

STELIOS PETRAKIS QUARTET

I'd been wanting to create a Cretan project to my own specifications for a long time. A small ensemble, formal and elegant, polished in every detail, combining Cretan music and dance old and new, showcasing the greatest possible variety of sounds, instruments and styles; an ensemble which would operate not in the traditional way but with clearly allocated roles and responsibilities, most of which would be mine. Properly orchestrated one- or two-hour concerts with both lyrical and powerful moments, with carefully-laid-out lines that each instrument would follow faithfully.

My training in the Mavrokostas dance schools under Thanassis Mavrokostas, and my long-term collaboration in Vassilis Stavrakakis's ensemble with Andonis and Giorgos Stavrakakis, provided me with young but first-class associates. For the first time I felt I could do what I wanted, completely free to lead the ensemble exactly where I was aiming for, without the doubts and hesitation inevitable when working with older and more experienced people – your teachers, in other words. Our group was later joined by sound technician Dimitris Hatzakis, whose expertise, feeling and dedication magically transfer the sounds made by our instruments straight to our audience's hearts.

The Quartet's concerts were sought after all around the world and European summer festivals, but not so much in Crete, although younger organisers have made honest efforts recently. In Crete, it's not that easy to hold Cretan music events intended as art rather than "entertainment", like the music played at weddings, fiestas and nightclubs. We are still trying to gather, shape and develop our home audience over time, with the valuable assistance of our sponsors and the Region of Crete. I'm proud to say we're getting there. The audience is becoming more in tune with the spirit of our endeavours year by year, overcoming their original puzzlement at Cretan music events quite unlike those they were used to.

As the "Cretan Quartet" (known abroad as the Stelios Petrakis Quartet...) we produced a live recording in 2015 titled "Avgi ts' avgis" ("Crack of Dawn") in a CD/DVD case, circulating in Greece and France. The recording won the Coup de Coeur prize of the Académie Charles Cros, entered the Top of the World (Top 10) of Songlines Magazine (issue #103) and reached 25th place in the World Music Charts Europe among the 800 albums of 2015.

We're travelling across the world to participate in famous international festivals (Womex 13 UK, GlobalFEST 16 NYC, World Sacred Spirit Festival INDIA 2016, Rainforest World Music Festival 2016 Malaysia, Balkan Traffic Festival 2016 Belgium, Théâtre de la Ville Paris, etc.) Our constant vigilance stimulates us to improve on our shows, keeping them always just as thrilling for every audience, from the uninitiated to the most demanding.