

ETUDES HELLENIQUES

HELLENIC STUDIES

**A Tribute to the Theatre of
the Modern Greek Diaspora
Hommage au théâtre de
la diaspora Greque moderne**

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Volume 16, No. 2, Autumn / Automne 2008

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ÉTUDES HELLÉNIQUES / HELLENIC STUDIES

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Published twice a year (Spring - Autumn) by the **Centre for Hellenic Studies and Research Canada, -KEEK, the University of Crete, Centre of Intercultural and Migration Studies-EDIAMME, Department of Primary Education and the University of the Aegean Post-Graduate Program in «Political, Economic and International Relations in the Mediterranean», Department of Mediterranean Studies.**

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Subscription orders, inquiries, single orders and back issues should be addressed / could be obtained from this address also. *Études helléniques/ Hellenic Studies* is an interdisciplinary, bilingual (French - English) journal devoted to the study of issues prevailing among Greeks in both Greece proper and the numerous Greek communities abroad.

Subscription Rates/Frais d'abonnement	One year/Un an	Europe (par virement)*
Individuals/Particuliers	\$35.00	35 €
Institutions	\$45.00	40 €
Support/Soutien	\$50.00	50 €

*Compte chèques postaux à Paris: CCP n° 2846134E020

IBAN FR72 2004 1000 0128 4613 4E02 057

BIC PSSTFRPPPAR

Revue publiée deux fois par an (Printemps-Automne) par le Centre de recherches helléniques Canada-KEEK, l'Université de Crète(Centre d'études interculturelles et de l'immigration-EDIAMME du Département d'Education Primaire) et l'Université de la Mer Egée (Programme d'études supérieures de deuxième et troisième cycle, «Sciences politiques, économiques, et relations internationales dans la Méditerranée»,Département d'études méditerranéennes).

Tous les articles, les recensions et la correspondance générale doivent être adressés aux **ÉTUDES HELLÉNIQUES/HELLENIC STUDIES**, C.P. 48571, 1495 Van Horne, Outremont, (Québec), Canada, H2V 4T3, Tel: (514) 276-7333, Télécopieur: (514) 495-3072 (E-mail: k12414@er.uqam.ca). Pour les abonnements, les informations, pour tout numéro courant ou ancien de la revue, prière de vous adresser aux **ÉTUDES HELLÉNIQUES/ HELLENIC STUDIES** à l'adresse ci dessus.

ÉTUDES HELLÉNIQUES/HELLENIC STUDIES est une revue interdisciplinaire bilingue (français-anglais) consacrée à la recherche: elle a pour objet l'étude de l'hellénisme tant de la Grèce que de la diaspora.

Gutenberg Publishing

Didodou 37

Athens 10680

Tel.: 210-3808334

Fax: 210-3642030

e-mail: info@dardanosnet.gr

Dépôt légal / Legal Deposit

National Library of Canada

Bibliothèque nationale du Québec

2e trimestre 2007

ISSN: 0824-8621

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Editor's note

I wish to express my gratitude to the Editorial Board of *Études Helléniques/Hellenic Studies* for dedicating this tribute issue to the theatre of the Modern Greek diaspora and for inviting me to be the guest editor. Their decision reflects their ongoing commitment to bring to the attention of their readership the contribution made by the Greeks of diaspora to the life, culture and tradition of both their communities and the national centre.

A work of this scope would not happen without the efforts of the many contributors who have offered the benefits of their knowledge and expertise as well as their valuable time and energy to make this issue a rich resource and reference work in an area of Ecumenical Hellenism which is just beginning to receive the attention and study that it deserves.

George Kanarakis

Le Théâtre de la Diaspora Grecque Moderne

George Kanarakis*

Introduction

Le théâtre comme un élément culturel fait partie intégrante de la physionomie diachronique de l'hellénisme, celui de la Grèce aussi bien que de celui de la diaspora.

Par le terme «diaspora» (dont l'étymologie provient de *speiro* «semer» et de *dia* «dessus» (sur, à travers), laissant de côté l'emphase particulière accordée par les historiens au critère géographique et le maintien des liens matériels, culturels et sentimentaux avec le centre national¹ pour ce qui est du processus de socialisation et de la formation de l'identité, on entend «la dispersion géographique des groupes ethniques qui, coupés mais pas nécessairement aliénés de leur groupe d'origine, de référence, ou de leur tronc national, vivent comme des groupes ethniques ou minoritaires au sein d'une société culturellement différente. Ces groupes se déplacent entre deux types de référence et deux systèmes culturels et par conséquent forment leur identité dans des conditions particulières»². Très peu de nations ont émigré autant, et en aussi grand nombre et d'éventail de classes sociales différentes depuis l'antiquité jusqu'à nos jours, que les Grecs. Les données démographiques concernant les Grecs de la diaspora ont toujours été un sujet controversé, et ont donné lieu à une variété d'estimations. A l'heure actuelle on considère généralement que l'hellénisme de la diaspora est composé d'environ cinq millions de personnes³, nombre à rapporter aux plus de 11 millions d'individus pour la Grèce elle-même⁴, ce qui signifie que les Grecs de la diaspora représentent 45% des Grecs du centre national.

Les Grecs de la diaspora, qui sont aujourd'hui dispersés à travers le monde, sont venus initialement non seulement de la Grèce continentale et des îles grecques ainsi que de Chypre mais aussi des endroits historiquement grecs, tels Constantinople, Smyrne, d'autres régions d'Asie Mineure, de la Thrace de l'Est et de l'Épire, ou d'autres pays où les nationaux grecs s'étaient installés

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pendant longtemps tels l'Égypte, les pays du Moyen Orient, la Roumanie, la Bulgarie, la Russie, l'Ukraine, des lieux où au fil des années les Grecs avaient établi des communautés florissantes et ont créé des centres culturels grecs.

Cependant, indépendamment de l'endroit du monde d'où les Grecs ont émigré ou ont été installés, ceux-ci ont toujours amené avec eux, non seulement les éléments de leur langue, de leur culture et de leur religion qui étaient fortement enracinées en eux, mais également leur longue tradition de l'art du théâtre, qu'ils ont transmise également à leurs enfants dans leur nouveau pays. Ceci ne signifie pas que dans tous les pays où ils se sont installés, les Grecs ont développé le théâtre soit comme écriture littéraire sous forme de dialogue ou comme représentation théâtrale, mais que dans les endroits où ils ont établi des communautés grecques (paroikies) nous rencontrons très fréquemment des individus d'origine grecque qui, indépendamment de l'environnement étranger et des circonstances dans lesquelles ils se trouvent, ils expriment leur profond intérêt et leur talent dans ce domaine.

Le théâtre de la diaspora grecque moderne ne constitue pas un phénomène contemporain. Bien au contraire, même si ce théâtre n'est pas aussi ancien que l'immigration grecque elle-même, il constitue, néanmoins, un phénomène des plus représentatifs et des plus authentiques du caractère de l'hellénisme de la diaspora.

Le théâtre de la diaspora grecque d'aujourd'hui est un phénomène dynamique et énergique caractérisé par l'originalité et la vivacité. De plus, on doit reconnaître que ces qualités sont attribuables principalement à ses racines, à ses liens profonds, étroits et intimes avec ses traditions, et à un certain degré à l'influence exercée par le théâtre de la métropole grecque.

Le théâtre grec de l'hellénisme qui a émergé à l'extérieur de la Grèce constitue non seulement une partie de la tradition théâtrale hellénique ancienne et moderne, mais la complète aussi, tout en préservant, en même temps, son caractère propre. Ce théâtre permet également à ce genre artistique d'être examiné et étudié comme une entité distincte. D'une part en raison de diverses conditions dominantes d'ordre socio-culturel, politique, géographique, linguistique et historique, des nouveaux environnements l'ayant façonné et d'autre part, à cause de l'atmosphère particulière de la communauté immigrante dans laquelle il est né et a évolué comme un produit final du phénomène séculaire de l'immigration grecque.

Une autre caractéristique importante du théâtre de la diaspora grecque moderne est que ce genre, examiné séparément dans le contexte de chaque

pays particulier où il a été développé, projette clairement sa propre personnalité. Cette spécificité découle du climat psychologique particulier formé par les conditions et l'environnement spéciaux, loin du pays d'origine de l'immigrant, profondément influencé par le microcosme de la communauté grecque (*paroikia*) et la société dominante du pays particulier au sein duquel les dramaturges grecs vivent et travaillent. Par conséquent ces «théâtres» ont acquis une expression et un ton non seulement différents de l'art du théâtre de la Grèce métropolitaine, et certains d'entre eux diffèrent même d'un pays de la diaspora à l'autre car composés de deux entités distinctes en elles-mêmes; alors que leurs créateurs, en fonction de leurs talents, acquièrent une place parmi ceux qui contribuent à la vie intellectuelle et sociale de leur pays d'adoption. Toutefois, bien que l'art théâtral dans les différents pays de la diaspora grecque est autonome et constitue des entités distinctes, qui peuvent être appréciées et examinées selon leur mérite propre, ceux-ci continuent néanmoins de partager un lien commun: l'influence multidimensionnelle qui provient de la Grèce, un fait qui caractérise non seulement le théâtre grec mais aussi la littérature grecque de la diaspora (poésie et prose).

Une caractéristique additionnelle – cette fois-ci du point de vue linguistique – est qu'une partie de ce corpus théâtral est écrite en langue grecque (en général le domaine des dramaturges issus de la première génération d'immigrants), quelquefois mélangés avec des mots d'emprunts et /ou des traductions empruntées de la langue de la société dominante, tandis que l'autre partie, créée principalement par la seconde et la troisième générations, est écrite dans la langue du pays hôte. Une exception, bien que rare à ce modèle, est constituée par un petit nombre d'immigrants Grecs de la première génération, qui se sentent à l'aise pour s'exprimer dans la langue du nouveau pays, et écrivent dans les deux langues.

Néanmoins, le fait est qu'aujourd'hui il existe un théâtre grec de la diaspora, tant comme écriture qu'en tant que représentation théâtrale, qui a été cultivé pendant des siècles par des gens de descendance grecque dans diverses parties du monde. Dans beaucoup de cas il s'agit d'un théâtre assez impressionnant et saisissant, autant que diversifié dans ses thématiques, les styles, la langue et les styles linguistiques. De plus ce théâtre a joué un rôle central dans la formation de la culture grecque dans chaque pays hôte de la diaspora et a contribué à l'expansion de la définition du concept de théâtre de la Grèce moderne, aussi bien que de la culture hellénique moderne globale.

Cependant, bien qu'il contribue de façon vitale à l'enrichissement de la vie communautaire grecque et aussi à la vie intellectuelle du pays hôte, on constate

avec peine que malgré le degré de popularité de certaines de ses œuvres, la reconnaissance académique du théâtre de la diaspora fait souvent défaut, et se trouve en attente d'études et de recherches complètes, comme il le mériterait. Celui-ci n'est donc pas inclus dans les oeuvres des historiens de la littérature et de théâtre du pays hôte ni dans celles de la Grèce elle-même. Si une partie de ces œuvres de théâtre a fait l'objet d'études et de recherches, elle l'a été principalement comme écriture littéraire et encore moins comme représentation théâtrale.⁵

Le but de cette publication *d' Études Helléniques/Hellenic Studies* est de fournir une image aussi complète que possible du théâtre de la diaspora grecque moderne à des lecteurs dont le grec n'est pas la langue maternelle. Un effort a été fait pour inclure des contributions d'experts (des producteurs, des spécialistes de théâtre, des universitaires et d'autres chercheurs) sur les communautés immigrantes grecques modernes, principalement du vingtième siècle, aussi bien que sur les communautés historiques dans différents pays. Certains traitent leur sujet d'un point de vue plus théorique (historique, socio-culturel etc.), d'autres d'un point de vue plus pratique, en mettant l'accent principalement sur des représentations théâtrales et leurs répertoires. Dans l'ensemble, cependant, ces contributions fournissent une image fascinante à travers laquelle le lecteur peut comparer le théâtre (aussi bien comme littérature et comme représentation théâtrale) des communautés immigrantes modernes avec celui des communautés historiques, et en tirer une réflexion globale sur le théâtre grec moderne dans son contexte global. En réalité, ces deux aspects de l'art du théâtre élargissent la définition et les limites du concept de théâtre au-delà de la définition traditionnelle qui met l'accent principalement sur la représentation.

Il est évident qu' à cause des contraintes de temps et d'espace que la publication d'une revue impose, il est impossible de couvrir toutes les communautés ou pays de la diaspora grecque (présentes et passées) qui ont développé l'art du théâtre grec. Grâce à l'expertise des auteurs des articles, dont l'étendue géographique couverte est importante, cette publication a pour but principal de constituer une source satisfaisante de références sur cet art. Il faut espérer qu'elle suscitera d'autres études sur un plus grand nombre de communautés dans les pays où vit la diaspora grecque.

Un autre but de cette publication collective est d'encourager les recherches et soulever l'intérêt de collecter du matériel pertinent nécessaire (scénarios, affiches, programmes, films, photos, calendriers, journaux, periodiques,

CDs, etc.), pour compléter les archives déjà existantes dans les librairies, les centres de recherche, les institutions éducatives, etc., et ainsi préserver l'histoire du théâtre de la diaspora. Il s'agit donc de fournir une richesse de connaissance aux Grecs du centre national, aussi bien qu'aux Grecs de la diaspora sur ce que leurs compatriotes ont réalisé et continuent de faire au sein de la communauté grecque dans sa globalité. Les articles de la présente Revue constituent un témoignage des efforts de leurs auteurs pour préserver et enregistrer un matériel d'une grande valeur et une information qui autrement auraient été perdues.

Dans cette édition spéciale d' *Études helléniques/Hellenic Studies* nous concentrons nos efforts sur le théâtre de la diaspora grecque moderne avec des articles relatifs aussi bien aux «communautés des immigrants modernes» en Allemagne, en Belgique, au Canada, aux États-Unis, au Venezuela, l'Afrique du Sud, et l'Australie, aussi bien qu'aux «communautés (paroikies) historiques» de Constantinople, Smyrne, Bulgarie, Roumanie, Egypte, Pontos, la Russie et l'ancienne Union Soviétique. Une étude spécifique concerne le théâtre de la communauté chypriote-grecque d'Angleterre. Deux articles additionnels, très différents l'un de l'autre forment une contribution introductive.

Un contraste émerge de la lecture des articles sur les communautés (paroikies) historiques et de ceux relatifs aux communautés immigrantes, reflétant les différents modèles de développement du théâtre grec dans ces pays. Dans le contexte des communautés historiques où les communautés grecques ont existé et ont réussi dans certains cas depuis des temps très anciens à devenir prospères et puissantes, le théâtre grec, comme d'autres formes artistiques, s'est développé comme un complément naturel dans un environnement établi et par conséquent, généralement favorable et dans une atmosphère économiquement durable. L'avantage de la proximité géographique à la métropole et à l'Europe et leurs mouvements intellectuels et culturels ont contribué au développement et au succès du théâtre grec dans ces communautés. D'autre part, dans les communautés grecques immigrantes de la diaspora, nous observons que le théâtre grec s'est formé dans une situation plus désavantageuse culturellement et économiquement; de fait, les immigrants grecs, comme nouveau groupe minoritaire dans un environnement multiculturel et multiethnique, ont été confrontés à de dures réalités pour la survie aussi bien qu'aux défis de l'adaptation, de l'assimilation et la peur du rejet par la société d'accueil. Avec pour résultat que, dans ce contexte, le théâtre a émergé sur la base d'une croissance économique et d'un certain enrichissement, qui a permis l'influence des communautés grecques.

Des aspects mythologiques et linguistiques

L'article de **Telemachos Moudatsakis** s'attache au caractère oecuménique et diasporique de l'art théâtral lié aux immigrations, aux déplacements et la création artistique comme annoncée par Dionysos, le dieu de μέθη (ivresse) et έκσταση (extase) et aussi le dieu de l'espace de la représentation principale, qui continue de se déplacer dans le monde en créant des miracles. Selon Moudatsakis, Dionysos est aussi devenu le premier scénographe dans le mythologie du théâtre.

La diaspora historique

Chrysothemis Stamatopoulou-Vasilakou explore la montée, l'apogée et le déclin, aussi bien que les paramètres qui affectent le théâtre dans les communautés grecques prospères de l'Asie Mineure jusqu'à la Catastrophe – de 1922-, et sur la péninsule balkanique de 1800 à 1922. Elle examine l'importance du théâtre grec, avec une mention spéciale sur Constantinople et Smyrne, tandis qu'elle se réfère également aux activités théâtrales des Grecs de Bulgarie et de Roumanie, mais d'une manière plus restreinte, à cause, comme elle le mentionne, de la bibliographie limitée pertinente sur ces sujets. Basée sur des sources des périodes historiques et d'études contemporaines, l'auteure procède à une réflexion de façon analytique sur la nature de ces communautés historiques, qui ont été non seulement affectées socialement par les événements politiques de l'heure mais aussi intellectuellement par l'impact des tendances du théâtre européen sur les audiences des classes moyennes. Stamatopoulou-Vasilakou fournit une mine d'informations sur des compagnies de théâtre (professionnelles et amateurs locales), des troupes en tournée, des acteurs, des répertoires, aussi bien que sur la montée du théâtre de variété et de la revue, en mettant en évidence que, finalement, la disparition de ces communautés grecques prospères durant le vingtième siècle à cause des événements politiques qui s'en sont suivis, a également provoqué une fin abrupte de toutes les activités du théâtre grec qui était florissant dans ces pays.

Konstantinos Fotiadis présente un article informatif sur l'importance du théâtre grec du Pont, de celui de la Russie et de l'ex-USSR, ainsi que de régions qui, selon lui, demeurent encore malheureusement presque totalement inconnues. L'auteur retrace le développement du théâtre grec à partir de ses

origines dans ces communautés vitales du point de vue historique en présentant des compte-rendus des gens qui en ont été des témoins oculaires et des critiques de l'époque concernant les auteurs des pièces de théâtre. L'auteur de l'article souligne la qualité des représentations, en se référant en détail à une multitude de groupes locaux de théâtre amateurs, leurs tournées dans différentes villes (Kerasous, Amissos, Argypolis etc.), leur contribution à la Révolution grecque de 1821. Il note aussi le profit financier important des représentations théâtrales pour les écoles grecques, les églises, les orphelinats, les associations culturelles, les Grecs frappés par la pauvreté et persécutés – et tout ceci sous l'œil vigilant et le contrôle des régimes dominants. Fotiadis termine son exposé en s'attachant au sort du théâtre et à sa lutte pour survivre après l'arrivée des Bolcheviques. Il met en évidence le fait que pendant les années 1922-37 l'hellénisme de la Russie a connu une revitalisation intellectuelle et artistique, suivie par un génocide culturel et physique résultant de la politique stalinienne du nettoyage systématique des minorités ethniques. Le dernier théâtre, surnommé *Théâtre Grec de Sochoum* en Abkhazie, a été fermé en 1988 comme résultat de l'expatriation forcée des Grecs de cette région, à cause des tensions politiques croissantes et des conflits.

Dans son article **Euthimios Souloyannis** trace un portrait des activités du théâtre grec en Egypte durant le vingtième siècle, période de revitalisation comparée à celle du dix-neuvième siècle. L'auteur signale que les débuts du théâtre de la communauté grecque dans ce pays remontent au dix-neuvième siècle à Alexandrie (le premier théâtre «Zizinia», a été bâti en 1870 dans cette ville), puis a évolué lentement, en s'épanouissant dans les années 1940 avec la fondation, principalement à Alexandrie et au Caire de troupes professionnelles et semi-professionnelles et les tournées de compagnies de théâtre renommées venues d'Athènes. Souloyannis mentionne que durant la Seconde Guerre Mondiale différents spectacles ont été montés sur scène aussi bien par l'armée grecque que par les armées des Alliés. Cette apogée du théâtre grec a continué vigoureusement jusqu'en 1950 avant le déclin des communautés grecques autrefois prospères d'Egypte.

La diaspora immigrante

Maria Karavia souligne la variété des activités théâtrales en Allemagne à partir de 1960, quand une grande vague d'émigration a commencé à se diriger vers ce pays, et en Belgique depuis 1985 lorsque *l'Atelier du théâtre grec*, le plus vieux groupe de théâtre en Bruxelles a été fondé.

Pour ce qui est de l'Allemagne, l'auteur explique qu'à cette époque le théâtre servait de lieu de rassemblement pour de nombreux artistes persécutés politiquement, arrivés de Grèce, bien que certains groupes théâtraux ont disparu après le changement politique de ce pays avec le rapatriement de beaucoup de leurs artistes. Karavia se réfère à divers groupes de théâtre de quatre dernières décennies, avec une attention particulière et en donnant des détails sur son propre groupe, *Le Théâtre Grec de Wappertal*, qu'elle a dirigé comme metteur en scène et actrice principale depuis sa fondation en 1990.

Dans ses commentaires sur la Belgique, elle décrit les activités de *L'Atelier de Théâtre Grec* mentionné plus haut (la section grecque de l'Atelier Théâtral des Institutions Européennes), et du *Théâtre Grec de la Belgique*, fondés respectivement en 1985 et en 1992. L'article de Karavia fournit un aperçu de première main sur les activités du théâtre grec dans deux pays de la diaspora.

Anastassios Petsalas fournit un compte-rendu détaillé du théâtre de la communauté chypriote grecque en Grande Bretagne depuis ses origines au début du vingtième siècle, précédé par une brève introduction au théâtre de Chypre lui-même. Son article fait référence aux diverses compagnies de théâtre et à leurs productions, aussi bien amateurs que semi-professionnelles; leurs acteurs et producteurs ayant été confrontés à nombre de problèmes internes, difficultés et discordes. De plus, il commente l'impact des compagnies de théâtre en tournée en provenance de Grèce et de Chypre. Petsalas fait valoir que le répertoire des débuts du théâtre chypriote grec en Grande Bretagne a été influencé par les politiques coloniales de l'heure, aussi bien que par la longue tradition théâtrale de l'île de Chypre et de la Grèce. Il explique en outre qu'aujourd'hui beaucoup d'acteurs Chypriotes-Grecs et des metteurs en scène ont essayé d'éviter la «ghettoïsation», préférant être sur le même pied d'égalité que leurs collègues Britanniques et devenir connus et reconnus comme artistes sur la scène britannique.

L'article de **Stephanos Constantinides** qu'il caractérise lui-même comme une première tentative d'explorer le théâtre grec au Canada, étant donné que celui-ci n'a pas été étudié jusqu'à aujourd'hui et demeure terra incognita, dresse un portrait de la situation depuis les débuts des communautés grecques dans ce pays. Des hommes d'affaires grecs contrôlent ainsi les principales salles de théâtre en 1920 à Montréal, mais il semble qu'ils étaient seulement les propriétaires des locaux sans s'intéresser au répertoire théâtral. Avant la deuxième Guerre Mondiale nous ne savons que peu de choses sur

l'activité théâtrale grecque au Canada. Curieusement les racines de ce théâtre se retrouvent dans les petites communautés grecques de l'Ouest Canadien. Ce n'est qu'après la deuxième Guerre Mondiale qu'on commence à disposer d'une information, au demeurant limitée sur l'activité théâtrale grecque au Canada. Les années 60 est la période où on peut le mieux l'étudier. Il s'agit toujours de théâtre amateur, qu'on trouve principalement à Montréal, surtout dans les écoles grecques. L'auteur propose une distinction entre deux sortes de théâtre grec au Canada: le patriotique-folklorique et le socio-politique.

Katerina Diakoumopoulou présente un compte-rendu du théâtre des Grecs, immigrants nouveaux et démunis des Etats-Unis, depuis 1895 jusqu'à aujourd'hui. En traversant les décennies, elle trace le modèle changeant des activités théâtrales, sa montée et sa fin depuis le dix-neuvième siècle, particulièrement à Chicago et New York jusqu'à son déclin dans la seconde décennie du vingtième siècle; beaucoup de jeunes Grecs s'étant enrôlés dans l'armée grecque durant les guerres de 1912 à 1922. Il y a une remontée des activités théâtrales à compter de 1920 avec la participation renforcée des Grecs de la seconde génération également. L'auteur examine ensuite de quelle façon après la révolution russe un noyau d'auteurs dramatiques a été formé provenant de groupes socialistes de théâtre, en produisant des pièces révolutionnaires, tandis que du point de vue de la langue, après la deuxième Guerre Mondiale, les Américains d'origine grecque ont écrit des pièces principalement en anglais. Elle complète son étude en fournissant une liste des pièces de théâtre aussi bien qu'un répertoire des compagnies de théâtre des immigrants grecs.

Constantin Palamidis étudie principalement les groupes de théâtre grec du Venezuela et leur répertoire depuis leur présence relativement nouvelle en 1973 avec la fondation du théâtre de la Communauté grecque de Caracas et une année plus tard de celui des Grecs du Venezuela, une organisation communautaire qui comprenait un groupe de théâtre (1974-1984). La présence grecque a continué à s'étendre au sein du Théâtre National du Venezuela (1985-1991) avec la contribution importante des frères Pantelis et Constantin Palamidis, dans la mise en scène des pièces d'Aristophane, Lorca, Ritsos, Racine et d'autres. L'auteur s'attache aux années 1984 à 2002 en citant les troupes de théâtre venues de Grèce, qui ont participé au Festival international de théâtre de Caracas, ainsi que leurs représentations en grec dans les communautés (paroikies) de Caracas et de Valencia (2000-2002).

Nicos Spanoudes étudie l'évolution de l'identité du théâtre grec en Afrique du Sud de ses origines au début du vingtième siècle à travers l'apartheid et le post-apartheid, quand le théâtre de la diaspora grecque moderne et le théâtre local de Protestation se sont déplacés de l'expression de la disparité à l'expression d'angoisses partagées, à l'état présent; avec leur flair d'une comédie faisant appel aussi bien à la jeunesse grecque que non-grecque de la jeune démocratie de l'Afrique du Sud. Spanoudes examine également l'influence du théâtre classique dans les efforts de l'hellénisme de l'Afrique du Sud à maintenir son identité dans un pays étranger. Il analyse aussi l'impact et l'inspiration de ce théâtre sur les intellectuels de l'Afrique du Sud (Nelson Mandela, Athol Fugard, J.M. Coetzee et autres) afin d'écrire et mettre en scène leurs propres pièces.

Dans son article **George Kanarakis**, en suivant une approche de développement historique fournit un compte-rendu cohérent du théâtre de l'hellénisme australien (développement, réalisations et contribution) du début du vingtième siècle jusqu'à aujourd'hui sous les conditions multiformes de la société australienne. Afin de présenter une image plus lisible, l'auteur examine l'évolution du théâtre en langue grecque mais aussi en langue anglaise. Il soutient que le théâtre des Grecs en Australie dans tous ses aspects (comme écriture littéraire sous forme de dialogue et comme représentation scénique) mérite d'être pleinement étudié. Malgré son importance dans la projection plus complète du profil de l'hellénisme au sein de la société australienne, son rôle essentiel et sa contribution à la vie de la communauté grecque et au maintien de la langue grecque aussi bien qu'à la meilleure compréhension de la culture grecque, ce théâtre n'a pas été étudié. Il se doit d'être inclus dans les cours des universitaires hellènes de langue et de culture grecque, et encore beaucoup plus, de faire partie des préoccupations des historiens de la littérature grecque et de façon plus générale de l'histoire grecque.

A l'évidence l'étude du théâtre de la diaspora grecque moderne ne peut être épuisée dans la présente publication, indépendamment de la qualité et de la valeur des contributions, des aspects aussi bien théoriques que pratiques abordés, et des nombreux pays de la diaspora historique et immigrante référencés.

Beaucoup d'aspects et de thèmes restent à étudier et davantage de pays doivent être explorés. Cependant, nous sommes persuadés que bon nombre d'idées découlant des articles de ce numéro d' *Études helléniques/Hellenic Studies*, reflètent l'importance du sujet traité. Nous pensons que ces articles

vont générer des recherches, des discussions et des analyses vigoureuses, pour le bénéfice de nos lettres grecques, tant en Grèce qu'à travers la diaspora.

Des remerciements sincères à Carlos Bivero et Diana Volpe pour leur traduction de l'article de Costas Palamidis de l'espagnol à l'anglais. George Kanarakis a traduit les articles de Maria Karavia et de Konstantinos Fotiadis du grec à l'anglais et Thalia Tassou l'introduction ainsi que les résumés de l'anglais en français.

NOTES

1. I.K. Hassiotis, *Review of the History of the Modern Greek Diaspora*, Thessaloniki: Vaniias, 1993, p. 19 [In Greek].
2. Michael Damanakis, "Neohellenic State and Neohellenic Diaspora: Institutional and Educational-Political Dimensions in Their Interrelation", in Michael Damanakis, et al, eds, *History of the Modern Greek Diaspora. Research and Teaching*, Vol. A', Rethymno: E.DIA.M.M.E., University of Crete, 2004, pp. 25-44 [Conference Proceedings, 4-6 July 2003, p. 26 [In Greek].
3. For example, among others, John Hassiotis (1993, p. 168), based on Greek consular figures, community calculations and censuses where existing, estimates the Greeks of the diaspora to be at a maximum of 4,5000,000, whereas George Prevelakis of the Sorbonne University (1998, p. 4) places the total just below five million, but according to the Council of Hellenes Abroad (SAE) the figure provided is 6,020,000 (Gregory Niotis, n.d., p. 29).
4. The figure 11,171,740 is the April 2008 estimate of the population of Greece for January 1, 2007 provided by the General Secretariat of the National Statistical Service of Greece.
5. A remarkable exception is the University of Crete's *Paedeia Omogenon* program, which since its inception in 1997/98 has made its aim, together with the maintenance and promotion of the Greek language and civilisation overseas, especially in the Greek diaspora, the study and promotion of school theatre as a decisive means of cultivating Greek language and civilization as part of diasporic Greek language education. In this context in 2006 a symposium entitled "Theatre, Diaspora and Education" took place at the University of Crete with its proceedings circulated on CD in 2007.

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The Theatre of the Modern Greek Diaspora

George Kanarakis*

Introduction

The theatre as a cultural element is an integral part of the diachronic physiognomy of Hellenism, in the national centre as well as in the countries of its diaspora.

By the term “diaspora” (etymologically deriving from *speiro* “to sow” and *dia* “over”), eschewing the historians’ emphasis on the geographical criterion and the maintenance of material, cultural and sentimental links with the national centre¹ for the process of socialisation and identity formation, is meant “the geographic dispersion of ethnic groups which, cut off but not necessarily alienated from their group of origin, reference, or national trunk, live as ethnic or minority groups within a culturally different society, move between two reference groups and two cultural systems, and therefore formulate their identity under particular conditions”.² Very few nations have been as migratory, both in numbers and across classes from ancient times until now, as the Greeks. Demographic data for the diaspora Greeks have always constituted a contentious subject, however, resulting in a variety of estimates. Presently, diasporic Hellenism is generally considered to consist of about five million individuals³ in comparison to 11, 171, 740 for Greece itself,⁴ that is the Greeks of the diaspora are equivalent to 45% of the Greeks in the national centre.

The Greeks of the diaspora who are today dispersed throughout the world came originally not only from the mainland and the islands of Greece and Cyprus but also from places historically Greek, such as Constantinople, Smyrna, other areas of Asia Minor, Eastern Thrace and Epirus, or other countries where they had long been settled, such as Egypt, the countries of the Middle East, Romania, Bulgaria, Russia, Ukraine and elsewhere, places where, in the run of the years, the Greeks had developed thriving communities and had created Greek intellectual centres.

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However, no matter in which part of the world the Greeks have originated or put down roots, they have always carried with them not only the deeply rooted elements of their language, culture and religion, but also the long tradition of theatre art, which they have also passed down to their children in the new country. This does not mean that in all the countries where they have settled, the Greeks have developed theatre, either as literary writing in dialogical form or as stage production, but that where there are established Greek *paroikies*, we very frequently encounter individuals of Greek descent who, regardless of the foreign environment and the circumstances in which they find themselves, express their deep interest and their talent in this genre.

The theatre of the Modern Greek diaspora is not a contemporary phenomenon. On the contrary, even if it is not as old as Greek immigration itself, still it is one of the most representative and genuine elements of the character of Hellenism abroad.

The theatre of today's Greek diaspora is a dynamic and energetic phenomenon, characterised by originality and liveliness. Moreover, it must be acknowledged that these qualities are attributable mainly to its Greek roots and its intimate ties with its Greek traditions, and to some extent to the influence exerted by the theatre of the Greek metropolis.

The theatre of Hellenism which has arisen outside Greece not only constitutes part of the Ancient and Modern Greek theatre tradition, but it also complements it while maintaining, at the same time, its own character. It also allows this artistic genre to be examined and studied as a separate entity, on the one hand because of the different and dominant socio-cultural, political, geographical, linguistic and historical conditions of the new environments which have shaped it and, on the other hand, because of the idiosyncratic atmosphere of the immigrant community life in which it was born and developed as a final product of the age-old phenomenon of Greek immigration.

Another important characteristic of the theatre of the Modern Greek diaspora is that this genre, examined separately in the context of each particular country where it developed, clearly exhibits its own distinctive personality, which derives from the particular psychological climate, and which is shaped by the special conditions and environment, apart from the immigrant's native land, also deeply by those of the Greek *paroikia* and the dominant society of the particular country in which the Greek playwrights live and work. Consequently these "theatres" have acquired an expression

and tone not only different from the theatre art of metropolitan Greece, but some even different from that of the other countries of the diaspora, therefore comprising separate entities in themselves, while their creators, according to their talent, acquire a place among the contributors to the intellectual and social life of their adopted homelands. However, although the theatre art in the different countries of the Greek diaspora is autonomous and constitutes distinctive entities which can be appreciated and examined on their own merit, still they share a common link which binds them together: the multidimensional influence deriving from Greece, a fact which characterises not only the Greek diasporic theatre but also the Greek diasporic literature (poetry and prose) in general.

An additional characteristic – this time from the linguistic point of view – is that part of this theatre corpus is composed in the Greek language (usually the domain of first generation Greek immigrant playwrights), sometimes blended with loan words and/or loan translations from the language of the foreign dominant society, while the other part, basically created by the second and third generations, is written in the language of the host country. An exception, although rather rare to this pattern, is that a few first generation Greek immigrants, who feel secure expressing themselves in the language of the new country, write in both languages.

Nevertheless, the fact is that today there is Greek diasporic theatre, both as theatre literature and as stage production, which has been cultivated for centuries now by the people of Greek descent in various parts of the world and in many cases it is quite impressive and sizable, as well as diverse in its themes, styles, languages and linguistic forms. Furthermore, this theatre, on the one hand, has played a central role in the formation of Greek culture in each host country of the diaspora and on the other hand, it has contributed to the expansion of the definition of the concept of Greek theatre of modern Greece, as well as of global modern Greek culture.

However, despite its vital contribution to the enrichment of Greek community life and also to the intellectual life of the host country, sadly it is noticed that no matter how laudable some plays are, academic recognition of diasporic theatre is usually lacking, and it is awaiting full research and study, as it deserves, and therefore it is not included in the works of the literary and theatre historians of the Greek communities, the host country and Greece itself. If some of this body of theatre has been studied and researched, it has been mainly as literary writing and even less as stage production.⁵

The aim of this issue of *Études Helléniques / Hellenic Studies* is to provide as comprehensive a picture as possible of the theatre of the Modern Greek diaspora to non-Greek-language readers. An effort has been made to include contributions by experts (producers, teatrologists, academics and other scholars) on the modern, mainly twentieth century, Greek immigrant *paroikies*, as well as the historical *paroikies* in different lands. Some of the contributors investigate their subject from a more theoretical point of view (historical, socio-cultural etc.), others from a more practical one, focusing mainly on stage productions and their repertoires. As a whole, however, the contributions provide a fascinating prism through which the reader, on the one hand, can compare the theatre (both as literature and as stage production) of modern immigrant communities with the historical ones, and on the other hand, can derive a panoramic reflection of modern Greek theatre in its global context. In reality, these two aspects of theatre art expand the definition and the boundaries of the concept of the theatre beyond the traditional one which emphasises mainly performance.

It is obvious that due to the constraints of time and space which a journal publication imposes, it is impossible to cover all the communities or countries of the Greek diaspora (present and past) which have developed Greek theatre art. Yet, based on the number of articles contributed, the expertise of their writers, as well as by the geographical expanse covered, this issue is intended to constitute a satisfactory source of reference on the subject and hopefully to ignite the spark of inspiration for further study regarding more communities in the countries of the global Greek diaspora.

Another aim of this collective issue is to encourage more research and raise more interest in the collection of relevant material (scripts, posters, programs, films, photographs, diaries, journals, newspapers, CDs, etc.) in order to supplement the already existing archives in libraries, research centres, educational institutions, etc., and thus preserve the history of the diasporic theatre and provide a wealth of knowledge to the Greeks of the national centre, as well as to the Greeks of the diaspora regarding what their compatriots have achieved and are continuing to achieve in the global Greek community. The articles of this issue bear witness to the efforts of their contributors to preserve and record the valuable material and information which otherwise would be lost.

In this special tribute of *Études Helléniques / Hellenic Studies* we focus on the theatre of the Modern Greek diaspora with articles on both modern

“immigrant *paroikies*” in Germany, Belgium, Canada, the United States, Venezuela, South Africa and Australia, as well as on the “historical *paroikies*” of Constantinople, Smyrna, Bulgaria, Romania, Egypt, Pontos, Russia and the former Soviet Union. One article also examines the Greek-Cypriot community theatre in England. Two additional articles make an introductory contribution, each from a different and valuable point of view.

One contrast which emerges from reading the articles on the historical and immigrant *paroikies* reflects the different patterns of development of the Greek theatre in these lands. In the context of the historical *paroikies*, where the Greek communities existed and thrived in some case from olden times becoming prosperous and powerful, the Greek theatre, like other artistic forms, developed as a natural complement in an established and, therefore, generally supportive and economically sustainable atmosphere. The advantage of geographical proximity to the metropolis and to Europe and their intellectual and cultural movements further contributed to the development and success of the Greek theatre in these *paroikies*. On the other hand, in the modern immigrant *paroikies* of the Greek diaspora, we observe that the Greek theatre developed in a more culturally and economically disadvantaged situation where the Greek immigrants as a new minority group in a multicultural and multiethnic environment were confronted by the realities of hardship and survival as well as the challenges of adjustment, assimilation and the fear of rejection by the host society. As a result, in this context the theatre emerged along different lines, along with the growth of economic wealth and influence of their Greek communities.

Mythological and Linguistic Aspects

Tilemachos Moudatsakis’ article focuses on the ecumenical and diasporic character of theatre art, linked to migration, displacement and artistic creation as heralded by Dionysus, the god of μέθη (drunkenness) and ἐκσταση (ecstasy) and also the god of the main performance space, who keeps moving in the world creating miracles. According to Moudatsakis, Dionysus also became the first scenographer in theatre mythology.

The Historical Diaspora

Chrysothemis Stamatopoulou-Vasilakou explores the rise, bloom and decline, as well as the affecting parameters of the theatre in the prosperous

Greek *paroikies* of Asia Minor up to the Catastrophe, and on the Balkan peninsula from 1800 to 1922. She examines the importance of Greek theatre, with a special emphasis on Constantinople and Smyrna, although she also refers to the theatre activities of the Greeks in Bulgaria and Romania, but in a more restricted manner, because, as she mentions, of the limited relevant bibliography on the subjects. Based on sources of both the historical periods and contemporary studies, the writer analytically reflects on the nature of these historical *paroikies*, not only affected socially by the political events of the time, but also intellectually by the impact of the European theatre trends on middle class audiences. Stamatopoulou-Vasilakou provides a wealth of information on theatre companies (professional and local amateur), touring groups, actors, repertoires, as well as the rise of vaudeville and the revue, pointing out that finally the demise of these prosperous Greek *paroikies* during the twentieth century because of the ensuing political events, also caused an abrupt end to all this thriving Greek theatre activity in those lands.

Konstantinos Fotiadis provides a most informative article on the significance of the Greek theatre in Pontos, Russia and the former USSR, areas which, according to him, still unfortunately remain almost completely unknown. The writer tracks the course of Greek theatre from its beginning in those historically vital *paroikies* presenting eye-witness accounts and critiques of the times regarding the authorship of plays as well as the quality of the performances, referring in detail to the many different local amateur theatre groups, their tours to various cities (Kerasous, Amisos, Argypolis, etc.), their contribution to the Greek Revolution of 1821, and the essential financial benefit from the performances to the Greek schools, churches, orphanages, cultural associations, the poverty stricken and persecuted Greeks – and all this under the watchful eye and control of the dominant regimes. Fotiadis concludes his discussion by focusing on the plight of the theatre and its struggle for survival after the rise of the Bolsheviks, pointing out that, although in 1922-37 Hellenism of the USSR experienced an excellent intellectual and artistic revitalization, what followed was a period of cultural and physical genocide resulting from the Stalinist policy of the systematic cleansing of ethnic minorities. The last theatre, the so-called Greek Theatre of Sochoum in Abkhazia closed in 1988 as a result of the forced expatriation of the Greeks from that area, due to the increasing political tensions and conflict.

In his article **Euthimios Souloyannis** portrays the Greek theatre activity in Egypt during the twentieth century as a period which was vitalised in

comparison to that of the nineteenth century. The writer points out that the beginning of Greek community theatre in this country can be traced back to the mid-nineteenth century in Alexandria (the first theatre, "Zizinia", was built in 1870 in this city) and evolved slowly, flourishing in the post-1940 years with the founding, mainly in Alexandria and Cairo, of professional and semi-professional groups and the invitation of renowned theatre companies from Athens. Souloyannis mentions that during the Second World War several shows were staged both for the Greek and Allied troops. This heyday of the Greek theatre continued vigorously until the 1950s following the decline of the prosperous Greek communities in the various cities of Egypt.

The Immigrant Diaspora

Maria Karavia outlines the variety of theatre activities in Germany since 1960, when a broader wave of modern immigration started moving towards this country, and in Belgium since 1985 when the Greek Theatre Workshop, the oldest Greek theatre group in Brussels, was founded.

Regarding Germany, the writer explains that at that time the theatre served as a gathering place for many politically persecuted artists from Greece, although some of those groups vanished after the political changeover in Greece and the ensuing repatriation of many of their artists. Karavia refers to various theatre groups of the last four decades, with special emphasis and detail regarding her own group, the Greek Theatre of Wuppertal, which she has led as stage director and a leading actress since its founding in 1990.

In her remarks relating to Belgium, she sets out the activities of the aforementioned Greek Theatre Workshop (the Greek section of Atelier Theatral des Institutions Européennes) and the Greek Theatre of Belgium, founded in 1985 and in 1992 correspondingly. Karavia's article gives a relevant first-hand insight into Greek theatre activities in two countries of the Modern Greek diaspora in Europe.

Anastassios Petsalas provides a detailed account of Greek-Cypriot community theatre in Britain since its beginning in the early twentieth century, preceded by a short introduction to the theatre of Cyprus itself. His article makes reference to the various theatre companies and their productions, both amateur and semi-professional, their actors and producers as well as to the internal problems, difficulties and discord which confronted them. Furthermore, he comments on the impact of the visiting theatre companies from Greece and Cyprus. Petsalas argues that the repertory of the

early Greek-Cypriot theatre in Britain had been influenced by the colonial politics of the time, as well as by the long theatrical tradition of the island of Cyprus and of Greece. He further proposes that today many Greek-Cypriot actors and stage producers try to avoid “ghettoisation”, preferring to be stand on an equal level with their British colleagues and become known and recognised as artists through the British stage.

Stephanos Constantinides’ article which he characterises as a first tentative on the Greek theatre in Canada, since it hasn’t been studied up to date and remains terra incognita, draws up a portrait of the situation since the beginning of the Greek communities in this country. Greek businessmen controlled the main theatre halls in the 1920s in Montreal but it seems that they were only the owners of the buildings without any relation to repertory theater. Before the Second World War we know little about Greek theatre activity in Canada. Curiously the roots of this theatre are traced to the small Western Canadian communities. Only after the Second World War we begin to have limited information about theatre activity. The 60s is the period when we can better investigate it. In all cases we are speaking of amateur theatre performed mainly in Montreal. It was established by amateur theatre groups or it was performed in Greek schools. The author proposes a distinction between two kinds of Greek theatre in Canada, the patriotic-folkloric one and the social-political one.

Katerina Diakoumopoulou presents an analytical account of the theatre of the Greeks as new and disadvantaged immigrants of the United States from 1895 until today. Working her way through the decades, she traces the changing pattern of theatre activities, the rise at the end of the nineteenth century, particularly in Chicago and New York, the marked decline in the second decade of the twentieth century as many young Greeks enlisted in the Greek army during the wars of 1912 to 1922, and the rise again from 1920 onwards with the participation bolstered by second generation Greeks as well. Diakoumopoulou then considers how after the Russian revolution a nucleus of playwrights was formed deriving from socialist theatre groups and producing revolutionary plays, whereas from the language viewpoint, after World War II the Greek-Americans wrote their plays mainly in English. She completes her study providing the Greek immigrants’ production of plays as well as the general repertory of the theatre companies.

Constantine Palamidis concentrates mainly on the Greek theatre groups of Venezuela and their repertory since their comparatively new presence in 1973

with the founding of the community Greek theatre of Caracas and a year later of the Greeks of Venezuela, a community organisation which included a theatre group (1974-1984). The Greek presence continued to expand within the National Theatre of Venezuela (1985-1991) with the significant contribution of the brothers Pantelis and Constantine Palamidis, in the staging of work by Aristophanes, Lorca, Ritsos, Racine and others. The writer surveys the years from 1984 to 2002 citing the theatre groups of Greece which have participated in the International Theatre Festival of Caracas, as well as their performances in Greek in the *paroikies* of Caracas and Valencia (2000-2002).

Nicos Spanoudes focuses on the way the identity of the Greek theatre in South Africa has developed from its beginnings in the early twentieth century through Apartheid and Post-Apartheid times, when the Modern Greek Diaspora Theatre and Local Protest Theatre moved from expressing disparity to reflecting shared angst, to the present state with its comedic flair appealing to Greek and non-Greek youth alike in South Africa's equally young democracy. Spanoudes also discusses the influence of Classical Greek theatre in the striving of South Africa's Hellenism to maintain its identity in a foreign land, as well as its impact and inspiration on South African intellectuals (Nelson Mandela, Athol Fugard, J. M. Coetzee and others) to write and stage plays of their own.

In his article **George Kanarakis**, following a historical developmental approach, provides a cohesive account of the theatre of Australian Hellenism (development, achievements and contribution) from its beginning in the early twentieth century until today under the multifaceted conditions of Australian society. To present a more comprehensive picture, the writer examines the course of both Greek and English-language theatre. He also argues that the theatre of the Greeks in Australia in both its aspects (as literary writing in dialogical form and as stage production), despite its importance in the more complete projection of Hellenism's profile in Australian society, its essential role and contribution to Greek community life and to the maintenance of Greek language as well as the better understanding of Greek culture, is still awaiting full research and study, resulting in its rare (if any) inclusion in the works of Greek Australian scholars, and even much more in the works of the literary or theatre historians of Greece.

Obviously the theatre of the Modern Greek diaspora cannot be exhausted in one journal issue, irrespective of the quality and value of the contributions regarding both the theoretical and practical aspects they address, in addition

to the many countries of the historical and immigrant diaspora which they encompass. Many aspects and topics remain to be researched and discussed and more countries remain to be explored. However, I am confident that many of the ideas flowing from the articles of this issue of *Études Helléniques/Hellenic Studies* reflect the importance of the entire subject and consequently they will generate more research and vigorous discussion and analysis for the benefit of our Hellenic Letters, both in the national centre and throughout the diaspóra alike.

Sincere thanks are extended to Carlos Bivero and Diana Volpe for their translation of Costas Palamidis' article from Spanish into English. George Kanarakis has translated Maria Karavia's and Konstantinos Fotiades' articles from Greek into English. Thalia Tassou has translated all the abstracts from English to French and George Kanarakis' introduction from English to French.

NOTES

1. I. K. Hassiotis, *Review of the History of the Modern Greek Diaspora*, Thessaloniki: Vaniás, 1993, p. 19 [In Greek].
2. Michael Damanakis, "Neohellenic State and Neohellenic Diaspora: Institutional and Educational-Political Dimensions in Their Interrelation", in Michael Damanakis, et al, eds, *History of the Modern Greek Diaspora. Research and Teaching*, Vol. A', Rethymno: E. DIA. M. M. E., University of Crete, 2004, pp. 25-44 [Conference Proceedings, 4-6 July 2003, p. 26 [In Greek].
3. For example, among others, John Hassiotis (1993, p. 168), based on Greek consular figures, community calculations and censuses where existing, estimates the Greeks of the diaspora to be at a maximum of 4, 5000, 000, whereas George Prevelakis of the Sorbonne University (1998, p. 4) places the total just below five million, but according to the Council of Hellenes Abroad (SAE) the figure provided is 6, 020, 000 (Gregory Niotis, n. d., p. 29).
4. The figure 11, 171, 740 is the April 2008 estimate of the population of Greece for January 1, 2007 provided by the General Secretariat of the National Statistical Service of Greece.
5. A remarkable exception is the University of Crete's *Paedeia Omogenon* program, which since its inception in 1997/98 has made its aim, together with the maintenance and promotion of the Greek language and civilisation overseas,

especially in the Greek diaspora, the study and promotion of school theatre as a decisive means of cultivating Greek language and civilization as part of diasporic Greek language education. In this context in 2006 a symposium entitled "Theatre, Diaspora and Education" took place at the University of Crete with its proceedings circulated on CD in 2007.

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The “Body” of Dionysos and Its Preannouncements: Theatre as an Ecumenical Diasporic Phenomenon

Tilemachos Moudatsakis*

RÉSUMÉ

Le caractère oecuménique du théâtre transpire déjà dans les aventures sanglantes de Dionysos, le dieu de l'espace principal de représentation, qui se déplace sans interruption dans toute «l'étendue globale» (χώρος οικουμένης) créant des miracles (exploits), devenant parfois un agresseur, parfois une victime fabuleusement extraordinaire. Le moment culminant de sa carrière pendant ses errances incessantes – s'est produit à Icaria, l'île où il avait été capturé par les Tyrrhéniens – les célèbres pirates, qui, ignorant la nature divine de leur victime, l'ont vendu comme esclave en Asie.

Dionysos y a établi la première scénographie de la mythologie théâtrale. Une vigne magique s'est développée sur le pont tandis que les avirons du bateau de pirates étaient transformés en serpents. Le caractère oecuménique et diasporique du théâtre s'affiche aussi avec les voyages d'Eschyle en 470 av. J-C en Sicile, où il a mis en scène *Les Perses* et a écrit une nouvelle tragédie inspirée par la région, *Les femmes d'Aïtne*.

ABSTRACT

The ecumenical character of the theatre seems to be preannounced in the bloody adventures of Dionysus, the god of the main performance space, who moves continuously throughout the “global expanse” (χώρος οικουμένης) creating miracles (exploits), sometimes becoming an aggressor, sometimes an extraordinary fabulous victim. The crowning moment of his career during his undeterred wanderings – occurred at Icaria, the island where he had been captured by the Tyrrhenians – the famous pirates who, ignoring the divine nature of their victim, sold him as a slave in Asia.

Dionysus then established the first scenography in theatre mythology. A magical vine grew on the deck while the oars of the pirates' ship were transformed into snakes. The ecumenical and diasporic character of the theatre is also heralded by Aeschylus' journeys in 470 BC to Sicily where he performed *The Persians* and wrote a new tragedy inspired by the area, *The Women of Aitna*.

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The theatre, from its cell form, is linked to migration, displacement and artistic creation. The adventure of Dionysus—the eminent god of tragic poesy, the guiding light of the dramatic poets—is truly indicative. Dionysus appeared first as a σώμα, a body repeatedly born and transformed while newborn. The Titans cut him into pieces, boiled them in a cauldron, while from the blood of his massacre a pomegranate grew. His grandmother Rhea, however, saved him by assembling his body fragments and reintroducing him to life. So Dionysus from his embodiment has within himself the meaning of, βρασιμός “effervescence” (what Nietzsche would later call the Dionysiac element in *The Birth of Tragedy*, by opposing it to the Apollonian element).

Dionysus’ first stop on his undeterred movements from place to place – in an adventure of ecumenisation of his “body” – was at Orchomenos. Here Persephone persuaded the royal couple, Athamas and Ino, to raise the child by keeping him, disguised as a girl, in the palace apartments provided for women (from that time the meaning of disguise will accompany the actors’ creative work in the theatre).

In a following stop, Hermes, obedient to Zeus’ suggestions, temporarily transformed Dionysus into a ram and delivered him to the nymphs of Helicon who kept him in a cave and nourished him with honey. The ode (ωδή), the song sung in the ancient festivals by the company of men who were wearing the skin of a ram (τράγος), is connected to this form of the horned animal and both elements in combination gave their names to the tragedy (τράγων+ωδή>τραγωδία).

When Dionysus reached maturity, despite his effeminacy caused by the kind of education he received in Orchomenos, Hera recognized him as a son of Zeus but at the same time she drove him mad. Madness, the fury (μένος), at this point is a preannouncing attribute of the art of theatre, of the ecstasy that is the exodus from one’s self and the frenzied permeation into another self which is not what it used to be, or is himself and somebody else.

Dionysos wandered the whole world in a passionate adventure, accompanied by Seilinos, his tutor, and the frenetic chorus of Satyrs and aenads (frenzied women), bearing swords, snakes, and sticks wrapped with ivy and a pine cone at the top.

Then we follow him to Egypt, to his next step where he accomplished the first of his military exploits: with the help of the Amazons defeating the Titans and restoring King Ammon to his throne.

From Egypt he migrated to India, met resistance from the King of Damascus, crossed the Tigris River, taught the art of viticulture (since he himself had conceptualized wine on Mount Nysse, an innovation which would bring him glory), established major cities and proceeded to enact a famous legislative work.

On his return from India Dionysus encountered resistance from the Amazons whom he pursued all the way to Samos and Ephesus. He slaughtered many of them. The field of battle was named Panaima (*Παν + αίμα* – all + blood).

He returned to Europe where his grandmother Rhea purified him from the innumerable murders he had committed in the course of his madness. Later he entered Thrace where the king of Hedonia Lycurgus (*βασιλεύς των Ηδωνών*) captured his whole army. Dionysus himself found refuge in the cave of Thetis. Rhea drove Lycurgus mad and he in a next step slaughtered his son Drias. Returning from the sea, Dionysus prophesied that if Lycurgus was not assassinated, the land would fade away. The people of Hedoni then led their king to Mount Paggeo and delivered him to the wild horses to be torn to pieces.

Dionysus also visited Thebes where, after Euripides (*Bacchae*), he invited women to take part in the orgiastic ceremonies on Mount Kithairon. Pentheas opposed the advent and spread of the new religion. Dionysus disguised him as a woman and leading him to Kithaeron delivered him to the Maenads where his own mother Agavi cut him into pieces and carried off his head thinking, in her fury, that it was a lion's head.

In Orchomenos he disguised himself as a young girl and drove the daughters of Minya mad because they refused his invitation to take part in the revelry. He then changed form again and became a lion, bull and panther. One of Minya's daughters offered her son Ippasos for sacrifice and all the three sisters slaughtered and devoured him ravenously. Ever since then the murder of Ippasos is celebrated at the festival of Agrionia (*Αγριώνια*), which means "invitation for wildness".

However Dionysus' migratory adventures continued. He arrived at the island of Icaria where he realized that his ship was unable to sail. He then rented another one from the famous Tyrrhenian pirates. They kidnapped and sold him as a common slave in Asia – as they were unaware of his divine nature. Then Dionysus worked the most extraordinary dramatic miracle, creating the first "scenography" in theater mythology: a magical vine branch

sprang up from the deck, wrapped the mast, while ivy became shrouds and oars became snakes. Dionysus transformed himself into a lion filling the vessel with animal ghosts and flute sounds. In terror the Tyrrhenian sailors jumped into the sea and became dolphins.

Later Dionysus visited the island of Naxos, where he found Ariadne (Minos' daughter) abandoned by Theseus (son of Aegeus, Prince of Athens) on his return to Athens after having killed the Minotaur. Dionysus married Ariadne producing five children. In globalizing his achievement he placed Ariadne's wedding wreath in the sky among the stars.

At Argos, Dionysus punished his enemy Perseus who had opposed him and drove mad the women of Argos who started to eat their own children.

Finally, having established the worship of himself throughout the world, he ascended to Heaven, sitting on the right of Zeus. He also descended to Tartarus, where he bribed Persephone with a myrtle (μύρτο) to release his dead stepmother Semele, changing her name to Theoni so that the other souls would not become envious and also ask to be released.

The mythical wandering of Dionysus presignifies with his successive actions (the ecstasy, the effervescence, the transformations) the theatre as an art under his "protection". Dionysus is followed by a troupe of Satyrs and Maenads as he would later appear with all the creative rationalised achievements of the dramatists in the theatre orchestras. Although inherent in all these mythical depictions is the meaning of a universal dynamic triumph of the theatre as art, not only of ecstasy (έκστασης) (this pertains to the external elements of the same art achieved with different techniques), but also as the expression of human destiny, as a verification of the horrific fate which captures the mortals' sufferings on earth. This fate appears in the child-eating events which follow the displacements – arrivals of Dionysus from country to country. The bloodstained universe signifies man's fate, destined to suffer, to be plagued and die – a death caused from man to man.

After all, Dionysus with his troupe –and their terrible weapons – heralds the ever shifting status of the theatre, the resettlement, the re-installation in "space" (σκηνη), the displacement from town to town from country to country. This is known by Thespis Chariot (Αρμα Θέσπιδος) and later by the entertainers who move their art throughout the whole world.

I would call to mind here – for the strengthening of the ecumenical nature of the theatre – that Aeschylus traveled twice to Sicily, in 470 BC., invited by the tyrant of Syracuse Hieron, who had defeated the Carthaginians in

480 BC. On this trip Aeschylus wrote and represented the *Aitnaie* or *Women of Mount Etna* to celebrate the founding of the city Etna. Aeschylus visited Sicily once more after 458 BC, that is, after the first performance of the *Oresteia* (Ορέστεια). It is also known that he was residing in Gela, where he died in 456 BC.

Notwithstanding the above, the ecumenical nature of the theatre lies in the fact that it enables man, as a single person, to participate in the life of another person, to expand into it, to experience its concerns, problems, and destiny, which is the common fate for both the characters invented by the poet in his drama work and the reader as a civilized being.

I proceed now to a re-reading of the famous passage 29 of *Nikias* by Plutarch, where the power of tragic poetry is revealed and hence its ability to give ecumenical dimensions to the art of Dionysus:

«Most of the Athenians perished in the stone quarries because of disease and malnutrition, their daily rations being a pint of barley meal and a half-pint of water. Several of them were kidnapped and sold into slavery, or succeeded in passing themselves off as serving men. When sold, they were branded on the forehead with the mark of a horse. Actually there were some freemen who suffered this indignity although they were not slaves.

But even these were helped by their restrained and decent bearing and were soon set free. Some had their honour restored and remained with their masters. Some also were saved thanks to Euripides. For it seems that the Greek Sicilians, more than the Hellenes of the homeland, had loved his poetry. They were forever learning by heart the little specimens and bits of it which visitors brought them from time to time, imparting them to one another with fond delight. In this case, at any rate, they say that many Athenians who reached home in safety greeted Euripides affectionately, and recounted to him that they had been set free because they rehearsed what they remembered of his works. Others said that when they were roaming about after the final battle they were offered food and water for singing some of his choral hymns. Surely, then, one need not wonder at the story that the Caunians, when a vessel of theirs took refuge in the harbour of Syracuse to escape the pursuit of pirates, they were not admitted at first, but kept outside, until, when asked if they knew any songs of Euripides and they declared that they did, they were allowed to bring their vessel safely in».

Euripides and his plays, as it is evident in the previous passage, were universal. His reputation had transcended the borders of Greece and had

conquered the whole world. Tragic poetry, the Dionysian art, won supporters everywhere. I will not lapse here into the dilemma of the *ηδύσματα*, the inner embellishments that all arts employ to fascinate the people.

It is essential for the universal dimensions of the art of the theatre that it liberates man from the slavery of habit, from its grand enemy of the everyday life of violence, that it reconciles people. It converts the enemy to a friend, the amoral hostility (*νείκος*) to sympathy (*φιλότης*), the slave to a master. Through poesy (the dramatic poesy in the previous passage of *Nikias*) the Athenians convert defeat into victory, into a humanitarian victory, a triumph of spirit against the measures (*μέτρα*), the material quality (*ύλη*).

The victory of the Syracusans appears to have been a material, weak resource that was incapacitated by the power of the spirit. The preannounced struggles of Dionysus with the bloodshed, the displacements, the wars and the battles to establish the new religion were upheld.

The theatre was ready to repel any resistance.

Finally it is known that the Greeks, at any geographical point, established cities, transferred the art of Dionysus, the worship of the god of *μέθη* (drunkenness) and ecstasy. They built up theatres, churches, temples. The auditorium of the theatre and the orchestra arrived, as Pausanias pointed out, to be the core document, the nucleus around which the *Πόλις* (city) was being formed. *Πόλις* and *Θέατρο* were two recommendations of solidarity. One does not exist without the other.

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The Greek Communities in the Balkans and Asia Minor and Their Theatrical Activity 1800-1922

Chrysothemis Stamatopoulou-Vasilakou*

RÉSUMÉ

Le but de cet article est l'examen analytique de la vie du théâtre au sein des communautés grecques, économiquement robustes, de l'Asie Mineure, durant l'époque de l'Empire Ottoman jusqu'à la catastrophe de 1922, ainsi que dans la Péninsule Balkanique. Un accent spécial est mis sur l'étude du théâtre grec de Constantinople et de Smyrne, d'une part, à cause de la présence des populations grecques dans ces grandes villes importantes qui étaient également des centres d'affaires et des ports majeurs dans la Méditerranée, et, d'autre part, en raison de la richesse de l'information fournie par les sources bibliographiques existantes. En revanche, la référence à la vie du théâtre des Grecs en Bulgarie et Roumanie, est plus limitée à cause de la bibliographie restreinte disponible à ce jour. Parallèlement aux événements historiques de cette époque, sont examinés le développement et le déclin de l'activité théâtrale grecque dans ces régions ainsi que les facteurs, qui y contribuent: les troupes de théâtre amateurs et professionnels, les acteurs, les traducteurs et les intellectuels.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is the comprehensive examination of theatre life in the economically robust Greek *paroikies* of Asia Minor, during the Ottoman Empire until the Asia Minor Catastrophe, as well as of the Balkan Peninsula. Special emphasis is given to the study of Greek theatre in Constantinople and Smyrna, on the one hand, because of the large Greek Orthodox populations in these significant large cities which were also business centres and major ports on the Mediterranean Sea, and, on the other hand, because of the wealth of information provided in the existing bibliographical sources. In contrast, reference to the theatre life of the Greeks in Bulgaria and Romania, because of the limited up-to-date relevant bibliography, is more restricted. In parallel with the historical events of the time, consideration is given to the rising and declining course of Greek theatre activity in these areas, as well as to its contributing factors: professional and amateur companies, actors, playwrights, translators and intellectuals.

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By the seventeenth century, Greeks had already settled in various areas of the Balkans, seeking their fortune and exploiting the various economic opportunities in the developing markets.¹ Apart from the economic motives, there were two main reasons for the relocation of the Greeks in the Balkan Peninsula: it was easier for them to associate with the native Orthodox Christian population, while the administration of these areas seemed moderate regarding the Ottoman Empire, due to Russia's protective intervention.²

Thus, the Greek communities under formation, which were increasing or decreasing in numbers depending on the historical circumstances, became quickly urbanized because of their prosperity. The theatre was cultivated within the scope of their activities, both as a means of amusement, according to the Western way of life of the middle classes, and as a means of cultivating the national conscience and the linguistic and cultural unification of the Greeks everywhere.³

Constantinople

Background

In the multiformity of South Eastern Europe, Constantinople, an international commercial centre with a profound multiethnic character, was throughout the centuries a meeting-place of various cultural currents, apart from the political searching. The indigenous Greek element, sometimes infused with new blood through the relocation of Greek populations coming from continental and insular Greece, and sometimes orphaned, depending on the prevailing political circumstances, either favourable or not, began to come into contact with the theatre as a means of expressing civilization and social communication since the seventeenth century. This contact was achieved through theatrical or theatre-like events organized in private areas, consular mansions or wealthy people's residences. A typical example was the Jesuits' theatrical activity in Constantinople in 1607 and 1623, the stage activity of comedy makers at the Persian embassy in 1650, a series of performances at the French embassy in January-February of 1673, similarly at the Swedish embassy in 1786 and at the Venice mansion in 1815.⁴

After the sporadic theatrical activities of the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries, of which we are aware thanks to the journals and the texts of travellers of the time, the Greek theatre in Constantinople since the nineteenth century has had a more stable and wide presence.

Its action, always linked with the historical course of the Greek Orthodox

element there, as was only natural, had a fluctuating course. For a much more effective understanding of this theatrical phenomenon, the theatrical activity of the Greeks of Constantinople from the nineteenth century until 1922 is presented here classified into four specific periods.

First Period (1800-1821)

There is an unbreakable tie between the pre-revolutionary period (1800-1821) and the prosperous class of Phanariots, namely the residents of the Phanar quarter, and their intellectual pursuits. The theatre was cultivated as a literary genre within the scope of the enlightening pre-revolutionary movement.⁵ This literary genre as a new way of intellectual expression was encouraged for its educational and moral uplifting influence on the people of the time, but also for its contribution to the national awakening.⁶

Under the influence of the European Enlightenment, the Phanariots, educated in the West and being multilingual, got round to the theatre at first by reading the drama texts of European playwrights in the original language at their evening gatherings (in French, the predominant language at the time); the second phase included the translation of representative works of Western playwrights into Greek (plays by Molière, Goldoni, Metastasio, Alfieri and Voltaire). Then, the Phanariots began writing original plays directly into Greek (Georgios Soutsos, Iakovos Rizos Neroulos, Iakovos Rizos Rangavis) and tested their strength in amateur stage attempts at evening parties in their mansions.⁷

Information on these amateur performances can be found in Alexandros Rizos Rangavis' *Memoirs*⁸, in the *Surviving Literary Writings* of Constantinos Economou of the Economos family⁹, as well as in the writings of the travellers Comte de Marcellus¹⁰ and R. Walsh. Drawing out of this documented evidence, it is worth mentioning the recitation of an extract from Aeschylus' *Persians* in 1820, a few months before the outbreak of the Greek War of Independence. The extract was recited by a student of the Greek School of Kydonia, under the guidance of Constantinos Economou, in the mansion of Dimitrios Manos, the former postelnikos in the administration of Wallachia, situated in the district of Therapeia. Another performance was that organized by Gerasimos Pitsamanos in the house of a pharmacist in Pera in June 1820, when the Greek Revolution had already begun, and which had a bloody upshot due to the violent intervention of the Turks.¹¹ The play being staged was probably *Constantine Palaeologus* by Ioannis Zambelios.

Naturally, all the associated activities were about to be interrupted during the ten years of the Greek national uprising.

Second Period (1836-1857)

The second period was that between 1836 and 1858, namely the preparation of the flourish that would follow in the second half of the century. Quite a few years after the extensive massacre of Hellenism in Constantinople during the Revolution, in reprisal for every successful action of the revolutionaries in the theatre of war, the remaining Greek element was infused with new blood. This came as a result of a new movement of Greek immigrants to Constantinople, which took place from 1832 onwards, due to the opening of new markets on the Black Sea.

The economic reconstruction also brought about the cultural one. Thus, at that time, new original plays (*Socrates*, *Margaritis*, *The Would-Be Philosopher*, *Misse Kozis*) were written, and plays by Schiller, *Kabale und Liebe* (1843), Molière, *Les Fourberies de Scapin* (1847), *George Dandin, ou Le Mari Confondu* (1854), and Victor Hugo, *Angelo, Tyran de Padoue* (1850) were translated. From the 1850s, French and Italian companies, performing mostly melodramas, were invited to Constantinople by the French and Italian communities, whose members also staged amateur performances.¹²

Third Period (1858-1899)

From 1858, the year in which the first public Greek performance was staged, until the end of the nineteenth century, is the third period during which the Greek theatre flourished. This period is linked with the peak that the Greeks in Constantinople reached in the economic, social, educational and cultural sectors. This was the result of the favourable terms of the Hatt-ı Hümayun (Imperial Edict) (1856), which granted religious and civil rights to the minorities of the Ottoman Empire.

Since 1860 the Greek theatre had been present on a daily basis in Constantinople's theatrical life, with public performances in the Greek language staged in various theatrical venues (theatres, meeting halls of societies, schools and cafés).

Touring companies from Greece played a leading part in the flourishing of the Greek theatre in Constantinople. The first Greek companies, disillusioned by the negative posture of Athenian bourgeois society which, imitating European manners frequented the performances of foreign

companies, sought their fortune in the financially prospering Greek communities. Thus, the companies of Pantelis Soutsas, Dionysios Tavoularis, Demosthenes Alexiades, Mihail Arniotakis, Nikolaos Lekatsas, Georgios Petrides and Ekaterini Veroni were performing in Constantinople for a long period of time and at different dates. Smaller companies too, such as those of Ioannis Kyriakou, Demosthenes Neris, Antonios Tassoglou, Xenophontas Isaias, Constantinos Halkiopoulos, Dimitrios Kotopoulos, and others, also staged performances occasionally, mostly in the districts and suburbs of Constantinople that had a Greek population. Bearing names of the ancient Greek playwrights and frequently changing them (the “Aristophanes”, “Aeschylus”, “Euripides”, “Sophocles”, “Menander” company), both the first ones, with their many-member casts and perfect organization, and the second ones with fewer means, contributed to a thriving theatrical life in Constantinople for over 60 years.¹³

As for their repertory, the professional companies at first performed works from the abundance of European play-writing, which could offer them a variety of plays and thus enabled them to satisfy the demands of the public, regarding daily changes in their program. In this way, they were able to perform a drama play and a one-act comedy each day, according to the standard practice of the time. Initially, they chose European neo-classical works, whose themes inspired by the ancient Greek past contributed to bolstering the national consciousness of the enslaved Greeks (playwrights such as Alfieri, Monti, Voltaire and Metastasio), as well as classic comedies by Molière and Goldoni that castigated human weaknesses and faults, and had many to offer towards this direction, namely to mould the people morally.

The Greek companies' repertoire would be enriched later with works of all European literary styles starting with the great Romantics represented by Victor Hugo, Shakespeare, Goethe, Schiller, Byron and Alexander Dumas, continuing with the popular writers of melodrama (A. Dennery, A. Bourgeois, V. Séjour, F. Legouvè, E. Cormon, P. Giacometti, B. Lytton, and others) to lead in the last twenty years of the century to the realistic drama. Greek theatrical plays (dramas and comedies) were only performed if they were considered “harmless” by the Turkish censorship or managed to elude its attention.

Research to date has recorded nearly one thousand titles of plays (original and translations) that were performed on the theatrical stage of Constantinople in the nineteenth century.¹⁴

The amateur companies, creations of the restless nature of Constantinople's

Hellenism, contributed also to the theatrical life. These native companies depicted the high intellectual and cultural level of Constantinople's Greek community. Competing with the foreign communities, their ambition was to create their own theatrical tradition and leave their mark on artistic creation. In the periods of the absence of professional companies, the amateurs worthily filled the gap in the Greek theatrical stage. Their ideological motive was to prove the superiority of Greek cultural forces over those of the foreign communities, to reaffirm their sense of being a national community in this multinational environment, and through the theatre to cultivate the Greek language and teach indirectly Greek history and tradition.

Societies of all sorts (educational, musical, charitable, benevolent, cultural, etc.), which appeared quite a lot when the political situation permitted, acted as the nursery of amateur theatre in Constantinople¹⁵. In these societies the most committed people acted provenly, being fully aware of the role they had to play for the benefit of the Greeks as a whole.

Beyond the ulterior national motives, this whole theatrical experimentation actually introduced a significant part of the Greek society there to the theatre. This included people with intellectual and artistic leanings, young people in particular, who came into contact with plays of both Greek and non-Greek playwrights and tried to bridge the gap between reading plays and performing them.

Another point worth mentioning is the contribution of societies in supporting and strengthening local theatrical production. A close study of their repertoire shows a clear preference for the plays of Greek writers from Constantinople.

The lectures organised by various societies (for example, the "Mnemosyne" Club in Phanar, the "Omonoia" Club in Diplokionio, the Chryssoupolis Club, etc.), and foremost among them, the Hellenic Literary Society of Constantinople, also contributed significantly to disseminating theatrical education to a wider public.¹⁶

As for their subjects, these lectures emphasized mostly the origins and the development of the theatre, laying particular emphasis on ancient drama (tragedy, comedy, satirical drama). Stress was also laid on the analysis of the works by ancient Greek playwrights, as this conformed to the spirit of the time, i. e. Greek-centred thinking and linking the present with the ancient Greek heritage. The analysis of playwrights and works of the European playwriting had a secondary role.¹⁷

The intelligentsia of Constantinople were the third factor of the Greek theatre's flourishing. It was the scholars, the journalists and the educators who by writing, translating and publishing plays created the theatrical literature of Constantinople.

The playwrights of Constantinople cultivated all the genres of theatrical speech. Their most important contribution was to comedy writing, both one-act and multiple-act. Collecting rich material from the rising middle class of Constantinople's Greeks, they had many issues to castigate and satirize: the newly rich, the imitation of European mores, human faults, social conventions and situations. Under the dominating influence of Molière, *Margaritis*, *Rich Miser and Old Lover* was written by A.M.A. the Byzantine (1839), *The Would-be Philosopher* by Nikolaos Ayvazides (1840), *Misse Kozis* (1848) by an anonymous writer, a moral play, a medley of Greek dialects, like *Babylonia*, *The Old Men's Lesson* (1861) by Christakis Skordos, the *Haviarohanon* (1864) by Odysseus Dimitrakos, *Malakof* (1865) and *Nouveau Riche* (1878) by Michael Hourmouzis, *The Desperate Husband* (1868), *Fiakas* (1867) and *The Duke of Stupidity* (1881) by Demosthenes Misitzis, etc..

In the category of the national dramaturgy, regarding plays with patriotic content, the contribution of Alexandros Zoeros is significant (*The Three Hundred, A Descendant of Timoleon*, etc.); the same applies in fictional drama with Alexandros Stamatiades, together with other less important writers, and in vaudeville with Christophoros Misaelides (*Michalios the Naive, April Fool's Day, The Bridegroom of Tyrine*), Georgios Karouzos (*Nikoltsos in the Sack*), Thomas Constantinides (*Maroula in Constantinople*)¹⁸ and many others.

The Twentieth Century (1900-1922)

The theatrical life of the Greeks of Constantinople continued the same prolific way until 1908, when the Young Turks movement broke out with the known historical consequences. During this time (1900-1907), Constantinople was at its theatrical acme. Companies came one after another to the theatrical stages with everyday changing repertory and the audiences flooding the central theatres.

The Greek travelling companies are indicatively noted: "Menander" of Dionysios Tavoularis, the United Company of Tavoularis-Pantopoulos (1901-1903), the company of Nikolaos and Evangelia Paraskevopoulou, the "New Stage" of Constantinos Christomanos (1902, 1903, 1905, 1906), the Drama Company of Eftyhios Vonasera-Dimitrios Veronis (1902, 1903, 1905), the

company of Evangelos Pantopoulos (1904), Pericles Christoforides–Nikolaos Kokkos (1904), Ekaterini Veroni (1905, 1907, 1908), Vassilis Argyropoulos (1904, 1905), Dimitrios Kotopoulos–Nikolaos Kokkos (1905), Nikolaos Lekatsas (1906), Kyveli Andrianou–Edmund Fyrst, while the theatrical activity of the local amateur companies remained remarkable. The amateur companies are also indicatively cited: the Reading Club “Hesperus”, the Philanthropic Society “Dorcas”, the Tatavla Charitable Confraternity, the Concord Confraternity, the Pera Amateurs Club, the Constantinople Greek Company, the Erasimolpon Amateur Club,¹⁹ and others. From 1908, the Young Turks movement and the Balkan Wars, as well as the First World War that would follow, had an impact on the movements of the Greek companies. Thus, the Greek theatrical activity of Constantinople seemed to be constantly diminishing until 1922. During this time, the presence of the following companies was significant: Ekaterini Veroni–Georgios Gennadis (1908), Marika Kotopouli (1909, 1910, 1911), Evangelia Paraskevopoulou (1910), Kyveli Andrianou (1912, 1914, 1918–1919, 1920, 1921), Rozalia Nika, Edmund Fyrst–Telemachus Lepeniotis (1912, 1913), Dimitris Veronis (1908, 1909, 1918–1919, 1920), and others. Amateur theatrical life appeared limited, too, during this period: Mega Revma Society (1908), Pera Amateurs Club (1908), Erasimolpon Amateur Club (1909, 1910, 1912), the amateurs’ company of the “Pheidippides” Society (1912), the company of the Galata Cultural Society “Regeneration” (1920), the Constantinople amateur company Friends of the Theatre, the Constantinople Drama School.²⁰

The repertory included a medley of plays from the Greek and European play-writing. As for the Greek play-writing, the plays that stood out were the ones that could be incorporated into the realistic spirit of the time, bourgeois dramas with a social aim by Polyvios Dimitrakopoulos, Georgios Tsokopoulos, Pavlos Nirvanas, Spyros Melas, Grigorios Xenopoulos, Pantelis Horn, Ioannis Polemis, Ioannis Delikaterinis, Angelos Simiriotes, Stefanos Dafnis, etc.

After the restoration of the Constitution in 1908 and the temporary abolition of censorship, there seemed to be a surge in the performances of historical dramas that caused excitement and deep feelings of patriotism. On the contrary, despite the fact they addressed an audience with bourgeois and cosmopolitan social characteristics, vaudeville and the dramatic romances had a particular appeal.²¹

The same applied to the successor of vaudeville, the revue that came into being in Athens in 1894. These modular plays with themes from political and social satire, of contemporary people and current situations, with music

from foreign operettas thrilled the Greek audience of Constantinople. The Asia Minor Disaster, as was only natural, put an end to the revue burst of the period 1907-1921.²²

The Actors

The success of a significant number of actors from Constantinople who stood out through the long theatrical life in Constantinople must be highlighted. These actors marked with their presence the stage of the nineteenth century and after the Asia Minor Disaster of 1922 they continued their careers in Greece. The leading actors among them came from the two great theatrical families of Constantinople: the Veronis and Kotopoulis families. The founder of the former was the leading actress-manager of the theatre company, Ekaterini Veroni, arguably the most significant actress of the nineteenth century; her siblings Sophia, Dimitrios and Themistocles Veronis, all actors, participated in her company. The Kotopoulis Company was founded by the actors Dimitrios and Eleni to continue with their daughter-actresses Antiope, Fotini, ChrysSoula, and the incomparable Marika Kotopouli. Evangelia Paraskevopoulou, the other great actress of the nineteenth century, was also from Constantinople, as were Pericles Christoforides and a host of other actors and actresses.²³

The Theatres

The centre of all this theatrical life was the district of Pera or Stavrodromi with the Naoum, Crystal Palace, Byzantine Alcazar, Verdi, Croissant, Variété, Mnimatakion, and Hippodrome theatres, and second, the district of Phanar with the Mnemosyne Club. However, apart from the central districts of Constantinople, there was also the theatrical movement in the suburbs and villages around the capital, where there was a Greek element: Vathyryakas, Vafeochorion, Galata, Diplokionion, Makrohorion, Mega Revma, Mesahoron, Prinkipo, Tatavla, Ypsomatheia, Halki and Halkidona, to mention the most common places.²⁴

Romania

The Danubian Principalities, which were a favourite region for the Greeks of diaspora since antiquity, attracted the interest of the restless Greeks; they started taking action there by dealing in all the sectors of the economy, particularly commerce, shipping and the exploitation of the land.²⁵ The great

acme of Danubian Hellenism took place in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, during the pre-revolutionary period (1711-1821), which coincided with the period of the enlightened Phanariot princes, who gave great impetus to the letters and arts.²⁶ Both in their courts and the Greek academies there,²⁷ Greek education found a convenient ground, which proliferated through the establishment of printing houses.²⁸ Within the framework of these intellectual pursuits of the Phanariot circles, the modern Greek theatre soon came into being in Romania (Iași and Bucharest) producing writers, translators and actors. All these worked zealously for its success and contributed through their activity to the national issue throughout the pre-revolutionary period.²⁹

In this cultural production, Rallou, the daughter of Wallachia's prince, Ioannis Karatzas, organized the first Greek amateur company and then built the Theatre of the Red Fountain (1817-1818), which was the first proper theatre auditorium in Bucharest. The fortunate coincidence was the fact that she met Theodoros Alkaïos³⁰ and Constantinos Kyriakos Aristias³¹, two actors who would leave their mark on the history of Modern Greek theatre. Their repertory, chosen according to the climate of the era, contributed to the propagation of revolutionary ideas and national self-consciousness.

Danubian Hellenism continued until after the Greek Revolution, despite the sacrifices and the losses it suffered, to dominate the commercial and intellectual sectors. In 1827, Constantinos Kyriakos Aristias, having earned his acting qualification after an apprenticeship in Paris under the famous actor F. J. Talma, was appointed professor at the School of Aghios Savvas. There he taught acting and staged plays with his students, translating his repertory into Greek. In 1833, together with Romanian intellectuals, he established the Philharmonic Company, with its aim to be an acting school which was the first in the Balkans in the nineteenth century.³²

After the Treaty of Paris (1856) and despite the increasing nationalism of the Romanians, the Greeks achieved financial strength, having benefited from the internationalization of the navigation in the River Danube and the Euxine Sea. A few names of eminent personalities of the economic life are referred to below, such as Zappas, Arsakis, Empirikos, Galiatsatos, Chrysovelonis,³³ etc., while the publication of a number of Greek newspapers is a sample of the great intellectual progress of the Greek element.³⁴

The vigorous and well-organized Greek communities³⁵ with their high standard of living and cultural level showed interest in developing theatrical

activity, which was mainly based on the Greek travelling companies. The first who seems to have visited Romania was Dionysios Tavoularis³⁶ in 1859, after his unsuccessful first theatrical attempt in Constantinople. In 1861 a Greek performance of the play *Diakos* in Bucharest's Belvedere garden is mentioned.³⁷ The groups that would visit the city later were the following: Vassilios Andronopoulos in 1868 and 1869,³⁸ "Aristophanes" of Themistocles Veronis in 1875,³⁹ "Menander" in 1877 and 1899, Dimitrios Alexiades company in 1879, 1881 and 1888 and the company "Sophocles" of Emmanuel Lorandos in 1882 and 1898.⁴⁰ In addition, the company of Constantine Pervelis in 1891 with Evangelia Paraskevopoulou as leading lady and the company "Athens" of the same leading actor in 1895 and 1899.⁴¹

Moreover, there was theatrical activity in the cities of Brăila, Galați and Contanța. The presence there of Dimitrios Alexiades' company in 1879 and 1881, the "Menander" company of Dionysios Tavoularis in 1882, Nikolaos Lekatsas' company in 1884 and the company of Ekaterini Veroni in 1896 and 1897 can be mentioned indicatively.⁴² It is also worth noting that plays with Greek themes were staged at the National Theatre of Romania, but also by the company of the Romanian writer Caragiale,⁴³ as a result of Greek-Romanian intellectual interactions.

In Bucharest, the areas reported as theatrical ones are the Union Suisse and Buichard or Belvedere Gardens as well as the Greek Theatre, the Opéra Lyrique and the small theatre Dacia, in Brăila the Ralli theatre, in Galați the Alcazar theatre, while in Contanța the performances were staged in the Auditorium of the Boys' School. In 1898, the Greek Company "Hope" looked after the construction of an auditorium by the French architect Piver.⁴⁴

Despite the fact that the Greek communities in Romania survived until the Second World War, there hasn't been any information with reference to twentieth-century Greek theatrical activity because of the lack of relevant research until now.

Bulgaria

In Bulgaria, the indigenous Greek populations, remnants of the ancient and medieval Greek colonies on the Western coasts of the Euxine Sea and Eastern Rumelia, managed to survive after five centuries of the unbearable yoke of the Turkish administration; at one time they were downsized and at others they were strengthened by young Greek immigrants coming from other parts of the Ottoman empire.⁴⁵ Since the end of the eighteenth century

and the beginning of the nineteenth, through their success in commerce and industry, they had become, under the protection of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, an important economic power that coexisted peacefully with the Bulgarian people and had developed intellectual and cultural relations.⁴⁶ At the same time, through the establishment of Greek schools,⁴⁷ they succeeded in establishing the Greek language as the language of civilization and transactions.

The Treaty of Berlin (1878), through which Bulgaria acquired its independence from the Turkish yoke, securing at the same time political, religious and linguistic freedom for the national minorities there, for many years offered Bulgaria's Hellenism the capability to restructure/reconstitute, live peacefully and be occupied with progressive and cultural projects.⁴⁸ Thus, already since the middle of the nineteenth century, the Greeks of Bulgaria in the urban and semi-urban communities of Plovdiv, Varna, Burgas, Asenovgrad and Pomorie had organized musical and theatrical groups to meet their entertainment demands.⁴⁹

The theatrical life, that appeared after 1870 and became particularly intense after 1880, was dependent on the travelling Greek companies which visited Bulgaria as they left Constantinople or were on their way to the Greek communities of Romania which were also active and numerous; theatrical life also depended on local amateurs, members of the educational community (teachers and students) or free-lance performers and scholars, members of the theatrical groups of the Greek societies there.⁵⁰

Of the first Greek actors, the ceaseless Vassilios Andronopoulos, whose presence in the Balkan Peninsula was testified already since 1861-1862⁵¹, staged performances in the auditorium of the Girls' School of Varna in October 1869.⁵² At the same place, an anonymous travelling Greek company staged performances during December 1871⁵³ – beginning of January 1872.⁵⁴ In Plovdiv, the company of I. Vassiliades staged performances at the auditorium of the Greek Girls' School there in January 1873⁵⁵, as did the Georgios Petridis' company "Orpheus" in the autumn of the same year at the Greek Music Society there.⁵⁶

In the winter of 1880, two years after Bulgarian independence, the Thespis Company visited Plovdiv for a series of twenty-five performances in the Apollo Greek theatre.⁵⁷ In the autumn of the next year (1881), the Thespis Company of Vasilios Andronopoulos performed at the International theatre.⁵⁸ In 1884 the New Menander Company of Georgios Petridis visited

the city with Evangelia Paraskevopoulou as leading lady and staged performances for only one month at the Luxembourg theatre. As it encountered a negative atmosphere, it then left for Odessa.⁵⁹

At the beginning of 1889, the company of Constantinos Pervelis arrived to stage performances at the same theatre with Evangelia Paraskevopoulou as leading lady again. During their four-month stay, the famous performer had the opportunity to unfold her acting talent, evoking the admiration of the prince of Bulgaria, Ferdinand, particularly as Galatia in Spyros Vassiliades' play.⁶⁰ The performance of the *Duchess of Athens*, a play of Kleon Rangavis, was also historic; at that time, the writer served as a diplomatic representative of Greece in Sofia and this performance was memorable indeed, as it was the first performance of the play after it had been awarded a prize at the Olympia theatrical contest and in particular in Bulgaria. This festive performance, which apart from being an artistic event was also a political one, was attended by the diplomatic authorities of Greece, Austria-Hungary, Romania and Spain, as well as the elite of the Greek community there. However, due to the fact that the relations between Greeks and Bulgarians had already been tense, the Bulgarian authorities forbade Ferdinand to attend, despite the fact he had rented a set of balconies.⁶¹

In 1894, the Lalaounis group⁶² visited Plovdiv and in 1895 Evangelia Paraskevopoulou staged performances there (April-May), as well as in Burgas, receiving rave critiques from the Bulgarians.⁶³ In December of the same year (1895), the company of Ekaterini Veroni came to Plovdiv and staged performances with great success at the Luxembourg theatre. However, the enthusiasm and the influx of the crowd worried the Bulgarian authorities, who under various pretexts, when the company went to Burgas, forced it to interrupt its performances and leave for Romania.⁶⁴ In 1899, the companies of Nikolaos Paraskevopoulos and of Dionysios Tavoularis visited Bulgaria and in 1901 the company of Nikolaos Kardovillis arrived as well.⁶⁵

The theatrical activity of Greek amateurs in Bulgaria was also important, taking action through relevant societies, such as the "Sophocles" Greek Drama Society of Plovdiv, the Varna Theatrical Company, the Plovdiv Music Society, the Varna Philharmonic Union, the Asenovgrad Greek Philharmonic Society, the Burgas Affable Liaison, the Pomorie Greek Progressive Society,⁶⁶ etc. Their performances, always for the benefit of the public, were staged in schools or in the meeting-halls of the Greek communities. An indicative example was the performance of Pichat's

historical drama *Leonidas at Thermopyles* that was organized by the Greek National Society “Force” in 1883.⁶⁷

The theatre, professional and amateur, apart from being a form of entertainment, was also, for the Greeks there, a manifestation of national-cultural strength and an expression of national self-consciousness, which caused the discontent of the Bulgarians.⁶⁸ In many cases, they tried to prevent its activity, as in 1905 when the company of Christoforides–Kokkos was ousted by the provincial governor and the mayor of Burgas, resulting in the company fleeing to Romania, where the Greek actors were arrested and imprisoned.⁶⁹

During 1878-1914, the establishment and consolidation of the Bulgarian national state gradually started taking place, bringing as natural outcome an intense conflict between the two nationalities, Bulgarians and Greeks, which would result in the first persecution of the Greeks in 1906 and the final abolition of the Greek communities just before the First World War.⁷⁰

Smyrna

Contemporary theatrical life in Smyrna begins with the settlement of the Europeans (mainly French, but also English, Dutch and Italian colonists) in the city in the sixteenth century, due to the bestowal of economic privileges, the noted *sponsions*, by Suleiman I (1494-1566). From that time, Smyrna, one of the most important ports of the East, enjoyed great economic prosperity, which also included cultural activities, including the theatre. Until then Turkish theatrical tradition had only consisted of impersonators-narrators (*meddah* or *mukallit*) and the shadow theatre with the character of Karagöz.

The European middle class that arrived at Smyrna brought along the theatre, which in most of their countries has already appeared in the Renaissance period. The local Greek society enthusiastically accepted European mores, adopted their forms of amusement and actively participated in them. Lunches, parties and concerts took place on a daily basis, together with amateur theatrical performances, staged in private places until 1775, as well as the particularly popular circus shows.

Until today the performance of Corneille’s *Nikomedes* is considered, based on the research, the first in Smyrna, which was staged in a festive atmosphere at the French Consulate in the carnival of 1657, as Laurent d’Arvieux, the French traveller and diplomat, describes.⁷¹

Another later mention of a theatrical performance in Smyrna is in 1747,

the performance by Jewish amateurs of the play *Aman's Death*, for which it is not clear whether it was staged in public or in private.⁷² The first public performance by European amateurs seems to have been Voltaire's play *Caesar's Death*,⁷³ staged between 1775 and 1785 in a specially formed theatre, while in 1797 we have the information that "at the Venice Consulate a performance was staged" and the entrance fee was one Turkish coin.⁷⁴

One of the biggest slaughters of the city's Greek population is linked to the theatrical life of Smyrna, which remained known in history as "The rebellion of Smyrna" in March 4, 1797.⁷⁵ Constantine Economou estimates the number of the slaughtered people at 6, 000.⁷⁶ According to Solomonides, a victim of the destruction was also the first theatre of Smyrna, which had been built by amateurs in French Street.⁷⁷

This was the second biggest slaughter of the Greek population of Smyrna since 1770, when after the Çesme sea battle, fanatic Muslims massacred 1, 500 Greeks. After that, the third persecution, the most terrible, followed in 1821, right after the proclamation of the Greek Revolution, which would cause a serious blow to the Smyranean Greek community.

During these difficult times, only French and Italian performances of European amateurs can be traced with plays mostly of Molière, Goldoni and Scribe, while in 1825 Metastasio's *Artaxerxes* was staged, translated into Greek.⁷⁸

From the 1840's, when the city acquired "Efterpi" (1841), its first big theatre of 300 seats and two rows of balconies, French and Italian melodrama companies started visiting Smyrna on a regular basis. This gave the theatre-going audience the opportunity to attend performances by professional companies and watch great names of the European lyric theatre. On the stage of the Efterpi theatre, the marvelous Italian tragedian Adelaide Ristori would distinguish herself during her first tour to the East in 1865.⁷⁹

The Smyranean Greek community, from 1828 onwards, distancing itself from the nightmarish events of 1821, found its peace again, as well as its rhythm of growth. As a result of the resettlement of immigrants, who had fled to Greece, to the homeland, a demographic rise of the Greek-Orthodox element is observed that coincides with the general rapid increase of the city's population; the motive was the exploitation of the chances offered by rising economic activity. The Greeks resumed control of commerce and reorganized, as the number of the Greek schools in the area⁸⁰ and the publication of Greek newspapers and magazines prove.⁸¹

The Greek theatre made its appearance then within the intellectual and cultural pursuit of the Smyranean Greek community, as a result of its economic prosperity. The first Greek performance was staged on February 3, 1845, at the Efterpi Theatre by amateurs in the Italian comedy *Maniacal*, translated and published by Ch. Michalopoulos in Smyrna in 1836. In the same month it was followed by the performance of *Babylonia* of Dimitrios Byzantios, which had been published in Smyrna in 1841 and 1843.⁸²

The Hatt-i Hümayun edict (1856) and the National Regulations (1860-1862) which recognized the political and religious rights of Christians, ensured freedom of action of the Greek-Orthodox populations of Asia Minor; thus, apart from the economic field, they offered great opportunities in the social and intellectual fields.

Under these favourable circumstances, from the second half of the nineteenth century until the great disaster, the Smyranean Greek community reached its acme, along with the Greek theatre.

In Smyrna, the Greek element, which until then attended foreign performances, earnestly wanted to acquire a Greek theatre. Therefore, from the beginning it embraced the travelling companies,⁸³ cherished Greek actors and supported fervently the Greek stage as an expression of culture, a means of boosting the national conscience and spreading the Greek language.

The repertory of the theatres in Smyrna was a repetition of Constantinople's, since the same companies usually visited Smyrna next.

However, apart from this "imported" repertory, Smyrna had its own intellectual dynamics, which since the post-revolutionary period had already cultivated theatrical literature, at first with translations and later with original plays and new adaptations.

A general overview of the theatrical publishing production in Smyrna during this century allows us to come to the conclusion that the translations outnumber the original play-writing. This was the natural intellectual fruit of a prosperous society turned westwards for professional and entertainment reasons, but also the result of its communication with members of the foreign communities, mostly French and Italian, within the framework of economic relations and sociality.

Therefore, the contribution of Smyrna's scholars to the instilling of classical play-writing to the Greek-speaking East was of major importance, as regards the plays of Molière *Tartuffe*, *The Misanthrope* and *The Miser* that

were translated by the Smyranean scholar Ioannis Isidorides Skylitsis, and also plays of Racine, such as *Iphigénie*, and Voltaire, such as *Oedipe* and *Zaïre*. In addition, Alfieri's *Orestes* and Metastasio's *Ruggiero* were translated, as well as plays of European romanticism (Hugo, Schiller, Shakespeare), just to mention the most important representatives of the European play-writing.⁸⁴

As for the original dramaturgy, the Smyranean writers made their contribution in all genres of the theatrical speech of the nineteenth century (dramas that referred to the glorious ancient Greek past, tragedies of Byzantine themes covered with the relative romantic cloak, romantic and fiction dramas).⁸⁵

Apart from the effort to form a national play-writing which, following either the legacy of the Enlightenment or the commands of Romanticism, was the leading terminus of the Greek intelligentsia throughout the nineteenth century, the Smyranean dramaturgy was enriched with a series of light plays, both one-act or multiple-act comedies and vaudeville, a result of the playful mood of a bon vivant and cosmopolitan society.⁸⁶

In Smyrna, apart from the prose theatre, the Greek lyric theatre experienced glorious days⁸⁷. The Greek middle class through the constant visits of foreign lyric companies was familiar with this theatrical genre, which was culminating at that time in Europe, and was craving to create Greek melodrama. At the same time, a new music theatre appeared, the revue, which based on the wide public, enjoyed great success in Smyrna. During the First World War after Smyrna's seclusion by the Allies and the lack of any kind of communication with Greece and Europe, the pure Smyranean theatre thrived with dozens of revues by Smyranean writers (Sylvio, Lailios Karakassis, Stavros Koukoutsakis, Yiannis Anastassiades, Nestoras Laskaris, Sokratis Ronas, etc.) that were staged by local companies. Revues that made history included *Dolls from Kordelio* (1915), *Cinema* (1916), *Encyclopaedic Dictionary of Smyrna* (1917), *Café Chantant* (1917), and *Smyranean Laughter* (1920).⁸⁸

At this point, it must be stressed that in parallel with the professional companies, travelling and local ones, either prose or musical, the theatrical life in Smyrna was enriched by amateur theatrical activity. Usually these consisted of young, dynamic people, who later would distinguish themselves in the sciences, arts, letters and commerce, but also eminent members of the Smyranean society, who were already prominent on a professional and social level. This social sector would breed theatrical writers and actors who would develop later into professionals.⁸⁹

The intense theatrical life also made imperative the creation of theatrical spaces that would be fitting to receive Greek and foreign companies. Thus, one after the other, the Efterpi (1841) and Kamerano (1862) theatres, the Alhambra and Eldorado summer theatres, the Sporting Club (1894), the Basin Theatre (1900), the Gay (1909), and finally the Splendid and Kremer theatres were built, while smaller theatres operated in the districts and suburbs of Smyrna. With the luxurious Theatre of Smyrna (1911), the city acquired one of the most beautiful and stylish theatres of the Balkans and the East.⁹⁰

The long presence of both the foreign and the Greek theatre was only natural to create a widely cultivated audience that formed the seedbed, through which new servants of the theatrical art emerged. Thus, Smyrna grafted the Greek stage with new actors that honoured the name of the artist firstly in their homeland and later in Greece. The following great actors are indicative representatives: Mitsos Myrat (1878-1964), Kyveli Andrianou (1887-1978), Giorgos Glinos (1895-1966), and also Nikolaos Pezodromos, Vassilis Argyropoulos, Alexandra Kallinea, Marios Palaiologos, Antonis Tziniolis, Vassiliki Dendrinou, Stassa Amira, Ioannis Stylianopoulos, Zaza Brillanti, Christos Ghimaras, etc.⁹¹

From 1919 until 1922, Smyranean actors participated also in the so-called military companies that followed the Greek troops to the front, bolstering the spirit of the soldiers. On the Asia Minor front the actors that fought and staged performances were Giorgos Glinos, Ioannis Avlonitis, Ilias Vergopoulos, Mavropoulos, Moussouris, Georgios Sarantides, Simiriotis, Mavreas, Nikos Perdikis, Dimitris Simopoulos, Stefanos Kaloutas, and others, but also actresses, such as Athina Lorandou, Katina Kalouta, Athina Simirioutou, Angeliki Zervidou and Aleka Nikolaou.⁹² In the fatal year (1922), the operetta company of Elli Afentaki, the company of siblings Constantinos and Marika Nezer and the company of Zacharias Mertikas visited Smyrna and staged operettas, revues and musical comedies with great popularity among the audiences, both political and military, despite the belligerent situation.

In the summer, the Italian melodrama company Sernela visited the city, which was bound with its performances to close the theatrical life in Smyrna. In August 21, the group staged Verdi's *Aida*, a symbolic opera for the march of events in Smyrna and in August 22, a month before the disaster, it staged its last performance with Puccini's *Bohème*.⁹³

The military events and the great disaster that followed would end an artistic tradition of more than a century. Smyrna, after the disaster, would

graft with the blood of its children the cultural life of continental Greece and particularly Athenian cultural life with many intellectuals who would continue their careers in the Greek capital.

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The Greek Theatre in Pontos, Russia and the Soviet Union

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RÉSUMÉ

Malgré son immense importance pour l'hellénisme, le théâtre grec du Pont, de la Russie et de l'ancienne Union Soviétique demeure encore aujourd'hui presque totalement inconnu, même à ceux qui y portent un intérêt et qui font la promotion de l'hellénisme oecuménique. Le but de cet article est de combler cette lacune en proposant une réflexion sur la contribution diachronique de l'hellénisme dans ces régions les plus sensibles et d'une importance capitale du point de vue historique, qui comme le Pont et la Russie ont joué un rôle important même lors de la Révolution grecque de 1821. L'auteur examine de façon analytique les difficultés auxquelles ont fait face les activités théâtrales grecques, depuis leur création au Pont après 1860, en Russie après la fondation de la *Filiki Etaireia*, à Odessa et en Union Soviétique (USSR) après la révolte bolchevique du début des années 1900, compte tenu des adversités géo-politiques, culturelles et linguistiques créées par les divers régimes locaux dans ces régions.

ABSTRACT

Despite its outstanding significance for all of Hellenism, the Greek Theatre of Pontos, Russia and the former Soviet Union still remains almost totally unknown, even to those who are interested in and promote ecumenical Hellenism. This article aims at fulfilling this need by reflecting on the diachronic contribution of Hellenism in these most sensitive and historically critical regions which, like Pontos and Russia, played an important role even in the Greek uprising of 1821. The author analytically examines the vicissitudes which Greek theatre activities, since their inception in Pontos after 1860, in Russia after the founding of the *Filiki Etaireia* in Odessa and in the USSR after the Bolshevik rise to dominance in the early 1900s, have faced in these regions under the geo-political, cultural and linguistic adversities created by the various local regimes.

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The Greek theatre of Asia Minor and the surrounding region of the Euxine Sea and particularly of Russia and the former Soviet Union, which contributed decisively to the intellectual, artistic and ideological *paedeia* of the Greeks beyond the boundaries of Greece is almost totally unknown to the theatre world, the intellectual circles, the university departments of theatrology, and in general to all those centres which research and promote Hellenic ecumenical civilization.

Apart from the excellent trilogy of the theatre man Ermis Mouratidis¹ and the scholarly works of Odysseus Lampsidis² and Christos Samouilidis³, this subject has not been researched holistically by scholars who are experts in the fields of theatre and art.

In Pontos of Asia Minor, Greek theatre functioned from the 4th century BC until the compulsory population exchange of 1922.

The Ottoman reform edict Hatt-i-Humayun of 1856 allowed the revival of the theatre in Pontos, as well as in the other regions of the Ottoman Empire. The first Pontian play was written in Kerasous by Ioannis Valavanis in 1860 in the Pontian dialect and in *katharevousa*, and was printed in Athens because there was not as yet a Greek printery in Pontos.

The Pontian theatre became the articulator of the history of Greek actions and the Greek language.⁴

The second play was written by Constantine Constantinidis, President of the to-be founded democracy of Pontos, Captain Yiorgis' son, and life mayor of Kerasous. It was a comedy entitled *Oi erotoliptoi* (Οι ερωτόληπτοι) in the Pontian dialect, published again in Athens in 1876. This was followed by E. Foinikopoulos' *Oi kodonatoi vrykolakes* (Οι κωδωνάτοι βρυκόλακες) and by another two plays by the same writer: *Hysse, tripse, phyne* (Χύσε, τρίψε, πλύνε) in 1885 and *I Trapezountia kori* (Η Τραπεζούντια κόρη) in 1890. Other known plays written in historic Pontos and performed in many towns and villages were Ph. Philippidis' *Stavros kai Stavroula* (Σταύρος και Σταυρούλα), a drama in six acts, printed in Constantinople in 1904 and Panayiotis Fotiadis' (or Markissios) *I dolofonos* (Η δολοφόνος) in 1910. Later this playwright wrote other plays in Greece as well, such as *I yinaika tou Protomastora* (Η γυναίκα του Πρωτομάστορα). The Pontian language enters into the space of the text as a structural dramaturgic element. Most playwrights in the entire region by the Euxine Sea cultivated their language in order to render through it the feelings, thoughts and conflicts of their heroes.

In Trapezond a special stage for theatre did not exist until 1895. The

performances, mainly of amateur companies, were staged in the Greek community club. Benefactorism, as with Greek education and in the same way with the promotion of culture, played a decisive role. Constantine Theophylactos, the great benefactor of Trapezond, financed the construction of the first theatre according to European specifications in the historic capital city of the Comninos, meeting thus the need of the city and its progressive inhabitants.

After the completion of the theatre, staged performances increased, not only by the amateur groups of the city and the greater area of Pontos, but also by the eponymous professional companies of Athens, Smyrna and Constantinople.

The official inauguration of the theatre took place in 1897 with Nicholas Paraskevopoulos' cast. Many times eponymous Athenian companies performed at the ornately decorated theatre of Trapezond with plays from the ancient and modern Greek repertoires, as well as the European one. In 1906 the management of the theatre was taken over by Joseph Ktenidis who gave a different impetus to the city's theatrical and cultural activity.

Up to 1912 very successful performances were staged by the professional companies of Christophoridis – Kokos (1906), Christophoridis – Kokos with the collaboration of the comedian Papaioannou (1907), Vasileia Stephanou – Stavropoulou – Helmi (1908) with their first play Aristophanes *Nefeles* (Νεφέλες), Aikaterini Veroni (1909), Constantinos Vasiliadis (1910), Helen and Philippos Apergis from Smyrna and many others. The Balkan Wars and World War I had a negative impact on the theatrical and cultural activity of the Greeks in Pontos.

In 1916-1917 with the conquest of Trapezond by the Russians, the progressive Greek youth of Trapezond upgraded that city's theatre group forming two departments: one purely theatrical and one musical-choral.

The theatre group, under the management of the lawyer Demetrios Eliadis, staged many performances which brought relief and gave a boost to their morale, because the news of persecutions and displacements of the Greeks in Eastern Pontos, being under the Neo-Turks' tyranny, were known to them through the Greek press, but also through their relatives and friends.

Beside Trapezond, we encounter a significant amateur theater presence in other cities as well, such as in Kerasous, Amisios and Argyroupolis, but also in large towns of the interior with pure Pontian populations, such as Santa with its seven large villages and Imera.

The earnings from the performances usually covered the immediate needs of the school board, churches, orphanages and other national and social needs. The positive atmosphere of the theatrical and artistic activities was in most cases an essential source for covering the serious economic problems of the community or of the cultural associations. The correspondent of the Trapezond newspaper *Epochi* reported on 29 January 1919 about the theatre performance given in that city for the needs of the Greek orphanage there:

“With the initiative of an amateur group last Sunday an afternoon performance was given to the advantage of our city’s Greek orphanage. The attendance of the Greek society of Kerasous was unprecedented, perhaps unique in our community’s history. At the beginning excellent musical pieces were played on the piano by Mrs Athena M. Mavridou, Miss Rinna Tzenna and Miss Julia Velissaridou. A song followed by Miss Esde Sadoh with the piano accompaniment of Miss Rinna Tzenna, followed by thunderous applause. Then, the well-known comedy *Ziteitai pseftis* (Ζητείται ψεύτης) was performed with great success. Especially Misses Anth. A. Neophytou as Marigo and Our. Sourmeli as Evanthia excelled. Mr Ioannis Aslanidis was also unrivalled as the teacher. After that the monologue *I miga* (Η μύγα) was recited very successfully by Eleftherios Ignatiadis. At the end the hilarious comedy *Ta Vassana tou Vassilaki* (Τα βάσανα του Βασιλάκη) was performed.

The proceeds totalled 900 pounds. In this way our people prove that they fully understand that supporting the orphans is not a kind of ordinary charity but on the contrary it is a sacred duty to the memory of our national heroes, to those from whose bones – as dear *Epochi* has written – our freedom will spring up, to those by their martyr’s death secured the fate and future of our nation here in this corner of Pontos”.

On April 1919 the amateur group of Kerasous gave a performance for a third time, now for the city’s poverty stricken due to the persecutions, robberies, murders and other measures Topal Osman, the mayor of the city, had enacted. The plays staged were *Tō yiandes* (Το γιάντες), *Pou kseris oti eho dolmades* (Που ξέρεις ότι έχω ντολμάδες) and *Th’ aftochiriastho* (Θ’ αυτοχειριασθώ). On 28 May 1919 the medical doctor Th. Thomaidis describes the performance of *O agapitikos tis voskopoulas* (Ο αγαπητικός της βοσκοπούλας) given several times in Kerasous in his own personal way as follows:

The amateurs of Kerasous like other Argonauts, standard-bearers themselves of the Greek civilizing spirit undertook the task of philanthropy immediately after the end of the war. The recent performance of O agapitikos tis voskopoulas achieved a double aim: an act of charity for which we are grateful to them on behalf of the poor and the orphans, as well as the expression of Greek fairness for which we heartily congratulate them. The art of performance, the diligence of finding what is useful, the inherent talent of Greek men and women for the exaltation of high levels of spiritual enjoyment were commensurate to the philosophically excellent and artistically unequalled play by Koromilas. No one was beneath his talent. On the contrary, everyone did full justice to the expectations of all those who had the honour to get to know and appreciate the elegant male artists and the charming female ones. The expressive and artistic tragic character of the former competed with the graceful and incomparable lyrical expression of the latter. In the midst of the tumult and the labour of everyday life, the artists Ioannis Aslanidis Soumelitis, Kefalidis, Nicholas Kesisoglou, Eleftherios Exarchidis, Georgios Molefs, and the female artists An. Neophytou, Elli Efstathiadou, Ioanna Sourmeli, Polymnia Papadopoulou, Olympia Sourmeli, Ioanna Aslanidou and the charming little Iordanou P. Sourmeli, along with the obliging collaboration of the tireless vice-director of the orphanage Mr G. Kalogeropoulos offered us an admittedly unforgettable intellectual banquet.

We thank and congratulate them in the hope that we will enjoy another artistic play in not too long a time.

Kerasous, May 1919, Th. Ch. Thomaidis

Similar information and critiques about the theatre performances in other Pontian cities are recorded in the newspapers *Epochi*, *Argonaftis*, *Pharos tis Anatolis*, and *Eleftheros Pontos*. In the villages the first performances appeared at the beginning of the twentieth century. First, Ioannis Pistophidis, a physical sciences student in Athens, took it upon himself in 1901, to organise a performance with staging of the heroic play *Markos Botsaris* at his village Santa, the Souli of Pontos. Actually the large number of students from Santa at the *Frontistirion* of Trapezond helped the amateur stage producers with the task of selecting talented actors. The students, in

collaboration with the teachers and other notable community members, were founding amateur theatre groups at all head villages, but because of harsh weather conditions, they staged performances only in the summers. Gerostathis Athanasiadis informs us that at Santa the Italian play *Pistis, Elpis kai Eleos* (Πίστις, Ελπίς και Έλεος) and the Greek plays *O agapitikos tis voskopoulas*, *Markos Botsaris*, *Galateia* (Γαλάτεια), *Golfo* (Γκόλφω), *Esmé I Tourkopoula* (Εσμέ, η Τουρκουπούλα), *Athanasios Diakos* (Αθανάσιος Διάκος), *Oi dyo lohiae* (Οι δύο λοχίαι), *Yia to chríma* (Για το χρήμα) were staged. Each drama was followed by a comedy.

The plays which were cherished and were frequently staged were *O fiakas* (Ο φιάκας), *Ziteitai ypiretis* (Ζητείται υπηρέτης), *To kokkalaki tis nykteridas* (Το κοκκαλάκι της νυκτερίδας) and *Oi Kodonatoi vrykolakes* (Οι Κωδωνάτοι βρυκόλακες). The female roles in the villages were acted by young males of the village because the consorting of the two sexes had not taken place yet.

In the same period, to encourage development of the national and intellectual spirit, public lectures were organised at Santa by teachers, students and other educated compatriots who distinguished themselves in the cities and returned to their villages in the summer time. Ioannis Pasalidis, leader of the EDA political party, the medical doctor Eustathios Spyranthis, he bee-keeper Iraklis Antoniadis, M. Himonidis, M. Masmanidis and Tr. Mavropoulos were a few of the speakers.

Theatre performances with the Greek revolution and its achievements as its themes were staged very carefully so that their heroic content did not reach the Ottomans' ears.

In historic Pontos, and generally in all of Asia Minor, the vigilant eye of the authoritarian regime of the established Ottoman order prevailed and it tried to control and to terrorize both individuals and institutions in case they attempted to change the educational and cultural climate. The example of Ibrahim efenti is indicative of this situation. According to the newspaper *Pharos of Anatolis* (Φάρος της Ανατολής) of 30 April 1911 Captain Ibrahim efentis was expelled from the theatre because he fervently applauded one of the heroes of the play and unjustly suffered the violence of the police authorities.

The Greek state, being hostile from its inception to plays with political, social and censorious content, presented on stage in 1978 for the first time since the arrival of the refugees, G. K. Fotiadis' seditious play *O Lazar - aghas* (Ο Λαζάρ - αγάς) from the Pontian stage of the State Theatre of Northern Greece and in 1979 *Proxenia* (Προξενία) by the same writer.

Another twenty-five years had to pass before Th. Kanonidis' *Oi prosfyges* (Οι πρόσφυγες) and *Tis Trihas to yefiri* (Της τρίχας το γεφύρι), plays of socialist content, were approved and staged by the same theatre.

The persistence of certain theatre men, and mainly their intellectual labour, such as the works of Ermis Mouratidis, played a decisive role in the few isolated concessions. The inaction of the state was encountered by the conscientious refugee associations but engaged in the mechanisms of the political parties which used to play, and still play, the game of the occasional political regime. Their educational and financial abilities allowed them to present with their amateur groups plays of folk content, comidylls or stories of everyday life. Many of them, because of their weaknesses did not manage to withstand the test of time. There are, however, quite a few plays that if there had been the interest of the state, that is the right stage financial backing, the right stage producer and the necessary professional actors, choreographers and musicians, then we would have along with the Cretan theatre and that of the Seven Islands, also the Pontian theatre.

The Historical Development of the Greek Theatre in Russia and the *Filiki Etaireia*⁵

The Greek theatre in Russia was founded by the *Filiki Etaireia* and until Stalin's persecutions it offered significant cultural work.

The Greek theatre in Russia began the same year the *Filiki Etaireia* was founded, in the same city of Odessa, and, we can surely argue, by the same people. The leaders of the *Filiki Etaireia*, having the amateur school theatre as a base where various sketches of patriotic content were staged, founded the theatre of the *Etaireia* as a means to transmit their revolutionary ideas and to prepare the uprising of the Greeks and the Philhellenes. The original plays which they staged were quite frequently written by themselves.

In 1817 the theatre group staged the Metastasio's play *Themistocles* (Θεμιστοκλής). On 16 February 1818 they staged *Philoctitis* (Φιλοκτήτης) hellenised in N. Pikkolos' translation and adaptation. Participating actors were G. Avramiotis, G. Lassanis, G. Orphanos, I. Mamounis and I. Bapayiotis. A repeat performance on 28 February indicates the great success it achieved. We read in *Logios Ermis* (Λόγιος Ερμής):

After the first act the most illustrious Count Laggeron, Governor of Odessa,... stepped into the wings, met the leading actor

(Avramiotis), praised him for his excellent performance, and invited him to his palace for the following day.

On 7 September 1918 N. Pikkolos' play *Thanatos tou Dimostheni* (Θάνατος του Δημοσθένη) was staged. The same play was staged again on 15 February 1819, together with the choreodrama *Souliotai* (Σουλιώται). Apart from the Greek actors, the Russia actress Moraskeva and the British philhellene Fr. Vilkenzon also took part. The earnings from the performances were offered to the Greek schools for their needs. G. Lassanis play *I Ellas kai o xenos* (Η Ελλάς και ο ξένος), which was performed for the first time in 1819, recorded a great success. In 1820 the group also staged *Mohammed* (Μωάμεθ) and *Thanatos tou Kaissara* (Θάνατος του Καίσαρα) by Voltaire, as well as plays by Sophocles, Ariosto and Modern Greek playwrights.

In 1820 in Moscow G. Lassanis printed the tragedy *Armodios kai Aristogeiton* (Αρμόδιος και Αριστογείτων) under the pseudonym *Gordidas Lissanios*, and dedicated it "To the sacred shadows of R..., the V... and to those who died gloriously with him for the fatherland". That is, he dedicated it to Regas Velestinlis and the first victims for freedom, among whom in a few months would also be his collaborator S. Drakoulis who was killed at Dragatsani in 1821. The same year, in honour of their sacrifice, the theatre group staged *Philoctitis* as an artistic memorial service.

The Pontian Theatre

The participation of the theatre group in the uprising of the Greek nation halted the theatrical movement in Odessa for many years until the Greek theatre reappeared in the manor houses. The liberation of Greece resulted in the creation of new cultural centres with new theatre companies which staged plays mainly of historical content. Odessa and other Russian towns, from being transmitters of light as theatrical centres became receptors of light.

From then on Greek theatre companies toured the densely inhabited Greek areas of the Euxine Sea. The Greek theatre of Russia rediscovered its old good self at the end of the last century when the first large waves from the forced exodus of the Greeks of Pontos took root in their new homelands. They would also bring with them the humble theatrical *paedeia* they had acquired in Ottoman-occupied Pontos.

A decisive role in the renaissance of the Greek theatre in Russia was also played by the new theatre built in Odessa in 1878 by its Greek Mayor

Gregorios Maraslis on the specifications of the famous theatre of Vienna. His example was imitated by other Greeks, such as Ioannis Aloizis, who with his own money built the theatre of Sochoum with a seating capacity of 650 people. In that hall plays in Modern Greek and Pontian were staged, as well as others by foreign playwrights in Greek translation and the masterpieces of Ancient classical playwrights.

Constantinople, the capital of ecumenical Greek civilization until 1923, functioned as a bridge between the Athenian state and Hellenism of the diaspora. The artistic activity of Athens completed its cycle with tours to the large Greek centres of the Black Sea. They presented patriotic plays in order to revitalise the national morale, as well as established classical works which had been staged in all large European cities.

During her tour to Odessa in December 1907, the famous Greek actress Kyveli staged Hermann Sudermann's play *I timi* (Η τιμή). Regarding that performance, Emmanuel Kapsambelis, the Greek Consul in that city, wrote: "I saw this spacious and grandiose theatre so crowded with Greeks of both sexes and I was touched so deeply that I held back my tears with difficulty."

The Golden Period of Greek Theatre in Russia

The 1905 revolution in Russia liberated the Greek intellectuals and artists who were captives of the obscurantist laws of the authoritarian regime. Taking advantage of the reforms, together with the establishment of Greek schools, they also founded everywhere amateur dramatic companies whose "activity for Hellenism there is in many ways worthy of many praises".

The *Filekpaideftiki Syllogoi* (Φιλεκπαιδευτικοί Σύλλογοι) frequently constituted dramatic groups to raise funds to cover mainly educational expenses, but also to assist the Russian army or refugees. In almost all of the cities of Russia special money-collection committees were set up for the refugees, and particular performances were presented to assist them with the plays *Stella Violanti* (Στέλλα Βιολάντη), *Golfo*, *Photeini Sandri* (Φωτεινή Σάντρι), Delikaterini's *Hrima* (Χρήμα) performed by Argyropoulos' cast, and others.

At the beginning of the twentieth century a prime mover of the Pontian theatre in Russia was the socialist George K. Fotiadis, whose plays *Proxenia* and *O Lazar-aghaz* (Ο Λάζαρο-αγάς) were repeatedly staged even at the smaller Greek villages of Russia and later of the Soviet Union. The capable person who

carried on this work was Yiangos Kanonidis, and a little later the recognised playwright, actor, stage producer and first director of the Greek state theatre of Sohoum, Theodore G. Kanonidis, known by his artistic name *Apollonas*.

The main theatre groups were the following:

The Greek Educational and Cross-cultural Association of Tiflida

On 25 March 1911 the Greek Amateur Dramatic Group of Tiflida staged, in one of the best theatres of the city, the national drama *Athanasios Diakos* (Αθανάσιος Διάκος). On 24 May 1915, the newspaper *Argonaftis* (Αργοναύτης) recorded:

The theatre was filled with spectators, the beautiful Greek fustanela shone.... The work of the amateur group took its beautiful course, its members increased in number, and since that year continues to stage plays regularly, which additionally came to the point to be a national school where many amateur actors learnt the Greek language, and which regularly brings together the local Greeks, gradually awakening in this way their national morale.

On 27 November the amateurs of the Greek theatre cast staged *Aikaterini kai Xanthopoulos* (Αικατερίνη και Ξανθόπουλος), a drama of Trapezond content, and the money collected (130 roubles) was offered to the needy reservists.⁶ On 21 April the amateur actors of the Greek Educational and Cross-cultural Association presented P. Zanos' drama *Yenos kai kardia* (Γένος και καρδιά) and the comedy *I trella* (Η τρέλλα).⁷ The performances continued with Peresiadis' play *Sklava* (Σκλάβο).⁸ The amateur group of Tiflida also presented Persidis' folk drama *Magemenos voskos* (Μαγεμένος βοσκός) and the comedy *Fiakas* (Φιάκας).⁹

In addition, with the initiative of the *Ellinomorfotikos Filekpedeftikos Syllogos Tiflidas* (Ελληνομορφωτικός Φιλεκπαιδευτικός Σύλλογος Τιφλίδας), the plays *Yenos kai kardia* (Γένος και καρδιά) and the comedy *Tō kokkalaki tis nychteridas* were presented on the stage of the Zoubalov Theatre. The endeavour proved successful, but it would have been better if Greek plays and not translations of foreign ones had been selected...¹⁰.

G. Th. Papadopoulos funded the dramatic group of Tiflida, the female teacher of the theatre group's Greek school, as well as the new educational association of Tiflida.¹¹ Ioannis Pastianidis donated his house for the Greek school of the dramatic school of Tiflida.¹²

The Prometheus Greek Association of Vatum and the Prometheus Dramatic Association

Prometheus was run by a seven-member board which was elected by the members in the general assemblies.¹³

In 1906 in Vatum the local amateur group staged G. H. Fotiadis' play *Skotadia* (Σκοτάδια) or *O Lazar-ghas*. Stavros Kanonidis, one of the great intellectuals of Pontian Hellenism wrote on 7 December 1913 in his critique of S. Melas' play *O yios tou iskiou* (Ο γιος του ίσκιου), staged at the Zelesniy Theatre of Vatum by the Prometheus Greek Dramatic and Philological Association:

...last Saturday our golden youth presented to the public the most sacred thrill of true dramatic art. A rare enjoyment of the time, pure art which, no matter whether it later made so many foreigners known, it was, and remains and will remain absolutely Greek....

A similar success met the plays *I katarameni* (Η καταραμένη) and *To kokkino poukamiso* (Το κόκκινο πουκάμισο), the earnings of which were not offered for the community's needs (church and school) but for "compatriot refugees of the province of Kars. You may ask: What are these refugees? We answer: They are Greeks like us; they speak the same language and worship the same god. The only difference is that while they were devastated by the Turks, we, thank God, did not suffer any difficulties. They are dying of hunger and the cold, while we are having an easy life...". On behalf of the needy people of Santa an unscheduled performance of the Pontian comedy *Oi kodonatoi vrykolakes* was staged at the Greek village of Tavka.

The Prometheus Association also presented at the Zelezny Theatre P. Nirvana's play *O architekton Marthas* (Ο αρχιτέκτων Μάρθας)¹⁴ with M. Michaelidis,¹⁵ as well as *Golfo*, *Stella Violanti* and the comedy *Ypo ehemytheia* (Υπό εχέμυθεια).¹⁶

The Prometheus Greek Association of Tuapse

A great theatrical presence was also enjoyed by Prometheus of the Tuapse community, the members of which sewed the luxurious theatre costumes of the various plays. The critic in charge of the relevant column in the newspaper *Argonafitis* of 12 January 1913 wrote about the performance of Antonis Antoniadis' play *O Panayiotis o Kalamatianos* (Ο Παναγιώτης ο Καλαματιανός):

The hall of the building is quite large; however so many people were assembled that almost no space was left... The performance reflected on a dramatic event of the revolution of 1821... Indeed it was a play of great merit and worth close study and long rehearsal. Nevertheless, it was performed with such unrivalled success that initially I thought that those involved were professional actors and actually first class.

The Prometheus Greek Association of Tuapse organised a performance of the play *O Panayiotis o Kalamatianos*, which was inspired by the revolution of 1821 and was written by the Kalamata High School Principal Antonis Antoniadis. The play appeared in Russia for the first time. The stage producer was Demetrios Amaxopoulos, President of the Association, with Director F. Filippidis as the prompter. The inspiration for the play and the costumes was provided by Filippidis, completed by the Vice-President Panayiotis Avraam Papadopoulos. Some custodians were selling tickets, while others were in charge of the canteen.¹⁷ On 27th December at the City Council building of Tuapse a performance was held for the Serbian brothers by the beneficent community of Tuapse, on the theme *I irois tis Makedonias* (Η ηρωίς της Μακεδονίας).¹⁸

Filekpaideftikos Syllogos Athina of Aikaterinodav

The youth of the community of Aikaterinodav, being urged by the Consul, founded the Athina Association whose aim was decided to be the creation of a library and reading room.¹⁹ This was followed by the approval of the rules of order of the Filekpaideftikos Syllogos Athina. The elected executive board consisted of E. Dallas, I. Exakoustos, S. Partidas, D. Kodonidis, D. Grammatikopoulos, G. Vrassidas, I. Mavroidis, I. Anastasiadou and N. Feideli.²⁰

In the association's hall the comedy *I theia tou Karolou* (Η θεία του Καρόλου) was staged with the takings intended for the needy students of the Greek school.²¹ P. Feidelis referred to the special difficulties of the particular work and pointed out that regarding their choice the amateurs of the Filekpaideftikos Syllogos Athina were carried away by the vanity of one of them with no good results in the end. However, he credited Zarokoilis, Delikaris and Pintoglou, as well as the young ladies Kondyli, Leontidou, Mavropoulou and Thomaidou.

The Greek Dramatic Group of Vladikavkas

This youth dramatic group was founded to stage plays aiming at the increase of the residents' intellectual level.

The progress of the Greek Dramatic Group of Vladikavkas was a reality.²² They staged the drama *Dolofonos* (Δολοφόνος) on 25 March. The stage was reconstructed by the personal work of P. Pastianidis. Several actors stood out, such as S. Faritof, E. Mourantantof, E. Tsahatarof, G. Kakoudidou, R. Pastianidis, I. Tamboulidis, K. Mourantanof, G. Olandezof, P. Thoidis, P. Kakoulidis. The play, written in the Pontian dialect, was warmly applauded.

Amateur Dramatic Group of Apinskaya

On 11 April the drama *Kassiani kai Akylas* (Κασσιανή και Ακύλας) was performed by this theatre group, with Angelopoulos and Yfantopoulos having excelled. The sum of 650 roubles was aimed to be allotted for the Greek school to be founded in the following year.²³

The Progressive Association Anayennisi of Apinskaya²⁴

The main concern and basis of this association was the organisation of theatrical performances and gymnastic games with the intention of increasing the intellectual and ethical education of its members. To achieve this idea of improvement and establishment, protection was needed as was fervent support on the part of the presiding board of the community, and of the consular authorities as well. In this way, it would be possible for the Progressive Youth Association, encouraged and assisted by the official quarters, to make its aim reality.²⁵

The Drama Group of Anapa

For a second time in 1917 a play was performed at Anapa, entitled *To matsoukakikon hara* (Το ματσουκακικόν χαρά) in the Trapezond dialect, as well as D. Koromilas' *O thanatos tou Perikleous* (Ο θάνατος του Περικλέους). Despite the negative reception of many people who had not read the excellent work by Fotiadis (*O Lazar-aghos* or *Proxenio*) and some folk songs, the play performed in the Pontian dialect was successful. The second play was a failure. Some acted well, such as M. Kyriakidou, Delikaris, Psaltis and

Gouzos. The suggestion of the journalist, signing as *Anatolitis*, was to form an association which would perform works in the Pontian dialect.²⁶

The Drama Group of Aloupka

On 22 January at Aloupka, after the initiative of H. Pastiadis and Antonis Tzinivizis, a soirée was organised with its theme the monologue *Ellinis* (Ελληνίς), and *Thanatos tou Markou Botsari* (Ο θάνατος του Μάρκου Μπότσαρη). For three years already there was an established school at Aloupka financed by the voluntary income of the theatre performances.²⁷ The comedy *O Fiakas*, staged on 22 January 1917 by this amateur group which had a life of just three years in the small Greek community of Aloupka, was also very successful.

The Elpis Progressive League (Adzraskaya 4) of Batoum

With the initiative of Messrs A. Domninos, P. Symenoidis, N. Sytmalidis and G. Kosmidis, a new league was created with the aim to financially support all those compatriot students who interrupted their studies in Russian Higher Education Schools, as well as those in the last year of their Greek High School studies, so that they continue with their education at university level.²⁸ The League also had a reading room²⁹ and organised theatrical performances.

The Drama Group of Krimskaya

This amateur group of Krimskaya presented Peresiadis' plays *Golfo*, *Moussiki synavlia* (Μουσική συναυλία), and others.

The Kyriakidis Association of Argyroupolis

The Kyriakidis Association at Argyroupolis organised theatrical performances with works, such as *I lyra tou gero-Nikola* (Η λύρα του γερο-Νικόλα), *O kapnodohokatharistis* (Ο καπνοδοχοκαθαριστής), *O petros kai I Sophia* (Ο Πέτρος και η Σοφία). The theatre group leader of a relevant performance, staged in February 1911, was Panayiotis Kazantzidis.³⁰

The Theatre after the Dominance of the Bolsheviks

For two decades after the dominance of the Bolsheviks, Hellenism of the

Soviet Union experienced its golden intellectual and artistic period. Lenin, respecting the cultural particularities of the different ethnic groups, allowed the establishment of theatre clubs, reading rooms and libraries in every village and town. Quite frequently theatre groups enjoyed even financial support from the local authorities and the state organisations. Certain theatre groups functioned within the state theatres themselves as departments. The Greek Theatre of Dobas in Marioupolis was one of the main state theatres, in which plays by the great Marioupolitan writer Georgios Kostoprav were staged for the first time.

In 1928 the Ftaroy Theatre at Sochoum was named the Greek State Theatre. Its first director, Th. Kanonidis, with the guidance of the Soviet Union, after the original difficulties were overcome, the theatre group had the ability to study theoretically and practically the art of acting. In the golden period 1922-1937 the Greek State theatre of Sochoum staged more than forty plays, original, adapted and translated.

The Greek Theatre of Sochoum served not only the theatre needs of the Greeks of Abkhazia but also used to tour other areas of the Black Sea. Just in the town of Kerts in one tour, the play performed was attended by 16, 350 spectators.

This period lasted until 1937 because the productive period of 1917-1937 was followed by the period of the personality cult and of sterile chauvinism. With orders from above and without excuses the authorities started the arrests and executions of Greek intellectuals. They closed all the schools, the theatres and the Greek newspapers. They destroyed the Greek churches and displaced thousands of Greeks in Siberia and Turmenistan, applying systematic cultural genocide. The Greeks [from Russia] who arrive in Greece even today are the victims of these measures. This is the reason why many of them do not know their mother tongue and their folk culture.

Struggle for the Greek Theatre

In 1958, after the decision of the government of Abkhazia, the Greek State Theatre of Sochoum started functioning again. It had closed in 1938 when, as part of the Stalinist cleansings of ethnic minorities, the Soviet authorities closed the Greek school, newspapers and theatres.

Its refunctioning was due to the efforts of the Greeks of the region, under the initiative of the stage producer Dimitris Bourbouridis. This stage

producer of Greek origin had sent a letter to Nikita Khrushchev and played a leading role in the collection of 10, 000 signatures for the reopening of the Greek schools, theatres and newspapers. He was also entrusted with the reorganisation of the State Theatre of Sochoum, which functioned successfully until 1988. The theatre staged plays in Greek and Pontian in Sochoum, and in parallel carried out tours throughout almost the entire former USSR and specifically to towns with a large Greek *paroikia*.

The theatre closed down in 1988 when the conflicts between the Georgians and the Abkhazians forced the Greeks into expatriation. It was then when the seventy-year-old Bourbouridis, whose contribution to the theatre had been recognised by the Autonomous Democracy of Abkhazia awarding him a prize in 1983, came to Greece. In Greece however, the stage producer, who had struggled in adverse times to maintain the existence of the Greek theatre in the former USSR, faced serious survival problems until the homeland offered him a final resting place and he found eternal peace there. The truth is, however, that, together with so many other noted neo-refugee intellectuals, he found the doors of state services almost closed and encountered scandalous behaviour from civil officials. The example of the internationally recognised eighty-five-year-old music composer Odysseas Dimitriadis, who had to queue up for a long time everyday for the verification of his details so that he could obtain Greek citizenship and a Greek identity card, speaks for itself.

To Hellenism by and around the Euxine Sea, which in recent years has begun to find its good self again, we wish it to play soon again a leading part in all cultural fields.

NOTES

1. Mouratidis, Ermis, *To Pontiakó teatro* (Το Ποντιακό θέατρο), Vol. 1-3, Thessaloniki.
2. Lampsidis, Odysseas, *Yyro sto pontiakó teatro* (Γύρω στο Ποντιακό θέατρο), Athens, 1978.
3. Samouilidis, Christos, *To laiko paradosiako teatro tou Pontou* (Το λαϊκό παραδοσιακό θέατρο του Πόντου), Athens, 1980.
4. Mouratidis, Ermis, *Fakelos: To teatro tou Pontou* (Φάκελος: Το θέατρο του Πόντου), *Foyer*, No. 18 (2007), p. 51.

5. Fotiadis, Konstantinos, "To elliniko teatro" («Το ελληνικό θέατρο»), *Foyer*, No. 18 (2007), p. 51.
6. *Argonafitis* (Αργοναύτης), 8 December 1912.
7. *Argonafitis* (Αργοναύτης), 168/1 May 1916 Tiflis.
8. *Argonafitis* (Αργοναύτης), 186/18 September 1916.
9. *Argonafitis* (Αργοναύτης), 169/8 May 1916.
10. *Argonafitis* (Αργοναύτης), 211/26 February 1917. I. Pastidis.
11. *Argonafitis* (Αργοναύτης), 166/10 April 1916.
12. *Argonafitis* (Αργοναύτης), 166/10 April 1916. Pastidis was born in Tiflida in 1876 originating from Santa. He served as a teacher at Sochoum, secretary of the regional courthouse and censor of the Greek publications and assistant to the legal advisor of the Tiflida Town Council. Prime mover for the convergence of a conference of the Greeks of the towns and villages of the Caucasus for the submission of a petition to the Ministry regarding the needs of the Greek population. In 1901 he collected subscriptions for the *Frontistirio Trapezoundas* (Φροντιστήριο Τραπεζούντας).
13. According to *Argonafitis* (Αργοναύτης) (158/14 February 1916), the Prometheus Association rendered accounting for and held elections. In the general assembly just six members were present, resulting in postponement since it was not considered a quorum. A new board was elected for Prometheus: President Hrouvliia Sytmalidis, Vice-President I. Persidis, Treasurer I. Phokas, Secretary Th. Gregoriadis, Librarian S. Kanonidis, Counsellors M. Athanasiadis and Z. Terzopoulou.
14. *Argonafitis* (Αργοναύτης), 167/24 April 1916. Batoum.
15. *Argonafitis* (Αργοναύτης), 168/1 May 1916. Theatrical works.
16. *Argonafitis* (Αργοναύτης), 221/14 May 1917.
17. *Argonafitis* (Αργοναύτης), 19 January 1913.
18. The performance was staged in a hurry, and although it was impossible to be successful from the artistic point of view, it succeeded financially. Congratulations to all the participants, and mainly to the organizers, Euthymios Siamnidis and Amoiridis. (D. Papadopoulos). On 6 February a performance was held for the community with Mageiropoulos in charge and with the cooperation of I. Amoiridis. The plays staged were the four-act drama *Aikaterini kai Xanthopoulos* (Αικατερίνη και Ξανθόπουλος) and the comedy *O dropalos erotevmenos* (Ο ντροπαλός ερωτευμένος) with Mageiropoulos, Katsikidis, Hatsikidis, Mavrokefalidis and Mageiropoulou distinguished. In the comedy I. Mavrokefalidis excelled. However, financially the performance was not profitable because of the lack of a suitable building and the sale of only three-

fourths of the tickets. Of the 250 roubles collected, 225 roubles went towards expenses, and the rest were shared by the war-stricken people and the needs of the community. (D. Papadopoulos). A performance of the four-act tragedy *O horos tou Zalongou* (Ο χορός του Ζαλόγγου) staged for the community and the war victims, as well as the comedy *Gamos kata ta pontiaka ethima* (Γάμος κατά τα ποντιακά έθιμα) composed by the writer of the article was acted by M. Mouratof (Krinio), E. Antoniadou (teacher) as Frosso and N. Alexandridis as Pilios Goussis.

19. *Argonafitis* (Αργοναύτης), 165/3 April 1916.
20. *Argonafitis* (Αργοναύτης), 195/6 November 1916.
21. *Argonafitis* (Αργοναύτης), 203/1 January 1917.
22. *Argonafitis* (Αργοναύτης), 168/ 1 May 1916, Vladikavkas (I. Konstantinidis).
23. *Argonafitis* (Αργοναύτης), 168/ 1 May 1916, Apinskaya.
24. *Argonafitis* (Αργοναύτης), 230/16 July 1917.
25. *Argonafitis* (Αργοναύτης), 16 July 1917.
26. *Argonafitis* (Αργοναύτης), 211/26 February 1917.
27. *Argonafitis* (Αργοναύτης), 212/5 March 1917.
28. *Epochi* (Εποχή), 1 July 1920.
29. *Epochi* (Εποχή), 8 August 1920.
30. *Pharos tis Anatolis* (Φάρος της Ανατολής), 16 February 1911.

The Greeks in Egypt and Their Theatre Activities During the Twentieth Century

Euthymios Souloyannis*

RÉSUMÉ

Cet article se penche sur la vie du théâtre des Communautés grecques en Egypte au vingtième siècle. Bien que les débuts du théâtre grec remontent au milieu du dix-neuvième siècle à Alexandrie, son point culminant est observé seulement après la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale, principalement dans cette ville et au Caire avec des groupes de professionnels et semi-professionnels, aussi bien qu'avec des troupes de théâtre bien connues d'Athènes qui ont joué devant un public très réceptif. L'auteur note que l'activité théâtrale s'est réduite après 1950 avec le déclin des Communautés grecques prospères à travers l'Egypte.

ABSTRACT

This article reflects on the theatre life of the Greek paroikies in Egypt during the twentieth century. Although the beginning of the Greek theatre there goes back to the mid-nineteenth century in Alexandria, its highest point is observed in the post World War II years, mainly in Alexandria and Cairo with professional and semi-professional groups, as well as with the invitation of well known theatre companies from Athens which performed in front of a most receptive public. The writer notes that theatre activity decreased after the 1950s following the decline of the prosperous Greek *paroikies* throughout Egypt.

“Of those who immigrated to Alexandria, nine out of ten without exaggeration belonged to the city’s labour class”. This is the picture drawn by Ioannis Ghikas, a doctor of Philosophy from Eptanisa, a teacher and the owner of “Lyceum”, a most prestigious school in its time, in Alexandria. This is written in his book *Fifty Years a Teacher* (Alexandria, 1950). What is also

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quite true is what is written of the theatre activity of the Greeks in Alexandria, published in the community newspaper *Metarrythmisi* (Reform) on 19 November 1886.

“This evening the Panhellenic Drama Company will present at the “Polytheama” (*Multivision*) theatre the patriotic family drama “Kyra Euphrosini”, a play by D. Vernadakis. It is needless to recommend this play to our readers, for everyone knows it is about the ruthless tyrant Ali Pasas of Ioannina, who had become a real plague for the Christians. This drama reflects the life which the Christians suffered at that time”. On the following day the newspaper anonymously praised the direction and the actors’ performances but condemned the play because the heroine betrayed her conjugal fidelity and surrendered herself to the tyrant of her country. It also suggested that the playwright could have chosen another subject of the many great events in our history, which were more appropriate and more educating. That was the perception of that time.

During the 20th century, the situation of the theatre definitely improved in comparison with that of the nineteenth century. Moreover, Ioannis Ghikas’ aforementioned viewpoint verifies that the small numbers of theatre enthusiasts during the first half of the twentieth century were rapidly increasing. Unfortunately, though, the results were still disappointing. This was due to the fact that the Greek upper class in Egypt could follow the artistic activities in Europe and travel to see productions at the Comedie Française, the Old Vic, and La Scala. As well, of course, theatre companies with such actors as Kotopouli, Kyveli, Ch. Nezer, Aim. Veakis, and in more recent years, Pappas, Lambeti, Horn, Fotopoulos, Iliopoulos etc., were being invited to Egypt from Greece.

Today’s research can begin at the archives of the Greeks of Egypt which can be found at the Greek Literary and Historical Archive of Athens (E. L. I. A.), as well as at similar archives that are still situated in Egypt or in private collections in Athens. Finally, the research of this paper is also based on the personal testimonies of people who had first-hand knowledge of the theatrical activity which is presented here.

The city of Alexandria had many theatre halls where companies from Europe staged performances. Moreover, this is where companies from Greece made some of their monumental appearances. One of the oldest theatres belonged to Zizinias, an important Greek businessman and friend of Mohamed Ali, the reformer of modern Egypt. Zizinias was also a

significant figure in the country's economy and one of the pioneers of the Greek community. The "Zizinia" theatre was built in 1870, and later was renamed the "Mohamed Ali". Today it is called "Sayed Darwish". In addition there were other halls such as the "Alcazar", "Polytheama", "Corntahi", "Palais Crystal", "Pausilypo", "Faliro", Momferatou", "Edem", Theatre of the Danube", Theatre of Bakos", "Alhambra" (still functioning as a cinema today), "Luna Park", "Casablanca", and "Moasat".

For one to find the origins of the Greek community theatre in Egypt, one must go back, I would say, to 1863. This is when "Bianca and Ferdinando", a drama in five acts, was published in Alexandria, translated from the Italian by Gerasimos Pentakis. Moreover, the first play written in Greek was "Greece Triumphant" by the Thessalian Vasilis Argyropoulos and published in Alexandria in 1865. There is an extensive catalogue of plays which were performed in Egypt in front of Greek audiences, presented by local professional or rather semi-professional companies, as well as by amateurs, members of various cultural societies in both Alexandria and Cairo. There were also many light-hearted revues (epitheorisis) - a genre most popular at the time - written by Greeks in Egypt. Those plays were presented from 1940 onwards.

What follows reflects the theatre activity in the community post 1939-1940. It is now that we can talk of the establishment of permanent local theatre companies. The idea began, according to Manolis Yalourakis, in 1939, when M. Dimitriou decided to engage pupils of his Drama School in Alexandria, which he had founded, to give some performances.

There were no great drama schools in the Greek community in Egypt, for whoever wished to study drama, was more likely to come to Greece. On the contrary, there were many conservatoires. On 22 October 1939, the revue "Sex Appeal" by E. Koletsos and N. Neogenis, both famous writers at the time, was played at the hall of the Greek Society "Aeschylus - Arion", in Alexandria. Of those two, Koletsos was more a novelist, while Neogenis had made a name writing revues. That company became the "Greek Company of Alexandria". Later on, Kimon Sarolidis and Mary Yannouli, with some of its members, formed a new company, which also went through some stages of break offs and reunions.

Mary Yannouli had studied theatre in Athens and London. Along with Kouimtzis and K. Persis, they founded their own company in 1942. We have now reached the war years of the decade of the 1940s, a period when these

companies invited artists from Greece in the likes of Nikos Loris, Sophia and Alikí Vembo, Mimis Traiforos, Zaza Brillanti, Menios Manolitsakis, Mary Carmina, G. Zafiropoulos, the composer Leo Rapitis, Rena Vlachopoulou, the composer Spartakos etc. An indispensable part of every social event at the time were singers such as Kakia Mendri, Nikos Gounaris etc.

It is in this decade and almost until the utter diminution of the Greek community that various playwrights make their first appearance in revue, boulevard and other theatre genres, such as Lambis Paschalidis, F. Paschalidou, T. Paschalidis and St. Stavridis. We should also mention especially the company founded by Adamandios Lemos and Mary Giatra, whose performances throughout the entire Egypt were greatly praised, particularly the shows given in front of the Greek and Allied troops during the Second World War. Also in Alexandria, a company headed by Metaxas gained a reputation in 1912. In Cairo, it was the time for the companies within the Greek community to flourish. In the beginning of the twentieth century, the Marinakis family was the core of a very active company. A company by G. Fotinos was established in 1914 and a company called "The Muses" (Ai Mousai) in 1924. Finally, there were the very popular companies of the Greek Philharmonic of Cairo, the Society of Greek Amateurs and the Alumni of the Abeteios School in Cairo.

A most prominent figure in the Greek community, as far as theatrical activity is concerned, was Giorgos Iordanidis, who later worked at the National Theatre of Northern Greece (K.Th.B.E.). Iordanidis directed many plays during community theatre celebrations, mainly shows presented by the Alumni of the Abeteios School. One of his last productions was, in 1960, the "Alexandrian Amateurs", a play by Nikos Atherinos, which was housed, among others, at the Greek Schools Alumni Society and the Society of Asia Minor.

All in all, we should also underline the theatrical activity at schools in Alexandria, Cairo, Mansoura, Port Said, Suez, Ismailia, and other major Greek communities, which contributed tremendously to the students' education.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that amateur theatre really flourished within the Greek community in Egypt. Various cultural and literary societies had established their own amateur theatrical groups, during the 1930's and until the 1950's. Professional actors never had a chance for a career in Egypt, perhaps because the country had always been visited by theatrical companies from Athens.

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Greek Theatre Activities in Germany and Belgium: The Last Fifty Years

Maria Karavia*

RÉSUMÉ

D'un point de vue, qui lui est personnel, l'auteur offre un tableau global du théâtre grec en Allemagne depuis 1960 et en Belgique depuis 1985. L'article éclaire la contribution de divers groupes, professionnels et amateurs, dans les deux pays et spécialement le théâtre grec de Wuppertal en Allemagne. De plus, une mention particulière est faite du rôle unique du théâtre grec en Allemagne, qui a attiré beaucoup de réfugiés politiques durant la période de la Junte et le déclin subséquent que ces groupes ont vécu après le changement politique en Grèce quand beaucoup d'artistes s'y sont rapatriés.

ABSTRACT

From a personal perspective the writer provides an overview of the Greek theatre in Germany since 1960 and in Belgium since 1985. Her account focuses on the contribution of various groups (professional and amateur) in both countries and especially the Greek Theatre of Wuppertal in Germany. Furthermore, there is particular reference to the unique role of the theatre of the Greeks in Germany which attracted many political refugees during the years of the Junta and the subsequent decline which these groups experienced after the political changeover in Greece when many artists repatriated.

Germany

Greek theatre activities in Germany were started by immigrants in 1960, the year of the general immigration. At times these theatre activities were also strengthened by groups of actors, known mainly from the film industry, who visited Germany and had received an enthusiastic reception from the Greek immigrants.

* Actress, stage producer.

While in the countries of the Mediterranean Sea and the Balkans the development of the Greek theatre was mainly the result of the intellectual and economic development of the Greeks, in Germany it functioned originally as a sentimental bridge with the homeland. Living in a country with a different culture gave birth to the need for building a bridge with the native land for their own survival and later for the maintenance of the Greek language, and even as a gathering place of politically persecuted artists from Greece. As a result, in various cities of Germany at times theatre activities came about because of the efforts of amateur artists as well as by professional ones.

The most significant theatre activity of our time was that inaugurated by the actor Yiannis Kyriakidis who unfortunately was killed in a car accident a few years ago. In 1968 Kyriakidis founded the Workers' Stage in Munich. The repertoire of this group included works by Greek playwrights such as Ioannis Kambanellis, Dimitris Kehaidis, and others, but also by non-Greek playwrights, such as Arthur Miller. Unfortunately, this endeavour faded with the return to Greece of many artists after the political changeover.

Later, we encounter in Wuppertal, Germany, some theatre activity by amateurs under the auspices of the Greek Church and the Greek Community, created by the director Dimitris Bialas who managed to stage two ensemble plays based on texts which he authored. After his death even this activity came to an end.

There have been many smaller scale events which have come to our notice, however, organised by Greek schools with the assistance of the teachers as well as by associations and Greek Communities. These Greek Communities, in an effort to share something of their history and culture with the host country, set up small amateur theatre groups with their members and staged a few plays, usually of contemporary Greek playwrights, but without any continuation. At the same time, well known artists from Greece, many financially subsidized by the Greek Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and later by the General Secretariat of the Greeks Abroad, visited Germany with the aim to entertain the Greek immigrants.

In the decade 1980-1990 the theatre Attis, under the leadership of the well-known stage director Theodore Terzopoulos, who in 1972-1976 worked as assistant director of the Berliner Ensemble in Berlin, presented theatre performances in Germany in the Greek language. Terzopoulos was distinguished for the quality of his work, as well as for the outstanding presentation of Ancient classical plays with his special focus on body

movement and voice projection in the ancient tragedy. His work impressed the German public.

At the end of 1990 Grigoris Nikiforidis, a teacher at the Greek High School of Nuremburg, initiated the founding of the Nuremburg Hellenic Club which attracted a large number of amateur actors as well as students of the Greek schools. Their activities, which continue to the present time, include theatre, music, dance, photography, cinema, as well as the publishing of a journal. Until now they have staged works by Costas Mourselas (*He and She, The Lady Is Not for Mourning*), Yiorgos Skourtis (*The Unemployed*) Dimitris Psathas (*A Fool and a Half*), Yiannis Pretenteris (*The Dimwit*), Nikos Zahopoulos (*A Pair of Legs*), Dimitris Potamitis, Alecos Sakellarios, Dimitris Kehaidis, but also Sophocles (*Electra*). They have also staged plays by non-Greek playwrights, such as William Saroyan, (*Hello Out There!*), Anton Chekhov (*The Anniversary*), Tennessee Williams and Fasbinter.

In 1994 in Hamburg Nikos Vouvoukis with the cooperation of amateur actors founded the Hamburg Theatre Company. Their aim has been to assist with the maintenance of Greek culture but also to provide young people with the opportunity to cultivate their talent and keep in contact with the Greek language. This group usually performs works from the Greek repertoire but mainly plays for children. It is also involved with shadow theatre.

During the decade of 1990-2000 some other small amateur groups were formed, such as the Pontian Theatre Group of Dortmund which had some sporadic appearances, a short-lived group in Berlin which consisted of amateur actors and one or two professionals, and the Munich Pensioners' Theatre Group. This latest group's activities are usually aided by German services and the Greek Communities within the program of pastime activities and psychological support for old age pensioners.

At the beginning of 1990 two new theatre companies were established simultaneously. They have been directed by professional actors with the participation of amateur ones, and both of them in the run of the years are developing into purely professional groups. They are the German-Greek Theatre in Cologne founded by Costas Papakostopoulos and the Greek Theatre of Wuppertal, the initiative of the actress and stage director Maria Karavia.

The quality of the performances of both theatre groups is high and the German critics continue to sing their praises. However, their approach to the presentation of their plays is completely different from the viewpoint of stage production.

The German-Greek Theatre of Cologne presents plays in the German language on subjects from the Ancient Greek dramatists based on an advanced staging aspect, and on the other hand Modern Greek plays are rarely done in the Greek language.

This theatre company has staged plays in the German language by: Aristophanes (*Plutus*, *The Acharnians*, *The Birds*, *The Frogs*), Dimitris Kehaides (*The Wedding*, *Tavli* (Backgammon), *Born Yesterday*), Euripides (*Bacchae*, *Medea*), Sophocles (*Oedipus Tyrannus*, *Oedipus at Colonus*), Aeschylus (*The Persians*, *Prometheus Bound*), Vasilis Ziogas (*The Comedy of the Fly*), Dimitris Dimitriadis (*I'm Dying Like a Country*), William Shakespeare (*Timon, the Athenian*), Dea Loher (*Manhattan Medea*), Heiner Müller (*Philoctetes*, *Hercules 5*).

The Greek Theatre of Wuppertal was started at the beginning of 1990 by Maria Karavia. It stages plays in two languages: Greek-German and Greek-English for the English language countries. The directing approach is classical with modern elements while the thematics of the plays reflect contemporary issues. The presentation of this ensemble's plays in Belgium and in many cities of Germany has been the challenge and the stimulus for amateur actors to be inspired to create their own theatre groups.

The purpose and goal of the Greek Theatre of Wuppertal is the production and performance of plays both for adults and students of the Greek schools in Germany, as well as in other European countries where Greeks reside. It also aims to organize further educational activities, theatre seminars, artistic exchanges, concerts, exhibitions and in general any kind of cultural activities which contribute to the intellectual and aesthetic cultivation of the diaspora Greeks, particularly the younger generations and in parallel to promote Greek civilization. An additional objective of this theatre company is to give vitality to the local, regional, national and international life with a European character.

This group's repertoire had included classical and contemporary Greek plays. It started with the work of a Spanish writer Federico Garcia Lorca's drama *Sunset*, which was staged within the International Cultural Festival in Wuppertal with the cooperation of actors from three nationalities (the Greeks, Germans and Spaniards). The performance was supplemented with a short German translation. This was followed by Yiorgos Hassapoglou's *The Sugar Biscuits* on the immigrant's dreams, struggle and finally social recognition in the foreign land. Another production was *Singing in the Aegean*, a bilingual musical based on texts by Greek writers on subjects

borrowed from mythology, Greek traditions, customs, music, poetry, literature and the history of the Aegean, and the most recent Makis Antonopoulos' bilingual Greek and German play *Anna Who Is Walking on the Clouds...*!, dealing with the drama of a Cypriot mother who has lived for years by the dividing line waiting for the return of her missing son and who, in the end, decides to search herself for him in Turkey. In addition, this theatre company has staged Ancient Greek tragedies and one comedy (Sophocles' *Electra* and Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*, both in Greek, Sophocles' *Antigone* and Euripides' *Medea* in bilingual form, in Greek and German).¹

Furthermore, the repertoire of the Wuppertal Greek Theatre has included literary musical programs dedicated to Greek poets, such as Yiannis Ritsos, Odysseas Elytis, George Seferis and Constantine Cavafy, a professional training program (1995) for repatriating immigrants 18-25 years of age, concerts for children of Italian, German and Turkish origin with the participation of students from the Greek Elementary School in Wuppertal, as well as art workshops for children 9-15 years old.

This theatre company has also staged plays in Germany, Switzerland, Holland, Belgium and Cyprus with the support of the Ministries of Culture and for Foreign Affairs, as well as of the General Secretariat for the Greeks Abroad, while since 2001, with the cooperation of the Anavasis Theatre of Kavala and the support of the Greek Ministry of Culture and of Macedonia-Thrace, as well as the Kavala Prefectural Administration has performed plays in Athens, Thessaloniki, Kavala, Drama, Serres, Xanthe, Alexandroupoli, and elsewhere.

Finally, mention must be made of Toni Mavridis, a painter, poet and especially a distinguished figure with a long presence in the theatre events of Germany. Apart from his fine arts activities (stage design for thirty-seven plays, including Chekov, Gogol, Durrenmat, Sartre, Slawomir Mrozek, and others) and the opening of Gallerie A23 in Athens, in 1982, he founded the Art Theatre in Munich which operated until 1995. The plays he staged and directed were Vasilis Ziogas' *Pandora's Seven Boxes*, I. Haggie's *Six Love Stories*, A. Tabugh's *Mr Pirandello, to the Phone*, Roula Kataferi's choreodrama *Mikado*, and his own *Polite People*.

In 1996, at the suggestion of the Greek Orthodox Diocese, Toni Mavridis adjusted the theatre stage of the Parish Cultural Centre of Munich, and during the twelve years of its existence he staged over fifty plays by Greek, but mainly non-Greek playwrights. Mavridis, through the Art Theatre,

made determined efforts to organize and help Greek artists in the region of Munich. For example, he founded the Munich Greek Artists' Association and for many years he initiated a collectively organised activity. In 2006 Toni Mavridis left the direction of the Theatre Centre of the Munich parish. Since then this Cultural Centre has hosted a variety of cultural performances but its theatre activity is now restricted only to occasional amateur endeavours.

Belgium

Apart from Germany, Greek theatre activities developed in other countries of Europe, such as Belgium. There we encounter two theatre groups with amateur actors but rich activities: the Greek Theatre Workshop and the Greek Theatre of Belgium, which occasionally cooperate staging plays together and even exchanging actors.

The Greek Theatre Workshop was founded in 1985, and it is the oldest Greek theatre group in Brussels. This is the Greek section of Atelier Théâtral des Institutions Européennes, with its members being mainly employees of the European Communities.

Over the years the Theatre Workshop has staged a range of works, mainly Greek, but featuring some plays as well by international playwrights, under the direction of Tassos Nychas, Irine Chalkia, Yiannis Gavras and Vasso Andronidi. With few interruptions the group has staged plays annually, sometimes presenting two or three plays a year. Their productions have included G. Skourtis' *The Trial of Orpheus and Eurydice* (1985), Mario Pontikas' *Domestic News* (1986), Aristophanes' *Ecclesiazusae* (1987) and *Thesmophoriazusae* (1993), Kostoula Mitropoulou's *The Trailer* (1987), Bost's *Fausta* (1989), Yiannis Kambanellis' *The Four Legs of the Table* (1991) and *The Daddy War* (1996), Dimitris Koromilas' *Pericles' Death* (1992) and *Maroula's Fate* (2001), Anton Chekhov's *A Marriage Proposal* (1992), Th. Papageorgiou's *Good Bye!* (1994), Kostas Mourselas' *The Aquarium* (1996), M. Tsikliropoulos' *The Garden with the Swallows* (1997), D. Vyzantios' *Vavylonia* (2002), M. Korres' *Lumbago* (2003) and others.

Since 1995 the Workshop has also directed its attention to developing a rich program of children's theatre and its productions have staged Alki Zei's *Matias the First* (1995), A. Adamopoulos' *The Semolina Man* (1997), K. Rouggeri's *Angelina, Cinderella* (1999) and her adaptation of Aristophanes' *Ecclesiazusae* [*Like a Tale*] (2002), *Chrysovergis and Iliotati* (a children's folk

tale) (1999), George Theotokas' *The Dream of the Dodekamero* (2003), M. Kontova's *The Tangle of Weird Happenings* (2004) and P. Tsaroucha's *The Kidnapping of Princess Aeora* (2005).

In parallel, the Greek Theatre of Belgium was founded in 1992 and its contribution has also been characterized by a varied and continuous program over the past decade and a half. In Brussels it has staged eighteen Modern Greek plays and one Ancient Greek. A number of the company's members who started with this group have developed into professionals who work in both Greece and Belgium.

The Theatre's productions have been staged under the direction of Vasso Androniki, Petros Sevastikoglou, Costas Lambroulis, Yiannis Economidis, Evi Economidis and Yiannis Gavras, and include Yialama and Pretenteri's *Worthless Youth* (1993), Yiannis Kambanellis' *The Courtyard of Wonders* (1994), *The Dialogue* (1995) and *The Road Passes Inside* (2003), G. Skourtis' *Karagiozis*, *Almost Vizier* (1994), Kehaidi and Haviara's *Laurels and Oleanders* (1995) and *With Force from Kifissia* (1998), A. Galanos' *Red Lights* (1995), A. Staikos' *Clytemnestra* (1996), Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* (1996), P. Matesis' *The Ceremony* (1997), V. Zioga's *Antigone's Matchmaking* (1996), Nikos Tsiforos' *Women Prefer Tough Guys* (1997), Ch. Gianakopoulos and A. Sakellarios' *Alas, Youth* (1999), Giovanna's *The Waiting Room* (1999), M. Korres' *Midas Has Donkey's Ears* (1999), D. Yiannoukakis' *The Lady's Tantrums* (2003), Thanassis Papathanasiou and Michalis Reppas' *The Stork Brings Babies* (2004) and others.

NOTES

1. For more information on these plays staged by the Wuppertal Greek Theatre, as well as for critiques mainly by German newspapers and magazines covering the years 1990-2006, see Maria Karavia, "The Theatre in Germany After the Political Changeover", in Tilemachos Moudatsakis, comp., *Theatre, Diaspora and Education*, Rethymno: E. DIA. M. ME., University of Crete, 2007, pp. 111-117 [Symposium Proceedings, 22-23 July 2006. In Greek].

Greek-Cypriot Community Theatre in Britain

Anastassios Petsalas*

RÉSUMÉ

La longue tradition théâtrale de Chypre et de la Grèce ne pouvait qu'influencer de façon significative le théâtre des Chypriotes grecs en Angleterre, créé au début du vingtième siècle. Cet article présente un portrait global des troupes de théâtre locales d'amateurs et de semi-professionnels, et précise que les politiques coloniales ont aussi eu un impact sur leur répertoire. Les pièces écrites par une variété d'auteurs Chypriotes-Grecs ont été présentées à Londres et ailleurs en langue grecque, en dialecte chypriote, aussi bien qu'en version anglaise.

ABSTRACT

It is only natural that the long theatrical tradition of Cyprus and Greece has critically influenced the theatre of Greek-Cypriots in England, since its inception in the early twentieth century. This article presents the panorama of the local amateur and semi-professional theatre groups, noting that colonial politics also had an impact on their repertory. The plays written by a variety of Greek-Cypriot playwrights have been staged in London and elsewhere in Greek, Greek-Cypriot, as well as in English translation.

Introduction

The presence of a new type of theatre is automatically connected with the development of a new kind of audience or with an intention to change the attitude of theatre-goers.¹ The changes, which we know were caused by the development of Cypriot theatre in the British cultural scene, raise questions such as: What are the aims and objectives of a theatre from two countries (Greece and Cyprus) with a long tradition in drama? Should it follow a distancing and potentially ghettoising policy, or should it merge with the

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magnificent cosmopolitan world of Euripides and Shakespeare? We are very lucky to have a wide variety of communities settled in Canada, Australia, Britain, U.S.A., Russia, Germany, etc. Every community has its own cultural institutions: Asian drama, Indian classical music, Latin American dance and music, Armenian theatre and so on. Cypriot theatre, however, has its own unique development because in both Cyprus and Britain we can observe the rise of the Cypriot theatre side by side with metropolitan Greek and British traditions.²

The Theatre in Cyprus

The archaeological monuments of theatres in Limassol, Paphos, and Salamis prove that Cyprus has a long theatrical tradition going back at least to the third century BC.³ Even earlier in Greece, stage performances were put on by amateur actors, known as *εθελονταί*, and by the Dionysiac artists: the professional guild of actors known as *οι περί τον Διόνυσον τεχνίται*,⁴ and also by the mime performers of the fringe.

As far as the modern Cypriot theatre is concerned, theatrical performances were very rare during the Ottoman Empire, but more frequent after Cyprus became a British Colony. All theatrical performances started with the aim of arousing the revolutionary and patriotic feelings of Cypriots against the Turks and English.⁵

The Agape tou Laou Theatre group (founded in 1898) produced the first political plays in Cyprus and introduced progressive drama much earlier than the radical theatre companies in Britain.⁶ It faced rivalry from amateur Cypriot companies and visiting Greek professional ones, which presented plays written by middle-of-the-road Greek authors: Spyros Peresiades, Dimitris Koromilas and Nikolaos Laskaris (a personal friend of King George I). The political rivalry played out on the stage continued until 1948, especially with the Panergatikos Theatre Group (founded in 1922) and the Prometheus Pancypriot Theatre Company (founded in 1944).

The first Cypriot playwrights appeared after 1910. They included Kostas Markides, Evelthon Pitsilides, Thrasyvoulos Makrygiannis, Dimitris Papadimitris, Kostas Montis, Kyriakos Akanthiotis, Pavlos Liassides, Rina Katselli, Filissa Hadjihanna, Kyriakos Efthymiou and others.

Lyriko (1942) and *Prometheus* (1944) were the first professional Cypriot theatre companies which tried to compete with the Greek professional ones.

Cyprus had three or four of these companies during the Second World War. Cyprus also saw plenty of performances from visiting companies between 1878 and 1960. Those visits caused the closure of many local theatre companies. Well-known actors left Cyprus: Sotirakis Markides and Philis Karaviotis went to South Africa; Evis Gavrielides, Phaedros Stassinis, George Pastellides, George Evgeniou and others emigrated to London in 1950.

Actresses were like “gold-dust”.⁷ Until the 1940s only a few women used to perform in amateur comedy productions. Actresses often dropped their careers in order to get married. The Cypriot managers searched desperately for young actresses, who were paid like Hollywood stars

First Performances in Britain

The first performances by Greeks and Cypriots living in Britain took place approximately after 1915 in the form of school sketches and stage performances by the Greek-Orthodox schools. Those performances are very interesting if we realise that in Cyprus Ancient Greek tragedy was a continuous monopoly of the secondary schools (*σχολαρχεία, γυμνάσια-λύκεια*) between 1909-1960.⁸ The Archdiocese of Cyprus had also shown an interest in Greek theatre. The late Archbishop Makarios gave a subsidy in 1962 for the Organisation of Theatrical Activities in Cyprus (ΟΘΑΚ: Οργανισμός Θεατρικής Ανοίξεως Κύπρου) founded by George Philis, and in 1971 for the National Theatre of Cyprus (ΘΟΚ: Θεατρικός Οργανισμός Κύπρου).

A good example of an amateur group in Britain was the Koromilas Theatre Company, founded in Liverpool in 1918 by George Birbas, a teenage immigrant, who went to Liverpool by boat from the Peloponnese in order to work. He collaborated with the Greek-Cypriots to form a Greek-Orthodox church and to organise the Greek-speaking community. His amateur group was named after the late playwright Dimitris Koromilas. It performed plays with patriotic themes such as *Papaflessas*. The group lasted until 1921 when Birbas returned to Greece in order to take part as a soldier in the war against the Turks in Asia Minor.⁹

The Saint Sophia School in West London (Bayswater) also made its own theatrical appearance. This school was founded in 1922 by the late Archimandrite Ilarion Vasdekis and included children from poor Greek and Cypriot families in London. The number of pupils increased because of the arrival of Greek refugees from Smyrni (Izmir) after the Turkish invasion in

August-September 1922. The school performances included plays with themes from the Greek Revolution (1821). Cypriot students played a prominent role in those drama activities with Koula Loukis, a very talented actress in the 1960s.¹⁰

Background of the Community Theatre

The Cypriot theatre companies in Britain were without any doubt influenced by the long and wide theatrical tradition flourishing in Cyprus between 1900 and 1962. About a dozen Cypriot companies played a vital part in British theatre culture. The large number of companies and their rivalries may be seen as reflecting the political stage competitions in Cyprus (1900-1948), as well as the political theatre in Britain, which started in the 1950s. Of course we should mention the appearance of ad hoc companies (*θεατρικά μπουλούκια*) which were dismantled either after one performance or even before the opening night of their first play.¹¹

Camden Theatro Technis is the longest-established Cypriot theatre in Britain. Its co-founder and director George Evgeniou was born in Limassol (1931), the biggest cultural and commercial centre in Cyprus during the 1930-1950 period. Eighty percent of the Cypriot actors were amateurs who had full-time daily jobs and spent their evenings at rehearsals and performances. Some of them joined visiting Greek companies, which needed actors for small parts.¹² For this reason some Cypriot theatre performances were cancelled because one or two actors walked out. Additionally, Evgeniou's views on community theatre and his admiration for Joan Littlewood continually came into conflict with the Cypriot performers' attitudes.

London Cypriots Arts Group (Καλλιτεχνικός Οργανισμός Κυπρίων Λονδίνου)

Tefkros Anthias (pseudonym of Andreas Pavlou) was an active member of the Prometheus Pancyriot Theatre who came to London in 1948. In 1952 he founded the first Cypriot community school in Camden, because many Cypriots did not like to send their children to the Greek-Orthodox community schools. Anthias also encouraged the founding of a theatre group called *Καλλιτεχνικός Οργανισμός Κυπρίων Λονδίνου*. Steady members were Takis and Yannoula Frangofinos, Dinos Sideras and Kypros

Kouzapas. They produced Anthias' plays *The War*, *Stop the Decline* (Ο Πόλεμος, Σταματήστε τον κατήφορο) and others.

Lakis Pytharas joined the group in 1957 and with Kypros Kouzapas produced Kyriakos Akanthiotis' folk play *Marikou's Love* (Η Αγάπη της Μαρικούς) in 1958, which was performed at venues in London and Birmingham. They also produced Akanthiotis' *Karagiozis* and Bogris' *The Engagement* (Τα αρραβωνιάσματα). This company lasted until 1960.

Cypriot Artists' Union (Ένωσις Κυπρίων Καλλιτεχνών)

Phaedros (Paul) Stassinou, Theodoulos Moreas, Evis Gavrielides, Harry Tardios and Lakis Pytharas founded the theatre group *Ένωσις Κυπρίων Καλλιτεχνών*, which operated under the auspices of the London Cypriot Brotherhood. George Evgeniou, who had just finished his involvement with the Dundee Repertory Theatre (Scotland), agreed to join. Other performers were Litsa Stavropoulou, Athanassia Vassiliou, Denise Baltsavia,¹³ Christos Adamou, Nicos Shiafkalis, Takis Frangofinos, Mikis Xenophontos, Stella Kranai, Antonis Olympites, Alice Roussou, Angelique Vayia, John Boyatzis, Theodore Hadjigeorgiou and Tassia Koulermou.

Their productions included two Greek comedies: *Illegal Traffic* (Παράνομος κυκλοφορία) by Christos Giannakopoulos and Alecos Sakellarios (1 April 1956) at the Palace Theatre, West End and *Straight and Crooked Lines* (Ευθεία και τεθλασμένη) by Dimitris Psathas and Georgios Roussos (1 June 1957) at the Scala Theatre. They also produced *Whose Baby?* (Ποιανού μωρό;), a Greek translation of an English farce with Xenia Kalogeropoulou as Mary Hamilton (3 June 1956) at the Cambridge Theatre. According to an interview given by Evgeniou on London Greek Radio (27 December 1984), various personality and financial conflicts among the actors caused the end of the company.

Cypriot Youth Theatre Club

The Cypriot Youth Club was an amateur group founded in 1958 by Lambros Nicolaou, a barber by profession. Nicos Shiafkalis was the Artistic Director and Kypros Kouzapas, Harry Tardios and Foula Christophorou were the main actors,¹⁴ with George Theodorou involved as a musician. They presented Psathas' comedy *Matchmaking* (Τα προξένεια) and Kolonas' Cypriot play *The Roots Are Very Deep* (Οι ρίζες είναι πολύ βαθιές).¹⁵

Camden Theatro Technis (Camden Θέατρο Τέχνης)

Early Years

The Camden Theatro Technis celebrated its Golden Jubilee in 2007. It was founded in June 1957 after the idea of several Cypriot actors to meet one evening in Camden Town to discuss the possibility of creating a theatre for the Cypriot community. The founding members (in alphabetical order) were: Dimitris Andrea, George Andrea, Denise Baltsavia, Mikis Christodoulou, Iroula Christou, Andriani Epsilandi, George Evgeniou, Byron Joannides, George Kafkaris, Toula Kouma, John Koussios, Stelios Kyriakou, Aristos Louvieris, Andreas Lyssandrou, Andreas Markos, Markos Markou, Nicos Shiafkalis, Harry Tardios, Andreas Tofarides and George Zenios.

In the first months the group had meetings once a week at the Hovenden Club in Leicester Square. The meetings became more frequent as the actors used their homes and several pubs for this purpose. Andreas Markos offered his home for rehearsals and it was the first postal address: Theatro Technis (Ελληνικόν Θέατρον Τέχνης), 12 Frederica Street, London N7.

The members were working on various methods to develop the theatre and some of them joined Littlewood's workshop from time to time. In her production *And the Wind Blew* by Edgar da Rocha Miranda (December 1957) at the Theatre Royal Stratford East, Evgeniou played the part of Tónico, Andreas Markos was Sargento and Harry Tardios was Bastos. The rehearsals for the first play stopped because Denise Baltsavia returned to Greece (she had a better offer), while Nicos Shiafkalis left Theatro Technis to join the Cypriot Youth Theatre.¹⁶

The opening night of the first production took place on 3 January 1959 at the King George Hall, Y.M.C.A., Great Russell Street, WC1. It consisted of four one-act plays adapted as follows:

A Cypriot lady is shelling beans in the kitchen in the presence of her son and daughters. While she works, the grandfather narrates various stories which are taken from the following plays: Angelos Vlachos' *The Grocer's Daughter* (Η κόρη του παντοπώλου) directed by Harry Tardios, P. Rossides' Cypriot sketch *Giorkis and Tooulis* directed by Evgeniou, and Dimitris Psathas' comedies *The Nervous Gentleman* (Νευρικός κύριος) and *The Madmen of Our Days* (Τρελοί της εποχής) directed by Andreas Markos.

Other productions of the early period (1959-1962) included: Doros Alastos' (pseudonym of Evdoros Joannides) *Lighting Light* (Άστραψε Φως), Nicos

Laskaris' *Complications* (Μπερδέματα), Iakovos Kambanelli's *Courtyard of Miracles* (Αυλή των θαυμάτων) and the the English-language Cypriot play *Cyps Go Home* (Κύπριοι, γυρίστε στην πατρίδα σας) devised by the cast and directed by Evgeniou. He was also a success in the title role of Jaroslav Hasek's play *Good Soldier Svejk* (Ο καλός στρατιώτης Σβέικ) directed by Andreas Markos.¹⁷ The Theatro Technis also presented Psathas' *The Thief is Calling Out* (Φωνάζει ο κλέφτης), F. G. Lorca's plays *Blood Wedding* (Ματωμένος γάμος) and *The Shoemaker's Admirable Wife* (Η θαυμαστή μπαλωματού) as well as Rossides' *The Tree of Idleness* (Το δέντρο της τεμπελιάς).

The actors worked hard and contributed financially with two shillings and sixpence per week. In time they tended to get involved with other activities. Andreas Markos joined in the production of the play *The Prodigal Son* (Ο Άσωτος Υιός) by Paraskevas Hadjimichael at King George's Hall, (26 September 1960) performed by the Cypriot Youth Christian Association (OXEN: Ομάδα Χριστιανικής Ενώσεως Νέων). The cast included Sotiris Fotiou, Ellada Loizidou, Irenoula Savva, Costas Papadopoulos, Christos Constantinides, Neophytos Markos, Dimitris Kyriakou, Petros Hadjidimitriou, Dimitris Glynos, Christina Markou, Euterpe Pagourou, Panayiota Georgiou and Mary Hadjidimitriou. Markos also performed with Peter Finch in the film *In the Cool of the Day* directed by Robert Stephens (1960). His third involvement was with Arnold Wesker's play *The Kitchen* directed by John Dexter at the Royal Court (opening night, 27 June 1961).¹⁸ Other Cypriot actors in the same production were Andreas Olympites, Panikos Iakovou, Andreas Malendrinou and Markos Markou.

The involvement of the actors in other productions, combined with differences of opinion about the policy of the Theatro Technis (Evgeniou, for example, was not in favour of Greek commercial plays) were the main reasons for the appearance of three new Cypriot companies within five years (1962-1967). These were disbanded after one or two years of activities because of disagreements and conflicts, and the actors joined other companies which had the same fate. Finally George Zenios and Andreas Markos returned to the Theatro Technis, whereas George Kafkaris immigrated to Perth (Australia) and others changed their jobs.

Cypriot Actors' Organisation (Οργανισμός Κυπρίων Ηθοποιών)

The theatre group *Cypriot Actors' Organisation* was founded on 28 October 1962 and lasted until 2 January 1965. Founding members were Andreas

Markos, Andreas Lyssandrou, George Kafkaris, Dimitris Andrea and George Zenios.¹⁹ Other actors were John Andrews, Takis Dimitriou, Panikos Constantinou, Stavroula Koni, Andreas Michael, Angeliki Vraka, Marianna Ignatiou, Leto Krokatsi, Stavros Lyssandrou, Maria Georgiou, P. Andronikou, Fofo Andronikou, Amalia Andronikou, Z. Ritli and M. Kitsiou. Michael Pappas²⁰ was their fund raiser. All their performances took place at King George's Hall.

Their first public performance included Evgeniou, and Dimitris Psathas' comedies *The Nervous Gentleman* (Ο νευρικός κύριος) and *The Madmen of Our Days* (Οι τρελοί της εποχής μας) directed by Andreas Markos. (υπηρέτης) (2 January 1963). A few months later they presented George Zenios' play *The Flame of Love* (Η φλόγα της αγάπης) with Windsor Davies as guest star and directed by Andreas Lyssandrou. The profits were used for the building of Saint Andrew's Greek Orthodox School. Other productions were: Psathas' "*Eros*" *Country Tavern* (Εξοχικόν Κέντρον ο Έρως) (8 February 1964) and Dimitris Photiades' *Mania Vitrova* (2 January 1965). The group came to an end when a new professional company appeared.

Dionysos Theatre (1965-1966)

Phaedros (Paul) Stassinis, an actor of the National Theatre of Cyprus who had graduated from the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art and was better known from film and TV plays, founded Dionysos under the registration name: Dionysos Theatrical and Film Enterprises Ltd. It was the first Cypriot company which employed actors for a fixed rate per show. Their address was 381 Kentish Town Road, London NW1, although they used the premises of Olympic Casino-Bayswater for their rehearsals. Stassinis was the Artistic Director and Louis Vrakas, the managing secretary. Other actors were Dinos Mouskoundis, Gregory Gregoriades, Serafeim Nicolaou, George Kafkaris, Costas Dimitriou, Yannoula Frangofinou, Foula Christophorou-Theodorou, Andreas Mavromatis, Nicos Soteriou, Androula Christophorou, Andreas Markos, Soteroula Christophorou and Andreas Stassinis.

The company presented plays of well-known authors translated into Greek, such as Albert Houseaun's *The Three Angels*, Bernard Shaw's *Arms and the Man* translated by Gregory Gregoriades, Gabriel Arout's *Gog and Magog* and Jean Anhouil's *Orpheus and Eurydice* translated by Marios Plorites. Venues of performances were The Scala, King George's Hall and the London Co-operative Centre. The actors were disappointed because Louis

Vrakas always played the title roles, so they decided to cease their cooperation.

Greek-Cypriot Stage (Ελληνοκυπριακή Σκηνή)

Andreas Lyssandrou and Tom Kazakos tried to present a purely Cypriot repertoire with the group Greek-Cypriot Stage (1966-1967). They presented Tefkros Anthias' plays *The War*, *Stop the Decline* and one or two other plays. Their efforts did not last for long as the Theatro Technis managed to attract more support from the British funding bodies.

Camden Theatro Technis (Camden Θέατρο Τέχνης)

Later Years (1962-2007)

Theatro Technis had policy changes because of political and social events. The armed resistance against British rule in Cyprus had begun in 1955 and led to the establishment of the independent Republic under President Makarios in 1960.

The Cypriot theatre company used as its first base a garage at 89 Camden Mews, NW1, until 1972 and hosted theatre performances, poetry evenings, painting and photography exhibitions. The “Garage” saved Theatro Technis after it was left by a number of founder members. New persons joined including Christos Araklides, Achilleas Georgiou, Maria Evgeniou, Rena Georgiou, Dimitris Nicolaou, Criton Tomazos, Sophocles Sophocleous, George Hadjiphanis, Stavros Varvarides, Andreas Markou (social worker), and Xenia Andreou.

An Islington social worker asked Evgeniou's help for Cypriot immigrants with problems. Therefore Evgeniou decided to expand the group's activities to social work and at the same time to give semi-professional theatre performances with a combination of professionals and amateurs. In other words Evgeniou achieved to get financial support from Camden Borough, so he could keep a core of members on salary as social workers, who he could use as actors if necessary.

Stavros Varvarides, a dress-factory proprietor, had a dream to become an actor. Evgeniou accepted him because he made the offers of steady financial help for Theatro Technis and jobs for actors and actresses in his dress-factory if Evgeniou was unable to pay them.

In 1962 two plays by Stavros Lillitos *The Old Suitcase* (Η παλιά βαλίτσα) and *Under the Carob Trees* (Κάτω απ' τις χαρουπιές) had their world premiere. They were taken to Cyprus for a tour in 1962 and 1979 and were televised on Cypriot TV (Ραδιοφωνικό Ίδρυμα Κύπρου - ΡΙΚ). During the period 1963-1982 Theatro Technis produced mainly plays written in either Cypriot dialect or in English, and some Greek and English translations of classical plays. Productions included Rina Katselli's *The Incapable* (Ο ανίκανος) (1963), Aristophanes' *Peace* (Ειρήνη) (1964), Tefkros Anthias' *Cyprus Tragedy* (Κυπριακή τραγωδία), D. Patatzis' *Don Camillo* (with Christos Araklides in the title role), and P. Nicolaou's *The Sun Is not a Candle* (Ο ήλιος δεν είναι κερί) (1968).

In 1969 they played Evgeniou's *The Conversion of Lord Do-gooder* (Η μεταστροφή του Λόρδου Παράκαλου), Aristophanes' *Women in the Assembly* (Εκκλησιάζουσai), Panos Joannides' *Gregory* and M. Pitsilides' *My In-law, Thanassis* (Ο Συμπέθερός μου ο Αθανάσης). Their repertoire also included Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* (1965) and *All My Sons* (1971), Harold Pinter's *The Caretaker* (1971) and Nikolai Gogol's *The Diary of a Madman* (1972).

During the period of military government in Greece (1967-1974) Theatro Technis became a platform for political artistic events. It was also influenced by the regular visits from Greece of Karolos Koun's Arts Theatre. In 1969 Sophocles' *Antigone* was performed by Theatro Technis (Hampstead Theatre), followed by Evgeniou and Keith Murphy's *Oh! Democracy* (Ω! Δημοκρατία), a free adaptation of Aristophanes' *The Knights* (Οι ιππείς). Another production was *Prometheus Bound Today* (Προμηθέας δεσμώτης σήμερα) an adaptation by G. Evgeniou from Aeschylus' tragedy and Pericles Korovessis' book *The Method* (Η μέθοδος). This stage adaptation included messages against the Junta and was produced seven times between 1970 and 1978.

Theatro Technis performances between 1959 and 1978 took place in various venues: Unity Theatre, Hampstead Theatre, King George's Hall, Theatre Royal Stratford East, the "Garage", the London Cooperative Centre and "The Canopy". The Canopy was a disused railway shed, which became the first regular venue for Theatro Technis. It was converted into an Arts Centre thanks to Mr. Kassabow, a Bulgarian lecturer in Architecture at University College, London (9 Yorkway, London N7). Finally, Camden Borough offered the Old Saint Pancras Church Vicarage (26 Crowndale Road, NW1), which is now the permanent base of Theatro Technis and has hosted all its productions since 1978.

At this venue the performances started in Autumn 1978 with *Prometheus Bound Today*, in English, directed by Evgeniou. The cast included Koraltan Ahmed (a Turkish-Cypriot actor, who played the title role), George Savvides (Hermes), Effie Arestides (chorus leader), Maria Evgeniou, Stavros Varvarides, George Evgeniou (Oceanus), Angelique Rockas, and Anna Savva.

The year 1979 was dedicated to Stavros Lillitos' memory. His plays *The Old Suitcase*, *Under the Carob Trees* and *The Ambassadors of Hampstead* (Οι πρεσβευτές του Χάμστεντ) had their premieres in English. The parts of Anna in the first play and the Gipsy in the second were played by Effie Arestides, an Australian actress of Cypriot background, who has made a successful career in the British theatre.

In 1980-1982 Theatro Technis presented *Aphrodite Unbound* (Αφροδίτη λυώμενη) by Nick Axarlis, *The National Engagement* devised by the cast, Euripides' *Medea* (Μήδεια) and *A Revolutionary Nicknamed "Roosevelt"* (Ένας επαναστάτης με το παρατσούκλι «Ρούσβελτ») also devised by the cast, with George Savvides in the title role. All those plays were directed by Evgeniou and were subsidised by the Arts Council of Britain.

An Australian from ... a Big "Greek City"

The semi-professional productions of Theatro Technis took place because of Evgeniou's feeling of insecurity, especially due to the appearance of other Cypriot companies founded by former members of Theatro Technis during the 1960's. Evgeniou claimed that he was inspired by Joan Littlewood. She, however, used mixed casts so that the professionals could influence the amateurs. In Theatro Technis the remarkable contributions of professional artists were spoiled by the tensions, which arose between them and the amateur actors. The rehearsals (professional program) took place in the daytime, which naturally created problems for the amateurs. Another technical problem was that George Evgeniou, Andreas Markou and Maria Evgeniou were regular actors and full-time social workers, so they had the duty to operate as citizen's advisers for immigrants' problems, an arrangement that caused many controversies. Therefore they were forced to walk out of rehearsals either to answer the phone or to deal with urgent citizens' problems.

The Arts Council of Great Britain which had sponsored the productions since 1978 refused to subsidise a production of Euripides' *Bacchae* because

of the negative reviews for Theatro Technis' production of *Medea*.²¹ The Arts Council agreed to subsidise the production of *A Revolutionary Nicknamed "Roosevelt"*, however. In September 1982 the Drama Officer of the Arts Council warned Evgeniou that the subsidy would stop if he did not employ a guest director with a fully professional team of artists.²² Help came from Australia. Theatro Technis began to raise its standard as soon as Ted Craig was involved as director of the productions. Born in Melbourne, he had worked as director of productions for the Drama Theatre at the Sydney Opera House and at various theatres in Britain.

With Theatro Technis he directed Euripides' *Alcestis* (Ἀλκηστις) (2-19 December 1982) and the highly successful production of Aristophanes' *The Frogs* (Οἱ βάτραχοι) translated into English by George Savvides. The music was by John Gould, the lyrics by David Dearlove and the set and costumes by Michael Pavelka. The cast included Guy Siner (Dionysus), David Shaugnessy (Xanthias), Alkis Kritikos, Panikos Efthymiou, George Savvides, Keith Varnier, Andy Hampton. Performances took place in London (3 November-11 December 1983) and also on a regional tour, which took place in Coventry, Oxford, Manchester and Sheffield (March-April 1984). In addition he organised the Youth Club of Theatro Technis and directed their play *Saint Pancras Circus* (February 1984). Evgeniou also raised the standard of his productions *The Appellants* (Οἱ εφεσιβάλλοντες) (March 1983) and *The Best of Tofias* (Το πιο καλό του Τοφία) (March 1984).

Other Activities

Theatro Technis expanded the activities of the Youth Theatre. Panikos Efthymiou directed the youth productions *Zeus Rules O. K.* (Ο Δίας κυβερνάει Ο. Κ.) (1984), *Break, Silken Thread* (Σπάσε, μεταξένια κλωστή) and *Gringland* (1985), *The Contract* (Το συμβόλαιο) (1986) and *Hands Tied, Tied Hands* (Χέρια δεμένα, δεμένα χέρια) (1987). All these plays were devised by the cast.

Corinna Seed (Greek-Egyptian) organised the Women's Theatre of Theatro Technis. They produced *Old Pandora's Box* (Το κουτί της γιού-Πανδώρας) devised by the cast and directed by *Maureen O'Farrell*. The cast included Maria Evgeniou (*Andromache*), Anna Savva, Corinna Seed, Georgia Clark, Dora Markos. Other productions included *Donna and Kebab* (Ντόνα και κεμπάπ) by Eve Adam and Martha Dimitriou, *Matchmaking* (Προξένεια) with Maria Evgeniou and Xenia Andreou. The policy of

Theatro Technis for the last twenty years is to produce one or two plays per year and to hire out the venues for visiting theatre companies.

The Prometheus Touring Theatre

“Prometheus” celebrated its silver jubilee on 21 October 2007. An invitation to Criton Tomazos, a Cypriot poet, playwright and designer from the Theatre Writers Union to present two of his plays at the Grove Theatre (Hammersmith) opened a new chapter for the Greek and Cypriot community theatre. Tomazos asked Effie Arestides to organise the operation of a new theatre company. The performances would take place on 22 November 1982. On 21 October 1982 a meeting was held with Effie Arestides, Criton Tomazos, Akis Gabriel, John Eastham and the author of this article present.

For the new theatre company Arestides proposed the name “Ubar Theatre”²³ and this author the name “Prometheus Theatre Company” which was voted for.

The company’s first sponsors were the National Bank of Greece, the Commercial Bank of the Near East, the Bank of Cyprus, Cyprus Airways and Olympic Airways. Their financial assistance covered the basic expenses of the productions, the hire of rehearsal space, venues for performance, set and costume constructions. The company was unable to pay the actors, however. All performers were professional equity-members, who had monthly income from the DHSS.

The productions of the company were C. Tomazos’ *The Shark* (Ο καρχαρίας), a one-act play with Effie Arestides and Peter Stanley, and *Maxim & Minnie* directed by Effie Arestides. The cast included Chris Wallace (Maxim), Jennifer Bamford (Minnie), Philip Ormrod, Rosamund Bott, Rachel Wright, Mark Johnson, and Toni Conrad. These performances took place at the Grove Theatre, 22 November 1982, whereas C. Tomazos’ *A Girl in a Dark Red Dress* (Ένα κορίτσι με σκούρο κόκκινο φόρεμα) and *Maxim and Minnie* (29 January - 20 February 1983) were staged at the Charles Peguy Centre. The devised play *A Stroke of Genius* (Λάμψη εφύλης) was directed by Effie Arestides (Oval House, March 1983) as well as C. Tomazos’ *Rehearsal* (Η πρόβα) (British Theatre Association, June 1983).

Prometheus’ aim and objective was to offer equal opportunities to all artists, especially performers, playwrights, designers, however, Tomazos’ involvement ceased on 12 December 1984 due to conflict of interests. The

company would continue to operate as a small-scale touring professional group under the name Prometheus Touring Theatre Company. It worked as main stage (α' σκηνή) and experimental stage (β' σκηνή). Arestides led theatre workshops and the participants used to take part in the studio workshop performances.²⁴ The touring productions of the main stage included professional actors. Productions included the devised studio play *Nightclub* (Drill Hall, March 1984), directed by Arestides; the devised studio play *Theatre-New Beginning* (Θέατρο – Νέα αρχή) directed by Effie Arestides (June 1984) at the Drill Hall, Bloomsbury London; Euripides' *Trojan Women* (Τρωάδες) translated into English by Richmond Lattimore and directed by Joan-Ann Maynard, with Effie Arestides as Hecuba and Lorraine Wright as Helen of Troy (28 September-19 October 1984) at the Commonwealth Institute, Whittington Community Centre, Saint Matthew's Meeting Place (South London) and Sir Richard Steele Theatre-Hampstead); the devised studio play *Love, Dreams and Other Madness* (Αγάπη, όνειρα και άλλη τρέλλα) directed by Effie Arestides (May 1985) at the Gray's Inn Resource Centre; Nicos Zakopoulos' *The Stranger* (Ο ξένος) translated into English by Philip Rump (September 1985) at the Offstage Theatre with a cast that included Arestides' workshop participants; James Martin's *Even* (Offstage Theatre) with Arestides' workshop participants; Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* (Λυσιστράτη) with Effie Arestides in the title role directed by Sue Charman (November-December 1985) at the Place, Harmood Community Centre, Harringey Cypriot Centre, North London Polytechnic and The Bridgelane; the devised studio play *A Different Drummer* (Ένας διαφορετικός τυμπανιστής) directed by Effie Arestides (June 1986) at the Gray's Inn Resource Centre.

Prometheus continued for a long time with new plays and workshop productions of devised shows in Oxford, Yorkshire and other regional places. The author's involvement with Prometheus ceased, however, in June 1988 as he had to return to Greece for military service.

Visiting Theatre Companies

Karolos Koun's Arts Theatre visited London several times during the period of the Greek military government and he directed Aristophanes' *Birds* (Aldwych Theatre), Aristophanes' *Acharnians* (Αχαρνείς) with George Lazanis as Dikaiopolis (Sadlers Wells Theatre) and Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes* (Επτά επί Θήβαις) (Sadlers Wells Theatre). Koun's talent was greatly

appreciated and recognised by the British theatre-goers,²⁵ and Sir Peter Hall invited him to Stratford-upon-Avon to direct Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* for the Royal Shakespeare Company.²⁶

The Organisation of Theatrical Activities in Cyprus presented three Cypriot folk-plays in London in the early 1960s. Amphitheatro presented Petros Katsaitis' *Iphigeneia in Lixourion* (Η Ιφιγένεια στο Λιξούρι) directed by Spyros Evangelatos with Leda Tassopoulou in the title role (August-September 1981) at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival and the London Roundhouse.

The National Theatre of Cyprus presented Kostas Montis' Cypriot adaptation of Aristophanes' comedy *Lysistrata* directed by the late Vladimir Kafkarides (31 March -3 April) at the Bloomsbury Theatre. The cast included Lenia Sorokou (Lysistrata), Florendia Dimitriou (Kleoniki), Elli Kyriakidou, Alcestis Pavlides (Myrrine), Medea Hanna, Annita Santorinaiou, Stelios Kafkarides (Magistrate), Spyros Stavrinides (Kinessias), Neophytos Neophytou, Andreas Moussouliotis, Leandros Panagiotides, Andreas Moustras (chorus leader), Stavros Louras, Costas Dimitriou, Phaedros Stassinou, Varnavas Kyriazis, Eftychios Poulaidis, Vladimir Kafkarides and Peter Costa.

Salonica Arts Experimental Stage (Πειραματική Σκηνή της Τέχνης) presented Aristophanes' *Women in the Assembly* directed by Professor Hourmouziades and Elias Kapetanakis' *Vengera* (Βεγγέρα) directed by Nicos Armaos (August-September 1985) at the Omnibus Theatre, West London.

Yannis Mentonis, a Cypriot comedian, also known as Firfiris, gave performances with his group at the Avenida Hall, North London (7, 14, 15 April 1984), the Dome Hall, South London (8 April 1984) at the Haringey Centre, North London (16-17, 23 March 1984) and the Kypriaki Estia in Birmingham (23 April 1984).²⁷

The Cypriot Folk Writers' Association (Λαϊκή Ένωση Λογοτεχνών Αγγλίας)

The Cypriot Folk Writers' Association (L.E.L.A.) founded an amateur group early in 1983 with folk plays in their repertoire. Their first public performance was with Yannis Grivas' *The Backgammon Addiction* (Συνήθεια για τάβλι) (4 September 1983) at the Earlham Grove Cypriot Community Centre.²⁸ They also presented Dimitris Papadimitris' *The Baby* (Το μωρό) at the Hornsey Town Hall (24 April 1986), Kyriakos Akanthiotis' *Marikou's Love* at Saint George's Theatre (6 December 1986), Nicos Hadjiapostolou's

The Girl of the Neighbourhood (Το κορίτσι της γειτονιάς) at the Tottenham Town Hall (May 1987), and also one-act folk sketches: George Athanassiades' *It's Better to Have Hope* (Καλύτερα να έχεις ελπίδα) and *O Kapnissis tzi o Tzirkantzis* at the Earlham Cypriot Centre (October 1985), Yannis Grivas' play *Your Customs and Your Language, Treasure at Your Door* (Τα έθιμα τζι' η γλώσσα σου εν θησαυρός στην πόρτα σου) at Tottenham (May 1987) and *The Clinic* (Η κλινική), a comedy based on the ideas and experiences of Hambis Conteatīs, a folk poet, performed at St George's Theatre (February 1986) and Earlham Cypriot Centre (November 1986).

Kypros Kouzapas was their Artistic Director, Antonis Karantonis and Kleopas Demosthenous were the designers. Performers included Hambis Polycarpou, Yannis Grivas, Christina Mousicou, Gregory Andreou, Lenia Polycarpou, Andreas Haralambous, Tassos Andreou, Evangelia Card, Georgia Card, Andreas Sofos and others.

Back to the Sixties

Yannis Mentonis' visit to London aimed to expand his activities in Britain with a London-based Cypriot company, which would present folk-plays also suitable to be sold on video cassettes. In his Firfiris Group he used actors from Cyprus and Anglo-Cypriots, who had been performers one or two decades before, but were forced to emigrate to Britain. Since they faced the racist attitudes (especially because of their continental accent) they did other jobs (dress manufacturers, grocers, restaurant owners, barbers). These persons perhaps thought that by working with the Firfiris Group they would immediately win recognition for their talents. After Firfiris' last performance (1985) his performers from London decided to found a theatre for the Cypriot community, so they could establish their own reputation.

The founding members of *Ελληνικό Θέατρο Αγγλίας* (May 1985) were Thanos Kanistras (Chair), Evangelia Card, Vassilis Panayi, Odysseas Antoniou, Tom Kazakos and Ellada Miliotou.²⁹ Thanos Kanistras tried to have complete financial control and rejected productions of Cypriot folk plays. Their first planned performance of Alekos Sakellarios' *My Pal Lefterakis* (Ο φίλος μου ο Λεφτεράκης) (7 August 1985) at the Haringay Centre was cancelled. Since the Cypriot actors could not fire Kanistras, they decided to change the name of the company. So the above mentioned actors had a meeting with Glafkos Violaris, Yannis Grivas and George Athanassiades in the premises of Anglo-Akanthou Aid Society (a Cypriot Advisory Centre in

Islington) on 24 November 1985. They voted Glafkos Violaris as chair and the new name of the company was *Κυπριακό Λαϊκό Θέατρο Αγγλίας*.³⁰ This company lasted for only three months as the members decided to incorporate it under the L.E.L.A. theatre group in February 1986. They planned to make L.E.L.A. a professional theatre company and to present a double bill on 24 April 1986. However, George Athanassiades, Vassilis Panayi, Ellada Miliotou, Odysseas Antoniou and Evangelia Card left L.E.L.A. ten days before the opening night. They founded another group, T.H.O.C.A. (Θεατρικός Οργανισμός Κυπρίων Αγγλίας) and succeeded in presenting the review *The Community Has Everything* (Απ' όλα έχει η παροικία) on 5 May 1986 in Birmingham Κυπριακή Εστία³¹ and North London Polytechnic (22-23 December 1986). The review included Athanassiades' comic sketches, *The Radio Stations* (Οι ραδιοφωνικοί σταθμοί), *Very Good Advice* (Πολύ καλή συμβουλή), *Year 2000* (Έτος 2000), *The Deaf* (Ο Κουφός) and *Piponias and Pagonou in London* (Ο Πιπόνιας και η Παγωνού στο Λονδίνο), as well as Vassili Panayi's sketches *Kiki's Little House* (Το μικρό σπίτι της Κικής), *Gossips* (Κουτσομπολιά) and *Who Will Do the Cooking?* (Ποιος θα κάνει το μαγείρεμα;). The company lasted about eight months. Its amateur actors joined L.E.L.A. and the professional ones went to Theatro Technis, which remained the main community theatres in London.

Community Theatre Today

The appearance of the Prometheus Theatre Company had the following achievements: it presented the Greeks and Cypriots as a vital part of multicultural British society and not as an isolated minority, and with its serious professional activity it provided an excellent example that two or three Cypriot and Greek companies could create stimulating competition and enhance entertainment. Although Prometheus is now a regional company, its founders are happy that Theatro Technis, the L. E. L. A. theatre company and the Lykeio Ellinidon theatre group are continuing and are making a significant contribution.

A Theatrical Ghetto?

Naseem Khan's effort to belittle Cypriot theatre in England by arguing that the Cypriots have little tradition of theatre, especially the rural immigrants³² is inaccurate. There are many Cypriot actors who prefer to be known only through the British stage as they intend to avoid "ghettoisation".

After all, any Greek or Cypriot theatre should be able to stand on an equal basis with the English ones. If the "ghetto" and the "ethnic stamp" are abolished I am sure that more Cypriot artists will have the courage to emerge.

NOTES

1. Anderson, 1965.
2. Katsouris, 1972, pp. 12-21.
3. Karageorghis, 1982, pp. 172-173 and *passim*.
4. Diodorus of Sicily, Book VII, ch. 5, §4.
5. Katsouris, 1972, pp. 13-14.
6. Itzin, 1980.
7. Katsouris, 1972, pp. 14-16. Cf. Khan, 1980, p. 74 (on Indian actresses).
8. Katsouris, 1972, pp. 15.
9. Interview with Birbas' in Chalandri, Athens, November 1989.
10. Oral testimony of the late Timotheos Bishop of Militoupolis, St Sophia (1986).
11. Charalambidis, 1983, pp. 113-120.
12. *Ibid.*
13. Baltsavia was known from Greek TV serials.
14. *Ellinikos Typos* (London), 15 April 1987, p. 3.
15. *Paroikiaki* (London), 10 August 1986, p. 23.
16. Shiafkalis became resident director of productions with the Cypriot National Theatre.
17. *Pharos* (London), 11 November 1962, p. 3.
18. Findlater, ed., 1981, Appendix 1.
19. *Pharos* (London), 20 August 1960, p. 6.
20. Michael Pappas was also film director and producer of *The Private Right, Tomorrow's Warrior* and other films.
21. *City Limits* (London), 29 January 1982, p. 55.
22. *Camden New Journal* (London), 14 October 1982, p. 2.
23. The ubar is a musical instrument of the Aborigines in Australia.

24. Zakopoulos, 1985.
25. Daubeney, 1971, pp. 216, 234-241, 244-248.
26. *Ibid.*, pp. 244-245.
27. *Ellinikos Typos* (London), 21 March 1984, p. 3; *Ta Nea* (London), 5 April 1984.
28. *Paroikiaki* (London), 19 February 1987, p. 17.
29. *Ellinikos Typos* (London), 27 June 1985, p. 4.
30. *Ta Nea* (London), 5 December 1989, p. 9.
31. *Ellinikos Typos* (London), 16 May 1986, pp. 2, 4.
32. Khan, 1980, pp. 73-75.

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The Theatre of the Greek Diaspora: The Case of Canada

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RÉSUMÉ

Le théâtre grec au Canada n'a pas été à étudié à ce jour et demeure donc *terra incognita*. Cet article se veut expérimental et tentera d'élaborer un portrait de la situation depuis le commencement des communautés grecques dans ce pays. Les hommes d'affaires grecs ont commandé les halls principaux de théâtre dans les années 20 à Montréal mais il semble qu'ils étaient seulement les propriétaires des bâtiments et n'avaient pas de relation avec le théâtre de répertoire. Nous en savons peu au sujet de l'activité grecque de théâtre au Canada avant la deuxième guerre mondiale. Curieusement les racines de ce théâtre sont tracées dans les petites communautés canadiennes occidentales. Ce n'est que seulement après la deuxième guerre mondiale que nous commençons à avoir des informations limitées sur l'activité de théâtre. Les années 60 sont la période où nous pouvons mieux l'étudier. Dans tous les cas nous parlons du théâtre d'amateur exécutés principalement à Montréal. Il a été établi par les groupes d'amateurs de théâtre et il a été exécuté dans les écoles grecques. Nous proposons une distinction entre deux genres de théâtre grec au Canada, le patriotique-folklorique et le social-politique.

ABSTRACT

Greek theatre in Canada hasn't been studied up to date and remains *terra incognita*. This article is a first tentative to create a portrait of the situation since the beginning of the Greek communities in this country. Greek businessmen controlled the main theatre halls in Montreal in the 1920s but it seems that they were only the owners of the buildings without any relation to repertory theatre. Before the Second World War we know little about Greek theatre activity in Canada. Curiously the roots of this theatre activity are traced to small Western Canadian communities. Only after the Second World War can we begin to have limited information about theatre activity. The 60s is the period when we can better investigate it. In all cases we are speaking of amateur theatre performed mainly in Montreal. It was established by amateur theatre groups or it was performed in Greek schools. We propose a distinction between two kinds of Greek theatre in Canada: the patriotic-folkloric and the social-political.

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Introduction

From antiquity to the present day wherever the Greeks migrated – and here I will not go into the discussion of the continuity or discontinuity of Hellenism – they transposed with them their theatrical tradition as an integral part of their culture. It seems that in ancient colonies the theatre was a priority as there were the temples of worship of their gods. Throughout the ancient Greek world we find traces of this theatre of worship. The presence of the theatre never ceased through the centuries and influenced the way of life and the thought of the Greeks. In medieval times as well, the theatre remained an integral element of Greek culture. So, for example, we find in 1627 a Greek troupe in Paris, which arrived there from the unknown.¹ According to some scholars it came from the Ionian Islands, while others say it came from Crete.

As in ancient times, when the colonies were in contact with Greek culture and knew the great exponents of Greek drama, Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides, so in recent times the Greek diaspora communities remain close to the Greek theatrical tradition. Thus we encounter the Greek theatre both in historical Greek communities and in its subsequent immigrant communities during the 20th century. We encounter it in Constantinople of the 19th century, the cosmopolitan Smyrna, in Odessa, in Philippoupolis, the Danube Hegemonies, in Pontus, in Alexandria, in the US, Canada, Australia and to a lesser extent in other geographical regions where the Greeks were established.

The First Steps

The Greek theatre in Canada has not been studied and is virtually unknown. This article is a first tentative to outline the theatrical activities in the Greek communities of Canada, but there is still a need for a lot of research to present something more comprehensive. Unfortunately many details about the Greek theatrical movement in Canada have been already lost or are inaccessible.

In prewar times the sole theatrical presentations which we know were those which were performed in Vancouver and Toronto. In Vancouver the first of these presentations was the well known work of Spyros Peresiadis, *Golfo*, which was performed on 2 May 1933. A few years later according to one source, without knowing when precisely, a patriotic work, *Athanassios Diakos*, was performed.³ A theatrical movement seems to have occurred in Toronto in roughly about the same period.⁴ It is also rather certain that amateur

presentations were performed in 1930 and 1933 on the occasion of the celebration of Greek Independence Day by the Greek Community of Toronto.

Without any doubt, judging from what happened in the neighbouring USA, theatrical attempts would also have appeared in Canada. They would certainly have been amateur efforts from various community organisations. It is particularly unusual that in Montreal, the heart of Canadian Hellenism at that time, we are unable at the moment to detect any trace of Greek theatre performances.

The Postwar Period

For the period after the Second World War we have more information on the growth of Greek theatre in Canada. Nevertheless for this period our information remains fragmentary, and paradoxically it is also limited to Montreal.

We also have more explicit testimony for the theatrical movement in Toronto during the postwar period, which appears to have developed in the frame of the celebration of various national anniversaries. Thus, for example, on 25 October 1959 a theatrical group of the Greek Community of Toronto presented a play by Haris Grigoriou, *Homeland of Heroes*, on the occasion of celebrations of the anniversary of 28 October 1940.⁵ We know nevertheless that after the war there were definite theatrical activities even in small communities, such as that of Calgary in western Canada. Peresiadis' *Golfo* was performed in Calgary in April and May 1963 and *The Beloved of the Shepherdess* (O Agapitikos tis Voskopoulas) a few years later in 1967. It seems that the theatrical group that presented this work and which belonged to the Greek Orthodox Youth (Greek Orthodox Youth of America), staged it in other communities of western Canada, as well as that of Edmonton.⁶ It is interesting to note that the play put on in Calgary in 1963 – *Golfo* – was directed by a priest, Father Demetrios Kavouras.

Thus in western Canada, even if the Greek communities were much smaller than those in Toronto and Montreal, they kept alive a certain theatrical movement that, as mentioned above, had already been encountered in Vancouver in prewar times around the 1930s. In the same city in 1958 an amateur theatre company of young persons also staged *Golfo*, the well known play by Spyros Peresiadis.⁷

We have, however, more precise information for theatrical activities in Montreal. On 1 May 1953 we know that the Benevolent Fraternity of Greek

Ladies of Montreal (Filoptohos Adelfotis Ellinidon Kyrion Montrealis), staged *The Temptation* (O Peirasmos) by Grigorios Xenopoulos. The play was presented on the national theatrical stage of Quebec, *Monument National*. One can observe here two paradoxes. First, the Benevolent Fraternity of Greek Ladies presented a relatively bold work, if one takes into consideration the conservative values that would have prevailed then in the Greek community of Montreal. From another perspective, the benevolent associations as we know them today in the Greek communities of Canada are fairly conservative and they would present such a play with difficulty even in our days. We know of course that the association that staged this play and that continues to exist today was not attached to the church as it happens with the other Greek women's benevolent associations in Canada. Nevertheless the question remains regarding this "deed of daring" in 1953. The second paradox arising from the performance of Xenopoulos' play is the theatrical stage on which it was presented. It is not a parochial hall but the most important theatrical stage of Montreal, the mother French-speaking city of Canada.⁸

In 1962, that is to say almost ten years later, the same association presented in Montreal, once again at the *Monument National*, the *Crabstick* (To Stravoxvlo) of Dimitri Psathas. The unanswered question that arises is whether the same association staged other plays in the intervening period. Potentially research will reveal it to us at some time in the future. Unfortunately, even if the Benevolent Fraternity of Greek Ladies exists today, the continuity of this organisation has not been able to preserve its archives from which we could draw the relative information. We suppose, of course, that in the same period some wider amateur theatrical movement would have existed in Montreal and potentially in the other Greek communities of Canada. It is certainly not possible to have had amateur theatre only in 1933 in one small Greek community in Vancouver in western Canada and then to find it, almost only in Montreal, with two productions twenty years later in 1953 and in 1962.

The period of the dictatorship appears to have been the golden season of Greek theatre in Canada. At that time certain Greek artists lived for some time in Canada and more specifically in Montreal where their efforts were overwhelming for the development and growth of Greek theatre. Among them were the director Nikos Perelis and the actors Yioula Gavala and Panos Xynos.⁹

In Montreal between 1966 and 1968 Panos Xynos created the Greek Theatre of Canada that performed various Greek plays. It was in essence an amateur theatre company which survived on some small government

subsidies. We encounter Xynos again later in 1986 in Toronto trying to create a theatrical movement.

Yioula Gavala performed *Medea* in Montreal in 1970. We do not have information on her other theatrical activities in Montreal or elsewhere in Canada. We know, however, that she was active in New York around this period and we can imagine that her Canadian experience was part of her American itinerary.

The well known director Nikos Perelis reached Montreal in 1971, studied at the French University of Quebec, and stayed in this city until 1976 when he returned to Greece. During this period an appreciable theatrical activity developed around Perelis with the help of Tassos Nifakos in the city of Montreal. At that time the Greek Popular Theatre was founded and presented works of Notis Pergialis, Iakovos Kampanelis, Giorgos Skourtis and Dimitris Kechaidis.

During the same period the Federation of Greek Associations of Montreal created under Tassos Nifakos the Popular Theatre of *Park Avenue* named after the well known avenue of Montreal which flourished then with the life and activities of Greek immigrants. On the stage of this theatre were performed plays such as *Good Night Margarita* (Kalinihta Margarita) by Gerasimos Stavrou, *The Engagements* (Arravoniasmata) by Dimitris Bogris and *The Musicians* (Oi Mousikoi) by Giorgos Skourtis.

In the same period Tassos Nifakos also presented shadow theatre, the well known Karagiozis, and performed children's theatre, as well.¹⁰

In 1971 an amateur team performed plays by Dimitris Psathas and Iakovos Kampanelis in the Canadian capital, Ottawa. Unfortunately, we have only fragmentary information about these activities.

We know that in other communities of Canada, in Toronto, Vancouver and elsewhere a certain number of plays was also presented in the period of the dictatorship but this theatrical movement has not been studied. Even the basic research into these theatrical activities is lacking.

In the period that ensued after the fall of the dictatorship in Greece, we encounter a theatrical movement that developed in Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver and other smaller Greek communities in Canada. In the case of Toronto and Montreal this theatrical movement had developed first within the two large historical organisations: the Greek Community of Toronto and the Greek Community of Montreal. In the other communities of Canada theatre has also developed within the communities but also around other community organisations.

In the Greek Community of Montreal the Cultural Foundation has functioned since 1976. Among its other activities there have been numerous theatrical productions with amateur groups, almost each time with different actors. These amateur theatre companies of the Cultural Institute of the Greek Community of Montreal have staged works of the most renowned theatrical writers of Greece, such as Grigorios Xenopoulos, Dimitris Psathas, Alekos Sakellarios, Iakovos Kampanellis, Kostas Mourselas and others.¹¹

In the Greek Community of Toronto the Nefeli Theatre was founded in 1992 and it functions until today having staged many works of Greek playwrights. This theatre group has also occasionally presented its work in Greece, having been invited by Municipalities and Prefectures of the country.

Occasionally various cultural associations were also created which dealt *inter alia* with the theatre, as well. In Montreal, for example, the Greek Cultural Association staged a series of plays between 1975 and 1980 while presenting simultaneously works of the shadow theatre. In the same city the Association of Greek Workers of Quebec that was founded in 1970, also performed a great number of plays. Similar efforts of other cultural associations are also found in other Greek communities of Canada.

Apart from Greek playwrights, occasionally the work of non-Greeks has been presented as well. Sometimes a few attempted to deal with ancient Greek tragedy.

In all cases this was the work of amateur companies, and the performed plays were usually presented up to three times.

School Theatre

The theatrical movement in the Greek-speaking schools of Canada has had an intense presence from the decade of the 1960s onwards. Short plays have been presented at almost all the school festivals by the children of these schools. Many of the capable child actors, when older, became involved in various amateur companies.

The Theatre from Greece

Various touring theatre companies from Greece occasionally have visited the Greek communities of Canada during the postwar period. As a rule their itineraries were organized for the big cities of the United States to which they included the two large Canadian cities of Montreal and Toronto. Performances included ancient drama, presented mainly by the National Theatre of Greece.

Theatrical Writers

No playwrights exist who sprang from the Greek communities of Canada. Individual efforts, of course, of certain amateur writers have appeared occasionally. In certain cases some plays of well known Greek playwrights were adapted to local needs and in other cases works of fiction or even poems from Greek literature have been dramatized.

Nevertheless one must mention the playwright of Greek origin Pan Bouyoucas who, however, wrote all his work in French and English. Some of his plays have been translated into many languages and have been performed repeatedly with success by professional companies in Montreal and in Toronto. His plays have also been performed in Rome, Paris, Belgrade and elsewhere. Nothing, unfortunately, has been translated into Greek. Bouyoucas is also a well known novelist with published novels and collections of short stories. The latter work, which in this case was also translated into various languages, remains completely unknown in Greece.

Pan Bouyoucas has written a dozen successful radio dramas and stage plays, many of which have been translated into several languages. His first plays were written and produced in English before his first work in French, *Le Cerf-Volant*, was produced at Théâtre d'Aujourd'hui in Montreal (1993). The same company performed his *Nocturne* in 1998. Some of his plays deal with second generation Canadians (the children of immigrants torn between two cultures), like the characters of *From the Main to Mainstreet* (a.k.a. *Divided We Stand*), which was a hit both at Montreal's Centaur Theatre and Toronto's Canadian Stage in 1989 and 1991 respectively. The protagonists of *Le Cerf-Volant* (translated into English as *The Paper Eagle*) were, like Bouyoucas, of Greek background, while the eponymous protagonist of his historical play *Hypatia* was the Greek and only woman director of the famous Alexandria Library.¹²

Tendencies

From what has been shown above, two main tendencies in the Greek theatre in Canada become apparent. The first tendency is the patriotic and folkloric one and the second is the political and social one. The patriotic-folkloric theatre is part of the different national festivities and generally the one cultivated in schools. The political-social theatre was cultivated especially during the dictatorship in Greece but it continued to have a place afterwards. Plays like *Golfo* or *The Beloved of the Shepherdess* are the classic plays of the folkloric repertory of the Greek theatre. Plays on heroes of the

Greek War of Independence like Athanassios Diakos complete the patriotic repertory of amateur troupes inside and outside schools. Playwrights like Stavrou, Bogris, Skourtis, Kampanellis, Pergialis introduced a more militant-political theatre which is more favoured by the new immigrants of the sixties than by the old established prewar Greeks in Canada.

NOTES

1. Giorgos Hatzidakis, *I Kathimerini, Epta Imeres* (Seven Days), Daily newspaper, *Tribute to the Theatre of the Diaspora*, 7 September 2003, p. 2.
2. Iraklis Papamanolis, Summarizing History of Canada and Greek-Canadian Directory, Montreal, 1922, pp. 185-189.
3. The Hellenic Community of Vancouver, *50th Anniversary, 1927-1977*, Vancouver 1977, pp. 145-146.
Nevertheless, the first theatrical representation of a Greek play in Canada was Sophocles' *Antigone* which was staged in Montreal on March 26, 1895. The play was performed in Greek by the students and professors of the Seminar of Montreal, a Catholic French College in which were taught ancient Greek. See Jacques Bouchard, «Les débuts de l'imprimerie en langue grecque au Québec», *Études helléniques/Hellenic Studies* Vol.1, No.1 (Montreal), Spring 1983.
4. The Album of the Greek Community of Toronto that was published in 1989, with rich photographic and historical material, includes the photograph of a theatrical group of 1930 with the note that it participated in the celebration of the 25th of March, the anniversary of Greek Independence. The play that was performed is not reported nor is anything else. See Michael K. Mouratidis, ed., *Historical Album*, Toronto: The Greek Community of Metropolitan Toronto, 1989.
5. Michael K. Mouratidis, ed., *Historical Album*, *op. cit.*
6. Nina K. Kolias, *The Greeks in Alberta, 1903-1995*, Calgary, 1997, pp. 186-195.
7. The Hellenic Community of Vancouver, *50th Anniversary, 1927-1977*, Vancouver 1977, pp. 145-146.
8. The reports on the theatrical movement in Montreal, and more general reports on the remainder of Canada, are supported by archival material of the *Centre of Hellenic Studies and Research Canada-KEEK*.
9. *Ibid.*
10. *Ibid.*
11. *Ibid.*
12. Information given by Pan Bouyoucas and archival material of the *Centre of Hellenic Studies and Research Canada-KEEK*.

The Greek Theatre in the United States from the End of the 19th Century to the 21st Century

Katerina Diakoumopoulou*

RÉSUMÉ

Cet article couvre l'activité théâtrale des immigrants Grecs aux Etats-Unis à partir de la fin du dix-neuvième siècle jusqu'à nos jours. Il souligne l'histoire de beaucoup de troupes de théâtre qui avaient fait leur apparition dans les communautés grecques d'Amérique à la fin du dix-neuvième siècle et ont connu le succès jusqu'à un déclin marquant dans la seconde décennie du vingtième siècle, déclin précipité par l'enrôlement de beaucoup de jeunes immigrants Grecs dans les Guerres Balkaniques. Le développement théâtral impressionnant, qui s'en est suivi de 1920 à 1940, et après la Seconde Guerre Mondiale, est examiné en mettant l'accent sur une variété d'aspects tels que les nombreuses troupes, d'amateurs et de professionnels et leurs répertoires, thèmes, tendances, problèmes, influences politiques, enjeux sociaux, etc., nécessaires pour comprendre le rôle et l'impact que le théâtre grec a eu jusqu'à nos jours. L'auteur note que l'on observe deux tendances particulières depuis la Seconde Guerre Mondiale: les auteurs dramatiques Américains Grecs composent leurs œuvres principalement en anglais et beaucoup d'Américains d'origine grecque de la seconde génération participent à des troupes de théâtre grecques, tandis qu'un nombre d'acteurs de la première génération ayant longtemps servi dans le théâtre sont devenus des professionnels.

ABSTRACT

This article covers the theatre activity of the Greek immigrants in the USA from the end of the nineteenth century until today. It outlines the history of the many theatre groups which had appeared in the American Greek communities by the end of the nineteenth century and thrived until the marked decline in the second decade of the twentieth century precipitated by the enlistment of many young Greek immigrants for the Balkan Wars. The impressive development which followed from 1920 to 1940, and then after the Second World War, is examined with focus on a variety of aspects, such as the many companies (amateur and professional) and their repertoires, themes, trends, problems, political influences, social issues, etc., necessary for an understanding of the role

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and impact which the Greek theatre has had to the present time. Two particular trends noted since World War II are that the Greek American playwrights compose their works mainly in English and that many second generation Greek Americans participate in Greek theatre groups, while a number of first generation actors with long service in the theatre have become professionals.

From 1895 until 1940

The aim of this article is to examine the theatrical life of the Greek immigrants in the United States of America, focussing on New York and Chicago, from 1895 until 2008.

On March 25th, 1895, a milestone date, the first performance of Greek immigrants was staged in the USA. The Lykourgos Society of Chicago took the initiative in staging the comedy *Babylonia*, written by Dimitrios Byzantios, with amateur actors who lived in the city. The receipts of the performance would cover the expenses of the celebration of the National Holiday. The performance, which took place at Turner Hall, was successful and the audience was so enthusiastic that in the afternoon of the same day the performance was repeated. The main contributors of the performance were Yiannis Palamaras, the president of the Lykourgos Society, and Nikos Bekropoulos.

In 1899 the actor N. Konstantinidis arrived in New York and formed the first theatre company of amateur actors. The company's first performance of the play *Athanassios Diakos* was staged on the afternoon of April 7th, 1899, at the Manhattan Lyceum in New York, in order to celebrate the Greek War of Independence. The performance managed to attract a large number of immigrants and was considered successful. Soon, it was decided to stage another performance of the company after Easter 1899. The second play of the company's repertory was a patriotic drama *Armatoloi and Klephts* by Christopher Samargides. On December 26th, 1899, at the Arlington Hall theatre of New York, Konstantinidis' company, following the audience's demand, repeated the three-act-play *Athanassios Diakos*, which had been staged on April of the same year. In addition, the programme included the one-act comedy *The Minister's Office*. On that same evening, Konstantinidis recited an act from the drama *The Parliamentary Candidate*. The performance was attended by more than five hundred Greeks, as well as some Americans. Then, the theatre company went on tour to Boston,

Massachusetts and Chicago after being invited by the Greek communities there. On January 1900 the company appeared at the Music Hall in Lowell, Massachusetts, with the drama *Athanassios Diakos*. Two thirds of the Greek community attended the performance.

The American newspapers of Chicago at the beginning of December 1899 published recommendatory articles about the city's Hellenism. The reason was the performance of the play *Odysseus' Return to Ithaca*, which was staged at the Theatre Hall for three consecutive evenings in front of a crowded audience. The play was composed of excerpts from the *Odyssey*. The central dramatic figure was Penelope, who narrates her life during the 20-year absence of Odysseus. The inspiration and head of the performance was the young Mabel May Barrows,¹ an American philhellene who had undertaken to find the right people and work patiently with them. The rest of the amateur actors – twenty in all – were Greek immigrants. However, the chorus was formed by American women, who had also designed the scenery and the costumes. The play's language was Ancient Greek and Barrows' interpretation of Penelope's role, despite the fact she was American, did not surprise the Greek audience. There was speculation concerning her origins and her education, but, in spite of all that, for the American society of the end of the 19th century her initiative was highly avant-garde.

In the play, Dimitrios Manousopoulos had the leading role and Georgios Matalas was his co-star.² The two young men were from Laconia, from villages of Parnonas. According to sources, they had public education, both had studied at the middle school of the community capital Vamvakou and at the secondary school of Sparti, in contrast to the large number of Greek immigrants who came from the mountainous areas of Greece and did not have any kind of elementary education. Manousopoulos and Matalas were among the first amateur actors of the Greek stage in Chicago and exhortators in the spread and establishment of theatre groups throughout America.

The theatrical activity of Mabel May Barrows did not end in 1899. At the beginning of October 1903, Barrows and about thirty "trained" Greeks met at the Hull House Theatre in Chicago to rehearse the forthcoming performance of the tragedy *Aias*. We know that the preparations for the performance of *Aias* were almost completed at the end of November 1903. The various people who participated in the performance had learned their parts under the instructions of the young woman Hellenist. Georgios Matalas played the character of Aias and Michael Loris, that of Tekmissas. The chorus was formed of thirty people with Paraskevas Iliopoulos as the

chorus leader. The performances were staged at Hull House, from the 6th until the 11th December of 1903. The character of Odysseus was played by Panagiotis Lambrou, Menelaos by Iason Korologos, Athena by Liverios Manousopoulos and Tefkros by Dimitrios Manousopoulos. The language of the performance was Ancient Greek. The American newspapers praised the performance and many professors of Ancient Greek attended, as well as journalists. Georgios Matalas and Dimitrios Manousopoulos received the most praise for their performances.

The composition of Mabel May Barrows' company did not change in the following year.³ After the great success in Chicago at Hull House, the head of the company decided to stage Sophocles' *Aias* in New York.⁴ The performances had been programmed for the 23rd, 24th and 25th of March. As it was perfectly natural that the whole company could not travel to New York, vacant places resulted in the chorus, which the director tried to cover with an advertisement in the newspaper *Atlantis* (Ατλαντίς). The members of the committee which had undertaken to promote the performance belonged to the upper class of New York society. The theatre where the performances were staged, Clinton Hall, was a small auditorium packed mostly with Americans who belonged to the literary world, and the critiques were triumphal. Although some believed that the audience of the theatre would not be able to keep up with the tragedy in the ancient text, the use of Ancient Greek was avant-garde. In reality, the American audience would not have found any interest in a tragedy staged in Modern Greek. Certainly, the performances of Mabel May Barrows impressed the Greeks of Chicago and New York and boosted Greek pride. On February 19th, 1905, Barrows reappeared with an original and interesting performance. She had dramatized pastoral poems of Theocritus, which she presented in the auditorium of the Association Hall at Brooklyn. During this performance, which was funded by the Brooklyn Institute, the chorus of young girls sang the Delphic hymn to Apollo, while all the participants were dressed in ancient Greek costumes.

In the first decade of the 20th century, in all Greek communities from the eastern to the western coasts of the United States, thirty amateur Greek theatre companies were formed which staged hundreds of plays. The activity of the following amateur companies was remarkable: "Orpheus" in New York with Jenny Prensio, "Orpheus" in Lynn, Massachusetts under Il. Krommidas and D. Stratigos, the amateur company of the Panhellenic Society, "Parthenon", in New York with Polyxeni Vorvis as the leading actress, "Phoenix" and "Moussa" in Chicago, "Aeschylus" and "Muses" at Lowell, Massachusetts, "Philippos",

“Apollo” and “Sophocles” under George Vorvis in New York, the Company of Athens in Philadelphia. The spread of the Greek companies was tremendous even in the cities that had few Greeks: the theatre company “Homer” at Nashua, New Hampshire and “Parnassus” in Washington with Eleni Konstantinidou as the leading actress; an amateur company was also formed at Beloit in the state of Wisconsin, as well as in many other places.

During this period, a tradition was created regarding the staging of theatrical performances of patriotic plays during the celebration for the Greek War of Independence, resulting in the earnings of the performances being used for the benefit of the nation.

At the same time, well-known Greek actors such as Dimitrios Kazouris, Dionyssios Tavoularis, Nikolaos Lekatsas, Aggelos Sarigiannis and Eftychios Vonaseras crossed the Atlantic. Despite their efforts and the time they spent in the United States, they did not manage to help create a permanent Greek theatrical stage in America. Nevertheless, with their presence they honoured the Greek immigrant and gave the necessary boost to encourage amateur artists to form theatre companies and write plays.

During the decade of the 1920s, Greek theatre activity in America diminished both in terms of the local companies, as well as the ones on tour from Greece. Thousands of young people, during the period from 1912 until 1922, returned to the homeland and joined the Greek army. Thus, this voluntary military service resulted in the withdrawal of creative and intellectual manpower from the Greek communities.

During the period from 1920 until 1940 the theatre companies, both amateur and professional, multiplied and spread. All Greek communities, even the smallest ones, came into contact with the theatre or developed theatre activity. The theatre would become for the Greek immigrants a mode of expression, an opportunity for social association, a political podium, a link of national unity, a means of protest but also of entertainment.

The longest-lived and most important companies of this period were: the family theatre company of Aristides Parisis, the “Apollo” company of N. Patsi and K. Zapnoukagia, the operetta company of Vr. Pantopoulou, the Greek Art Theatre of Nikos Patsis, the Athenian Operetta with Lina Dorou as leading actress, the New Athenian Operetta of Yiannis and Katina Thymiou, the Lolota Ioannidou Company that performed in America from 1925 until 1929, the Greek Theatre and Greek Actors of Gerasimos Kourouklis, the Athenian Company of Ar. Chrysochoou, the New Theatre

of Yiannis Vokos and P. Adamidis, the company of Aliki Theodoridou, who settled down in America in 1939, and others.

This period also witnessed the appearance of the socialist theatre. In 1918, the communist newspaper *The Voice of the Worker* had been founded aiming to unite the Greek labour world. Through the newspaper the first local professional theatre company was born in New York, the Theatrical Labor Group of Nikos Patsis. His example was followed by other professional and amateur companies: The Socialist Amateur Group under the guidance of the well-known “veteran” of the Greek stage in America, Artemis Zampou, the Communist Amateur Group in New York, the Drama Group of the Greek Labor Educational Association in Chicago, the amateur drama groups “Spartakos” in Chicago and New York, the “Pioneer” and “Prometheus” in Chicago, and others.

We know that the means of the companies were limited, the actors in most cases were amateurs, the repertory was repeated and dated, and the result, from the aesthetic point of view, was many times mediocre. Despite all these negative factors, the companies offered plenty of feelings of admiration, joy, rapture, sadness, disappointment, but above all pride for the Greek nation and its capabilities. We must not overlook the fact that the most important role of the immigrant theatre was to entertain. It was a form of true and constructive entertainment, especially in an environment where the exhaustive rhythm of life was making even more imperative the need for theatre being a way out of the oppressive and monotonous routine.

Since the beginning of the Modern Greek theatre in the U.S.A., the companies used to rent American theatres. In addition, in the decades of 1930s and 1940s, the frequency of the performances imposed the need for permanent cooperation of the companies with theatres of Broadway and Fifth Avenue. Moreover, the theatrical groups were making appearances in the halls where events of the Greek associations and communities took place. The school performances were staged in the basements of the Greek churches, specifically where Greek language lessons were usually taking place.

Apart from its beneficial impact on the social education of the Greek immigrants, the theatre was also a way of collecting money for public benefit causes. That is why it was embraced by the various associations of Greek immigrants (associations that either were related to their place of origin in Greece or to their professional activity) which integrated theatre within the scope of various balls organized on any occasion.

Undoubtedly, the contribution of the Greek theatre companies to the cultural and social life of the Greek communities in America during the first half of the 20th century is remarkable. With the artistic activities they developed they taught sociability and brotherhood and relieved the immigrant, as spectator, actor or dramatist, from his everyday problems, the obligations regarding the place, the time and the needs of life, providing him a place of freedom. The theatre, by promoting intellectual communication and mental contact, offered the immigrants common ideals and objectives. But it mostly cultivated the notion of belonging to a broader group of people, it boosted the national conscience and it played a unifying role.

By reading the Greek-American press of the time, it can be concluded that on the whole the critiques were favorable and aimed at encouraging the audience, the companies and the dramatists. Only the criticism of the socialist newspaper *Onwards* constructively targeted the need to improve the repertory and the companies. From this severe criticism even the socialist groups were not exempted.

Until the Second World War, apart from the rapid development of the Greek-American theatre, the large production of dramatic plays by Greek immigrants was also remarkable. The self-taught immigrant playwrights, during the first immigration period until 1910, saw the prime need of writing to be to maintain the nostalgic mood of America's Greeks for the far-away homeland. Their sources of inspiration were the dramatic idylls, folk poetry and multiverse dramatic songs, i.e. "paralogues". The plays written until the decade of 1930 are easily classified into categories: immigration dramas, moral plays, historical dramas, as well as comedies, usually of one act. The main representatives of the Greek nostalgic dramaturgy in America are the following: Mimis Dimitriou (*The Fate of the Immigrant, The Deserter, The Fate Abroad, Brouklys in Athens*), Nikos Lambropoulos (*The Erudites, The Gamble, The 'Bad' Road, Clergymen and Priests, Community Meetings*), Angelos Sarigiannis (*Our Mess in America*), Ilias Papailiou (*Greek Soil, Birds of a Feather Flock Together*), Leonidas Arniotis (*The Immigrants*), Spyros Spyropoulos (*The Chicken That Gets Lost and Disturbs the World, The Immortal Soldier, The Spy*), Nikolaos Vavoudis (*Who Are Going to Parnassus, Alamana Hero, Greek-American Seamen in Faliro, The Fighters of Faith, Crucified Mothers, etc.*), Georgios Kartsonis (*Glorious Greece*), Chr. Papachristos (*The Torment of the Engaged Woman, The Wreckage of the Asia Minor Destruction, etc.*), Stefanos Charalambidis (*Kassiani, The Unknown Woman, Theodora, The Two Orphan Girls, etc.*), Athinagoras (*Nostalgia, Priest Being Klepht, etc.* and who afterwards

became Patriarch of Constantinople), Dimitris Theodoridis (*The Legacy of the Unknown Woman*) and other many writers.

After the Russian Revolution, a nucleus of playwrights was created who came from the socialist societies and created plays that were revolutionary and naturalistic with, however, many moral elements. They focussed on social injustice, the exploitation of workers, inequality, racism, and in general the whole pathogenesis of America.

The auctorial motivation of the Greek immigrants was not literary recognition, but their desire to express and to free their intellectual world, to create a means of communication, to cultivate the Greek character and to reveal class conscience. Despite their moderate literary value, they form a singular dramaturgy. Both the plays that were spotlighted by the footlights, as well as those that were written only to be read, cultivated the theatrical *logos* having as central themes the love for the homeland, the much desired repatriation, the struggle and toil to survive. Of course, there were also immigration plays on social mores, which attempted to illustrate proper domestic and social behaviour. About fifty immigrant playwrights and more than one hundred theatrical plays have been located.

The companies' repertory was not limited to the dramaturgy of the immigrants, but also borrowed plays from the Greek and the international repertory. From the last decade of the 19th century until the first two of the 20th, the theatrical stages of the Greek immigrants presented mostly historical dramas. The companies gave priority to patriotic dramas having as their purpose to rouse emotion for the fight for independence of the enslaved Greeks. The second kind of drama which was very popular was the dramatic idyll, such as those of Spyridon Peresiadis and Dimitrios Koromilas. The place of action of these plays, the mountainous Greek landscape, awakened memories and appealed to the Greek immigrants.

During the decade of 1920, the need to change the themes was noted. The social issues of inequality, new role models, woman's position, etc., confronted the socialist and the workers' theatre groups, whether professional or amateur, which incorporated plays of the socialists Dimitris Tangopoulos, Sotiris Skipis and Georgios Simiriotis into their repertories. In addition, the naturalistic dramas of the first creative period of Spyros Melas, Theodoros Synadinos and Rigas Golfis were revived. The theatre of "ideas" found support not only within the socialist and workers' associations, but also in a limited audience, loyal to the Greek-American theatre. Then, the

socialist groups, without changing their ideological aim, worked round and adopted more light-hearted shows, the musical theatre in particular, with the intention to attract and acquire a broader audience. One-act comedies were very common, followed by dramatic plays, in order to soften the heavy atmosphere of the “serious” play. This strategy can be observed throughout the entire period under examination.

The Athenian companies on tour, at the end of the second decade of the 20th century, carried in their luggage theatrical reviews and operettas. The fashion of the light theatre lasted until the end of 1930 and its popularity matched the educational level of the Greek immigrants, but also the main objective of the theatre, the entertainment of the Greek family.

From the international dramaturgy very few plays were performed on the Greek-American stages. Shakespeare’s plays were never staged in complete form. The great playwright was barely introduced to the audience of the Greek immigrants by Dionyssios Tavoularis and Nikolaos Lekatsas, who used to interpret extracts from his plays. In contrast, the French historical dramas, as well as dramatized novels found response from the Greek-American audience. The plays that were chosen were characterized by strong dramatic elements, educational character, but at the same time by elements of the drama of social mores. It is evident that the local companies did not follow the repertory of the American companies, but of the Athenian ones, which proves the dependence of the Greek-American theatre on the Greek one. It is also worth noting that only two American plays were staged by local companies.⁵

From 1940 Until 2008

The 1940s’ epopee shocked the Greeks of America, who were anxiously following the dramatic developments through the Greek-American press, the narratives of the immigrant volunteers and the proclamations that leaked out in the Greek-American communities. The Greek-American dramaturgy during the Second World War managed to surpass its ideological contradictions and follow a common dramaturgic line. Romance and the notions of self-sacrifice and freedom prevailed. The themes of the plays were about the Greek-Albanian war and the years of the Occupation, usually in a non-artistic way, enriched with pompous rhetoric and extreme sentimentality. There were the plays for ephemeral consumption, scripted by alleged writers, such as the play *The Glory That is Greece: Patriotic Drama in*

Three Acts by the Arcadian magistrate Andreas I. Vlahos, who lived in Chicago, or plays by amateur dramatists, such as *Enslaved Hellas: Drama in One Act* by Konstantinos Papafotiou, who came from Western Macedonia. The drama in one act by Theano Margaritis *For a Free Hellas – Under Slavery* was a success and was published in 1943. The plays at the beginning of the decade of 1940 are full of emotional elements and patriotism.⁶

During the decade of the 1940s amateur companies prevailed which opted for the patriotic repertory and the famous Athenian war operettas. Greek actors, who before the war participated actively in the local Greek-American companies, became successful in key positions within the Greek communities. Manolis Diamandis, in America since the mid-1930s, was an actor in Gerasimos Kourouklis' companies, Greek Actors and New Theatre. In the years after the war he had a radio programme on WEYD, which was long-lived and enjoyed great ratings in New York. The same applied to the radio broadcasts of the great Greek-American actor Yiannis Thimios, which were transmitted from the same frequency. The broadcasts of the veteran actors were a diverse theatrical podium. Theatrical radio plays were interpreted, such as *The Seven Days of Creation* by the pianist Maria Horapha, which was broadcasted in October, 1956, while on the same day the newcomer to New York, Adamantios Lemos, through the radio broadcast of Manolis Diamandis, announced his intention to develop a permanent theatrical activity in America.⁷

In Chicago, the newspaper *Greek Press* of the theatre-goer Lefteris Konstantopoulos supported and promoted the theatre, as was the case with the magazine *Athenian* of the playwright Dimitris Michalaros. Radio hours with theatrical orientation were introduced and operated in Chicago thanks to the playwright Michalis Chatsos, but mainly due to the business acumen of his wife Anna.

In the decades to follow, the Greek-American playwrights, though they continued to be inspired by Greek-American theatrical life, set aside the Greek language and continued to write mostly in "social", communicative English. The first immigrants, on the one hand, completely ignored English and, on the other, strictly addressed the audience of the economic Greek immigrants. The second generation Greeks, but also those that crossed the Atlantic after the war, were possessed by the need to free themselves from the narrow boundaries of the Greek communities and develop more complex communication means within a broader environment, maintaining, however, emotional elements in relation to the Greek character, as is the case of the writer Athina Dalla-Dami.

As mentioned before, Adamantios Lemos and his wife Mary arrived in America in 1956. Lemos with the priceless moral and economic support of the businessman Nikos Papadakos, who was the husband of Rika Dialyna, staged on March 10th, 1957 at the Assembly Hall of New York's Hunter College, the *Bridal Song* of Notis Pergialis, without great success however. Within the same period, Nikos Papadakos and Adamantios Lemos decided to establish "the first regular Greek theatre in the US". In the middle of 1957 Papadakos also rented a small theatre on 42 Street. The "Greek Art Theatre" was inaugurated on November 11th, 1957 with the play by Sakellarios-Giannakopoulos *No Names, No Pack Drill!* On February 1958, the comedy *In Need of a Dad* by M. Mrantel and A. Heart was staged. On February 1958, the newly established theatre company also presented the play *Love Needs... Beating*. Unfortunately, the theatre was soon gone due to the exorbitant expenses. In the summer of 1958, Lemos presented some summer performances in the Catskill Mountains of New York. During the new theatrical season he staged on January 30th, 1959 at New York's Carnegie Hall the drama *A Mother's Tragedy* by Dario Nicodemmi that was followed by the comedy *An Unfortunate Lady* by Sakellarios and Giannakopoulos. From February until March 1959 and also during the winter theatrical period of 1960-1961, tours were organized to nearby cities in the mid-west states and Canada. From 1961 until 1963 Lemos' activity was occasional.

On June 27th, 1963, at the Hotel Piccadilly in New York during the entire community's assembly, the establishment of the independent Hellenic Theatre Foundation of America, Inc. was announced. From 1963 until 1966 Lemos staged performances on Fridays and Saturdays, but also organised tours to focal points of Hellenism in America. In 1965 the Hellenic Theatre Foundation of America, Inc. acquired a permanent theatrical house, the Maidman Playhouse, in the centre of Manhattan. The Junta, however, terminated Adamantios Lemos' activities, as he was cut off artistically.

In the period that followed, he prepared his interpretation of Gogol's *Diary of a Madman*, which was staged in the spring of 1970 at Finch College in Manhattan. In June 1973, Lemos, insisting on a quality repertory, presented the *Chairs* by Ionesco and Pirandello's *Man with a Flower in His Mouth*. In August 1973, the Lemos couple returned to Greece, however, later, he would return twice to America on tour.⁸

George Arkas, playwright and director, left Greece after the military coup and settled in New York. In 1973 he staged *Medea* and this performance gave

him the opportunity to find wealthy supporters. As a result, in 1974 the Greek Art Theatre was born. Arkas announced: "My friends saw from the reactions of the critics and the audiences that what can be in Greece, can also be here". In October 1974, on Sheridan Square the Greek Art Theatre was inaugurated with the substantial collaboration and contribution of Greek businessmen. Arkas had leased the Café Society, a night club, for which he had to pay \$50,000 in order to change it into a "miniature classical Greek amphitheatre".⁹

The director sought to form a fifteen-member theatre company aiming at presenting Ancient Greek dramaturgy in English. His ambitious plan took effect on November 11, 1974 with the beginning of the performances of the Delphic Festival. The first play was Sophocles' *Electra* adapted by Arkas. In the homonymic role the leading lady was Yula Gavala and the role of Clytemnestra was played by Sylvia Miles. A few days before the opening night, the director praised the diachronic virtues of the Ancient Greek tragedy. However, he felt that the enthusiasm did not suffice and that it was necessary for the audience to relive the feeling as well. This is why he rejected the standard director's choices and introduced an innovation promoting the interaction between the audience and the actors.¹⁰ Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound* and Euripides' *Trojan Women* followed. Every performance lasted about ten weeks covering the period 1974-5.

George Arkas intended to present not only Ancient Greek drama but also Modern Greek repertory, but only in English, instantly limiting his audience. Furthermore, the annual leasing of the stage at Sheridan Square was reaching \$72,000. The enormous cost for the Non-Profitable Cultural Organization was covered by the earnings, the donations of the sponsors, and also by movie projections of the Classical European and American Cinema. Despite all these efforts, the company did not manage to last more than three seasons and disbanded.¹¹

Yannis Simonides, who had also been member of the Greek Art Theatre, hastened to cover the gap that the revocation of the Arkas company left behind. Simonides was born in Constantinople and grew up in Athens. He arrived in America in 1965 with the intention to study nuclear physics. Soon, however, his love for the theatre prevailed and he enrolled at the Yale School of Drama, where he studied acting and stage direction. After completing his studies, he made stage experimentations in Connecticut, lectured at Yale, and for a period he was Artistic Director at the New Britain Repertory. From 1976 until 1981 he served as chairman of the Drama Department at New York University.

In 1979, while he was still professor and president of the Drama Department of New York University, he established the Greek Theatre of New York. The activity of the company was limited until 1981. The appearance of this newly established company at La Mama E.T.C., 74A East Fourth Street, was remarkable. There "Theatrika", a festival of music, dance, poetry and drama was presented in English and also in Greek, in contrast to the previous company. For two weeks (21/10-2/11/1980), plays such as *He Who Must Die* by Michael Antonakes, based on the novel *The Greek Passion* by Nikos Kazantzakis, were incorporated into the artistic program of "Theatrika". In the same event, Olympia Dukakis interpreted in Greek the role of Clytemnestra, in an adaptation of the *Oresteia*. She also had the leading part in the play *Growing up a Greek-American*, which she had written in English.¹²

Simonides had discerned the need to acquire a permanent theatre stage and after a two-year search, in 1981 the theatre at 120 West 28th Street in a New York area where many Greeks lived and worked was acquired. The place had two stages, a central one with ninety-nine seats and a smaller one that was utilized for theatrical experimentations, but operated also as a children's stage. After the presentation of the plays in English on 28th Street, the company moved temporarily to Bryant High, in Astoria, Queens, where it made appearances with the same repertory in Greek, catering for the numerous Greek community.

In the same year, 1981, in order for his venture to be viable, Simonides established The Choregoi of the Greek Theatre of New York, inviting the theatre-going Greek-American and American audiences to contribute and support the theatre activity of the professional theatre company in exchange for granting privileges.¹³

The repertory of the company during the first theatrical period 1981-1982 consisted of the plays: *Tale Without Title* by Iacovos Kambanellis, *Island of Aphrodite* by Alexis Parnis, *Birds* by Aristophanes, the adaptation of *A Christmas Carol* by Dickens and *Agamemnon* by Aeschylus. But, during the next period, 1982-1983, the company insisted on the well-known dramaturgy.¹⁴ It's worth noting that during the Greek-American Playwrights' Festival, which took place at La Mama, plays by contemporary and famous Greek-American playwrights, such as John Kallas, Louis Phillips and Peter Perhonis, were staged.

The Greek Theatre of New York incorporated into its activities workshop performances of plays by the Greek, American and global dramaturgy,

children's theatre, cabaret, lectures, dramatic readings, music, dance and cinema. In October 1983, Yannis Simonides also established The Greek Theatre Workshop, with courses for tragedy, comedy, acting, phonetics, kinesiology and choreography.¹⁵

In 1984 the Greek Theatre of New York had moved to Westbeth Theatre Center, 151 Bank Street, near the Hudson River and once again organized a festival of Modern Greek plays. Eleven actors interpreted abstracts from thirteen plays by seven contemporary Greek playwrights translated into English. Among the directors were Sam Blackwell, Peter Byrne, Richard Morse, Ellen Nickles and Alkis Papoutsis.¹⁶ The themes of the repertory were related to the Modern Greek change in life and the Americanization of Greek society.¹⁷

Simonides' professional company was active systematically until 1994 with great performances and co-productions of plays by Euripides, Aristophanes, Sophocles, Shakespeare, Brecht, Ibsen, Korres, Matesis and Skourtis, which marked the Greek-American, as well as the Modern Greek theatre.¹⁸ Simonides was awarded an Emmy, established the Mythic Media International, a workshop of dramatic arts, and in 2006 he revived the Greek Theatre of New York by establishing the Elliniko Theatro, a non-profitable theatrical organization which faithfully followed the bilingual theatrical tradition that he created. The dramatized version of the platonic apology of Socrates, *The Apology Project*, with Simonides as leading actor under the direction of Loukas Skipitaris and costumes by the Oscar and Tony-awarded Theoni Vavlioti-Aldredge, was presented for the first time in 2003 in New York. During the period 2006-2007, it also went on tour in Greece with enormous success, giving performances both in Greek and English. Until today, *The Apology Project* has been presented to institutes, libraries, theatres and universities in many states of the USA, as well as in Greece. The recent significant productions of Elliniko Theatro, apart from *The Apology Project*, include *The Refugee*, directed by Simonides, *The Memoirs of General Makriyiannis*, and *Cavafy: Passions and Ancient Days*.

Loukas Skipitaris studied acting in New York and stage direction at Hunter University. He first appeared on Broadway in *Ilya Darling* with Melina Mercouri. He has participated in numerous performances of companies off Broadway and has directed plays of the ancient classic writers, Chekhov, Williams and Shaw, while he was also the director of the world premiere of the oratorio *Erotokritos* at Alice Tully Hall of the Lincoln Center. He is the founder and artistic manager of a professional acting workshop, The Acting Place, and of the Greek-American non-profitable centre of

theatre arts in New York, Theatron Inc. The performances of Theatron Inc. since 2002 include: *Yiannis & Johnny*, *The Prince Is Back*, *Growing up Greek-American*, *The Apology of Socrates* (co-production with Yannis Simonides' Mythic Media International), *Mama's Boy*, *A Groom for Vassoula*, *The Miser*, *Friday the 13th*, *The Iliad* (a staged reading), *Better to Be Crazy*, *Doctor against One's... Will!*, *Crooks and Co.*

In parallel with the activity of George Arkas and Yannis Simonides, in 1974 the Greek Cultural Center was established, in order to promote music, theatre, folk dances and shadow puppet theatre. Systematic theatre activity began in 1978. The Theatre Company, which is the name of the company of the Greek Cultural Center, has staged over seventy-five plays in the last thirty years. During that time, the company has incorporated great new Greek professionals and manages to stage up to four productions annually, receiving warm critiques and firmly supporting Modern Greek theatre.

The team also organizes annual theatre workshops for children and adults. The company's repertory derives mostly from the ancient drama (tragedies and comedies), but also from the Modern Greek comedies of situations and characters. An indicative reference includes *The Trojan Women* by Euripides (October, 2006), *Ten Little Indians* by Agatha Christie (February, 2007), *Daddies with Rum* by M. Reppas & Th. Papathanassiou (April, 2007), *Frogs* by Aristophanes (October, 2007), *With Strength from Kifissia* by Dimitris Kehaidis and Eleni Haviara (February, 2008), *Madame Sousou Conquers Manhattan*, an adaptation of D. Psathas' play *Madame Sousou* (May 2008). Also remarkable is the company's steady choice of the Greek language, incorporating at the same time a system of hyper-titles in English. The main contributors to the theatre for young people include the following: Christos Alexandridis, Martha Tompoulidou, Kostas Ilias, Christos Alexandrou, Vassia Lakoumenta, Yiannis Amouris, Antonis Armeftis, Ioanna Chasta, Fotis Michelioudakis, Louisa Papazaharia, Alkis Sarantinos and Marina Smargiannakis.

Theatre Companies on Tour from Greece

Apart from the local companies, theatre life in America was boosted by the companies on tour that arrived from Greece. In the first half of the 20th century, the theatre companies that arrived in America (the family companies of Aristides Parissis, Lolota Ioannidou, Vr. Pantopoulou, M. Iakovidis, etc.) soon dispersed, their members settling permanently in

America and joining local companies. Therefore, the theatre companies from Greece contributed significantly to the Greek theatre of America, reinforcing the local companies with professional actors and new plays. Almost all the theatre companies on tour performed within the Greek communities without having any aspirations to conquer the American audience.

In 1930 Marika Kotopouli arrived in New York, this great actress having been fare-welled in Athens by Eleftherios Venizelos himself. Marika Kotopouli's company would return to Athens in the spring of 1931, while Marika would return on 24 January 1932,¹⁹ the Greek audience anxiously awaiting her.

The critiques of the Greek-American press fervent supported not only the famous Marika Kotopouli, but also Katina Paxinou and Alexis Minotis. This great success was the reason that motivated the couple to visit America for a second time after a decade. In February 1941 Paxinou left London with New York's port her destination. Four days after the ship had sailed, it was torpedoed by a German war ship. A British war ship collected the castaways and transported them back to London. In May of the same year, Paxinou set off again for her transatlantic journey and finally arrived in America on 13 May 1941. On May 21, 1942 Alexis Minotis, following his own adventures and wanderings due to the war, arrived in New York, too.²⁰

During the entire 20th century, as well as in the beginning of the 21st, remarkable tours of America have included, among others, the following: in 1952, the National Theatre; in 1957, D. Psathas' *A Fool and a Half* by Vassilis Logothetidis Company; in 1994, Euripides' *Suppliants* by the Cyprus Theatre Organisation; in 1997, Sophocles' *Electra* by the National Theatre; in 1998, Euripides' *Medea* by the National Theatre; in 2006, Aeschylus' *Persians* by the National Theatre; and in 2007, Sophocles' *Electra* by the National Theatre.

NOTES

1. Mabel May Barrows was the daughter of the well-known philhellene Samuel J. Barrows, former Congressman from Massachusetts and writer of the book *Isles and Shrines of Greece*. [See "Έλληνες εν Αμερική" ("Greeks in America"), *Atlantis* (Ατλαντίς), No. 664, 9/10/1903, pp. 2, 3].
2. Georgios Matalas was one of the founding members of the "Sparti" Society in Chicago. Dimitrios Manousopoulos was a contributor of the Chicago newspaper

Atlantis (Ατλαντίς). [See “Ἕλληνες ἐν Ἀμερική” (“Greeks in America”). *Atlantis* (Ατλαντίς), No. 154, 5 February 1897, p. 6].

3. February of 1904.
4. According to Rozakos, whose information is not documented, *Aias* was staged based on a Modern Greek translation that had been published anonymously in Constantinople in 1868. [See Nikos Rozakos, *Το νεοελληνικό λαϊκό θέατρο στην Αμερική: 1903-1950* (Modern Greek Folk Theatre in America: 1903-1950), San Francisco, California: Falcon Associates, Inc., 1985, pp. 4, 5]. For more information on this translation of *Aias*, as well as on other of its translations, see Chrysothemis Stamatopoulou-Vasilakou, *Το θέατρο στην καθ’ ἡμᾶς Ανατολή: Κωνσταντινούπολη και Σμύρνη* (The Theatre in the [Greek] Near East: Constantinople and Smyrna), Athens: Polytropon, 2006, pp. 80-81.
5. For more specific information on the theatre of Hellenism in America and mainly in New York, see Aikaterini Diakoumopoulou, *Το θέατρο των Ελλήνων στη Νέα Υόρκη από τα τέλη του 19ου αι. έως το 1940* (The Theatre of the Greeks in New York Since the End of the 19th Century Until 1940), (Ph. D. thesis), Athens: Panteion University, 2007.
6. Rozakos, 1985, pp 88-89.
7. Adamantios Lemos, *Η ουτοπία του Θέσπη: θεατρικό οδοιπορικό* (Thespis Unreality: Theatrical Itinerary in Athens), Athens: Filippotis, 1989, p. 384.
8. Lemos, 1989, pp. 384-549. See also Adamantios Lemos, «Στην Αμερική του 20ου αι.» (“In America of the 20th Century”), *Seven Days, Kathimerini*, (Επτά Ημέρες, Καθημερινή), 7 September 2003, pp. 24-27.
9. Louis Calta, “Delphic Festival for Café Society”, *New York Times*, 18 September 1974, p. 34.
10. Margaret Kry, “Greek Theater Opens on Sheridan Square”, *Villager*, 31 October 1973, p. 8.
11. Bruce Chadwick, “Greek Theater Has Home”, *Daily News New York*, 23 October 1981, p. 23.
12. “Greek Theater”, *New York Times*, 21 October 1980, p. C8.
13. P. L. N. Y. Press release of the Greek Theatre of New York.
14. 1) *Alexandriad, Part I* by Alex Bellas and Yiannis Simonides, an English language adaptation of texts by Homer, Arrian, Aristotle and Euripides; 2) *Ευτυχισμένη δύση* AE. (Happy Sunset Inc.) by Manolis Korres; 3) *Οιδίπους Τύραννος* (Oedipus Rex) by Sophocles; 4) *Καραγκιόζης στη χώρα των Βεζύρηδων* (Karaghiozis in the Land of Viziers) by George Skourtis.
15. P. L. N.Y. Performance programme of the Greek Theatre of New York, 1982-1983.

16. "Modern Greek Plays", *New York Times*, 17 February 1984, p. C28.
17. "Hellenic", *New York Times*, 7 February 1984, p. C15.
18. *Ερωτόκριτος* (Erotokritos) of Kornaros, *Λυσιστράτη* (Lysistrata) of Aristophanes, *Ιφιγένεια εν Ταύροις* (Iphigenia in Taurus) under the direction of Yiannis Houvardas and costumes by Dionysis Fotopoulos in May 1992 at La Mama E.T.C.
19. Frixos Iliadis, *Μαρίκα Κοτοπούλη* (Marika Kotopouli), Athens: Dorikos, 1996, pp. 240-245.
20. Platon Mavromoustakos, comp., *Παξινοῦ-Μινωτῆς, μίμησις πράξεως σπουδαίας και τελείας* (Paxinou-Minotis, Mimesis of a Great and Perfect Action), Athens: MIET, 1997, pp. 30-31, 75. See also "Tribute to Katina Paxinou", *Nea Estia* (Νέα Εστία), Vol. 93, No. 1097, p. 368.

Theatre and the Greek Community in Venezuela

Costas Palamidis*

RÉSUMÉ

Le théâtre grec au Venezuela et son répertoire a une présence relativement récente, avec la fondation du théâtre de la Communauté grecque de Caracas en 1973 et une année plus tard avec la fondation du groupe les Grecs du Venezuela, une organisation communautaire qui incluait un groupe de théâtre (1974 à 1984). La présence grecque a continué à se développer au sein du Théâtre National du Venezuela (1985-1991) avec la contribution importante des frères Pantelis et Constantin Palamidis, dans la mise en scène d'œuvres d'Aristophane, Lorca, Ritsos, Racine et autres.

Cet article fait le point sur les années de 1984 à 2002 au cours desquelles des troupes de théâtre de Grèce ont participé au festival International de Théâtre à Caracas, aussi bien qu'à des représentations en langue grecque dans les communautés (*paroikies*) de Caracas et Valencia (2000-2002).

ABSTRACT

The Greek theatre in Venezuela and its repertory has a comparatively recent presence, with the founding of the community Greek theatre of Caracas in 1973 and a year later of the Greeks of Venezuela, a community organisation which included a theatre group from 1974 to 1984. The Greek presence continued to expand within the National Theatre of Venezuela (1985-1991) with the significant contribution of the brothers Pantelis and Constantine Palamidis, in the staging of works by Aristophanes, Lorca, Ritsos, Racine and others.

This article surveys the years from 1984 to 2002 presenting the theatre groups of Greece which have participated in the International Theatre Festival of Caracas, as well as their performances in Greek in the *paroikies* of Caracas and Valencia (2000-2002).

Greek immigration made itself present in Venezuela in the 1950s, at a time this oil-producing country required productive imported labor in the fields

* Actor, stage producer

of industry, trade and agriculture. During the Pérez-Jiménez dictatorship more than two million Spanish, Portuguese and Italian immigrants, among other European nationalities, arrived by sea and settled in the land Columbus had baptized, centuries back, as “The Land of Grace”. Most Greek immigrants to Venezuela came from the south of Greece – from the Peloponnesus and the islands – as well as from Rumania and the Pontus, all of them devastated not only by the Second World War but also by the immediately following Civil War. A majority chose to live in Caracas, the capital, while smaller numbers settled in the towns of Valencia, Barquisimeto, Maracay and Maracaibo. By the late 1960s and 1970s, the Greek community in Caracas numbered more than three thousand people and in the whole of Venezuela well over four thousand.

Greek immigrants ventured mostly into the manufacturing and trade of textiles and apparel as well as industry and imports. Those were the years when most of the Greek community associations came into being as did the conflicts that have characterized the Greek diaspora’s community-life: the struggle for power between the church and civil society and the yet-to-heal wounds of the Civil War. The hope of establishing a school to serve the needs of the community gave life to a project that lasted less than a year due to ongoing conflicts between conservatives who favored a strong oversight by the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North America and liberals who clamored for independence from religious authorities. At the time Greece was under right-wing governments, followed by the dictatorship of the “Colonels”. Under the circumstances, the liberals could hardly have been expected to win the debate. The school never saw the light of day and a Saturday-only school was established under the aegis of the Orthodox Community, by then already well under the authority of the North American Archdiocese, and particularly of Archbishop Iakovos, of unfortunate memory. It was within the framework of this Greek Orthodox community school that cultural events and small theatrical productions were first organized. Poetry recitals, songs and theatrical sketches were the easiest and more agreeable ways for children and young adults to practice the mother tongue. Under the guidance of Bishop Gennadios Chrisoulakis and of the teachers Amalia Zianettos, Evangelia Biraki and Sofia Papasaki a series of commemorative school activities took place that can be seen as the earliest expressions of a theatre of the diaspora in Venezuela¹.

In 1973 a group of personalities (among whom the teacher Amalia Zianettos is to be noted) established the Greek Theatre Company and

produced a one-time benefit gala for the Greek School and for the establishment of a youth organization. Overcoming great difficulties, this “Greek Volunteer and Cultural Group”, as it was known, staged the social manners comedy by Asimakis Yalamas and Kostas Pretenteris entitled *The Two-Penny Youth*. Presented at the National Theatre in Caracas, it brought together for the first time Greeks from different generations and different political inclinations, all joined by a common desire to spread the knowledge of the Greek language and culture among their fellow kin.

Its success, and the fear that the Group could serve as an excuse for further divisions within the community, made Bishop Gennadios call upon four of its young members (Fena Antonatos, Elisa Piourzetian, Pantelis and Kostas Palamidis) to establish, within the framework of the community and with the requisite autonomy, the “Greek Youth of Venezuela”. Thus, in 1974 this important organization, without parallel in all of Latin America, was established. It indefatigably fostered Greek cultural values for more than a decade, not only within the community but all over Venezuela. The incorporation of Cristos Aguridis, Anastasia Chimaras, Stella Athanasiou, Anastasia and Basilio Andriopoulos, Dimitri and Antonio Constantinou, Atanasio and Maria Kazana, Apostolos Goropoulos strengthened the group, as did the later addition to the theatre, dance and music group of Giorgos and Dora Bacatsias, Maria Marangoudakis, Cristos and Giorgos Mitsicostas, Demetrio Lambrou, Panagiotis Melimopoulos, Lazaro Georgiadis, Teresa Dimopolous, Sofi and Lucy Tsortsotsidis, Mihalis and Manolis Liarmakopoulos, Maria Palamidi, Sultana and Efterpi Haralampidis, Haris and Sofia Panagiotidis, Dimitra and Maria Giannouli, Elena and Kostas Filipou, Dionisio and Maria Arvanitakis, Ilia and Giorgos Papasarrantos, Nikos and Vangelis Hatzikostantis, Elena and Giannis Esperidis, Marisol Forlakis, Liana and Sofia Laliotis, Ana Luisa Drosos, Helena Mendis, Mercedes, Maria and Rafael Meligonitis. Already in 1974 the Greek Youth of Venezuela presented a very important show called *Greek Joviality*, which comprised two important one act plays, *The Parade* by Loula Anagnostaki (Greece) and *A Sunny Morning* by the Quintero Brothers (Spain).

For a full decade, the Greek Youth of Venezuela not only devoted itself to organizing Greek music and folklore presentations all over Venezuela but also to staging in different theatres throughout Caracas plays such as *Liar Needed for Hire* (1975) and *The Insatiable* (1976), by the great genre writer Dimitris Psathas, fragments of the review *Oh, What a World, Daddy!* by Kostas Murselas (1976), *My Love, Huahua* (1977) by Pierre Lacroze, and

Aphrodite (1979) by Peter Shaffer, among others. It also organized a children's theatre presentation based on the poems of Odysseas Elytis with music by Linos Kokkotos and Mihalís Tranoudakis, under the title *Forward on, Forward on, Little Machine* (1980).

With much public acclaim, theatre, music and poetry came together in many a great soirées such as *Kostas Varnalis and Us* (1977), *Yorgos Seferis and Us* (1978), and *Yannis Ritsos and Us* (1979). Dramatic representations of Greek poems, particularly by Tasos Livaditis and by the poet and journalist Nikos Palamidis (1978-80), were also staged in honor of the Athens Polytechnic and the students' struggle.

The organization's activities expanded into many fields, covering the edition of *The Shape of Absence*, a book of poems by Yannis Ritsos, and *Bolivar*, by Nikos Engonopoulos, with translation by Miguel Castillo Didier, as well as the launch of Greek Cinema Weeks and a radio program.

Severe criticism of the isolation, conservatism and intellectual backwardness of the Greek Orthodox Community, at the time under the chairmanship of Diogenes Duzoglu and of the newly-arrived priest Lefteris Konakas, published in the first edition of the art journal *Pegasus* (1981), caused a schism within the community and after seven years of existence the Greek Youth Organization drifted away from its roots. During three years it continued its activities in association with another community organization, the "Greek-Venezuelan Center", at the Teatro Chacaito, and with the Greek Embassy, under the sponsorship of Their Excellencies Antonios Protonotarios and Nikos Dimadis. During this period, it produced such shows as *Four Eras* (1982) and *Café Concert* (1983) that combined music and theatre under the direction of its two founding members, Pantelis and Kostas Palamidis.

In 1984, upon celebrating its tenth anniversary, the "Greek Youth of Venezuela" organization decided to come to an end and devote efforts to spread Greek culture through two new organizations: a) Greek Dances of Venezuela, and b) AEDOS (Popular Song Collective).

In 1985, Pantelis and Costas Palamidis joined the founding team of the National Theatre Company of Venezuela and during its first five years of existence held with much success the positions of General Manager and Administrator, and Assistant-Director, respectively. By that time they had both concluded their studies at the Central University of Venezuela with degrees in Music (Pantelis) and Theatre (Costas). As artists in their own right, the Palamidis brothers, in association with AEDOS, Greek Dances of Venezuela,

several theatre companies such as the National Company, the Latin American Repertoire Theatre “Teatrela” (founded by Costas Palamidis in 1985), “Contrajuego” and other groups, fostered the presentation of both Greek classical and contemporary plays such as *Pluto* by Aristophanes (1993), *Polis* by Loula Anagnostaki (1994) and *Oedipus Tyrannus* by Sophocles (1995).

During the Nineties, a series of shows were organized to present the music of Mikis Theodorakis, the *Rembetica*, at the National Theatre and the theatres of Caracas’ Atheneum. Moreover, with the support of many famous Venezuelan actors, staged readings were held of *Christopher Columbus* by Nikos Kazantzakis.

During those years, famous theatre personalities from Greece visited Venezuela to participate in the Caracas International Theatre Festival, amongst them special mention should be made of Panagiotis Mihopoulos, Theodoros Terzopoulos, Nikos Sakalidis, Iliana Panagiotouni, Stavros Doufexis and Mihalis Marmarinos.

By the new millenium, AEDOS, Greek Dances of Venezuela and Teatrela have already reached twenty years of existence and have given their support to Greek culture in Venezuela organizing both Greek Cultural Weeks and Months in Caracas theatres and cultural centers. It is worth mentioning that the musical *Good Bye, Alexandria* (1993-2007), produced by AEDOS with music by Pantelis Palamidis, poems by Constantinos Kafavis and the actors Costas Palamidis and Ludwig Pineda, has had over a hundred presentations in Venezuela and has toured in the United States, Puerto Rico, Mexico and Greece. It also represented the Greek diaspora in Latin America on the occasion of the “2003 Heleniada”, held in Salonica.

Between 2000 and 2002, AEDOS in cooperation with the Caracas International Theatre Festival and the Athens Greek Cultural Center staged the first Greece-Venezuela co-production of *The Trojan Women* by Euripides, directed by Stavros Doufexis. Under the sponsorship of the Ambassador of Greece, Lazaros Nanos, and the Orthodox Community Greek School - whose teachers are sent by the Greek Government (at a time when the Greek community in Venezuela counts less than two thousand members) – special presentations of *The Trojan Women*, in Greek and with Greek actors, were organized for the Greek communities of Caracas and Valencia.

During the last few years, AEDOS, Greek Dances of Venezuela and Teatrela have worked together to produce two Greek Cultural Months during which plays based on Greek tragedies have been staged. Thus, *One Hundred Pairs of*

Eyes, a piece based on *Clytemnestra or the Crime*, a tale by Marguerite Yourcenar, and on poems by Yorgos Seferis (2005-2007), and the play *Phaedra* by Jean Racine (2006-2007) have been presented receiving much critical and public acclaim. AEDOS receives vital support from the General Secretariat for Greeks Abroad of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs as well as, since 1996, by the Ministry of Culture of Venezuela. Teatro de Repertorio Latinoamericano “Teatrela” is one of the most successful theatre groups of Venezuela and has received important prizes awarded by the Government of Venezuela. Since 1990 it has received an annual allocation from the Venezuelan Ministry of Culture. “Greek Dances of Venezuela” continues to organize Greek folk-dance workshops in several Caracas cultural centers, as well as in the School of Arts of Venezuela’s Central University.

NOTES

1. This article is derived from the author’s personal research, both for his B. A. thesis *The Greek Myth in the Theatre of Latin America* and his many lectures given over the last twenty years. An additional source has been the work *Chronicle of the Greeks in Venezuela*, Athens, 1995 [In Greek] by his father, the noted writer and journalist Nikos Palamidis.

The Theatre of Identity: Changing Survival Mechanisms of Diasporic Hellenism in South Africa Through Apartheid to the Present Day

Renos Nicos Spanoudes*

RÉSUMÉ

Une analyse de l'expérience théâtrale de la diaspora grecque en Afrique du Sud révèle l'influence du théâtre grec classique. Parallèlement aux églises communautaires grecques avec leurs salles pour la célébration des mariages et des salles de spectacles, les associations grecques, luttant pour le maintien de leur identité dans un pays étranger, ont produit des pièces de théâtre et ont organisé des festivals de danse. Durant les années d'Apartheid, les Grecs étaient perçus de façon stéréotypée comme des immigrants impliqués dans les *cafés du coin*. Dans la nouvelle Afrique du Sud, la contribution des groupes minoritaires, dans des domaines allant du légal au médical est reconnue; et en termes artistiques, le théâtre de la diaspora grecque moderne reflète de façon croissante les angoisses partagées de la société. Dans cet article l'intérêt pour le théâtre grec n'était et n'est pas confiné aux premiers immigrants et aux générations suivantes. Nelson Mandela, inspiré par Sophocle, a monté sur scène l'interrogatoire d'Antigone par le Roi Creon, avec des camarades de prison, durant son incarcération sur l'île Robben. L'auteur dramatique Athol Fugard a immortalisé cet événement dans les pièces *The Island* et *Demetos*, en décrivant les tragiques réalités des masses dans des sociétés non démocratiques. J. M. Coetzee, récipiendaire du Prix Nobel de la littérature, a présenté la corruption dans la pièce *Waiting for the Barbarians*. Plus récemment, *Plutus* d'Aristophane, retravaillée par la seule école grecque du jour du pays, a résonné avec les défis actuels auxquels font face tous les Sud-Africains.

ABSTRACT

An analysis of the Hellenic diasporic experience in South Africa reveals the influence of Classical Greek Theatre. Alongside Greek community churches with halls for weddings and feast days, Hellenic associations, striving to maintain identity in a foreign land, produced plays and organised dance festivals. During the Apartheid years, Greeks were stereotypically perceived as immigrants involved in *corner cafés*. In the new South Africa, contributions of such minority groups, in fields ranging from legal to medical is

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acknowledged, and in terms of the arts, Modern Greek diasporic theatre is increasingly reflecting shared angst. Regard for Greek Theatre was and is not confined to original immigrants and subsequent generations of offspring. Nelson Mandela, inspired by Sophocles, staged Antigone's interrogation by King Creon, with fellow prisoners, while incarcerated on Robben Island. Playwright Athol Fugard immortalised this event in *The Island* and in *Demetos*, addressing the tragic realities of masses in a non-democratic society. J. M. Coetzee, recipient of the Nobel Prize for Literature, presented corruption in *Waiting for the Barbarians*. More recently, Aristophanes' *Ploutos*, reworked by the country's only Greek Day School, resonated with the current challenges facing all South Africans.

Introduction

Diasporic research should necessarily seek archival material in order to capture and comprehend the patterns and processes of immigrant survival in the new home or host land. In the case of Hellenic diasporic records in South Africa, sources point to an ever present range of ethnic groups involved in the proprietorship of "Corner Cafés". Undated registers of licensed businesses, estimated to span the years 1908-1935, indicate the café involvement of "Asiatics" (Gujarati-speaking Muslims and Hindus), "Africans", Greeks, Jews and Germans, the "Asiatics" and "Africans" entries having pass book (identification) numbers and residential permit codes. According to data contained in the Johannesburg Commercial Directories, the dominance of café ownership by Hellenes appears to have been area-specific and fluctuating. More specifically, a Greek majority (ranging from 32% to 49%) in fruiterers stores spans the years 1893 to 1932 but indicative of ethnic upward mobility, changes its fabric and emerges as area-specific dominance in general dealer stores until 1944, restaurants, tearooms and fish-and-chips stores until the mid 1950s and cafés and milk bars until the early 1980s.

At present, Hellenic dominance in retail food and catering enterprises is even more area-specific and appears in a range of businesses including supermarkets, hyperamas, family food stores, Greek restaurants, steakhouses, fast food outlets and property investments. Hellenic dominance, or at least presence, in areas other than food and catering enterprises has been on the rise since the mid 1970s and continues to grow. This presence has been in spite of Apartheid regime rise and fall and even in the light of the most recent xenophobia sweeping the country presently. Diasporic assimilation has facilitated the involvement and world class recognition and success of South African Hellenes in almost every single aspect of activity including

Law, Medicine, the Arts and Education. It is clearly evident that as time passes from the initial immigration, arrival, survival and settlement of the first generation (immigrant parentage) of Hellenes in South Africa (from mainland Greece and the islands, including Cyprus, Lemnos, Ithaki and Crete), so the second and subsequent generations (immigrant offspring) reflect an increasing identification with and assimilation into South African culture, norms, ideals and behaviour. It is suggested that, as is the case in most regions of Hellenic and other diasporic processes on the planet, this increasing identification is reflected in such realities as inter-marriage, loss of fluency in mother or ancestral tongue accompanied by verbalised denial of roots and acceptance of the notion “the soil upon which one is born is the soil that determines one’s individuality”.

This notion is one which has been addressed by the major practitioners of art of second and subsequent generations of Hellenes resident in South Africa. The focus of the present paper being that of theatre and diasporic Hellenism in South Africa is apt, as it is in this field that expressions of identity occur in both the Greek church halls and in the commercial theatres of the country. In the latter, the expressions are in the form of one person productions in which the artist contemplates and debates whether he or she is South African, Greek South African, South African Greek or Greek-Cypriot South African, to state but a few considerations. In the former, the expressions are in the form of community productions which are also labours of love but which serve to remind Hellenes of the land they left behind, quench their thirst for original Greek thought and philosophy and satisfy the hunger for uniqueness. In both cases, study of the Theatre of Identity provides a window into life outside the businesses and financial survival strategies outlined above.

Delving into the realities of Hellenic immigrant community presence and existence highlights the vital role of recreational support and survival mechanisms during an often troubled South African history. Entertainment such as theatrical productions, poetry readings and competitions, commemoration days, *laika* functions, bouzouki evenings, dance presentations and art exhibitions, all by local Greeks, attest to the expression of identity.

The Diasporic Beginnings

The production of a locally written Greek play in English has not occurred at community hall level which has always been dominated by authentic

Greek plays in Greek by Greek playwrights from Greece. In interesting contrast and parallel diasporic pattern, there is a plethora, most recently and increasingly, of locally written short stories and poems in both Greek and English with some of the most successful commercial theatrical productions in the country having been written and performed by South Africans of Greek origin about the challenges, joys and pain of being at the heart of a diasporic existence. This expression of a Hellenic life journey inevitably refers to the original Greek settlers, their corner stores, their longing for the homeland, their difficult lives “behind the counter” and their hopes for the youth. While these themes are universal to all diasporic communities throughout the world, in the case of South Africa, one needs cognisance of the details of such diasporic beginnings and journeys.

Due to differing opinions and scant archival sources, it is difficult to ascertain when the first Greeks arrived in South Africa. It is believed (Nicolaidis, 1923) that the first Greek immigrants arrived in the late 1800s and were seamen who had first emigrated to America and then travelled to South Africa. A social historian (Mantzaris, 1978) maintains that by 1888, there were about twenty Greeks in Kimberley and in 1891 approximately fifteen Greeks lived in Cape Town. In 1896 there were at least seventy Greeks in Johannesburg and by 1903, the first organic unity – The Mutual Help Organisation – was formed and the first Greek Orthodox Church, to serve the now 1000 strong Greek population of Cape Town, was built. Another, albeit different organic unity, the Greek Miners’ Association, was formed the previous year in Johannesburg (Callinicos, 1987) to safeguard against the Transvaal Miners’ Associations’ actions of undercutting the wages of unqualified immigrants.

The First Immigrants

What appears to be a now generally and academically accepted diasporic beginning is the account that towards the end of the nineteenth century, Hellene immigrants reached the Southern shores of what now constitutes the Republic of South Africa (Gerondoudis, 2002). The first immigrants inhabited the area of Cape Town and as their numbers gradually increased, they began travelling northwards towards Johannesburg and Pretoria. At the beginning of the twentieth century, small concentrations of Hellenes were formed in the towns in which they settled. Numbering a few hundred individuals each in most cases, they were aware of the need to safeguard their religious, linguistic and cultural tenets and ideals, and so formed themselves

into regional societies which they named Hellenic Communities, each Community named after a town or region.

The formation of the Hellenic Community of Johannesburg and the Hellenic Community of Pretoria occurred in 1908, five years after that of Cape Town. As the Hellenic population increased and sizeable concentrations of Hellenes were formed in other major towns of South Africa, additional Hellenic communities, whose aims were consistent with the pioneer Hellenic communities, were established.

The Establishment of a Federation of Hellenic Communities

Simultaneously, ethnic regional societies were formed alongside the Hellenic communities to serve the interests of Hellenes originating from a particular island or region of Greece or the needs within a specific field of human endeavour and expression, such as teaching Greek to the youth, a benevolent function for those facing financial difficulties or illness, a sporting club, a chamber of commerce, a group of professional practitioners and a recreational *omadha*. These last mentioned groups or troupes were often thespian in nature and focussed not only on theatrical productions but also on festival dances and commemorative celebrations. However, such a wide range of groups and gatherings was at times counter productive, and so resulted in the formation, in October, 1950, of The Federation of Hellenic Communities of South Africa, a unified body to coordinate the efforts of the Hellenic communities towards a common purpose, supported by the other Hellenic organisations, all working in unison to uphold the ideals of Hellenism in South Africa.

Notwithstanding the enthusiasm shown by the representatives of the twenty-five Hellenic communities and organisations at the time, the Federation was short-lived. It was only after the Turkish invasion of Cyprus, when an association named the Hellenic Cyprus Relief Fund formed at the initiative of the Hellenic Cyprus Brotherhood and supported beyond wildest expectation by other Hellenic organisations that the process of forming the Federation of Hellenic Communities of the Transvaal began. In 1975, the communities of Alberton, Benoni, East Rand, Pretoria, Vaal Triangle and West Rand, Germiston, Johannesburg and Witwatersrand and Rustenburg were ratified as representatives. In 1976 the communities of Cape Town and Environs, Durban (Association of Natal), East London, Port Elizabeth and Eastern Province, Bloemfontein, Welkom and Districts became members.

The diasporic identity and survival process continued when in 1976, following the Soweto Uprising on June 16, the Federation changed its name to the Federation of Hellenic Communities of South Africa. In 1978, Hellenic ethnic regional societies begin being represented. In 1978, the Hellenic Cyprus Brotherhood of South Africa, the Ithaqesian Philanthropic Society of South Africa, the Pan-Cretan Association of South Africa and the Peloponnesian Society of South Africa joined the Federation.

At present, the Federation, having grown from strength to strength, is heralded as the only apolitical Hellenic institution in the service of Hellenism in South Africa. In its drive to uphold *Ellinorthodoxia*, it now embraces South African Hellenic communities from Kimberley, the far West Rand and the Northern Cape, as well as ethnic regional societies of South African Hellenes from Egypt, Sudan, Lemnos, Kassos, Epirus, Macedonia, Samos, Kefalonia, Mytilini and Pontos.

In light of the demise of Apartheid and the new South African Constitution, the Federation has now been renamed the Federation of Hellenic Communities of the Republic of South Africa. It is important to note that presently, the Hellenic Students' Association, the Hellenic Chamber of Commerce and Industries, the South African Hellenic Educational and Cultural Institute (SAHETI School), the New Pan Hellenic Voice, Hellenes for Human Rights, Equity and Justice, Hellenic Orthodox Ladies Benevolent Society, the Department of Hellenic Studies – University of Johannesburg, the National Association of Greek Youth of South Africa (NAYSOSA) and the Lyceum of Greek Women are among the most active and prolific groups of the Federation.

Economic Activities of Greek Immigrants and Greek Theatre in South Africa

In more general terms, it is the Greek student associations, the radio station, the charities, the universities and the schools of the Hellenic diaspora in South Africa which may be seen as the major practitioners of theatrical presentations both celebratory and educational. For example, university student productions such as *Den Xehno*, reflecting on the 1974 Turkish Invasion of Cyprus, are produced or at least partly presented annually, Kazantzakis and Elytis are favourites in the presentations of readings of their classical and highly regarded works, the on-air blood drive and plea for helping victims of crime and xenophobic attacks refers to the grand ideals of democracy in a dramatic

manner and Odysseus is highlighted in a production which is at once didactic and hopeful. Whatever the style or nature of the theatrical or dramatic form, one aspect of diasporic Hellenes remains within the greater South African context, namely, that of the stereotypical store owner with broken English and gold chain dangling on a hairy chest. This stereotype, while still valid to some degree, in certain areas of the country, is losing its universal reference. Perhaps this changing diasporic Hellene is the one depicted in *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*, received, by all accounts, with great applause in diasporic regions, such as South Africa but not in Greece itself. Whatever the case may be, considerations of Hellenic diasporic theatre, written by South Africans, almost always refers to the café on the corner, the village back home, the sense of being foreign, the Greek accent, the grandmother in black, the Turkish coffee, the breaking of the plates, food and more food, and dancing like there is no tomorrow within a flame of lit whiskey.

In light of these continued stereotypical representations, it is necessary to investigate and record the actual daily lives in general and economic activities specifically, when considering the theatre of the Hellene in the diaspora. A starting point would clearly be a backdrop of such lives and survival strategies in other diasporas with Hellenes. A case in point is the fact that the occupations, institutions and assimilation of Greek immigrants into host communities have been widely studied in Australia and America (Baddely, 1977; Scourby, 1980; Chock, 1981; Lovell, 1981).

In all diasporic instances of Hellenes, a common thread of concern is the desire for one's children to learn to speak and write Greek, to *tsoungrisi* red eggs at Easter, to dance the *hasaposerviko* and to make *dolmadakia*. Although the café form and proprietorship as evident in South Africa (Spanoudes, 2005) is absent overseas, the Greek immigrants have been found to be involved, as suggested above, in food retailing to varying extents. In a study of business proprietors in Poughkeepsie, New York, during the 1960s (Newcomer, 1962), it was found that the majority of Greek retailers were involved in the food business. An examination of urban adaptation among diasporic Greeks in Auckland (Baddeley, 1977) has revealed the emergence of a Greek coffeehouse establishment within the community, and in Sydney the diasporic Greek owned shops and services (Burnley, 1976) are seen as indicative of the presence of Greek immigrants in suburban areas. Such presence and emergence has continued to date.

In South Africa, the diasporic process and patterns initially existed predominantly in café proprietorship but have continuously declined to date

(Nicolaidis, 1923; Added, 1973; Mantzaris, 1978; Spanoudes, 1983, 1997, 2005; Bizos, 2008). Causes for this decline vary from changes in the socio-economic structure of the country to emigration back to one's country of origin or a safer country, upward mobility and diasporic assimilation by the younger generation within South African cultures, sub-cultures, and opportunities.

Present day observations are understood more clearly when cognisant of the various time frames and stages of diasporic process within an economic survival context. Newspaper survey series on "The people who come from other countries to make a new home in South Africa" and "The fascinating immigrant communities of Johannesburg" concur that the first Greeks to have landed in South Africa were sailors in the late 1880s. These reports point to the more authenticated documentation revealing the legal and official emigration of Greeks to South Africa began as a trickle through Lourenco Margues prior to the Second Anglo-Boer War and thereafter gradually increasing (*Pretoria News*, 20 November 1975; *Star*, 28 June 1978).

An example of such a document indicating immigration through Africa of Greek peoples is a list of names of Hellenic refugees from the Middle East (Union of South Africa, Labour Report, 1941). In August 1941, these individuals registered with the Controller of Industrial Man Power of the Union of South Africa, for the purpose of obtaining employment. Interestingly, their stated occupations include carpenter (majority), motor mechanic, engineer and electrician. Further, their stated language proficiencies besides Greek were Turkish, French and English – perhaps indicative of earlier education and social status.

In the 1950s, some of the economically active Greeks in the Transvaal (Callinicos, 1987) were artisans, tailors, cabinet makers, blacksmiths and shoe makers, while most were traders in the general dealer, fruiterer, baker and confectioner, tobacco, bottle store and (predominantly) tearoom and restaurant enterprises. Records of the involvement of Greeks in mining (Mantzaris, 1982; Callinicos, 1987) inform that workers were recruited from the ranks of the unemployed miners from the Belgian Congo. The feudal pattern of land ownership which predominated in Greece, Crete and Cyprus during the first decades of the last century, suggests that the majority of immigrants were drawn from the agricultural and villager strata. These immigrants did not bring a café ownership occupation with them, rather they arrived with their agricultural knowledge, little capital and a meagre education (Added, 1923; Mantzaris, 1978; Michos, 1983, Spanoudes, 1983, 2003; Bizos, 1983, 2008, Greek Community Annual Reports).

In the late 1970s, Jewish tearoom and grocery store proprietorship began to be overshadowed by that of Hellenes. Upward mobility, as already suggested, enables such change. From the late 1980s, Greek proprietorship of the café trade in the major cities was replaced by members of the Portuguese, Indian and Chinese ethnic groups – themselves experiencing diasporic patterns and processes. In the present day South Africa, the remnants of the diasporic Greek café journey are clearly observed. In fact, the further one travels out from the business districts towards the smaller towns and into the rural areas of the country, the greater the unchanged and continued activity and presence of Hellenes in such businesses and survival strategies. In the cities, however, cafés have been a prey for monopolistic and oligopolistic corporations who forged the development of the dominance of large shopping malls, franchised food outlets, petrol station convenience stores, mega supermarkets and an emergence of Hellenic dining experiences alongside a healthy, indigenous coffee society.

From the turn of the century, Black economic empowerment has enabled the emergence of a legal informal trader and will engender an increasingly sophisticated inner city retailer. This retailer, if current political challenges are met, will mirror the original characteristics of the Hellenes in their original activity of survival, namely a first-aid post and provision of a public service to all classes and races of society.

It is against a backdrop of the history of the formations of the Hellenic communities of South Africa and establishments of Hellenic associations and their recreational activities in the country on the one hand, and cognisance of the strategies of survival and assimilation of the Hellenic immigrant and the subsequent generations, that Greek diasporic theatre may be understood, that the voice and witness of Greek diasporic theatre in South Africa may be heard.

Theatre of Identity in Hellenic Communities and Hellenic Ethnic Groups in South Africa

While all the Hellenic communities and ethnic associations have, to a lesser or greater degree, been involved in presentations, festivals, celebrations and productions, there have been those who have excelled in such and so have become synonymous with the broad terms of culture and theatre.

One such Hellenic community is that of Albertyn which has always been at the forefront of meeting the educational and intellectual needs of

diasporic Hellenes, actively participating in efforts to raise money and establish a thriving family-orientated Greek life of activity. The theatrical productions of Alberton have mostly been an annual event and have always focussed on the great contemporary comedies. The cultural rise of the Alberton Greeks and the Hellenic communities in the vicinity and beyond became richer following the establishment of Alberton's Theatre Group in 1987. Its main aim was to give the opportunity to Greeks of the city to get involved in creative thinking and cultural awareness. Basil Markatselis has been the Chairman and firebrand of this cultural group since its inception to date. Their many theatrical productions have all been written by the well-known theatrical writer, Dimitrios Psathas. The plays are performed in the community hall of the Hellenic Community of Alberton in their official South African premieres and subsequently, they have been performed throughout the country to the very appreciative diasporic audiences.

At the time of going to press, this vibrant community was in rehearsal for this year's production – Psatha's *I Hartopehtra*. Critics who question why such a dated and seemingly irrelevant piece is being produced in South Africa today clearly do not understand the dynamics of diasporic process and pattern. Such a production immediately appeals to an older, established Hellene who inadvertently is wishing to instil some awareness of Greek culture in the youth. At the very least, the desire is to engender the passion and interest in theatre that the younger generation display with regard to both contemporary and "older" music, ranging from Georgos Dalaras to Eurovision success stories, such as Anna Vissi, Elena Paparizou and Sakis Rouvas (all four having travelled and performed to capacity houses in Johannesburg).

The closest that the Alberton and certainly the other South African diasporic Hellene communities have come to appealing to the youth en masse, besides the "socials" (disco, club nights) in terms of somewhat theatrical (costume, make-up, dance) or cultural events, are the Olympic Flame Journey Day in South Africa in 2004 and the very recent visit by Angelo Tsarouchas, world famous Canadian Hellene, who performed his stand-up comedy routine to such demand that he had to give additional shows at other community halls and at SAHETI School. Sadly perhaps, the production of *I Hartopehtra*, or a screening of a classic Greek film such as *Mia Gineka Stin Antistasi*, *Oratotis Mithen* or *Xerizomeni Genia*, or even famous Greek stories in English motion pictures, such as *Captain Corelli's Mandolin*, *Ulysses' Gaze* or *Zorba The Greek* would not receive such tremendous support from South African Hellene offspring today. In interesting contrast, a staging of a local *Big* and *Fat Greek*

South African Wedding would, a sign of the diasporic process of assimilation and universal definition of self.

The Theatre of Identity of the Hellenes in South Africa and South Africans of Hellenic Roots

As described above, there is more than a century of presence of Hellenes in South Africa. While there are second, third and fourth generations of offspring, there are also continuous and recent arrivals and departures of Hellenes, driven by factors internal to South Africa and specific to Greece, Cyprus and the *patritha*.

The story of an immigrant who makes a success despite great difficulties is at the heart of great Greek literature and equally stirring international diasporic writings and expression. In terms of dance expression in South African Greek diaspora, major strides and achievements have been realised by Mairy Vasiliou who has been teaching Greek dancing throughout the country since her arrival in 1956. She has won international and local acclaim, having choreographed the movement and dance sequences for Greek productions by South African Greeks, as well as South Africans who have staged Greek plays such as Leon Gluckman's production of *Iphigenia* at Johannesburg's Civic Theatre and *Extracts from the Greek Tragedies* by, amongst others over the years, Taubie Kushlick at the University of Johannesburg, University of the Witwatersrand and the National Grahamstown Festival (Vasiliou, 2008).

In terms of musical expression, members of the Greek community who expressed interest and who participated in the arts, founded the Hellenic Cultural Movement of South Africa (EPNEK) as an organisation in 1978. Their aims were to promote Greek culture in South Africa, to encourage cultural expression especially among the youth and to facilitate cultural exchange between South Africa and Greece. On many occasions, EPNEK has been invited to participate in the Athens Festival at Lykavitos and Festivals by the Ecumenical Hellenism Organisation. While the majority of their productions have been musical concerts, their theatre sub-committee has staged the works of the now deceased Apostolis Parianos such as *Metanastis*, *Arhontogiftissa*, *Exomologiseis* and *28 Oktovriou* – all texts which strike at the heart of diasporic angst.

In terms of local theatrical Greek-themed expression in South Africa, there has been one particular such story which was not staged as a play but was

produced by Grey Hofmeyer, himself married to a Greek woman born in South Africa. Tom Hanks and his Greek American wife Rita Wilson, falling in love with Nia Vardalos' one woman show in Canada, is an enlightening parallel in that in both cases Hofmeyer and Hanks speak to the diasporic heart which longs to tell the story of the home away from home. Hofmeyer's television series was the story of one Savvas Englezakis, who was born in Cyprus in 1939. His studies in Italy and England were halted by the political unrest in Cyprus and so he was forced to return home. In 1956, he was involved in an ambush against the British where he and his fellow freedom fighters faced execution. He was spared due to the fact that he had a strong command of English and so could be interrogated. He escaped and journeyed to South Africa in 1957. His story is here detailed for it is in the specific that one addresses the universal – particularly when dealing with diasporic truths. In 1960, he started his corner café which was a fish-and-chips shop in a downtrodden area where not many individuals ventured to do business. It is recorded that the shop cost him a mere 350 pounds but it turned out to be a highly lucrative business. He thus expanded as time progressed and opened up a restaurant, bakery and supermarket store. In the mid 1960s, he began cattle and game farming and continuing his diasporic process of assimilation and survival, he eventually started an ostrich farm with its own abattoir and tannery. This is an international enterprise today, still owned and run by the Englezakis family (Gerondoudis, 2003). Hofmeyer's television series was entitled *The Big Time* and has been controversially seen as the quintessential story of the Hellene who chose South Africa. It was however not filmed with Greek South Africans in the leading roles, it was not written by Greek South Africans, it was not even considered as potentially a play.

The Englezakis-Hofmeyer collaboration begs questions such as, what does *The Big Time* on television say for Theatre of Identity in the diaspora and what other stories have been told theatrically by Greek South Africans? In response one would refer to the practitioners who have had the courage of the power of a diasporic story to venture into a theatrical expression of their "Greekness", their "South Africaness" and their "identity quest".

Irene Stephanou, graduate of the University of the Witwatersrand's Dramatic Arts School has always written and performed her own work which has been dominated by two main issues or concerns. The first, directly linked to Apartheid South Africa, is a desire to understand what it means to be a foreigner, a child of immigrant parents, a child who becomes educated

to escape the burdensome life behind the counter in the café but who then seeks to embrace her different roots. The second, directly linked to the new South Africa, is the attempt to celebrate one's uniqueness in a country whose constitution recognises the interdependency of a nation that has survived potential anarchy. Once again, universal diasporic themes abound and make for riveting theatre. Stephanou's *Stukkie Jorls* examined the Greek girl at university. *Meze*, *Mira and Make Up* and *Apollo Café* presented her parents' Odyssean Journey to the foreign land, their joys and struggles, the differences between the richer property owning Greeks and the shopkeeper Greeks as well as her youth growing up behind the counter of their neighbourhood Café and Grocery Store (Krause, 2007). *Meze* has travelled to Australia and England but in the former case, it was not anything special or unusual to the diasporic Hellenes in Sydney and Melbourne. On many occasions, the Hellenic associations and communities have hosted Stephanou's productions in their own halls and venues – in each instance, to raise money for a pressing and worthy cause (Stephanou, 2008).

Harry Sideropoulos, a graduate of SAHETI School who played the lead in all the Greek productions of the Classics at the school, is a producer and actor who examined a similar Odyssean journey of parents alongside an obsession with food in his *No Sugar, Canderel Please*. He is presently in a new piece which is responding directly to diasporic angst. His *Harry Shabalala, the Artist Formerly Known As Harry Sideropoulos* is a comedy dealing with being South African, believing in the country and planning to stay and celebrate its democracy in spite of the odds of crime, AIDS, xenophobia and the threat of a botched 2010 World Cup Soccer event.

The change from a Greek name to an African one possibly mirrors the latest sentiment of South Africans of Hellene descent, namely not forgetting one's roots but rather marrying them with those in the soil of the country where one was born – to the refrain of a Classical Greek tune.

Great Classics as well as Greek and European music have predominated Sideropoulos' productions of *Big Band Blast* and *Song of the Mediterranean*, both of which have earned him the status of a successful Hellene in South African theatre (Sideropoulos, 2008).

John Vlismas is a stand-up comedian whose father was Greek but whose mother he affectionately calls *xeni*. His theatrical productions all deal with the stereotypes of South African society and holding back no bars, he sees no cow as sacred and attacks all races, colours and creeds.

His latest offering, being staged concurrently with Sideropoulos' *Shabalala*, is entitled *Lucky Plebian* and will be similarly commercially successful because it does not depend on the attendance of the Greek community and it appeals to the current trend of comic relief in the commercial theatrical arena of the country (Vlismas, 2008). Therefore, one may categorically state that the theatre of the diaspora is a form of survival in that it not only expresses the artists' identification issues but it also is influenced by the commercially viable style of theatre.

Few are the artists who will venture out of the financial safety web of comedy. One such instance, which received local and critical acclaim and accolades was Renos Spanoudes' one man play about Dimitrios Tsafendas. *Tsafendas* dealt with the issues of identity, and the man himself was an individual who had a life-long struggle to be accepted, for whatever reason, by any of the countries he visited as a merchant seaman. He is notorious for the assassination of the architect of Apartheid, Prime Minister Hendrik Frensch Verwoerd in 1966, and this incident has been recorded as one of the most traumatic events that had to be dealt with by the Executive Committee of The Hellenic Community of Johannesburg and by the Greek community at large. The assassination had disastrous consequences for small Greek businessmen who were operating and living in predominantly Afrikaans-speaking and National Party supporters' areas. Spanoudes' motivation was to tell the universal story which is Tsafendas', namely that prejudice, intolerance and inhumane judgement of any human being, on the basis of his skin colour, religion, sexual persuasion, beliefs or abilities can lead to unthinkable actions of desperation.

Dimitrios Tsafendas was the son of a Cretan father and Black Mozambiquan woman. In the Portuguese terminology he was labelled a mulatto, a mule, a half-breed. The themes are deeply diasporic, particularly when many Hellenes were forced to carry non-European identity documents due to the curliness of their hair or their dark complexions. The protagonist in Spanoudes' deeply dramatic and powerful piece is a man rejected by his Greek step-mother, his half brothers and sisters and who, when resident in South Africa, experiences the Apartheid regime on both sides of the fence. He was given a "White" ID Book due to his father being Greek but then changed it to that of a "coloured" ID Book, so that he would be allowed to marry the coloured woman with whom he had fallen in love. The Apartheid *Immorality Act* was one of countless laws and regulations which prevented the mixing or intermarriage of South Africans of differing race.

Theatre of Identity of South Africans of Non-Hellenic Roots

Plays, such as *Tsafendas*, which have a social conscience and adopt Classical Greek Theatre, Brechtian and Grotowski techniques in a Post-Modernist framework, have been met with much controversy and have not been financially viable. They are diasporic theatre pieces which are highly respected and lauded by academics and enlightened individuals. This is not to suggest that *Shabalala*, *Apollo Café*, *Lucky Plebian*, *Meze* or Spanoudes' new work *The Apple Tree*, inspired by the writings of Tennessee Williams and South Africa's most famous playwright, Athol Fugard, are not of quality. Athol Fugard has always been at the forefront of Protest Theatre and his colleagues Barney Simon and Mannie Manim placed South African theatre on the international map with their ground-breaking work.

Their main source of reference for Political Theatre were the classics of Greek Theatre and the most famous example is surely the play workshopped and collaborated by Fugard, John Kani and Winston Ntshona. The work was originally entitled *The Hodoshe Span* so that the Apartheid authorities of the early 1970s would not recognise it as a human rights piece.

Inspired by Sophocles' *Antigone*, the work uses the techniques of Poor Theatre and presents in a minimalist fashion, two prisoners on the infamous Robben Island. Incarcerated for life, they are serving sentences for burning their pass books (ID Books) and demanding justice. In prison they are required to create recreational pieces of theatre for entertainment of fellow prisoners and the wardens. John and Winston, retaining their real names, fight a daily battle against the punishment of hard labour and at night rehearse their play. It is the scene between King Creon and Antigone when she is sentenced to death after her trial for disobeying the law and burying her brother. Antigone (Ntshona dressed in a blanket for a dress, a mop for hair and tin cans for breasts) tells Creon that both her brothers, Eteocles and Polynices, deserve a decent burial. Creon (Kani dressed with a necklace of nails and a blanket as a cloak) attempts to justify his decision and exert his power over Antigone.

They become metaphors and representations – Creon of the oppressive Apartheid Government, Antigone of the masses who seek justice and an end to human rights infringement. While *The Island* was first staged in the 1970s and was constantly hounded by police – Blacks were not allowed to perform on the same stage as Whites let alone be seated or even in the same theatre as Whites – it is still performed today throughout South Africa and the world.

The universal truths and philosophical messages of Sophocles remain ever

present and are seen as guiding lights to solving problems of injustice and inhumanity (Kitto, 1994). Like Fugard who had made a conscious decision as early as 1964 to discontinue writing and setting plays in terms of local specifics and produced *Orestes*, in which superimposed the image of a young White radical hanged for a bomb outrage upon that of the Ancient Greek Tragedy, many cultural groups and South African theatre practitioners, as well as drama departments at universities and schools, have produced and continue to this day to stage Greek texts in many translations and adaptations from the originals (Fugard, 1999). *Medea*, *Oedipus Rex*, *Antigone* and *The Birds* are regular features at National Festivals and are staged in varying formats ranging from *Medea* and *Elektra* in *Molora* as a post-Apartheid truth and reconciliation scenario to an *Antigone* in the proverbial Black township.

Concluding Remarks

The salient observation in terms of the ambit of this paper, of the various presences of Greek Theatre in South Africa is that it is the informed theatre and arts festival goer who will ensure his or her attendance at Hellenic productions such as *Orestes*, *The Island*, *Molora* or *Tsafendas*, it is the older generation Hellene who will ensure his or her attendance at Hellenic productions such as *I Hartopehtra* and it is a range of audience members from the pool of South Africans of all walks of life, who will be in attendance at Hellenic plays such as *Shabalala*.

Once named a “Nation of Shopkeepers” due to their predominance in such enterprises, the Greeks of South Africa today are wide and varied in their influence, contributions, endeavours and activities. Their presence is felt in business as much as in law, medicine, the arts, research and finance – to name but a few.

They do not dominate in terms of presenting theatrical productions of the great Greek tragedies and comedies. This arena is dominated by South Africans who have embraced Greek Theatre through the ages and have used it to voice comment on societal problems and unbearable injustice.

Greek Theatre staged by a Hellenic local community, a Greek association or a Hellenic ethnic group, has been in the form of more contemporary texts which serve to appease nostalgia and bring a taste of the land, people and culture left behind with uncertainties regarding returning. Local productions featuring sons and daughters of Greeks are supported in general and provide a source of pride for the achievements of the young. From time to time,

locally written plays about being a Hellene in the diaspora, as well as productions of both locally written and international plays are frequented as a function to raise funds.

The very successful television series, *The Big Time*, reflected the universal South African Hellenic diasporic journey while at the same time retrenching the stereotypical perception of the “Greasy Greek who can’t play soccer because every time he is in the corner he opens a café”. A film by Greek graduates at the local Johannesburg Film School AFDA, entitled *Dizzy Stone*, tells the story of a Black gardener winning a Greek dancing competition after watching his mother’s employer’s Greek children practicing for the competition.

Interestingly, the producers called their film *Dizzy Stone* because they believed that the Greek dance they always dance at socials and parties was a *petrozali* as opposed to a *pentozali*. Does the diasporic process reach a stage where the aim to retain Hellenism, the principles of Greek culture, education, traditions and the Greek language and religion within the community becomes fruitless? Such an issue begs intense debate and sharing of experiences across the globe.

The only South African diasporic prose writer to be formally honoured in Greek literary circles (The Lountemis Award in 1985 and the Association of Greek Authors and the Diamantopoulos Awards in 1992) was Dimitris Dimitriou Leos. Although writing was his passion, he owned and ran the highly successful Engineering College in Johannesburg. His writings range from lectures on great South African authors (such as Herman Charles Bosman) to periodicals (such as *The Southern Cross*) and newspapers in Cyprus, Alexandria and Johannesburg (in particular, *Nea Hellas* community newspaper columns collected and published as *Johannesburg Calling*) as well as many novels all dealing mainly with people who leave Greece in search of a better life – an ever present feature of Greece from its Classical Epoch.

His works have not reached the stages or silver screens but they are powerful testaments praised for their depiction of the effects of Greek diaspora on its emigrants and how, despite many seemingly significant radical and all-encompassing changes to the main characters over the period that they are away from Hellas, it is not possible for them to shed any part of their essential *Romiosini*.

This core remains unchanging for the older generation, irrespective of the country they reside in or their actual circumstances (Gerondoudis, 2003).

Their very *Hellinismos* enables them to adapt, to form part of a larger picture and to contribute to it but, at the same time, always being aware that their Greek identity is not something that can be discarded at will. It remains an essential feature of the emigrant Greek. It remains a feature which diasporic Hellenes long to develop and maintain in the future generations.

Perhaps in the case of South Africa, what is now needed, in its trying times of xenophobia and mistrust, are texts by Hellenes of its diaspora, of all generations, of origin or birth, which express the themes of *A Big Greek Wedding in South Africa*, *Eat Drink and Be Married in South Africa*, *Middlesex South Africa* or *Ploutos* and *Irini* in the country (Makis, 2004; Eugenides, 2003).

Perhaps a work in progress, *Zorba in S.A. – Greek to Me*, will address common, bleeding edge realities of a planet in diasporic flux.

Perhaps even a return to the *Elliniko Kinimatographo* Sunday night screenings (one screening at 18h00 for those who did not own cafés and a second screening at 21h00 for those who had to close their shops first) of Aliki Vouyouklaki, Rena Vlahopoulou, Costas Voutsas and Nikos Xanthopoulos Finos Film Classics and *Epikera Apo Tin Patritha* at Downtown Johannesburg's Little Greek Cinema *Mon Cine* or the taverna and bouzouki Saturday evenings which always attracted Greek and non-Greek alike will make most welcome companions and distractions as inhabitants, Greek and South African alike, are comforted and entertained by the sounds and strains which are unmistakably Greek, distinctly Hellene.

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The Theatre of Australian Hellenism in Historical Perspective

George Kanarakis*

RÉSUMÉ

Bien que le théâtre des Grecs en Australie, comme écriture littéraire et comme production théâtrale, est presque aussi vieux que la poésie et la prose, les deux derniers genres ont tendance à être considérés comme les plus dominants dans "la littérature". Alors, à tort ou à raison, ce théâtre de la diaspora, avec son histoire dans son ensemble, est généralement considéré comme une matière à part entière et, par conséquent, il est rarement inclus dans les études sur l'histoire de la littérature australienne de l'hellénisme.

Cet article, basé sur des années de recherche sur l'hellénisme australien, vise à fournir un ensemble cohérent sur le développement, l'évolution, les réalisations et la contribution du théâtre en langue grecque mais aussi en langue anglaise du début du vingtième siècle jusqu'à aujourd'hui, sous les multiples aspects de la société australienne. Pour présenter une image plus complète cet article examine le théâtre de langue grecque et anglaise tant comme écriture littéraire que comme représentation scénique.

ABSTRACT

Although the theatre of the Greeks in Australia, as literary writing and as stage production, is almost as old as poetry and prose, the two latter genres tend to be treated as the dominant ones in "literature". So, rightly or wrongly, this diasporic theatre, with its history as a whole, is generally considered a separate subject, and as a result it is rarely included in studies on the literary history of Australian Hellenism.

This article, based on my years of research on Australian Hellenism, aims at providing a cohesive account of the theatre, its development, achievements and contribution from its beginning in the early twentieth century until today under the multifaceted conditions of Australian society. To present a more comprehensive picture this article examines the course of both Greek and English-language playwriting, as well as stage performances.

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1. Scope

The theatre of Australian Hellenism¹, both as literary writing in dialogical form² and as stage production, is a cultural element which has significantly illuminated the overall ethnic³ picture of the Greeks in Australia. Unfortunately, though, irrespective of its importance in the more complete projection of Hellenism's profile in Australian society, as well as its essential role and contribution to Greek community life, until today this dynamic and popular element, in both its aspects, is still awaiting full research and study.⁴

Despite the lack of academic recognition in both Australia and Greece, the locally written and performed plays have always been popular and enjoyed a warm reception from audiences throughout Australia. Not all dramatic works written by the Greeks in Australia have been staged. Several, either because they lacked theatrical plot or proved inappropriate for staging, remained only part of theatre literature, a phenomenon not unknown even among writers of Greece.⁵ Nevertheless, the significance of every play is that it tells its readers and spectators, as well as the theatre historian much about the period in which it was written as it does about the period it reflects, and that because it is a cultural product conveying the values and the attitudes of its time. This is why a play as a cultural activity, no matter how old it is, should not be discarded as out-of-date. It may no longer be a reliable secondary source, but it can never cease to be a valuable primary one.

The theatre of Australian Hellenism has played a central role in the formation of Greek culture in Australia and, together with the theatre of the rest of the Greek diaspora, has contributed to the expansion of the definition and the boundaries of the Greek theatre of modern Greece, as well as of global modern Greek culture. Furthermore, the contribution of the theatre of the immigrant Greeks in Australia, together with that of other ethnic groups, is that they have laid the foundations for a multicultural theatre, a concept which reflects the core of present and future character of Australian society itself.

This achievement of the immigrants of non-Anglo-Celtic background was realised but not without serious difficulties and frustrations, such as the lack of adequate financial support, facilities, and full time trained actors. They were workers first, supporting their families, and then playwrights, actors, directors, and other theatre staff, attempting to present productions of a professional level. Theatre, especially in the past, was practised mainly as a form of community entertainment (sometimes the only one available) and release from social stress, rather than as a significant artistic experiment, or

as a serious, and at the same time, enjoyable commentary on the conditions and happenings of society. These immigrants had emigrated to Australia rarely out of free choice but mainly for economic and political reasons. They might have been to some extent content from the economic point of view, but those with interests in the theatre and the arts in general, though amateurs, faced deep disappointments due to the limited opportunities to express their artistic talent and interests, the restricted number of locally produced plays, the lack of recognition and financial rewards, etc. They did it simply out of love for the theatre and personal enjoyment.

Despite these perennial difficulties, a number of interesting and worthy plays have been written and many others have been staged successfully, making their creators' efforts highly laudable. These plays, together with the large number of "imported" ones from Greece, have created an overall significant theatre movement in Australia's Greek communities.

This dynamic theatrical activity, from the beginning of the twentieth century until today, has been coordinated and projected via two channels: by branches of social organisations and by independent groups. The first has consisted of the theatre groups sponsored by panhellenic, regional and community associations, brotherhoods, leagues, etc. The second consists of those set up by individuals or groups whose aim was to stage plays for entertainment and, many at the same time, for philanthropic, patriotic, and other intentions: to assist earthquake victims in Greece, refugees of the Asia Minor Catastrophe, Greek orphans of the wars, etc.; to support community schools, childcare centres, retirement villages, etc.; or to contribute to Australian national causes, such as flood and bushfire relief, the Royal Blind Society, and the Australian Red Cross through its Greek branch. These works were either locally written or borrowed from the Greek repertory of the homeland. Naturally, the independent theatre initiatives predated the associational branches of organisations, usually as part of the programs of social events (Greek national celebrations, school festivals, etc.) in the form of short patriotic, bucolic or satirical sketches, farces, etc.

Surveying the contribution of Australian Hellenism to the theatre with locally written and produced plays, we realise that, despite the fact that quantitatively it has been less productive than poetry and prose, it is represented by an interesting range of works including social and political satire, comedy, patriotic drama, and even the comidyll, as well as musical comedies and revues. In particular, the comidyll and the musical comedies

and revues were well served mainly by two exponents, the first by Constantine Kyriazopoulos of Melbourne and the other two by Demetrios Ioannides of Perth, Western Australia.

From the viewpoint of influences and inspiration, which have shaped the physiognomy of playwriting by Greeks in Australia, three main sources emerge: the Greek *paroikia*, the broader Australian society and the immigrant's native land not only in its general sense (Greece, Cyprus etc.) but also in its more geographically specific one (village, island, city).

The Greek *paroikia* is reflected through its community characters, the routine pace of its daily life, the problems of the Greek immigrant family, the contrasts between older established immigrants and the recently arrived, the significance of the *kafeneio* in the Greek community, etc.

Australia has exercised its influence in many different ways, with matters such as the different social and cultural ideas, mores and lifestyles, the Greek immigrant's difficulties in settling in the new social environment, the psychological consequences for the individual and the family, the creation of feelings of disillusionment, alienation and isolation, the unexpected physical environment of the new country, etc.

The immigrant's native land has proved equally dynamic and varied with subjects such as Greek rural life, customs, the Greek landscape, etc., including, of course, subjects deriving from politico-military and social upheavals there, as well as physical disasters, such as the Asia Minor Catastrophe, World War II, the military dictatorship, the Turkish invasion of Cyprus, earthquakes, etc.

The early written plays were mainly satires on the community (they reappeared from 1970) or romantic and patriotic works, essentially imitations of plays written in Greece. The local plays modeled on the plays of the homeland, or even those brought haphazardly from Greece in order to fill the existing vacuum created by the scarcity of local works of the type of *Golfo* by Spyros Peresiadis or *The Shepherdess' Lover* by Dimitris Koromilas, or even "imported" plays reflecting the Greek middle and lower middle classes of the time, beyond the entertainment they provided, did not tackle the serious issues confronting the Greeks, such as the struggles of immigrant life and their traumatic experiences in an adverse, dominant social environment.

World War II gave rise to some locally written political satires, while from the 1960s onwards a number of playwrights finally turned their focus to the

emotional and psychological problems relating to Greek immigrant identity and the individual's dilemma of being divided by his deeply rooted ties with Greece as birthplace and his immigrant ties to Australia as adopted homeland. This was a delicate subject as it reflected internal family conflicts, especially between parents and children and the precarious issues rising from the process of social adjustment.

Since the beginning of the 1980s, and particularly in contemporary times, we encounter dramatic and comedic works, written in both the Greek and English languages, which reveal that their creators have been inspired by the phenomena of immigration, *xenitia* and immigrant identity, and have attempted to positively connect Greek culture and Greek identity with the dominant Australian culture and thereby promote awareness and initiative. A main reason for this is the changing consciousness of the Greek immigrant in Australia, reflecting the changing context of attitudes and social perspectives, as well as intercultural and intersocial relationships. Now the Greek immigrant in Australia, assisted by contemporary social attitudes and official policies, sees himself and his family as permanent residents of this country, thus gradually abandoning the odysseic dream of final return to the native land.

From the viewpoint of language, the theatre of the Greeks in Australia, as in other countries as well, has not been written and performed only in Greek. Many plays, mainly in recent decades, are written and performed in English. They are composed by Australian-born playwrights of Greek origin, individuals who emigrated to Australia in childhood, and adult Greeks who, before emigrating, lived for years in countries where English was also used in everyday communication and who feel more comfortable expressing themselves in English, addressing in this way the readership and audiences of both the Australian and English-speaking Greek communities.

The first English-language plays appeared as early as towards the end of the decade of the 1920s. These were written by the immigrant Edward Parry, whose mother was Cypriot and his father Welsh, and appeared in the pages of the Sydney newspaper *Panellinios Kiryx* [Panhellenic Herald], but they were never staged.

In Greek-language works, sometimes the playwright intentionally uses, in the same work, words of both the purist and demotic forms, reflecting corresponding language phenomena of the playwriting in Greece, while in other cases (mostly in satirical plays) uses *Greeklish*, that is hellenised Australian words (usually words with a Greek ending), loan words from

Australian English or even loan translations (Greek expressions which are translations of corresponding Australian ones) (Kanarakis, 2007, pp. 215-217). In this way, thematically and linguistically, the Greek playwright of Australia has formed today a theatre reflecting social conditions which they experience daily, written and performed in a vocabulary which the Greek immigrants of Australia created themselves. This enhances their sense having their own theatre.

Those plays written and performed in Greek dialects and local idioms, primarily produced to entertain people from certain regions of Greece, are extremely few. One such play was performed in the Pontian dialect in Melbourne in 1957, the first in this dialect, while in 2005 another one-act play in the same dialect was staged in Sydney by a visiting Pontian theatre group of the Thessaloniki Arts Society in front of a huge, enthusiastic audience.⁶ Others have pursued this with the intention of contributing to the maintenance and promotion of their native regions, such as the Cypriot Maro Gemetta in Melbourne. In the end, the Greek linguistic medium used by the playwrights (Modern Greek Koine or Modern Greek Koine mixed with *Greeklish*, or dialectic Greek) invigorates the element of Greekness or Greek identity.

2. Historical development⁷

2.1. *The early years*

Since the first official Greek Communities in Australia were founded as early as 1897 (the Community of Melbourne and Victoria) and 1898 (the Community of Sydney and New South Wales), it is not surprising that, despite their meagre numbers⁸ the first theatre performance, according to my research, took place in 1912 in Sydney. The play was *The Lyre of Old Nicholas* by the Athenian playwright Demetrios Kokkos (Kanarakis, 1985, p. 75 and Kanarakis, 1991², p. 57). This play, like others by the same author, belonged to the *comidyll*, a fashionable new kind of play in Greece of the generation of the 1880s (Demetrios Koromilas, Demetrios Kokkos, Nicholaos Laskaris, Babis Anninos and others) which, together with the *revues*, followed the period of the pastoral dramas (See also Kambanis, 1948⁵, p. 357). This modernist, lively musical comedy with its songs, folklore elements, demotic language and heroes of the people, proved very popular in Athenian theatres as it moved away from the romanticism of the

time to naturalism, reflecting realistic every day life in non-urban settings (See also Dimaras, 1975⁶, p. 360; Politis, 1975², p. 178).

The Lyre of Old Nicholas, which enjoyed tremendous success, was performed by Greek immigrants of Sydney and produced under the direction of the Ithacan George Payzis, who had only emigrated to Sydney in December 1910 and would play a pioneering and catalytic role in the Greek community theatre of Sydney (Kanarakis, 1985, pp. 73-78 and Kanarakis, 1991², pp. 56-60).

Therefore, the beginning of Greek theatre in Australia was marked by the staging not of a locally written play but of an “imported” one from Greece, written by an established writer of the time to fill the vacuum created by the lack of local immigrant playwrights, resulting in a subsequent lack of plays on subjects regarding immigration and in particular, the Greeks’ immigrant life in Australia. This was a need which would persist for quite a few years, as did the easy tendency to present plays by writers in Greece or to host theatre groups from Greece. The first professional group to visit Australia was the Christoforos Nezer-Theodore Pofantis-Gerasimos Kourouklis group, invited in 1922 by the Greeks of Sydney to present a series of performances, among which they staged *Oedipus Tyrannus* in the Sydney Conservatorium (Kanarakis, 2003, p. 61). Later the Krinio Pappa-Spyros Mousouris group toured Australia in 1950, and among other plays presented in Sydney, they staged Sophocles’ *Antigone*, Alexander Bisson’s *The Unknown Woman* in which Payzis himself played the Public Prosecutor Flerieu and the *Scandal in a Girls’ High School* by Gregorios Xenopoulos, adapted from Hungarian (Kanarakis, 2003-2004, p. 202). They were followed by Costas Hadzichristos and his group in 1959, Nikos Stavridis and his group in 1979, the Athens Drama Company sponsored by the Australian Elizabethan Theatre trust in celebration of the 2500th anniversary of the birth of classical Greek Theatre, which presented *Iphigenia in Aulis* and *Lysistrata* as well as the choreodrama *Electra*, and others.

Another point worth noting is that *The Lyre of Old Nicholas* was staged in the Sydney Greek Community school celebration, one of the earliest such events on record of what ever since would become a frequent phenomenon. This reflects the social role of the theatre in the Greek community especially in its early years as it did not function as an autonomous form of art but was embodied in community activities, such as school and Greek national celebrations, and, therefore, short one-act sketches comprised part of the variety of the whole program. It also reflected the traditional idea of the educational value of the theatre, compensating thus for the shortage of other

sources of knowledge, a concept the Greek immigrants had brought with them to their new homeland helping with the maintenance of their language, their customs and their Greek consciousness. At the same time the theatre was also used as a means for supporting philanthropic causes, not only of Greek community concerns but also of Greece and even international ones, impressive when one considers the small size of the Greek population in Australia at that time.

Such a philanthropic cause would be the inspiring factor for another landmark, namely the writing of the first play by a Greek immigrant in this country. It was the one-act comedy, *The Inconsiderate Guest*, by the polyglot medical doctor from Adrianople Constantine Kyriazopoulos⁹ who, in his own words, borrowed the idea for his play from the diary of the Athenian writer Constantine Skokos. The result was his writing of *The Inconsiderate Guest*, staged on 17 October 1917 during a celebration organised in support of the orphans of World War I by the Greek Women's Society of Melbourne, the President of which was his wife. This play proved so popular among the Greek public of Australia that it was re-staged, even quite a few years later, as for example as part of a Greek play evening organized by the Greek Women's League in aid of Greek war relief on 24 November 1943 in Adelaide, presented together with another two one-act locally written satires, *The Solicitor's Mishap* and *Wow! Dollars*.

The Inconsiderate Guest was also published in 1923 in Athens by the publishing company A. Pallis, thereby becoming the first work in the whole field of literature by a Greek immigrant of Australia to be published in book form. In keeping with the Kyriazopoulos' philanthropic nature this publication raised money for Greek orphaned children.

Despite the promising start in 1917 with Kyriazopoulos' both locally written and staged play, it remained an isolated case because no other plays written and staged by Greek immigrants would appear until the early 1930s. The plays which continued to be staged were from Greece and thematically were frequently quite irrelevant to the immigrant experience and way of life; those written locally but not staged remained part of literary writing.

In the meantime, the year 1915 had witnessed another significant event, the founding in Sydney of the Greek Philodramatic Society (also known as the Greek Drama Lovers Society), the first Greek theatre group in this country, as well as the fourth earliest among the Greek cultural panhellenic and even regional associations in Australia.¹⁰

The inspiration for the founding of the Greek Philodramatic Society was George Payzis, who dedicated himself totally to the art of the theatre. He co-founded the Society with the Arcadian Alexander Grivas, a prominent community figure of the time and subsequent owner of the Sydney newspaper *Panellinos Kiryx*.¹¹ Payzis also attracted the cooperation of several like-minded Sydney Greeks who assisted him with the successful staging of many plays while, at the same time, he gained the whole-hearted support of the Greek community public of Sydney as well as of the whole of the state of New South Wales. The aim of the Greek Philodramatic Society, apart from the regular quality production of plays in the Greek language by Greek and non-Greek writers for entertainment, was also to attract the interest of the Greek immigrants to the theatre arts. Apart from theatre performances, it organised philanthropic and other activities (support of the war effort of World War I, the Sydney Hospital, the building of the Greek Orthodox Church of Sydney Ayia Sophia, etc.), making a significant social contribution to the Sydney Greek community as well as to the wider Australian society.

The importance of this endeavour is made even more apparent by the fact that in 1915 the Greeks in the entire state of New South Wales numbered just over 800 (Cf. Tsounis, 1971, p. 50 Table I). Unfortunately, however, the functioning of this significant cultural association came to an abrupt halt in 1921 because of the opposition of the Greek Church in Australia to its activities, and, in particular to its co-founders, both prominent community figures and supporters of the institution of the Community.

Payzis' artistic and intellectual contribution, as a poet, a stage producer and an actor in Greek and English-language plays,¹² to the Greeks of Sydney and New South Wales for over seventy years from his arrival in Sydney in 1910 until the end of his life in 1984 proved invaluable. He founded several theatre groups and directed, staged and acted in many plays in Greek and in English. Specifically, apart from the Greek Philodramatic Society, he also founded the Greek Theatre Group of Australia (1931) with co-directors George Pyrpassopoulos and the writer and actor Homer Regas, the Metropolitan Amateur Theatre Group of Ayia Sophia (1936), the Theatre Group (1939), the Greek Arts Group of Australia (1952) and the Greek Theatre of Australia (1963). He staged more than 60 plays (Greek plays, others in Greek translation, as well as a few in English): dramas, comedies, operettas and revues.¹³

Payzis' career in theatre also included many years' work as an actor both in Greek and English-language plays (his English stage name was 'H. A. Haggard'). In 1970 Payzis also wrote his only play, *The Grandmother*, a one-

act dramatic yet humorous piece of work (Kanarakis, 1992, pp. 79-81). Reflecting the discord between the Greek Orthodox Church and the Greek community in Australia, particularly in relation to its consequences on families and *paroikia* primarily in Sydney in the 1920s and later again in the 1960s, he was pressured not to stage it.

Payzis has been singled out as a rare case in the history of Greek theatre in Australia because of his total dedication to the idea of the theatre and because, for so many decades (from 1910 to the end of his life in 1984) among so many amateurs, he was one of the most “professional”.

Although the decades of the 1920s and 1930s saw quite a lot of theatre activity in Sydney, due almost exclusively to Payzis’ efforts, the plays which were staged continued to be by non-immigrant writers, with the exception of a few one-act sketches, some published in the Sydney Greek press, their writing stimulated frequently by the Church-Community conflict in Sydney and the resulting divided spirit among the Greeks of New South Wales. They have remained largely part of theatre literature. An indicative example is the one-act satire *Meeting of Meetings* published in *Panellinios Kiryx* (30 March 1932, p. 2) by a regular contributor under the pseudonym “Single-saddled” (Kanarakis, 2000, p. 94, fn. 23). However, during this period there were several plays staged by amateur groups, associations, Greek schools and even individuals in other capital cities, as well. These include a few plays, mainly by writers of Greece, performed in Melbourne, Adelaide, Brisbane and Perth. In Melbourne particularly, the two community associations, the Greek Amateur and Philanthropic Association ‘Orpheus’ and the Ithacan Philanthropic Society ‘Ulysses’, staged *The Slave Woman* by Peresiadis and *Morpho* in early 1930 and 1932 correspondingly, the latter’s proceeds offered to the Greek school of Melbourne. In Adelaide in 1932 a local amateur group presented with great success two one-act plays, *The Crazy Gambler of the Foreign Land* (drama) and *A Woman in the Barracks* (comedy), by the Adelaide resident Constantine Panayiotidis. In Brisbane the Greek national drama in verse, *Athanasios Diakos*, of the nineteenth century metropolitan writer Leon Melas, was staged in the Hellenic Club in 1933 as part of a fund-raising activity and produced by the Egypt-born Efstratios Venlis, founder of the Greek press in Australia. In Perth the six comedies (*The Uncle from Australia*, *An Unwilling Bridegroom*, *Aunty Pulcheria*, *Queen of Spades*, *It’s Sour Grapes* based on a well known Greek character in Perth, and *Ananias in Australia* humourously depicting the passion of some Greek immigrants for horse racing and wagering), as well as five patriotic dramas (*Photo*, *The Heroine of Souli*, *The*

Female Slave (thematically relating to the Greek Revolution of 1821). In *Glory's Mountain Retreats* (the epic of Crete during World War II) and *Blood-Stained Easter*, all by the prolific Athenian immigrant Demetrios Ioannides,¹⁴ were written and staged there in 1939-1940.

Despite other rather short-lived theatre groups, two quite active groups appeared in the 1930s and continued throughout the war years and much later. They belonged to two community organisations of leftist orientation, the Greek Workers' League 'Demokritos' in Melbourne founded in 1935¹⁵ and the Greek Atlas group in Sydney founded in 1939.

While this was the situation with Greek-language playwriting, with the English-language it was somewhat different. The earliest English-language plays appeared towards the end of the 1920s and were one-act plays by the immigrant Edward Parry, a resident of Sydney. Probably because of his background, the content of his plays was not entangled in the Church – Community discord of the time. They appeared in the pages of *Panellinios Kiryx*, but were never staged. In the decade of the 1930s we encounter English-language plays staged both in Sydney and Perth. In Sydney Raoul Cardamatis, an immigrant from Athens, who before his emigration to Sydney had studied medicine at the university of Berlin as well as philosophy in connection with the theatre under the Austrian producer Max Reinhardt had staged in Germany works of Strindberg, Goethe and Shakespeare. Similarly, all his productions in Australia dealt with non-Greek plays in English translation. The only Greek play he produced was an Ancient Greek tragedy and that also in English.

Cardamatis' first production in Australia was the play *Art and Mrs Bottle* for the Players Club in the early 1930s. In 1933 he formed his own impressionist theatre company and began the work which was to make him a renowned and respected figure in the Australian world of theatre. His productions included G. Hauptman's *Hanenle's Dream*, Rostand's *Cyrano de Bergerac* (for the Theatre Royal), Casella's *Death Takes a Holiday*, Strindberg's *The Ghost Sonata*, several works by Moliere and Chekov, Mary Stuart's *Night Must Fall*, and as late as the end of November 1949 Oscar Wilde's *Salome*. Cardamatis exhibited a fine intelligence and made sensitive use of the resources of the theatre. He was undoubtedly an artist, a creator, although an unusual case in the early decades of Australian Hellenism's theatre.¹⁶

Specifically, in 1931 Ioannides wrote and presented the romantic melodrama *Beauty and the Boss* and in the following years five musical revues (*The Gypsy Princess*, *Australomania*, *Australian Merry-Making*, *Viennese Nights*

and *The Athenian Nights* with exceptional success, especially the last which in 1939 was staged three times in Perth and once in Fremantle) and three musical comedies (three-act operettas: *The Queen of Hearts*, *The Newcomer to Australia* and *Somewhere in Perth*). With Parry's death in 1945, Ioannides' in 1947 and Cardamatis' a little later, English-language playwriting dies too, not to reappear until the late 1950s.

2.2. World War II and the Post-War Years

The outbreak of World War II revitalized nationalism among the immigrant Greeks of Australia, exercising an impact upon the arts including a renewal of theatre activity as well as of its dynamism and themes. It is interesting that now remarkable Greek-language playwriting and stage production are also noticed in Melbourne, although plays in Greek continued to be produced with the same enthusiasm in other cities with Greek populations. The main playwrights and producers in Melbourne were two Ithacan friends, Stathis Raftopoulos (Kanarakis, 1985, pp. 194-197 and Kanarakis, 1991², pp. 140-142) and Nikos Fiambolis (Kanarakis, 1985, pp. 200-201 and Kanarakis, 1991², pp. 145-146).

In the decade 1940-1950 Raftopoulos, a playwright, actor and poet, wrote seven comedies on subjects reflecting community life: the two-act play in verse *The Dowry-Hunter* (1946, staged in 1948), four one-act plays *In the Army*, *Seeking an Employee*, *The Vagabond at Court* and the *Greek Daddy* (all written in 1948, staged in 1950), the two-act farce *Lost Dreams* (1950), as well as the one-act comedy *Bride from Greece*, written and staged in 1955. Of his seven comedies, six were staged, all in Melbourne. In 1947-1951 he got involved with the Greek school of Melbourne, directed by the well-known teacher Alexandra Vrahna, and contributed to the staging of Psathas' *Von Dimitrakis*, *My Little Self* and others.

Fiambolis, a playwright, actor and versifier, also wrote and presented on stage in Melbourne a comic monologue of patriotic content (*Mussolini Learns the Greek Alphabet*, 1950 and 1952) and several comedies, staging them in Melbourne and later in Newcastle, the most successful being *The Business Agent's Debts* which revolved around the bankruptcy of a Melbourne Greek business agent. He wrote it in 1948 and produced it with Raftopoulos in 1950 in Melbourne.

One characteristic of the theatre of those years is that it did not produce any viable playwrights. The comedies, sketches, and revues written and

staged in Melbourne by Raftopoulos, Fiambolis and another one or two immigrants, such as Takis Douvaras, and even the few comedies written in Adelaide were simply light-hearted plays reflecting the spirit of the times, and were composed to entertain. In many cases, the playwrights of these times wrote and staged their plays for Greek or Australian philanthropic purposes and war relief. So, the importance of the Greek immigrants' plays of those times lay mainly in their contributions to the cultivation of the Greek theatre tradition in Australia.

The decade of the 1950s proved more successful in stage productions due mainly to the gradual post-war increase of Greek immigration to Australia, especially after 1952¹⁷ an event which would have wider consequences for the future development of Australian Hellenism in general. This influx invigorated the community with new enthusiastic and talented individuals in the theatre art and, at the same time, it boosted the numbers of the audiences.

Another result was the appearance of new theatre groups, for example, the theatre group of the Union of the Greeks from Egypt and the Middle East with flourishing repertory until today, the group of Olympiakos which was founded in 1949 but began its stage performances in 1950 with D. Bogris' *The Engagement Celebration*, followed by plays such as Elias Venezis' *Block C* (1952), Sophocles' *Antigone* (1954) which was staged to raise money for charity, and other works produced successfully throughout this decade in both Melbourne and Adelaide. Another group, organized in Melbourne in 1952 by a new immigrant (1950) from Himarra of Northern Epirus, Petros Simos, and his friend Nikos Fiambolis, despite the enthusiasm of its founders, like so many others, proved short-lived, especially after Fiambolis moved from Melbourne to Newcastle in 1954. The plays Simos staged were all written by him and were inspired, with one or two exceptions, such as the two-act comedy *The Kind-hearted Boy* (performed in August, 1953), either by his grief for the loss of Northern Epirus to "foreign occupants" as in the one-act comedies *At School* and *Northern Epirus and Hodja*, both staged in 1952, or by subjects relating to Greece, either of patriotic content such as the historic drama *Women of Mount Pindos*, staged in 1952 to benefit the war orphans in Greece, or about environmental catastrophes as in the three-act social drama *The Earthquake Victims* staged to raise funds for the survivors of the 1953 earthquakes on Ithaca, Cephalonia and Zakynthos. Incidentally, Fiambolis had leading roles in all of Simos' plays, except for *The Earthquake Victims* where Simos himself took a leading role, and the *Women of Mount Pindos*.¹⁸

From this point on we notice a gradual increase in the writing of plays by local writers and, with the exception of Petros Simos, frequently on local subjects. This means that increasingly we are moving towards a more authentic community theatre. In parallel there was a growth in the publishing of plays in the press and book form. The first in this period seems to have been *Tonia Mantouri* by the Kytherian Anargyros Fatseas of Sydney. A drama which was never staged, it appeared serialised in the Melbourne journal *Ikoyenia* (1 October 1957 to 1 August 1958), and focused on the life of a Greek immigrant woman in Australia, confronting Greek social customs such as matchmaking and the dowry.

In the decade of the 1950s Adelaide and Perth were also sites of interesting theatre activity thanks to, apart from school celebrations and fund-raising purposes by brotherhoods and regional associations, the conscious efforts of the newly founded company “Aristophanes” in Adelaide and the Progressive Youth Association “Athena” in Perth.

An equally, perhaps even more impressive picture in theatre activities was revealed in Sydney, not only in the variety of productions, but also in the skill and experience of the producers. Takis Kaldis, who emigrated from the island of Lesbos to Sydney in 1950, proved to be both a capable producer and leading actor. He played a key role in the founding of the Greek Artists Company (1954) and later, the Fine Arts Society (1956). Kaldis offered quality theatre productions to the Greeks of Sydney as well as of Melbourne, Newcastle, Wollongong, Canberra and elsewhere, both as producer as well as a leading actor in some twenty plays. He continued until the end of the 1960s when he quit the theatre for a career in journalism and politics. By that time he had also worked as producer and actor with the Greek group Atlas, with which he gave one of his memorable performances in Jaroslav Hašek’s satire *The Good Soldier Švejk* which was so successful that he staged it twice, once with the Greek Artists Company and another with Atlas. Furthermore, he had revealed his talent for acting even in roles of Ancient Greek tragedies, as in Sophocles’ *Oedipus Tyrannus* staged in 1954 by the noted Sydney producer of the time Chrysostomos Mantourides.

Mantourides, born in Cairo of Cypriot parentage,¹⁹ had emigrated to Sydney in February 1949 when George Payzis was continuing his theatrical activities in that city. Mantourides brought theatrical experience as both producer and actor from Cairo and immediately embarked on his own long career, which would prove equally impressive as Payzis’. Completely dedicated to the art of the theatre, as a stage producer, director and actor, Mantourides’

rich talent also found expression in stage design, painting, sculpture, and some literary writing. His career in Australia falls into two distinct periods, 1950 to the end of 1962 and 1963 to 1979. In the first period, a period of “experimentation and searching”, he founded the Sydney Hellenic Theatrical Group and, starting his Australian career in Sydney with the seventeenth-century drama in verse of the Cretan School *The Sacrifice of Abraham* by Vitsentzos Kornaros, in which he played Abraham (1950),²⁰ he staged another six plays – Melas’ drama *The Black and White*, four comedies (Melas’ *Educating Father* and Psathas’ *The Nervy Chap*, *Kiphsophon* and *The Crazy People of Our Days*) and the highly praised *Oedipus Tyrannus*. In this success Mantourides, apart from producing and directing, also played the two roles of Zeus’ priest and the leader of the chorus. Towards the end of 1962 Mantourides reorganized his group, enriching it with new immigrant actors, under the title Greek Artists Group and a logo which he designed himself.

In both periods, Mantourides successfully staged over thirty plays with a number of repeat performances, as well as theatrical contributions (patriotic sketches, musical evenings, etc.) to community activities. His entire repertoire was impressively extensive, ranging from Ancient Greek tragedies to modern Greek plays by Melas, Psathas, Xenopoulos, Kambanellis, Katiforis and Mourselas, as well as foreign works in translation by Chekhov, Tennessee Williams and others. Finally, his courageous and imaginative character inspired him to write and stage in 1960 an innovative version of Karagiozis (*Karagiozis, the Doctor*), a first for Australia, but a venture only attempted once before in Greece, with Photos Politis’ satire *Karagiozis, the Great* staged by the Royal Theatre in Athens. Another innovation was the staging in 1972 of Nikos Kazantzakis’ tragedy *Christopher Columbus*, until then not presented on stage even in Greece. Mantourides staged *Christopher Columbus* in Sydney in a world premiere, with unexpectedly remarkable success. His last premiere was Sophocles’ *Antigone* (1977) but his last production was a repeat of Richard Nash’s comedy *The Rainmaker* (1979), just a year before his untimely death at the age of sixty-five.

Something worth noting is that in his extensive repertoire,²¹ Mantourides did not neglect to stage works by local Greek playwrights on Greek immigrant subjects, such as Theodore Patrikareas’ *Throw Away Your Harmonica, Pepino* (1963), a drama based on the immigrant’s life in Australia, and *The Uncle from Australia* (1964), a comedy centering on a Greek immigrant who, after thirty-five years in Australia, returns to his village rich and in search of a bride.

The end of the 1950s also saw the reappearance of English-language playwriting with *The Foreign Born* by the previously mentioned Anargyros Fatseas. Fatseas wrote it for ABC television and it deals with Greek immigrant life in Australia in a warm and humourous style. Later, in 1971, he would write another English-language play, under the same title and thematically similar, but this time for the theatre. Both remained unpublished and unstaged.

At that time Brisbane, capital city of the state of Queensland, would also produce her Greek exponent of the theatre, Tassos Emmanuel who emigrated with his parents to north Queensland in 1913 when only a few months old. Although he began with Greek-language sketches which he wrote in 1946 for the League of Greek Youth of Brisbane, he would switch to English-language plays in 1964. They were two one-act comedies on the life of Greek immigrants in Queensland, *Bush Town Story* and *Here Comes the Bride*, staged in that year by the company Art Theatre of Brisbane and again in 1977 by the AHEPA of Brisbane in his Greek translation version. A few years later he would write in English *The Red Rooster*, a play he had originally written in Greek. Based on the subject of Greeks involved in drugs, it was staged again by AHEPA in 1979 under his direction. Apart from Emmanuel's staged plays there are two (the English-language *The Case of Wattle Street* and the Greek-language *The World Is Gone Berserk*), which are still unperformed.

Emmanuel and Fatseas' English-language plays would remain isolated attempts in the repertory of Australian Hellenism until the end of the decade of the 1970s when English-language playwriting activity appeared.

The main Greek-language playwrights, however, offering plays mature in themes, more complex in structure, and dealing earnestly with immigrant subjects, made their appearance from the mid-1950s to the end of the 1960s: Lambis Paschalides from Cairo and Theo Patrikareas from Lakonia. Both Sydney residents, they wrote and staged their works in that city.

Paschalides— a poet, prose writer, journalist, and playwright had many previous stage successes of one-act plays and revues written by him and produced by his own company, such as the revue *Hanging Out All Your Dirty Washing* (first prize in the Panhellenic Revue Competition in Alexandria, 1947) or by other Greek companies, such as his revue *Under the Palm Trees* (1949) staged by the Kalouta Sisters, Rena Dor and others, in Egypt, Syria, the Sudan, Palestine, Suez, Cyprus and elsewhere. A talented actor, he

performed in his own Greek plays as well as those of international writers.²² In 1955, only seven months after his arrival in Australia, he directed and produced in the Sydney Conservatorium five one-act plays under the general title *Five Masterpieces* (*She [The Ship] Was Spanish*, *The Trifles*, *For One Button*, *The Little Bride of Death*, and *The Little House-Keepers*), the first three of which he himself had written and the other two he had translated from French.²³

Patrikareas, a playwright, actor and producer,²⁴ has had five of his plays: *Throw Away Your Harmonica*, *Pepino* (made into a film in 1974 entitled *The Promised Woman*), *The Uncle from Australia* (first staged in 1964), *The Suitors* (first staged in 1966), *Zorba Teach Me to Dance* (1988 adaptation based on Kazantzakis' corresponding novel), and the 1989 Greek State Theatre Award winning *The Divided Heart* (first staged in 1992), successfully produced in Sydney and elsewhere in Australia. The second was also screened on Greek state television in 1974. Additionally, the first two plays were published in book form, the first in Athens in 1984 (reprinted in 1989), and the second in Sydney in 1973 and reprinted in Athens in 1987. Finally, these two plays together with *The Divided Heart* were published in English translation in an independent volume under the title *Antipodean Trilogy* by RMIT University of Melbourne.²⁵

In that time, Evangelos Bollas, was the first Greek immigrant to write plays of political and social content reflecting the conditions in his times and also see them performed. From Alexandria, Egypt, he arrived and settled in Sydney in December 1955, after a long career as a journalist with Alexandrian newspapers since 1940. He resumed his journalism career, working for Greek newspapers of Sydney, but was soon involved in the socio-political affairs of the Greek community in Australia.

Bollas' plays and poems sometimes deal with immigrant social problems, particularly those relating to the Greeks of earlier times and often with political events and conditions in Greece and Cyprus during the time of the Junta, all of them written in a satirical vein. Although his plays remained unpublished, because of their contemporary subjects, they were staged in Sydney. His first play was *Unemployment* (1963/4), followed by a satire against the Junta entitled *The Bird* (1969).

This socio-political interest of his was consistently reflected into the 1970s and 1980s, until a few years before his death, in the plays *The Polytechnic* (successfully staged in 1973, 1980 and 1982), *The Letter* (a satire about the

Greek pensions scandal in Sydney in 1978) and two anti-Junta satires *The Dictator and the Conscience* and *The Mother's Curse* (1983). He also wrote the one-act plays *Marikoula – or, Our Life in Australia* and *Under Attila's Boot* and performed in various plays including Psatha's *A Fool and a Half*, Patrikareas' *The Suitors*, his own work *The Polytechnic*, and others.

2.3. *New Horizons*

The 1970s saw Australia officially and quite radically changed with the development of the new ideology and policy of multiculturalism.²⁶ Multiculturalism rejected assimilation and viewing the increased diversity of Australian society as cultural and economic enrichment endorsed the existing cultural pluralism. As a result, a more general acceptance of the immigrants, as well as indigenous people, as equal members of Australian society emerged, followed by encouragement of their artistic expression. Then, federal organizations were especially set up for the translation of this policy into action, including the Australia Council (1973), its branch the Community Arts Board, and particularly for writers, the Literature Board, the aim of which was to assist with the development of a national Australian identity through immigrant artistic expression. They began funding writers, painters, etc., and in this case, playwrights for the translation and/or staging of their works. Consequently this new government policy and in particular the economic and psychological support it offered, encouraged the establishment of more permanent theatrical groups and an increase in theatre activities.

Efforts of the 1970s consist of several plays written and staged in the Greek communities, mainly of Melbourne and Sydney, focusing on the theme of immigration. Chronologically, among others, there are: the *Revue*, comprising short sketches and produced by University of Melbourne Greek students (1974), *Scenes from the Life of a Greek Immigrant* by Vassilis Trikaliotis in collaboration with the drama workshop of the Greek Progressive Youth of Australia (Melbourne, 1975), *For a Plate of Food* by the same Melbourne group (1978), and the satire *From Newtown to Vacluse* by Vaggelis Mygdalis under the pseudonym Z. K. Melas with the United Artists Mavrakis group (Sydney, 1979). In 1979 two comedies, *I AM a Greek, with a Stubborn Head* (The Genuine Greek) and *Perdikis and His Perdikoula*, both on topical subjects were written by Lambis Kalpakidis, the first published in book form in Melbourne but both have yet to be staged.

In the mid-1970s, another Melbourne immigrant, Con Kassimatis from Athens, started writing plays which attracted considerable interest. In 1977

he staged his comedy, *A Know-All Priest* twice in Melbourne with his own cast, while later in 1982 he staged *Baptize Me a Communist* and the political satirical revue *With PASOK in Charge, a Wedding at the Town Hall*.

A further significant event occurred in April 1980 with the organization of a competition in script writing by the Laiki Skini of Melbourne for a work on immigrant life, the first such competition in Australia.

The first prize of the Laiki Skini group was shared by John Vasilakakos' *The Identity* (Melbourne), a drama portraying the conflicts between Greek immigrant parents and their Australian-born children, and Vasso Kalamaras' *The Breadtrap* (Perth), a drama exploring the disastrous conditions and problems of Greek immigrant families after the collapse of the tobacco industry in Western Australia in the early 1960s. Both plays were staged in Melbourne in 1981 by the Laiki Skini and were later published as books.²⁷ Furthermore, these two plays continued to enjoy success in the following years as well. Kalamaras, who has also proved a very capable poet and short story writer, saw another of her plays *Holiday in Greece* produced in English in 1984 by the Patch Theatre and received the "Play of the Year 1984" award again from the same theatre. Her collaboration with the Patch Theatre continued with her next work, the one-act play *Phryne*.

In 1987 Kalamaras' play *Karagiozis, the Rich* was produced in Sydney and Canberra by Stavros Economides' Theatre of Art of Australia and in 1992 a second Karagiozis play, *Karagiozis Down-under*, was performed in English in Perth. In addition, with a grant from the Arts Council of Western Australia, she wrote her two-act historical drama *Olympias: Mother of Alexander the Great* which was published in 2001 by Owl Publishing of Melbourne in separate Greek and English editions.

Kalamaras is the first Greek-language woman playwright in Australia, while the first English-language woman playwright of Greek origin (Kytherian parentage) is the Melbournian drama teacher Tes Lyssiotis.²⁸ Her satire *Robert M – the Big M* was successfully staged by the Why Not Theatre in Melbourne in 1978. The content of this play was a first as it dealt with a mainstream Australian subject – the former Prime Minister Robert Menzies. It was the first of a number of original plays which she would write and produce in English, all of them dealing with immigrant issues (quite frequently with the Greeks of Australia) and the complexity of the concept of multicultural identity.

Lyssiotis' first professionally produced play was the bilingual (English and Greek) *I'll Go to Australia and Wear a Hat* (1982) which focused on the theme

of immigrant reality. Up until now Lyssiotis has written and staged fourteen works, twelve for the theatre (including a trilogy comprising *A White Sports Coat* (1988), *The Forty Lounge Café* (1990) and *Blood Moon* (1993),²⁹ interrelating Australia as the adopted homeland, Greece as the motherland and Greek family life),³⁰ one for television (*English As a Second Language*, 1984), and one for radio (*A Small Piece of Earth*, 1986). Additionally, her play *Paradise* is included as a contribution to literary writing in Helen Nikas' anthology *Mothers from the Edge* (Melbourne, 2006, pp. 223-230). Lyssiotis is not only the first English-language immigrant woman writer of Greek origin in Australia but also one of Australia's recognised playwrights today.

From the decade of 1980, more plays by Greek immigrant women have been staged and several of them have appeared in book form. In recent years, the Greek women playwrights have become increasingly productive. Today, apart from Vasso Kalamaras and Tes Lyssiotis, successful playwrights include Sophia Ralli-Catharios of Sydney, Koula Teo and Maro Gemetta of Melbourne, as well as the English-language writers Angela Costi and Susan Alexopoulos of Melbourne.

Sophia Ralli-Catharios, a prolific playwright, has written and produced seven plays since 1991. Of them her drama *Iphigenia South of the Capricorn* (1991) was also produced in New York in 1994 by director Achilles Lavidis in his Village Studio. *Flesh and Germ* (1994, 1997), under the title *Minotaur's Children*, was performed in Herakleion, Crete in 1999 and awarded "Best Play" at the Pan-Cretan Theatre Games. *Preferably Gardenias* and *Transit* were published in Athens in 1989 and a one-act play, *The Three Faces of a Mirror*, was included in Helen Nickas' aforementioned anthology (pp. 159-170). In addition, several of Ralli-Catharios' dance dramas have been performed in Sydney, two in Toronto, Canada, and one in Crete, while some others are written but have yet to be staged.

Ralli-Catharios moves comfortably from comedy and satire to drama and tragedy. Thematically, she transcends the limits of Greek immigrant life in Australia. In *Iphigenia South of Capricorn* she blends the ancient Greek mythical Iphigenia with modern Iphigenia (the immigrant in Australia),³¹ giving thus a new social perspective to the tragic deed of personal sacrifice, or by interplaying cultural and social differences to transcend community experiences for better understanding of human relationships as in *Crossroads* (staged in 1991 in English and in 2008 in Greek in Canberra and Sydney) where she successfully explores the spirituality of two cultures of ancient origins: the Greek and the Aboriginal.

Another prolific playwright has been the Melbourne resident Koula Teo. Until now she has written and directed ten plays as well as another nine one-act plays for children's theatre. Teo's works, whether comedies or dramas, focus on the family and social problems encountered by immigrants, especially Greeks living in the multiethnic, multicultural cauldron of Australian society, as well as the psychological conflicts they experience in everyday life. She began her theatre career in 1990 with her comedy *Her Majesty, Mama*, which was awarded the second prize in a Sydney script competition in that year. This was also her first play which was performed out of Australia, in Crete, in 1996 by the Panhellenic Immigrant Theatre founded in Hania the year before. In 1997 the same theatre group would present her well known play *A Pair of Socks*³² in a number of cities in Crete, receiving first prizes for the best female role and stage direction and second prize for best performance at the Cultural Theatre Games in Herakleion, as well as then presenting both plays in Thessaloniki and Athens. *A Pair of Socks* was first staged in Melbourne in 1992, in 1995 in Sydney by the Art Theatre as well as in 1996 in Adelaide, while in 1994 it was published in Melbourne by Dionysos Books.

A third woman playwright, notable in her own way, is the Cypriot Maro Gemetta. She first appeared in 1991 with her play *Our Easter Then* staged in that year by the Sunshine Parents and Youth Association in Melbourne. Since then she has written a number of plays (historical, folkloristic, etc.) such as *The Old Maid*, *Noblewoman Antzoulina*, *The Wedding of Maroulia and Michalis*, *The Neighbours* and others. Gemetta's main aim is to keep the Cypriot culture alive and promote it through her work, and she consistently uses the Cypriot dialect in all her plays. Gemetta's plays have been performed (usually under her stage direction) in Cyprus and in Melbourne. In 2005 she was awarded a special distinction by the State Government of Victoria for her contribution to the maintenance and promotion of the Greek-Cypriot culture in that state.

An English-language playwright of Cypriot origin, who has written and has had her work performed, is Angela Costi. In 1996, a year after her return from Greece and Cyprus where, under an Australian National Languages and Literature travel grant, she had studied classic Greek theatre, Costi completed her first and best known play *Panayiota* in which she explores the intense conflict and cultural differences experienced by second and third generation Greek Australians of Cypriot origin. In September of that year the play was adapted for radio and produced on ABC Radio National and in

June 1997 it was first performed in Melbourne. It has also been published in the journal *Australasian Drama Studies* (Queensland University Press, 1998) and selected by the Australian Script Centre for its '99 *Collection*. Other plays and poetic narratives by Costi include *The Sounds of Incense* produced by ABC Radio National (1998), *Welcome Matt* (City of Kingston, 2000) and *Shimmer* (City of Darwin, 2001), all receiving critical acclaim. The second promising English-language Melbournian woman playwright, and also actress, is Susan Alexopoulos who wrote and staged in 2005 in Melbourne with noted success her first play, the bittersweet autobiographical comedy *By Night We Tremble*.

There are several other women writers who have not yet seen their works staged, nevertheless they have contributed, each according to her talent, to the theatre as literary writing. The works include: in Sydney, Yota Krili's bilingual socio-political drama *Christina's Case* and Pipina Ellis' *Gifts of Love, Dionysiacs*, and *The Aunt* (all published in 1998) and *Theatre 2000* consisting of three plays published in 2000 and *Theatre 2006* comprised of three plays published in 2006, all focusing on social issues; in Melbourne, Dina Amanatides' social dramas *Dangling in Mid-Air* (Tsonis Publishing, 2000) and several sketches (presented in her short story collections *Bodies of Stone* (1990³), *The Seed of Peace* (Greek edition 1990², English edition Argo Publishing 1993) and *Human Characters* (Tsonis Publishing, 1997)), two of which (*As Long As There Is Still Time* and *Greek Retirement Home*) were performed by Greek community schools, and Vasso Fares' comic drama *Of Saintly Hunger* (Tsonis Publishing, 2003); as well as in Adelaide Georgia Xenophou's comedy *Cousin Casanova*.

Despite the impressive demographic increase of Greek women in Australia since World War II (from 25. 8% of the Greek population in 1947 to 49. 4% in 2001) (Kanarakis, 2003, p. 106, fn. 8) and the dynamic presence of Greek women playwrights in the theatre art of Australian Hellenism, both qualitatively and quantitatively, they still number fewer than men.

Comparatively with the past, despite the significant decline of Greek emigration to Australia in the last two decades (420 in 1989-90, 280 in 1993-94, 187 in 1995-96, 155 in 1996-97, 111 in 1997-98, 142 in 1998-99, 99 in 2003-04, 147 in 2006 (January-August) etc. (Kanarakis, 2000, p. 141, fn. 38; Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2007) but thanks to the continuing post-1970s psychological and economic encouragement of the new policy of multiculturalism in Australia, and also due to the traditionally cultural interest and creative desire of the Greeks in the arts, the number of

Greek playwrights and those involved in theatre productions – like those of poets and writers – have increased impressively, giving us plays of all kinds and at an accelerating pace, both as literary writing and as stage production.

Among the many male playwrights who have continued their contribution in the eighties and the following decades, indicatively I mention the Melbournians Costas Alexiadis and his two works *Metamorphosis* staged in 1982 by the Greek Theatre of Australia in Melbourne and in 1985 in Lefkada, Chios and Kalamata, Greece as well as the unstaged ones *Bonegilla* (1981) and *Neither Here Nor There* (1984); Gregory Andreas whose play *Youth* was produced in 1984 by the Jika-Jika Theatre Group of Melbourne; John Vassilakakos whose second play *Attention, Fragile* was staged in 1985 in Adelaide by the “Bonds” Theatre of the Diaspora in collaboration with the Arts Centre, within the cultural activities of Flinders University Greek Students Organisation, in Thessaloniki within the First Helliniada Festival by the Thiasos Paroikia group in 2003, in the same year on the island of Lefkada and in Melbourne, and a third one *Ravings* (eight one-act monologues) on the life of the Greek immigrants of Australia, not yet performed or published; Dimitris Katsavos and his plays *The Mistake* (1986), *Holy Money* (1987), *How Are You, Community* (1988), *The Community in Utter Chaos* (1989),³³ and *Machinist Wanted* (1993); George Katsaros with *Fasouli's Story* (1988), and in Sydney George Kazouris and his plays *Mother's Last Visit* and *Life Is Beautiful*, both staged in 2003 by the Thiasos Paroikia in Melbourne and the latter also in Sydney in 2003 by the Arts Theatre and repeated in 2006 in Melbourne by Thiasos Paroikia. Two of Kazouris' sketches, *What a Wonderful Brother!* and *Almost a Divorce*, have been published, the first in the Sydney magazine *Tachydromos* (No. 10, April 1980, pp. 24, 94) and the second in Kanarakis' anthologies (1985, pp. 444-450 and 1991², pp. 334-340).

More plays have been written and published during this period than in any other, both as books or in duplicated form, and are waiting to be staged, therefore their impact lies in theatre literature. Some of these plays are *My Splendid Son* (1997, self-published) by Sotiris Mantalvanos of Melbourne, *Lost Homelands* and *Working Together* (in manuscript form) by Stasinios Makris of Adelaide, as well as the drama in verse *The Beggar's Heart* (1980, duplicated edition) by John Koukouliatas, *The Pensions of Shame: The Greek Conspiracy* (1994, self-published) by Costas Souliotis (pen-name of Costas Tsavelas) and *A Branch of Basil* (2004, self-published) by Gregory Chronopoulos, all three Sydney writers.

The most productive and staged Greek-language playwrights of this

period, however, are George Makridis of Sydney and Vasilis Georgarakis of Melbourne.

Makrides has written more than ten plays (several dramatic comedies or satires), three of which have been included in 1998-99 in the journal *Hermes O Logios* (Marrickville Municipal Library, Sydney) and four performed in Sydney and Melbourne. The first play he wrote was *The Hot Tip*, a dramatic comedy which was performed under the title *Grandpa, My Dear Grandpa* by Thiasos Paroikia in Melbourne in 1999 and 2002 and published (duplicated edition) in 2002. The other three staged plays are *A Room to Let* and *Invitation for a Better Life* performed by Thiasos Paroikia in 2000 and 2003, and *Maria of the Patris* [ship] staged in 2004 in Sydney by the Art Theatre under the title *Loves, Passions and Tales* and repeated in 2006 in Melbourne by Thiasos Paroikia under the first title. Finally, Makrides' long service to the theatre and the quality of his work were recognized in 2002 when his play *The Honour of Conscience* was awarded the second prize by the Panhellenic Writers' Society in Athens.

Georgarakis is the most staged and acclaimed Greek-language playwright of this period, mainly focusing on human psychology frequently filtered through the political (though not party political) ideology of his characters. His production totals over twelve plays, two of which, *Jack and Jack* and *Boyfriend*, are written in English. The first was included in the 1991 Ethnic Street Theatre Group's production under the general title *200 Years Only? They've Got to Be Joking!*, while others such as *The Return* (1987) and *The Reunion* (1988) remain unpublished and unperformed.

Georgarakis made his first appearance with a one-act play (*A Room to Let*) which was staged successfully in 1984 in Melbourne. After a three-year period of silence he re-emerged with *An Indictment Against Whoever Is Responsible* (three short independent one-act plays) which was performed within the Antipodes Festival in Melbourne (1987), while in December of that year it was also published in the Melbourne journal *Antipodes* (No. 22, pp. 5-11). The success was so notable that for several years afterwards this trilogy was performed in Australia, Greece (Thessaloniki within the First Helliniada Festival by Thiasos Paroikia, 2003) and the USA (New York by the Center of Hellenic Civilization theatre group, 1996 together with another two plays by the same writer, *Third Bench on the Right* and *Shadows of the Past*). It was not the first time *Third Bench on the Right* was staged with impressive success. In 1991 it was restaged with his other play *Sunday's Breakfast* and the play *A Life's Summer* by the Australian-born Sydney

playwright Vasilis (Bill) Kokkaris, in one performance by the Take Away theatre group in Sydney, repeated by Thiasos Paroikia in 2002 in Melbourne and 2003 in Thessaloniki. Other of Georgarakis' Greek-language plays can be added to his long list of staged successes, including *The Bridegroom from Greece* performed in Melbourne, Canberra and elsewhere (2002), *The Visit* at La Trobe University, Melbourne (1989) and *An Early Autumn* by the Laiki Skini in Melbourne (1991).³⁴

The English-language theatre production from the end of the 1970s until today is not restricted to Tes Lyssiotis' works, however. There have been others (first as well as second generation immigrants) who have contributed to English-language theatre. Some examples are George Haralambopoulos' *An Arvo at the Soccer* produced in Melbourne in 1980 in collaboration with the Why Not Theatre, Nicolas Tsoutas' *The Age of the Innocents* staged by the Sydney group All Out Ensemble in 1985, Stelios Kourpetis' *Poison and Cold* staged under his direction in 1988 and *(Lonely) Rider on the Storm*, Gregory Andreas' *Happy*, a black comedy dealing with alienation and the elusive happiness of repatriation to a small village in Greece, staged in 1990 in Sydney by Underground Theatre Productions, *What's the Difference* by Takis Soros, Janet Elefsiniotis and Suat Yilmaz (of Turkish origin) staged by the Ethnic Street Theatre Group, as well as Dimitris Katsavos' *Let's Celebrate*, Janet Elefsiniotis' *Celebration Minister*, Costas Alexiadis' *Australia 40, 000BC – 2088AD*, Costas Giannopoulos' comic plays of ethnic humour *You Can't Teach An Old Wog New Tricks*, *Where Did the Daygo?*, *When You're Dancing*, *Greek to Greek*, *How Much Is that Woggy in the Window?*, Christos Tsiolkas' *Who's Afraid of the Working Class* (in collaboration with Andrew Borell, Patricia Cornelius and Melissa Reeves), *Viewing Blue Poles*, *Elektra AD* and *Non Parlo di Salò* (about the Italian filmmaker, poet and activist Pier Paolo Pasolini), Bill Kokkaris' *Night Journeys* staged in 2007 by Sydney's professional Greek-Australian company Take Away Theatre and his other credits including *Parthenon Air* (2002) and *To Baraki* (1999), as well as *It's a Mother* (2005) and *It's a Father* (2006) which he wrote for Sydney's Sidetrack theatre, as well as other English-language playwrights. Here must also be included the acclaimed English-language Melbournian novelist, poet and playwright Tom Petsinis. He is known for a number of plays including *The Drought* and *the Thief*, the first shortlisted for the Victorian Premier's Literary Award, also having won the Wal Cherry Playscript of the Year in 1993, and both performed by Anthill Theatre, as well as for *Salonica Bound* commissioned by Melbourne's Playbox Theatre.

All this proves that, especially during the last few decades, the activity and vigour in theatre production, script writing and publishing appears significantly increased, while quite a few other plays remain unperformed and unpublished. At the same time, several theatrical groups have appeared and continue their activities in the capital cities, some of them belonging to cultural or regional associations and fraternities, such as Dimokritos' Greek Progressive Youth of Australia (est. 1980) and the Theatre Section of the League of Greeks from Egypt and the Middle East (est. 1952), both in Melbourne, school theatre groups, Greek Community theatre groups, etc. Others have been functioning on an independent basis, such as Sakis Feidogiannis' Laiki Skini (est. 1976), the Experimental Theatre, Nikos Skiadopoulos' Drama School and Theatre Organisation Yefyra (1974-91),³⁵ Dimitris Katsavos' Immigrant Theatre of Australia (est. 1991), Thanasis Makrigiorgos' Thiasos Paroikia (est. 1990)³⁶, and the Greek Theatre of Australia (est. 1981), the Diaspora Group, Anna Maniatakou's theatre group (1990), the Greek Australian Theatre Association of Victoria (est. 2003), Costas Makrigiannakis' Touvla Theatre (est. 1990), The Troupe (est. 1977), and others in Melbourne, Stavros Economides' Art Theatre [of Australia] (est. 1984), the Hellenic Theatre Group (SEK) (est. 1981), the Greek Artists' Group, the young graduates of St Spyridon's College theatre group 'Curtain' (est. 2005), the Greek Theatre founded by the Greek Community, Theatre of Comedy (est. 1973) by Petros Printezis who nine years earlier had founded the Petros Printezis Comedy Theatre, and others in Sydney, Max Mastrosavvas' Theatre of Dreams in Adelaide (est. 1990) and his Youth Theatre of Dreams (est. 2002).

Finally, an additional proof of the robustness of the theatre of the Greeks in Australia is that within the past few years there have been successfully organized theatre festivals, such as the Greek Comedy Festival first organized in 2005 in Melbourne by the Greek Theatre of Australia and Thiasos Paroikia for the latter's fifteen-year celebration of its founding, with more festivals in the following years and even Australian Greek script writing competitions, such as that in 2002 sponsored by the World Council for Hellenes Abroad (SAE), Office of Oceania, within the 2001-2004 Cultural Olympiad.

3. Conclusion

Viewing the theatre of Australian Hellenism (Greek and English-language) from its early uncertain steps at the beginning of the twentieth century until today, we realize that, going through many phases of development and

diversification, it now constitutes an unquestionable reality, with its own local themes and identity and its own lexicon, while quite frequently works of quality exploring contemporary Greek-Australian themes and those of multicultural Australia are written by local Greek immigrants and by Australian-born persons of Greek origin, as well, adding in this way to its distinctive character, although Greece and Cyprus are still valuable sources of plays for staging.

Furthermore, despite the problems which local groups frequently face (lack of finances, proper facilities, and in most cases permanent premises, but also experienced stage and costume designers, theatre technicians, or actors with sufficient education in the theatre, etc.), many people offer their enthusiasm and talent to the theatre as actors, producers, musicians, etc., on a steady basis.

The final conclusion is that, despite the difficulties mentioned, the dynamism and individuality of the theatre of the Greeks in Australia which have grown and developed during almost one hundred years, and which are obvious today, give us confidence that Greek theatre, while it will continue to maintain unbreakable ties with the theatrical tradition of Hellenism, has a bright and steady future in the land of the Antipodes. After all, a significant and highly appreciable contribution of the Hellenic theatre to its Greek audience in Australia – as well as in the other countries of the Greek diaspora – has always been, apart from the valuable entertainment and enjoyment it offers, first the assistance in maintaining the Greek language, second the learning and better understanding of Greek civilization and culture, and third the preservation of the ties with Greece as their homeland (or the home of their ancestors) through the theatre *logos* and *praxis*, in no small part due to the conscientious endeavours of its creators.

NOTES

1. "Hellenism", in the sense of a people, a geographical place, or a political or intellectual history, should not be confused with "Greekness" which is the ethnic identity of the Greek people. Furthermore, Hellenism takes a dynamic confrontational stand towards the "others" whereas the Greek identity, like any type of identity, is defined with itself as the point of reference (See also Tsaousis in Tsaousis, 1983, p. 18).

2. For the classification of theatre writing as a literary genre, along with poetry and prose, see, among others, Dimaras, 1975⁶, p. 162 and Mastrodimitris, 1976², pp. 22-23.
3. The definitions of ethnicity are many and varied. The most comprehensive are those on which ethnicity is determined on the basis of shared values and cultural traditions and a sense of common descent, as well as recognition of difference from other peoples by people of that ethnicity and by others. In this sense, for two most representative definitions see P.L. van den Berghe, 1967, p. 242 and Abdul A. Said and Luiz R. Simmons, 1975, p. 67.
4. For a diachronic, though in some cases partial, picture of the theatre of the Greeks in Australia, see mainly T.[akis] K.[aldis] "The Greek Theatre in Australia", *O Krikos* (London), Vol. 8, Nos 79-80 (July-August 1957): 112-114 [In Greek]; George Michelakakis, "Aspects of Greek Theatre in Australia" (tr. Dina Tourvas), *Multicultural Arts Today in Australia (M.A.T.I.A.) Theatre*, Australia Council, [1985], pp. 16-20; Stavros Panyperis, "The Community Theatre: Part 1. Where It Came from and Where It Is Going", *Paroikia* (Melbourne), Vol. 1, No. 6 (May 1986): 60-61, "Part 2. The 'Thriving' Decade and Today's Problems", *Paroikia* (Melbourne), Vol. 1, No. 7 (June 1986): 68-70 [In Greek]; Despina Pieri-Georgiou, "From the History of the Greek Theatre in Australia", in Koula Teo, *A Pair of Socks*, Melbourne: Dionysos Books, 1994, pp. 105-119 [In Greek]; George Kanarakis, *Aspects of the Literature of the Greeks in Australia and New Zealand*, (Series: Hellenism of the Diaspora, No. 2), Athens: Grigoris Publications, 2003, especially chapters 2 and 7 [In Greek]; George Kanarakis, "The Theatre as an Aspect of Artistic Expression by the Greeks in Australia", *Modern Greek Studies (Australia and New Zealand): A Journal of Greek Letters* (Sydney), Vol. 11-12 (2003/2004): 198-211 and George Kanarakis, "The Theatre Production of the Greeks in Multicultural Australia", in Tilemachos Moudatsakis, comp. *Theatre, Diaspora and Education*, Rethymno: E.DIA.M.ME., University of Crete, 2007, pp. 43-54 [Symposium Proceedings, 22-23 July 2006. In Greek]. For information on the life and theatre activities (playwriting and performances) of a number of playwrights since the beginnings of the twentieth century, see George Kanarakis, *Greek Voices in Australia: A Tradition of Prose, Poetry and Drama*, Sydney: Australian National University Press, 1991², passim.
5. An indicative example is that of the well known novelist, short story writer, essayist and critic George Theotokas who also wrote historical plays but without success on the stage (See also Politis, 1975², p. 265).
6. The Greek dialects have inspired the Greek immigrants quite extensively in writing poetry and prose, with most usual dialects being the Macedonian (including local idioms, such as of Kitros, of Velvendos, and Kavakliotika), Cypriot, Cretan and Pontian (See Kanarakis, 2003, pp. 189, 223-234).

7. Due to the limitations of space for this article, children's theatre will regrettably be omitted.
8. In 1891 the Greek-born residents in the state of Victoria were 202 and in New South Wales 255 out of a total of 482 in the whole of Australia, while in 1901 there were 181 and 392 respectively out of a total of 878 (These numbers are based on the data of the Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics for those years. See also Tsounis, 1971, 50 Table I).
9. Kyriazopoulos graduated from the School of Medicine, University of Athens, in 1891 and took specialised studies in pathology and obstetrics in Paris. In 1902 he settled in Melbourne becoming one of the first qualified Greek doctors in Australia. Later, in 1921-1923, he became Honorary Consul General for Greece in Melbourne.
10. The four earliest Greek associations in Australia were the Greek Philodramatic Society in Sydney (1915), the Greek Society in Melbourne (1912), the Castellorizian Brotherhood of Western Australia in Perth (1912) and the Hellenic Society of Queensland (also known as the Hellenic Club) in Brisbane (1913).
11. For the life of Alexander Grivas, see George Kanarakis, 1997, pp. 111-137.
12. From 1906 to 1910 Payzis studied theatre at a drama school in Athens and regularly attended theatre performances. In Sydney, he enrolled at the Repertory Theatre Society for three years (1912-1915) under Gregan McMahon (Kanarakis, 1985, pp. 73-78, and Kanarakis, 1991², pp. 56-60).
13. Some of the plays Payzis staged in Greek or in Greek translation included: *The Rag* by Dario Nicodemi (1931), *The Canary* by N. Laskaris (1935), *Golfô*, *Esme the Turkish Girl*, *The Slave Woman* and the *Dance of Zaloggo* by S. Peresiadis (1939), *The Unknown Woman* by A. Bisson (1950), *Scandal in a Girls' High School* adapted from Hungarian by Gregorios Xenopoulos, directed by himself and staged by Krinio Pappas and Spyros Moussouris when on tour in Australia (1950). He also directed the plays by D. Psathas, *My Little Self* (1953), *Von Dimitrakis* (1953), *The Thief Is Shouting* (1963), *Vicious Circle* (1969), *The Indomitables* (1979), *Philoumena Mantourano* by Edouardo de Filipo (1981), and others. The plays he staged in English included *Dream Faces* with the Panhellenic League in Australia (1925), the Russian play *Life is Calling* with the Australian theatre group Workers' Art Club Players (1925), *The Brass Door Knob* and *Miss Evans* with the Metropolitan Amateur Theatre Group of St. Sophia (1936), Robert Sherwood's *The Petrified Forest* with the Jewish Youth Theatre (1939), as well as *Sir Hugo*, *Uncle Vanya* etc. The last play he staged was Xenopoulos' *Stella Violanti*, a resounding success, in 1982 at the age of 90, just two years before his death.
14. Demetrios Ioannides, a cosmopolitan Athenian raised in Smyrna, spent much of his adult life in Port Said, Egypt and Australia, had a talent for music, literature and journalism. Of his verse, short story writing and playwriting (in Greek and

- English), the last saw him more productive, more original, and of higher quality (Kanarakis, 1997, pp. 155-176).
15. The theatrical activities of this organization were re-invigorated in the 1980s with the founding of a theatre workshop entitled Greek Progressive Youth of Australia (Pieri-Georgiou, 1994, p. 109).
 16. See also Mary Comino, 1949, p. 8.
 17. After 1952's signed agreement between the two governments for assisted emigration – then Australia being a member of the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration (ICEM) established in Geneva – the numbers increased dramatically: 1, 979 arrivals in June 1952-July 1953, 5, 361 in 1953-1954, 12, 885 in 1954-1955 and 17, 896 in 1964-1965 (Department of Immigration, *Australian Immigration: Consolidated Statistics No. 3, 1969*, p. 36).
 18. Simos showed his talent even before his emigration to Australia, as with the three-act patriotic work *Days of the Greek Epos in Albania* written and successfully staged in Kerkyra in 1946 with a group of Himarra refugees. Additionally, he wrote poetry and translated short stories from Italian and Albanian.
 19. For an extensive reference to Mantourides' life and theatre activities in Egypt and Australia, see Kanarakis, 1993, and Kanarakis, 1997, pp. 179-209.
 20. Mantourides staged this play in 1950, 1955 and 1977.
 21. For Mantourides' full repertoire of staged plays, see Kanarakis, 1993 and Kanarakis, 1997, pp. 179-206, especially pp. 207-209.
 22. Among other roles he played Polymestor and the "spirit" of Polydoros in *Hecuba* by Euripides (Cairo, 1940), Mr Knox in *Fanny's First Play* by George Bernard Shaw (Alexandria, 1947/48) staged by Karolos Koun with Melina Mercouri in the role of Margaret and Koun in the role of Mr Duvalé, Uncle Linus in his own play *She [The Ship] Was Spanish* (Sydney, 1955), Topaze in Marcel Pagnol's play of the same name, and Archibald in *My Cousin from Warsaw* by Louis Verneuil.
 23. The play *She [The Ship] Was Spanish* was published in the Sydney periodical *Tachydromos* (September 1979, pp. 13-14). For Paschalides' extensive theatre activities, see Kanarakis, 1985, pp. 250-251 and Kanarakis, 1991³, p. 186.
 24. As regards Patrikareas' interest in production and acting, in 1965 he staged in Sydney Alejandro Casona's play *The Trees Die Standing*. He also staged and acted in *Block C* by Elias Venezis (as the colonel), the *Good Soldier Švejk* by Jaroslav Hašek (as the pawnbroker), his own plays *The Suitors* and *The Uncle from Australia*, and others.
 25. For more information on Patrikareas, see Kanarakis, 1985, pp. 333-336 and Kanarakis, 19912, pp. 246-248.
 26. See, among others, Castles in Freeman and Jupp, eds, 1992, pp. 184-201; Kanarakis, 2003, pp. 100-101, 163; Doumanis in Clogg, ed., 2004, pp. 150-162.

27. Vasilakakos' play was published in Greek in Athens by Gutenberg in 1982 (reprinted in 1986) and Kalamaras', in bilingual form, in Melbourne by Elikia Books in 1986.
28. For Lyssiotis' work, see Tsefala in Moudatsakis, 2007, pp. 121-125.
29. The play *Blood Moon* moved beyond Australia and in 2008 was produced successfully in Volos, Greece within the activities of the Research Stage of the regional Municipal Theatre.
30. The trilogy has been printed in book form under the title *A White Sports Coat and Other Plays* (Sydney: Currency Press, 1996).
31. On the transcendence of time and place in modern theatre, see Ralli-Catharios, 2005, p. 4. Also for the significance of the Ancient Greek myth in her playwriting, see her 2000 conference paper (Sancta Sophia College, University of Sydney) "The Ancient Greek Myth in Contemporary Greek Writing for Community Theatre in Australia", pp. 1-14.
32. The title reveals Teo's play on words, between the Greek word *kaltses* and the English word *cultures*, the way the latter is pronounced by many Greek immigrants.
33. *The Community in Utter Chaos* consists of eight one-act sketches, seven written by Dimitris Katsavos and one (*Greek Community Bus*) by Sotiris Mantalvanos.
34. For a first approach to Vasilis Georgarakis' contribution to the theatre, see Nick Sky's Honours Thesis submitted to the Department of Modern Greek, La Trobe University, Melbourne, November 1992.
35. In 2006 Skiadopoulou undertook the directorship of the newly founded Theatre School of the National Centre for Hellenic Studies and Research, La Trobe University.
36. According to Thanasis Makrigiorgos in the Melbourne newspaper *Neos Kosmos* (3 October 2002, p. 9), Thiasos Paroikia re-started the Greek Theatre of Australia twelve years after its demise, and both groups run in parallel but with different repertoires.

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Chronologies

CHYPRE: 1^{er} avril 2007 - 30 septembre 2008

3 avril: Ouverture d'un nouveau point de passage entre la zone libre et la zone occupée, rue Ledra à Nicosie.

10 avril: José Manuel Barroso, le président de la Commission européenne déclare que la Turquie doit remplir ses engagements et ouvrir ses ports aux navires de la République de Chypre.

23 mai: Rencontre entre Dimitri Christofias, président de la République de Chypre et Mehmet Ali Talat, chef de la communauté chypriote turque. Ces deux dirigeants chypriotes affirment s'impliquer en vue d'une fédération bizonale et bicommunautaire.

24 juin: La Cour européenne des droits de l'homme juge la Turquie responsable des meurtres de deux manifestants chypriotes grecs, Anastasios Isaak et Solomos Solomou en aout 1996. Une somme de 315 000 euros est attribuée à leurs familles.

1^{er} juillet: Rencontre Christofias-Talat, qui ont convenu du principe d'une souveraineté et d'une nationalité uniques pour Chypre.

3 juillet: La Chambre des Représentants autorise la ratification par Chypre du traité de Lisbonne par 31 voix (conservateurs et socialistes) contre 17 (Akel, parti du président Christofias).

13 juillet: Participation du président Christofias au Sommet, à Paris, de l'Union pour la Méditerranée.

17 juillet: Nomination d'Alexander Downer, ancien ministre australien des affaires étrangères au poste de Conseiller spécial pour Chypre du Secrétaire général de l'ONU.

25 juillet: Rencontre Christofias-Talat, qui décide l'ouverture de négociations sur le statut de Chypre à compter du 3 septembre.

28 aout: L'ambassadeur de Russie en Grèce, Andréï Vdovin déclare que «la Russie ne reconnaîtra en aucun cas les territoires occupés à Chypre» faisant valoir que pour Moscou, «les cas de l'Ossétie du sud et de l'Abkhazie sont sui generis».

3 septembre: Début des négociations directes Christofias-Talat; les négociations se poursuivent les 11 et 18 septembre.

30 septembre: Le président Christofias déclare à Strasbourg devant l'Assemblée parlementaire du Conseil de l'Europe qu'il propose l'annulation simultanée des prochaines manœuvres «Nicéphore» de la Garde nationale chypriote et «Taurus» de l'armée turque en zone occupée.

GRECE: 1^{er} avril - 30 septembre 2008

3 avril: Au sommet de l'OTAN à Bucarest la Grèce avec le soutien de la France exerce son droit de veto à l'adhésion de l'ancienne République yougoslave de Macédoine (Fyrom) en raison du refus de ce pays de trouver une appellation acceptable par Athènes.

29 avril: Accord gréco-russe South Stream sur la construction du gazoduc qui acheminera le gaz russe vers le sud de l'Europe.

16 mai: Le commissaire européen au Marché intérieur et aux services Charlie McCreevy appelle à une libération des services en Grèce.

26 mai: Le chef d'état-major des forces armées Dimitri Grapsas est en visite en Turquie à l'invitation de son homologue dans ce pays.

3 juin: Le maire de l'île de Tilos en mer Egée procède, malgré l'interdiction du Parquet, à la célébration des deux premiers mariages en Grèce de personnes du même sexe.

6 juin: Visite à Athènes du président français Nicolas Sarkozy, qui après s'être exprimé devant le Parlement signe avec le Premier ministre Costas Caramanlis une déclaration commune sur la défense et la sécurité.

8 juin: séisme de 6,5 sur l'échelle ouverte de Richter au Nord ouest du Péloponnèse provoquant 2 morts et 37 blessés.

11 juin: le Parlement grec ratifie le traité de Lisbonne par 250 voix contre 42 puis rejette, le 18 juin, une demande de l'opposition visant à l'organisation d'un referendum sur ce traité.

12 juin: exclusion de l'ancien Premier ministre Costas Simitis du groupe parlementaire du Pasok, en désaccord sur la position de ce parti favorable à la tenue d'un referendum sur le traité de Lisbonne.

13 juillet: participation du Premier ministre Costas Caramanlis au Sommet,

à Paris, de l'Union pour la Méditerranée.

19 aout: Mgr Nikolaos, Archevêque catholique de Tinos et de Naxos se plaint auprès d'Alecos Alavanos, président du groupe parlementaire Syriza de «l'absence de reconnaissance juridique par l'Etat grec de l'Eglise catholique grecque».

12 septembre: Démission du ministre de la Marine marchande, Georges Voulgarakis dont le nom a été mêlé au scandale immobilier de deux sites olympiques vendus à bas prix par l'Etat au monastère Vatopédi du Mont Athos, qui les a ensuite revendus très cher; Anastassios Papaligouras remplace, le 13 septembre G. Voulgarakis.

17 septembre: La Commission européenne approuve le plan de sauvetage de la Compagnie Olympic Airways. Ce plan prévoit la privatisation de certains actifs de cette société.

30 septembre: Le Premier ministre Costas Caramanlis décide d'exclure du groupe parlementaire de la Nouvelle Démocratie le député de Drama, Stavros Dailakis. Ce député avait demandé la démission du ministre d'Etat Théodore Roussopoulos. Après cette exclusion la majorité parlementaire de la Nouvelle Démocratie n'est plus que de 151 députés sur 300.

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REMERCIEMENTS/ THANKS TO
Panayiotis Constantinides
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COMPOSITION/MISE EN PAGE: Constantina Metaxa

