

Music in Cyprus

JIM SAMSON AND NICOLETTA DEMETRIOU (EDITORS)
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Music in Cyprus and Cypriot music are two general issues that are being dealt with in the volume in hand that Jim Samson and Nicoletta Demetriou compiled and delivered for Ashgate publications. Although one can see these as extremely eclectic issues to deal with, one should be aware of the vast number of particularities that occur in a place such as Cyprus and how these are being reflected in the musical world of this Mediterranean island. Subsequently, since they are reflected in music but are initiated from other socio-political and historical issues, this book could be of interest to scientists deriving from various disciplines, not necessarily only to musicologists.

The book is comprised of nine chapters and an extended introduction that is being delivered by one of the editors, namely Jim Samson. The chapters can be vaguely separated between them in two general categories: those which discuss issues that have to do with traditional music and those that discuss issues dealing with art music. Also, there is one, the final chapter actually, that focuses on an aspect of popular music.

The introduction sets the framework of the book; Samson gives a graphic retrospective in historical, cultural and social contexts of what Cyprus is and Cypriots are, and how this is reflected in music. He actually sets the pace for a broad understanding of music within the Cypriot context.

Consecutively, the first chapter takes upon the most important issue that is burdening Cyprus till today, the problem of partition between communities. Papadakis and Hatay, the two authors, offer a thorough description that touches upon issues such as language and folklore and how these are reflected by traditional music. Folklore especially, with its shared and common past between the two major communities, Greek and Turkish, that reside on the island, seems to be a rather complex issue to deal with. The two authors offer a fair account of the issues and manage to describe how folklore has been used to serve nationalistic purposes.

The second chapter, by Effie Tsangaridou, comes to emphasise the importance of traditional music. She follows the trend that has been established in the previous chapter and again decides to put the two communities next to one another, not to compare them but to see them as a unity that has been separated by circumstances. As it will happen in several chapters of this book, and is probably something which has been

discussed between authors and editors, the chapter is divided into smaller subchapters that deal with epochs through landmark years and events. This is something that works extremely well, and the reader is left with a clearer understanding of the different eras that Cyprus went through.

The next chapter, which is produced by the latter of the two editors, namely Nicoletta Demetriou, focuses on Greek Cypriot traditional music. Demetriou takes us through a journey of music evolution, discussing issues that have to do with past influences and, more importantly and substantially, the connection Cyprus has with motherland Greece. The author achieves a comprehensive and all-inclusive description of a rather difficult subject, keeping her scientific integrity intact and vibrant.

Bekir Azgun's effort comes next, and it is a reflection of Demetriou's chapter from the Turkish Cypriot point of view this time. A large part of his chapter is dedicated to the folklore research that has been conducted during several spans of time in the Turkish Cypriot sector, a field that seems to have been used as an identity tool.

The fifth chapter is titled 'The Ottoman Legacy', and rightly so since Eralp Adanır describes the Cypriot past in conjunction with Ottoman rule and the aftermath of it in the centuries that follow. In his research, he discusses widely and in depth the Mevlevi tradition of Cyprus, followed by a short discussion about the years after the 1960s and the rise of interest in Turkish folk music as a means to enhance national identity of Turkish Cypriots.

Chapter six is the turning point towards the art music world, which will be the main focus for the next three chapters. Anastasia Hasikou embarks on an historical journey to the times of the early British period (1878-1914) and gives details about the first art music concerts that were held in Cyprus. She also discusses issues that had to do with ecclesiastic music and the debates that arose between those who believed in the pureness of the Byzantine Melos, which had to preserve its monophonic tradition, and those who believed that music in church should move forward and become more westernized. This, as Hasikou correctly pinpoints, was a debate that was actually imported from Greece. It goes without saying, though, that the Orthodox Church in Cyprus had its fair share of debate on the issue, sometimes revealing parallel issues that had to do with power in the ecclesiastic realm of the Cypriot Orthodox Church community.

Vasilis Kallis decides to discuss the work of individual composers who were born in Cyprus, and he does so for composers of both Greek and Turkish Cypriot descent. His research is heavily up to date: a valuable characteristic that gives us an overview of the art music scene in Cyprus. Young composers, such as Sammoutis and Athinodorou, are discussed, with information about their work. What I feel is lacking here is some more hands-on experience of their work, probably in the form of score referencing.

Nevertheless, I believe that the chapter gives a good overview of the compositional output in the island during the 20th and early 21st centuries.

The eighth chapter is solely about the music education sector in Cyprus, leaning quite understandably towards the music education sector of the Cyprus Republic but with some information concerning the situation in the occupied side. Kenneth Owen Smith has first-hand experience for a considerable number of years, and I think he describes the situation quite accurately. He discusses issues that have to do with private conservatoires ('odeia', since he prefers to transliterate the word in Greek) and university music departments that exist on the island, and the only thing that I found to disagree with was the use of the title 'Greek Odeion of Athens', apparently meaning the Hellenic Conservatory.

The last chapter of the book touches upon the popular music field and actually describes one of the legendary recording labels on the island. Mike Hajimichael delivers an eloquent text dealing with the legacy of Keravnophone Records, the label that was launched by Kyriakos Keravnos. Alongside this, one can see glimpses of the popular music scene that sprung up in the 1960s through the 1970s and until the 1980s. Hajimichael chronicles the history of this particular recording studio through a series of interviews that he held on the issue. This is actually a significant piece of research since it opens new paths towards investigating the popular music scene in Cyprus, something that does not seem to have been in the research scope.

As a whole, the book succeeds in many ways. The authors deliver interesting and well-researched chapters that outline Cypriot music history, whereas the editors curate the tome in the most accurate and mind-captivating way. The positioning of all chapters has a clear relevance and the reader moves step-by-step towards engaging more into the music in Cyprus and all the implications and significancies that it carries. Furthermore, the chapters included are not there to put a fullstop to research but actually to open the field for more researchers to take an interest in Cyprus and its music traditions. This is surely a reference book that will please readers.

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