

Digital Archive of Greek Songs

Digital Archive of Greek Songs (1870-1960) in the Music Library of Greece "Lilian Voudouri"

Introduction

The Music Library of Greece "Lilian Voudouri" has been established in 1995 and started operating for the public in 1997. 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 organizing within the boundaries of the Library.

The role of the Greek Music Archive was clear from the first instant. In the Archive we collect material such as books, scores, recordings, photos, programmes, journals, manuscripts etc. The types and styles of Greek music that are being covered span from Ancient Greek to Byzantine and from Rembetiko, 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 1870-1960.

This collection of songs contains approximately 6000 titles, with almost half of them (3000 titles) 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 even today with worthwhile material. The remaining 3000 songs have been embodied from many different sources (eg. donations, purchases from flea market and secondhand bookshops etc.).



Nikolaos Kokkinos *H moda*
(Fashion)



Grigoris Konstantinides *Mia gynaika perase*
[A woman passed]



Napoleon Lampelet *Apochorismos*
(Separation)

The unique collection of Greek songs of the Music Library of Greece "Lilian Voudouri" covers a wide range of songs and embodies 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 later on of Tsitsanis, Souyoul and Theodorakis. Similar breadth is found in the research of the philological value of the songs. It juxtaposes the verses of D. Solomos, A. Valaoritis, G. Vizyinos with the

kind of verse – technique used to create more popular songs and was inspired by the everyday life of the time.

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.

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Historical Overview

The Library's collection of Greek songs is comprised of music that has been described as "popular" in the broader sense of this term. Here it seems useful to remind the entry for the term "popular" 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". 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 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 in 1827, the Ionian islands were under an English or French command. This resulted to a closer connection with the western spirit and the ability to absorb western influence. 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. Melodramatic 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 1827, 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 life. 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.

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.



Dimitrios Rodios Ellinikai Melodiai [Greek Melodies]



Attic (Kleon Triantafyllou)



Theofrastos Sakellaridis

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 canconetta-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 Theofrastos Sakellarides, Grigoris Konstantinides, Lola Votti, Attic (Kleon Triantafyllou) are the main representatives of this new genre that mixes music, songs and theatrical sketches. The songs included in this type of varieté 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 varieté music). In this case, publications of foreign songs in sheet music helped audiences receive them more easily.



Eduardo Bianco's Orchestra



Athenian Operetta

In latter years, the musical elements introduced in the Athenian Varieté, 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 lower social class people 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 Varieté, operetta was one of the most popular types of music. It is a fact that the varieté 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 reign. 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).



Spyros Ollandezos
Ah, Retsinoula mou Xanthia
[Oh my blonde Retsina]



Iosif Ritsiardis Ma tora...
[But now...]



Dimitrios Rodios Ellinikai
Melodiai [Greek Melodies]

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.

We hope that this brief overview helped you understand the rich material included in this collection that we are presenting.

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Technical specifications of the collection

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); it includes the digitized archives of the composers Mikis Theodorakis, Emilios Riadis, George Poniridis, Frank Choisy, the Nileas Kamarados Archive, the collections of manuscripts and Greek Songs that belong to the Library and also the Domna Samiou Archive, which belongs to the "Domna Samiou Cultural Society of Folk Music". This digitization programme gave the Library the opportunity to digitize seven out of twelve of its main archives and collections.



The digitization programme ran for 18 months from September 2005 to February 2007 and the digitized documents amounted at 264.385. 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 (eg. 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 we decided to build a custom-made schema of metadata elements. However, soon enough we realized that this schema, although it may suit our needs up to a certain point, had major drawbacks in terms of interoperability. Therefore, we made a new decision to change this and use Dublin Core metadata Element Set instead.

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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 in <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 added in the portal yearly as they come out of the intellectual property law restrains. Furthermore, from January 2010, and in order to promote research on this material, we have decided 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 we are currently working on translating the full amount of metadata and information.

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Final Remarks

Our major concern all these years in the Music Library of Greece has been not only to collect and research but also to ensure that the past and present of Greek music will be rescued from oblivion. That was the reason for the establishment of the Archive for Greek Music. By digitizing a large part of the available material and creating this portal we aimed to trigger and enhance research on Greek music delivered by musicologists and scientists not only in Greece but globally. Also, a serious concern of ours was to avoid as much as possible quick spoliation and destruction of archival material.

One can say that the collection of Greek songs distinguishes for its rarity and interest. Songs have always been a core musical idiom that has been used in various forms within the historical timeline of Greek music. A large part of the output of Greek music is in song form and this makes it somehow difficult to fully identify what and which of these can be mentioned as "popular" or "art" songs. Probably research on these topics will give us results in the near future and we hope that the digital collection of Greek songs that exists in the Music Library of Greece, maybe the largest available to researchers, will play a key-role to new musicological findings on these topics.

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