

REFRAMING AND RESHAPING GREEK MUSIC HISTORY

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Abstract: Digitization projects across cultural sectors have revealed and gave the opportunity for researchers to shape and refocus their work around new perspectives. This meant that many new resources have been made available, sources that were not even within the scope of researchers. This has been also valid for musicologists. Through these new resources that were made available not only locally but globally, musicologists gained access into new archival repositories that were based far away or they were unknown. But these practices had another immediate effect and that was the impact that they could have to the understanding of music history in full. This is even more visible when someone is working with subjects that are set on the periphery and somehow away from the center of the established scholarship. Therefore, in this article I will be focusing on how the understanding of Greek music history has been affected and reshaped due to the ongoing revelation and wide access of various resources that have been made available towards these last years.

Keywords: Greek music history, digital repositories, archives, research.

REENQUADRANDO E REFORMATANDO A HISTÓRIA DA MÚSICA GREGA

Resumo: Projetos de digitalização em todos os setores culturais revelaram e deram a oportunidade aos pesquisadores de moldar e reorientar seu trabalho em torno de novas perspectivas. Isso significou que muitos novos recursos foram disponibilizados, fontes que nem sequer estavam no escopo dos pesquisadores. Isso também foi válido para musicólogos. Por meio desses novos recursos que foram disponibilizados não apenas localmente, mas globalmente, os

musicólogos ganharam acesso a novos repositórios arquivísticos distantes ou desconhecidos. Mas essas práticas tiveram outro efeito imediato e esse foi o impacto que poderiam ter na compreensão da história da música de forma plena. Isto se torna ainda mais visível quando alguém está trabalhando com assuntos situados na periferia e de alguma forma longe do centro do conhecimento estabelecido. Portanto, neste artigo, vou me concentrar em como a compreensão da história da música grega foi afetada e reformulada devido a revelação contínua e o amplo acesso de vários recursos que foram disponibilizados para esses últimos anos.

Palavras-chave: História da música grega, repositórios digitais, arquivos, pesquisa.

Greece has been a country that, musically, was at the periphery of Europe both in order of significance but also as a factor of relatively low impact in the European music history. This is more than obvious if one takes a closer look to the corpus of research on the topic internationally and see the amount of publications in the past fifty years or so. However, in the recent years this seems to be changing with a systematic approach to all those European peripheries that could offer new scope for research and bring new interest in the musicological field¹. Therefore, music for peripheries such as Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria and others seem to be gaining a significant amount of attention from the scholarly community. Of course, this is not a coincidence. As I will argue further, I believe that it has to do with two specific conditions that have seen a sense of development in the recent years. The first is the understanding of a holistic approach in

1 See, for instance, the quite recent publication of Samson (2013), which is a perfect example of such an example of a publication from a major scholar. Also, one could refer to the bibliography section of this particular book for a better understanding of all recent research.

the music history of Europe, which, however, I will not go into much detail in this article². The other factor though, in which I am going to focus, has to do with the fact that more resources are currently available. For discussing this issue, I will use the Greek art music world as a case study of how newly available resources have affected our understanding of music history and, in a sense, have reshaped it in order to be more accurate.

First, though, I need to go into a short retrospective narration concerning the history of musicological research in Greece and then, discuss the recent developments of digital music repositories that came as a result of extensive digitization projects held. Through this process I hope that I will be able to draw a clear picture of where we stand today, us who work on this field, and describe the framework within which we research and disseminate information.

The first university music department in Greece was established in the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki in 1984³ and musicology found its long-awaited formal establishment in an academic environment in order to start functioning as a field of study and, most importantly, field of research. Until then musicology was a discipline that applied to individual researchers outside the academic field or it was a topic tendered additionally to other disciplines in university departments such as philosophy, philology, sociology and others, making it obviously difficult to be established as a separate scientific branch of the humanities. In the years to come, three more music departments were established, with the last one being found in the University of Macedonia, again in Thessaloniki, in 1996⁴.

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- 2 It should not go unnoticed the fact that the International Musicological Society has recently established a separate Regional Association under the topic "Study of Music of the Balkans". This specific Association has proven extremely active the past two years with conferences being organized and articles being published.
 - 3 For more information one can see at <http://www.mus.auth.gr/cms/?q=en> accessed 10 October 2015.
 - 4 One can browse the music departments web pages at the following URLs: Ionian University Music Department <http://www.ionio.gr/central/en/maa/>, University of

Since musicology started gaining a valid status, research was being carried out in most of these institutions. This had as a result a series of doctoral dissertations to be produced in the consecutive years and new topics of research to crop up with individual research being initiated in private, but also, public archives. Moreover, musicologists who had the chance to be educated abroad were able to return and offer expertise and, most importantly, methodological foundations in order to train a younger generation of musicologists.

An important addition that serves the whole musicological community was the establishment of the Music Library of Greece "Lilian Voudouri" that was based in the Athens Concert Hall since the Library's establishment. The organized Greek Music Archive that incorporated important archival material from Greek composers and musicians⁵ came to fulfil a need that seemed to be in order for a long time. Archival research has never been a priority before or it was touched upon selectively on an individual basis, apart from some few organized archives that existed and were accessible to the public, such as the Manolis Kalomiris Society for instance⁶. With the establishment of the Music Library of Greece and the close collaboration with researchers from the university music departments, the history of Greek art music started shaping up and many vague and blank spots seemed to be clarifying. This had as a result a more pragmatic and scientifically accurate approach to the historical facts, away from romanticized and superfluous generalisations which were actually the norm for a long time before the establishment of any of the scientific bodies of the ones mentioned above.

Athens Music Department <http://en.music.uoa.gr/> and University of Macedonia Department of Music Science and Art <http://www.uom.gr/index.php?tmima=9> accessed 10 October 2015.

- 5 One can access the list of all the available archives at <http://www.mmb.org.gr/page/default.asp?la=2&id=23> accessed 10 October 2015.
- 6 Manolis Kalomiris' archive has been preserved and maintained by the Manolis Kalomiris Society available at <http://www.kalomiris.gr/> accessed 10 October 2015.

During the beginning of the 2000s a series of digitisation projects were initiated across the board by many cultural establishments: university and state libraries, private and public archives, private specialised libraries, research centres⁷. The outcomes of these digitation projects were uploaded on the web, shared through Europeana on a later stage and quite a few of these had the opportunity to be used and re-used in various research and educational projects. Of course, mishaps were not avoided: digitization committees lacked coordination, therefore there were many incidents where the same material was multiply digitized by different bodies. Also, in some cases procedures were carried out in a haste or without any prior preparation and this had some poor results such as disfunctional material going online, digitized material was uploaded with no english translation of their metadata and others. Moreover, in some cases, the cataloguing and material-describing schemes that were used were not actually in accordance with what was internationally adopted and all these had to change. On the good side though, and besides the fact that some valuable time was lost, most of the material that is now up on the web is noteworthy and fully functional to use after the amendments that have been carried out by providers. In any case, and putting aside the difficulties encountered, the fact is that currently some of the treasures of Greek cultural and artistic life found their way and became available to the public and, most importantly, to researchers in Greece and abroad.

In the field of music now, archival material that became available could be of major importance. Resources such as the music archive of Mikis Theodorakis, a musician and composer who enjoys world fame, became visible and traceable⁸. These procedures revealed more than just music resources though. It was time that some

7 For more information, see Anonymous writer. "Ψηφιακοί πολιτιστικοί θησαυροί στο Διαδίκτυο" [Digitized cultural treasures on the Internet]. *Kainotomia*, issue 7, (March-April 2009): 18-23. <http://www.ekt.gr/content/img/product/77479/18-23.pdf> accessed at 25 October 2015

scientific deduction could be carried forward, and, in many cases from unexpected resources. For instance, to our surprise we found that there were salon music pieces in 19th century literary magazines or a vast amount of music criticisms in newspapers of the 19th and 20th century (Xepapadakou and Charkiolakis 2014). The main point is that all the material available drew a more clear picture and provided valuable information about musical life in Greece from the establishment of a significant art music scene in the beginning of the 19th century.

One should not escape to add to the above, the various digitization projects that were taking place all over the world. Similar material was been made available in parallel. From here onward I will go into a more case-study approach to the phenomenon and I will present some cases in which I happened to be involved, hoping that these will help us understand the potential that was being borne.

It was the year 2009 when Michael Burden, a professor from Oxford University, contacted me asking if I could help him identify the composer and the work in a score in Greek that he had in his possession. In the meanwhile, he had already donated the score to the Barr-Smith Library at the University of Adelaide in Australia. He was kind enough to send me a few pages that he had photocopied before sending the score to Adelaide. After these arrived through regular mail I was surprised to see that it was a spartito score of a Spyridon Samaras operetta, titled *Η πριγκίπισσα της Σασσώνος* [The Princess of Sasson], probably the penultimate work of the composer. The thing

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- 8 As it is mentioned on the database page: "On December 15, 1997, Mikis Theodorakis donated his personal archive to the Music Library of Greece "Lilian Voudouri". The archive, impressive in size and thematic variety, includes manuscript scores and texts, press cuttings, posters, programmes, audio-visual material, dissertations – studies, photographs, medals and various publications. His manuscripts, both scores and texts, as well as part of the music programmes collection are now available online." <http://digma.mmb.org.gr/Collection.aspx?cid=1> accessed on 28 October 2015.

got more interesting for me when I realised that in the Rares Collection of the Music Library of Greece, where I was working at the moment, we possessed a set of orchestral parts of the work. Unfortunately, no full score there. Furthermore, in the archive of the National Opera of Greece I managed to find the full score of the operetta, a setting though that was not the original but a recreation of it with a few added numbers, that reflected the time and place when the work was performed again (Charkiolakis 2011). After some clarifying correspondence with Michael Burden, he gave me all the details of Cheryl Hoskin, who was at that time working at the Rares Department of Barr-Smith Library. I contacted her and asked for a copy of the spartito for our collection in the Music Library of Greece, explaining the situation. She was willing to help and she actually decided to do something even more useful than donating a copy of something that was already in the public domain. The library staff digitized the spartito in two days and added all the metadata available.⁹ After the premiere of the work in the 21st of January 1915 and the consecutive performances of it in the 1950s with a recreated score and parts, we had the chance to have access to the original material of the work, even in a spartito form. With the original set of parts from the premiere of the work and the available material deriving from the spartito, we have a more clear lead towards the recreation of the original score.

Furthermore, at the digital repositories currently available in Greece one can find samples of rarely known or even totally unknown works by composers who later on became famous. Let me refer to a characteristic example that represents this.

In the manuscripts collection of the Music Library of Greece, among many other things, one can trace a literary unknown work by

9 One can access the score at <https://digital.library.adelaide.edu.au/dspace/handle/2440/56535> accessed on 25 October 2015.

Iannis Xenakis, accessible till recently only to those who were able to visit the library's premises. The work, although does not appear yet at the Library's Catalogue but only on the Acquisitions Catalogue, was traceable. After all, cataloguing of the Rares and Manuscripts Department needs to proceed with care and it is inevitably slow. However, when the second phase of a digitization project went forward, this piece, among others, was chosen to be digitized in the "Greek Composers Manuscripts" section¹⁰. There one finds the piece titled *Πάτημα Γοργό και Αυστηρά Ισόχρονο* [Quick Tread and Strictly Timely/Isochronous] that was composed by Iannis Xenakis, in his youth, and more specifically in June 1952, as the composer marks on the right hand corner of the score¹¹. This is a one-page piano work that may contain elements that have been used in other pieces, for instance the unpublished *Seven Piano pieces without title* from 1949/50 or the *Suite* for piano from 1950 that also remains unpublished. The interesting fact though remains that a piece under that specific title does not exist in any catalogue of Xenakis' works. Although it is a common practice that youth works of composers are not included in their official catalogues, most of the times as non-representative of their later work, there is some mention about them. This is not the case for this piece, since I have not managed to find a reference to it.

The Athens Conservatoire was being established in Athens as early as 1871, making it one of the oldest institutions of the sort in Europe. During the 1890s and for a substantial amount of time within the 20th century there was a constant flow of foreign teachers who were hired for their teaching qualities and due to the fact that they were considered as performers of high calibre. By doing so, the Board of Directors of the Athens Conservatoire believed that they would add value to the Institution. Also, one cannot neglect the fact that there

10 See <http://digma.mmb.org.gr/Collection.aspx?cid=4> accessed on 25 October 2015.

11 For the piece see <http://digma.mmb.org.gr/Item.aspx?kkt=ARIBAS000000041>

were no Greek teachers who had the capacity of knowledge in order to teach at this level, especially during the first years of the Conservatoire's function. One of the foreign teachers who was recruited during the last year of the 19th century was Franck Choisy a, swiss-born but from Belgian decent, violinist, composer and conductor who would end up living for a substantial span of his lifetime in Athens and finally dying there. Choisy was born in 1872 and arrived in Athens in 1899 to take the position of violin teacher at the Athens Conservatory. Later on he became the conductor of the Athens Conservatoire Symphony Orchestra and stayed at his position till 1907, year that he decided to return to Geneva. He returned to Athens in 1929 or 1930 and died there in 1966¹². Apparently, Choisy was a gifted musician who became interested with what comprised the folk and ecclesiastic element of Greek music. We observe him being interested for the byzantine melos and traditional folk tunes,¹³ without though being a prototype ethnomusicologist in that sense. He also established an interest on ancient Greek music. We know these from his archival material which is actually split in two parts: one is beign maintained (and has been digitized) in the Music Library of Greece¹⁴ and the other part, mostly non musical but equally interesting, remains at the MIET-ELIA Archive which stands for the Hellenic Literary and Historical Archive and National Bank of Greece Cultural Foundation¹⁵. Although most of the musical part is being kept

12 For Frank Choisy see (Charkiolakis 2012) and also (Lerch-Kalavrytino 2013).

13 For instance, one can revert to a collection of essays that was destined to form a book under the title "Parlons Musique", a project that was not realised as it seems. In any case, quite a few of the typeset pages exist in his archival remains and one can see them here <http://digma.mmb.org.gr/Item.aspx?kkt=CHOISY000000035> and here <http://digma.mmb.org.gr/Item.aspx?kkt=CHOISY000000038> (accessed on 28 October 2015). The first chapters of this book were dedicated to ancient Greece and the music of the period.

14 This is the link to the Frank Choisy Archive at the Digital Greek Music Archive <http://digma.mmb.org.gr/Collection.aspx?cid=5> accessed on 28 October 2015.

15 This is the link to the information about the Frank Choisy Archive that is kept at the MIET-ELIA (Hellenic Literary and Historical Archive) <http://www.elia.org.gr/entry.fds?entryid=9&pageid=103&pagecode=05.06&tablepageid=24&pageno=1&direction>

at the music library, one of the most interesting artefacts, an autobiography of his, is being kept at the counterpart MIET-ELIA Archive and it is currently on the process to be digitized (hopefully, translated as well since it gives interesting information of the Athenian musical life). Focusing on the digital part of the archive to which one has access to, we come across his rather small but significant compositional output, and more specifically to a symphonic work titled *Exile du Patre, Suite Grecque pour petite orchestre*, a work that was probably composed around the end of 1902 or the beginning of 1903 and got performed on the 7/20 March 1903. In this work, Choisy uses a tune deriving from the Greek dance "Tsamikos" at the second movement. In a sense, the "Tsamikos" that the composer is using plays a significant role of a dance part resembling for this movement only with the baroque suite trends. Moreover, he inserts the main theme of the Greek national anthem in the third and last movement of the work, which is titled "Le Soir". In order to make it more visible, he actually records it on the score. All these do not say much if you see them separate from Greek music historiography. However, all takes a different spin when one realises that this work was performed almost a year before the *First Hellenic Suite* by Dionysios Lavrangas (1904, conducted by Choisy), and four years before *The Feast* (1907) by Georgios Labelet. These two works that I have just mentioned have been considered the first works of the Greek nationalistic movement that will rise in the years to come and will prevail under the dominating figure of Manolis Kalomiris. But, it seems that it was actually a Swiss who was the first that introduced audiences to this national sound, a fact that would have continued to be neglected if the archive was not digitized and widely disseminated.

[=asc&orderby=&langid=2&showresults=true&letter=&onoma_titlos=choisy&apo=&mexri=&tupoi_arxeioid33=&uemata_katalocoid40](#)= accessed on 28 October 2015. Also, one can refer to Stamatogiannaki (2012).

As I mentioned earlier in this article, due to the digitization projects that have been carried forward, one is now able to find interesting material deriving from other, not necessarily musical, sources as well. As it has been revealed, and this is something that musicologists were suspecting that existed but resources were scarce and difficult to accumulate and therefore not much research has been conducted, Greek literary magazines and periodical publications of the late 19th century contain certain musical sections with salon music pieces solely by Greek composers (Charkiolakis 2011). Although, salon music as a genre is something commonly underestimated in the Greek musical historiography, it seems that there was actually a market and an audience that would be entertained by them. Publications of the sort would include one-page items inserted at the literary periodicals of the time. These were pieces that would appear later on as sheet music (mostly 4-page pieces) that would be sold separately at the music shops that were established. It was only when I was engaged in a research project through the University of Athens from 2013 onwards¹⁶, which had in the centre of focus those literary publications that have been widely digitized but not thoroughly researched for their musical aspects. Credits mainly go to Dr. Avra Xepapadakou for this revelation since she was the first to pinpoint this issue and discussed it with me within the scope of this research projects. Furthermore, what we have been trying to do since then was to signify the impact salon music had in Greek musical matters and the actual fact this genre was something alive in the Greek music scene. Currently, we are working towards a book on the subject that will probably appear later in 2016.

During the first twenty or so years of active and institutionalized musicological research revolving around Greece and

16 For this project see <http://excellence.minedu.gov.gr/thales/en/thalesprojects/375892> accessed 28 October 2015.

Greek music we have been struggling to resolve issues that had to do with national identity, hellenicity, issues that have to do with positioning our art-music world and epoch within the framework of the modern hellenic state that has been established, enlarged, diminished and, finally, stabilised in the 20th century. During the 1990s and beginning of 2000s most of our conferences were held in Greek, had mostly a national character and articles existed mainly in the native language with only just a few exceptions.

By the mid 2000s though the approaches seemed to be changing. Maybe because we were past our "childhood illnesses" that one inevitably has to go through, partly also because younger generations with more up to date interests were taking the lead, the fact is that Greek musicology has been going forward. Hand in hand with this though goes the fact that from then onwards we had far more many resources to rely on. Digital resources that were developed and await to be used accordingly.

Earlier on I gave a few hands-on examples of what is available and how all these new resources could potentially widen our understandings in our field. But the most important factor I think comes from the realization that all these are part of a wider perspective, the fact that what was happening in the Greek musical world of that time, is in fact a part -even a small one- of a wider phenomenon that one can identify as a European musical framework. A periphery which still bears resemblance to its European counterparts, a periphery where music moves, although sometimes in a more staggered way, towards Europe. By acknowledging the above, the Greek musicological perspectives changed, partly because of what I explained before (young scientists, different methods and modern perspectives) but also due to the wider availability of archival material. We managed to shift, and I hope that we will continue doing so, from

an introvert to an extrovert musicology with our understanding of things shifting towards new paths, widening our horizons. By releasing new and under-researched or, even more importantly, never-researched material that one could access from a distance gave researchers the opportunity to dig and harvest information that would have taken far longer to unearth, if it was ever to be unearthed. Continuing in this path is obviously the only way forward, and I am sure that more fragile and undocumented myths that have been taken for granite will be replaced, reformed and reshaped in order to give a clear and accurate picture. Furthermore, new and exciting facts could be revealed, new paths could be drawn in order for us, musicologists to be more accurate when we discuss a two centuries old musical scene, that encapsulates a variety of musical styles and genres, which also bears a significance not only of national but of international value, that awaits to be explored even further.

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