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GREEK COMPOSERS OF THE IONIAN ISLANDS IN ITALIAN MUSICAL LIFE DURING THE 19th CENTURY

Summary During the 19th century most of the Ionian islands played a leading role in the Greek musical life. The vicinity of the islands with Italy combined with the Venetian domination were two facts that helped the creation of strong links between the Ionian islands' and the Italian cultures.

The phenomenon of the visits of Greek composers to Italy during the 19th century in order to study at the principal conservatories of the country is one of the most interesting aspects of the history of Ionian music. The relations of individual composers with Italian composers, professors and music institutions are considered together with relevant aspects of Greek and Italian musical ties.

The travelling of Greek composers to Italy for educative purposes is regarded not only as a historic phenomenon but also as a major step in their career. References are made regarding their contacts with distinguished Italian composers and intellectuals.

Furthermore, the success of Greek composers in Italy is an undoubtful fact. A considerable part of Greek composers' musical works was performed and published in Italy. Facts indicating the success and the effect of Greek composers' work on the Italian musical life are given with references to primary music and literary sources.

Key-Words: Greek music, Ionian islands, Italian music

Very little is known about the history of the Ionian islands' music, especially, beyond the Greek borders. Few musicologists have been so far occupied with the research of this period of the Greek music history although there has been arisen great interest in this field during the last years. The lack of relevant bibliography combined with the difficulty of confining and approaching primary sources are the main reasons of reaching to this point. It should also be mentioned the great amount of lost or destroyed, by various causes, historical documents of this period which is a fact that deepens the problem.

All sources reveal the growth of a flourishing musical – and not just – culture in the geographical area of the Ionian islands which reached at its peak during the 19th century. The running of music institutions – most of them philharmonic societies following the patterns of Italian music education – operatic theatres, music editions, and the large number of composers who came from the Ionian Islands, a rather narrow territory of Greece, are evidence of the Ionian musical culture's blossom.

The geographical vicinity of the Ionian Islands to Italy was an important reason for the development of strong relations between them. Besides, people of the Ionian Islands had lived together with Italians for many centuries since the Ionian Islands were under Venetian domination. Consequently, not only were they very well-acquainted with the culture of the neighbouring country but also there were strong economic, commercial and social relations developed between them. In addition, numerous Italian musicians lived and taught music in Corfu and the other Ionian Islands.

Spyros Motsenigos, a musician and music historian from Corfu, who wrote one of the first histories on neohellenic music, offer adequate information relative to musicians from the Ionian Islands who studied in Italy. In most cases, a child used to acquire his first music learnings in the Ionian Islands and afterwards visit Italy, sometimes in a very young age, in order to carry on with his music studies.

It seems that Greek composers from the Ionian Islands studied principally at the Conservatorio San Pietro a Majella di Napoli though many of them also studied at the Conservatorio Giuseppe Verdi di Milano. We do not know whether there was a specific reason why this happened or whether it became a habit. Certainly, these two conservatories were among the leading music institutions of Italy during the 19th century¹ and continue to be up to now. Perhaps the fact that Nikolaos Chalichiopoulos Manzaros, one of the first and most celebrated Greek composers from Corfu who is also the composer of the Greek national anthem, studied at the Conservatorio San Pietro a Majella di Napoli was determinative. Possibly the fact that many Greek composers of the Ionian Islands took their first music lessons from Nikolaos Manzaros influenced some of their next choices. It also has to be mentioned that numerous Italian musicians lived in the Ionian Islands and worked there as music teachers and music performers.

Dionysios Rodotheatos, to mention one from the great range of Greek composers, took music lessons in Corfu from Manzaros². According to Motsenigos, Rodotheatos also studied for seven years at the Conservatorio di Musica San Pietro a Majella di Napoli and – after staying at Corfu for some time – he travelled back to Italy in order to continue his studies at the Conservatorio di Musica Giuseppe Verdi di Milano. There is not any reference to the names of Rodotheatos's teachers in Italy but, considering an

¹ According to Mariangela Dona "The founding of the Milan Conservatory initiated the founding of a series of conservatories all over Italy [...] The conservatory soon became the most important music school in Italy, attracting such pupils as Puccini and Catalani to study with professors of the stature of Ponchielli (1880–86)." (DONA', Mariangela, *Milan, 4. 19th century in The New Grove Dictionary of music and musicians*, London, Macmilan, 1980, v. 12, p. 297)

² MOTSENIGOS, Spyros, *Neohellenike mousike: symbole eis thn istorian tes*, Athens, 1958, p. 232.

information saying that Cavalliere Alberto Mazzucato encouraged him to stage one of his first operas³, we can assume that Alberto Mazzucato, who served as a music director at the Conservatorio di Musica Giuseppe Verdi di Milano⁴, was one of his teachers. Unfortunately, because of the fact that there has not been yet any research carried out from our part in order to collect documents related to Greek composers from Italian music archives our facts derive primarily from Greek archives and bibliographic sources.

The Italian libraries' online catalogue is a very important source of information for Greek music history of the 19th century. Many Italian libraries hold musical and theoretical works of Greek composers of this period – amongst them some manuscripts – while we cannot trace in their catalogues but few Greek musical works of the 20th century. This fact can be regarded as a strong indication of the relations been developed between Italian and Greek composers of the 19th century and of the acceptance the latter met in Italy. Some of the holdings are music scores, librettos of operas presented in Italian theatres, and theoretical works, usually on harmony or counterpoint which, in some cases, are not located in any archive in Greece.

The studies of young Greek composers in Italian conservatories opened up new prospects both for their musical thought and their careers in the musical stages of Italy and other European countries. During their studies they met with significant celebrities of European music and literature and became acquainted with all the new art movements of that era. Not only did they have the opportunity to experience new musical ideas in their works but, in many cases, they themselves took part in the formation of these new ideas. A typical example of this assumption is Spyros Samaras, a Greek composer from Corfu whose work met with great success both in Greece and Italy. Samaras accomplished to combine in his works – many of them are operas – the elements of 'verismo', Leit-motiv with Greek melodies and music modes. Samaras's unpublished correspondence proves his friendship with famous Italian composers, like Puccini and Mascagni, and the fact that they felt great respect about his work⁵.

Most of Greek composers of the Ionian Islands had the good fortune of seeing their melodramas produced in famous operatic theatres of Italy, like

³ MOTSENIGOS, Spyros, *Neohellenike mousike: symbole eis thn istorian tes*, Athens, 1958, p. 232.

⁴ "Dal 1839 *insegno* canto, dal 1851 *compos.*, dal 1852 *storia ed estetica mus. e dal 1857 anche strument. al Cons. di Milano del quale fu direttore dal 1872 fino alla morte.*" (*Dizionario enciclopedico universale della musica e dei musicisti*, Torino, UTET, 1994, Le Biografie, volume quarto, *Mazzucato*, p.746).

⁵ George Leotsakos in his commentary for the recording of Samaras's *Rhea* (an opera in 3 acts) presents the facsimiles of two congratulatory letters (the one is Puccini's and the other is Mascagni's) to Spyros Samaras.

Teatro Carcano of Milan or even Il Teatro alla Scala di Milano. Pavlos Karrer, or, Karreris – to mention one – is amongst the most celebrated Greek composers, born in Zante in 1829. Two of his numerous melodramas, *Dante e Bice* in 1852 and *La rediviva* in 1855, had their first representations at the Teatro Carcano of Milan. Besides, significative of the successful career which Spyros Samaras – mentioned above – created in Italy is the fact that six of his operas were represented at the Teatro alla Scala of Milan.

Published music scores of the 19th century prove also to be important documents for the music history of the Ionian Islands. In general terms, Greek composers' works were published by some of the most prominent publishers of that era. For example, most of Spyros Samaras's operas were published by Edoardo Sonzogno, while Ricordi, Lucca and Canti seem to keep many Greek works in their libraries. Music compositions of Greek composers published in Trieste possibly reveal some relevance with the strong economic and commercial relations which, undoubtedly, had been developed between the famous Italian city and the Ionian Islands, not to mention the flourish of the Greek community of Trieste.

Valuable information on Greek music is offered by the 19th century's extant librettos published in Italy. Considering the lack of primary sources mentioned (e.g., composers' manuscripts, music scores, etc.), all these booklets accompanying the opera performances make a crucial contribution to musicological research. Names of librettists, performers, places and dates of first representations together with the synopses of the operas make up an astonishing picture of the history of opera of this era. Except from the librettos held both in Italian and Greek archives, there should be mentioned the compiled catalogues of some libretto collections in Italy, like the *Catalogo dei libretti per musica dell' Ottocento (1800–1860) of the library of the Conservatorio San Pietro a Majella di Napoli*, edited by Francesco Melisi⁶, and the *Libretti per musica manoscritti e a stampa del fondo Shapiro nella collezione Giorgio Fanan*, by Laura Ciancio⁷. Both of them include some Greek operas.

The strong relations of Greek composers of the Ionian Islands with the Italian musical life of the 19th century certainly affected them in many ways. Though their music works have the identity of Greek music there can be traced many references to Italian music. The fact that they lived and worked for a long period of their life in Italy forced them to adopt specific compositional techniques and musical ideas.

⁶ *Biblioteca del Conservatorio di San Pietro a Majella di Napoli : catalogo dei libretti per musica dell'Ottocento (1800–1860)*, a cura di Francesco Melisi, Lucca, Libreria musicale italiana, 1990.

⁷ Laura CIANCIO, *Libretti per musica manoscritti e a stampa del Fondo Shapiro nella collezione Giorgio Fanan" catalogo e indici*, Lucca, Libreria musicale italiana, 1992.

The composers of the Ionian Islands wrote music on the music genres employed by the Italian composers of the 19th century. Therefore, many of them composed *sinfonias* for piano or orchestra, *romanzas*, *mazurkas*, *polkas* and other small music pieces, *arias*, vocal music with piano accompaniment, *melodramas*. In the composers' lists of works operas and piano pieces hold a special place, to be followed by vocal and choral music.

Being acquainted with the Italian language, because of the Venetian domination of the Ionian Islands, the Ionian composers quite often used Italian poetry for their vocal music. Besides, many Greek poets who came from the Ionian Islands used the Italian language in their poetry. It was inevitable for Ionian composers to use Italian poetry and librettos since they made careers in the neighbouring country and they addressed themselves to the Italian audience. It would be very difficult for a young Greek composer to have one of his operas produced in an Italian theatre if the libretto was in the Greek language. In addition some Greek composers had the chance of working with famous Italian librettists, like Luigi Illica who wrote the libretto for Samaras's opera *La Martire*. There is no proof whether this stand of Greek composers was a matter of pure choice or not.

Although the Italian influence is obvious in Ionian composers' music, they compose Greek and not Italian music. Their music idiom bears a Greek character traced in their melodies, which in some cases are Greek folk songs, or, remind us of folk music, as well as in the use of Greek music modes. They sometimes use the characteristic music metres of Greek folk dances or set Greek poetry to music. Many Ionian composers use characters or stories of the Greek history and mythology in their operas, like Karrer's *Marcos Botsaris*, *Kyra Frossini*, *Marathon-Salamis*, and others, possibly indicating some intention for the creation of a Greek national opera. Especially, Karrer is believed to have attempted the creation of Greek national opera as he tried to use stories from the history of the Greek Revolution and Greek librettos for some of his operas.

Most Ionian composers used to return to their motherland after finishing their studies in Italy but did not interrupt their relations with the Italian musical life. However, there is no doubt that Corfu and most of the Ionian Islands had a remarkable musical life. Many Greek and foreign operas were represented at the famous Corfian theatre Teatro San Giacomo every year. Italian music companies visited Corfu often while it seems that the island's audience was very demanding; publications of that time mention that if a new artist was applauded by the audience of Corfu he would not encounter any problem at the famous theatres abroad. The extant librettos of these performances are similar to the Italian ones and most of them are kept in private libraries⁸.

⁸ One of these private libraries is held in the Corfu Reading Society (Anagnostike Etairia Kerkyras) and belonged to Pierris.

Eventually, it seems that the Italian music educational system has affected the formation of music education in the Ionian Islands. Philharmonic societies, which were the main music institutions of the 19th century, were established one by one in many islands and their music teachers were not only Greek but also foreign musicians. Many pupils of the Philharmonic societies were trained to serve as musicians in the islands' music bands. The bands held a substantial part in the Ionian Islands' musical life as they gave many concerts and usually participated in the churches' litanies.

Undoubtedly, the study of the musical ties between Greece and Italy during the 19th century is both demanding and tempting. Exchanges must have been effected to both parts and are subject to research.

A fascinating game of travelling music without rivals...

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ГРЧКИ КОМПОЗИТОРИ НА ЈОНСКИМ ОСТРВИМА У ИТАЛИЈАНСКОМ МУЗИЧКОМ ЖИВОТУ ТОКОМ 19. ВЕКА

(Резиме)

Током 19. века Јонска острва су играла водећу улогу у грчком музичком животу. Њихова близина у односу на Италију, заједно са вишевековном доминацијом Венеције (нека од њих нису никада била под турском влашћу), помогле су да се створе јаке везе између двеју култура. Музички процват ове области достигао је свој врхунац у 19. веку. Међу музичким институцијама истакнуто место заузимала су филхармонијска друштва, оперска позоришта, музичке издавачке куће.

Феномен боравка грчких композитора у Италији ради студија на главним конзерваторијима у земљи представља један од најинтересантнијих аспеката историје јонске музике. Већина грчких композитора са Јонских острва студирала је углавном на конзерваторијима у Напуљу и Милану, тада водећим институцијама те врсте у Италији. Вероватно су многи следили пример Николаоса Халихиопулоса Манзароса, једног од првих и најчувенијих грчких композитора са Крфа, аутора грчке химне, који је студирао у Напуљу. Познати композитор Дионисиос Родотеатос је био Манзаросов ученик на Крфу пре него што је отишао да студира у Напуљу, а затим и у Милану.

У многим италијанским библиотекама чувају се врло важни извори за проучавање грчке музичке историје 19. века. То су музичка и теоријска дела, као и оперска либрета.

Неки композитори са Јонских острва успели су да стекну афирмацију у Италији. Тако је Спирос Самарас имао успеха са својим делима, углавном операма, у којима је комбиновао елементе веризма и лајтмотивике са употребом грчких народних мелодија. Био је славан и Павлос Карер, чијих је шест опера изведено у миланској Скали. Дела грчких композитора штампана су у Трсту и другим градовима. Јонска острва су имала дугу традицију добрих трговачких односа са Трстом, у коме је живела и грчка заједница.

С обзиром на то да обично недостају извори какви су рукописи дела, драгоцено је што су сачувана штампана оперска либрета, заправо опширније програмске књижице са низом важних података.

Укључивши се у музички живот Италије, ови композитори су писали оне жанрове који су карактеристични за то време: троставачна дела за клавир или оркестар (*Sinfoniae*), романсе, мазурке, полке, арије, вокалну музику с клавирском пратњом, мелодраме. Разумљиво је што су јонски композитори користили италијанску поезију и либрета, пошто су се обраћали италијанској публици. Неки грчки композитори су имали срећу да раде са чувеним италијанским либретистима, као што је Луиђи Илика, који је аутор либрета за Самарину оперу *La Martire*.

Иако је италијански утицај очигледан код јонских композитора, они су стварали грчку, а не италијанску музику. Њихов музички идиом носи грчке црте у мелодици, јер су то често или аутентичне грчке народне песме, или подсећају на њих, или су базиране на грчким модусима. Некада се уочавају и карактеристике метрике грчких народних игара. Многи композитори су се инспирисали ликовима и причама из грчке историје и митологије (Карерове опере *Marcos Botsaris*, *Kyra Frossini*, *Marathon-Salamis*, и друге), што говори о могућности да се размишљало о стварању грчке националне опере.

Већина јонских композитора враћала се у домовину после завршених студија у Италији, не прекидајући везе са италијанским музичким животом. На самом Крфу и неким другим Јонским острвима постојао је релативно динамичан музички живот. Многе грчке и стране опере извођене су у чувеном крфском позоришту San Giacomo, у коме су италијанске музичке трупе често гостовале.

Музички образовни систем на Јонским острвима је такође трпео италијански утицај. Филхармонијска друштва, главне музичке институције, оснивала су се на многим острвима, а међу њиховим наставницима музике било је и Грка и странаца. Свршени ђаци су обично свирали у оркестрима на острвима, а учествовали су и у црквеним свечаностима.

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