

MODERN GREEK MUSIC

by SOLON MICHAELIDES
Director of the State Conservatory
of Music, Salonica, Greece.

Modern Music begins with the liberation of Greece (about 1830) and may fall into two periods: a) the initial stage, and b) the Contemporary School. The first period covers all the 19th century and the first decade of the 20th.

Musical life in the broad sense of the word did not exist in Greece until the end of the 19th century. This period is dominated by Italian music, chiefly operatic. Italian companies were regularly visiting Greece, and the Italian operas with their arias were the first medium (with the Bavarian bands formed after the arrival of the Bavarian Prince Othon, as first King of Greece) which gave the Greek people an acquaintance with European music.

A somewhat concrete stage in shaping the musical life in Athens began in 1871 with the foundation of the Athens Conservatory of Music (present Director ^{M. Pallandios} ~~S. Phrantzatos~~) which played a preponderant part in the evolution and progress of music in Greece. Other Conservatories followed; - in Athens the "Conservatoire Lottner" (1899-1919), the "Hellenic Conservatoire" (1919, present Directors A. Evangelatos and M. Varvoglis) and the "National Conservatoire" (1926, Director K. Kalomiris), in Salonica the "Salonica Conservatoire" in 1914 (Director S. Michaelides), the only State Conservatoire in the Country, and little by little many other Schools in the principal towns and islands.

Various musical societies from 1871 onwards contributed to the formation of the musical life.

The Symphony Orchestra of the Athens Conservatoire was founded in 1893 and began a most serious work of musical education of the people, It has been transformed into the Athens State Orchestra in 1943 and continues its work now under Vavayiannis and Paridis. A second State Symphony Orchestra was formed in Salonica in 1959 (dir. S. Michaelides).

An important work was made at the same time in the operatic field by various Societies and Operatic Groups. This led to the foundation in Athens of the National Opera House (1940).

The first Greek composers came from the Ionian Islands; almost all of them studied in Italy and their art is influenced by the Italian School. I shall mention four of these composers; the first, NICHOLAS MANTZAROS, was the composer of the Greek National Anthem. Born in Corfu in 1795 (where he died in 1873), he was a sound theorist, a great ideologist and teacher, but as a composer, though considered by some Italian writers as original, he was indeed more Italian than Greek. The second, SPIROS XYNDAS, from Corfu (1814-1891), pupil of Mantzaros, wrote the first Greek opera ("The Candidate"). The third, PAUL CARRER (1829-1896), from Zante, also greatly influenced by Italian music, succeeded nevertheless in freeing himself at certain moments to write some Greek music. He is the composer of one of the most popular songs which is sung everywhere in Greece, and is generally considered as a folk-song, "The Old Demos". The fourth, SPIRO SAMARA, is the most interesting of all Greek composers of this period. He was born in Corfu in 1863 and died in Athens in 1917; he studied in Paris with Léo Délibes and has been chiefly an operatic composer. His operas met with success in Italy and France, where he spent most of his life. His style was not much more Greek than that of his predecessors, but he was the first Greek composer to be recognised on an international scale. He opened the way to the next generation.

From the Ionian Islands continued to come other composers, who now sought their inspiration from inside Greece, from the folk-song, from the national legends and traditions. So, the Greek School began to evolve and develop in this direction, after the example set first by the Russian School with the group of the Five about the middle of the 19th century. Of course here, as is also the case with other Schools, it is no question of imitating the folk-art, but of seeking inspiration within their country with a view to achieving development on higher level of the elements found in popular art. Among these composers from the Ionian Islands I should mention two, DENIS LAVRANGA from Cephalonia (1861-1941), a pupil of Massenet and founder of the Greek National Opera, and GEORGE LAMBELET from Corfu (1875-1945). Lavranga was an operatic composer, but wrote also symphonic works and many songs. G. Lambelet was one of the first to propagate the gospel of the creation of genuine Greek music. He was chiefly a song-writer, and published also several studies on folk-music; special mention must be made of his collection of Greek folk-songs in French (edited by the Greek Ministry for Foreign Affairs in 1934). His brother, Napoleon, was also a composer, and had lived until his death (1932) in London. Another composer of this generation was GEORGE AXIOTIS (b.1875-1924) who wrote some symphonic works.

With these two composers we enter the Contemporary School in which there is no more trace of Italian influence. The Greek composers study now either in Germany or mostly in France. The French School has exercised a considerable influence on modern Greek music; this phenomenon is easily explained of course. The French School, after having been influenced by Moussorgsky and the Russian School, succeeded in influencing in its turn most other Schools by the impressionistic aesthetic movement, the development of exotic means, the harmonic methods, the bright art of orchestration and generally by the particular spirit so characteristic of the French art. For the Greek composers, besides all these reasons, there was also some relation of temperament, a sort of aesthetic affinity more profound perhaps than with other nations.

Little by Little the Greek School is turning to the principles of creating of a purely national art seeking its inspiration in the national traditions and the legends of the people, in the neo-hellenic poetry and folk-music.

The chief representative of this tendency has been MANOLIS KALOMIRIS. From 1910 he has been the leading figure in this movement, trying with his compositions, his articles, his books, and his teaching, to encourage the creation of pure Greek music. Born in Smyrna in 1883, he studied in Vienna and was for 4 years Professor of the Conservatoire of Harkov in Russia. He is now the head of the "National Conservatoire of Athens", which he founded in 1926. Many of his works have been performed in France, Germany and other countries. He composed 3 operas (one was performed in Berlin in 1940), two symphonies, a piano concerto, suites and other works for chamber music, piano solo, songs, etc.

He is now working on his fourth opera "Konstantinos Paleologos".

Kalomiris received the National Medal of Letters and Arts (1919) and was elected Member of the Academy of Athens in 1945.

A number of distinguished composers belong to the pre-war generation (we mean the first world-war, 1914-18). Among them a group who cultivated special ties with the French School; mention should be made of the following:

MARIO VARVOGLIS, an Athenian (b. 1885), studied in Paris under Xavier Leroux, Caussade and Vincent d'Indy. His principal works include the one-act opera "The afternoon of love" (performed at the National Opera House, 1944), the symphonic poem "The Fair" (1906), the symphonic prelude "Saint Barbara", a "Pastoral Suite" for Strings, a Sonatina for pianoforte etc. He received the National Medal of Letters and Arts (1923) and a prize of the Academy of Athens (1937). He is co-director of the "Hellenic Conservatoire" of Athens since 1937.

EMIL RIADIS (Salonica 1888-1935) studied in Munich with Mottl and in Paris with Ravel. He was a professor and

assistant director of the Salonica Conservatoire. He was chiefly a song-writer, the most delicate of the Neohellenic School. His other works include the "Byzantine Mass" of Saint Chrysostom, the "Biblical Danses" etc. He was honoured with National Medal of Letters and Arts (1923).

PETRO PETRIDIS (Nigde, Asia Minor, 1892), a strong personality and a very prolific composer. He studied in Paris under Albert Wolf and Albert Roussel. His principal works include five symphonies, two piano-forte concertos, two Suites, a Dramatic Symphony, an oratorio "Saint Paul" (1951), the opera "Zephyra", a Requiem and other important works.

He was elected member of the Academy of Athens in 1959.

GEORGE PONIRIDY (Constantinople, 1892) studied in Brussels and in Paris at the Schola Cantorum. Two symphonies, a symphonic Triptyc, three symphonic preludes, the Cantata "Kassiani" etc.

To the same group belong D. LEVIDIS (Athens, 1886-1951), a pupil of Mottle and Richard Strauss and TH. SPATHIS.

Other composers of this generation working on other lines are GEORGE SKLAVOS (b. Braila, Roumania, 1888) and LORIS MARGARITIS (b. Patras, 1895-1953). Sklavos studied with A. Marsick at the Athens Conservatoire where he became a professor of Harmony, Counterpoint and History of Music. His works include the lyric dramas "Kassiani" (National Opera House, 1959), and "Lestenitsa", the symphonic poem "The Eagle", Two Idylls of Theocrite etc. Margaritis was distinguished as a pianist and appeared as a prodigy at the age of six. He was until his death a professor of the Mozarteum in Salzburg and at the Salonica Conservatoire. His compositions include "Ulyses and Nausicaa" for orchestra and many pianoforte pieces and songs.
works.

DIMITRI MITROPOULOS is a most prominent figure. Born in Athens (1896), he studied first at the Athens Conservatoire, and afterwards in Brussels with Gilson and in Berlin with Busoni. After his studies he was appointed permanent conductor of the Symphony Orchestra of the Athens Conservatoire, a post he held

until his move to U.S.A. He was also a professor of composition at the Athens Conservatoire. 1930 marks the turning point of his career; on the 27th of February he conducts the Berlin Philharmonic with great success. Since then he is invited to conduct in Italy, France, Belgium, England, Roumania and Poland. In 1936 he conducts the Boston Symphony and from 1937 to 1949 is permanent conductor of the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra. In 1949 he is appointed Musical Director of the New York Philharmonic, a post he held until 1959.

As a composer he wrote a few but particularly interesting works among which mention should be made of his Concerto Grosso for Orchestra (1929), his opera Beatrice, and his music for Electra and Hippolyte of Euripides.

To this group belong also K. SPAKIANAKIS and ST. PROCOPIOU.

The first generation is succeeded by a second one who continues the work of the first with equal devotion. Younger composers endowed with talent and equipped with a solid technique have enriched the Greek School with new and, in some cases, important works, many of which have been performed in major musical Centres.

The following may be mentioned:

A. NEZERITIS (b. 1897) who wrote, among others, an opera, "Vassilias Anilagos" (National Opera House, 1948), a musical tragedy "Hero and Leander", "Five Psalms of David" for solo voice, chorus and orchestra, two symphonies, a Violin Concerto, Ballet Music etc. A. KONTIS (b. 1899), a pupil of Haas in Munich, with several orchestral works. TH. KARYOTAKIS (b 1903), a pupil of Mitropoulos and Varvoglis, a prolific composer. He wrote for Orchestra " Symphonic Study on a Greek folk-song", " Petite Symphony" for Strings, " Epic Song ", " Divertimento ", a Ballade for piano and Strings, an opera. " Moon Flower ", two Violin sonatas, a large number of songs etc. J. KONSTANTINIDES (b. 1903), who wrote a "Dodecanese Suite" for orchestra, 44 pianoforte pieces for children, three Sonatas for piano etc.

A. EVANGELATOS (b. 1904) studied in Leipzig, Vienna and in Basle under Weingartner. He is since 1937 co-director with Varvoglis of the "Hellenic Conservatoire" and from 1941 a permanent conductor at the National Opera House and also of the Radio Symphony Orchestra. His works include for Orchestra a Symphony, an Overture to a Drama, Variations and Fugue on a Greek folk-song - his most important work so far - a Suite, incidental music to Aeschylus' "Persians", Sophocles' "Electra" etc.

An important place is occupied by NICOS SKALKOTTAS (1904-1949). After brilliant studies at the Athens Conservatoire he went, thanks to a scholarship, to Berlin, where he studied with Willy Hess, Kurt Weill, Philipp Jarnach and especially with Schönberg.

Skalkottas was one of the most gifted composers of the younger generation of the Greek School. He left a great number of important works, among which mention may be made of a Concerto and a Symphony for wind instruments, 36 Greek Dances for orchestra, three piano Concertos, a Violin Concerto, a Cello Concerto, a Concerto for two violins, two Ballets, many works for chamber music etc. Skalkottas is a master of the twelve-note system.

L. ZORAS (b. 1904), who was a conductor at the National Opera House (1941-1958), wrote a Symphony, a Suite, a Violin concerto etc.

J. PAPAIOANNOU (b. 1909) wrote important orchestral works:- Three symphonies (his Second Symphony won a prize in 1955 at the Queen Elisabeth Competition in Brussels), "poème de la Forêt", a Triptyc, The "Corsair", a symphony legend in 11 pictures etc.

G. KAZASSOGLOU (b. 1910) wrote incidental music to a great number of dramas by Shakespear, Ibsen and other writers. Also "Four Preludes" for orchestra, a Symphony and many songs.

M. PALLANTIOS (b. 1914) wrote an opera "Antigone"; for orchestra; Two symphonic poems, "Petite Suite", a "Greek Classical Overture", incidental music to many ancient tragedies.

A.XENOS (b. 1912) wrote a Symphony, two Symphonic poems ("Tzavellas" and "Digenis") and other works.

Other composers of this generation who may be mentioned are Ch. Perpassas, M. Vourtsis, G. Georgiades, A. Kountourof, St. Papadopoulos, R. Kyriacou, L. Lalaouni, M. Koutoungos.

A third generation with a group of very gifted young composers is now in evolution. Many of them have already given important works which have been performed with success both in Greece and in other Countries.

G. SICILIANOS (b. 1921), a pupil of Sklavos at the Athens Conservatoire and of Pizzetti at "Santa Cecilia" in Rome. He had also lessons from O. Messiaen in Paris and W. Piston and B. Blacher in U.S.A. His first Symphony was performed by the N. York Philharmonic under Mitropoulos. He wrote also a "Prelude and Danse" for orchestra, a symphonic poem, a Concerto for Orchestra, two String Quartets etc.

A. KOUNADIS (b. 1924), a pupil of J. Papaioannou in composition. He "Chorikon" has been performed on June 14th, 1960, in Cologne. Other works: a Sinfonietta, "Music for piano and orchestra", several ballets etc. M. THEODORAKIS (b. 1925), whose ballet "Antigone" was given with success at Covent Garden in London, in October 1959. He wrote also several orchestral works and chamber music. M. HADJIDAKIS (b. 1925) wrote several Ballets, a charming suite for piano "For a little white seashell", incidental music to Aristophanes Comedies, many songs etc.

J. CHRISTOU, Composer of a Symphony and other orchestral works. XENAKIS, an explorer of electronic music.

Besides composition, modern Greece has to show achievements also in other branches of music, in musicology and performance. Of musicologists we may mention D. CALVOCORESSI (1877-1944), who was an authority on Russian music. His publications include books on Glinka and Mussorgsky - this last one a valuable contribution to the study of this composer -, also on Liszt, Schumann etc. He was a contributor of the Groves

Dictionary, of the "Encyclopédie de la Musique" and of many music magazines.

TH. GEORGIADIS (b. 1907), professor of musicology at the University of Munich, ("Der griechische Rhythmus" 1949 and other books), A. AJUTANTE, M. DOUNIAS, J.G. PAPAIOANNOU, S. SKIADARESSIS, PH. ANOYANNAKIS.

Among Greek performers who made a name for themselves the following may be mentioned, the pianists: Sp. Farantatos, Gina Bachauer, G. Themelis, M. Papaioannou, M. Cheroegeorgou, R. Kyriacou, L. Lalacoupi, G. Hadjinicos, The Violinists: F. Voloninis, V. Kollassis, N. Dikaies, the cellist E. Papastavrou, the singers: Maria Callas, E. Nicolaidou, A. Trianti, Irma Kolassi, A. Tassopoulou, V. Georgiou, N. Moscona and others.

S. Michaelides

The writer of the article.

SOLOM MICHAELIDES (b. 1905), composer, musicologist and conductor. He studied in London at Trinity College of Music, London and in Paris at the Schola Cantorum and the Ecole Normale de Musique where he was pupil of Nadia Boulanger. He is a member of the Executive Board of the International Folk Music Council since 1948, and for many years adjudicator at the Ilangollen International Musical Eisteddfod. He is a Contributor to the Grove's Dictionary (Ed. 1954) and to several music magazines.

His works include a symphonic poem, two Greek symphonic pictures, an Archaic Suite, an Opera "Ulyses", two cantatas etc. Many of his works have been performed in London, Oslo, Geneva, ^{Munich} Athens and Salonica. His books include "Modern Harmony" (2 vol.), "The Neohellenic Folk Music" (in English), Modern Greek Music etc.

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STON MICHAELIDES