

## Cultural Sidelights

## MUSIC

## Modern Greek Music

MODERN GREEK 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 perhaps 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 operas. 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 King Othon) 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 Conservatoire, which played a preponderant part in the evolution and progress of music in Greece.

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 three 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 of the three, *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 third, *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 Lavrangas* from Cephalonia (1864-1941), a pupil of Massenet and founder of the Greek National Opera, and *George Lambelet* from Corfu (1875-1943). Lavrangas 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 nice 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.

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.

Of the composers of the pre-war generation (I mean the first world war, 1914-18) there are two distinct groups, one working inside Greece and the other outside, especially in France. Of those belonging to the first group *Manolis Kalomiris* has offered the most considerable national service. 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 at 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. In connection with the same group I should mention *Emil Riadis* (1892-1935) a pupil of Ravel and a very delicate and original com-

poser, also the well-known pianist *Margaritis*, and *George Sklavos*, professor at the "Conservatoire of Athens."

Of those who lived and worked chiefly outside Greece and made a name for their country and for themselves, the principal is *Petro Patriddis*, a powerful composer. He is the most widely known of Greek composers. He was born in Asia Minor (Sigde) in 1892 and studied in Paris, first with Albert Wolf and later with Albert Roussel. He composed four symphonies, of which the 4th was given a first performance in Brussels on the 8th of January this year, two piano concertos, a cello concerto, two suites (a Greek and an Ionian), an opera and other works.

Special mention must be made of *Mario Varvoglis*, an Athenian (1885) and a charming composer, who after living for 20 years in Paris established himself in Athens where he is the director of the "Hellenic Conservatoire." He studied in Paris with Xavier Lefebvre, Caussade and Vincent d'Indy. To the same group also belong *George Poniridy* (1892), a pupil in Brussels of Ysaye and in Paris of d'Indy, and a very prominent figure in Modern Greek music, *Dimitri Levidis* (1886), President of the Union of Greek Composers, and *Th. Spathis*.

Another prominent figure is the well-known conductor *Dimitri Mitropoulos*. Born in Athens in 1896, he studied in Belgium and later in Berlin with Busoni; after having conducted in many countries of Europe, he established himself in the United States, where he is the permanent conductor of the "Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra." He composed an opera, a concerto grosso and other works. One should further mention some composers of the younger generation who have won a select place in the Modern School: *Ant. Evangelatos*, an excellent composer of sound technique; he was born in Cephalonia in 1904 and studied in Leipzig, and in Basle with Weingartner. He is now conductor at the "Lyric Scene" and co-director of the "Hellenic Conservatoire." Also, *Andreas Nezeritis* (Patras, 1897), who composed important symphonic works; *Skalkotas*, a pupil of Schönberg, and *A. Kontis*. With them a pleiad of talented and promising younger composers strengthen the hopes for the future of Greek music: *Karyotakis* (Argos, 1903), *Kazasoglou* (Athens, 1910), *Papaioannou* (Kavalla, 1910), *Pallantios* (1914); also *Zoras*, *Platon*, *Georgiadis*, *Perpessas*, *Kyriacou*.

To this list I want to add the well-known critic and musicologist *Michael D. Calvocoresi*. Although he was born in Marseilles (1877) and lived all his life outside Greece, he was nevertheless a Greek musician. He was an authority especially on Russian music, and published books on Moussorgsky and Glinka, also on Liszt, Schumann, etc. He contributed in Grove's Dictionary, in the French "Encyclopédie de la Musique," and in other Encyclopaedias and music magazines. He died in February, 1944.

To complete the picture some information may be given on the organisation of musical life in Greece. The principal centre is Athens, where there are three main Conservatoires; but there are also High Schools of Music in Piraeus, Salonika and other towns. The oldest is the "Conservatoire of Athens," established in 1871; it has been the chief institution which cultivated and encouraged the development of music in the country. In 1893 it founded its Symphony Orchestra, whose concerts have played the same educational rôle there as Sir Henry Wood's Promenade Concerts have in England. The orchestra soon became a body of high standard and has been conducted at times by such composers and conductors, as Saint-Saens, Richard Strauss, Weingartner, Bruno Walter, G. Pierné, Paul Parry and others. Among soloists who played with the Orchestra I may mention: Sauer, Schnabel, Cortot, Lamond, Backhaus, Rubinstein, Kreisler, Hubermann, Casals, etc. The "Conservatoire of Athens" (Director: Sp. Farantatos) is now working with about 60 professors and teachers. The other two High Schools of Music are the "Hellenic Conservatoire" (1919) and the "National Conservatoire" (1926), which have local centres throughout Greece, in Egypt and Cyprus. Athens also has a "Lyric Scene" (National Opera House) giving almost daily performances of Greek and foreign operas from the international repertoire. Mention must also be made of the "Athens Choir" and other choral societies. The "State Symphony Orchestra," which is the old orchestra of the Conservatoire taken up by the State in 1943, gives weekly concerts throughout the year; the concerts in summer are given in the ancient Theatre of Herodes Atticus at the foot of the Acropolis. In this way Neohellenes are enjoying Art at the same place and under the same blue sky, as did their ancestors.

SOLON MICHAELIDES

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The seeds of our punishment are sown at the same time we commit sin.—*Hesiod*.

Never forget that wrong-doing cannot be made to pay in the end. It may hold out the promise of pleasure or profit; but shame and loss will surely follow.—*Anon*.

Europe is a spiritual conception, but if men cease to hold that conception in their minds, cease to feel its worth in their hearts, it will die.—The Rt. Hon. Winston Churchill.