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Xenakis Matters
Contexts, Processes, Applications

Compiled and edited
by
Sharon Kanach

The Iannis Xenakis Series No. 4

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The Politics of Totality: Iannis Xenakis' *Polytope de Mycènes**

Olga Touloumi

Genuine problems are like that, both necessary and impossible. And possibility arrives right when you no longer expect it. That is what an event is.

- Alain Badiou¹

On September 9, 1978, the Greek Radio Television broadcast Kostas Ferris's "hot off the press" documentary on Xenakis' *Polytope de Mycènes*, the fifth of its kind, but the first and only to take place in Greece.² In the documentary, the director of *Rembetiko* and lyricist for Aphrodite's Child's 666 introduced Xenakis to the Greek public essentially as a "man at work;" tanned, in cut-off jeans, half-naked under an unforgiving bright sun, conducting through his walkie-talkie, rehearsing his script against the ruins of Mycenae, "working" the dry Peloponnesian landscape. In between snapshots of this man and his crew at work, the other Xenakis, Xenakis-the-intellectual, the exiled resistance fighter—an image produced and reproduced so excessively that it hardly means anything anymore—explicated the thinking behind the spectacle:

* An earlier version of this essay was presented at the conference "Reclaiming the Countryside" at the University of Thessaly, Greece in 2008, and was published in *I Diekdikisi tis Ipaithrou: Fysi kai Koinonikes Praktikes sti Sigchroni Ellada* (edited by Kostas Manolidis and Theocles Kanarelis). I would like to thank Pendragon Press for offering me the opportunity to revisit this article and incorporate within it extensive archival research since pursued in Greece and France. This essay constitutes part of a larger ongoing research project on the design praxis and thinking of Iannis Xenakis.

¹ Alain Badiou. *Five Lessons on Wagner* (London; New York: Verso, 2010) 159.

² "Polytopo ton Mykenon' stin EPT: Ora 10" *Ta Nea*, September 9, 1978.