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NEOTERIC “ARCHITECTURAL” SHAPES OF THE KARPATHIAN HOROSTASI

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1. The folkloric celebration

The folkloric celebration, which takes place either on the occasion of a saint's celebration or a happy family event (wedding, engagement, baptism...), used to be, and still is these days, on a smaller scale though, the center of activity in traditional societies. A folkloric celebration was the joyful break from the everyday struggle for survival. It also offered a great chance for social contact; it was a place of acquaintance and romance. In addition, it is the showing off of social prosperity (through expensive clothing accessories and expensive perfumes and jewelry).

Several folklorists have studied the songs of those celebrations. Some have studied the traditional musical instruments, as well as the human factor, the traditional musician. Finally, a great number of them have studied traditional dances and their symbolisms. However, the *horostasi* itself and the different forms it has, synchronically and diachronically, have not been studied enough. This study was based on the participial observation and interviews given to me by dancers, gymnasts and traditional musicians, as well as on the relevant bibliography.

2. Karpathos Island

The Island of Karpathos has preserved its customs and traditions through time, because of its geographical location, being the most southern corner of the Dodecanese; it used to be an isolated island for centuries. Therefore, it can be a point of reference in the study of many folklore phenomena. The emigration wave, which arose intensely throughout the 20th century, enabled the Karpathians go through new experiences and broadened their horizons. The emigrants returning to the island brought along with them new experiences from travels, new

musical instruments (violins, accordions, mandolins, guitars, bouzoukis, harmoniums...), as well as new dances and songs. They also brought sound amplifiers. All the above affected and altered the form both of traditional celebrations and dance, which is the highlight of a celebration. Northern villages of the Island (especially Olympos due to its geographical isolation, because of the elevation -since 1980 there was neither a road connecting it to the southern villages of the island nor electricity) were less affected by this invasion of new trends and maintained on a larger scale the characteristics of the traditional festival. Therefore, we can synchronically study the traditional celebration of Karpathos Island (by observing the celebrations in Olympos), as well as the neoteric elements introduced to the island (by observing the southern part of the Island celebrations). Even though a study like this one is a local monograph, it can become the guidebook for relevant studies in other places.

3. Dance learning

The term *horostasi* has a double meaning in Karpathos. It is the place where dance occurs at public and private festivals, as well as dance schools where the young gathered regularly in old times in order to learn how to dance. Parents and grandparents' laps can be considered to be a first simple *horostasi*. They would orally produce the sound of the lyre, being in a playful mood, moving the child rhythmically on their knees and therefore introducing it to the rhythm from an early age.

Some years ago they used to organize *horostasia* in every village, once or twice every week, aiming at teaching dances to the young. Unfinished large houses (*spitarones*) were used for this purpose. The place was more comfortable and appropriate if the wooden *sofás* [1], which is characteristic of a Karpathian house, had not been constructed yet. A couple of traditional musicians (players of lyre and lute) and the single young boys and girls of every village gathered there. Usually one or two good and respected dancers showed the steps to the young and prepared and introduced them to the process of the celebration.

The shepherds usually lived away from villages and therefore could not attend the *horostasia*, learned the dances on their own up on the mountains. They sounded out notes, producing the sound of the lyre and tying their waistband (*mizaros*), on a tree, imitating the dance moves they had previously watched at festivals and this is how they would learn to dance. In addition, school students of the island were taught the traditional dances during the gymnastics class. As a result, there were always potential dancers ready for the celebrations or the musicales of Lyceum Club of Greek Women.

4. Public and private festivals

Festivals, which have dance as their main part and highlight, can be put into two categories, private and public ones. Private celebrations occur at family occasions (weddings, engagements, baptisms, acceptance to universities, family or friendly gatherings, return of emigrants...). Public celebrations usually happen in the event of religious celebrations. In the past, private celebrations took place in houses, yards, on roofs or in coffee houses of the village. Lately every village has a communal or ecclesiastic manor (*megaro*) where celebrations occur very often. The growth of tourism has led to the construction of many hotels and taverns, which usually have places to dance along with sound equipment. Therefore a big part of a private celebration takes place in the rooms mentioned above. Public festivals are still taking place in churchyards or at ecclesiastic and communal manors.

Recently several village cultural clubs, schools or parent-teacher associations, have held antechoirs. The aim of the antechoirs is to provide financial support for the organizers. Most of the times they take place inside roofed areas. Usually the evening starts with a traditional program and continues with modern music. The place where the private and public celebrations happen is either outdoor or indoor, depending on the season and weather conditions.

5. Factors that determine the “architecture” of *horostasi*

Using the term *architecture of horostasi* I refer to the external shape of the *horostasi*, as well as how the musicians, singers, dancers and spectators take their places in the *horostasi*. Which is where the traditional musicians, the singers and the spectators sit and where the dancers dance. This architecture is never incidental (as well as the architecture of houses, which is defined by geographical, climatologic, historic, cultural and other factors). Let us comment on those factors, which form the architecture at a *horostasi*:

5.1. Historic factors: The history of an institution greatly affects its contemporary form and its future development. Since old times most Greek dances were cyclic.

5.2. Geographical factors: In mountainous areas, like Karpathos Island, where open space areas (big squares, sandlots) are rare, the festival is necessarily defined and limited by the size and the shape of the offered areas. Therefore the festival in Karpathos Island rarely takes place in a circular spacious place. The festival is often limited to a small and most of the times oblong place. In this last situation it is difficult for the

spectators to watch simultaneously the musicians and the dancers. In addition, when the festival occurs in roofed rooms (referring to the winter festivals mainly), e.g. the size and shape of some ecclesiastic manors determines the architectural shape of the festival as well. For example the ecclesiastic manor in “Panagia” of Menetes village forces the celebrators to move in a parallelogram, which in fact is an oblong shape. This placing causes difficulties for the festival, as only a small part of the dance can be visible by the spectators each time.

5.3. **Acoustics** is another important factor that affects the shape of the architectural structure of the *horostasi*. Acoustics is defined mainly by the following elements: I) by the natural acoustics of the place, II) by the kind, the quality and the volume of musical instruments, as well as by the loudness of the singers’ voice, III) by the participants’ contribution, which can help the music to be heard clearly as long as they are quiet IV) by using technical means to amplify the volume of the music (sound equipment). When the acoustics is not sufficient the celebrators approach the musicians in order to hear well.

5.4. The **field of vision** works in a similar way. The spectators look for a solution when their view is limited due to space narrowness or due to obstacles (trees, pillars). It is customary for spectators to gather in certain places where they can have good visual contact of the events and to avoid other places where the view is unclear. Very often some climb even on trees or sit on stairs or high stone benches to have a better view.

5.5. **Climatological factor:** the participants usually avoid certain areas of the festival because they are exposed to the wind, the sun or the rain.

These are the main factors that define the architectural structure of the traditional *horostasi*.

6. Various “architectural” types of the Karpathian *horostasi*

The basic types of architectural shapes of *horostasi* in Karpathos Island fall into the following categories:

6.1. **Circular *horostasia*:** this form helps to develop the dance well. They usually occur in spacious outdoor areas and sandlots or in older times on threshing floors. The musicians sit in the center of the *horostasi* on chairs put on two or three joint tables, so as to be seen and to be heard well by the spectators. The only time that the musicians leave their post and walk in front of the dancers playing their musical instruments is during the Fomistos dance at weddings. Then the best man collects money for the musicians in a straw basket. The spectators are arranged in a circle on chairs, around the musicians looking towards the periphery of the circle. In Olympos village where traditions are kept, the euphonious men sit around the musicians’ table since no professionals take part; there are

only men participants. The men take turns to improvise and to create folk couplets (*madinades*). The rest of the men repeat the *madinades* chorally. The Olympos village women are allowed to sing only at important private occasions, e.g. at their child's wedding. So they are not permitted to sit around the musicians' table. The unmarried women and their mothers sit in front of the men because in Olympos they are the main dancers. Therefore in festivals of Olympos men and women sit in different places. Men start dancing and women (who dance in particular places according to custom) gradually surround them. On the contrary this custom has faded in the rest of the villages, therefore the spectators choose to sit wherever they want and women usually start the dance. Finally the dancers move in a circle around the celebrators, facing the center of the circle where the musicians and the spectators are (Graphic 1).

The advantages of the type are:

- All the dancers are equidistant from the musicians so that they can hear well.
- There is visual contact between the dancers and the musicians and so they can collaborate well.
- Similarly all the spectators are equidistant from the musicians and the dancers therefore they can hear and see well.

6.2. **Rectangular *horostasia***: occur in yards of houses or of churches or in rectangular roofed areas. The arrangement of the musicians, spectators and dancers is similar to the arrangement of the circular ones. Even though the area has a rectangular shape, the dance tends to have a circular arrangement (Graphic 2). Rectangular *horostasia* have no disadvantages in comparison to the circular ones.

6.3. **Parallelogram *horostasia***: they happen in outdoor parallelogram areas (house and church yards, oblong squares) or in roofed parallelogram areas (ecclesiastic manors, house rooms, or coffee houses). In Karpathos Island this is the dominant type of *horostasia* because of the mountainous modulation of the island and the resultant narrowness of the area. Likewise the spectators sit around the musicians who are in the center and the dancers move around the edge of the parallelogram. In this type of *horostasia* the arrangement of both the spectators and the dancers is ovate. The more oblong the parallelogram is the more ovate the arrangement of the spectators and the dancers becomes (Graphic 3). Visibility and acoustics change depending on the spectator and dancer's position. There are more problems in oblong areas.

6.4. Finally the *horostasia* may have any other shape, as they occur in church yards and small squares which very often do not have a regular shape.

Usually in shapes, like the ones mentioned above, due to limited space some of the spectators sit in a row on campstools or on a stone

bench or on some stairs (if they exist) outside the dance circle at the edge of the *horostasi* facing the inside of the circle (Graphic 4). In rectangular and parallelogram *horostasia* this external row of spectators usually has a rectangular or parallelogram shape. Most of the times the spectators who do not dance are in this position. This arrangement has a disadvantage since the spectators stand away from the musicians and therefore cannot hear well. In addition they are constantly looking at the backs of the dancers.

7. The participants of the festival: new trends

Lately some alterations and innovations have been observed in the architectural shapes, which have been previously described. These alterations are a result of social and economic factors. The big emigration wave (internal and external emigration), as well as the tourism (which climaxed in the early 1980s) introduced the Karpathians to new ways of life, habits and alienated them from the customs and traditions of the Inland. Many emigrants returned home bringing with them new ideas, which spoiled the regularity and the traditional order of the festival. Let me refer to these alterations and innovations commenting on all the factors of the festival (musicians, singers, spectators and dancers).

Recently new musical instruments have invaded the traditional festival. The violin had already been introduced to the Karpathian music years ago. In Menetes village particularly the violin has put the lyre aside. Despite this replacement the violin is played in a traditional way and therefore it keeps the Karpathian music rooted in its origins, so much so that no Karpathian today feels oddly hearing this instrument at the Karpathian festival. Lately other new musical instruments have invaded the Karpathian festival (guitars, accordions, harmoniums, drums...). Many locals oppose this phenomenon. The traditional lyre player Mihaeel Zografides specifically told me: *“I have never liked these phenomena and I never will. These instruments do not fit into the Karpathian music. They have to play only their own program. The drums and the accordion have no business in the Karpathian music. These are outlandish. Why does the harmonium imitate the sound of the bagpipe (tsabouna)? (He refers to the imitation of the sound of tsabouna by the synthesizer). It is unheard of. You must castigate these phenomena in the conference. They must take action because the Karpathian music has “gone to hell”. They have trampled everything”*. Olympos village on this occasion as well, unlike the villages of Southern Karpathos, resists, since the use of these instruments in the regional festivals has not been allowed so far. The use itself of the traditional Karpathian instruments has changed. Many lyre players use the Cretan lyres or use bows (usually from the violin) without

little bells or they replace the traditional strings [2] by metallic ones, in order to be carried well by the sound amplifiers, as they say. Some lute players have started to use minor and major accords.

Some Karpathian emigrants, since the late 1970s, have been bringing sound amplifiers to Karpathos Island. Today the use of sound amplifiers at festivals in the villages of Southern Karpathos is wide. In Olympos village sound amplifiers have never been used, as I have been informed. In the villages of Southern Karpathos the festivals occur in larger places and there are more celebrators than in Olympos, this fact may justify their use.

In addition, the composition of the participants in the festivals is different today. Some years ago, as I have already mentioned, the festival was an opportunity for the population to be relieved from their everyday problems. However, nowadays as the opportunities for relief from the everyday problems have multiplied since the Island has a lot of cafés, bars, music halls, taverns etc., the traditional festival has lost its aim. The emigration and the tourism altered the class hierarchy of the Island, so that old hierarchies in the festival and the dance were questioned and its rules lost their prestige. Therefore, the phenomenon of the lack of concern over the rules of the festival, and the cause of irregularities appear, especially in the villages of Southern Karpathos. Ilias Zervoudakis, who has been a gymnast and a teacher of traditional dances in the Lyceum of Greek Women for many years, told me: *“In the past the festival and the dance was a ritual. If you threw down a coin everyone could hear its sound. Today the festival has become a “vourvoukia”. Vourvoukia means a lot of noise. They let loose the children in the festival place, everyone cries out, some people from Athens and America also come and make a fuss. What has greatly affected the festival is the way we lead our life today”*.

Many alterations have happened to the dance recently. Many Greek traditional dances (Kalamatianos, Pentozali, Critikos...) are embodied in the Karpathian festival along with the regional dances (Sianos or Kato horos, Gonatistos, Pano horos, Sousta, Zervos). In addition, in the Karpathian dances, which are modest, the first dancer who dances at the beginning of the circle (“kavos”) does, nowadays, more and more impressive tricks (*tsalimia*), “*kritikofermata*”, as one of the interviewees called them, because he thinks that they are influenced by the Cretan dancers. In the past the dance was united, having one *kavos*. Today we usually observe the phenomenon of dance breakup into two or three parts with different *kavos*. The internal function of the dance, which was based on strict rules, was disturbed, as well. Today everyone can dance, without any problems, in any position of the dance they wish, without abiding by the traditional rules and hierarchies. Olympos village resists this, as well.

8. Neoteric “*architectural*” shapes of the Karpathian *horostasi*

All the above affected the Karpathian *horostasi* and its “*architectural*” shape. Therefore many alterations can be observed:

8.1. In many festivals we can observe musicians sitting at one edge of the *horostasi*. The dancers dance in front of the musicians and the spectators sit at the other edge of the *horostasi*, far away from the musicians (Graphic 5). The reason for this alteration is not of course, as someone would think, the imitation of the architectural shapes of “*bouzouksidika*” (music halls with the bouzoukia, instruments) of the city. The main reason for this is the almost catholic, use of technological means by the traditional musicians. The sound amplifiers increase the volume of the music and the sound of the singers’ voice, so that it is not necessary for them to sit at the center of the *horostasi*, as this position was previously necessary because of acoustic needs. The placement of the musicians at the edge of the shape serves another purpose as well: from this position the musicians have better access to the wall sockets. In addition the placement of cables under the spectators and dancers’ feet is avoided. This change happened gradually, since the first use of acoustic means at festivals, the musicians used to the old way, continued to play at the center for a long period of time. The cables reached the center from high above without being in the way of the spectators and the dancers. The position of the dance changed moving towards the edge of the *horostasi* and as a result approached the musicians. In some hotels and taverns pedestals for musicians and dance floors for the participants are constructed at the edge of the room aiming at saving space. Therefore the above shape is followed. Although this shape does not cause acoustic problems, it causes visual ones, since the spectators cannot see the dancers well (only the spectators who sit in the front have this ability. In reality they can only see the backs of the dancers, since the Karpathian dances are circular). Similarly musicians are able to see dancers’ backs only. Therefore the visual contact between the musicians and the dancers, which is essential, has vanished.

8.2. A combination shape is adopted in order to solve the visual problem. The musicians sit at the edge of the *horostasi*, the spectators sit in the center and the dancers rotate around them, as it was in the past before the use of sound amplifiers (Graphic 6).

In Northern villages of the Island, especially in Olympos and in Diafani, those two neoteric architectural structures of the *horostasi* are absent. The reason why this happens is that sound amplifiers are not used during the festivals, as they are more traditional. The use of sound amplifiers at the festivals in Olympos, where the singing is still a lively

participial process, would destroy this process and would only show the talent only of single singers. Therefore is imperative in Olympos that the musicians are at the center of the *horostasi* so that everyone can hear them. The use of the *tsabouna* (an instrument that produces loud sound) in Olympos next to the lyre and the lute, gives a satisfactory solution to the acoustics problem. The structure of all the festivals in Olympos village is based on the traditional architectural shapes, as the musicians always are at the center of the festival (Graphics 1, 2 and 3).

9. Conclusions

To conclude, the structure of architectural shapes of the Karpathian *horostasi* is still altering. The traditional festival is in a transitive stage. We can observe almost all architectural shapes previously described. Southern villages of the Island are “an open door to the outer world; a vessel, which receives, filters, assimilates and finally caters to the whole Island with new ideas” [3]. The inhabitants of Olympos village (and its haven, Diafani) are the defenders of the old types of festivals, still maintaining the traditional architectural shapes of the *horostasi*, refusing to use sound amplifiers, as well as modern musical instruments. Many Karpathians oppose the invasion of outlandish musical instruments and habits. An undeclared war is being waged. Life itself, the needs of the celebrators and the existing objective conditions will define the choices and the architectural shapes, which will prevail.

10. Index of interviewees

1. Vassilarakis G. Konstantinos, date of birth 1926, construction worker and lyre player, from Othos village.
2. Gergatsoulis G. Emmanouil, date of birth 1947, graduate of 6th grade, shepherd and lyre player, from Aperi village.
3. Diacogeorgiou G. Ioannis, date of birth 1935, graduate of 6th grade, priest and construction worker, from Olymbos village.
4. Zervoudakis E. Ilias, date of birth 1932, Gymnastics' Academy, Gymnast, from Aperi village.
5. Zografides G. Mihaeel, date of birth 1950, graduate of 6th grade, postman and lyre player, from Olymbos village.
6. Kritsiotis E. Vassilios, date of birth 1940, captain and lyre and lute player, from Othos village.
7. Melas A. Minas, date of birth 1924, graduate of 6th grade, violin player, from Menetes village.
8. Prearis G. Ioannis, date of birth 1963, graduate of 6th grade, shoemaker and lute player, from Olymbos village.

11. Notes

[1] Construction used both as bed and storage room.

[2] Made of animal intestines.

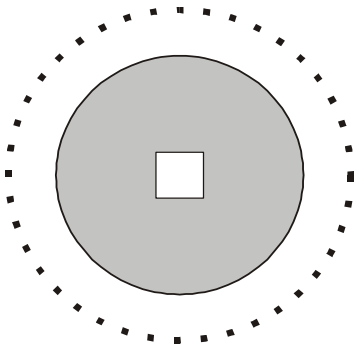
[3] Georgios S. Amargianakis., “Impressions of a Music-Folkloristic Expedition in Karpathos Island in 1970”, Karpathos and Folklore, Proceedings of Karpathians Folklore Conference A (Karpathos Island, 26–27 March 1994, Karpathos Courthouse Publication, Athens 1998-2001, p. 68.

12. Bibliography

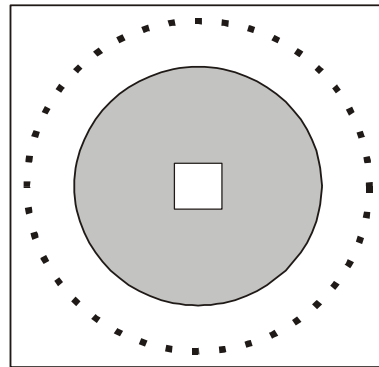
1. **Alexiadis** Minas Al., *Karpathian Folklore, Aspects of the Popular Culture*, Cultural Center of Karpathos Municipality, Athens 2001.
2. **Amargianakis** Georgios S., “*Impressions of a Music-Folkloristic Expedition in Karpathos Island in 1970*”, Karpathos and Folklore, Proceedings of Karpathians Folklore Conference A (Karpathos Island, 26–27 March 1994), Karpathos Courthouse Publication, Athens 1998-2001, p. 63-69.
3. **Kavouras** Pavlos., “*The Dance in Olymbos Village of Karpathos. Cultural Change and Political Confrontations*”, Ethnografika 8, P.L.I., Nafplion 1992, p. 47-70.
4. **Kritsioti** Maria., “*Structure and Function of Karpathian Dances*”, Karpathos and Folklore, Proceedings of Karpathians Folklore Conference A (Karpathos Island, 26–27 March 1994), Karpathos Courthouse Publication, Athens 1998-2001, p. 125-140.
5. **Mavrommati** Nena., “*Presentation of Pavlos Kavouras’s Article: The Dance in Olymbos Village of Karpathos. Cultural Change and Political Confrontations*”, Notes of a Dance Seminar, 1^o Dodecanese, Karpathos, 22-26 August 1999, Lyceum of Greek Women, Athens 2001, p. 97-104.
6. **Mihaelidis-Nouaros** Mihaeel G., *Folklore Symicta of Karpathos*, tome A, Athens 1932.
7. **Stavrakaki** Alexandra Ioannou., *Karpathos the Unknown Neighbour*, Pitsalos Publications, Athens 1995.

I would like to thank Ms Kalitsi Athina for helping me with the translation.

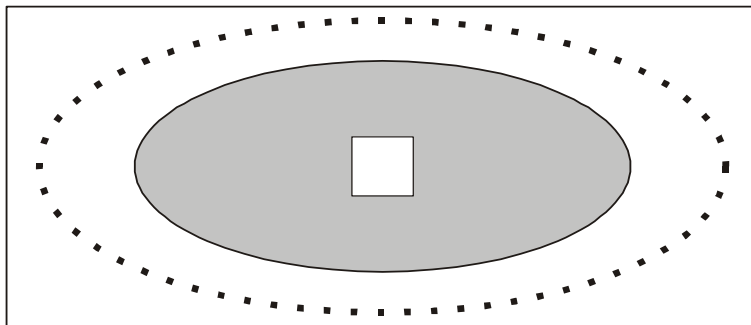
Traditional “architectural” shapes of horostasia



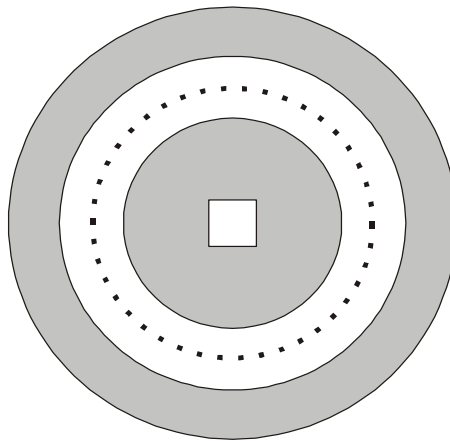
Graphic 1



Graphic 2



Graphic 3

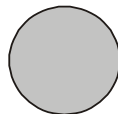


Graphic 4

Memo:



Musicians

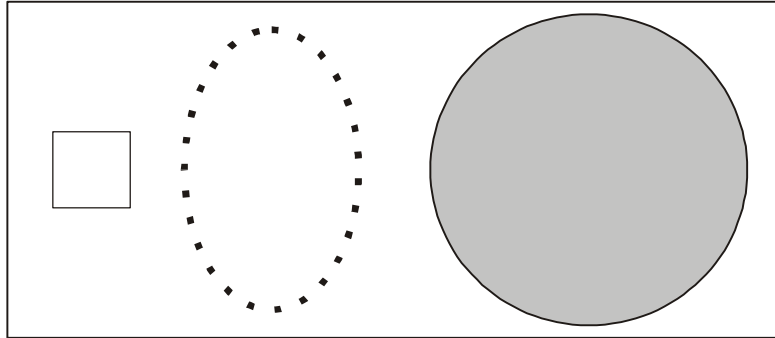


Spectators

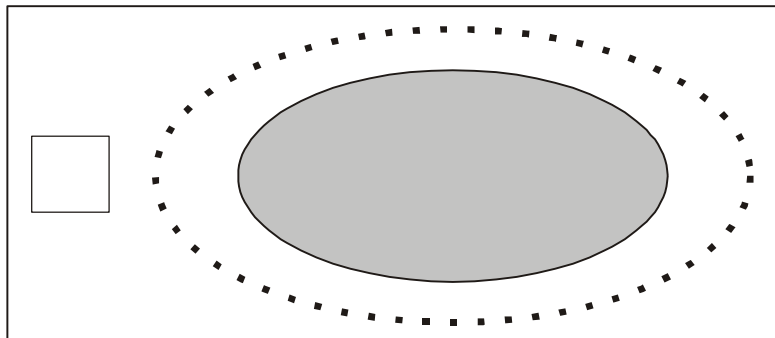


Dancers

Neoteric “architectural” shapes of horostasia



Graphic 5

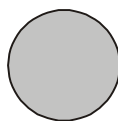


Graphic 6

Memo:



Musicians



Spectators



Dancers