

The Greek Musicologist Solon Michaelides

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Michaelides, Solon (*b.* Nicosia, Cyprus, 12 Nov. 1905). Greek composer and musicologist. [...] (Blom, 1954).

Michaelides, Solon, Greek musicologist, conductor and composer; *b.* Nicosia, Cyprus, Nov. 25, 1905. [...] (Slonimsky, 1978).

Michaelides, Solon (*b.* Nicosia, 12 Nov 1905; *d.* Athens, 9 Sept 1979). Greek composer. [...] (Leotsakos, 1980 and 2001).

Michaelides, Solon (*b.* Nicosia, 12 Nov 1905; *d.* Athens, 9 Sept 1979). Cypriot composer, conductor, musicologist, and pedagogue. [...] (Kallis, 2015).

The above quotations from *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians* of 1954, *Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians* of 1978, *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* of 1980 and of 2001, and the *Grove Music Online* of 2015 reflect the national identity conscience of Cypriots in the corresponding periods.¹ During the twentieth century, Michaelides was a Greek, born in Nicosia on the Greek island of Cyprus. It is important to conceptualise this idiosyncrasy of Cypriots before proceeding to our talk on Solon Michaelides. The psychological repercussions of it were deep, resulting in an admiration of Greek culture and a sort of inferiority complex. Yiannis Papadakis and Mete Hatay, writing about the teaching of language as a means for creating national identity consciousness, describe how the Cypriot idiom “was treated as a vulgar, peasant and ugly idiom, while standard Greek was considered elevated and refined.”² It is also to be noted that until 1960, the year that the Republic of Cyprus was established, the Cypriots shared the Greek flag; that they still today sing the Greek national anthem; and that for several years after 1960, schoolbooks were provided free of charge from the Greek Government.³ Both Cypriots and Greeks behaved as if Cypriots were Greeks.

In the twentieth century, Greece was ahead of Cyprus in the introduction of Western music education and practice. The unconcern of the British for education in Cyprus was absolute; all Cypriot universities – public and private – being established after 1960. Concerning music education, it relied much on Greek conservatories that established annexes on Cyprus.⁴ Some, includ-

1 The article on Michaelides in the first quotation is signed “E.B.,” the initials of the dictionary’s editor, Eric Blom. The article of the second quotation is unsigned as are all the articles in the sixth edition by Nicolas Slonimsky. It is to be assumed that Michaelides himself provided the information to both.

2 Yiannis Papadakis and Mete Hatay, “The Cultures of Partition and the Partition of Cultures,” in *Music in Cyprus*, ed. Jim Samson and Nicoletta Demetriou (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), 19–36.

3 Cyprus Ministry of Education and Culture, “50χρονα Υπουργείου Παιδείας και Πολιτισμού” [50 Years of the Ministry of Education and Culture], accessed 2 January 2017, <http://50chrona.moec.gov.cy>.

4 Kenneth Owen Smith, “The Organizational Field of Art Music,” in *Music in Cyprus*, ed. Jim Samson and Nicoletta Demetriou (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), 149–74.

ing Solon Michaelides, profited also from the Trinity College Examination Centre that reached all British dependencies.

Both Greece and Cyprus, however, have been the most retarded among Eastern European countries in that respect. In Greece, until the 1980s, all institutions related to music performance, music education, and music research – if they existed at all – were far behind the level of the rest of Europe, including all Balkan countries to the north that had profited from the mass music education of the Soviet cultural policies after World War II.

Distinguished Greek musicians during the first half of the twentieth century studied abroad, as a rule in France and Germany. Some went to the West as graduates of the Athens Conservatory of Music, which, as the only music conservatory in Athens until 1919, had a faculty of foreigners and Greek nationals raised abroad. They were the core that initiated a movement of German- and French-influenced art music in the city. That movement, which had replaced and discredited the Italian-influenced music practiced in Corfu and the rest of the Ionian islands, grew at a very slow pace, as no Greek government cared about it, at least until the last quarter of the century.⁵

Greek musicians, when studying abroad, faced the dilemma of returning home and working for the progress of music in Greece or pursuing an international career by becoming assimilated into contemporary developments of Western music. Combining the two was impossible, due to the country's isolation. Staying in Greece meant belonging to an introvert society; working abroad meant a cosmopolitan, uprooted existence.

It is most telling of Solon Michaelides's real talent that he was a pioneer in Greek musicology, although he did not study that discipline. He nonetheless shared the fate of other Greeks active in the first half of the twentieth century who returned home after brilliant musicological studies in the West: most prominently, Thrasybulos Georgiades (1907-1977), whose research on music's connection to language is highly valued; Minos Dounias (1900-1962), an expert on Tartini; and Konstantinos Oikonomou, a student of Guido Adler who was practically "buried" under the ignorance and antagonism of local celebrities.⁶ None ever wrote a musicological work in the Greek language; their scholarly language was German. Only Michaelides wrote musicological works in English, the most important being his contributions to the *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians* and his *Encyclopaedia of Ancient Greek Music*.

The *Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* was first published in 1873 by George Grove, as an aid to London music professionals and amateurs. It circulated in four volumes with information useful especially for concertgoers. Therefore, Greece – even ancient Greece – was not included. The fifth edition came out in 1954 and mirrored the growth of musicology, especially in the universities of the United States, which profited from immigrant European musicians and musicologists. It was in this edition that Modern Greek music and Greek composers were included for the first time. And it was Solon Michaelides who wrote all the relevant articles. The article on Michaelides himself is signed, as already mentioned, by Eric Blom, the editor of the fifth edition of *Grove's*.

5 Tertiary music education was only established in Greece in 1985. The first state – and professional – orchestra, the Athens State Orchestra, was established in 1942 during the German occupation. Greek musicians collaborated in several ways with the Germans during World War II, wishing to get the most from them for the sake of Greek music; see Katy Romanou, "Occupied by the Most Musical People of Europe: a Musical Greek Tragedy," in *Proceedings of Crossroads: Greece as an International Pole of Musical Thought and Creativity Conference 2011*, ed. Evi Nikas-Samson, et al. (Thessaloniki: Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, 2013), 53–62.

6 Oikonomou was the director of the Athenian music periodical *Μουσική Ζωή* (1930-31), which supported Nikos Skalkottas and contemporary music in general; see Ioannis Foulis, "Κωνσταντίνος Δ. Οικονόμου. Ένας σκαπανέας της επιστήμης της μουσικολογίας στην Ελλάδα του Μεσοπολέμου" [Constantinos D. Oikonomou: a Pioneer of the Science of Musicology in Interwar Greece] *Μουσικολογία* 21 (2013): 201-33.

The following edition, appearing in 1980 and entitled *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, had twenty volumes. The second edition of *The New Grove*, the last hardcover edition, came out in 2001 with twenty-nine volumes. In both of the *New Grove* editions, nearly all of the – by then multiplied – articles on Greek art music were written by Giorgos Leotsakos, who is the only writer not to recognise Michaelides as a musicologist. The recent *Grove Music Online*, the eighth edition of the *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, includes hundreds of articles related to Greek art music and musicians (performers composers and musicologists), written by specialists in all fields, most of them graduates from Greece's four university music departments established in the last decades of the twentieth century. Articles related to Cyprus, appearing for the first time independently from Greece, are included in this online edition by professors of private Cypriot universities and graduates of British universities.

The importance of Michaelides's contribution to the fifth edition of *Grove* lies in the fact that this was the first time that Greek art music was presented in a universal edition of such scope.⁷ For a Greek reader, Michaelides's articles strengthen the understanding that history might be delivered for years undisputed and that documents, no matter how uneven they are, produce deeply rooted interpretations.

In the history of Greek music of the first half of the twentieth century, Manolis Kalomiris (1883-1962) is a central figure. A man of unusual vitality, self-assurance, and optimism, Kalomiris chose to live in Greece following his studies in Vienna. He was a dominant figure in Greek music from 1910, when he settled in Athens, to the 1950s, when the Cold War's cultural politics overturned the nationalistic ideology and aesthetics to which he adhered. He built around himself a "shielded society" that followed his ideas with enthusiasm.

With acute perspicacity he constructed a network for the dissemination of his ideas and music to his contemporaries and future generations. He established his own music conservatory with annexes in many cities, including Nicosia, and a music printing-house. He was crucial in the foundation of organisations for the professional protection of composers. A sociable and generous character, he managed to relate equally well to both state officials and promising young musicians. He publicised his ideas and protected the closed world around him, acting as a music critic from 1926 to 1958 in the daily *Ἔθνος* [Nation].⁸ He also published his *Memoirs* serially in *Νέα Ἑστία* [New Hearth] from 1 January 1944 to 1 June 1945), a basic source for all biographical music histories.⁹ Thus, Kalomiris produced the documents for almost all histories of Greek music written in the first half of the twentieth century, where he himself and his ideas dominate.

Kalomiris's achieved aim was to lead a Greek national school of composition, combining the tradition of nineteenth-century German art music with Greek traditional music, believing that that explained how Russian music had achieved splendid results in a short time. In his reviews, he repudiates all Greek music that is either Italianate or adheres to contemporary Western trends. His contempt for Italianate music is due to his admiration for Wagner, of whom he aspired to become a Greek replica. His contempt was personalised in his polemics against musicians from Corfu, who were generally regarded as the true founders of Western music education in Athens. The Lambelet family, and especially George Lambelet, were his main targets.

7 "Modern music" of the Greeks was covered in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century encyclopaedic works. In all cases it refers to what we call Byzantine music (i.e., the music of the Greek Orthodox Church).

8 Reflecting Kalomiris's persuasive skills is the fact that *Ἔθνος* published his reviews until the mid 1930s, placing them prominently on its first page.

9 Manolis Kalomiris, *Ἡ Ζωή μου και η τέχνη μου: Απομνημονεύματα 1883–1908* [My Life and My Art: Reminiscences 1883–1908] (Athens: Nefeli, 1988).

Solon Michaelides had not yet settled in Greece when he wrote for the 1954 *Grove's* edition. His description of Greek music is therefore refreshingly uninfluenced by the Kalomiris network.

Michaelides wrote the general article on modern "Greek Art Music," the subsection "Greek" within the article "Folk Music," entries for "Athens" and "Salonica," and entries for the composers A. Evangelatos, D. Lavrangas, G. Lambelet, D. Levidis, M. Kalomiris, Th. Karyotakis, G. Kazasoglou, D. Mitropoulos, A. Nezeritis, M. Pallantios, St. Papadopoulos, J. Papaioannou, P. Petridis, G. Poniridy [Ponirides], E. Riadis, N. Skalkotas, G. Sklavos, M. Varvoglis, and L. Zoras.

His article on Greek folk music, "Greek. (2) Neo-Hellenic" is an outstanding text.¹⁰ The musical systems of Greek folk music are compared to ancient Greek music systems, scales, modes, and meters, and are shown with clarity and many music examples from all over the country (where Cyprus also belongs). His long list of "Collections with music" includes editions both in staff notation and Byzantine notation. The awareness of this duality of Greek music – as well as his familiarity with both notations and cultures – is in this article very prominent, but it is also expressed in the article on Greek art music, "Greek Music (Modern)", which is introduced with the sentence: "It is difficult to determine the chronological delimitations of ancient, medieval (chiefly church [Byzantine]) and modern Greek music."¹¹ Nevertheless, in this short article the beginnings of Greek art music are situated in the 1830s. Michaelides concentrates on ensembles and schools established in the three consecutive capitals of the new country, as well as in Corfu. He then mentions the foundation of the Conservatory of Athens and the most active music societies. The article closes with general information on composers, categorized according to musical style and age. He names Dionysios Lavrangas and George Lambelet as the first to draw inspiration from the folk tradition, adding that "from 1910 onwards Manolis Kalomiris (b. 1883) became the real leader of this movement."¹² Describing Kalomiris as a successor of Lambelet sounds like a gross joke, knowing all the derision the former had poured on the latter.¹³ Michaelides does full justice to the "Greek composer and musicologist" Lambelet. Singling out his study "National Music" of 1901 and his 1934 collection of sixty folk songs entitled *La musique populaire grecque*, Michaelides describes Lambelet as "perhaps the first Greek musician to understand in all its extent the value of Greek folk music and the resources it offered for the creation of a national school, and he published enlightened studies on this line."¹⁴

Michaelides's article on the "Greek composer" Manolis Kalomiris is well informed of all his activities. He does not, however, express any personal judgment on him. He concludes the articles with the statement that Kalomiris "is generally considered as the principal exponent [of national music] and has exercised considerable influence in Greece."¹⁵

Michaelides's expression "is generally considered" becomes meaningful if one reads the article, also very well informed, on Petros Petridis, where it is evident that he esteems Petridis

10 Solon Michaelides, "Greek (2) Neo-Hellenic," in *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 5th ed., ed. Eric Blom (London: Macmillan, 1954), 3:268–77. A column under the title "Greek (1) (Ancient)," signed by H. Julius Tillyard, precedes Michaelides's article and in a footnote we read that it was appended in the fourth edition of the article "Byzantine Music." Tillyard is the author on Byzantine music in this edition as well.

11 Solon Michaelides, "Greek (2) Neo-Hellenic."

12 Solon Michaelides, "Greek Music (Modern)," in *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 5th ed., 3:781–2.

13 On the public quarrel between Kalomiris and Lambelet see Katy Romanou, *Εθνικής Μουσικής Περιήγησις 1901–1912: Ελληνικά Μουσικά Περιοδικά ως Πηγή Έρευνας της Ιστορίας της Νεοελληνικής Μουσικής, Μέρος Ι* [Wandering National Music 1901-1912: Greek Music Periodicals as a Source for the Research of the History of Neohellenic Music, Part I] (Athens: Cultura 1996), 219-31.

14 Solon Michaelides, "Lambelet, George," in *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 5th ed., 5:29.

15 Solon Michaelides, "Kalomiris, Manolis," in *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 5th ed., 4:694–5.

most among Greek composers. Petridis, he writes, "is a powerful composer of international standing. Though his music is closely related to the modern French school, it has the mark of his strong personality."¹⁶ Due to Michaelides's connection with France we get information in the dictionary on Greek composers who lived in Paris and are nearly forgotten today, such as Stamatias Papadopoulos (1906-?) and Theodoros Spathis (1883-1943).¹⁷

Reading Michaelides's article on Skalkottas, one understands much about his own conception of the ideal Greek composer. His command of contemporary music innovations is well demonstrated in the two volumes of his *Αρμονία της Σύγχρονης Μουσικής* [Harmony of Contemporary Music] published in Limassol in 1945. The book ends with a thorough description of the twelve-tone method (indicatively, as developed both by Hauer and by Schoenberg), concluding with the remark that "it is difficult to risk a definite opinion for its future. Time will show its actual value and the influence it may have to the formation of a new tonal system or a new mode of 'thinking' in relation of tonality in general."¹⁸ In that book Michaelides gives music examples from Skalkottas's Piano Concerto No. 2 (not under the chapter on twelve-tone music), his Sonatina for Violin and Piano, and his Piano Suite (from the *32 Piano Pieces*); and it should be remembered that at that time Skalkottas was only known to a small circle of friends and musicians, his importance was not yet publicized, and only the second movement from his Sonatina had been published.¹⁹ Michaelides had grasped the importance of Skalkottas's work. The way he speaks about him in *The New Grove* reflects both his quandary regarding twelve-tone music and his solid view of what it means to be a Greek composer: "His first works," he writes, "were greatly influenced by Schoenberg, but he succeeded in freeing himself and creating a personal style of his own. His principal contribution to Greek music are his *36 Greek Dances* for orchestra [...]."²⁰

Michaelides's other important musicological work is his *The Music of Ancient Greece: an Encyclopaedia*. It contains almost all of the terms one may come across when reading ancient Greek writings on music, as well as persons, real or mythological, connected to it. What makes the work an achievement that will never lose its significance and usefulness is that Michaelides does not provide his own interpretations of the terms, but the varied – and at times conflicting – interpretations of ancient Greek writers themselves.

It is fitting to finish this essay on the Greek musicologist Solon Michaelides by quoting from the foreword to the encyclopaedia by the famous British classicist Reginald Pepys Winnington-Ingram, who also contributed to the fifth edition of *Grove's Dictionary* with the article on ancient Greek music. It summarises Michaelides's conceptualised identity and the joy he received from musicological research:

Solon Michaelides has for decades played a prominent part in the musical life of Greece [...]. A composer as well as a musicologist, in the course of a long and busy life he has never lost his intense interest in the music of ancient Greece but (while not professedly a classicist) has devoted his leisure to the compilation of this encyclopaedia, which is unique. [...] The subject abounds

16 Solon Michaelides, "Petridis, Petro," in *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 5th ed., 6:691–2.

17 Solon Michaelides, "Greek Music (Modern)," in *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Eric Blom, London, Macmillan 1954/1961 (with supplement)/1973 (reprint), 3:781–2. A footnote (p.782) instructs the reader to find details about the composers mentioned in the article in "entries under their own names." However, neither the main body of the dictionary nor the supplement includes an entry for Theodoros Spathis.

18 "[Ε]ίναι δύσκολο να ρηγοκινδυνεύσει κανείς μια απόλυτη γνώμη για το μέλλον του. Ο χρόνος θα δείξει την πραγματική του αξία και την επίδραση που μπορεί νάχει στη διαμόρφωση ενός νέου τονικού συστήματος ή ενός νέου τρόπου του 'σκέπτεσθαι' σχετικά με την τονικότητα γενικά." Solon Michaelides, *Αρμονία της Σύγχρονης Μουσικής* [Harmony of Contemporary Music] (Limassol: Solon Michaelides, 1945) 2:413.

19 It was published in the periodical *Μουσική Ζωή* 4 (31 January 1931): 83–6.

20 Solon Michaelides, "Skalkotas, Nicos," in *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 5th ed., 7:827–8.

of course in controversial issues; and on these the writer wisely contents himself with lucid statements of received opinion while providing enough up-to-date bibliography to enable the student to pursue his own enquiries. There are few who will not find the exploration of this encyclopaedia a fascinating and rewarding pursuit.²¹

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21 Reginald Pepys Winnington-Ingram, "Foreword," in Solon Michaelides, *The Music of Ancient Greece: An Encyclopaedia* (London: Faber and Faber, 1978), v.

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Abstract

Solon Michaelides's most important musicological works are his contributions to *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians* and his *Encyclopaedia of Ancient Greek music*. The fifth edition of *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (1954) initiated the extraordinary growth of the Grove music dictionaries. It was in that edition that Modern Greek music and Greek composers were included for the first time, and it was Solon Michaelides who wrote all the relevant articles. Michaelides's *The Music of Ancient Greece; an Encyclopaedia* is an achievement that will never lose its significance. In it Michaelides does not provide his own interpretations of terms, but those of ancient Greek writers themselves.

About the Author

Musicologist Katy Romanou is a researcher of Greek music in the Common Era. She has published widely in the Greek and English languages, and has conducted several projects in collaboration with Greek and non-Greek – especially Balkan – musicologists. Romanou (who studied musicology in Bloomington, Indiana from 1969 to 1974) was a music critic of the daily newspaper *Καθημερινή* (1974-1986), has taught in several music conservatories in Athens, at the municipal conservatories of Kalamata, Argos, and Volos, as well as in the University of Athens and the European University of Cyprus. She is coordinator of the Greek team of RIPM (Retrospective Index of Music Periodicals) and a member of the Board of Directors of the Hellenic Musicological Society.