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***Maria Antonietta: Pavlos Carrer's last Italian opera and second European attempt***<sup>1</sup>

In the summer of 1873, Pavlos Carrer agrees with his friend, poet Conte Giorgio D. Roma,<sup>2</sup> to work together on the libretto of a new opera based on the “episode of the French Revolution concerning Marie Antoinette”.<sup>3</sup> The choice of the subject raises questions, since it forms the only exception among the five Greek national operas that Pavlos Carrer composes from 1868 until the end of his life.<sup>4</sup> The composer does not state, his sources, therefore we do not know whether he and Roma studied the history of the French Revolution and, consequently, drew the inspiration for their libretto from it or worked on a literary text. Further below, we will examine that both may be the case.

The composer describes vividly the carefree, summer days when both of them, living in Zante, worked together for the creation of the opera's libretto, while talking and laughing until midnight. Roma, as Carrer explains, was so enthusiastic with the new opera that his “pen was running too fast”. Many times the composer was obliged to make cuts at the “extremely and beyond any rule lengthy lyrics”, driving the librettist to express his strong opposition:

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<sup>1</sup> An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Conference *The Ionian Opera and Musical Theatre until 1953*, University of Athens-Dept. of Theatre Studies, Athens State Orchestra & Athens Concert Hall, 23-24 April 2010 and was published in its *Proceedings*, pages 134-144.

<sup>2</sup> More about Carrer's librettist in De Viasis, Spyridon. ‘Georgio Dionisio Roma’. *Kypseli*, Zante: Aughust 1885, 401-403.

<sup>3</sup> Carrer, Pavlos. Manuscript Memoirs. *Apomnimonevmata tou kalitechnikou mou viou* [*Memoirs of my artistic life*] in Zante: Mouseio Solomou kai epiphanon Zakinthion, [1887], p. 20 recto.

<sup>4</sup> Carrer composes the following operas: *Kyra Frossini* (1868), *Despo* (1875), *Lambros* (beginning of composition in 1879), *Marathon-Salamis* (1886), *Contes Spourgitis* (beginning of composition in 1888).

In the charming letters he sent me, he calls me a cannibal, a Goth, an Ostrogoth, a barbarian, whom he will never allow to cut his poetic ideas and endless garrulity.<sup>5</sup>

Carrer might as well be bantering, remembering these friendly quarrels. However, judging from the written comments that he expressed some years later to another librettist of his, Ioannis Tsakasianos, it becomes evident that the composer drastically interfered in the creation of his librettos and posed definitive requirements in respect of the length and the dramatic function between words and music.<sup>6</sup>

### **Synopsis<sup>7</sup>**

#### ***Maria Antonietta***

#### **Historic-tragic Opera in Four Acts**

#### **Dramatis Personae**

**Louis XIV**, king of France (br)

**Marie Antoinette**, his wife (s)

**Elisabeth**, the king's sister (ca)

**Barnave**, a Republican (t)

**Danton** (bs)

**Robespierre** (bs) } Jacobin deputies

**Marat** (bs)

**Girard**, a republican priest (bs)

**Clery**, the king's butler (t)

<sup>5</sup> Pavlos Carrer, *Apomnimonevmata...* ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ioannis G. Tsakasianos, *Theatrika erga. Apo to komidilio sto melodrama, 1876-1898*, [Theatre works. From vaudeville to opera] (introduction-editing: Georgia Kokla-Papadatou), Zante: Dimosia Istoriki Vivliothiki Zakinthou, 2008, 333-335: Letter dated 8<sup>th</sup> of November 1888 and 335-337: Letter dated 22<sup>nd</sup> of December 1888.

<sup>7</sup> The synopsis is based on the following libretti: α) *Maria Antonietta - Melodramma storico tragico in Quattro quadri*. Poesia del Conte Giorgio Roma. Posto in musica del Maestro Paolo Carrer. Zante, Tipografia Zacinto Menzicof D. Bulzo, 1883, 40 pages, Corfu Reading Society. β) Conte Giorgio Roma, *Maria Antonietta - Tragikon Istorikon Melodrama se tesseris praxis*. Melopiithen ypo tou mousikodidaskalou Pavlou Carrer. Metaphrasis G. K. Sphika. En Zakintho 1885, tipsis S. Kapsokhepalou, National Library of Greece and Benakeios Library of the Hellenic Parliament.

**Location:** Paris

**Time:** 1790-1793

### **First Act: The Flight**

In a large chamber at the palace of the Versailles a luxurious banquet and a ball take place. The orchestra of the royal court plays, while the aristocrats and courtiers drink, dance and sing a hymn to the pleasures of life. The royal family comes in and the whole court extols king Louis. The general cheerfulness is suddenly interrupted by the cries of the people: "We want bread!" The aristocracy is indifferent. The butler Clery informs Louis that the people have risen up with the slogan "Out with the King!". Marie-Antoinette and Louis's sister Elisabeth are terror stricken. The king is forced to obey the will of the public and returns with all his family to Paris.

In an alley at the Tuileries Garden, Danton, Robespierre and Marat contemplate the future of France and plot against the king. The action moves into a hall of the palace of the Tuileries, where the royal family is held captive and guarded by the national guard. Louis has been called to appear before the National Assembly. Marie-Antoinette senses the danger, urging her husband to agree to leave Paris. He refuses, but, with the assistance of Elizabeth, he is finally convinced. Clery announces that everything is ready for their departure.

### **Second Act: The Arrest**

The hall of the National Constituent Assembly is overcrowded. The people are sitting amphitheatrically in stalls. After a while, the parliamentary deputies with the three Jacobin leaders, Danton, Robespierre and Marat among them, appear. Danton announces the arrest and trial of Louis. The royal family enters, accompanied by the young lawyer Barnave, a representative of the Assembly and an appointed escort to the royals. In his speech of defence Louis denounces the procedure as illegal. Danton accuses him of treason against the Revolution and the French people. Louis confutes his arguments and vigorously denies the accusations. However, the three prosecutors are relentless and the Assembly returns a damning verdict.

### **Third Act: The Tower of Temple**

In a guarded room in the Tower of Temple, Marie-Antoinette and Elizabeth, devastated, are trying to make sense of what is happening to them. Marie-Antoinette tells a nightmare that

portends the death of Louis. She finds comfort in the arms of her two children. Louis comes in, accompanied by Barnave and men of the guard. He explains to the two women how bravely Barnave defended him. Nevertheless, the verdict is now irreversible: he has been sentenced to death. Marie-Antoinette and Elizabeth collapse on hearing the decision.

Louis pleads with them to show courage. The crowd is heard from outside singing the ‘Marseillaise’ demanding the blood of the royal family. Danton, Robespierre and Marat arrive. Louis gives the last farewell and is guided out. Sounds of drums accompany the king to the scaffold. A salvo announces the decapitation of the “citizen Louis Capet”. Marie-Antoinette is torn apart by grief.

#### **Fourth Act: The Conciergerie and the Martyrdom**

In a dark cell in the prison of the Conciergerie, Marie-Antoinette prays into the night. Barnave, captivated by the majesty and kindness of the former queen, comes to comfort her. However, she is well aware of her fate and has made peace with the idea of death. Barnave tells her that there might be a way to be saved, but Marie-Antoinette refuses to escape. The clock strikes four in the morning. Abbot Girard, holding the cross in his hand, arrives to accompany Marie-Antoinette to the place of execution.

In the background, the steps leading to the scaffold. The people mock the ‘widow Capet’ and become delirious when Marie-Antoinette appears, carried with her hands tied in the back. She forgives the insults of the people and courageously steps on the scaffold. Barnave, devastated, runs behind her in a last moment attempt to save her. Danton makes him stop, but both freeze when they hear the blade of the guillotine dropping. The sacrifice has been carried out.

In 19th century Europe, any approach to the controversial personality of Marie-Antoinette and her blood-stained story seems almost impossible. The distance from the historical fact is still short, and her blood, as well as that of the thousands of the victims of the guillotine during the French Revolution, is still fresh. Since the beginning of the century, a myth is formed surrounding her legendary life, which is constantly fed with huge amounts of anecdotal material, reports, narratives, memoirs, correspondence and a lot of other “evidence” mostly false and fictitious.

No other figure of that turbulent period did cause so much hatred, pity and admiration, all at once. That woman, who was called an “Austrian whore”, a “tiger” and a “she-wolf” by the supporters of the Revolution, in the first decades of the

following century, becomes idealized by her biographers, who present her as a martyr and a symbol of dignity, endurance and majesty.<sup>8</sup>

On the other hand, the same subject is considered inappropriate and quite dangerous at that time of political turmoil. In the decades of 1860 and 1870 the monarchy is struggling to maintain its hold on Europe that is constantly shaking from rebel movements and pro-democracy uprisings. The memory of that bloody era in which the “national razor” of France hit the royal necks, stirs and brings forth home evils. Besides, despite the turbulence brought about by the *Springtime of the Peoples*, the *ancien régime* remains ubiquitous throughout Europe of the mid-19th century. Consequently, although the years of the French Revolution produced an abundance of radical projects,<sup>9</sup> in the Europe of Bismarck, nobody would risk presenting a drama or an opera with such a theme.

Apart from one exception: In 1867 the Italian dramatist Paolo Giacometti dares to produce a play entitled *Maria Antonietta*, written especially for the famous Italian actress Adelaide Ristori.<sup>10</sup> The leading actress interprets the title role in the same year, during her second tour in America and, in November of the following year, in the “Brunetti” theatre of Bologna. The actor and the playwright had to deal not only with the suspicion of the censor, who considered the content of the project revolutionary and anarchist, but also with the fanatical reaction of one portion of the public during the premiere, which interpreted the approach as an attempt by Giacometti to idealize the members of the French royal family contrary to the ideas of the French Revolution. The dissatisfaction is expressed through contemporary

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<sup>8</sup> The subject is analysed in detail by Stefan Zweig, who published a non sentimental biography of Marie-Antoinette in 1931. Particularly in the postface of his book Stefan Zweig. *Marie Antoinette. The portrait of an average character*, trans. Edan and Cedar Paul. New York: Grove Press, 2002, 466-472, he is recounting the difficulties he faced in his attempt to sift the historical truth from a farrago of untrustworthy sources, which the biographers of the past habitually used.

<sup>9</sup> Dean Winton, ‘Opera under the French Revolution’ in *Proceedings of the Royal Music Association*, 9<sup>th</sup> session, London: Royal Musical Association, 1967-1968. 77-96.

<sup>10</sup> Paolo Giacometti, *Maria Antonietta / Marie Antoinette, A drama in a prologue, five acts and epilogue*, trans. Isaac C. Pray, New York: Théâtre Français, 1867. I would like to warmly thank Professor Dimitris Spathis who informed me about the play. Before Giacometti, another Italian writer of the previous generation, Giacomo Leopardi, occupies himself in 1816 with a romantic tragedy entitled *Maria Antonietta*, which remains incomplete. However, this play is not the model of Giacometti’s drama bearing the same title. Giacomo Leopardi, *Teatro*, ed. Isabella Innamorati, Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1999. 235-245.

theatrical criticism, which disapproves of the project, deeming it inopportune, given the historical proximity, as well as inept because of its dramatic handle.<sup>11</sup>

Carrer’s opera relates, in my opinion, to the noise roused by the drama of Giacometti four years ago. The libretto of *Maria Antonietta* follows closely the basic plot of that particularly extensive and complicated work. Although it is clear that Giacometti’s drama contains a larger number of scenes, their actual concept and form are, however, identical to that of the opera. Specifically, omitting the preface, where a witty debate between Marie-Antoinette and the comedy writer Beaumarchais is being carried out, we may identify the following similarities: The action of the first and second act of Giacometti’s play is condensed in the first act of Carrer’s libretto, which takes place in Versailles, with the unsuspecting royal family becoming upset by the angry cry of the people. The third act of the play coincides with the second of the opera, evolving inside the National Assembly Hall, where we watch the trial of Louis. The fourth and fifth acts take us to the Tower of Temple, where the execution of the king is heard. In the opera exactly the same events are included in the third act. Finally, the drama ends with an epilogue in the Conciergerie and the departure of Marie-Antoinette from her last abode, accompanied by the executioner, Sanson. Similarly, Carrer places the last scenes of the opera in the *Conciergerie* and the *Place de la Revolution*.

Giacometti	Carrer
<b>Prologue:</b> [Versailles]	—————
<b>First Act:</b> [Palais des Versailles]	<b>First Act: <i>The Flight</i></b> [Versailles, Tuileries]
<b>Second Act:</b> [Palais des Tuileries]	<b>Second Act: <i>The Arrest</i></b> [National Assembly Hall]
<b>Third Act:</b> [National Assembly Hall]	<b>Third Act: <i>The Tower of Temple</i></b> [Guarded room in the Tower]
<b>Forth Act:</b>	<b>Fourth Act: <i>The Conciergerie and the</i></b>

<sup>11</sup> Adelaide Ristori, *Memoirs and artistic studies of Adelaide Ristori*, trans. G. Mantelini, New York: Page & Company, 1907, 76-80.

[Tower of Temple]	<i>Martyrdom</i> [Guarded room in the Conciergerie, La Place de la Revolution]
<b>Fifth Act:</b> [Tower of Temple]	_____
<b>Epilogue:</b> [Conciergerie]	_____

The drama play, as well as the libretto, hushes up even the slightest notion concerning the accusations indicted to the queen of France by the court and related to her supposed sexual abuse of the underage dauphin. As a result, the trial of Marie-Antoinette is not dramatized and we never actually learn the reason of her guilt and condemnation to death. Besides neither the mores, nor the intention of both creators to idealize the heroin, would have allowed any reference to that.

Although Carrer and Romas follow on Giacometti's steps, they do not simply rely on a mere precis of his work. They proceed with further historical research and differ in several respects from the play, while adding new elements. First of all they introduce figures that have played an important role in the Revolution, but do not appear in the play. Giacometti's Robespierre will be broken by Carrer into three. Now the triumvirate Robespierre, Marat and Danton will become the collective voice of the Revolution, though the largest and most significant part is assigned to Danton.

One more Jacobin, the young Barnave, takes in the opera the romantic part of Marie-Antoinette's admirer, following her to death. Antoine Pierre Joseph Marie Barnave was indeed a historical figure: when the royal family, after the desperate attempt to escape from France, was arrested in Varennes, Barnave was one of those who led them back to Paris. Travelling in the same carriage for almost three days with the Kings, it is said that this gifted orator had the chance to revise his extreme revolutionary ideas. His revised attitude led him to the guillotine in October 1793.<sup>12</sup> However, the respect and sympathy for the queen that eventually turns into erotic attraction purely belongs to the realm of fiction.

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<sup>12</sup> "Barnave" in F.X. De Feller, *Biographie Universelle ou Dictionnaire Historique*, II, Paris : J. Leroux, Jouby etc libraires, 1847, 74-75.

A key difference between the opera and the play is detected in the three final scenes. Giacometti completes his drama quite early: the executioner Sanson prepares Marie-Antoinette and leads her out of the Conciergerie at the time when the curtain falls. Carrer and Romas, on the other hand, place the fifth, sixth and seventh scenes of the fourth act in the Place de la Revolution, in front of the blood stained scaffold. This is a staging proposal, quite bold, if anything especially when we consider that not even the *verismo* composer Umberto Giordano attempts it about two decades later in the corresponding scene of his opera *Andrea Chénier*.<sup>13</sup> The sight of the scaffold is enough to cause frisson and the sound of the abrupt fall of the blade closing the opera reinforces, with its grim brutality, the stage verisimilitude.

We note however that a similar stage treatment of a corresponding scene in the Place de la Revolution is spotted in Georg Büchner's drama, *Danton's death*, written in 1835, but staged only as late as the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>14</sup> There too, in the penultimate scene, the heroes, one by one, go up the stairs of the scaffold until they are lost from the sight of the spectators.<sup>15</sup> Could these two Ionians really know the long forgotten work of Büchner? Were they perhaps inspired by this play to create the impressive figure of Danton? Perhaps, we would only be in a position to answer if we knew the contents of Carrer's family library.

To sum up, Carrer and Romas seem to have taken into account the work of Giacometti, which they enrich with additional dramatic and scenic ideas. It should be stressed here that Carrer's risky decision to dramatize the last chapters of monarchy in France has no precedent in European opera. No other opera is about the life and death of Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette is created before Carrer's *Maria Antonietta*.<sup>16</sup> I believe that the direct correlation of his opera to the contemporary developments in

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<sup>13</sup> Umberto Giordano's opera *Andrea Chénier*, libretto by Luigi Illica, was presented for the first time on the 28th March 1896, in 'Teatro alla Scala' of Milan.

<sup>14</sup> Georg Büchner wrote his first play entitled *Dantons Tod* in 1835 but never saw it on stage. It was presented for the first time eighty years later, in Berlin, in the beginning of the 1900s. Simon Williams, 'Büchner Georg', in *The Cambridge guide to world theatre*, ed. Martin Banham, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1900. 128.

<sup>15</sup> Georg Büchner, *Dantons Tod und Woyzeck*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1971). 81-83.

<sup>16</sup> Basso, Alberto ed., 'Maria Antonietta' in *Dizionario enciclopedico universale della musica e dei musicisti: I titoli e i personaggi*, II, Torino: Unione Tipografico Editrice Torinese, 1999, 315.



the European theatre stage suggests that Carrer has not in the year 1873 yet excluded the possibility of building abroad a second artistic career.

In this opera, the brave walk of Marie-Antoinette to the scaffold is in line with Carrer's conscious course towards realism. This ascertainment is based not only in the dramatic and the stage requirements of the libretto, all of which follow the basic principles of the romantic historical drama, but on the only part of this musical work that has ever been recorded, the ten minutes long «sinfonia».<sup>17</sup> Realism in opera, at least in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, relates both to the dramatic themes, as well as the ability of music to contribute to a realistic representation of the drama. We will therefore see how, with a rare theatricality, this trilateral introduction summarizes the main musical themes that are developed in the individual scenes of the opera.

In the first part, after a few initial bars, the orchestra slips unexpectedly sharply into two powerful chords, which are then accompanied by the sound of drums. Carrer's music pictures clearer than any image or description the time of execution and the fall of the blade of the death machine. This is a motive that lurks in the overture and we assume that it will culminate in the opera's final scene. A lyric part follows, obviously one of incorporating one of the melodies to be sung by the main heroin. The imitation of non-musical sounds and the presence of the "rough and crude" component create an interactive relationship between music dramaturgy and dramatic plot, which moves along the axis of realism.<sup>18</sup> These small *vrais détails*, like the grim resonance of the drum and the successive blows of guillotine operate as a coherent sound material that will lead to the next part of the overture.

The second part takes us into a completely different atmosphere, inserting a rapid, rich and brilliant orchestration of the optimistic theme of democracy. Carrer creates an atmosphere full of colour and light to pass to the third theme, which incorporates the anthem "La Marseillaise", thus transforming the macabre tone of the drums of death to a song of freedom. The phenomenon "music within music" is to be found in many of Carrer's operas. For example, in the first scene of *Marco Botzaris*, the offstage song "I have grown old my lads" is heard performed by the main

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<sup>17</sup> The 'Sinfonia' of *Maria Antonietta*, conducted by Byron Fidetzis is included in the digital recording: Carrer, Paolo. *Despo*, CD 0792, Athens: General Publishing Company S.A. Lyra, 2002.

<sup>18</sup> Dahlhaus, Carl. *Realism in Nineteenth-century music*, trans. Mary Whittall, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982, 13 & 18-20.

character, while the *Klephts* clean their tanks. To return to the “Marseillaise” it is a fairly common practice in which the composers resorted during the years of the French Revolution, aiming to awaken the public with well-known patriotic tunes.<sup>19</sup>

In the case of *Maria Antonietta*, the “Marseillaise” is sung again offstage by the risen people, to colour the historical atmosphere with realistic hues. Reflecting in this way the democratic demands of the contemporary society, the choir takes an active role in the opera.<sup>20</sup> Like in Verdi’s *La Traviata*, here too, the individual fate of the main heroes is dependent on a social mechanism, which is not simply a décor for the opera, but operates as an active dramatis persona on stage.<sup>21</sup> French revolutionary songs, such as “La Carmagnole” and “La Marseillaise” will be applied by Giordano in *Andrea Chénier* in 1896, switching on exactly the same mechanism.<sup>22</sup>

The crowd is the most central presence in the opera *Maria Antonietta*. Starring in each scene, it smashes like a wave upon the life of the dramatic characters. The numerous nobles dancing and singing in the halls of Versailles are transformed into the menacing mob calling for bread, followed by a people’s court to condemn the king and finally to the aroused masses who sing the “Marseillaise” and push and shove for a good position near the scaffold. In this brutal and crowded scenery, the dramatic characters abort the courtier and historical stature and gain human dimensions. The crowned protagonists of *Maria Antonietta* hardly resemble their illustrious predecessors of romantic and early verdian opera.<sup>23</sup>

The dramatic character of Marie-Antoinette in particular, matures and gradually ages, as the opera develop. This “common character”, the frightened and superficial woman of the first act, resumes her royal identity at the end and rises to a majestic personality. Although, we do not have the opportunity to hear how Carrer would evolve musically and vocally his heroine, we suspect, however, that the careless queen entertaining at the ball of Versailles must not sound the same as the woman prisoner walking proudly to her end. The first festive scene in the ballroom, a

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<sup>19</sup> Dean Winton, *ibid.*, 77-96.

<sup>20</sup> David Kimbell, *Italian Opera*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). 495.

<sup>21</sup> Carl Dahlhaus, *ibid.*, 64.

<sup>22</sup> Donald Jay Grout feat. Hermine Williams Weigel, *A short history of Opera*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988). 515.

<sup>23</sup> Celletti, Rodolfo. *A History of Bel Canto*, trans. Frederick Fuller, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991, 189.

typical pattern in Italian opera, acts dramatically, highlighting the brutality with which fate changes the heroine's life: from the ballroom to the prison and from the throne to the scaffold. The soprano Marie-Antoinette counterpoints and balances in the majority of the opera scenes with the contralto Elizabeth. Although the real historical person, Madame Elisabeth, was a very young woman, younger than the queen of France, Carrer chooses for her a low tone, to give her depth and weight.

Regarding their vocal treatment, the male roles are also of interest. The tenor here is not the protagonist Louis, but the secondary role of Barnave. Carrer wants the dreamer, ideologist, visionary and ultimately the revolutionary in love, to sing in high range, while the robust and mature king sings in the most masculine middle tessitura of baritone. Finally, Carrer's virtuosity is highlighted on the vocal handling of the three Jacobins. Except for the smaller scenes in which Danton stands out, the three baritones sing intact, undifferentiated, as one single body, declaring in unison with the principles of the Revolution. They seem to obey a law of automatism, which takes away from their humanity, emotions and ultimately their dramatic character. Thus, the impersonal face of authority is accentuated.

*Maria Antonietta* is a work of completely different style compared to the earlier and later operas by Carrer, which is addressed to a much wider audience than that of the Ionian Islands and Athens. We know that at the time of creating, the composer maintains correspondence with his old music publisher Lucca.<sup>24</sup> It seems that Carrer composes with his eye turned abroad and possibly trying to promote his new work on the European scenes, negotiating with the grand music publisher Giovannina Lucca. It is indicative that *Maria Antonietta* appears on stage much later, after over ten years, and when it is finally shown on the Zacynthian theatre "Foskolos" in 1884<sup>25</sup> articles and reviews are published in the Milanese musical press.<sup>26</sup> No other Carrer's opera from his repatriation and then onwards has been

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<sup>24</sup> Pavlos Carrer, *Apomnimonevmata*, 25 v.

<sup>25</sup> Carrer writes in his *Memoirs* that he was planning to stage his new opera in the newly built Municipal Theatre of Zante "Foskolos", an architectural work by Ernst Ziller. However the mayor of Zante, Luccas Carrer decides to open the theatre earlier, before the completion of *Maria Antonietta*. The opera was evidently staged on January 28<sup>th</sup>, 1884, in the same theatre. Pavlos Carrer, *Apomnimonevmata*, 20 r. & v και 27 r. and also Xepapadakou, Avra. 'O Pavlos Carrer kai to melodramatiko tou ergo, 1829-1896' [Pavlos Carrer and his opera work] Ph.D. thesis, Ionian University-Department of Music Studies, 2005, 487-488.

<sup>26</sup> *La Musica Popolare*, 15/3/1884, 43.

detected in the foreign press, only *Antonietta* twenty-seven years after its final departure from Italy.

The composition of a pure Italian opera in the early 1870's suggests that Carrer lives at a turning point and undergoing conflicting pressure between Greece and abroad. On the one hand, he confronts himself with his romantic mission, commanding him to devote himself to the national music creation, and on the other he is trying at all costs to stay connected with Europe. He cannot forget the experience of Italy and is possessed by a desire to face once again his colleagues of the European opera scene. The unexpected triumph that his two "national operas" reserved from the Athenian public in 1875 and the expectation of a continuing presence in the musical life of the Greek capital<sup>27</sup> would frustrate the prospect for a second chance in the major scenes of Europe and finally entrench Pavlos Carrer within the Greek borders.

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<sup>27</sup> The year 1875 marks the beginning of the most creative period in Pavlos Carrer's career. During this period he composes new works and experiences enormous popularity in the theatres of Zante, Patras and Athens, where his operas are finally recognized. His success would reach a climax with the triumphal productions of his national operas *Marco Botzaris* and *Kyra Frossini* in "Apollo" theatre of Athens. Avra Xepapadakou, *ibid.*, 141-201.