

*Imagining Homeland: Identity and
Repertories of a Greek labor-immigrant
musician in Germany*

*Music and Musical Life of the Greek
Diaspora in Germany*

5/10/2006

Smaragdi Boura

The first years of settlement in Germany: Life portrait of Aristoteles Konstadinidis

*“The begging is the half of everything”. Before me, many of my compatriots had already tried to find their way by immigrating abroad. A suitcase and my beloved **lyra** were my only baggage. Inside the case of my string instrument there was enough space to place the necessary equipment and the spare parts of my lyra: many strings, two bows, resin, a nail-clipper, a cloth and a thick notebook. My notebook was full written and included a collection of **the best Greek songs**, carefully compiled, **most of them traditional from Pontus...***



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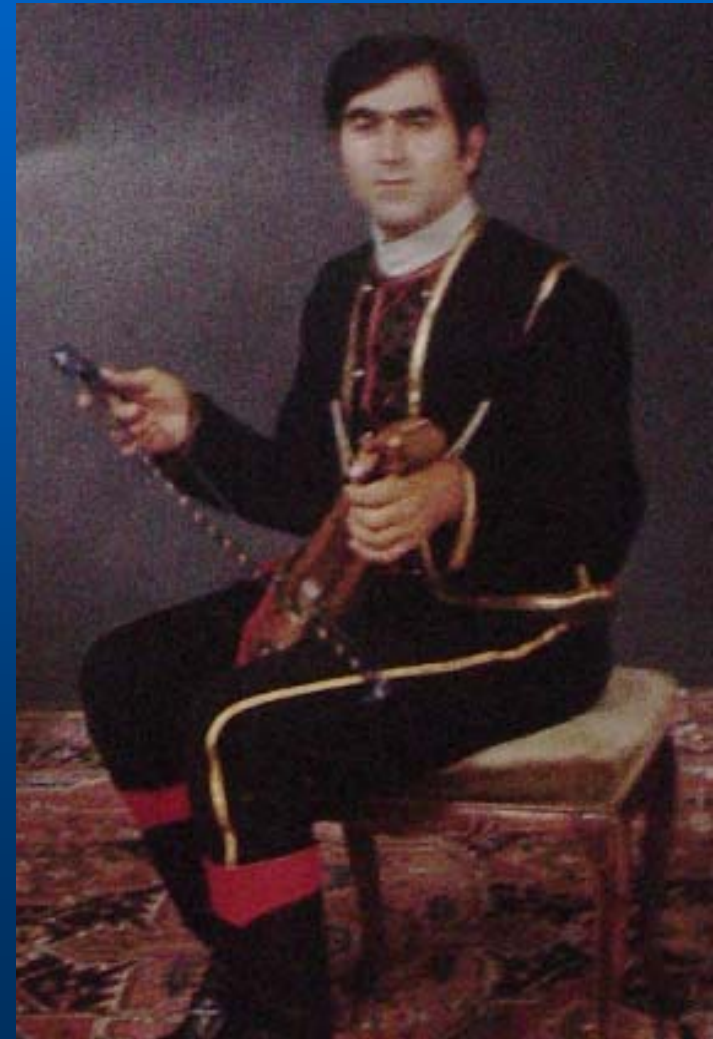
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*but there were also those **contemporary folk songs** you know these famous **songs of migrancy** (“της ξενιτιάς”), **songs for our homeland and love songs**... These were **compositions of skillful and rememberable Greek artists**... they were the life itself with all the characteristics deriving from it... the joyfulness, the sadness, the smile and the tears... all of them with enviable and expressive verses and musical lines. While performed these songs, you could listen to the sweet bows and the fresh and fascinating voices of our eternal folk and traditional artists...*

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*...In Munich I worked in a factory as an engineer... All that time I was alone, actually I had a company, my sister **HOPE!!!** HOPE would love me as a brother and I would adore her... (laughing)...but realistic speaking, I had my **Greek colleagues at work** and when I was returning back “home” I had my **lyra**. You know, without my instrument there would be no life for me in Germany...During my staying in Munich, I heard a lot of times my compatriots talking about a **union for Greeks from Pontus**, but I didn't manage to get there and meet with other beloved compatriots...On 31. of August 1973 I moved to another state of Germany, in the state of Baden Württemberg and specifically in the **region of Stuttgart**, in the city of **Esslingen**. Here the situation differences a lot from the one in Munich... there were **so many Greeks** here, that it was really hard to learn even basic German...you needed to take private lessons, to make a lot of effort...*

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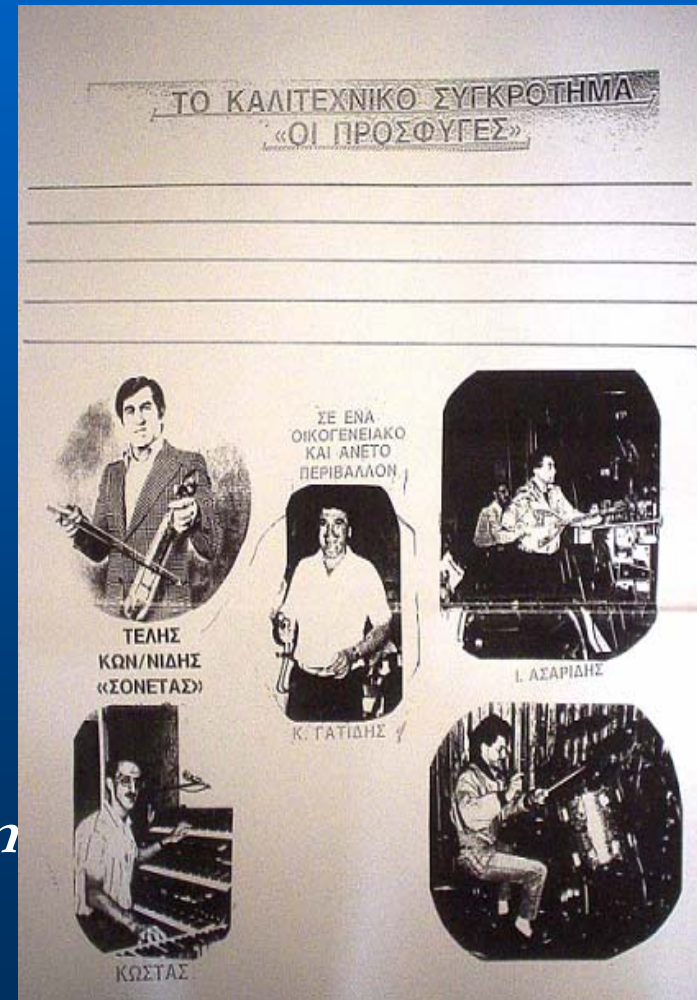
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*...In 1975 there was none society for **Greeks from Pontus** within the region, however people would make thoughts of establishing such a union and many of them would move forward to this...In the first month of my arriving in Esslingen, I formed a music group with **other compatriots** who had been there previously and had established already good contacts with the **Greek community**... a group performing **folk-popular songs and music from Pontus**. The name of this first music group that I participated in Germany was **“Oi Prosfyges” (The refugees)**. Since then, I have been playing my lyra with **many music groups** such as **“I Parea” (The Company)**, with musicians coming from other parts of Greece...*

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Together with them I learned to play music from other regions of Greece, music that I had never played before...

Our aim as musicians abroad was this one and only: We wanted to serve all our compatriots who were away from homeland to be in contact with our music and dances, with our valuable tradition. We undertook this task both as commitment and necessity... we felt our selves being social actors and as well as servants of our Greek Mouse. We performed at any occasion, at any communal event, given for example marriages, engagements, dances and festivities organized by the Greek communities...

(Abstracts from interviews with Aristoteles Konstadinidis: Esslingen, January–March 2005)

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