

Presentation proposal for the conference
Politics in Music and Song (Queen's University Belfast, 8-10 September 2023)
with the title

‘Beating the line’: Contemporary Greek Cypriot popular music beyond divides

The recent history of divided Cyprus has created a context of intense politicisation of all kinds of cultural production. In his inaugural solo album, *Kkismetin* (2021), Greek Cypriot musician Antonis Antoniou uses the barrels that provide the physical boundaries in Cyprus' Buffer Zone not only as a central image, but also as a percussion instrument which he recorded himself playing, 'guerrilla style'. This evocative musical-political gesture can be seen as a fight against the divide, and as a way in which the divide becomes a vehicle for new music endeavours. Starting from Antoniou and expanding to other artists, this presentation discusses the ways in which contemporary Greek-Cypriot musicians seem to be 'beating the line', both directly as in the case mentioned above, but also indirectly, by using the Cypriot elements of their cultural heritage (like Cypriot Greek dialect) to criticise the ethnic nationalism that perennially dominated the Cypriot narrative(s) and point to a civic nationalism that emphasises the second denominator of the Greek-Cypriot identity. This, it is suggested, opens up spaces for pluralism, inclusion, and co-existence. The presentation also explores how, by 'beating the line', contemporary Greek-Cypriot musicians challenge other boundaries as well, including the ones between East and West, modernity and tradition, the local and the global, the local and the foreign, and the self and the "other".

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Biography:

Maria Kouvarou holds a Ph.D. in Music from Durham University. She has published, among others, articles in *Popular Music and Society*, *Historia Critica* and *Popular Music*. During the past years, her research interests are focussed on the independent popular music scene of the Republic of Cyprus. Currently, she is a special scientist in research at the Department of Social and Political

Sciences of the University of Cyprus, working for the research programme *Music, dialect, and the re-invention of folk traditions in Cypriot modernity (MU.DI.RE.)*, that is funded by the A.G.Leventis foundation.

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