

Welcome Kostis!

We are delighted to welcome Dr. Kostis Tsioulakis to SCA. He is a multi award-winning film and concert composer, pianist and arranger. He also formed the ethnic-jazz band "Checkmate in Two Flats". We managed to catch up with Kostis, via some dodgy internet connections, while he was touring Europe on holiday with his wife and new baby to ask him about his background.



Could you tell us something of your background, Do you come from a musical family?

In a way, yes. My father, in his youth, was a percussionist/drummer, my mother used to sing and play the guitar and my grandfather was a self taught pianist and guitar player. So I grew up surrounded by a variety of musical instruments and was lucky enough to have a practice/recording studio at my disposal since I was seven. It is noteworthy that me and my brother were the first ones in the family to receive a proper classical education since we were 6 years old.

When did you start composing and what sort of music was it.?

My first compositions were solely based on piano, at the age of 11-12, when I had to compose a little project as an assignment for school (I attended a music school in Athens). Apart from these assignments, I used to play around with the piano and compose little miniatures, usually based on minor keys and of a slow and heavy pace. I used to arbitrarily call them 'my film music'.

After studies at home you came to England to study at Bristol University. What drew you to England to study.

After I finished my BA in History and Archaeology, as well as my piano diploma and music theory studies, I wanted to pursue a career in film music. Bristol University has a great reputation on this subject, so I applied. I had been in the UK before, for holidays and work (concerts with one of my bands) therefore I was, in a way, familiar with the culture, way of living etc.

Following your Film music MA you carried on to complete a PhD in composition. Was your aim to specialise in concert music or to broaden out into further areas of composition and music making?

My initial thought was the latter. I always felt that film composers, who solely use their computer to make music, were missing a lot of interesting adventures. Having said that, the moment I started composing concert music more seriously I 'fell in love' with contemporary composing techniques. This also changed my film-music compositional style.

Could you tell us the composers/music you're been mainly influenced by?

First, by far, Bela Bartok. Many will say 'what about new music?' But, every single time I listen to Bartok's string quartets I discover something new in technique, sound, harmony, rhythm. Stravinsky's rhythms and Debussy's harmonies also have a huge role in my 'compositional textbook' Newer music that affected my stylistic approach to concert music: Yannis Christou, Thomas Ades and of course my teachers Stathis Oulkeroglou, Neal Farwell, John Pickard and very much, due to our common Influence from Turkish music, Michael Elisson. Regarding film music, my biggest influence was and still is Dario Marianelli. His score for *Atonement* has taught me so much about diegetic and non-diegetic film music, and most of all, about how to 'read' a film properly. Marianelli's conceptual representation of one film's atmosphere is, to me, unique. Also Takemitsu's techniques and dynamics as well as John Williams' references to romantic composers have very much shaped my cinematic compositional signature.

Are there any projects in the pipeline at the moment?

In fact I'm finishing now the music for a short documentary about wildlife in Namibia. Has such amazing landscapes and colours, so inspiring for composers. Will be released early winter 2018.