My personal approach of using the Iranian santour

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Playing on multiple voices on the santour - 1

In a series of texts, I present different techniques to play on several voices on the santour. The present text is the first one in the series.

In the following, I will illustrate a technique that allows to add a bass voice and a middle voice to a melody with the example of my transcription for the santour of To sfagio by Mikis Theodorakis.

Figure 1 shows an excerpt from the original melody in E minor. For this transcription, and by personal choice, I first transposed the melody into the key of G minor.

For the creation of the other voices, one must first **choose the notes** and the **rhythmic** motif, and then the **way of their integration with the melody**.

Choice of the notes

For this piece, I tune my santour by putting "D"s on the left yellow string 1 and the left and right white string 1 (see Figure 2). The G, A and the flat D (tonic, supertonic and the dominant of the scale) of the left yellow bridges are used for the bass voice. **The bass voice appears on the first beat (the downbeat) of certain measures**. Note that for the simplicity of writing, the bass voice is written in sixteenth notes, but in reality, its duration at each of its appearances is a whole note (i.e. the 4 beats of the measure) or more. The D of the right white bridge 1 and the A of the right white bridge 4, are used for the middle voice.

Choice of the rhythmic pattern

This melody being mainly composed of quarter and eight notes, I use a basic rhythmic pattern in 4 sixteenth notes per quarter note (times 4 quarter note per measure). This pattern allows to add "texture" to this piece.

Integration with the melody

The technique consists of reproducing the motif in each measure, while replacing its notes with the notes of the melody according to the occurrences of the latter.
Figure 3 shows an excerpt from To sfagio, with the addition of low and middle voices to the melody. The 4 introductory bars present the rhythmic pattern with the bass and middle voices before the melody begins.
You can see the complete version of my transcription with this link: To sfagio music score
You can listen to it with this link: To sfagio audio

Figure 1

ΤΟ ΣΦΑΓΕΙΟ

Ποίηση: Μίκης Θεοδωράκης

♩ = 114

Am

Το με - ση - μέ - έ - ρι χτυ - πά - νε στο γρα - φεί - ο
Χτυ - πούν το βρά - δυ στην τα - ρά - τσα τον Αν - δρέ - α

Am

με - τρώ τους χτύ - πους το αί - μα με - τρώ
με - τρώ τους χτύ - πους τον πό - νο με - τρώ

Dm   G   Am

101

Figure 1

Mineur G 1 - 424 4 244 - Majeur Bb 442 4 442

			F -½	F	F#			F #	F #	F	F	B b	C		-½	F	1	2	3	2
		E	E b	D#	E b	E b^	E		E	E b^	E b	A b				E	1	2	1	
D#	D	D b^	D b	D b	D b^	D	D#	D#	D	D b^	D b	G				D	3	3	3	
		C#	C	C	C#	C#				C#	C	F				C	1	1	1	
		B	B b	B b	B b^	B			B		B b	E b	E			B	1	1	1	1
A#	A	A b^	A b	A b	A b^	A	A#	A#	A	A b^	A b	D				A	3	3	3	
		G#	G	G	G#				G#	G	G	C	C#			G	1	1	2	1
		F#	F	F	F#	G#				F#	F	G#	B			F	1	1	1	2
E	E b^	E b	D	D	E b	E b^	E		E	D	C	B b				E	1	1	2	

D and A are used
for the
middle voice

G, D, and A are
used for the
bass voice

Figure 2

To sfagio
The slaughterhouse
L'abattoir
Composed by Mikis Theodorakis

Santour - Minor

Reza Madani
Transcription

Figure 3