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"Nobile Teatro di San Giacomo di Corfù": an overview of its significance for the Greek *ottocento*'

For more than 150 years (1733–1893) "Nobile Teatro di San Giacomo" of Corfu played a central role in the musical life of both the Ionian Islands and Modern Greece, despite the fact that, compared to other European operatic stages, it had a rather provincial character. Its importance is not confined only to its operatic activities, but is equally extended to its rapid transformation into a musical pole that concentrated musicians, singers and music teachers, mainly from Italy, as Corfu was practically a part of the wider Italian operatic market. Several of these individuals settled in Corfu and constituted a significant background towards the creation of the distinctive musical achievements of the Greek *ottocento*.

This paper will be limited chronologically from the end of eighteenth century until 1864 (year of the annexation of Ionian Islands to Greece) and, with "Teatro San Giacomo" in its background, it is going to assess in brief two main topics; a) the significance of the Italian musicians' presence in Corfu in conjunction to both musical and educational issues, and b) the rise of the so-called "Ionian School" of music as a direct effect of the creative amalgamation that was achieved between the Italian practices and the local conditions. Special reference will be made to the personality of Nikolaos Halikiopoulos Mantzaros, one of the most misrepresented personalities of Greek 19th-century music, the first of a series of indigenous composers, who benefited from the creative assimilation of the two cultures.

‘There is a small theatre at Corfu, where the performance is confined to Italian operas and comedies’.¹ With such a succinct way an 1840’s British travel guide describes the activities of the San Giacomo theatre in Corfu, reflecting this way an opinion on the cultural activities of the island common to several non-Greek travelers of that era. Despite that this description might not be totally irrelevant to the actual activities of the theatre it represents the notions of a public that had an already developed operatic background, as well as a continuous flux of high-standard musical productions. However, it totally ignores the significance of the existence of this theatre in the vicinity of the newly-established Greek Kingdom (1831), as well as in the Ionian Islands themselves, the only Hellenic region that, unaffected by both the ottoman occupation and the orthodox obscurantism, had the opportunity to develop in its urban centres a typical European culture and to fully integrate all the major historical and cultural European developments from Renaissance onwards.

Our knowledge for the activities of San Giacomo was until recently very limited, mainly due to the loss of its valuable archive during a German bombing in 1943. However, recent archival research is moving towards the uncovering of its intriguing history.

The town of Corfu, despite being a marginal city of the European world, possessed in eighteenth and in nineteenth century all the characteristics of an Italian town of its era. It had municipal buildings, courts of justice, a *monte di pieta*, a busy port, mercantile activities, vivid aristocratic and bourgeois classes and, of course, a theatre. ‘Nobile Teatro di San Giacomo’, named after the nearby catholic cathedral of Corfu, was inaugurated in 1693, after several problematic situations not unrelated to the conditions in Venice during the Cretan War (1645–1669). Originally it functioned as the *loggia* of the island’s Venetian nobility, but in 1720 it was converted into a theatre, which, despite being one more theatre in the provinces of Serenissima, became the first modern theatre on Greek soil. Initially, it seems that it staged strictly

¹ *A Handbook for Traveler's in Ionian Islands, Greece, Turkey, Asia Minor and Constantinople* (London, John Murray, 1840), 5.

theatrical performances, but in 1733 opera was performed there for the first time.² Despite staging several theatrical and non-theatrical events, at least from 1771 and until its conversion to Mayorial House in 1892 San Giacomo had a continuous stream of operatic productions. This fact shaped the musical instinct of the local society, brought musicians and music teachers on the island and eventually created those conditions that during nineteenth century resulted to the creative assimilation between Ionian and Italian cultures forming thus the distinctive achievements of the Greek *ottocento*.³

This presentation will try to examine in brief this often the neglected aspect of Greek nineteenth century music. Beginning with late eighteenth century, which signals the end of the Venetian presence on the island (1386–1797), the discussion will stop in 1864, year of the annexation of the Ionian Islands to the Kingdom of Greece, a fact that had detrimental effects on the cultural, and not only, life of the region. During the end of eighteenth century the Corfiot upper society came in contact with the Enlightenment and in 1797 the ideals of French Revolution reached the island changing radically its social status. The Napoleonic Wars opened a political unstable period, which ended in 1814, when the Ionian Islands were declared a British protected area. This way, a special and unique status quo was created, since Ionian Islands, a region inhabited almost exclusively by Greeks, which additionally from 1800 to 1807 formed the first independent Greek state in modern history, was then the only region of what is today Greece that was officially politically depended to another European nation.

In regard to San Giacomo, a theatre that belonged to the wider Italian operatic piazza, this period coincides with a notable activity, despite its rather provincial character when related to those of important operatic centres of Italy. These activities are of particular importance for the music history of modern Greece, since in an era when there was not such a thing as Greek State in Greek Mainland (let alone organized musical activities) the Ionian Islands and Corfu in particular had already an important musical background, based on European (basically Italian) prototypes.

San Giacomo's intense operatic activities in eighteenth century were characterized by the staging of *opera buffa*, which actually constitutes the vast majority of the performances known today. *Opera buffa* was then the most popular operatic genre, but also constituted a rather economical solution for the impresario, the heart of the Corfu's operatic life both in eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The staging of *opera buffa* required much less expenses than those of *opera seria* that called for elaborate scenery, magnificent costumes and a castrato. The impresario's professional identity varied from that of a *capo comico* or an instrumentalist to individuals totally unrelated to opera world, and at least until mid-nineteenth century he was of Italian origin. The commonest place of the formation for the San Giacomo's troupe seems to have been the wider area of Southern Italy. Naples, a city with

² Platon Mavromoustakos, "To italiko melodrama sto theatro San Tziakomo tis Kerkyras (1733–1798)" [The Italian Melodrama in the Theatre of San Giacomo of Corfu (1733–1798)], in *Paravasis I* (1995), 147–191: 157. The title of the opera was A. Aurelli's *Gerone, tiranno di Siracusa* and it is probably the one that was set to music by J.A. Hasse (premiere in Naples, 1727). See also: Claudio Sartori, *I libretti italiani a stampa dalle origini al 1800: catalogo analitico con indici*, 8 vols (Cuneo, Bertola & Locatelli Editori, 1993), Indici I, 33.

³ The first to underline the tremendous importance of Italy for the nineteenth century Greek music was the musicologist George Leotsakos in his pioneering paper "Italy as *alma mater* of 19th century Greek music and as a vast field of future historical research on it", in *Mediterraneo Musica* 1995 (Palermo, 1995), 66–79.

important operatic background, seems to have played an important role.⁴ Naples's significance for the nineteenth century Greek music is becoming increasingly important, since it also became a common educational destination for the majority of the Ionian musicians.

Of course, the opera performances applied primarily to the aristocracy and the Venetian authorities of the island. Their presence in the opera house had a social symbolism similar to that of the rest opera theatres of Italy. The coming of the French in 1797, despite changing the social status of the region, did not affect Corfu's operatic activities. Even during the siege of the island by the Russian-Ottoman fleet in 1799 San Giacomo continued its performances by a troupe which was trapped in the city of Corfu by the blockade.⁵ Its performances were used as a medium of revolutionary propaganda, as well as a way to keep a high moral among the besieged.

San Giacomo continued its musical activities during the period that succeeded the withdrawal of the French in 1799. However, the blockade of the British fleet from 1809 onwards (imposed to the French, who occupied the islands for a second time from 1807 to 1814) seems to have caused certain difficulties to the theatre.⁶ Nonetheless, the impresario's incompetence was one additional reason for increasing problems in San Giacomo.⁷ However, in 1812 and 1813 the theatre seemed to have retrieved its pace. In 1812, for example, a full season is being programmed⁸ and before Corfu's surrender to the British an impresario is appointed for the 1814–1815 season by the Ionian Senate.⁹

As the status of British Protection started to be imposed the activities of the theatre were again regularized and further strengthened according to the changes that occurred to the Italian operatic piazzas after the Napoleonic Wars. The opera seasons, following the well-known model of the 'Autunno' and 'Carnovale' periods, were occasionally extended after Easter.¹⁰ The need of an opera house during the period of British Protection is made obvious by the renovations that San Giacomo underwent,¹¹ by its regular, and often costly, repairing program and by the fact that at least once there was a thought to inaugurate a new municipal theatre in Corfu based on modern prototypes.¹²

The increasing significance of the theatre had as an additional consequence the coming of musicians from the Italian peninsula as to work in San Giacomo either as

⁴ A Gentleman, *A Journal kept on a Journey from Bassora to Bagdad; over the Little Desert to Aleppo, Cyprus, Rhodes, Zante, Corfu and Otranto, in Italy; in the year 1779* (Horsham, Arthur Lee, 1784), 147. Regarding early nineteenth century, see; General State Archives of Corfu (G.S.A.C.), Imperial French, 87/6.

⁵ Emmanouil Rodokanakis, *O Vonapartis kai ai Ionioi Nisoi* [Buonaparte and the Ionian Islands] (Corfu, 1937), 153.

⁶ G.S.A.C., Ionian Senate / Imperial French, 33, 237.

⁷ G.S.A.C., Ionian Senate / Imperial French, 17,284.

⁸ G.S.A.C., Ionian Senate / Imperial French, 33, 289.

⁹ G.S.A.C., Ionian Senate / Imperial French, 33, 790.

¹⁰ The position of opera in a Greek urban community is made obvious by the fact that the closing day of San Giacomo in Carnival season was calculated in the Greek Orthodox manner, something that is made obvious already from the initial notification towards theatre's potential impresarios. After all, the much debated Ionian constitution of 1817 admitted the Orthodox Church as the dominant religious group of the Ionians and this was something that even the opera enterprise had to take into consideration.

¹¹ Fessa-Emmanouil, Eleni, *I arhitektoniki tou Neoellinikou theatrou (1720–1940)* [The Architecture of the Modern Greek Theatre (1720–1940), 2 vols. (Athens, 1994), 39, 152–157. See also; *Gazzetta Jonia* 47 (20/5/1815), 1 and *Gazzetta degli Stati Uniti delle Isole Jonie*, 63 (27/2–10/3/1832), 6.

¹² *Gazzetta degli Stati Uniti delle Isole Jonie*, 239 (15–27/7/1822), 4 and 275 (24/3–5/4/1823), 6.

instrumentalists or as singers. From the presently accomplished archival research it results that the local musicians, either of Italian or Greek descent, during late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, despite not being few, they were not enough for the needs of the theatre. In an era, in which there was not such a thing as permanent operatic troupe in the Italian piazzas, Corfu was considered as one more potential place of professional possibilities for the musicians. These music immigrants (described as “professore di musica”, “suonatore”, “musicante” or “virtuso”) came from places all over Italy, and mostly from Naples, Rome, Ancona, Livorno, Mantova, Parma, Bologna and Rimini. The opera troupe included the majority of the instrumentalists and often the violin-conductor. However, from late 1830’s onwards the number of the locally found musicians began to increase considerably. There are several permanent instrumentalist of Italian descent and several local musicians made their appearance in the orchestra of the theatre. At least from mid-1840’s the potential impresario of San Giacomo had in his disposal an adequate number of locally found instrumentalist,¹³ a fact of considerable importance, since he had to hire from Italy only some principal instrumentalist, as well as the singers.

San Giacomo gradually acted as a pole that could hold in Corfu adequate and often well-qualified players and teachers from Italy. This resulted to the increasing interest towards music, a fact that had both cultural and social roots, and to the gradual emergence of a series of indigenous players, becoming this way the first professional musicians of modern Greece.

The earliest known music teachers of the island are either Italian or second generation Italian immigrants, but in any case all of them directly related to San Giacomo theatre. The brothers Stefano and Girolamo Pojago, sons of Giovanni Battista Pojago from Milan,¹⁴ where both born in Corfu. They became leading instrumentalists and music educators, Girolamo teaching the violin and Stefano the harpsichord, as well as music theory. Stefano was also for several years *maestro al cembalo* of the theatre, organist at the Catholic Cathedral of Corfu and the composer of the interludes for the opera *Gli amanti confusi ossia Il bruto fortunato*, which was presented in San Giacomo in 1791. The Pojago family seems to have been the earliest locally born music dynasty, since already from late eighteenth century several members of the family, apart from the two aforementioned brothers, are reported as instrumentalists.¹⁵

Another important music teacher is Stefano Moretti, an Italian musician native of Ancona. He seems to have made his first appearance in Corfu in 1784, as a second rank singer.¹⁶ From 1786 he is reported as *maestro al cembalo* of San Giacomo. In the meantime he established his reputation as a leading local educator. It is notable that in 1815 Ioannis Capodistrias considers both one from the Pojago brothers (probably Stefano) and Stefano Moretti as important individuals in Corfu’s musical reality,

¹³ *Gazzetta degli Stati Uniti delle Isole Jonie*, 115 (1–13/3/1847) and G.S.A.C., Regent 275 (years 1852–1853).

¹⁴ Registers of the Catholic Archdiocese of Corfu. Stefano Pojago was born in 1768 and died in 1826, and Girolamo was born in 1779 and died in 1842. The information was kindly provided by the secretary of the Catholic Archdiocese of Corfu, researcher and good friend Spyros Gaoutsis, whom I would like to thank for his cooperation.

¹⁵ G.S.A.C., Executive Police, 32/1, 1319, 1547.

¹⁶ A certain Stefano Moretti appears to participate as singer in the performance of Pasquale Anfossi’s opera *I viaggiatori felici* (see; Mavromoustakos, “To italiko melodrama [...]”, 172. See also; Sartori, *I libretti italiani*[...], v, entry 24.799).

despite leaving certain doubts for their competence to keep up with the new developments.¹⁷

A leading figure for nineteenth century was the Neapolitan Giuseppe Castignace, whose presence dominates the largest part of the period in discussion. He studied in the San Sebastiano Conservatory under Fenaroli and apart from opera composer he was also a competent *partimentista*.¹⁸ He is reported to have composed eight operas in the whole before coming to Corfu. His opera *Il contadina bizzara* was successfully presented in Teatro Nuovo of Naples in 1810,¹⁹ as well as in the premises of the San Sebastiano Conservatory,²⁰ and his *La metamorfosi di Pulcinella* seems to have met a particular success in the same theatre.²¹ He came for the first time in Corfu in 1817,²² where he stayed until his death in 1858. He was hired as *maestro direttore e concertatore* and at least from 1823 he is reported as *maestro al cembalo* or *maestro e direttore della musica* of San Giacomo, a place that he held until late 1840s.²³ After a transitional period he was succeeded by the Swiss Felice Lambelet, an ex-piano accompanist of Teatro alla Scala and genitor of the Lambelet music dynasty.²⁴ Castignace also delivered private music lessons and can well be considered, along with Mantzaros, as one of those musicians that, directly or not, opened the way to the indigenous musicians towards seeking further musical education in Naples.

Another notable Italian musician, not only for Corfu, but especially for Athens is that of Raffaele Parisini. The composer found himself in Corfu as violin-conductor of San Giacomo from 1841 until the Carnival of 1844. That year he decided to move to Athens via Patras,²⁵ apparently, because he found intriguing the fact that the newly established capital of the Greek Kingdom had no musical education and its musical life was in its infancy. Without ever losing contact with Italy, Parisini set the tune for the musical life of nineteenth-century Athens with his compositional and educational activities. He turned his home into a music school, formed a choir, founded the Philharmonic Society “Euterpe” (1871), composed several works for the Athenian public and published for the first time a *Theory of Music* in Greek. Above all, he set an example to the already growing Ionian music movement, by indicating Athens as a place of potential professional reinstatement, something that in the future was to contribute to the atheniancentric character of music activities of today’s Greece.

The list could be further continued, but due to time limits just a brief and eclectic reference will be endeavoured. Giulio Cesare Ferrarini (1807–1891) (an

¹⁷ Polychronis Enepekides (ed.), *Ioannis Kapodistrias: 176 anekdota grammata pros ton patera mou (1809–1820)* [Ioannis Kapodistrias: 176 unpublished letters to my father (1809–1820)] (Athens, Papazisis, 1972), 201, letter dated Vienna, 21/4–3/5/1815.

¹⁸ [Nikolaos Halikiopoulos Mantzaros], *Rapporto del Cav. N.C. Manzaro Presidente della Musica della Società Filarmonica di Corfù relativo al dono di alcune opere di Monsigny e Grètry dal chiarissimo di lei socio onorario J. Lardin di Parigi* (Corfu, 1851), 20.

¹⁹ Francesco Florimo, *La Scuola Musicale di Napoli e i suoi Conservatori*, 4 vols (Torino, 1882), iv, 156. Score of the opera belongs to the Archives of ‘Conservatorio di San Pietro a Majella’ in Naples. Three concert, possibly, arias by Castignace belong to the Archive of the Philharmonic Society of Corfu.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, iii, 470.

²¹ [Mantzaros], *Rapporto* [...], 20 and C.G.S.A., Regent 38, 1593.

²² C.G.S.A., Regent 38, 1593. It is stated that he was hired as *maestro direttore* of San Giacomo by the Ionian government.

²³ His place is evident from the existing librettos in the collections of the Corfu’s Reading Society.

²⁴ Iossif Greka, “Oi Lambelet: Mia megali oikogeneia moussikon stin Ellada” [The Lambelets: A great music family in Greece], *Peiraias 1960* offprint (Athens, 1960), 162.

²⁵ *Gazzetta Ufficiale degli Stati Uniti delle Isole Jonie per notizie politiche, scientifiche, letterarie*, 10 (29/2–12/3/1844), 10.

“Acc. Fil. di Bologna, e di Lugo, e socio onorario dell’ Ateneo di Forli, e del Nobile Casino Dorico d’ Ancona”) before becoming *maestro direttore* in Teatro Regio of Parma (1857–1871) was the violin-conductor of San Giacomo from 1831 until at least 1834. During that time he became familiar to the teaching of Nikolaos Mantzaros. The composer of *Inez de Castro*, Giuseppe Persiani reached Corfu in 1824 in a very critical financial status. During his short stay in the island he also benefited from the teaching of Mantzaros and it seems that they stayed in touch after that period. The violin-conductor Marco Battagel is a musician possibly related to Francesco Battagel, who served as *maestro direttore* of San Giacomo in late Venetian era. He was the founder of the first Zakynthos’s Philharmonic Society (1816)²⁶ and is reported as San Giacomo's *primo violino e direttore d’ orchestra* already from 1824 until 1831. He was possibly the orchestra’s leader in Sp. Zambelios’s *O Dafnostefanos* [The laurel], a theatrical performance in Greek that took place in Lefkada in 1833.²⁷

The vast majority of San Giacomo’s singers was also exclusively Italian. Coming from various cities, affiliated to different philharmonic societies and with different backgrounds, those, often second or third rank, singers formed the backbone of the operatic activity of nineteenth century Greece. Most of them were coming occasionally in Corfu as part of the general mobility that characterized the Italian opera of the time. However, some of them were frequently appearing in the Corfiot stage. For instance, the Neapolitan soprano Anna de Paolis Pelizia, the tenor Raffaele Recupito and the baritone Andrea Bartoluzi sung at San Giacomo almost every year from 1814 until 1821. Another indicative example is Ezzebina Ercolani, who from 1840 until 1843 performed such diverse roles as that of Lucrezia in *Lucrezia Borgia*, Desdemona in Rossini’s *Otello*, Eleonora in Donizetti’s *Tarquato di Tasso* and Elisa in Fioravanti’s *Il ritorno di Columella dagli studj di Padova*. Occasionally, famous virtuosi and singers, such as Carolina Sabatier Ungher, visited and performed in Corfu, though not as a part of an operatic troupe,²⁸ something that, nonetheless, indicates Corfu’s increasing importance for the region’s cultural activities.

The things are a bit complicated in the case of indigenous singers, and especially female. The appearance of female singers on the Ionian stages was initially considered as scandalous act. It is indicative that in 1812 in Zante the prospect of an opera performance and the subsequent appearance of female singers on stage raised several discussions.²⁹ Moreover, the female roles of the amateur theatrical performances in Corfu were performed either by local male dilettanti³⁰ or by professional female opera singers, who by definition were entitled to appear on stage.³¹ This attitude can be largely attributed to the religious conservatism, especially that of the Orthodox Church, which additionally considered anything “western” as heretic. It is indicative, that religious intervention, as well as financial problems,

²⁶ Spiridon Moutsenigos, *Neoelliniki moussiki: simvoli is tin istorian tis* [Modern Greek Music: a Contribution to its History] (Athens, 1958), 143, 166 and Stelios Tzerbinos, *Filarmonika Zakynthou* [Zakynthos’s Philharmonics] (Zakynthos, Filomousi Kinisi Zakynthou, 1996), 23–25

²⁷ *Gazzetta degli Stati Uniti delle Isole Jonie* 112 (4–16/2/1833), 4–5. The music was composed by another Italian musician, ‘G. Piccoli’. See also, *Gazzetta degli Stati Uniti delle Isole Jonie* 106 (24/12/1832–5/1/1833), 7 and *Gazzetta degli Stati Uniti delle Isole Jonie* 120 (1–13/4/1833).

²⁸ *Gazzetta Ufficiale degli Stati Uniti delle Isole Jonie* 71 (27/4–9/5/1846), 14–16.

²⁹ Henry Holland, *Travels in the Ionian Isles, Albania, Thessaly, Macedonia &c during the years 1812 and 1813*, 2 vols. (London, Longman, 1819), i, 36.

³⁰ e.g. *Gazzetta degli Stati Uniti delle Isole Jonie* 64 (5–17/3/1832), 6.

³¹ e.g. *Gazzetta Jonia* 49 (24/8/1815), 1.

seems to have prevented the Philharmonic Society in 1853 from being upgraded into school of music drama.

However, there are certain isolated cases of local singers, who benefited from the distinct musical achievements of the Greek *ottocento*. The Corfiot, though of Italian descent, mezzo-soprano Elena d' Angri (1824–1886) made a notable career both in Europe and in Americas. The Zantiote soprano Isavella Yatrà (~1832–1916) became an important figure in the Greek melodramatic history. Moreover, several singers of obvious Greek origin appear in the existing librettos of the San Giacomo.³² The most notable of them are Spiridon Patricchios (1840), Demetrios Mexas (1846, 1848) and Luigia Milonopoulou (1854).³³

The existence and the permanent staying of notable Italian music teachers on Corfu and the special musical conditions that were created, had as a consequence, among others, the gradual interest in advanced music theory and composition. Until the beginning of nineteenth century the interest of the Corfiots who occupied themselves with learning music was limited to the tolerable performance of a musical instrument. In nineteenth century this had also a social significance, since music wasn't taught in public schools and only nobles and rich bourgeois could afford the hiring of a music teacher. The learning of an instrument or the cultivation of one's voice had as primary scope to satisfy the performer and his or hers limited family audience. The urge to study advanced music theory or composition was either considered as non-valuable excess or thwarted. The first to break these boundaries, despite his noble descent, was the already mentioned Nikolaos Halikiopoulos Mantzaros.

Mantzaros actually was the first indigenous, who fully exploited to the utmost the distinctive for the Greek reality musical achievements of Corfu. He was a student of both Pojago brothers (1806, 1808) and Moretti (1808). In 1810 a certain 'Cavaliere Barbatti' came in Corfu, who gave new perspectives to Mantzaros's counterpoint studies. The identity of this notable music teacher remains until today a mystery. Nevertheless, it is known that he was a famous musician in Italy and had a music school there (possibly in Naples).³⁴

In 1813 Mantzaros accomplished his studies with Barbatti, but his first appearance as composer did not take place before 1815. In that year the twenty-years-old composer presented in San Giacomo several concert arias and an 'azione comica in un' atto solo', beginning this way a series of similar works that were to be performed between 1815 and 1827, usually during beneficial nights of certain singers. These works constitute the first creations of their kind in Greek music history and, in the case of the 'azione comica' *Don Crepuscolo* the first attempt of a Greek composer to create an operatic work. In the title pages of these, as well as other, works the composer characterizes himself as 'dilettante', in order to clarify that his involvement with musical composition is related to personal pleasure and not to financial profit, underlining this way his noble descent. This attitude towards music characterized Mantzaros throughout his life, since he never considered himself as professional composer, despite his heavily involvement with music, his contact with the musical

³² The main corpus of these librettos, despite far from being exhaustive, belongs to the collection of Corfu's Reading Society.

³³ Their names, often under leading roles, appear in the existing librettos. For Dem. Mexa, see also: *Gazzetta Ufficiale degli Stati Uniti delle Isole Jonie* 96 (19–31/10/1846), 20–21.

³⁴ Spiridon De Viasis, "Nikolaos Halikiopoulos Mantzaros", *Apollon* v. E', January 1890, 942–946: 943. It is worth mentioning that the Barbattis come from refugees of Napoli di Morea (today's Nauplion in Peloponisos), who after the capture of the city by the Turks scattered in Italy and on Corfu.

reality of Naples by the side of Niccolò Zingarelli (periodically from 1822 until 1826), and the composition of the Greek National Anthem.³⁵

As an immediate consequence to this attitude comes his lifelong resistance to compose a large operatic work either for San Giacomo or any other theatre. Despite demonstrating in his early works a strong understanding of the operatic idiom of his time (after all, both Pojago brothers and Moretti were involved with opera), and despite having demonstrated some innovative ideas in his orchestration, Mantzaros might have considered opera world too dull.

Nevertheless, he continued the legacy of the Italo-Ionian amalgamation from other points. Forseeing that in order to have a proper musical background in the society, one should educate people musically, Mantzaros started delivering music lessons free of charge from 1820s and already in 1830s students of his started to make their presence felt in the Corfiot society. This way, Mantzaros became the genitor of what was to be much later called "Ionian School of Music".

In 1841 he also became the lifelong artistic director of the newly established Philharmonic Society of Corfu (established in 1840), which during Mantzaros's years had the most fruitful period of its history. The philharmonic became gradually one more additional pole for well-qualified musicians's concentration, independently from their origin. This musical institution, before its reduction in twentieth century to a school of wind instruments' elementary teaching, functioned as the first fully-working Greek musical academy based on European prototypes. Moreover, Mantzaros became a well-known teacher of counterpoint of his time, continuing the Neapolitan contrapuntal tradition. His name seems to have been known and respected in Italy from 1830s onwards. He also developed a whole philosophical system based on counterpoint, which he considered as the only musical form that represented the Hegelian ideals.

The lack of operatic compositions by Mantzaros created a gap in the creation of local operatic works. This absence was to be compensated by the works by several Mantzaros's students. Almost all of them were performed in San Giacomo and represent the earliest full-scale operatic works by Greek composers. Several of these works were dedicated by their composers to Mantzaros as a mere sign of respect. After all, despite having continued their studies in Italy (Naples, Rome, Milan) initially they were all Mantzaros's students. A brief presentation of some of these composers might give an overview of their works and tendencies.

Spiridon Xindas is widely known as the composer of the opera *O ypopsifios* (1867), the first opera on Greek libretto. However, already from 1855 he has presented in San Giacomo operas on Italian libretto. This led him to be acknowledged as a leading opera composer. *Anna Winter* (1855), based on the well-known story of Duma's *The Three Musketeers*, constitutes one of the earliest uses of a Duma's work in modern Greek theatrical history. *Conte Giuliano* (1856) is based on an Italian libretto by Gerasimos Markoras, one of the most important figures of the Ionian nineteenth-century literature. The same libretto was used by Felice Lambelet for his *Il castello maledetto* (1857). Xindas was one of the initial founders of the philharmonic society and proposed repeatedly the creation of a melodramatic school.

Domenikos Padovas, or better Domenico Padovani, was a catholic, son of Girolamo Padovani, a literate figure of Corfu of the first half of nineteenth century,

³⁵ Officially adopted in 1865 the Greek National Anthem is the first of the twenty four (or twenty five) parts that form Mantzaros's 1828 setting of the Zakynthian poet's Dionysios Solomos *Hymn to the Liberty* (first published in Messologhi in 1825).

whose roots can be traced back in Italy. Domenico, apart from being the organist of the local Catholic Cathedral and the composer of both instrumental and vocal music, left at least two operatic works. The one-act comic opera *Il ciarlatano presso per principe* (before 1847) and the tragic opera *Dirce, figlia di Aristodemo* (1857). The first is based on a libretto by the Italian literate, carbonarist and editor Saveriano Fogacci, an until recently neglected figure in regard to 1840s Corfu's music. The fact that *Il ciarlatano* is scored exclusively for male voices (both singers and choir) might further depict the lack of female amateur voices. *Dirce*, based on Vincenzo Monti's work, is clearly connected to the idealized, and deceptive, European notion of modern Greece as the immediate heir of the ancient world.

Of special importance are the activities of the Liberali brothers. Antonio and Giuseppe Liberali were the sons of the Italian (a native of Fermo) bandmaster of the British garrison Domenico Liberali and his Zakynthian wife. Despite their Italian descent the Liberalis thought Corfu as their homeland and similar attitudes were expressed by their social environment. It is indicative that their surname is often 'hellenized' as 'Eleftheriadis', a translation of the word 'liberale' in Greek, something that could have further connotations in the increasingly nationally sensitive 1830s and 1840s Ionian Isles. In any case both of them composed, among others, works that had to do with the Greek 1821 revolution, a historical period that in the Ionian Islands of the 1840s had self-understood symbolisms.

For instance, Antonio –a founder of the philharmonic society, as well– composed in 1837 a cantata titled *L' orfano di Suli*, which was performed in San Giacomo during a *benefiziata* of 'M. Calzerani',³⁶ being this way in total parallel with similar nationally inspired trends of Europe. He also looked back to the idealized past of Greece, and particularly of Corfu, by composing incidental music for the performance of Tommaso Sauli Sajani's tragedy *Ulisse, re di Itaca in Corcira* in 1834.³⁷ Nonetheless, Antonio did not make any contribution to the operatic genre, since he died very young in January 1842.

His brother, Giuseppe, continued and further developed Antonio's notions. Apart from being an excellent pianist, he was also the composer of operas such as *Rigas Feraios* and *Marcos Botsaris*,³⁸ as well as the scene and duet *Alis and Tzavellas*, all of them presented in 1840s and 1850s. The subject of Marcos Botsaris, one of the most famous heroes of the Greek Revolution, is very common in the Ionian opera composers, since apart from Liberali's opera there are three more with this title; an unfinished opera by the Zakynthian Frangiskos Domeneghinis, one more by the Cefalenian Nikolaos Zannis Metaxàs and, the most famous one, that of the Zakynthian Pavlos Karrer (composed in 1858, performed in 1860 in Patras).³⁹ Giuseppe Liberali is also the composer of a piano fantasia based on popular themes titled *Le réveil du Kléphth* [The awaking of the klephth]⁴⁰ that was published in 1847⁴¹

³⁶ Appendix to the *Album Jonio* LII (16/1/1842), 417–418: 417.

³⁷ Thomas I. Papadopoulou, *Ioniki bibliografia* [Ionian bibliography] vol.i (1508–1850), 363, entry 2118. Photographic reproduction of the source on page 320.

³⁸ The latter work is sometimes attributed to Antonio Liberali. See, for example: Luigi C. Ippaviz, *Corcira antica e moderna* (Venezia, 1901), 278.

³⁹ For an overview of *Botsaris's* presence in nineteenth century Greece see, Avra Xepapadakou, "O Markos Botsaris tou Pavlou Karrer: mia "ethniki" opera" [Pavlos Karrer's *Marcos Botsaris*: a "national" opera] in *Moussikos Loghos* 5 (2003), 27–63.

⁴⁰ 'Klephtes' and 'armatoloi' formed the irregular militia of the Greeks during the 1821 revolution.

⁴¹ George Leotsakos, *Light under the bushel: Piano works by Greek composers*, booklet of the homonymous CD (Crete University Press, CUP 11, 1999), 33.

(or 1849)⁴² by Francesco Lucca. This work is considered as the earliest existing work of national Greek music.⁴³

Nonetheless, the lack of Greek speaking singers was a crucial factor towards the late appearance of arias, songs and, above all, operas in Greek language. The Italian singers of San Giacomo played again a central role. It is characteristic that the lyrics of Mantzaros's *Aria Greca* (1827), an aria concertante, the first work of its kind that sets to music modern Greek language, are written in latin characters, as to be manageable from Elizabetta Pinotti, the Neapolitan singer who performed it.⁴⁴ Mantzaros's student Spiridon Xindas also composed arias in Greek already from 1840's that were again performed by Italian singers,⁴⁵ a practice that he followed as late as 1868.

In 1867 the opera *O Ypopsifios* [The Parliamentary Candidate] was performed in San Giacomo by local amateurs. This was the first opera to use a full-scale libretto in Greek and which shows the creative assimilation of Italian and Greek musical perspectives in the Ionians. Despite having several common characteristic with Italian opera the casting was rather peculiar, since it included five male and one female voice. This non-standard distribution for Italian opera reflects the problems caused from the absence of a local opera school. It also shows that the composition of the work was rather coincidental, since in that period seems that in Corfu were concentrated enough voices. This is further supported by the fact that both the composer and the librettist were part of the original casting.⁴⁶

From all the above it is obvious that San Giacomo played a central role in the formation of the Greek *ottocento*, both as a concentration point for musicians, that practically became music educators of modern Greece, and as place of presentation for music works by indigenous composers. These second-generation heirs of the creative amalgamation in the music life of the Ionian Islands have created unique conditions for the musical reality of nineteenth century Greece. In mid-nineteenth century Corfu, capital of the Ionian State, there was a vivid musical life and at least three fully working professional composers, a totally opposite situation compared to that of Athens. This dynamic of the Ionian Islands was also reflected in Italy itself by composers such as Pavlos Karrer (in 1850s), Dionisios Rodotheatos (in 1870s) and Spiros Samaras (in 1890s–1900s), but their activities are another equally interesting story.

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⁴² See the newspaper of Corfu *Patris* [Homeland] 15 (23/4–4/5/1849), 6.

⁴³ Leotsakos, *Light under the bushel* [...], 9. See also, Haris Xanthoudakis, “Herder’s legacy and the national ideal in nineteenth century Greek music”, paper in the international conference *Romanticism and Nationalism in Music* (Corfu, Ionian University / Music Department, 17–20/10/2003), to be published.

⁴⁴ *Gazzetta degli Stati Uniti delle Isole Jonie* 475 (22/1–3/2/1827), 3. The score is today part of the Archives of Benakis’s Museum in Athens. Mantzaros’s settings of Greek poetry for one or two voices with piano accompaniment were intended for private occasions or for salon performances, where Greek speaking dilettante singers could freely perform.

⁴⁵ *Gazzetta Ufficiale degli Stati Uniti delle Isole Jonie* 103 (7–19/12/1846), 22–23.

⁴⁶ Spiridon Xindas, *O ypopsifios*, libretto (Corfu, 1867).