

## **Traditional (as sung by Marika Papagika)**

### ***Smyrneiko Minore***

#### **Arranged by Jacob Garchik (b. 1976)**

This arrangement of *Smyrneiko Minore* is inspired by a 1918 recording by Greek singer Marika Papagika. Of the many immigrant groups arriving in America via Ellis Island to begin new lives, the Greek community was one of the more persistent and enduring. By the mid-1920s, when the major explosion of ethnic recording was taking place in the United States, the Greek catalogues already boasted over a decade's worth of comprehensive input. The breeding ground of Greek-American music was often the "café Amans," atmospheric gathering places filled with cultural reassurance, Greek newspapers, home-cooked food, ouzo, strong coffee and, always, music. One of the most popular was a New York-based operation run by the husband and wife team of Kostas and Marika Papagika.

Marika Papagika was born on the island of Kos in 1890. Her family moved to Egypt, probably settling in Alexandria, when she was a teenager and it was there that she began her singing career. She and her husband arrived in New York in 1915, on board the *Themistocles*, a ship that had sailed from the Greek port of Piraeus, and by 1925 they had moved to 215 West 34th Street, where they owned and operated their own club. She became a noted exponent of the Smyrnic Greek style of the *rebetiko tragoudi*, the freshly reinvented and garrulous music that had first emerged in Smyrna, and was then tempered by the tragic events of the 1922 Turkish expulsions that transplanted the Greek community into the ramshackle world of Piraeus.

By this time Papagika was also an established recording artist, having initially signed with Victor in 1918, and she was one of the first to commit *rebetika* to wax in the new world. Interestingly, as well as Greek songs, operetta, influences from French café music and an adventurous utilizing of unusual combinations of instruments, her repertoire also included a few Turkish songs. This willingness to perform both Turkish and Greek works at a time of strained relations between the two countries points, perhaps, to the immigrant's differing perspective of events. She saw herself, it seems, at least as much as a product of the crumbling Ottoman Empire as of her culturally Greek background.

Papagika's first four-song session for Victor took place in New York in 1918 including the celebrated *Smyrneiko Minore*. [This recording has been re-released on *Black Mirror: Reflections in Global Musics (1918-1954)*, compiled by Ian Nagoski for Dust-to-Digital Records.] Among the song's lyrics is the stanza, "If you love me and it's a dream/ May I never wake up/ In the sweet dawn/ God lets me take my soul away." Between that first session and 1929, she cut 232 performances. The Papagikas fell victims to the Wall Street Crash of 1929, and in the subsequent economic collapse they lost the business sometime in 1930. Her recording career ended with only one further session in 1937, and she died in her Long Island home in 1943.

Trombonist and composer Jacob Garchik, born in San Francisco, has lived in New York since 1994. Since 2006 Jacob has contributed arrangements and transcriptions for the Kronos Quartet of music from all over the world. An active freelance trombonist, he plays with groups including the Lee Konitz New Nonet, the Ohad Talmor/Steve Swallow Sextet, Slavic Soul Party, the John Hollenbeck Large Ensemble, and the Four Bags. He has also worked with composers George Lewis, Joe Maneri, Anthony Braxton, Anthony Coleman and James Tenney, choreographers Yoshiko Chuma and Anita Cheng, and the Theatre of a Two-headed Calf. His second, independently released CD, *Romance*, was hailed by Ben Ratliff in the *New York Times* as "odd and excellent...taut with paradox...slow and beautiful art songs." He has recorded for Piranha, Omnitone, Fresh Sound New Talent, NCM East, Tzadik, New World, and Palmetto. Garchik also plays accordion, bass trombone, tuba, computer, and piano.

Program note by Paul Vernon, adapted from the article "Seeking Marika," which appeared in the world music magazine *fRoots*. Reprinted with permission.

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