

## BOOK REVIEW

Avra Xepapadakou and Alexandros Charkioulakis, eds, *Interspersed with Musical Entertainment: Music in Greek Salons of the 19th Century* (Athens: Hellenic Music Centre, 2017). xi + 229 pp. 22.00€.

Nineteenth-century salon studies traditionally have centred on musical activity in western European urban centres, particularly in Paris and Berlin.<sup>1</sup> The disproportionate focus on such metropolises has meant that less attention has been paid to the curation and collection of the music and cultural histories of parallel salon cultures in smaller cities or those that have been less centrally embedded in the narratives of western musical history. Co-editors Avra Xepapadakou and Alexandros Charkioulakis work towards remedying this imbalance in this anthology, which contextualizes the growth of salon culture after the Greek Revolution and presents 15 piano and vocal works deemed representative of the movement. The book, as Jim Samson writes in the Foreword, ‘constitutes an act of recovery, and it makes concrete the “little stories” of multiple Hellenic cultures’ (p. xiv). The sceptic might easily view the Greek salon to be anachronistic because it solidified decades later than its European counterparts. Moreover, the salon sets the familiar narratives into motion, such as expanding the public’s musical literacy, establishing networks of patronage, and creating an arena where women were cultural leaders. Looking beyond the traditional emphases in salon studies, Xepapadakou and Charkioulakis also highlight the notion that the salon was a cultural tool through which the Greek population enacted a rapid cultural assimilation to western European customs after obtaining independence from Ottoman control. To this point, the anthology is illustrative of the ways that the salon institution could propel cultural-political change at local and national levels.

The volume draws from a variety of sources: it brings the recent research of Greek historians to the attention of English readers; it analyses materials found in nineteenth-century Greek journals; and, it draws from archival collections, such as the Sakkoulidis Collection in Istanbul. The majority of the historical sources studied were gathered through the *Chrysalis* project, a research initiative centred on periodicals circulated in Greece during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>2</sup> In the spirit of uniting conversations and promoting access to this emergent body of sources, the collected materials are currently undergoing digitization through the *Medusa* archival repository.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> On the Parisian music salon, see Myriam Chimènes, *Mécènes et musiciens: Du salon au concert à Paris sous la IIIe République* (Paris: Fayard, 2004). Also see David Tunley, *Salons, Singers and Songs: A Background to Romantic French Song 1830–1870* (London: Routledge, 2016). On the Berlin salon scene, see Rebecca Cypess and Nancy Sinkoff, eds. *Sara Levy’s World: Gender, Judaism, and the Bach Tradition in Enlightenment Berlin* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2018).

<sup>2</sup> Focusing on the study of cultural transfer and ‘national character’ in nineteenth-century Greek periodicals, the *Chrysalis* project website is accessible in Greek and English at <http://chrysalis.eu/> (accessed 10 October 2018).

<sup>3</sup> The *Medusa* repository is accessible in Greek and, with some exceptions, in English at <http://medusa.libver.gr/> (accessed 10 October 2018).

Organized into two distinct sections, the first portion of the book written by Xepapadakou offers a historical overview of Hellenic salon culture. The second portion presents scores of selected salon pieces edited and discussed by Charkiolakis who includes biographies of the composers and descriptions of the music. The body of the book is followed by two appendices, a pronunciation key and reproductions of the original scores published in nineteenth-century journals.

Establishing the historical origins of the Greek salon in the first section of the book 'Music in Greek Salons of the 19th Century', Xepapadakou identifies several threads that set the stage for the domestic organization of musical life during the Ottoman occupation of Greece. First, she underscores the cultural importance of the Phanariot, an elite merchant class of Greeks that lived in Constantinople and other cities important to the Ottoman trade routes, such as Venice, Vienna and Odessa. With access to sheet music and instruments, this group was positioned to absorb continental musical styles. Not only that, but Xepapadakou points out that the musical interests of the merchant communities are serendipitously documented in the surviving albums of sheet music compiled by Phanariot women. While much of the music represented the popular repertoires of western Europe, the albums also indicate an interest in mixed-style compositions, such as those of Franz Ruzsitski (François Rouschitzki) whose works exoticize Greek and Turkish melodies within a western musical framework. Xepapadakou also identifies the Ionian islands, the only Hellenic region outside Ottoman Empire, as the second cultural arena that prepared pre-revolutionary Greece for salon culture. Tracing the line of influence from Italy to the islands of Corfu, Zante and Cephalonia, she identifies routes of musical exchange: Ionians studied at Italian conservatories, brought Italian teachers to the region, and imported the first keyboards to Hellenic soil. Stressing the role this region played in cultivating western art music, the historical discussion highlights the multitude of musicians and composers that emerged from the Ionian islands, including Nikolaos Mantzaros (composer of the Greek national anthem), Pavlos Karrer (Paolo Carrer) and Napoleon Lambelet, among others.

Addressing the period following Greek independence in 1834, Xepapadakou's discussion shifts to identify factors that propelled the rapid growth of salon culture in Greece. As was the case in western Europe, the salon emerged in the wake of urbanization. With tremendous population growth in Athens, as well as Hermoupolis and Patras, the salon became part of the infrastructure for socialization. It, in turn, created demand for access to music and musical training, stimulating the establishment of music schools (most notably the Athens Conservatoire, founded 1871) and prompting the circulation of sheet music through subscription journals.

Lithographs, sketches and paintings of salon life are 'interspersed' (to draw from the anthology's title) throughout this first section of the book. At a glance, they perhaps summon the characteristic intimacy that is often associated with domestic music-making. However, the collective selection of images is ultimately quite perplexing. These figures almost exclusively illustrate salon culture in western Europe, while representations of the Greek salon are all but absent (two sketches related to music-making in Greece appear on pp. 18 and 68). This detail provokes questions. Are representations of Hellenic salons unavailable? If so, perhaps it would be fruitful to discuss the challenges faced in curating a collection of images of domestic musical life in Greece. If this is not the case, one wonders why the editors favour the western European images, such as a painting of the

Menzel family (p. 14) or the sketch of Chopin with Pauline Viardot (p. 33), and consequently miss the opportunity to share and analyse the iconography of the Greek salon? The systematic permeation of western European images in the volume appears purposeful, yet the question of how the images offer a counterpoint to the present discussion of Greek salon culture remains unanswered.

The historical discussion presents 'Salon Music through the Greek Prism' (as one section is entitled). The 'prism' is an apt metaphor, not only because the editors seek to show the ways that the western European salon is refracted through the Hellenic collective consciousness but also because the book is somewhat prismatic in its organization. Rather than constructing a linear narrative, the history of the Greek salon is described in 15 subsections, each briefly illuminating the subject from shifting points of view. Each segment, on topics ranging from salon performers to salon locations to salon instruments, is like a fractal that offers a separate frame of insight into the broader topic.

The second half of the anthology, 'A Selection of Salon Music Pieces', edited by Charkiolakis, presents 15 pieces published from the 1880s through the early twentieth century. The repertory includes strophic songs, opera excerpts and works for solo piano, with an emphasis on dance genres such as the mazurka and polka. The representative repertory closely aligns with the type of music heard in the French salons; this is unsurprising, since many Greek composers studied at the Paris Conservatoire, such as Spyridon Samaras and Dionysios Lavrangas who were trained respectively by Leo Délibes and Jules Massenet (pp. 100 and 109). Although 15 pieces cannot possibly encompass a comprehensive picture of Greek salon music, the editors favoured these selections because they were designed to be performed and studied by a general audience rather than a specialized musical circle. Charkiolakis underscores the point that musical examples published in journals with a broad readership reflected the public interest in cultivating cultural knowledge that included literature, philosophy and music – a notion that was rooted in the values of the Modern Greek Enlightenment (pp. 37–41). Charkiolakis prefaces each work with a biographical sketch of the composer and a stylistic analysis of the piece. In some instances, tracing the history of the composer required a considerable degree of archival excavation, as in the case of Gerasimos Vothrondos, whose life and activity is documented in few scattered public records (p. 60). The edited scores offer performers a tidy presentation that also includes phonetic transliterations of the songs. Those interested in the archival sources will find facsimiles of the original sheet music in Appendix II, including many that feature sketches of dancing figures, landscapes or portraits of the composers. The pictorial aspects of these scores invite further analysis – some illustrate metropolitan modes of sociability while others romanticize pre-Industrial landscapes.

To assist singers, the anthology's pronunciation guide located in Appendix I offers transliterations of the Greek alphabet as well as English word equivalencies to illustrate the consonant and vowel sounds. In general, the guide aims to make the articulation of the Greek language as accessible as possible; however, not all Greek consonants and vowels map precisely onto English and, as a result, the pronunciation guide misses the sounds that fall outside the boundaries of English phonetics. Two omissions particularly stand out. The first is *chi* (Χχ), described to be equivalent to the 'H' sound heard in 'he'. While this correspondence is accurate some of the time, the transliteration guide does not account for the times when *chi* is pronounced as an unvoiced uvular fricative much like the German *ach-laut*, as it is in the word ήσυχο meaning 'quiet' (p. 92). The second is *gamma* (Γγ),

described to be equivalent to the letter 'Y' as sounded in 'yacht'. Again, this applies in some cases but, in other contexts, the *gamma* is a voiced velar fricative, meaning that the back of the tongue lifts to the velar palate (just in front of the uvula) to sound a soft 'g'. This is the sound used in *εγώ*, meaning 'I', and *μεγάλοι*, meaning 'great' (p. 104). Greek is the only modern language that uses this voiced velar fricative, the closest equivalent being the uvular 'r' of French and German, and to omit this nuance is to dampen the variegated palate of phonetic articulations in Greek.<sup>4</sup>

The materials and discussion presented in the anthology support the notion that the salon as well as its cultural products (and byproducts) helped construct the cultural identity of independent Greece. This focus invites nationalistic-style comparisons between the Greek salon and its more familiar western European counterparts, a thread that might be explored by the recitalist who juxtaposes Chopin's and Parisini's mazurkas or Schubert's and Lambelet's strophic songs, or by the historian who examines musical style and locality. This approach aligns with the traditional view that the salon stimulated the creative production of popular entertainment, repertoires and practices that are emblematic of regional style and taste. And yet, as this anthology also demonstrates, the Greek salon shares perhaps more commonalities than differences with other European salons, particularly in the way that it emerged within urban social environments and stimulated a self-sustaining musical infrastructure. In this respect, salon studies could use more 'little histories' such as this to illuminate the range of environments in which the salon emerges, the types of musical networks it activates and ultimately the social and political movements it mobilizes.

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<sup>4</sup> The singer may find Lydíá Zervanos' diction guide to be a useful companion; see *Singing in Greek: A Guide to Greek Lyric Diction and Vocal Repertoire* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015).