as the final result as a whole, is a piece of art.



## **7. Summary**

In summing up this work was the opportunity to explore a part of the traditional music and attire of Cyprus which has bidirectional element of influence: it is influenced by the Cypriot everyday life, as well as having an influence on Cypriot everyday life until today. Although the interest in our musical tradition and our customs has considerably declined, there are young people, members of various bands or groups, who have fresh ideas, which will not only maintain, but will also promote and advance our Cypriot culture. It is clear that the Cypriot musical tradition reflects the spirit and character of the Cypriot people and accompanies the good and bad moments throughout their life. Through this work I discovered several underlying messages and feelings of the Cypriot traditional music, which in turn made me appreciate my Cypriot culture even more.

8. Attachment

5. ΤΡΑΓΟΥΔΙ ΤΟΥ ΓΑΜΟΥ  
στόλισμα του γαμπρού και νύμφης

Andantino  $\text{♩} = 72$   
Intro

The musical score is written in G major and 2/4 time. It features a Violino (violin) accompaniment and a Canto (singing) line. The score is divided into two systems, each with two staves. The first system includes an 'Intro' section followed by the first two staves. The second system includes the continuation of the two staves. The lyrics are in Greek and describe the wedding of the groom and bride.

1.  
2. Canto  
Canto  
Violino Canto  
Canto  
Violino 1.  
2. Canto  
Violino Canto  
Violino

Ω - ρα κα - λ'η τζι'ω -  
ρα γρου - σ'η Τζι'ω -  
ρα ευ - λο - η - μ'ε - νη.  
Το'υ - τη δου - λει'α π'α -  
ρκ'ε - ψα - μεν να  
βκει στε - ρε - ω - μ'ε - νη.



*Sewing of the bed*



*Groom's preparation: The shaving*



*The procession from the house to the church*



*Sickle*



*Tatsia*



*The glasses dance*



*Dance of the couple (ploumisma)*



*Pithkiavli*



*Lute*



*Tambourine*



*Official dress as a man*



*Everyday dress as a man*





*Sagia*



*astiki*



*foustani*

## 8. Bibliography

ΦΩΝΕΣ ΚΑΙ ΤΡΟΠΟΙ ΤΗΣ ΓΗΣ (Ταξίδι στην μουσική παραδοση της Κυπρου) :

Μαριος Ορθοδοξου, Λαρνακα – Κυπρος 2002

Kallinikos, T: Cypriot Folklore Muse. Nicosia – Cyprus 1951

[www.nostoc-nostoc.blogspot.cz/2011/02/blog-post\\_18.html](http://www.nostoc-nostoc.blogspot.cz/2011/02/blog-post_18.html)

[www.mcit.gov.cy/mcit/chs/chs.nsf/DMLcostumes-gr/DMLcostumes-gr?OpenDocument](http://www.mcit.gov.cy/mcit/chs/chs.nsf/DMLcostumes-gr/DMLcostumes-gr?OpenDocument)

[www.markellas.blogspot.cz/2014/04/blog-post-26.html](http://www.markellas.blogspot.cz/2014/04/blog-post-26.html)

[www.hiropoiito.blogspot.cz/2010/12/cyprus-folk-dance-dredge.html](http://www.hiropoiito.blogspot.cz/2010/12/cyprus-folk-dance-dredge.html)

[www.eknadance.cyprusnet.gr/index.php?section=7](http://www.eknadance.cyprusnet.gr/index.php?section=7)

[www.vasilitzia.org.cy](http://www.vasilitzia.org.cy)

[www.nostoc-nostoc.blogspot.cz/2012/10/blog-post-8139.html](http://www.nostoc-nostoc.blogspot.cz/2012/10/blog-post-8139.html)

[www.dance-pandect.gr](http://www.dance-pandect.gr)

[www.linou.org.cy/gr/customs-lgr/wedding-lgr](http://www.linou.org.cy/gr/customs-lgr/wedding-lgr)

[www.netgamos.gr/articleCyprus.html](http://www.netgamos.gr/articleCyprus.html)

[www.santoriniosgamos.blogspot.cz/2012/10/blog-post\\_28.html](http://www.santoriniosgamos.blogspot.cz/2012/10/blog-post_28.html)