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THE NOTION OF THE ENEMY IN THE GREEK OPERATIC WORLD OF THE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURIES¹

Abstract: Opera has been a major and vital element contributing to the firm establishment of the Greek National School during the first decade of the 20th century, following the trends of other national schools appearing around or before that time. The national element has been present in several cases and although the Greek National School was firmly established in 1908 with a manifesto that was presented by Manolis Kalomiris, the Greek operatic world dealt with the patriotic sentiment long before that. During several periods in the 19th and 20th centuries, historical circumstances gave composers the opportunity to express themselves through the notion of the heroic, directing the subjects of their works towards the awakening of national pride, contributing to the nationalistic ideas that were developing during each period. Heroism and heroic deeds of the past were the perfect materials for this purpose.

Key words: nationalism, Greece, heroism, Balkan history, Ottoman Empire, national school

As odd as it might seem to some of the readers, Greek opera and the equivalent operatic world is actually a vast subject, at least to my eyes, especially when one puts it in a European perspective. During the past decades, Greek musicology was a truly self-contained discipline. Most of the subjects were discussed between Greek musicologists, most of the resources existed only in Greek, a large number of new articles and papers presented were presented only at Greek

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¹ Sound examples are available online at the official New Sound YouTube channel. Please find the playlist here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GZt_2SKutBY&list=PLNFG-wrMs0-Xzo9GYGsuBaxxOc6704_IUJ

conferences and published in Greek musicological periodicals. In general, one could say that our discipline suffered from introversion that made things difficult for others to get to know a quite rich and diverse musical past that actually numbered more than 200 years of history and presence in the European realm.²

In order to be able to present as accurately as possible the notion of the enemy in Greek operatic works I will need to discuss in a rather comprehensive way the historical past of this music. In this retrospection, my aim will be to try and connect all those aspects that constitute what one can vaguely describe as Greek operatic history. Eventually, the operatic works that I will focus on will bear, as one might think, the national (or even nationalistic) sentiment that a reader would expect. Therefore, the historical part that I will have to touch upon begins from the birth of art music in the Greek world up to the end of the National School in the early 1960s, when the founder and main representative, Manolis Kalomiris, died.

During the last decades of the 18th and mainly in the 19th century, art music was an important issue only in the Ionian Islands. Mainland Greece was still under Ottoman occupation, when the outbreak of the War of Independence in 1821 marked a new era that was somehow completed in 1830 when the First Hellenic Republic was established. Actually, the newly born state was established as early as 1827 when Kapodistrias was named the first Governor.³

The Ionian Islands (also called Heptanisa) belonged to this geographical part of Greece, which bears a closer connection to what one might recognise as the European spirit. With a quite diverse musical life and with opera being one of the major attractions for the public, the Ionian Islands could be easily identified as the most forward-thinking area of all the parts that were recognised as potential parts of the newly established Hellenic republic. The reason for this European sentiment was the long occupation period under forces such as the Venetians, the French, the Russians, the French again and, from 1807, the British. The Heptanisa remained under British rule till 1864 when they were finally attributed to the Greek State, actually fulfilling the wishes of the population's majority.

Musically, the Ionian Islands had a long established, close connection with Italy with many Italian operatic groups performing there and musicians being trained in Italian conservatoires. Moreover, music venues were established, ven-

² See, for instance, Jim Samson, *Music in the Balkans*, Leiden, Brill, 2013, 302–331.

³ Resources about the historical events dealt with in this text can be found at books such as Richard Clogg, *A Concise History of Greece*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2013, or Tassos Vournas, *Σύντομη Ιστορία της Ελληνικής Επανάστασης* [A Concise History of Greek Revolution]. Athens: Patakis Editions, 1999.

ues such as the famous San Giacomo theatre in Corfu which was used as an opera house as early as 1733.

Nothing would have been possible though without the presence of important people. If one would like to assign an absolute starting point to narrate the story of Greek Art Music one could use as a yardstick the birth of Nikolaos Chalikiopoulos-Mantzaros in 1795.⁴ He was the first accomplished composer whose musical training took place in Italy, at the Conservatorio San Sebastiano in Naples, a music academy that was renamed later on as the Conservatorio di Musica San Pietro a Majella. There, Mantzaros was taught by Niccolo Zingarelli, a famous composer of his time, and published several of his works in Italian music publishing houses. Mantzaros' fame spread beyond Corfu and he was asked to take over his teacher's position as the director of the Naples Conservatory, an appointment that he had to refuse twice and returned permanently to Corfu. Mantzaros however was not a stranger to Greek audiences as he had presented his works to the Corfiot public even before he went to Naples. In 1815, in San Giacomo he presented an operatic work under the title *Don Crepuscolo*, actually a one-act *azione comica*, probably the first operatic work ever, written by a Greek composer (until further research proves us wrong). Furthermore, one cannot neglect the fact that Nikolaos Chalikiopoulos Mantzaros is famous for the musical setting of the 'Ὕμνος στην Ἐλευθερία (Hymn to Liberty), a poetic work by Dionysios Solomos. The musical setting of this poem, and more precisely the first two stanzas, became the official Greek national anthem in 1865. For the record, Mantzaros' actual work that was adopted as the national anthem was the fifth version of it and the national anthem officially consists of the first 24 of the 158 stanzas that constitute the poem.

As we mentioned before, the San Giacomo theatre in Corfu held operatic productions from the 18th century. Archival research has shown the wealth and diversity of the works that were produced during the 19th century, the period that mostly interests us at this moment. Katy Romanou, in her book on the history of neo-Hellenic music, published a long chart of all the productions during the 19th century.⁵ In this exhaustive list one will see works that were performed in Corfu just a few years after their premieres in the major theatres in Europe or almost at the same time as in other renowned lyrical theatres. By simple observation of the performance history of the theatre one can track works by Donizetti, Rossini,

⁴ Kostas Kardamis: *Νικόλαος Χαλικιόπουλος Μάντζαρος: Ενότητα μέσα στη πολλαπλότητα* [Nikolaos Chalikiopoulos Mantzaros: Unity within multiplicity], Corfu, Etaireia Kerkyraikon Spoudon, 2008.

⁵ Kaiti Romanou, *Εντεχνη Ελληνική Μουσική στους Νεότερους Χρόνους* [Greek Art Music during Modern Times], Athens, Koultoura Editions, 2006, 91–98.

Bellini, Cimarosa, Mercadante, Pacini, Verdi but also by Greek composers such as Antonio Liberalis, Nikolaos Mantzaros, Pavlos Carrer, Spyridon Xyndas, Eduardo Labellet, Dionysios Rodotheatos and Spyridon Filiskos Samaras that were staged over the decades.

Another important feature of Ionian musical activity were the first music education institutes, the renowned Philharmonic Societies that were being established. Music started spreading around through these institutions, which played a highly important, instructive role as music schools. Most of these societies exist to this today carrying on the legacy that has been established.⁶ The Philharmonic Society of Corfu had the privilege to elect as their lifelong president Nikolaos Mantzaros,⁷ who supported them by teaching students pro bono and by reaching a substantial agreement with the San Giacomo theatre so that Greek musicians might join forces with Italian or French operatic groups that performed at the theatre. This was doubly important: firstly, Greek musicians secured some kind of employment and secondly, they gained important and valuable experience playing next to professional musicians.

Another important year in the realm of Greek art music history was 1829 when Pavlos Carrer was born in Zante.⁸ He proved to be one of the most important composers of the operatic world of his time. His compositions dealt largely with patriotic sentiment, although they were composed initially in Italian librettos. Carrer studied in Corfu with Mantzaros, and later on moved to Milan where he tried to establish a career. His music was performed at the Carcano Theatre and the Alla Canobianna Theatre but Carrer was not satisfied with the progress of his career and the opportunities coming his way. He decided to return to Zante and remained there till the end of his life. In 1858, he composed *Μάρκος Μπότσαρης* (Markos Botsaris),⁹ a work with several influential outcomes that, nevertheless, suffered a rather unfortunate fate with a large part of its orchestration being lost. In it, Carrer incorporated his famous *Γέρο Δήμος* (Old Man Dimos) song as an aria. Many believed that this was a folk song that Carrer had adopted – a common misunderstanding. Carrer composed this aria genuinely and on a text by Aristotelis Valaoritis. This aria was successful enough to have a career of its own, being extracted from the body of the opera and performed widely and in many various contexts and occasions. The compositional and performance

⁶ See also Stelios N. Tzermpinos, *Φιλαρμονικά Ζακύνθου (1816–1960)* [About Philharmonics in Zante (1816–1960)], Zante, Filomousiki Kinisi Zakynthou, 1996.

⁷ Kaiti Romanou, *Εντεχνη Ελληνική*, op. cit., 86–87.

⁸ Avra Xepapadakou, *Παύλος Καρρέρ* [Pavlos Carrer], Athens, Fagotto Books, 2013.

⁹ Markos Botsaris (1790–1823) was a hero of the Greek War of Independence who was killed near the city of Mesolongi, in the Battle of Kefalovriso.

history of this specific aria is an obvious symptom, a clear structural element of a newly arisen national school. Markos Botsaris was a hero of the Greek Revolution and a perfect icon for a nationalistic opera, even if this was composed on an Italian libretto. *Markos Botsaris* was premiered in Patras in 1861 with huge success. In the following years, Carrer would compose a series of other operas with *Κυρά Φροσύνη* (Lady Frosyni), *Δέσπω* (Despo) and *Μαραθών – Σαλαμίς* (Marathon-Salamis) about subjects that referred to the glorious past.

An important event for the Greek operatic world occurred in 1867 when Spyridon Xyndas presented to the public his work *Υπουργός Βουλευτής* (Parliamentary Candidate) on a Greek libretto. The work was performed in the San Giacomo theatre and this was the first ever opera that was written directly upon a Greek text, breaking ground with the contemporary trend of those times that had to do with Italian librettos being the favourite material for an opera setting. This was a move towards a new era.

Moving somehow away from the Ionian islands and in 1872, the young state had the privilege of benefitting with the establishment of the Athens Conservatoire which was re-organized on a more professional level in 1891. Musical interest gravitated towards Athens, which had as a driving force a primitive bourgeoisie that needed to establish itself. During the last decades of the 19th century, Spyridon Filiskos Samaras¹⁰ became one of the most prominent figures on the Greek but, most importantly, on the European musical scene. He was born in 1861 and studied music in Corfu with Spyridon Xyndas, who suggested that the young Samaras move to Athens to continue his studies in the Athens Conservatoire, which he did in 1874. In 1881, he moved to Paris to pursue further studies with Leo Delibes. In 1885, he moved again in order to reside in Italy. His talent earned him success and in 1886, his opera *Flora Mirabilis* was performed at the Carcano Theatre in Milan, and then at La Scala the following year. Samaras was considered one of the important representatives of the *verismo* movement in Italy. Among his operatic works one can find *Medge*, *Rea* and *La Martyre*. An important moment in Samaras' career was when he was chosen to compose the *Ολυμπιακός Ύμνος* (Olympic Hymn) for the first modern Olympiad that was held in Athens in 1896.¹¹ In the hope that he could be nominated as a professor or even as the director of the Athens Conservatoire, he decided to move back to Athens in 1911. Unfortunately, neither of the posts materialised, and we find

¹⁰ Giorgos Leotsakos, *Σπύρος Σαμάρας 1861–1917: ο μεγάλος αδικημένος της έντεχνης ελληνικής μουσικής, δοκιμή βιογραφίας* [Spiros Samaras 1861–1917: The great underclassed of Greek art music, an attempt at a biography], Athens, Benaki Museum Editions, 2013.

¹¹ Alexandros Charkiolakis, “Music in the first modern Olympiad in Athens in 1896: Cultural and social trends” in *Mousikos Logos* 1 (2014), <http://m-logos.gr/downloads/articles/i0001/m-logos-i0001-a0009-charkiolakis.pdf>

Samaras struggling financially and deciding to take up operetta compositions in order to survive. The composer died prematurely in 1917.

Also very important for Greek music was the Lambelet family. Originally from the Ionian Islands, the Lambelets produced a remarkable succession of important musicians such as Eduardo, Napoleon, Ludovikos, Korina and, lastly, the extremely important Georgios Lambelet. This last member, Georgios, was actually the first who touched upon the need for the establishment of a national school, for a movement that would sound purely Greek in every aspect. He published a series of articles in 1901 on this issue, laying the groundwork for discussion and thought on the subject.

The establishment of the Athens Conservatoire brought forward the need for the inauguration of a symphonic orchestra, one of the most important issues for the Conservatoire's Board of Directors. This shortly became a reality with an orchestra being established in 1897 under the baton of violin professor, composer and conductor Frank Choisy. This introduced another important element: many of the Conservatoire's professors were foreign and had come from a different cultural background, more progressive than the Athenian one, bringing an air of cosmopolitanism that was so much needed – at that time – among the small Athenian bourgeoisie.

Another major issue that was meant to be dealt with was the need for the establishment of a, more or less, permanent lyrical theatre along with the Orchestra. The First Hellenic Melodrama was founded in 1887, but lasted only until 1888, a short-lived establishment that was formed in order to produce *Υποψήφιο Βουλευτή* by Spyridon Xyndas. The Second Hellenic Melodrama was also short-lived since it was established in 1888, and remained open till 1890. In 1894, the composer and conductor, Dionysios Lavrargas, arrived in Athens in order to take over the direction of the Athens Philharmonic Society Choir.¹² He established the Third Hellenic Melodrama in 1898 and the first performance of the ensemble was held in 1900 with *La Boheme*. This operatic group was far more vibrant and managed to remain active until 1935, performing more than 50 different productions over those years.

A major shift on the Greek musical scene occurred in June 1908, when the young composer Manolis Kalomiris was invited to perform some of his works before the Athenian public in the Athens Conservatoire's main concert hall. Kalomiris was already famous for his writings in the *Nouμάς* (Noumas) journal¹³, a

¹² For a history about all the phases of the Hellenic Melodrama also see Dionysios Lavrargas, *Tα απομνημονεύματά μου* [My Memoirs], Athens, Govostis, 2009.

¹³ About the background of this historical journal see G. H. Kalogiannis, *O Νουμάς και η εποχή του 1903–1931* [Noumas and Its Time 1903–1931], Athens, Epikairotita, 1984.

periodical that was in favour, as Kalomiris was, of the demotic language movement. Within the boundaries of this concert, Kalomiris, instead of the usual programme notes for the works that were to be performed, wrote and published a manifesto with his beliefs for a truly national Greek musical idiom. The road towards the establishment of a national school movement was open and it was meant to be completed when Kalomiris moved permanently to Athens in 1910 and appointed as piano professor in the Athens Conservatoire. He ruled the Greek musical scene till 1962, the year of his death.¹⁴

At this instant, it would be interesting to mention just briefly what was going on in the field of modernism as well. Dimitris Mitropoulos, the famous to-be conductor, and Nikos Skalkottas seemed to be very capable of keeping up with all the new trends, despite the fact that their music was not among the premium choices of the Athenian public. The modernist idiom in Greece was obviously under-represented, with the nationalist composers becoming more powerful. In any case, modernist composers were not really focused on the operatic idiom. It was only Mitropoulos that composed a very interesting work, namely *Soeur Beatrice*. Skalkottas, on the other hand, perceived today as the truly important composer he is, composed in a wide, very self-contained and, in a sense, unique idiom of serialism, without however abandoning his tonal musical language.

Going back to Kalomiris and the national school, one will see that the work that actually established the idiom was an operatic one, *Πρωτομάστορας* (The Masterbuilder). Kalomiris composed a total of five different operatic works (or musical dramas or music tragedies, as he used to call them, influenced by his Wagnerian beliefs).

The historical circumstances that unfolded in the course of a long period prove that in the first three decades of the 20th century, Greece was a country that was constantly trying to expand. This was achieved through warfare and diplomatic decisions. Nevertheless, the far-fetched “Great Idea” for a country that would be surrounded by two continents and five seas was never accomplished since the Asia Minor expedition turned into an Asia Minor disaster in 1922.

The Greek musical world in the 20th century saw the establishment of two new conservatoires, namely the Hellenic Conservatoire and the National Conservatoire, both of them being founded consecutively by Kalomiris, increasing the number of schools offering a music education in Greece to three. The

¹⁴ For the life and work of M. Kalomiris refer to Manolis Kalomiris, *Η ζωή μου και η τέχνη μου, απομνημονεύματα 1883–1908* [My Life and My Art, Memoirs 1883–1908], Athens, Nefeli Editions, 1988 and also Nikos Maliaras and Alexandros Charkiolakis (Eds.), *Μανώλης Καλομοίρης: 50 χρόνια μετά* [Manolis Kalomiris: 50 years after], Athens, Fagotto Books, 2013.

dream of having a permanent symphony orchestra was always there. All three establishments (the Athens Conservatoire, Hellenic Conservatoire and National Conservatoire) were endeavouring to create their own orchestras, sometimes combining forces and sometimes splitting into parts. The orchestra that mainly remained in force and had a more or less continuous presence was that of the Athens Conservatoire, working at a nearly professional level for the most of time.

After a long but, I believe, necessary digression we are now returning to our main subject. The operatic output was not that rich during the 20th century, especially if one compares it to that of the 19th century. The reason for this is easy to understand: operatic production required funds to be available (especially since there was no established state opera house) and involved a great risk for the organizers. However, during the late 1930s, a state lyrical theatrical company was established as a separate branch within the frame of the National Theatre. Dionysios Lavrangas, the pioneer who greatly supported and worked towards the establishment of a permanent operatic schema, died before seeing his efforts coming to fruition and before the Greek National Opera received a separate, individual status.

The national element in music was in a decline of some sort in the years following the Civil War (1946–1949). Musicians experimented with new trends and Greece, being a country that was in the Western sphere of influence, moved towards new perspectives. The national school was, in a sense, something of an institutionalized foundation that came to an unofficial but very true end with the death of Manolis Kalomiris in 1962.

After this overview of the Greek musical world till the early 1960s and the, more or less expected, end of the national school era, I will focus on a few of those works that contain the element of the enemy, the rival. I have chosen to showcase operas by composers that the reader might somehow be familiar with so far. In these works, the enemy is either portrayed as a figure, an active icon or is even spoken of briefly. However, in most of the cases, the enemy is used as the opposite icon of the hero, thus someone or a concept that exists in order to highlight the virtues of the main character. Therefore, we come across a rather persistent, manichaeistic approach.

Taking things chronologically, I will start our journey through some specific examples. I would like to touch upon the case of Pavlos Carrer and two of his operas, namely *Δέσπω* and *Κυρά Φροσύνη*. In the one-act *Δέσπω* Carrer tells the story of a valiant woman, Despo from Souli, a village that has rebelled against Ali Pasha. Despo, fights “like a man”, as it is declared in the libretto, along with other women from Souli. Unfortunately, her husband Giorgos Botzis dies on the

battlefield. She asks how he was killed and Lambros, his beloved friend, mentions that he was wounded in the chest. Despo, full of pride, shouts that he died like a hero for Liberty, and vows that she will have vengeance on his murderers. The Ottoman army comes closer and surrounds Souli. Despo and the other women lock themselves up in a nearby castle and when the enemies break in, Despo lights the fuse and blows up the castle, sacrificing herself and the other women. With her sacrifice though she manages to take with her a substantial number of the Turkish troops. This is portrayed as a truly heroic deed.¹⁵

The time frame and conditions are clear: the Turks are the enemy and the Greeks are the oppressed heroes. Here, I would draw attention to two examples from the work and especially from the libretto, which was written by Antonis Manousos, which actually portray the enemy. The first is the moment when Despo is informed about the death of her husband. This devastating moment for the heroine is illustrated in the text by her notion that the soil of her homeland has been contaminated by the barbarian Asians. And she continues “Holy Cross shine and you Liberty quail not, the Greeks are fighting now”. The significance of the religious sentiment and the religious superiority of the Christian faith are being invoked and actually this is connected to the race; the Turks are referred to as barbarians compared to Greeks. The second example is in the battle scene of the work. One reads in the libretto the use of the historically charged phrase “Liberty or Death”, a widely appreciated statement that was common amongst the rebels during the Greek War of Independence, demonstrating the will to liberate and unite the homeland. By using a historically significant phrase such as this, the composer (and the librettist) make a clear statement.

In terms of the music material that is used in order to build tension, the composer remains in the Italian musical world. Nevertheless, there are significant moments where the composer goes a step further by using a clearly similar musical quotation that seems to derive directly from the long history of Greek folk tunes. A moment like that occurs for instance during the “Liberty or Death” part of the work, where the composer enriches this significant phrase with a clearly folk-like, yet still elaborated tune.

In the other opera by Carrer that I would like to examine, namely *Kυρά Φροσύνη*, the synopsis is as follows: the Greek Frosini is the mistress of Muhtar, the son of Ali Pasha. She has abandoned her husband and children in order to be with Muhtar. They live together in Ali Pasha’s palace in the city of Ioannina. Ali Pasha is secretly in love with Frosini and confesses this to his sidekick Tachir. The latter advises him to get rid of Muhtar by sending him on a war expedition in Romylia. Ali Pasha does so. Before Muhtar leaves, Frosini confesses that she

¹⁵ Avra Xepapadakou, *Παύλος Καρρέρ*, op. cit., 337–342.

is determined to abandon him and return to her husband. After Muhtar leaves, devastated by the news, Ali Pasha appears to confess his love for her. She rejects him and Ali Pasha orders her imprisonment. After several days, Ali Pasha asks if Frosini has lost her courage in jail but the answer is negative. Then, he decides to kill her along with 17 beautiful virgins he has captured in the occupied city of Ioannina. Suddenly, Ignatios, the bishop, appears and asks Ali Pasha to release Frosini. Ali Pasha refuses, while Muhtar returns victorious from his expedition. Muhtar hears about Frosini's condition and denies his father who orders him to be arrested and jailed along with Frosini. In the final act, the bishop Ignatios visits Frosini's cell to hear her last confession. Suddenly, Ali Pasha appears with her two children threatening to kill them. Frosini cannot bear the pressure and dies. Ali Pasha is furious and Ignatios asks for the body to be buried according to Christian ritual.¹⁶

Pavlos Carrer portrays the character of Ali Pasha as a ruthless man without moral boundaries, a superficial character blinded by his passions. In an aria, Ali Pasha announces that he is going to steal Frosini because he is not afraid of fate and vows by the Quran that she will be his. Here, there is a semantic interest: Ali Pasha vows on the Quran that he will perform such a terrible act. One can probably identify a logical leap. No one would have vowed on a sacred text that he would perform a terrible act. Still, a "barbarian" like Ali Pasha does so and he remains unpunished. In the next example, Frosini confesses her sins to Ignatios. She asks for God to forgive her and Ignatios blesses her with forgiveness through prayer. Even the love song of Muhtar cannot distract her from her prayer. Carrer juxtaposes the distinction between the two religious worlds, a notion that distinguishes good from evil.

Spyridon Filiskos Samaras composed *Rea* in 1908 and in it he interpolated his own *Ολυμπιακός Ύμνος* (Olympic Anthem). The story of *Rea* takes place on the island of Chios, which was under Genoa's rule in the 1400s. The opera starts with Lysias beating a Saracen at wrestling and the Genoese governor Spinola along with the Venetian Guarcha congratulates him. This opera is actually a love-story in which Rea, the second wife of the governor, and Lysias are secretly in love. Daphne, Spinola's daughter from his first marriage, is desperately in love with Lysias. Moreover, Guarcha is jealous of Lysias because he loves and admires Rea. He is an important character in the opera because he sets up a series of manipulations in order to separate Rea and Lysias. He suggests that Spinola marries Daphne to Lysias in an attempt to unite the Genoese and the Greeks against the Saracens. Guarcha, in a rage of jealousy, gives a ring to Rea that contains poison. She finally agrees to the marriage between Lysias and

¹⁶ Ibid., 311–320.

Daphne because she is forced and blackmailed by Guarcha who knows about her infidelity to Spinola. Lysias however fends off Daphne, feeling betrayed and jealous about Rea's attitude. After a series of explanations between Rea and Lysias, they decide to flee Chios in Lysias' boat and they plan to meet at dawn on the shore. Guarcha hears about the plan and blinded by rage arrives at the meeting place and kills Lysias. Rea, devastated by Lysias's death, inhales the poison that is hidden in her ring and dies beside him in a more or less Wagnerian impulse and setting. Daphne mourns for the loss of her happiness.¹⁷

One might think that in this opera it is only a love story that is being told. The icon of the enemy is not so present. However, there is an interesting moment that I would like to draw attention to, and it is the moment when the Genoese governor Spinola, praises the valour of Lysias and asks him to help unite the Greeks and Genoese against the Turks and Saracens. Spinola, mentions that it is a great honour for him that he reconstructed this ancient stadium where Lysias beat the Saracen and that he is very happy that the winner is from the glorious race of the Greeks. He asks for Lysias's help to unite the Greeks and Genoese against the Muslims. In the most manichaeistic way, Samaras uses an analogy of the West (Greeks and Genoese) against the East (Saracens and Turks) by making a distinction between the cultures. By mentioning the fact that he, a Genoese, reconstructed the ancient stadium he associates himself and his compatriots with, which someone in the West would recognise as the eternal western spirit and civilisation, he posits it against the barbarian ways of the Muslims and the East. The constant antagonism of West against East reoccurs, albeit only briefly.

I will now proceed to present some examples from operas by Manolis Kalomiris, the most influential composer of the nationalistic movement. I shall start backwards on the timescale of his compositional work and discuss his last operatic work *Κωνσταντίνος Παλαιολόγος* (Konstantinos Palaiologos), which was composed on a text by Nikos Kazantzakis. This was the second operatic achievement of Kalomiris that was based on a Kazantzakis text, the first being *Πρωτομάστορας* (The Masterbuilder).

The reason for taking things backwards is because the subject matter of the work has to do again with the nation that has been portrayed – either directly or indirectly – in all the previous operas as the enemy, the Turks or, rather, Muslims. In *Κωνσταντίνος Παλαιολόγος*, Kalomiris presents the last days before the fall of Constantinople. During the last moments of the work this is re-enacted in the most skilful way. It is an opera about bravery and heroism, which Kalomiris managed to compose just a few months before his death. In a generous gesture,

¹⁷ More information on the booklet included on the CD recording of *Rea*. Spyros Samaras *Rea*, Lyra Company, 5202483105325.

the composer dedicated the opera to the Greeks, to a nation and a race that has suffered greatly, as he says. The plot starts in the square in front of the Palace. People are begging God and the Virgin Mary to save the city from siege. The Great Duke Notaras says that the wrath of God is a result of the alliance with the Franks. Pyrovatis (a name that literally means “the one who walks on fire”) is a *yurodivy*, a holy fool, who plays the role of the people’s conscience or personifies it, announces that the city will be occupied and destroyed. However, people feel uplifted and perform a litany in disbelief that the city will fall. Anna, the daughter of Notaras, seeks Konstantinos Palaiologos and meets him in order to declare her love for him. Anna suggests that they flee immediately but Palaiologos states that his position and inevitable duty is to stay, fight and, eventually, die. Anna says that she will stay with him till the end. Suddenly Charkoutsis, a Cretan captain, and his men appear, a brave small squad who have come to help the people of Constantinople since the Franks do not seem willing to do so. The Abbot, who is leading the crowd, asks Palaiologos to hand over his crown and authority because the Virgin Mary has requested so. Palaiologos manages to persuade him that everyone should fight together for the common good. During the liturgy that is performed, the crowd laments and Pyrovatis states that he sees an apparition of the Virgin Mary being wounded. What he actually sees is Anna Notara who is dying, fighting next to Palaiologos. Charkoutsis enters the Saint Sophia church, the symbol of Constantinople and of the Byzantine world, and announces the death of the Emperor. A threnody breaks out and the liturgy is interrupted. The wall in front of the altar cracks open, the voice of the Abbot covers the crowd’s laments. An angel pushes the priest through the wall and hides him in order to finish the liturgy whenever the city is liberated again. The doors break open and the Turks move inside the church. Charkoutsis and his last two men draw their swords and people shout that one day, when the time comes and all the legends are fulfilled, Constantinople will return to the Greeks.¹⁸

The first example derives from a chorus in the first act, when the people say that they do not want the Turks, they do not want the Franks and that all they desire is to be free. Here, apart from the Turks, one can recognise another kind of enemy, the Franks, who only want to manipulate the Byzantine Empire. People do not want them, but they need them in order to repel the Turks. The Franks will never come and they will let Constantinople fall. Apparently, this has been the general belief of the Greek society for a long time, that the Greeks are a

¹⁸ Alexandros Charkiolakis, “Recapitulating the past: Manolis Kalomiris and his opera *Konstantinos Palaiologos*”, in: Vesna Mikic et al. (Eds.), *Between nostalgia, utopia and realities*, Belgrade, Department of Musicology, Faculty of Music of the University of Arts, 2012, 229–240.

nation that cannot and should not be tied to any of the existing parallels of East or West but that it is better to stand alone, with pride and a clear national identity, a recurring idea that has appeared in different ways till today. Furthermore, during the whole course of the work, the spectator will encounter a variety of religious representations (a Holy Communion scene during the last act, several Byzantine hymns juxtaposed to original melodic material and other elements). The personification of the Virgin Mary and an extended understanding of Christianity are featured widely in the work. The Virgin Mary occupies an important position in the religious “mythology” of the Greeks. She is considered the holy saviour of the Nation and the hymn *Τη Υπερμάχω Στρατηγώ τα Νικητήρια* (To thee, the Champion Leader, we thy servants dedicate a feast of victory) is dedicated to her. This is actually the hymn that Kalomiris used in the final movement of his Symphony No. 1 *Της Λεβεντιάς* (of Valour), a milestone work in the history of the national school. In *Κωνσταντίνος Παλαιολόγος*, Virgin Mary picks up the dead body of Palaiologos and buries him deep in the foundations of the Church of Saint Sophia. The myth is that the Emperor was petrified and he will be resurrected when the time comes to liberate Constantinople. Kalomiris uses the Virgin Mary as an active character with her voice being heard towards the end of the work, saying that the wheel of time will change, that there will be a time that all of these will be hers again. The bravery of Constantinople’s citizens is exalted in many cases, in the course of the work. The Turks are described as blood-thirsty barbarians, who break down the doors of the Saint Sophia church not to conquer but to slaughter the innocent and unarmed people.

Let me now try and offer a different perspective on the subject of the enemy. As my final example, I chose to discuss the first operatic work of the nationalistic movement, the *Πρωτομάστορας* (The Masterbuilder). This was actually the first work by Kazantzakis that Kalomiris decided to put to music. There, the enemy does not have to do with ethnic or religious characteristics, it is not a different nation, it is something more transcendent and lucid: fate. The hero is a Nietzschean character, a human that surmounts all difficulties and will do anything to succeed. The synopsis is as follows: a bridge has just been built, but the prophecy is that the bridge will collapse unless someone is sacrificed for it. The Masterbuilder is in love with Smaragda, the daughter of the Governor. The Governor, in return for the building of the bridge, proclaims his will to give anything that the Masterbuilder wants. He states that he would like a palace for him and his beloved. But before mentioning her name, the Masterbuilder challenges fate, and the bridge collapses. The Old Mother appears on the scene, accusing the Masterbuilder that he challenged fate and for the bridge to be stable, he needs to sacrifice his beloved one. The Governor asks for the name of the Masterbuilder’s beloved but he refuses to say it. The Governor commands that they place

the Masterbuilder inside the foundations of the bridge and bury him alive. Suddenly, Smaragda comes out of the crowd and states that she is the Masterbuilder's loved one. The Governor on the one hand curses her and, on the other, he becomes extremely saddened because of the forthcoming loss of his only child. Smaragda moves forward and is buried alive in the foundations of the bridge. The Masterbuilder suppresses his grief and supervises the building with great pain and sadness. In the end, he excels and he overcomes his sentiment and fate. The bridge is built, stabilised and secured. The Masterbuilder leaves with pride, stating that his job is done here.¹⁹

Here is a different type of the enemy element. Ill fate needs to be overcome. The *Πρωτομάστορας* is based on a folk legend that actually exists in many Balkan countries. The Masterbuilder is the man who governs his fate; he overcomes difficulties, a larger-than-life character that needs to elevate himself above human standards. His inner, weak self is the enemy and he invests all his efforts into conquering it.

As we have seen, the national element in its polemical sense has been presented in various aspects of the Greek operatic scene. The icon of the enemy has been used mainly in order to juxtapose the icon of the hero, the person who through his or her general beliefs regarding the nation, race, even religion, is different from others who do not share their common past, destiny and beliefs. Therefore, the enemy has been used as a yardstick for positioning the inner self, for adding the nation on the map and showing the world all those notions of bravery, chivalry, manhood and willingness. Also, it has become evident that the enemy lies within each and every one of us. A weakness that one needs to overcome in order to meet destiny, to become the one that will change fate.

It becomes quite evident that the philosophical world in which all these works exist, mainly touches upon a single quality that seems to be addressed as an exclusive Greek quality. This is heroism. A nation that searches for answers concerning its own existence seems to be in need of a nostalgic, heroic approach to the common past that will actually be projected to contemporary society and will rely upon it also in direct connection to a past that one is proud to be a part of.

¹⁹ Olympia Frangou-Psychopaidi, *H Εθνική Σχολή Μουσικής: προβλήματα ιδεολογίας* [The National School of Music: Ideological problems], Athens, Idryma Mesogeiakon Spoudon, 1990, 140–142.

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Summary

In this article I will start by giving an overview of the musical situation since the establishment of the modern Greek state focusing in part on the foundations of art music in the geographical area that includes contemporary Greece. For this reason, I use as an initial point the operatic world of the Ionian islands and the established composers there, along with a description of the situation. Moreover, I introduce some of the operas that Greek

composers of the 19th century wrote, expressing ideals of national sentiment but also the main subject of this article, the notion of the enemy.

Further on, I continue with a linear and dual approach; firstly, from the historical aspect, leading towards the establishment of the Greek national school and the prominent figure of Manolis Kalomiris but also discussing and presenting several works that contain the element of the enemy and how this was presented in works of the first half of the 20th century. The highlight of this concept remains a detailed discussion about the musical drama *Konstantinos Palaiologos* by Manolis Kalomiris, his last work before his death, which deals with the last Byzantine Emperor and the last moments before the Fall of Constantinople.

This article ends with some remarks on the issues that have been dealt with, hoping to produce some solid ground for further engagement with the repertoire and developing the research output respecting Greek art music and opera within the scope of the notion discussed.