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Experiencing the past and encountering the future; Music, War and Politics in Corfu (1916-1919)¹

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Abstract

Corfu experienced dramatic situations during the Great War, because both of its occupation by the Entente forces (1916-1919) and as a place of refuge and reorganization of the fleeing Serbian army and government. In a sense, Corfu at that time experienced in miniature and under dramatic conditions the multiculturalism and the transnationalism of its past.

This article attempts to investigate the ways that music interacted with the military and political circumstances in Corfu during the aforementioned period. Music held a prominent place in the island's cultural dynamic already since 18th century and the allied occupation profited by its facilities and musical development, using the “art of the sounds” as a form of escapism. Corfu's Municipal Theatre continued its activities with repertory related to the pre-War experiences, acting as a medium for the diversion and the moral strengthening of both the locals and the military personnel. Concerts, often with the participation of Greek and Serbian artists, presenting conventional repertoire acted also as propaganda sources. The same applies for the military bands' concerts and the silent cinema, in which military ensembles often offered its accompaniment.

Parallel to this, the Serbians on Corfu not only demonstrated a considerable musical activity, but also music played significant role towards the strengthening of the idea for the creation of a new state in the Balkans, namely the Kingdom of

¹ Some parts of the present article had been presented in the *First joint symposium of the ICTM Study Group on Mediterranean Music Studies and the International Musicological Society* (Naples, Università degli studi di Napoli “L'Orientale” and Conservatorio di Musica San Pietro a Majella, 21-26.6.2016, the paper was published in Kardamis, 2017a, see esp. p. 33-34). An early version of the article had been presented in 2018 during the conference entitled *The Birth of Contemporary Europe: WWI, Music and the Arts* (Athens, Music Library of Greece “Lilian Voudouri”, 9-11.11.2018).

Yugoslavia. Its creation, in an era of collapsing Empires, was signed in the summer 1917 in the Corfu's Municipal Theatre. However, this decision was musically further consolidated in the town's central square through the repertoire performed by the Sloveno-Serbian Military Band, featuring works by Croatian, Slovenian, Serbian and Montenegrin composers.

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The news regarding the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand in Sarajevo reached Corfu officially via the consul of Austria on June 30th 1914.² Before that, Corfu experienced the prequel of World War I, namely the two Balkan Wars (1912-1913) and actually in 1914 Corfu was honouring the military action of its 10th Infantry Regiment during that conflict. Moreover, and as a result of the Balkan Wars, Corfu had to cope with the care for the refugees from Thrace, Asia Minor and the newly annexed region of Epiros, as well as with the locally found war victims' needs and the support of the political activities in the Independent Region of Northern Epiros (today's Southern Albania). These conditions did not prevent the celebration in full pageantry during May 1914 of the 50th anniversary since the Ionian Islands' annexation to the Greek Kingdom. Moreover, already before and more intensively after the outbreak of the World War I the French, British and German Mediterranean Fleets were patrolling in the Ionian Sea,³ which in due course also suffered from the legendary "unrestricted submarine warfare".

At the same time, and despite the critical conditions, Corfu retained its cosmopolitan character and its fame as a place that combined the aura of the western culture and life with the stereotypical Western approaches regarding both Greek antiquity and folkloric fixations. Several books, travelers and articles could here be cited, but it seems that the person directly related to the present essay's aims is the legendary German Kaiser Wilhelm II, who has found in Corfu "a heaven on earth" and bought there the summer palace (Achilleion) of the late Austrian Empress

² General State Archives of Corfu (GSA/C), Prefecture 262, 5598.

³ On 9.7.1914 Germany asked for a permission to be granted to the legendary battleship "Goeben" to contact exercises in the region of Corfu (GSA/C, Prefecture 263, 6083) and two months later the French and British Fleets were coaling themselves just off the western coasts of the island (GSA/C, Prefecture 263, 8901, 8909, 9060, 9090, 9117, 9135, 10125). At the same period, they were contacting naval checking in the coasts of Adriatic (GSA/C, Prefecture 264, 11123).

Elisabeth.⁴ He visited Corfu on regular basis from 1908 until 1914 and actually left the island forever on 4.5.1914,⁵ just weeks before the War's outbreak. It was a prophetic coincidence that the British Fleet paid a visit to Corfu one month after Kaiser's departure and that its band performed in the town's square some days before the Sarajevo events.⁶

Kaiser's strong character, vanity and 19th-century fixations found in Corfu a positive environment, since the island was also in a transition between its importance within the 19th-century social and political sphere and its place within the limits of a problematic Hellenic Kingdom that had just experienced the first successful military fulfillment of its irredentism. Kaiser's presence in Corfu was welcomed and mutual interest in cultural, archeological and political means was not insignificant. Medals to Corfu's authorities, donations of works of art and financial subsidies to local artistic associations, as well as the direct contact with the Greek royal family were only some of the manifestations of the German Emperor's infiltration into the local society.⁷

Musically, it is beyond doubt that Kaiser's presence left to Corfu the melody of the 1892 German song *Die Holzauktion* that eventually became the distinctive dance of Gastouri (the village in the vicinity of Achilleion palace) and is still considered by many as one of the islands' original rural dances. Parallel to this, Kaiser's numerous visits to Corfu played decisive role for the commission by him of the opera *Kerkyra* (premiered in Berlin, 27.6.1912),⁸ in which Corfu's ancient past meets its picturesque and imagined contemporary folklore, and the *fin-de-siecle* convictions regarding ancient Greek music are combined with rural tunes. More to this, the band of Kaiser's yacht "Hohenzollern" often performed in public and Kaiser's summer residence welcomed Gastouri's newly-organized (1907) civic band. Wilhlem also asked for a selection from the 1867 opera *The Parliamentary Candidate* by the Corfiot composer Spyros Xindas (1817-1896) to be included in the repertoire of his band.⁹ This was also related to his interest in folklore, since Xindas's work, not

⁴ Detailing his experiences regarding Corfu were among Kaiser's priorities immediately after his abdication in 1919 (published in Kaizer, 1924).

⁵ GSA/C, Prefecture 262, 3484, 21.4.1914 and *Efimeris ton Eidiseon* 1204 (23/4/1914), 2.

⁶ *Efimeris ton Eidiseon* 1208 (6.6.1914), p. 2 and GSA/C, Prefecture 262, 5168, 6.6.1914.

⁷ GSA/C, Prefecture offers a fine overview of such instances.

⁸ Music: Joseph Schlar, libretto: Joseph Lauf. See also «Nouvelles Diverses», *Le Menestrel* 4271 (1.2.1913), 38. "Kerkyra" is Corfu's name in Greek.

⁹ Corfu Philharmonic Society-Administrative Archive (CPS/A), Correspondence Book 1900-1921, n.4749 (13/26.6.1909).

only is the earliest opera in Greek language, but also makes extensive use of local rural music (Kardamis, 2017b).

All the above, of course, also profited from the island's musical past (an overview in Kardamis, 2014). Opera performances were taking place continuously on annual basis at least since 1771 (the earliest documented opera performance, however, took place in 1733) and Corfu's theatre had been part of the Italian operatic market since late 18th century. In 1902 a new and larger Municipal Theatre had been inaugurated, which nonetheless continued hiring Italian operatic troupes, and its opening opera was Wagner's *Lohengrin* sung in Italian. In this respect, it is of some importance that in the spring of 1915 there was even a particular reference to wagnerian ideas in Corfu's press debates regarding the War.¹⁰

The Philharmonic Society (founded in 1840) guaranteed since 1850s a continuous flux of string and wind instrumentalists for the theatre's orchestra and choristers for its choir. Actually, the Corfu Philharmonic Society functioned as a full-scale music academy, offering to its students a wide variety of practical (instrumental and vocal music) and theoretical (from theory's rudiments to composition) instruction. The creation and maintenance of a wind band was the main concern of the 'Mantzaros' Philharmonic Society (established in 1890), as well as of two short-lived similar organization established later in Corfu town and of four in the islands rural districts, established between 1907 and 1911 (Tsantaridis, 2003; Kardamis, 2019). Several amateur choral associations complemented the musical activity of Corfu town and the island's semi-urban regions.

Initially Greece retained a neutral stance towards the Great War, balancing between the pro-German sentiments of King Constantine (husband of the Kaiser's sister) and the pro-Entente ideas of his prime minister, Eleftherios Venizelos. However, the Entente forces did not refrain from infiltrating in the Greek matters. In September 1915 the Bulgarian mobilization caused also that of Greece. In October 1915 the French landed in Thessaloniki aiming to support the Serbian military combat. A year later the same occupied city became the capital of the so-called Government of Thessaloniki formed by Venizelos during the National Schism, which eventually in 1917 led Greece to the side of the Entente forces.

¹⁰ "Peri tou poleμου os ideas" [On the war as an idea], *Efimeris ton Eidiseon* 1235 (29.4.1915), p. 1-2

Back in 1915 the Serbian defeat caused the retreat of its army and government, who after a dramatic march via Albania reached Corfu, on which the French Army had already landed since 11.1.1916 and occupied strategic positions in order to support the Serbian evacuation. Corfu was not the only Greek port occupied during the War by the Entente forces, since the same applied for places such as Argostoli, Zakynthos, Pylos, Souda, Milos, Moudros and Mytilini. Nonetheless, regarding Corfu the main facts are more widely known (an account in Pachi, 2022); After a few weeks diseases made their presence felt among the Serbian army causing severe casualties also among the local population. Eventually, the morbid was successfully treated. Parallel to this, the forced co-existence in Corfu of such multiethnic populations caused inevitable contrivances in the form of private property's occupation, infiltration in the local administration, stealing and sexual abuses. Nonetheless, the Serbian Army's re-organization was taking place at the same time and soon its divisions began their transfer to the Macedonian Front.

The Entente Forces, however, stayed on Corfu until June 1919 and actually the Italian forces left after diplomatic pressure, since their presence on the island proved to have been a preparation for its permanent occupation. It is indicative in this respect that in August 1915, some months before the Entente's disembarkation on Corfu, due to the general suspicion caused by Italy's policy in the region and its recent alliance with the Entente, a mandolinata piece performed by Corfiots using Greek National Anthem's reminiscences provoked a violent incident against nearby Italian citizens.¹¹

So, it is beyond doubt that Corfu between 1916 and 1919 was in a peculiar situation, since military and political developments soon became there an everyday experience; Corfu, despite certain attempts, did not become part of the Thessaloniki Government's territory, but at the same time it was practically separated from the regions under royal control. It was *de facto* administered by the Entente forces,¹² despite continuing the usual administrative contact with Athens. And despite being a mercantile centre it became officially an Entente military base after Greece joining the War in 1917. This conditions prevailed despite Corfu having elected an overwhelming number of royalist deputies in the 1915 elections and retaining a neutral (if not pro-German) stance. Moreover, a serious humanitarian crisis was soon evident on the

¹¹ GSA/C, Prefecture 470, f.1, 27.7.1915, where a police report describes the incident.

¹² Even the "Phoenix" theatre was leased to the impresarios after a French officer's approval. See, *Les Communiqués des Alliés* 101 (1.3.1917), p. 2

island and food shortage and starvation became an everyday reality during the War years.

At the same time, Corfu, even under these forced conditions, experienced between 1916 and 1919 in miniature once more the multiculturalism and transnationalism that decisively contributed to the formulation of its distinctive culture since the 11th century.¹³ In 1916, a century after the Napoleonic Wars' end and roughly fifty years after the Ionian Islands' annexation to the Kingdom of Greece, the French and the British returned to the region (this time as allies), supporting the retreating Serbian army and accompanied by Italian forces.

Expectedly enough, music in such an environment played an important moral and cultural role. During extreme times, such as a war, the sense of retaining the life's usual pace has a positive effect, even if it is to be considered as a form of escapism. So, Corfu's transitional musical environment, which already followed with certain difficulty the new musical trends, invested to the need of retaining some aspects of the past, in order to offer to its population and the multiethnic military personnel the idea of "regularity".¹⁴ At the same time, music was also used as a medium of indirect political propaganda. The turning point was of course the 1916 Entente and Serbian Army's landing, which virtually brought the war in the local houses' front yards.

Regarding opera, Corfu's theatre continued its activities, albeit with considerable organizational problems, both before and after the Entente's landing, by hiring Italian troupes (despite the aforementioned suspicion towards Italy). In January 1915 Verdi's *Rigoletto*, *Un ballo in maschera* and *Traviata* were performed,¹⁵ confirming the connection with the past, since all three of these operas had been staged on regular basis during the past decades. On the other hand, the 'Giovine Scuola' was represented by the established *Cavaleria Rusticana*¹⁶ and *La Bohème*.¹⁷ At the same time in the town's smaller theatres Greek operetta troupes offered a

¹³ Due to its geographical position Corfu constituted both part of the Greek world and of the common cultural space between the Ionian Sea, the Italian Peninsula and the coasts of the East Adriatic. The long Venetian administration (1386-1797) and the Italian connections had left lasting marks in both social and cultural means, long before the Ionian Islands becoming a military theatre of the Revolutionary and the Napoleonic Wars. The French had already occupied the island twice (1797-1799, 1807-1814) and the British Protection played central role regarding the formulation and the administration of the United States of the Ionian Islands (1815-1864). For an overview of the Ionian Islands' history, see Pylarinos (ed.), 2007.

¹⁴ The news for Enrico Caruso's marriage may also be approached in this respect. See, *Les Communiqués des Alliés* 643 (27.8.1918), p. 2.

¹⁵ *Efimeris ton Eidiseon* 1225 (8.1.1915), p. 3.

¹⁶ *Efimeris ton Eidiseon* 1227 (21.1.1915), p. 3.

¹⁷ *Efimeris ton Eidiseon* 1229 (12.2.1915), p. 1.

popular diversion. In 1916 the Entente forces' presence, a series of organizational hazards¹⁸ and most importantly the aforementioned morbid resulted to the opera season's suspension, in spite of some unsuccessful attempts. However, a year later, between January and March 1917 a bombardment of opera performances heralded the attempt of "musical normalization" in an era of military extremes. Once more, the constant reminder of the previous peaceful years, supported by the standard Italian operas, is obvious; *Aida*, *Carmen*, *Madame Butterfly*, *Othello*, *La bohème*, *Lorelay*, *Fedora*, *Pagliaci* and *La Gioconda* were performed by the Corfu's theatre Italian troupe.¹⁹

One cannot fail to observe that the operas presented during this period included works by Verdi's late period and by the "Giovine Scuola" (despite its Central European musical references), as well as *Carmen*. This could well have been an attempt to address to the spectators' age group that coincided with that of the French, Italian, British and Serbian military personnel, as well as that of Corfu's active population. On the other hand, this repertoire was both particularly popular, and also deprived of nationalistic connotations within the Entente forces' narrow circle. Nonetheless, during April 1917 there was also a brief additional period, in which not only *Tosca* and Massenet's *Manon* were performed, but also two works of the older (but standard) repertoire, namely *Rigoletto* and *Lucia di Lamermoor*. In most of the above operas of the 1917 season the direct or indirect presence of France is also obvious and this was not necessarily related to the works' popularity. The same seems to apply also in regard to a lengthy locally published article dedicated to the centenary since Étienne Nicolas Mehul's death,²⁰ an emblematic French composer whose operas have never been performed in Corfu.

During the 1917 season the opera artists and the orchestra gave also a benefit concert for the Corfu's Civilian Hospital, demonstrating thus their contribution to the aforementioned critical situation.²¹

Regrettably, for the 1918 opera season, which coincided with the War's culmination, there is yet no reliable information available. Nonetheless, in February

¹⁸ *Elpis* 274 (4.8.1916), p. 3.

¹⁹ All the cited opera titles derive from numerous issues of the newspaper *Les Communiqués des Alliés*, which was published in Corfu during the Entente occupation. The same newspaper also provides the singers' and conductors' names, the full listing of which exceeds the essay's limits.

²⁰ *Les Communiqués des Alliés* 376 (2.12.1917), p. 2.

²¹ *Les Communiqués des Alliés* 93 (21.2.1917), p. 2.

and March 1919 *Un ballo in Maschera*, *L'amico Fritz*,²² *La traviata*, *Carmen*, *Ruy Blas*, *Mefistofele* and *Isabeau* were presented. If these operas are also indicative for the potential 1918 season, then the already discussed remarks do not differentiate considerably. During the war years also the usual artist's benefit concerts took place and in 1919 in one of these concerts the orchestra's conductor Paolo Belluci presented three of his compositions.²³

However, the period's most prominent and widely disseminated music ensemble was, expectedly enough, the windbands, both in their military and in their civic capacity. Actually, military music played a crucial role during the initial, and embarrassing, moments of the Entente's disembarkation on Corfu; A silent, but increasing, number of civilians was observing the French Army's movements in Corfu's port, when "la fanfare des Alpains" received an order to perform a carefully selected series of compositions. It begun with the Greek National Anthem, followed by the French, a fact that transmitted a reassuring musical message. Some of the most characteristic French marches followed, namely *Sidi Brahim*, *Marche Lorraine* and *Sambre et meuse*. This musical intervention "made all hearts leap, ours and those of the Greeks. It is beautiful, the music! From then on, it was enthusiasm, sincere hurrahs burst. The soldiers of the Greek garrison, initially hesitant, ventured in our ranks. We greeted them as friends, we had a feast with them."²⁴ The melodious, and at the same time political and diplomatic, message had been successfully transmitted to and received by the Corfu's people.

The need for diversion through band music, especially in a period of war, of sanitary and humanitarian crisis and of no opera season, was also made explicit by the local press in June 1916; "Luckily the beginning of the summer period means that the bands of our Philharmonic Societies will begin to divert us on regular basis every Friday and Sunday and that they will cease the weekly life's monotony".²⁵ The anonymous writer should have been very satisfied in the end, since for the next three

²² In some of its performances the violin solo of Act I was performed by the talented Corfiot violinist, Maria Nicachi. See, *Les Communiqués des Alliés* 810 (11.2.1919), p. 2 and 811 (13.2.1919), p. 2.

²³ *Les Communiqués des Alliés* 853 (26.2.1919), p. 2. The titles were *Preludio* for orchestra, harp and violin, *Suite per archi e arpa* in four parts and *Marcia sinfonica* for orchestra.

²⁴ 'Les Sebres en exil' *Le Grande Guerre du XX^e Siècle* III-25, Février 1917, Paris: Bonne Presse, pp. 237-249: 241. Similar sentiments related to the military bands' performances have also been recorded in Thessaloniki roughly at the same time, see 'To neon oplon' [The new weapon], *Makedonia* 1463 (4.1.1916), p. 1. The article warmly suggests that such concerts should be organized in Athens, Peiraeus, Patras, Nauplion, Messolongi, Kalamata, Corfu "and everywhere".

²⁵ *Syntagmatiki* 372 (30.5.1916), 3.

years, besides the Corfu town's civic wind ensembles, the bands of the French Zouaves,²⁶ the Allied Fleet,²⁷ the Slovenian and Serbian Army, the Italian Army,²⁸ the military forces' massed bands²⁹ and those of certain ships of the French Navy offered almost every day a constant and different musical background as part of both their daily military services and a series of regular weekly concerts. The "Musique des Alpains" also participated from an early stage in certain public ceremonies and concerts in an attempt to blend into the islands formal activities.³⁰ The military band repertory was a well-established mixture of opera music (usually related to the works presented in the theatre), popular dance music, character pieces and, naturally, marches.³¹ The music of the bands' respective countries had, of course, a very prominent place, offering in this way a variant musical, as well as politically orientated, palette.

Within these conditions it seems that Corfu's only direct connection with Greece's patriotic sentiment was the national anniversaries' celebration, namely that of March 25th (Greek War of Independence) and May 21st (Ionian Islands' Annexation to Greece, which coincided with King Constantine's nameday). The town's civic windbands participated in the ceremonies³² and the French, British, Italian and Serbian commanding officers were also invited via their consuls.³³ It is also indicative that during the celebrations of 21.5.1916 a new patriotic composition for windband and choir was performed by the "Mantzaros" Philharmonic Society; It was the fantasia entitled *The battle of Sarantaporo* by the Corfiot composer and "Mantzaros" bandmaster Spyros Doukakis on verses by the painter Georgios

²⁶ *Les Communiqués des Alliés* 178 (17.5.1917), p. 2 and 372 (28.11.1917), p. 2. Actually in June 1917 there was a thought by the French military command that the Zouaves would substitute the "Mantzaros" Philharmonic Society's band in its Sunday concerts, but soon more convenient arrangements were made. See "Mantzaros" Philharmonic Society Archive (MPS/A), Correspondence 1917, 24.6.1917, 25.6/8.7.1917. A Serbian band was expected to perform every Thursday.

²⁷ Indicatively, *Les Communiqués des Alliés* 132 (1.4.1917), p. 2; 178 (17.5.1917), p. 2 and 707 (31/10/1918), p. 3.

²⁸ *Les Communiqués des Alliés* 376 (2.12.1917), 2 and 643 (27.8.1918), p. 2.

²⁹ Indicatively, *Les Communiqués des Alliés* 131 (31.3.1917), 2 and 145 (14.4.1917), p. 2.

³⁰ *Empros* 7041 (24.5.1916), 5 (festivities for the King Constantine's name time), 18.8.1916: funeral of the Greek Parliaments President, Michael Theotokis.

³¹ *Les Communiqués des Alliés* includes some of the military bands' programmes, which, despite far from being complete, offer an adequate glimpse into their activities. See, List.

³² I take the opportunity to express my gratitude to the Administrative Committees of both the Corfu Philharmonic Society (CPS) and the "Mantzaros" Philharmonic Society (MPS) for facilitating the research into and the use of their valuable archival material.

³³ GSA/C, Prefecture 484.

Samartzis.³⁴ This was a programmatic composition honouring the military action of Corfu's 10th Infantry Regiment during the Balkan Wars.

On the other hand, and given the marginal conditions caused by the National Schism, the 1917 ceremonies for the Greek Revolution's commemoration were asked to be celebrated "in kindness and respect, without passion against anyone",³⁵ and thus after a relevant order by the French authorities the bands of both the Corfu and the "Mantzaros" Philharmonic Societies had a limited presence in the ceremonies and the subsequent concerts.³⁶ The events related to the National Schism justify the fact that the same bands on 21.5/3.6.1917 were supposed, following a new order by the French military commander, to participate in the official mass in the Metropolitan church for the King's Constantine nameday without any parade, but only by sending there their bandsmen separately, in order to perform in ensemble the Greek National Anthem.³⁷ The annual festive concerts for the same occasion were suspended by the police. On the other hand, the Corfu Philharmonic Society decided to follow the same practice regarding its participation in the French National Day celebrations on 14.7.1917.³⁸ It was a musical, albeit peculiar, way to implement the triptych "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity".

Greece's declaration of war would soon add different aspects in the aforementioned musical activities; In June 1918 the Corfu Philharmonic Society informed the local Venizelists' Association that they would participate in the national celebrations of France and the U.S.A., according, however, to its bandsmen availability, since a substantial number of them had already joined the Greek and the Italian military forces.³⁹ Eventually, in this celebration participated both the two Corfu town civic bands and most of the military bands.⁴⁰ As a general remark, during the period between 1916 and 1919, in spite of the financial and organizational

³⁴ *Syntagmatiki* 372 (30.5.1916), p. 1-2. The choir consisted of local amateurs. The same work was presented in a piano and choir version a few days later during a gala performance organized by the Corfu Sports Association for the support of the soldiers' families [*Syntagmatiki* 372 (30.5.1916), p. 2-3]. Regarding Doukakis, see Papikinos, 2022.

³⁵ *Les Communiqués des Alliés* 135 (4.4.1917), p. 2.

³⁶ CPS/A, Board Minutes 1915-1922, 24.3.1917 and MPS/A, Board Minutes 1912-1917, 24.3.1917.

³⁷ CPS/A, Correspondence Book 1900-1921, 4971, 20.5.1917. and Board Minutes 1915-1922, 20.5.1917, MPS/A, Board Minutes 1912-1917, 21.5.1917. Nonetheless, both Committees send telegrams with their wishes to the King on the occasion of both the March 25th and the May 21st anniversaries. Constantine resigned in June 1917, succeeded by his son.

³⁸ CPS/A, Board Minutes 1915-1922, 25.6.1917.

³⁹ CPS/A, Correspondence Book 1900-1921, 6.6.1918.

⁴⁰ MPS, Correspondence 1918, 30.6.1918.

difficulties, the Corfu town civic bands participated in a series of events that not only tried to retain a sense of regularity, but also followed the political developments in Greece, confirming that they functioned as a safe indicator of their society's attitudes. The civic bands participated⁴¹ in several minor religious ceremonies, in concerts for the financial support of Corfu's hospital and of the victims of Thessaloniki (August 1917) and Kydonies (1919) disasters, in the Greek Army's ceremonies, in the annual commemoration ceremonies of Ioannis Kapodistrias and the Byzantine Emperor Constantinos Palaiologos and the anniversary of Ioannina liberation (1913), as well as in religious services on the occasion of contemporary events, such as the attainment of National Unity (June 1917), Jerusalem's seizure (December 1917) and the Greek Fleet's entrance in Constantinople (November 1918). The bands were also asked to participate in events related to the Entente's military presence, in order “to avoid any provocations” (as suggested by Corfu's Prefecture). Such instances were the funeral of Vice-admiral Biard (August 1917), as well as those of the Admiral Grellier and the General Stephanovich (both in August 1918). Corfu's civic bands were also present during the “final curtain” of the Entente's presence on the island, since during the official ceremony for the lowering of the allies' flags (8/21.6.1919), which heralded the island's military evacuation, they performed the Greek and the Entente forces national anthems.⁴²

Parallel to these, the importance of community music in the recently acquired region of Epiros is underlined by the fact that the “Muses” Philharmonic Association of Ioannina asked for the organizational support of the Corfu's philharmonic societies, which were called to play also such a role during a period of extremes.⁴³ Related to the era's political developments is also the request by the Corfu's Labour Centre in April 1919 to engage the “Mantzaros” wind band for the May 1st festivities, an engagement authorized by the Society's board,⁴⁴ confirming its 1890 initial founding article to act “for the entertainment of the labour class”.

The activities of the Sloveno-Serbian military band are particularly important,⁴⁵ since they are related to the nation that caused Corfu's most dramatic

⁴¹ All the following information retrieved by the relevant material of CPS/A and MPS/A.

⁴² *Empros* 8137 (9.6.1919), 2, as well as relevant material in CPS/A and MPS/A.

⁴³ CPS/A, Correspondence Book 1900-1921, 8.12.1917 and MPS, Correspondence 1918, 8.3.1918.

⁴⁴ MPS/A, Correspondence 1919, 19.4.1919.

⁴⁵ Music's importance for the Serbs refugees is further underlined by the Royal Guards Orchestra's reorganization in Corfu, where they performed in its theatre before moving in Thessaloniki,

sanitary crisis during the 20th century, that connected itself with the burst of the Great War and that held a central role in the shaping of the European map, at least as it was formulated between 1918 and late 1990s. Its concert activity is also interesting because of its repertory; This consisted not only of opera reductions from the standard (i.e. Italian) repertory, marches and popular dance music [see, List], but also featured windband arrangements from works by composers of the wider region of the Western Balkans, underlining in this way the new political and diplomatic developments leading to the emergence of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. After all, the creation of this new state was officially proclaimed in autumn 1917 by the Serbian Parliament, the seat of which was then at the Corfu's Municipal Theatre.

The concerts of the Sloveno-Serbian band included, among others, arranged selections from the emblematic opera *Nikola Zrinjski* by the influential composer Ivan Zajc (born in today's Croatia)⁴⁶ and dance music by Jovo Janisevich (born in today's Montenegro),⁴⁷ as well as selections of Serbian melodies and songs.⁴⁸ Similar repertory was performed by the aforementioned band under the direction of "captain Vins" during the beneficial concert for the Serbian kids (22.5.1918, Theatre "Phoenix"), in which Davorin Jenko's overture to *Jourmous et Fatima*, V. Rendla's *Motives Serbes*, a Serbian selection entitled *Balkaniade* and Vins' *Quadrille serbe* were presented.⁴⁹ In this respect, the creation of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, as a result of the collapse of three Empires during the Great War, was further strengthened (or even forged) in musical means also in Corfu's open-air concerts and within the limits of a transnational audience.

Moreover, the same audience (both the indigenous and the military personnel) also encountered a repertory, which despite related to the emerging art music of Yugoslavia, was considered to be within the margins of the conventional western music perception [Samson, 2013; Romanou (ed), 2009]. Joined concerts of Greek and Serbian artists were also taking place featuring vocal music of their respective

see Tomasevich, 2009: p. 37. A concert's programme in Thessaloniki (dated 20.1.1918, "Pantheon" theatre) is exhibited in Corfu's Serbian Museum, the curators of which I would like to warmly thank.

⁴⁶ *Les Communiqués des Alliés* 348 (4.11.1917), p. 3. The opera was premiered in 1876 and became an Illyrian nationalism's symbol, see Samson, 2013: pp. 243-245.

⁴⁷ *Les Communiqués des Alliés* 376 (2.12.1917), p. 2.

⁴⁸ *Les Communiqués des Alliés* 641 (25.8.1918), p. 2 and 659 (12.9.1918), p. 2 (the latter concerning works by the emblematic Serbian composer Josip Marinkovich).

⁴⁹ Programme exhibited in Corfu's Serbian Museum. The event also included the violonist Maurice Bonabeau, the baryton Copart and the abovementioned bandmaster Spyros Doukakis (piano accompaniment), performing music by Massenet, Diaz and Toselli.

countries.⁵⁰ To these, one may add the performance of Russian songs arranged for windband,⁵¹ as well as a selection from Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*,⁵² completing in a sense this Corfu-based musical reference to the Balkan Pan-Slavism. This is further underlined by the performance of Davorin Jenko's symphonic work *Kossovo* by the Italian military band,⁵³ presenting thus a work by a composer born in today's Slovenia, who nonetheless became a musical symbol of the Serbian and Pan-Slavic nationalism.

The Sloveno-Serbian military musicians also participated, both as windband and as string orchestra, in the activities of the Corfu's cinema.⁵⁴ The Serbian String Orchestra also organized a series of special concerts, probably for the financial support of its members, performing a non-negligible repertory heard for the first time on Corfu.⁵⁵ The changes that came after the entry of the U.S.A. in the War were also reflected in the Sloveno-Serbian ensemble's repertory, since works related to the Entente's new member were included in its concerts.⁵⁶ Nonetheless, it was the "Mantzaros" Philharmonic Society's band that prior to all the existing bands performed Sousa's march *Star and Stripes forever* a month after the U.S. joining the War.⁵⁷

Parallel to these formal musical activities, it should also be mentioned that the local amateurs were particularly active, offering their share in the populace moral. Ranging from carnival events⁵⁸ and the people's financial support⁵⁹ to school festivities⁶⁰ and high profile concerts,⁶¹ often with the participation of acknowledged

⁵⁰ *Les Communiqués des Alliés* 89 (17.2.1917), p. 2; 90 (18.2.1917), p. 2, regarding a joined concert of Greek and Serbian artists "Mme Nichlitch and M. Méchterovitch", the latter being singers of the "Serbian Theatre of Nich".

⁵¹ *Les Communiqués des Alliés* 348 (4.11.1917), p. 3

⁵² *Les Communiqués des Alliés* 634 (18.8.1918), p. 2.

⁵³ *Les Communiqués des Alliés* 643 (27.8.1918), p. 2. This must have been the "disbanded Italian band", whose 26 instruments were bought by the Corfu Philharmonic Society in summer 1919 (CPS/A, Board Minutes 1915-1922, 26.5.1919).

⁵⁴ Indicatively, *Les Communiqués des Alliés* 644 (28.8.1918), p. 2; 651 (4.9.1918), p. 2 and 659 (12.9.1918), p. 2.

⁵⁵ *Les Communiqués des Alliés* 636 (20.8.1918), p. 2; 650 (3.9.1918), p. 2; 651 (4.9.1918), p. 2; 659 (12.9.1918), p. 2. The repertory included, among others, Beethoven's *Egmond* overture, Frederic Cowen's, *Graceful English dances in the olden style*, Mozart's *Don Giovanni* overture, Paderewski's, *Menuet*, op.14, a selection by Sullivan's *The Mikado* and several Serbian and Slovenian songs.

⁵⁶ *Les Communiqués des Alliés* 634 (18.8.1917), p. 2 and 641 (25.8.1918), p. 2.

⁵⁷ *Les Communiqués des Alliés* 258 (6.5.1917), p. 2. Almost a year later the band participated in the reception of a U.S. delegation in Corfu and gave an open air concert for the 4th of July celebration, MPS/A, Board Minutes, 20.6.1918.

⁵⁸ *Les Communiqués des Alliés* 96 (24.2.1917), p. 2.

⁵⁹ *Syntagmatiki* 372 (30.5.1916), p. 2-3, GSA/C, Prefecture 272, 4811 (16.5.1916).

⁶⁰ *Syntagmatiki* 895 (4/6/1917), p. 2-3.

artists,⁶² the Corfu music amateurs seem to have used music as a medium of endurance and of retaining a connection to culture during an uncivilized era. Also the Serbians had parallel approaches on this issue; it is indicative that in March 1917 a Serbian family was asking to rent per month a piano with the mediation of a local bookbinder,⁶³ while at the same time gypsy musicians, besides wind bands, were diverting the Serbian soldiers in their camps.⁶⁴ Moreover, the emblematic Serbian song *Tamo daleko*, reputedly composed on Corfu by the soldier Djordje Marinkovic (Pachi, 2022, p. 105), supported the moral of the exiled Serbians and melodically retained their (new) country's image.

The Great War was definitely a transitions' era in several fields and it affirmed globally the eve of a new world that shaped the 20th century's convictions. A micro-history, such as Corfu's, and especially that concerning music during these turbulent times underlines in its own way this process. Several of the aforementioned issues would surface in the immediate years; the nostalgic idea of Corfu's "glorious musical past" is still evident even today and given the current timing this still undoubtedly acts partly as a form of escapism. Italian imperialism would re-emerge, this time openly aggressive, both in 1923 and during the World War II, placing the region's Venetian past, including music, in its focus. Actually, Corfu's 1923 short Italian occupation resulted to the suspension of hiring Italian operatic troupes, thus ending the island's incessant, almost two centuries long, connection to the Italian operatic market. Serbians, being part of Yugoslavia until 1990s, still pay regular visits to the "Island of Salvation" singing *Tamo daleko* in their mausoleum, even during the Yugoslav civil war, and the music road between Corfu and Serbia was always open even during the Cold War. Those turbulent times of the Great War make their impact felt even today. Let us hope that peace will be the formulative factor for such relations in the future.

⁶¹ *Les Communiqués des Alliés* 778 (10.1.1919), p. 2; 796 (29.1.1919), p. 2; 798 (31.1.1919), p. 2; 799 (1.2.1919), p. 2.

⁶² Indicatively, *Les Communiqués des Alliés* 96 (24.2.1917), p. 2.

⁶³ *Les Communiqués des Alliés* 116 (16.3.1917), p. 2.

⁶⁴ 'Les Sebres en exil', *op.cit.*, p. 245.

List of the military and civic bands repertory in Corfu (1917-1919)
as recorded in *Les Communiqués des Alliés*

Fanfare the 10th Territorial Batallion of Zouaves: *Les cadets de Gascogne*, J. Furgeot / *Le voyage en Chine*, ouverture, François Bazin / *Pour les bambins*, polka, Phil. Farbach / *Speranza*, fantasia / *Gavotte-Bébé*, Boisson / *Blanche*, waltz, Roubin
n.178 (17.5.1917), 2

Sloveno-Serbian Band

Viva Torero, Obrezon / *Marthe*, overture, Fried. Flotow / *Pot-pourri des chansons russes*, Pokorny / *Mépistostophélés*, fantasia, Ar. Boito / *Nikola Zrinjski*, Duetto e finale, Ivan Zajc
n.348 (4.11.1917), 3

Cols bleu, march / *Norma*, overture, V. Bellini / *Margarette*, quadrille, Ivanichevitsh / *Théâtre et amusement*, pot-pourri, Brodile / *Il trovatore*, fantasia, G. Verdi
n.376 (2.12.1917), 2

Frégoli, march, J.P. Sousa / *Silvio Pellico*, overture, Wilgus / *Théâtre et amusement*, pot-pourri, Brodile / *Lucia de Lammermoor*, 2nd act, G. Donizetti / *Eugène Onegin*, fantasia, P.I. Tchaïkovsky
n.634 (18.8.1918), 2

Le père de la victoire, march, Louis Ganne / *Semiramis*, overture, G. Rossini / *Les Dragons de Villars*, fantasia, Aimé Maillard / *Down South*, American sketch, W.H. Middleton / *De beaux jours*, pot-pourri serbe, A. Dvorak
n.641 (25.8.1918), 2

Band of 271th Italian Territorial Battalion

Marcia militare, Franco da Belforte / *Lolita*, serenata spagnola, A. Bucci Peccia / *Loreley*, “*Danza delle Ondine*”, A. Catalani / *Tosca*, fantasia, G. Puccini / *La Vestale*, overture, G. Spontini
n.376 (2.12.1917), 2

Marcia Sinfonica, Careslia / *Kossovo*, overture, Davorin Jenko / *Reginetta delle rose*, waltz, R. Leoncavallo / *La traviata*, acts 1 and 2, G. Verdi / *Ruy Bals*, fantasia, Fil. Marchetti

n.643 (27.8.1918), 2

Marcia caratteristica, Davide Delle Cese / *Maggio*, leggenda, Pasquale Ernesto Fonzo / *Don Pasquale*, fantasia, G. Donizetti / *Rigoletto*, act 2, G. Verdi / *Mefistofele*, fantasia, Ar. Boito

n.650 (3.9.1918), 2

Vie muscovite, polka, Romanzato / *La gazza ladra*, overture, G. Rossini / *La forza del destino*, reminiscenze, G. Verdi / *La Gioconda*, Terzetto e duetto finale atto 4, Am. Ponchielli / *La mezzanotte*, fantasia, Carlini

n.657 (10.9.1918), 2

Marcia militare, Angelo Ciglia, / *Ninfe e fauni*, dialogo, Franco da Belforte, / *Omaggio a Mercadante*, overture, P. Serrao / *Ernani*, reminiscenze, G. Verdi / *Fasti militari*, fantasia, Gemme

n.664 (17.9.1918), 2

Cenerentola, overture, G. Rossini / *Loreley*, “*Danza delle Odine*”, A. Catalani / *Tosca*, fantasia, G. Puccini / *Il rintocco della mezzanotte*, fantasia, Oreste Carlini / *I Lombardi alla Prima Crociata*, act 4, G. Verdi

n.684 (8.10.1918), 2

Italia, Marcia sinfonica, Papa / *La Gioconda*, “*Danza delle Ore*”, Am. Ponchielli / *Otello*, fantasia, G. Verdi / *Sonnambula*, reminiscenze, V. Bellini / *Pagliacci*, sunto dell’ opera, R. Leoncavallo

n.678 (1.10.1918), 2

Marcia militare / *L’ Andalus*, danza spagnuola, Tarditi / *Rigoletto*, act 2, G. Verdi / *Werther*, fantasia, J. Massenet / *Gioconda*, act 3, Am. Ponchielli

n.703 (27.10.1918), 3

Band of “Provence”: *Marche Lorraine*, L. Ganne / *Zampa*, overture, Ferd. Hérold / *Le Saltibanques*, fantasia, L. Ganne / *Espana*, waltz, Émile Waldteufel / *La bohème*, selection, R. Leoncavallo / *Stars and stripes for ever*, J.P. Sousa.

n.679 (2.10.1918), 2

Band of “Lorraine”: *Strasbourg*, march, Andrieu / *Mireille*, overture, Ch. Gounod / *Czardas*, Michiels / *La maladetta*, selection, Paul Vidal / *Premiers pas*, waltz, Durand

n.685 (9.10.1918), 2

Bands of “Victor-Hugo” and “Courbet”: *Les Dragons de Villars*, overture, Aimé Maillart / *Ballet de Coppelia*, L. Delibes / *Loin du Bal*, overture / *Babillage*, intermezzo, Ernst Gillet / *La vivandière*, fantasia, B. Godard / *Le cimbre*, march, Signard

n.707 (31.10.1918), 3

Bands of “Provence” and “Courbet”

Zampa, overture, Ferd. Hérold / *Salamambo*, fantasia, Ernst Reyer / *La letter de Manon*, overture, Ernst Gillet / *La feria*, suite, Paul Lacome / *Salut lointain*, march, A. Doring

n.783 (16.1.1919), 3

Domino Nero, overture, D.F.E. Auber / *Carmen*, fantasia, G. Bizet / *Menu et Caprice*, Parès / *Scaramouche*, ballet, André Messager / *Alsace-Lorraine*, Fred. Bentayoux

n.800 (2.2.1919), 3

“Mantzaros” Philharmonic Society Band: *The stars and stripes for ever*, march, J.P. Sousa / *Norma*, overture, V. Bellini / *La Gioconda*, fantasia, Am. Ponchielli / *Aida*, selection, G. Verdi / *A toi*, waltz, Em. Waldteufel

n.258 (6/5/1917), 2

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