

EXPLORING AN UNKNOWN MUSICAL WORLD: THE CASE OF THE GREEK SONGS COLLECTION AT THE DIGITAL GREEK MUSIC ARCHIVE (DIGMA)

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Abstract: Digitisation has been the major innovation that occurred in the turn of the 21st century, widening the scope of research in various fields. The availability of material reshapes the way we see and research and this becomes quite obvious in the case of musicology. A strong example of this is the fact that musical microhistory deriving from the periphery seems to be gaining interest, especially when one places this in a parallel route towards the major music centres that were active during each era. Therefore, we are going to examine a collection of Greek songs currently accessible for those researchers who are interested on the activities of local song composers from the European periphery, available at The Music Library of Greece "Lilian Voudouri."

Keywords: digitisation; musicology; microhistory; European periphery; The Music Library of Greece Lilian Voudouri.

EXPLORANDO UM MUNDO MUSICAL DESCONHECIDO: O CASE DA COLEÇÃO DE CANÇÕES GREGAS DO ARQUIVO DIGITAL DE MÚSICA GREGA (DIGMA)

Resumo: Digitalização tem sido a principal inovação que ocorreu na virada do século XXI, alargando o âmbito da pesquisa em vários campos. A disponibilidade de material reformula a forma como vemos e pesquisamos e isto torna-se evidente no caso de Musicologia. Um forte exemplo disso é o fato que esta micro-história musical provinda da periferia parece ganhar interesse, especialmente quando colocada em uma rota paralela em direção aos centros principais da música ativos durante cada era. Portanto, vamos examinar uma coleção de canções gregas atualmente acessíveis para os pesquisadores interessados sobre as atividades dos compositores de música locais da periferia Europeia, disponível na Biblioteca de Música da Grécia “Lilian Voudouri.”

Palavras-chave: digitalização; musicologia; micro-história; periferia Europeia; Biblioteca de Música da Grécia Lilian Voudouri.

Introduction

Digitisation has been the major innovation that occurred in the turn of the 21st century, an innovation that widened the scope of research in all aspects with the humanities and arts disciplines not being an exception to that. The availability of material that was not accessible before could actually reshape the way we see and research and this becomes quite obvious in the case of musicology. A strong example of this is the fact that musical microhistory deriving from the periphery seems to be gaining interest, especially when one places this in a parallel route towards the major music centres that were active during each era. Therefore, to set an example by the case we are going to examine here, a collection of Greek songs is currently accessible for those researchers who are interested on the activities of local song composers from the European periphery.

In order though for all these to happen (digitisation, preservation etc.) an institution had to be established. The Music Library of Greece “Lilian Voudouri” started functioning in 1995 and operating for the public from 1997 onwards. Its main focus has been Western music and major aspects of Greek music and musical life. One of the main goals that has been set since the first years of function, was to collect, study, research and track material that had to do with the past and present of Greek music. Therefore, a Greek Music Archive started being organized within the boundaries of the Library with an ultimate goal of not only to collect and research but also to ensure that the past and present of Greek music will be rescued from oblivion. By digitizing a large part of the available material and creating a portal (digma.mmb.org.gr) the aim of triggering and enhancing further research on Greek music by musicologists and researchers not only deriving from Greece but also from abroad has been made possible. One also should not neglect a serious concern, which had to do with avoiding quick spoliation and destruction of archival material, something that would have most certainly occurred over the course of years, if the material was not carefully preserved.

Since the role of the Greek Music Archive was clear from the first instant, materials such as books, scores, recordings, photos, programmes, journals, manuscripts and others have been and still are being accumulated for the benefit of researching the Greek musical world. The types and styles of Greek music that are being covered span from Ancient Greek to Byzantine and from Rebetiko, Folk, Popular to Art Music. Moreover, one cannot neglect the amount of archives that has been collected over the years, which now actually consist the main part of the material within the Archive. This collection of rare material grows either through personal donations, purchases from collectors, rights holders and auctions or through constant enrichment with material that comes from various sources.

The latter is the case that best describes the Collection of Greek Songs. This collection is being comprised of approximately 6000 titles, with almost half of them being purchased from a single collector, thus becoming the basis of the collection. This occurred in 1996 during the Library's collection development phase. It's needless to say that the collection still continues to expand with worthwhile material. The other large part of the archival material has been embodied from many different sources (e.g. donations, purchases from flea market and second-hand bookshops etc.).

The unique collection of Greek songs of the Music Library of Greece "Lilian Voudouri" covers a wide range of titles and encompasses both scholarly and popular music expression, given that these compositional styles addressed to a wider audience, which had no special music education. In this way, along with Kokkinos', Napoleon Lampelet's and Mantzaros' lieder are the songs of I. Kaisaris, I. Karantzas and L. Spinellis, and even those of Tsitsanis, Souyoul and Theodorakis. Also, and although this will not be the focus of this text, it is interesting to mention that one can find a similar span and diversity in the philological value of the songs. It juxtaposes the verses of D. Solomos, A. Valaoritis, G. Vizyinos with the lyrics that were used, for instance, in popular and rebetiko songs.

In order to fully understand and be able to judge the musicological importance of this material it seems useful to proceed to a brief historical overview that could help place these types of music within the frame of Greek music life and history.

Historical Overview

The Library's collection of Greek songs is comprised of music that has been described as "popular" in the broader sense of the term, meaning music that was published for recreation and amusement. In this extend one could even include those art songs that appeared in the sheet music format. Here it seems useful to remind the entry for the term "popular music" as it has been defined in the Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians: "A term used widely in everyday discourse, generally to refer to types of music that are considered to be of lower value and complexity than art music, and to be readily accessible to large numbers of musically uneducated listeners rather to an elite. It is, however, one of the most difficult terms to define precisely. This is partly because its meaning (and that of equivalent words in other languages) has shifted historically and often varies in different cultures; partly because its boundaries are hazy, with individual pieces or genres moving into or out of the category, or being located other inside or outside it by different observers" (Middleton and Manuel 2001). This seems, more or less, describing the case with Greek popular music.

During the years of the Ottoman occupation in mainland Greece, Heptanisa (Ionian islands) have been the only part of the Greek world of that time that remained unoccupied by the Ottomans and thus had the opportunity to be in connection with the West. For most of the time before the creation of an independent Greek country that occurred after the War of Independence that broke out in 1821 along with the help of great powers such as the British, the French and the Russians, the Ionian islands were under an English or French command. In the field of music one can observe that there has been a close connection with the Italian popular element that was mainly expressed in the genre of melodrama. Operatic companies toured in

the Ionian Islands and audiences had the opportunity to listen to popular arias from Italian operas.

After the establishment of an independent Greek country in 1830, these companies initiated their sets of tours around mainland Greece and mainly in cities that had a strong bourgeois community. These were cities like Patras and Syros. Athens, on the other hand, was small and poor, with limited artistic life¹. However, with the enthronement of King Otto and the establishment of various cultural societies something seemed to be changing. Cultural life was enriched and Italian companies started visiting Athens as well. Here we need to mention the effort that was being asserted by bourgeois circles for a Westernization of Greek society and especially from the circles around the King's court, whom they wanted to establish a more central European touch in the Athenian life.

During the final decade of the 19th century, one can observe the influence Italian *bel canto* had in Greek songs that were being composed at the time. Composers, of Ionian descent mainly, such as Napoleon Lambelet, George Lambelet, Dionysios Lavrangas, Dimitrios Rodios, Nikolaos Kokkinos wrote songs that were meant to become popular. These were published and used for entertainment reasons.

In the first decades of the 20th century and mainly during the Athenian bell époque period (1900-1920), a new song genre is being created, the "Athenian Song." The two main types are an Italian *canzonetta*-style and the "kantada," which is really a polyphonic song. In those years a new type of entertainment, "The Athenian Varieté," becomes extremely popular. Composers like Theophrastos Sakellarides, Grigoris Konstantinides, Lola Votti, Attic (Kleon Triantafyllou) are the main representatives of this new genre that

1 For more information see also Baroutas (1992).

mixes music, song and theatrical sketches. The songs included in this type of *variété* were deeply influenced by western equivalents. This meant that audiences had the opportunity to be introduced in European popular music (a mixture of cabaret music, operetta and *variété* music). In this case, publications of foreign songs in sheet music helped audiences receive them more easily.

In later years, the musical elements introduced in the Athenian *Variété* were described as “light” or even “European music” in order to significantly differentiate from other genres such as *rebetiko*, the urban songs of lower class people, a genre that was heavily influenced by the populations arriving to Greece just after 1922 and the Minor Asia destruction. This “light music” was comprised of songs in styles that were only found in foreign countries and in genres such as tango, fox trot, rumba, etc. Greek composers started writing their own melodies on patterns that did not have much resemblance to folk or other popular music types. Light music moved from the theatre to nightclubs, bars and *tavernas* with music. At that time *rebetiko* music was an outcast genre and only people from lower social class listened and entertained themselves to it. This of course changed in due course.

On this occasion, a particular mention should be made to the genre of Greek operetta. Along with the Athenian *Variété*, operetta was one of the most popular types of music. It is a fact that the *variété* was eventually taken over by the operetta world and during the 1920s operetta conquered and extinguished it. However, its reign was meant to be short. Its predominance started around 1916 and the nadir point seems to be around 1928. It has been estimated that around 1000 operettas have been composed through the years of its popularity. The most popular songs deriving from these operettas were heard in unconventional places such as tavernas and these were printed in sheet music form.

From 1930 onwards one can observe a significant change. Now music could be diffused through the new technologies available. The new developments in discography brought a change to the music world. In Greece the new radio station that was established in 1938 helped in the most positive way. Of course, sheet music was still available and that continued for many years to come. The composers that culminate are Mihalis Souyoul, Kostas Giannidis (the alter ego of the art music composer Yannis Konstantinidis), Spyros Ollandezos, Iosif Ritsiardis and others.

New types of songs and music appear and are now vividly described as “songs of wine and tavern”. These are moving towards and approaching music genres that mainly express lower classes in Greece. Moreover, from the '40s and during the German Occupation and Civil War years, popular song of all types deteriorates. In 1949, the composer Manos Hadjidakis gives a talk and officially puts rebetiko on the map. Composers of that time, and especially those writing light music, had to move towards a new genre called “arhontorebetiko” (a mixture of rebetiko music but with lyrics and meanings that did not hesitate with the ones used in authentic Rebetiko, which were thought to be decadent).

During the next years and from 1950 and onwards, one can see that light music (kantades, fox trot, tango music, etc.) suffer a heavy blow and popular music separates in more than one branches. This means that types like: *laika* (urban popular music) and *elafrolaika* (light urban popular music; music where bouzouki is the primary instrument) are being introduced. Even art music composers venture to write these types of music, for example Mikis Theodorakis, Manos Hadjidakis and others.

Technical Aspects

After giving a brief but hopefully comprehensive timeline of what one can comprise within the bounds of the term "Greek song" it is time to return to the specific project in discussion. Music Library of Greece realized the programme *Creation of a complete unit of documentation and promotion of Greek music*, funded by the operational programme "Information Society" (3rd European Community Support Framework, 2000–2006), which was later on broadened and enriched by new collections and material thanks to the donation by the National Bank of Greece. Originally, within the frame of this project, the archives of the composers Mikis Theodorakis, Emiliós Riadis, Georgios Poniridis, Frank Choisy, the archive of Nileus Kamarados-Nikolaos Vlachopoulos, a part of the Manuscript Collections and of Greek Songs that belong to the Library, as well as the Domna Samiou Archive which belongs to the Domna Samiou Greek Folk Music Association were digitized and are available on the Internet free of charge. On a later stage, the archive of Dimitrios Lialios, the collections of concert programmes and cultural events, Greek musical periodicals, books on Byzantine music and vinyl records were added. At the same time, concert programmes from the Mikis Theodorakis Archive were digitized and added to that collection, whereas the processing of the Greek songs collection was completed. These digitization programmes gave the Library the opportunity to digitize thirteen out of twenty nine of its main archives and collections.

The first period of the digitization programme ran for 18 months from September 2005 to February 2007 and the digitized documents amounted at 264.385. The second period ran for three years from January 2009 to December 2011 and the digitized documents amounted at 66.000. At this time this significant thematic documentation of Greek music includes more than 330.000 digitized

documents of unique cultural value; they are the source for every researcher interested in Greek music. These items can be utilized for the interdisciplinary creation of cultural services, always subject to intellectual property law.

The selection of the material was based on four major criteria: 1) user's interests and needs, 2) making full use of already existing metadata, 3) the opportunity to digitize material that would not have been possible otherwise (e.g. hiring a specialist such as a sound engineer), 4) material that was or would have been free of intellectual property rights near the completion of the project or material that we had the permission of the composer to offer it as free web content.

The Collection of Greek songs fulfilled all of the factors mentioned above and naturally became part of the material that was digitized. This collection was already catalogued and had a certain amount of metadata available. These were: name of the composer, song title, title of the major work or collection that each song was deriving from, lyricist, place of publication, year of publication and publisher. These metadata existed in excel and access files. During the digitization period musicologists that were hired within the framework of this project, worked on enriching the available metadata, correcting possible errors and adding metadata on a specifically-build database. Due to the fact that a certain amount of metadata already existed there was a decision to build a custom-made schema of metadata elements. However, soon enough it was clear that this schema, although it may suit the needs up to a certain point, had major drawbacks in terms of interoperability. Therefore, a new decision was made to change this and use Dublin Core metadata Element Set instead.

Portal

The outcome of this digitization process has been deposited in a new portal that was created in 2008. The acronym of it is DIGMA (Digital Greek Music Archive) and one can find it at <http://digma.mmb.org.gr>. All the material that has been digitized appears in this portal, according of course intellectual property laws within the European Union. Music works that are on the public domain appear in full in the portal along with the appropriate metadata. As far as the Collection of Greek Songs is concerned, the ones that are in the public domain amount to 325 and these are offered as free web-content that can be viewed and printed. The remaining digitized songs, that lead up to 6000, are being revealed in the portal yearly as they come out of the intellectual property law restraints. Furthermore, from January 2010, and in order to promote research on this material, a decision has been made to offer all metadata and first page images of these songs that are still copyrighted. It's important to mention that quite a few parts of the portal have already been translated in English and there is a constant effort towards translating the full amount of metadata and information.

Case Studies

In order to make things more clear, we provide five case-study examples deriving from this specific digitized collection that shows the diversity of it.

Μιχάλης Σουγιούλ [Michalis Souyoul]: Αθήνα και πάλι Αθήνα [Athens again and again]²

Michalis Souyoul (1906-1958)³ was born in Turkey, in the Aydin region at Asia Minor in 1906 and his real name was Michael Souyioultzoglou. His family migrated to Athens in 1920 where he began to work as a self taught pianist and few years later in 1925, he created his own jazz orchestra and started to work as a professional musician. He died in Athens in 1958. He was one of the creators and main representatives of the “arhontorebetiko” genre, songs with western instrumentation and popular melodies that resembled rebetiko music. The main feature, and major difference with rebetiko songs, was that they used violin instead of bouzouki. He wrote more than 700 songs of tango, waltz, even songs of patriotic sentiment, with most of them having great commercial success. He also composed music for 45 theatrical plays and 10 films. During the Second World War many of his songs were presented with lyrics referring directly to the war condition, sometimes in a mocking way sometimes in a more sentimental in order to raise the morale of the people.

According to the metadata given this specific song is a waltz, which was written during the Second World War for the theatrical play (*variété*) *Fouskodendries* and sung first by Sophia Vembo, a great artist of the era. The lyrics were written by Mimis Traiforos who was a famous writer, director and poet and also Sophia Vembo's husband. The theme of the song is Athens, the capital of Greece praising the city for its beauty and grandiose. The song was published in 1942 and first recorded in 1949. The cover has been edited by the copyist

2 Accessed on 29/1/2015 <http://digma.mmb.org.gr/Item.aspx?kkt=GRSON000004029>.

3 For more information see Tsabras (2005).

Richardos Fretsas, a name familiar to all those who deal with this era and to whom we are going to refer to later on as well.

Γιώργος Μητσάκης [Giorgos Mitsakis]: Δεν είμαι εγώ ο Γιώργος σου [I am not your favorite George anymore]⁴

Giorgos Mitsakis (1921-1993) was born in Turkey and more precisely in Istanbul (Constantinople) in 1921.⁵ He came in Greece with his family in 1935 and after various wanderings in different cities (Cavala, Volos, Thessaloniki) he was finally settled in Piraeus just before the Second World War started in 1939. Piraeus was the centre of the rebetiko scene at that time. There he collaborated with other famous Greek composers of rebetiko such as Vassilis Tsitsanis and Apostolos Chatzichristos. He stood out as a great composer, singer, bouzouki player and lyricist. He died in Athens in 1993. He wrote music and lyrics for many songs and he was one of those who pioneered the development of the song from Rebetiko to “Laiko”, a more popular and in a sense a more acceptable form of bouzouki music. Mitsakis holds an unusual but interesting record: he was the first ever rebetiko musician who appeared with his band in a film in 1952, the film was *Ο Πύργος των Ιπποτών* [The knights tower]. The song that is discussed here was written in 1951 by Giorgos Mitsakis and the lyrics also belong to him. The premiere was given by Nikos Gounaris, a famous singer and an interesting choice for the time since the song was a zeimbekiko and Gounaris was not a famous rebetiko singer. On the contrary, this was a crossover choice for the time. The piece was published in 1951 and first recorded at the same year. The theme of the song is probably autobiographical and we could say that describes an old love. This version of the score presented here is a

4 Accessed on 29/1/2015 <http://digma.mmb.org.gr/Item.aspx?kkt=GRSON000002701>.

5 For more information see Mitsakis (1995).

transcription for voice and accordion and the cover has been edited by the copyist Minos.

Παύλος Καρρέρης [Pavlos Carrer]: Το φεγγάρι [The Moon]⁶

Pavlos Carrer (1829-1896)⁷ was one of the most important art music composers of the 19th century and his output was mostly comprised of operatic works. He was born in Zante, with his musical education taking place in Zante, Corfu and later on in Milan. Italy has always been an accommodating destination for his operas and quite a few of his premieres took place there. In 1857 he returned to Zante remaining there for the rest of his life. Heavily influenced by the Italian style of the time he composed in a *bel canto* style, without however abolishing any of those individual Greek elements. He dealt with subjects deriving both from the recent and ancient Greek past, establishing a non-systematic but sustainable Greek idiom and adding a Greek flavour to quite a few of his works, and also dealt with subject that were common to the operatic styles of his time (for instance, he composed a *Maria Antonietta*, an opera titled *Dante e Bice*, etc). The mentioned art song that derives from the collection of the Music Library of Greece is for a soprano voice range. The lyrics are written by A. Manousos and the score has been published by the Veloudios Publishing House, as one can extract from the metadata given. The song is being published in a series titled "Ανθοδέσμη Ελληνικών Μελωδιών" [Bouquet of Greek Melodies] where a bulk of Greek art songs has been published for a number of years.

6 Accessed on 29/1/2015 <http://digma.mmb.org.gr/Item.aspx?kkt=GRSON00000011>.

7 For more information see Xepapadaku (2003) and Leotsakos (2003).

Νικόλαος Κόκκινος [Nikolaos Kokkinos]: Τα ευζωνάκια μας [Our Evzones]⁸

Nikolaos Kokkinos (1861-1920)⁹ was a composer mainly of popular songs. Although he was recognised as one of the most talented Greek composers of popular music of his time, the fact is that he did not have a proper musical education, something that he was attempting to disguise under his unquestionable talent. He organised choirs and musical bands that performed regularly around Athens and other cities in Greece and abroad. He died in Istanbul after a heart failure he suffered while being on a performance tour. The above mentioned song it could be easily described as a national-patriotic work. Currently, the Evzones are the elite army corps which function as a Presidential Guard. Historically though they refer to the light infantry units that served in the first organised Greek army battalions upon the newly established Hellenic Republic in 1833. Evzones have been considered (and still are) as an iconic figure of the Greek Army. The reference on them in this song has to do with the expeditions of the Greek Army during the first decades of the 20th century. Unfortunately, there is no indication about the exact date of this song and to which of all the wars that Greece was involved at refers to. During that period, Greece was involved at the First and Second Balkan Wars (1912-13) and later on on the First World War (1914-1918) and the Asia Minor expedition (1919 till after the death of the composer). The lyrics are by D. Galanos and the score has been published by Georgios Fexis Publishing House.

8 Accessed on 29/1/2015 <http://digma.mmb.org.gr/Item.aspx?kkt=GRSON000000217>.

9 For more information on N. Kokkinos see Kalogeropoulos (1998b, p. 199-201).

Γιάννης Βελλάς [Giannis Vellas]: ήρθες αργά στο δρόμο της ζωής μου [you came late to the pathway of my life]¹⁰

One of the most thriving and flourishing genres that appeared in the Greek song era was tango songs. An idiom that was targeting the upcoming bourgeois Greek, mostly Athenian, society presented as with hundreds of songs that were following the Argentinian dance genre. G. Vellas (1910-?)¹¹ was a self-made musician with not much of a theoretical background although he received some lessons after he begun his professional career. He formed one of the most successful guitar groups in the 1930s and started composing tunes that were actually transformed into songs by some of his apprentices. He composed over 250 songs with many of them being in the tango idiom. He also wrote music for films and *variété* theatre. This particular song that was published in 1946 was one of his biggest hits and it is still performed. The lyrics have been written by K. Kofiniotis and the song has been published by Andreadis-Nakas publications in Athens. An interesting historical fact that one comes across in quite a few of these scores, and derives from the metadata, is the name of the music copyist. Richardos Fretsas was probably the most famous copyist and has copied the music by most living Greek composers of his time. Unfortunately, the archival material from his laboratory has never been revealed although there are many urban legends about it. Fretsas used to also copy works that were not destined to be published but were used as performance material.

10 Accessed on 29/1/2015 <http://digma.mmb.org.gr/Item.aspx?kkt=GRSON00000523>.

11 For more information on Giannis Vellas see Kalogeropoulos (1998a, p. 352-353).

Final Remarks

The Greek Songs Collection at the Digital Greek Music Archive is only a small portion of what actually is contained at the portal. We chose to discuss this part of the archival material though, because we believe that this actually describes best the timeless and diachronic aspect of it. In other words, we picked digital material that shows the wealth of a genre described in the most generalist way as "Greek Song" although we have clearly shown with the five case studies that were presented in brief the diversity of this material. Music that has been composed and published for almost one century in the form of sheet music had to be preserved and delivered to those who want to know more. The Greek Songs Collection at the Digital Greek Music Archive was designed as such. To help preserve, disseminate and present to the world something that most did not know. It is now in the hands of researchers and music lovers to turn a fresh eye on it and place it in its rightful place in the European music history.

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