

# Lullabies

Reconrdings 1930-1998

Produced by Friends of the Melpo Merlier Music Folklore Archive  
Sponsored by the Ministry of Culture

Production, publishing and booklet editors:  
Markos Ph. Dragoumis, Thanassis Moraitis

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**O**ur many female friends interested in the activities of our Institute have repeatedly asked us to favour them with copies of lullabies belonging to our collection, so that they could use them appropriately at home, when putting their babies to sleep. Pleasing them was a task we found very rewarding, in spite of the limited time we always have at our disposal. It is our desire therefore to thank Danai, Eleni, Natalia, Evi, Milagros and so many other friends of ours, for inspiring us in the present endeavour.

Thanassis Moraitis  
Plaka, December 2003

**T**he Music Folklore Archive, since its foundation in 1930, has recorded dozens of lullabies all over Greece. The 48 examples included on this CD come from the Islands, from the North, and from the Greek refugee communities from Asia Minor, where often babies were lulled with songs in Turkish (see exx.19, 26, 32, 35 and 44).

\* \* \*

The lyrics of the lullabies selected for the present CD consist of two to twenty rhymed lines, numbering eight or fifteen syllables each. And the women sing these verses in the most simple manner, without interruptions due to repeated syllables or added phrases, as is common in other Greek folk songs. Moreover lullaby melodies unfold in free time having no meter, or fixed units of stress. The septuple meter (7/8) of ex.34 is an exception.

Other characteristics of Greek lullaby melodies is their restricted compass which rarely exceeds the interval of a 6th, and their tendency to employ only three of the many types of tetrachords which are in use in Greek folk music. Those are the diatonic ones of C or D (often with a fluctuating E) and the so-called oriental chromatic tetrachord with the augmented second in the middle (e.g. D-E flat-F sharp-G). Of all melodies presented here only ex. 46 is based on a mode rarely appearing in lullabies. It employs the D tetrachord with its fourth degree flattened, a mode known in ottoman music as “sabah”.

An integral part of the Greek lullaby are the “exclamations” which appear frequently at various points within the song, but mostly at the beginning and the end. In one case (ex. 9) the exclamation consists only of a vowel (a) and a double consonant (ps). The latter seems to have apotropaic connotations. By hearing it, bad spirits that could in any way harm the baby and its sleep are supposed to fly away. A similar sound is heard in a lullaby from Lapland. Ex 21 is a rare combination in Greek folklore of

a lullaby and a fairy tale. Ex. 47 is satirical and is also sung during Carnival in the town of Thebes, as well as the village of Villia, where it is adapted to the rhythm of the Tsamikos dance. The anthology ends with a melody by Brahms (his lullaby) that our informer in Salamina considered to be traditional. It is likely that she had learned this song at school.

Markos Ph. Dragoumis  
December 2003

