

CARMELO SICILIANO

# GREEK FOLK MUSIC

An Anthology of Tunes

VOLUME 1



FILELLENIA

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Made with L<sup>A</sup>T<sub>E</sub>X by Carmelo Siciliano



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# Introduction

This volume inaugurates a series devoted to the rich and diverse world of Greek folk music. Its purpose is to provide musicians, researchers, and enthusiasts with a carefully curated selection of traditional tunes drawn from various regions of Greece. Each piece is presented with the aim of balancing scholarly accuracy with practical usability, allowing both performers and students to approach this vibrant musical heritage with confidence and understanding.

## Transcription Criteria

Transcribing Greek music—as with most forms of traditional music—is a challenging task that often requires difficult decisions. Every choice involves a compromise between faithfulness to the original recording and the readability of the sheet music, and therefore its practical usefulness.

Greek folk music is essentially heterophonic: voices and instruments follow similar, though not identical, melodic lines. In instrumental music especially, melodic variations depend not only on the type of instrument used, but also on its tuning (in fourths, fifths, etc.), its distinctive techniques, and of course, the performer's individual skill.

Just as a spoken language can sound different from one speaker to another, it is nearly impossible in Greece to find two musicians playing the same melody in exactly the same way. Even a single musician will often render the same musical phrase with one or more variations.

All the pieces in this anthology have been transcribed to help the reader study and practice traditional Greek music. The transcriptions follow the recordings as closely as possible, though they do not include every ornament or spontaneous variation. The result is a didactic score that conveys the essence of each melody, rather than a pedantic reproduction.

## Discographic Reference

The transcriptions are based on specific recordings, whose details are provided in the introduction to each piece. The tracks can be listened to by scanning the QR codes included with each transcription, or by visiting the website: [www.carmelosiciliano.com](http://www.carmelosiciliano.com), on the dedicated page for the volume *Greek Folk Music: An Anthology of Tunes*.

## The Four Types of Transcription

Each piece is accompanied by one or more transcriptions. The "modal" transcription is the most accurate. It is intended for musicians familiar with the modal systems of Greek music and Ottoman classical music, along with their respective theoretical frameworks. Since Greeks and Turks use different reference tonics for their modal system, two modal transcriptions are provided: one with *rast* on C, following Greek convention, and another with *rast* on G, according to Ottoman practice.

The "equal-tempered" transcription is an adaptation of the corresponding modal transcription to the Western equal-tempered system, following the Greek theory of *dromi*. It uses the same tonic as the Greek modal transcription. Only one equal-tempered transcription is provided when its tonic matches that of the reference recording; otherwise, an additional transcription is included, transposed to the tonic used in the recording. In cases where a piece does not follow a discernible modal logic, only the equal-tempered transcription is provided.

## Musical Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used, both in the introductory text and in the transcriptions:

- **D.C. (Da Capo)**: an instruction meaning «from the head» or «from the beginning». It tells the performer to go back to the beginning of the piece and continue playing from there. It may be followed by indications such as "2x", "3x", etc., which specify that the *Da Capo* should be executed two times, three times, and so on;
- **Coda**: literally meaning «tail» in Italian, a *Coda* is a concluding passage that brings the piece to an end. It is often marked with a special symbol and follows a specific instruction, like *D.C. al Coda*;
- **D.C. al Coda (Da Capo al Coda)**: this means «go back to the beginning, and when you reach the sign, jump to the *Coda*». It directs the performer to return to the beginning of the piece, continue playing until reaching the *To Coda* marking, and then skip ahead to the *Coda* section;
- **Fine**: this indicates the end of the piece. When a performer is instructed to return to an earlier point (e.g., with *D.C.*), they stop at *Fine* rather than continuing to the very end of the score;
- **D.C. al Fine (Da Capo al Fine)**: «go back to the beginning and play until the word *Fine*». This tells the performer to repeat from the beginning and conclude the performance when they reach the *Fine* marking.

## Key Signature

The key signatures of the modal transcriptions follow the logic of the respective modal systems, i.e. Greek (*rast* = C) and Ottoman classical (*rast* = G). The equal-tempered transcriptions follow modal logic (with appropriate accidentals) only in the version that retains the corresponding tonic of the Greek modal system. Transpositions to match the tonic used in the recording do not include a key signature; instead, accidentals are written as needed, measure by measure. Finally, pieces that do not follow modal logic, but are instead tonal, use standard key signatures corresponding to their respective keys.

## Chords

The modal transcriptions do not include chord symbols for accompaniment. The equal-tempered transcriptions provide chord symbols to accompany the melody. It should be noted, however, that even when major or minor chords are indicated, Greek folk music often favors dyads formed by the root and the fifth. For example:

- C → C5 (C + G, without E)
- Cm → C5 (C + G, without E♭)

Chords in parentheses are optional or represent a possible alternative to the suggested ones. In any case, all chords should be understood as suggestions rather than strict prescriptions, as even within the same reference recording, harmonic accompaniments may vary.

## Special Typographical Conventions

Notes printed in a smaller font size than the surrounding ones are intended as micro-variations. Their execution is optional and left to the performer's discretion. For example, the following excerpt:



can be performed either as:



or as:



## Ornaments

I have deliberately avoided exhaustively notating every ornament, as in Greek music ornamentation is not only free and spontaneous, but also closely tied to the instrument being played, its tuning, and the overall character of the piece. However, I have included those ornaments I deemed essential for a convincing rendering of the melodic line. By way of example, the ornaments should be interpreted as follows:

The image displays 13 examples of musical ornaments, labeled a) through m), each shown on a single staff in treble clef. The ornaments are as follows:

- a) A quarter note followed by a dotted quarter note.
- b) A quarter note followed by a dotted quarter note with a sharp sign above it.
- c) A quarter note followed by a dotted quarter note with a sharp sign above it.
- d) A quarter note with a sharp sign above it, followed by a dotted quarter note with a sharp sign above it.
- e) A quarter note with a sharp sign above it, followed by a dotted quarter note with a sharp sign above it, and a triplet of eighth notes.
- f) A quarter note with a sharp sign above it, followed by a dotted quarter note with a sharp sign above it, and a triplet of eighth notes.
- g) A quarter note with a sharp sign above it, followed by a dotted quarter note with a sharp sign above it, and a triplet of eighth notes.
- h) A quarter note with a sharp sign above it, followed by a dotted quarter note with a sharp sign above it, and a triplet of eighth notes.
- i) A quarter note with a sharp sign above it, followed by a dotted quarter note with a sharp sign above it, and a triplet of eighth notes.
- j) A quarter note with a sharp sign above it, followed by a dotted quarter note with a sharp sign above it, and a triplet of eighth notes.
- k) A quarter note with a sharp sign above it, followed by a dotted quarter note with a sharp sign above it, and a triplet of eighth notes.
- l) A quarter note with a sharp sign above it, followed by a dotted quarter note with a sharp sign above it, and a triplet of eighth notes.
- m) A quarter note with a sharp sign above it, followed by a dotted quarter note with a sharp sign above it, and a triplet of eighth notes.

## Transliteration of Greek Terms

α	<i>a</i>
αι	<i>ai</i>
αυ	<i>e</i>
αι	<i>ai</i>
αυ	<i>af</i> (preceded by a voiceless consonant); <i>av</i> (preceded by a voiced consonant or by a vowel)
β	<i>v</i>
γ	<i>g</i>
γγ	<i>gg</i>
γκ	<i>gk</i>
δ	<i>d</i>
ε	<i>e</i>
ει	<i>i</i>
ευ	<i>ef</i> (preceded by a voiceless consonant); <i>ev</i> (preceded by a voiced consonant or by a vowel)
ζ	<i>z</i>
η	<i>i</i>
θ	<i>th</i>
ι, ῑ	<i>i</i>
κ	<i>k</i>
λ	<i>l</i>
μ	<i>m</i>
μπ	<i>b</i>
ν	<i>n</i>
ντ	<i>d</i> (at the beginning of a word, or within a word when preceded by a consonant); <i>nt</i> (within a word when preceded by a vowel)
ξ	<i>x</i>
ο	<i>o</i>
οη	<i>oi</i>
οι	<i>i</i>
ου	<i>ou</i>
π	<i>p</i>
ρ	<i>r</i>
σ, ς	<i>s</i>
τ	<i>t</i>
τζ	<i>tz</i>
τσ, τς	<i>ts</i>
υ	<i>i</i>
φ	<i>f</i>
χ	<i>ch</i>
ψ	<i>ps</i>
ω	<i>o</i>

# GREEK FOLK MUSIC

VOLUME 1

DEMO

## 1

# Argitikos

**Name:** *Argitikos* | *Αργεΐτικος*, «From Argo<sup>1</sup>».

**Origin:** Peloponnese.

**Discography:** *Αργεΐτικος*, from the CD *Πελοπόννησος. Ηχογραφήσεις Σίμωνος Καρά 1975–1976*, Μουσικές του Ελληνισμού series, Κέντρο Ερεύνης και Προβολής της Εθνικής Μουσικής, Athens 2015, track n. 12.

**Meter:** 7/8 (3+2+2).

**Structure:** repeat the entire structure twice.

### Transcriptions:

- Modal transcription, Greek notation (*rast=C*), page 14;
- Modal transcription, Ottoman notation (*rast=G*), page 15;
- Equal-tempered transcription (D), page 16;
- Equal-tempered transcription (A), page 17.



<sup>1</sup> Argo is a town in the northeastern Peloponnese, in the Argolid region.

# Argitikos

Modal transcription (*rast=C*)

Peloponnese

**A**

5

**B**

1. 2.

10

1. 2.

15

**C**

**B**

1. 2.

20

**B**

1. 2.

D.C. (2x)



# Argitikos

Equal-tempered transcription (D)

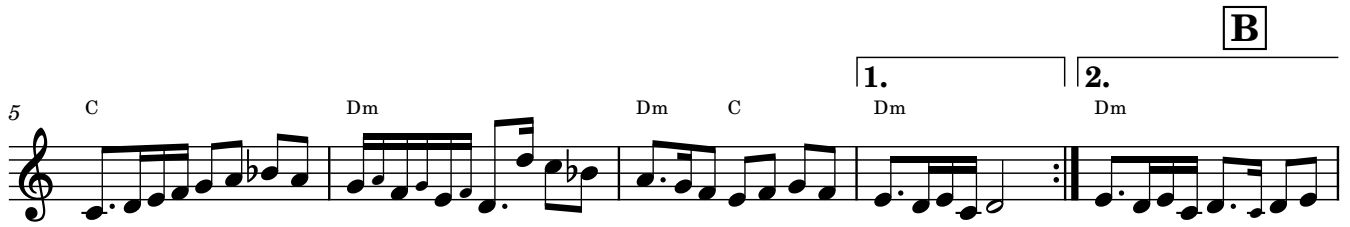
Peloponnese

**A** C Dm Dm C F



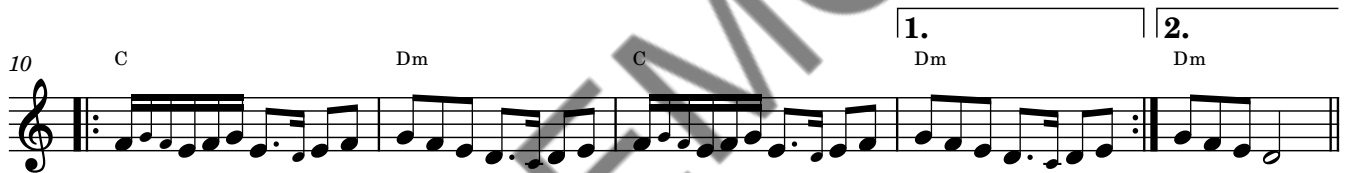
5 C Dm Dm C **B**

1. Dm 2. Dm



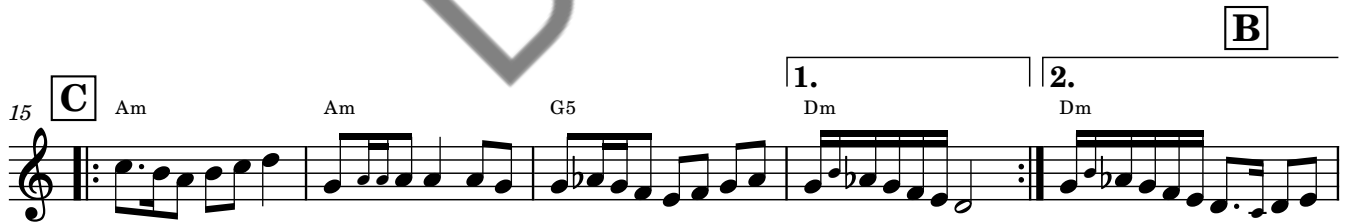
10 C Dm C **B**

1. Dm 2. Dm



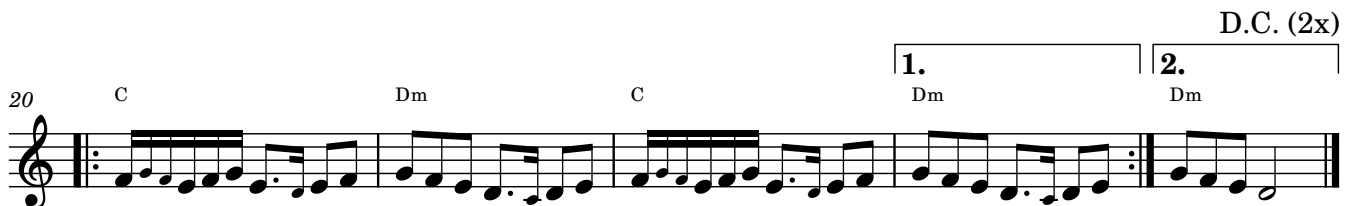
15 **C** Am Am G5 **B**

1. Dm 2. Dm



20 C Dm C **B** D.C. (2x)

1. Dm 2. Dm



# Argitikos

Equal-tempered transcription (A)

Peloponnese

**A** G Am Am G C

5 G Am Am G **B**

1. Am 2. Am

10 G Am G **B**

1. Am 2. Am

15 **C** Em Em D5 **B**

1. Am 2. Am

20 G Am G **B** D.C. (2x)

1. Am 2. Am

# Greek Folk Music • 1

Step into the vibrant world of *Greek Folk Music* with this unique anthology—an essential resource for musicians, educators, and enthusiasts eager to explore one of the Mediterranean’s most expressive musical traditions. This first volume in the *Greek Folk Music* series includes:

- **22 TUNES** from diverse regions of both mainland and insular Greece, including areas within and outside modern-day Greece: *Argitikos* (Peloponnese), *Ta xila* (Lesbos), *Mazemenos* (Lesbos), *Lerikos* (Leros), *Mantilatos* (Orestiada), *Tatavlianos sirtos* (Constantinople), *To stiadi* (Kimolos), *Baintouska* (Megali Doxipara), *Chalai* (Ak Dag Maten), *Skopos tou Prasinou* (Paros), *Sirba Lerou* (Leros), *Foties* (Erythrae Peninsula), *Fourlana* (Corfu), *Tenedios* (Lesbos), *Mantilatos* (East Thrace), *Geranos* (Zakynthos), *Roditikos pidichtos* (Rhodes), *Pousnitsa* (Almopia), *Chasapiko & Sirba* (Constantinople), *Megaritikos karsilamas* (Megara), *Ni ke dre* (Amorgos), *Karsilamas* (Asia Minor);

- **MULTIPLE TRANSCRIPTIONS** using modal and/or equal-tempered notation, to accommodate a range of study and performance needs; whether you play an equal-tempered or non-equal-tempered instrument, this collection offers clear, adaptable transcriptions with accompaniment chords where appropriate;

- **QR CODES** providing direct links for listening on your smartphone or tablet.

CARMELO SICILIANO was born in Catania, Italy, in 1980. For years, he has devoted himself to studying, researching, and promoting his lifelong passion: the traditional culture of Greece. A musician, educator, and cultural music disseminator, he is the founder and president of the FILELLENIA Cultural Association — *Center for Studies, Documentation, and Education on Greek Music, Dance, and Traditions*. He is also the author of several works, including: *Listening to Greece: A Journey Through Music and Traditions* (2019); *The Greek Songs of Niccolò Tommaseo: Musical Parallels in Contemporary Greece* (2021); *Songs of Greece: With Greek Text, Translation, and Notes* (2022); *The Theory of Rebetiko: From the Makams of Asia Minor to the Dromi of Piraeus* (2025).

Visit the website: [www.carmelosiciliano.com](http://www.carmelosiciliano.com)



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