

Manolis Kyzalas Portfolio

About

This portfolio contains selected work from a diverse range of fields. I follow music wherever it takes me: from playing to composing, writing, luthiery, documentary making, theatre, coding, and more.

I have studied Western music and audiovisual arts, and later found myself in the world of maqam and Eastern Mediterranean music. I am a bit of a multi-instrumentalist and mostly play the Politiki Lyra and Lavta, among others. I take a multi-specialization / anti-specialization approach to learning and creating.

My main interests revolve around Early European Music and the music of the Eastern Mediterranean.

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Field research and shooting, 2021-2024

Impromptu

Poetic and ethnomusicological documentary about the Slavic songs of
Macedonia

[View the full project](https://manoliskyzalas.com/en/projects/impromptu/)

<https://manoliskyzalas.com/en/projects/impromptu/>

About

Impromptu is a poetic and ethnomusicological documentary about Slavic songs in the Greek part of Macedonia.

It deals with themes of identity, memory, the passage of time, and the conflict between collective stories and institutional historiography.



Process

Shooting and field research took place from 2021 to 2024 in Korestia, Prespa, Edessa, Bitola, Pelister, and Florina. We made many trips, each with a different lens, as our understanding was built gradually.

In hindsight, this was a process of improvisation and it is reflected in the final work. I was oblivious to what the final product would look like when I started; I let it be shaped by the people I met and the stories they told me.

Work and credits

The field research, development, shooting, and editing were done in collaboration with Dina Koumouli. I wrote and performed original music for the film. The documentary was produced as my diploma thesis under the supervision of Maria Chalkou.

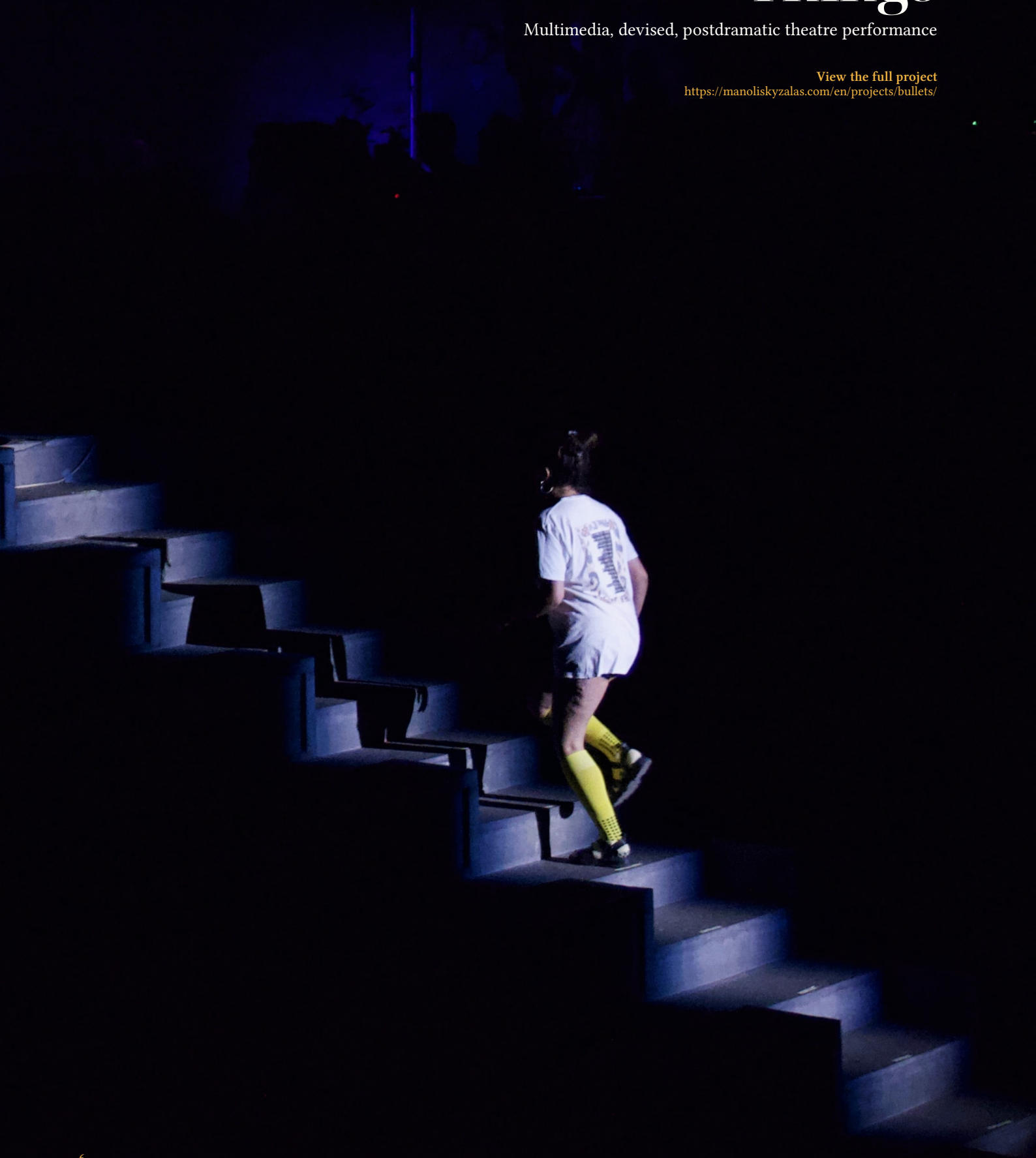
2025

Bullets and Other Fallen Things

Multimedia, devised, postdramatic theatre performance

View the full project

<https://manoliskyzalas.com/en/projects/bullets/>



The performance

Directed by Dina Koumouli, the work explores sound, noise, memory, grief, and the body through a practical investigation into what is defined as, and what defines, the performative event. It examines how musical forms can be translated into theatrical structures.

Rehearsal expanded the musical jam into a devising method and used counterpoint and polyphony as compositional tools. Lines from films, lyrics, memories, current events, movement, songs, legal texts, gossip, and theory all became material.

Sound installation

The performance took place at the National Theatre Drama School. Four speakers were positioned at the corners of the space, with dozens of microphones and contact microphones throughout the room. They were routed into a live system that amplified, altered, and reshaped the sounds of the space and the performers' voices in real time.

My contribution

I was involved from the initial conception and throughout the development of the work as an artistic collaborator. I took part in the devising process, helped design the sound installation, and implemented much of the real-time digital processing. In each performance I operated the installation live on stage as a musician.



Devising, the microphone field, and the live processing position.

Pambur

Improved luthiery. An instrument in between.

Pambur is a custom improvised instrument, sitting on the verge of traditions or even outside tradition. Its construction was driven by instinct, my interests, and my capabilities as a luthier at the time, with no exact foreplanning. Maqam music of the Eastern Mediterranean and early European music guided the design.

The name is a portmanteau of pandura and tambour or tamboura: words associated with two- or three-stringed instruments across history, from Mesopotamia to the Mediterranean and the Balkans.





Body, bridge, and fretboard details.

Construction and playing

It has the bowl body of an early, pre-war type of bouzouki. Three single PVF strings are usually tuned D-A-D. The floating bridge is built in a manner resembling the baglama or saz. It has a wenge fretboard and uses thin fishing line for movable frets.

The fretting is not equal-tempered. It allows large and small tones and semitones, accommodating perfect fifths and fourths and making room for maqam, early music repertoire, and experimental tunings. I usually play it with a soft guitar pick rotated 90 degrees to approach the depth of the lavta sound.

View the full project

<https://manoliskyzalas.com/en/projects/pambur/>

2025

Nota

A music typography and layout LaTeX extension

About

Nota is an open-source LaTeX package for including properly formatted musical notation in a document. It takes the document layout and margins into account, and it can render a score system by system so notation can appear inline and wrap naturally with the text.

Its goal is a simple interface with good defaults that feels as if it is “just working.”

Editing workflow

Scores remain editable in the software of the user’s choice. After an edit, saving and recompiling rerenders the score inside the document without manually exporting an image or PDF, cropping it, and importing it again.

The package uses Verovio to render scores and automatically passes the appropriate options for the document. It generates the LaTeX needed to place the resulting notation. The demonstrations shown here test the package in an A4 article and an A3 two-sided book with different inner and outer margins.

Source code, documentation, and full demonstrations
<https://manoliskyzalas.com/en/projects/nota/>

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Athens, Greece / 2026