

DINOS CONSTANTINIDES

BYRON'S GREECE

for

Baritone voice, Children's chorus, Chorus (SATB), and Wind and
Percussion Orchestra

LRC 92a

Piano Version



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Poetry: **G. G. Byron**

From *Childe Harold*,
(Canto II)

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Baton Rouge
December 24, 1984

Born in Ioannina (Yannina), Epiros, in Greece, Dinos Constantinides is a composer, violinist, and conductor who received much of his training and has worked throughout most of his career in the United States. He is currently faculty of Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, but is active around the country and the world. His new work, dedicated to his native country and province, takes inspiration from sections of Byron's *Childe Harold*, in which the Philhellene poet — who gave his own life for Greece during its War of Independence — celebrates the glories of ancient Greece amid the unhappy conditions of its subjection to the Turks in his own day. "Byron's poetry offers many contrasting images," the composer writes, "which gave me the idea of employing contrasting musical groupings: solo versus ensemble and adult chorus versus children's chorus." Techniques of contemporary composition (clusters, microtones, choral speech) are mingled with modal lyricism representative of Greek folk music. The work is an uninterrupted sequence of sections. An instrumental introduction based on the germinal intervals of major seventh and perfect fourth, followed by a textless vocal section employing cluster effects, leads to a declamation by solo baritone on Greece's glorious past, with contributions then from the children and adult choruses. Reflections on the past are then shifted, through another textless vocal-cluster section, to the Greece of Byron's day, its striving for freedom conveyed in varying solo and ensemble combinations. Solo clarinet and children's voices portray the beauties of the land in suggestions of folk style. Renewed consideration of Greece's latter-day struggles through various devices, including a spoken fugue, eventually brings all of the performing forces into play for a rousing crescendo, ending the work in a mood of hope for the future. Thus, Constantinides evokes the whole span of his country's history as well as his pride in it, through a synthesis of present-day and traditional musical idioms, but on the basis of his very personal exploitation of an unconventional but inspiring text.

— John W. Barker

Program notes for Byron's Greece were written by John W. Barker for the premiere performance of the composition at Avery Fisher Hall of Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts in New York. The work was commissioned by Peter Tiboris who conducted the premiere with soloists, combined choruses, The Colorado Children's Chorale, and The American Symphony Orchestra on May 5, 1985.

— Dinos Constantinides

From Childe Harold by G.G.Byron (Canto II, Stanzas 73,74, 85-90)

GREECE

Fair Greece, sad relic of departed worth!
Immortal, though no more; though fallen, great!
Who now shall lead thy scattered children forth,
And long accustomed bondage uncreate?
Not such thy sons who whilome did await.
The hopeless warriors of a willing doom,
In bleak Thermopylae's sepulchral strait —

Oh! Who that gallant spirit shall resume,
Leap from Eurotas banks, and call thee from the tomb?

Spirit of freedom! When on Phyle's brow
Thou sat'st with Thrasybulus and his train,
Couldst thou forbode the dismal hour which now
Dims the green beauties of thine Attic plain?
Not thirty tyrants now enforce the chain,
But every carle can lord it o'er thy land;
Nor rise thy sons, but idly rail in vain.
Trembling beneath the scourge of Turkish hand,
From birth till death enslaved; in word, in deed, unmanned.

And yet how lovely in thine age of woe,
Land of lost gods and godlike men, art thou!
Thy vales of evergreen, thy hills of snow,
Proclaim thee Nature's varied favorite now;
Thy fanes, thy temples to thy surface bow,
Commingling slowly with heroic earth,
Broke by the share of every rustic plough
(So perish monuments of mortal birth,
So perish all in turn, save well-recorded Worth);

Save where some solitary column mourns
Above its prostrate brethren of the cave;
Save where Tritonia's airy shrine adorns
Colonna's cliff, and gleams along the wave;
Save o'er some warrior's half-forgotten grave,
Where the gray stones and unmolested grass
Ages, but not oblivion, feebly brave,
While strangers only not regardless pass,
Lingering, like me, perchance, to gaze, and sigh "Alas!"

Yet are thy skies as blue, thy crags as wild;
Sweet are thy groves, and verdant are thy fields,
Thine olive ripe as when Minerva smiled,

And still his honeyed wealth Hymettus yields;
There the blithe bee his fragrant fortress builds,
The freeborn wanderer of thy mountain air;
Apollo still thy long, long summer gilds,
Still in his beam? Mendeli's marbles glare;
Art, Glory, Freedom fail, but Nature still is fair.

Where'er we tread 'tis haunted, holy ground;
No earth of thine is lost in vulgar mold,
But one vast realm of wonder spreads around,
And all the Muse's tales seem truly told,
Till the sense aches with gazing to behold
The scenes our earliest dreams have dwelt upon:
Each hill and dale, each deepening glen and wold
Defies the power which crushed thy temples gone:
Age shakes Athena's tower but spares gray Marathon.

The sun, the soil, but not the slave, the same;
Unchanged in all except its foreign lord —
Preserves alike its bounds and boundless fame
The Battlefield, where Persia's victim horde
First bowed beneath the brunt of Hellas' sword,
As on the morn to distant Glory dear,
When Marathon became a magic word,
Which uttered, to the hearer's eye appear
The camp, the host, the fight, the conqueror's career,

The flying Mede, his shaftless broken bow;
The fiery Greek, his red pursuing spear;
Mountains above, Earth's, Ocean's plain below;
Death in the front, Destruction in the rear!
Such was the scene — what now remaineth here?
What sacred trophy marks the hallowed ground,
Recording Freedom's smile and Asias's tear?

The rifled urn, the violated mound,
The dust thy courser's hoof, rude stranger, spurns around

NOTATION

Accelerando and ritardando
Clusters
Lowest Pitch Clusters
Shouting
Spoken

Whisper

¼ tone high }
¼ tone low }

Whenever text is not given employ free vowels