

**Emilios Riadis: *Jasmines et Minarets*
The landscape of a multi-cultural city****ALEXANDROS CHARKIOLAKIS**

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Emilios Riadis (1880-1935) is recognized as an authentic representative of Greek National school. He lived most of his life in Salonica, during a time when the city was a truly multicultural centre of its time. In 1913 he composed *Jasmines et Minarets* as a tribute to his own city, just after a year (1912) from the moment that Salonica became a part of Greece, after the treaty that was signed between the forces of the Ottoman Empire and the Greek army. In this song cycle, Riadis is attempting to represent the landscape of his own city, a landscape where *Minarets and Jasmines* are the main features, proving that Salonica was a truly multiethnic and multicultural city.

Keywords: Emilios Riadis, *Jasmines and Minarets*, Greek National School.

Salonica or *Selanik* or any other name that has been attributed to the city over the years, has been, for a considerable amount of time a cosmopolitan, multi-ethnic place that suffered, in many cases, the repercussions of different nationalisms that derived from the ideologies of its citizens. During Ottoman rule, and especially after the 1850s and the reforms that were made, the city and its port became one of the significant, maybe the most significant, economic centres in the Balkans. Local populations had the opportunity to reveal their business talents and explore the many possibilities that were given to them through the new railroad connections with cities such as Belgrade and Istanbul, trading centres and banks that were opening branches rapidly, the steam boats that were trading constantly with cities around the Mediterranean Sea.



Lifestyle was a true mixture between East and West, with Muslim, Christian and Jewish populations adding the obvious colour to the surroundings. However, the mixture proved, in many cases, to be really hazardous. Salonica became the theatre of rivalry and fighting between Bulgarians, Greeks and Turks with many incidents bearing lethal effects for people. The nationalistic sentiments of these three major communities led to the First Balkan War and towards an alliance between the Kingdoms of Bulgaria, Greece, Serbia and Montenegro against the Ottoman Empire. The main ambition of this alliance was to gain as much land as possible from the Ottoman Empire, especially those areas that remained within the bounds of the European peninsula. Salonica was the major aim for both Greeks and Bulgarians. The Greek army finally was the first to sign a treaty with Hasan Tahsin Pasha (1845-1918) and marched in the city in the afternoon of 27th October 1912. Just for the sake of history, I would like to add here an incident that occurred when the Bulgarians finally approached the city and they demanded a similar treaty to be signed with them. Then, Hasan Tahsin Pasha told them that he couldn't do that because, as he said: "Μια Θεσσαλονίκη είχα και αυτήν την παρέδωσα στον Ελληνικό Στρατό" (I only had one Salonica and this I have already surrendered it to the Greek Army).¹

Here it is interesting to mention the population census that was held in 1913 revealing some interesting facts: the population was 150,889, with 39,956 Greeks, 45,867 Turks, 61,439 Jews (mainly people who actually adopted easily with the Greek populations), 6,263 Bulgarians and 4,364 of different nationalities. Moreover, on a historical perspective it seems quite interesting the fact that Osman Sait (unknown-1934) remained the mayor of the city, with some small discrepancies, until 1922 (his office was between 1912-1916 and 1920-1922). The obvious effort was towards the building of a multi-ethnic city although these efforts in many cases fell through.

Emilios Riadis (1880-1935, his real name being Emilius Kou) was the son of of the Austrian pharmacist Heinrich Kou and Anastasia Grigoriadou-Nini². He started learning music in Salonica with Dimitrios Lalas (1848-1911) and he continued his studies in the Munich Music Academy being a student of Felix Motl (1856-1911). In 1910 he moved to Paris where he lived, worked and continued his studies with

¹ Christos K. Christodoulou: *Οι τρεις ταφές του Χασάν Ταχσίν Πασά* (The three burials of Hasan Tahsin Pasha). Thessaloniki: Epikentro (2012), p. 178

² Kaiti Romanou: *Έντεχνη ελληνική μουσική στους νεώτερους χρόνους* (Greek Art Music in recent years). Athens: Koultoura Editions (2006), pp. 189-191

Maurice Ravel (1875-1937), among others. He was acquainted with the French music circles and he was truly influenced from the cosmopolitan musical flavours of Paris. He returned to Salonica in 1915 where he was appointed a piano professor in the State Conservatory of Salonica and in 1918, he became the vice-director of the same institution. He remained in this position till his death. Riadis was also a noteworthy poet who published his poems under the pseudonym Emilius H. Eleftheriadis. His poetic talent went along with his musical capabilities and he frequently used his own poems when he was composing songs.

Riadis was one of the prominent and foremost figures of the Greek National School, a movement that was established in the Greek musical world around the beginning of the 20th century and remained active and vibrant till the death of his establisher, the composer Manolis Kalomiris (1883-1962) in 1962³. Riadis represented the national school movement of the North, being actually the main representative from the area. Although he was a prolific composer, mainly of songs (he wrote about 200 of them, with a vast majority that still remains unpublished). Riadis was also notorious of his perfectionism and this was proved by the fact that he was going over his works again and again, recomposing certain passages and changing small details. This meant that the material involving each piece accumulated several different versions. His archive contains a plethora of reworked and finalised scores and, as it goes in cases like these, many unfinished and abandoned works.

His national sentiment was emphasized and presented through various pieces. He composed works with titles such as *Μακεδονικές Σκιές* (Macedonian Shadows), *5 Μακεδονικά Τραγούδια* (5 Macedonian Songs), *9 Μικρά Ρωμέικα Τραγούδια* (9 Little Romeika Songs), *Ελληνικά Τραγούδια* (Greek songs) and a few orthodox sacred works for SATB choir or for children and men's choir. Salonica played an extremely important role in this compositional output with his home town being, in several occasions, the focus of his musical world dealing with the city as a landmark and as an icon.

Riadis's music and archival material has been gathered by his relative Eliza Riadis and it was preserved by his student Ismini Tzermia-Sakellaropoulou with another part of his archive being donated to the State Conservatory of Thessaloniki. A few years ago, Music Library of Greece "Lilian Voudouri" of the Friends of Music

³ Manolis Kalomiris: *Η ζωή μου και η τέχνη μου* (My life and my art). Athens: Nefeli Publications (1988), pp. 145-147

Society digitized the archive⁴ and Riadis's works are freely available through the internet in an effort to make his work accessible to musicologists and performers. Now, I would like to focus on the work in question, *Γιασεμιά και Μιναρέδες* (*Jasmines and Minarets*) a circle of four orchestral songs for soprano and orchestra. Firstly, there is a clarification that needs to be made concerning the number of songs that constitute this circle of songs. Some of the songs contained have been published individually and for a long time there was a general belief that *Jasmines and Minarets* was constituted by three songs. However, archival research has proved that Riadis' cycle constituted of four songs, the ones we will deal with here, and that these four songs have been kept together at his archive⁵.

Having clarified the above matter and in order to fully comprehend about the significance of this piece, we need to consider the fact that Riadis composes this cycle while he is already in Paris and he was actually away from Salonica since 1908 when he left for Munich. His depiction of Salonica is actually this of a multicultural city. It doesn't seem to be an exaggeration that the composer wants to catch the framework, the horizon, the landscape, the atmosphere of a city like that, a city though that changed rapidly in the years to come after the Greek annexation. It's interesting to see how one conceives this work now. In my eyes, and as we gather it now, this is a nostalgic account of an idealistic view of a globalised, multiethnic place.

Let's focus on the work itself. As I mentioned earlier, the songs are based on poetry by the composer himself. The four individual titles of the songs are: "Ράικα" (Raika), "Οδαλίσκη" (Odalisque), "Σαλονίκη" (Salonica), "Νανούρισμα" (Lullaby). For the sake of homogeneity from this point onwards I will be referring to the title of the work and the titles of the songs in their translated form. It worth's mentioning that in the scores contained in the digitized archive of the composer the lyrics of the full score appear to be in French⁶, probably because he was aiming for a performance of these while he was in Paris. However, I am not aware of a premiere of the work there. Furthermore, the available recording of the piece that I have in hand is from a live performance of the National Symphony Orchestra of the Greek Broadcasting

⁴ see <https://dspace.mmb.org.gr/mmb/handle/123456789/6695>

⁵ See the digitized manuscript with the title page here <https://digital.mmb.org.gr/digma/handle/123456789/15440>

⁶ Emiliós Riadis: manuscript scores from his archive.

"Raika" <https://digital.mmb.org.gr/digma/bitstream/123456789/33874/1/document0d.pdf>

"Odalisque" <https://digital.mmb.org.gr/digma/bitstream/123456789/33875/1/document0d.pdf>

"Salonica" <https://digital.mmb.org.gr/digma/bitstream/123456789/33869/1/document0b.pdf>

"Lullaby" <https://digital.mmb.org.gr/digma/bitstream/123456789/33877/1/document0d.pdf>

System (ERT), under the direction of Byron Fidetzis, with the soprano Martha Arapi as a soloist. I will make an attempt to translate the verses or at least the meaning of these songs. So, in the first song, *Raika* one reads the following

The white jasmines down by the seaside

and the white minarets

Raika, Raika

and my soul a harbour full of joy

the ship is awaiting for the sailor

alas, the poor sailor

The white jasmines down by the seaside

and the white minarets

Raika

oh the sailor has painted

all the sails black

the ship is black

his soul is black

and his goes around far away

Raika is a woman's name without any depiction that she is of Greek origin, in fact quite the contrary. Riadis recollects the love story of a woman with a positively exotic name and a sailor that is not named. It's interesting to point out that the composer states the title of the whole work in the opening verses. Exotic influences are evident in the score, something that doesn't come as a surprise taking into account that the composer, at that time, was residing in Paris, interfering and corresponding with the music circles there. Even the woman's name adds to the exotic atmosphere. A symbolic attitude is adopted, especially through the verses about the black ship and the black soul (this is actually an idiomatic phrase in Greek which cannot be really translated here). The love story of Raika and the sailor does not have a happy ending although the sailor already declares his love feelings for her from the first instant

and my soul a harbour full of joy

the ship is awaiting for the sailor

The next song of this cycle is *Odalisque*, a clear reminiscent of the Ottoman past. Again, I will be making an attempt to translate it.

Her long black hair
her green eyes
and the closed palaces
a light, feathery dance
Snake, hawk, sealed soul
She only loves her eyes
Her long black hair
her dance
A swallow flies
in a spring sky
in a spring's dream
with tireless feathers
a swallow flies
within a love cage
and her hair are a tomb
her eyes the sky
And all the tambourines sound
And the zithers play
and the closed palaces
a light, feathery dance
Snake, hawk, sealed soul
She only loves her eyes
Her long black hair
her dance

An odalisque is a young girl that was serving in a harem, actually the word means a “chambermaid” and it derives from the Turkish “odalik”. An odalisque didn’t have the privileges and the rights that concubines had. The odalisque was on the bottom of the social ladder of a harem, however there was a chance that she could excel to become a concubine if she was beautiful or had talents in dancing or singing. Riadis actually points out all these talents and her natural beauty, praising her constantly.

One should recognize again the oriental, in a sense I could have dared say ottoman, sound quality that the composer is adding to this song. Another interesting point is the fact that during the 19th century the odalisque has become a common figure for artists that were within the orientalism movement framework, and especially in France.

The odalisque was portrayed in quite a few erotic paintings by such artists as Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres (1780-1867) with two paintings the *Grand Odalisque* and *Odalisque and a Slave* or Jules Joseph Levebre's (1836-1911) work *The Odalisque* and others. Did Emiliios Riadis knew of these works? I cannot be positive about it but his artistic interests stretched beyond just music so if I had to guess I would have said yes. For example, the *Grand Odalisque* was in the Louvre Museum since 1899⁷.

The next song is dedicated solely to his hometown with a nostalgic tone. The title is *Salonica*.

Salonica

you are always appearing in front of me

full of charm

a dream and longing

Salonica

your flowers bloom

and your sea is foaming

Salonica

I always feel your sweetness

just an eyeful of sadness

to extinguish

to ignite, to extinguish

⁷ see here for the date of acquisition <https://collections.louvre.fr/en/ark:/53355/cl010065566>

Deep inside I feel
I feel to die out
the white jasmines

This third song is a song of praise for his hometown. Salonica is described as an eternal dream, a nostalgic image compiling beauties and sweetness to his heart. The musical content is quite straightforward in terms of content, there are moments where the ideals of the young, already established but still fresh, Greek national school seem to be fulfilled with the occasional use of the augmented second, a typical characteristic between nationalist composers in the Balkans.

Fourth and final song is titled *Lullaby*, coming as a closing to this circle of four songs for voice and orchestra. A lullaby marks the end of a day.

Sleep
I bring you apples from the apple tree
I bring you roses
Sleep
and your sleep should be sweet
and full of blooming smells
Sleep
and your little heart is beating
like you are a star
and it shines for me
like you are a star
and it gives me the jewels
and it gives me the gold
that I wear
and it gives me those palaces
where I will rest
Sleep, sleep, sleep

In the *Lullaby*, Riadis lets all his lyricism flow. However, he doesn't avoid the Greek subject. The motives of the Greek lullabies are mainly built around the word "Sleep" ("nani" is a pet word for the word ύπνος [Hypnos, sleep] that both appear in the text) and the stated fact that there is an eternal wish for the child to gain the highest position within society, most of the times appearing as the hope for wealth, palaces and jewels.

An important factor that cannot go uncommented is the fact that three out of the four songs are dedicated to the French composer Paul Ladmirault (1877-1944). The last song, the *Lullaby*, was dedicated to Rene Lenormand (1846-1932), also a French composer and music theory teacher. Just a brief comment here that the three songs dedicated to Ladmirault do not bear a determined tonality throughout whereas the song dedicated to Lenormand bears a loose tonality of C sharp minor. Actually, the case of Ladmirault is quite interesting within the framework of composers who connect themselves to national ideologies. Ladmirault was a follower of Breton Celticism, arguing in several cases his position for a Breton identity that should be included in the work of Breton composers. In 1928, in the first issue of the periodical *Kornog* Ladmirault published a manifesto about Breton music declaring that Breton composers should follow the example of the "Mighty Handful", the Russian nationalist music group of the 19th century, and reject German and Italian musical models, relying only on folk traditions that connect to the Breton identity and pentatonic scales⁸. Probably, Riadis was feeling quite close to Ladmirault in terms of his national ideas that were already developing in a fast pace.

To conclude, for me it is obvious that *Jasmines and Minarets* is a nostalgic piece about one's homeland, a work that stands as a memorial monument, a depiction of an icon, for a composer who resides away of his beloved cosmopolitan city. He is aware of the news that the city is finally a part of the Greek Kingdom and he celebrates not with a polemic and heroic work but with music that places his pride above any type of vengeance or remorse. Riadis describes musically the landscape of his city, with a heavy touch of exoticism and oriental idioms. Moreover, he expresses his Greek sentiment in all the occasions available but also, he reveals some of his French musical influences of the time. Therefore, he creates a multi-influenced work, a piece of Greek music, with French influences in its musical language and heavy symbolism of his Ottoman past, a piece comparable to a city of similar sort, a truly cosmopolitan one.

⁸ Yves Krier. "Ladmirault, Paul." *Grove Music Online*. Oxford Music Online. Oxford University Press, accessed May 5, 2022, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/15799> .

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Short Bio

Alexandros Charkiolakis studied piano and music theory at the Hellenic Conservatoire, musicology and orchestral conducting at the University of Sheffield and the Royal Northern College of Music, philosophy and management at the University of Athens. He worked at the Music Library of Greece "Lilian Voudouri" of the Friends of Music Society and from 2013 till 2017 he taught at MIAM – Istanbul Technical University and he was also head of the "Erol Üçer" Music Library. In May 2017 he became the general director of the Friends of Music Society in Athens. He has edited several books and he co-authored with Avra Xepapadaku the book 'Interspersed with musical entertainment': Music in Greek salons of the 19th century (Hellenic Music Centre). He is a member of the Board of Directors of the State Orchestra of Athens, member of the board of the Mikis Theodorakis Museum in Zatouna and member of the board of the Greek IAML Branch.



Αιμίλιος Ριάδης: *Γιασεμιά και Μιναρέδες* Το Τοπίο μίας Πολυπολιτισμικής Πόλης

ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΟΣ ΧΑΡΚΙΟΛΑΚΗΣ

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ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Ο Αιμίλιος Ριάδης (1880-1935) αναγνωρίζεται ως αυθεντικός εκπρόσωπος της Ελληνικής Εθνικής Σχολής. Έζησε το μεγαλύτερο μέρος της ζωής του στη Θεσσαλονίκη, σε μια εποχή που η πόλη ήταν ένα πραγματικά πολυπολιτισμικό κέντρο της εποχής της. Το 1913 συνέθεσε το *Γιασεμιά και Μιναρέδες* ως φόρο τιμής στην πόλη του, μόλις ένα χρόνο (1912) από τη στιγμή που η Θεσσαλονίκη προσαρτήθηκε στην Ελλάδα, μετά τη συνθήκη που υπογράφηκε μεταξύ των δυνάμεων της Οθωμανικής Αυτοκρατορίας και του ελληνικού στρατού. Σε αυτόν τον κύκλο τραγουδιών, ο Ριάδης επιχειρεί να αναπαραστήσει το τοπίο της πόλης του, ένα τοπίο όπου οι μιναρέδες και τα γιασεμιά αποτελούν τα κύρια χαρακτηριστικά, αποδεικνύοντας ότι η Θεσσαλονίκη ήταν μια πραγματικά πολυεθνική και πολυπολιτισμική πόλη.

Λέξεις κλειδιά: Αιμίλιος Ριάδης, *Γιασεμιά και Μιναρέδες*, Εθνική Σχολή.