

Callas: the conflict about Epidaurus

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ABSTRACT | The objective of this article is to explore situations that are intimately related to Callas' concerts in Epidaurus. Callas, who had left Greece in 1945 to go to the United States, and hadn't been back since, returned to Athens in 1957 to inaugurate the Festival with two performances at the Herodium in 1957. However, an unpleasant atmosphere had been created against her, because she demanded an enormous amount for the standards of that period! After her appearance at the Athens Festival, Callas, as expected, did not want to give another concert in Greece. But, in 1959 K. Bastias took charge of the administration of the Greek National Opera and proposed Callas to present an opera in the Ancient Theatre of Epidaurus. It is worth noting that since its opening in 1954, the Epidaurus Festival only included ancient Greek drama performances given by the National Theatre of Greece. Performances from other troupes were not allowed. Finally, Callas accepted to present Norma by Bellini and decided to grant her remuneration in order to create a scholarship foundation. After Callas' success in the role of Norma, she returned to Epidaurus a year later to present Medea by Cherubini. At the main time a situation of tension was to begin; Emilios Chourmouzos, the director of the National Theatre, reacted to the performance of Medea, a fact that evokes many questions. Therefore, his reaction is not justified. In fact, he realized that via Callas' performances in the Epidaurus theatre melodrama tended to be established. He saw losing the National Theatre's monopoly in Epidaurus and undoubtedly, the presence of the Diva in Epidaurus was the first step to abolish the monopoly of the Greece National Theater.

Keywords: Callas, Festival, Epidaurus, Opera, Norma, Medea, Minotis, Bastias, Greek National Opera, Chourmouzos, Greek National Theater

1. ATHENS FESTIVAL IN 1957

There are numerous foreign and Greek studies that analyze Maria Callas' life and work. However, the objective of this article is not to replicate information on her international career or personal life but to explore all the events that are intimately related to her concerts in Epidaurus, in the role of Norma (1960) and Medea (1961) bringing the latter into focus.

In February 1957, Achilleas Mamakis, director of the newly established Athens Festival, met Callas in Milan, and proposed her to open the Festival in the summer of that year. Callas, having a busy program during the summer, asked on purpose an excessive remuneration believing that the Festival could not afford it. Nevertheless, Mamakis agreed. So, Callas, who had left Greece in 1945 to pursue a career in the United States, and hadn't been back since, returned to Athens in 1957 to inaugurate the Festival with two performances at the Herodium on 01 and 05 August 1957 (Petridis, 1957, August 06, p.2).

However, the first performance was canceled just an hour before. Rumors started spreading around (Εματαιώθη η έναρξιν του Φεστιβάλ, 1957, August 02, and Η αναβολή ενάρξεως του Φεστιβάλ Αθηνών, 1957, August 03, p.2). According to the media this cancellation was either due to Callas' illness (Η αναβολή ενάρξεως του Φεστιβάλ Αθηνών, 1957, August 03, p.2)¹ or because of the police authorities having cancelled the concert in order to prevent public disorder (Θεατρικά νέα, 1957, August 02, p.2 and Εματαιώθη η έναρξιν του Φεστιβάλ, 1957, August 02,) since there have been rumours for disapproval on behalf of the public.

It seems that before her arrival an unpleasant atmosphere had been created against her, because the artist refused to sing under the direction of a Greek conductor and had asked to have her collaborator, A. Votto, fly from Italy (Θεατρικά Νέα, 1957, August 01, p.2). But above all, she demanded a 9,000 dollar fee for her two performances at the Festival - an enormous amount for the standards of that period! The press put the blame on the high-ranking government minister, Constantinos Tsatsos (1899-1987) who had accepted this proposal.

So Callas' payment issue lit a fire in the Greek political stage and that was the reason why the leaders of the other political parties, namely G. Papandreou (1888-1968), S. Venizelos (1894-1964), leaders of the Liberal Party, and S. Papapolitis (1911-1973), leader of the political party "National Political Union Centre" (ΕΠΕΚ) refused to attend the opening of the festival, expressing their discontent (Θεατρικά Νέα, 1957, August 01, p.2). After this tension, Callas' pretended illness escalated the already explosive ambience.

Tsatsos, in order to appease the spirits, stated² that Callas' remuneration was unusual for the Greek standards but usual for international theatres. He cited as examples: her appearance in Chicago, where for one and only appearance Callas received 10.000\$ and in Texas, where for a single appearance she received 11.000\$. To support his position he pointed out that the festival ticket worth of 420 drachma (Επισήμως ανακοινούται ότι η κ. Κάλλας θα εμφανισθή τη Δευτέρα, 1957, August 03) was actually less than the ticket cost in festivals abroad. He added that the gains from Callas' two performances covered her remuneration as well as all her related expenses. Moreover, he mentioned that for the upgrading of the festival every possible sacrifice should be made. For this reason personalities of international reputation should be invited, whose resounding presence in Athens could "monopolize the entire world press", something that did happen in Callas' case. Lastly, he turned against his political opponents for using the Festival and Callas' issue for gaining political benefits.

¹ According to the doctor, Callas suffered from a slight inflammation of the trachea. But the newspaper Ta Nea (Θεατρικά Νέα, 1957, August 02, p.2) claims that the doctor said that she could sing.

² To perceive the amount, it is worth mentioning that in 1957 a newspaper cost 1.50 Drs.

In an ambience full of doubts about Callas' second performance the official opening of the Festival took place on 2 August at the National Theatre with the play *Iphigenia in Aulis* with Anna Synodinou and Thanos Kotsopoulos in the leading roles (Η αναβολή ενάρξεως του Φεστιβάλ Αθηνών, 1957, August 03, p.2). The day after Callas' unique performance, during a press conference at the hotel "Grande Bretagne", she refused to answer to questions about her remuneration saying that "it is her own affair" and adding that "of course she is getting paid well enough, nevertheless, the theatres have always the last word" (Θεατρικά Νέα, 1957, August 07, p.2). The situation was triggered after some articles in the press claiming that Tsatsos' statements were misleading, because he knew that Callas had never achieved to be paid more than \$2.500 per performance (Θεατρικά Νέα, 1957, August 08, p.2). Finally, the committee of the festival announced that Callas received the sum of 135.000 drch - half the amount of that expected, for a single performance. However, there is no official reference or source to provide specific information about the actual amount.

Indeed, the invitation of a great personality like Callas in the Athens Festival, not only was consistent with the artistic goal of the Festival, which was to bring together the best Greek artists who excelled in Greece or abroad (Kaggelari, 2003, June 29, p.24), but would also highlight the institution worldwide. Thus, Callas' appearance also served the second goal of the festival which was the development of tourism (Kaggelari, 2003, June 29, p.24). However, it should be noted that her appearance was intended to introduce the newly formed institution, primarily to the Greek public and to foreign tourists who were visiting Greece and secondly, the enhancement of tourism since a foreigner who was able to enjoy the artist in a operatic scene in his country would not travel to Greece just for an operatic concert by Callas³.

However, the fact that the appearance of Callas became a political scandal which has been reinforced by the press of that period it seems a natural consequence as the 1950's was a difficult decade for the Greeks: Greece was trying to recover after a troubled past decade during which the country had suffered due to the Italian and German occupation and by the civil war. Under the "Marshall" project, tourism was seen as a powerful tool that could reinforce reconstruction (Kaggelari, 2003, June 29, p.24). Reasonably, the question arises: where such sacrifices worthy at the time?

³ For the first concert on 1 August the following program had been selected: three airs from the Verdi operas *La Forza del destino* and *Il Trovatore*, Overture from the opera *La Vestale* by Spontini, one air from Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*, one air from *Lucia di Lammermoor* by Donizetti, one air from *Hamlet* by Thomas and an intermezzo from *Amico Frits* an opera by Mascagni. The Festival Orchestra would end the program with an overture from *La forza del destino* as well as an intermezzo and a dance from the lyrical drama *La Vida breve* by Manuel de Falla. The second concert on 5 August would include: an overture from the opera *Les vêpres siciliennes*, aria from *La vestale*, an air from Meyerbeer's *Dinorah*, Prelude and the Death of Isolde from *Tristan und Isolde*, *Polovtsian Dances* by Borodin, one air from *Ballo in maschera*, intermezzo and dance from *La vida breve* by Manuel de Falla, one air from *Lucia di Lammermoor* (Το πρόγραμμα των δύο συναυλιών της Κάλλας, 1957, July 10, p.5). However, due to the cancellation of the first performance it seems that on 5 August the program of the first concert was given (Lalaouni, 1957, August 07).

2. NORMA IN 1960

After her appearance at the Athens Festival and because of the hostile atmosphere, Callas, as expected, did not want to give another concert in Greece. Nevertheless, in 1959 K. Bastias⁴ took charge of the administration of the Greek National Opera (Εθνική Λυρική Σκηνή). It was the same person who, back in 1940, saw into young Maria Calogeropoulou a great talent, supporting her financially, recruiting her as a chorister and then as a main actress in the newly established National Opera. Bastias proposed Callas to present an opera in the Ancient Theatre of Epidaurus, directed by Alexis Minotis (Bastias, 2005, p. 462). Callas had already worked with him in 1958 and in 1959. We may presume that Minotis was hired by Bastias in order to change Callas' mind; this is probably the reason why she finally agreed to appear again in Greece after the previous scandal. The chosen Opera was *Norma* by Bellini⁵. And as far this performance was concerned, Callas asked to bring over the conductor Tullio Serafin with whom she had also collaborated in the past⁶.

The first performance of *Norma*, which sold 12.000 tickets⁷, was cancelled because of a sudden downpour (Θεατρικά Νέα, 1960, August 22, p.2 and Kampanis, 1960, August 23, p.2). The inhabitants of the region claimed that it was "the wrath of Gods that postponed the performance of *Norma*" (Η ζωή της πόλεως, 1960, August 23, p.2). In fact, in the area there was an old superstition and according to it, the ancient Greek gods accepted drama -and not opera- to be performed in the ancient theatre.

Finally, the first performance was on 24 August and the second on 26 August. Nevertheless, during the second, Callas was ill with fever, as Bastias informed the audience before the beginning of the performance (Θεατρικά Νέα, 1960, August 27, p.2). The third scheduled appearance of Callas, which was to replace the first performance that was cancelled because of rain, was also cancelled, because of "Callas' rapid deterioration of influenza"⁸. Due to her bad health condition, Callas left Greece in Onassis' yacht, in order to be hospitalized abroad. For both performances the artist received the amount of \$10.000, a sum which she donated to "Maria Callas scholarships Foundation"⁹.

The selection of *Norma* came as a surprise. Callas in 1958 and 1959 collaborated with Minotis and Tsarouchis in order to present *Medea* by Cherubini abroad. Bastias' son claims that it was Callas who suggested *Norma* (Bastias, 2005, p.462). This statement is also confirmed by a press conference she gave after her arrival in Greece in 1960: "I did not choose *Medea* but *Norma* because it is more of

⁴ Kostis Bastias (1901-1972) novelist, journalist, publisher, editor and columnist for major Athenian newspapers, general manager of the Royal (National) Theater (1937-1941), the National Opera (1940-1941 and 1959-1964) and the National Radio Foundation (1961-1963).

⁵ On August 21, 24 and 28, 1960. Yannis Tsarouchis-scenery, Antonis Fokas -costumes, Michael Vourtsis- Chorus Conductor, Tatiana Varouti-choreography.

⁶ Until his arrival in Athens, rehearsals were taken over by Totis Karalivanos.

⁷ The performance was attended by the Deputy Prime Minister Costas Karamanlis, the Public Speaker Mr. Rodopoulos and the leader of the Liberals Party Mr. Venizelos (Θεατρικά Νέα, 1960, August 22, p.2).

⁸ The doctor, Mr. Papathanassopoulos, found inflammation in the upper respiratory system which was turned to laryngitis because of the hot and dry climate of Greece. He recommended her to abstain for a week from her duties (Καταποικίρην λαρυγγίτιδα υπέστη η Μ. Κάλλας, 1960, August 28,).

⁹ There was an official announcement that Callas would perform *Norma* in Olympia Theatre in February 1961 and that the box office receipts would be donated to her newly-founded «Maria Callas Scholarships» (Θεατρικά Νέα, 1960, August 30, p2). However, this did not happen.

a bel canto»¹⁰ (Callas 1960, August 09). This opera was one of Callas' favorites, a demanding role that the artist knew well, but also a play to which Callas gave prominence with her interpretation and vocal talent. Additionally, it was an opera that had never been performed in Greece (Giatras, 1960, August 19, p.3).

Callas' decision to grant her remuneration in order to create a scholarship foundation in her name for people who wanted to pursue vocal studies but they did not have the financial means was a pleasant surprise, so press and public reconsidered their opinion about her (Pilichos, 1960, August 10, p.2 11 and Psyrakis, 1960, August 11, p.3). In the press conference she explained that she took that decision, as an action of gratitude towards Bastias, who had helped her in the past (Callas 1960, August 09 and Bastias 1997, pp. 472-473). Nevertheless, this statement is not confirmed, because the sources are few and unreliable. Indeed, "Maria Callas' scholarships Foundation" is an institution that is still active, helping many young artists.

On another account of the issue, and according to Bastias' son, it was actually Kostis Bastias who persuaded Callas to provide her remuneration towards the creation of the scholarships foundation. This fact is not confirmed by another source. But if this is true, it raises the following question: Why did Bastias propose it to her? Was it a strategy to appease the tension created in 1957? Or did Bastias, by this means, wanted the money to return to the institution?

3. MEDEA IN 1961¹²

After Callas' great success in the role of Norma, she returned to Epidaurus a year later to present Medea by Cherubini, a production already presented abroad.

Minotis recounts (Minotis, 1995 February 12, p. 22 and Minotis, 1981, p. 115-116) that in the summer of 1958, Callas called him asking to assume the direction of Medea in order to present it in The Dallas Opera in Texas¹³. Initially, he refused, expressing his disagreement about this type of opera. However, according to him, Ms K. Paxinou¹⁴, his wife, who was present during this phone call, persuaded him to accept.

In the autumn of 1958, Callas interpreted Medea by Cherubini at the Dallas Opera, directed by Minotis¹⁵. The same production was transferred to Covent Garden, in 1959. In November 1959, the performance was repeated in Dallas and in December 1961 as well as in May-June 1962, it was staged

¹⁰ Original text: «ήθελα τη Μήδεια αλλά προτίμησα τη Νόρμα διότι είναι πιο bel canto».

¹¹: "the taming of the tiger....She will donate \$ 15,000 dollars at the Greek National Opera".

¹² According to Dounias (1961, August 09) the French version was presented but N. Dontas (2003, July 13, p. 30) suggests that it was presented in its Italian version.

¹³ The possibility that Callas had met Minotis for the first time in 1957 when she came to sing at the Festival of Athens is not accurate, because according to Minotis he had not yet met her at the time (Minotis, 1981, p 115).

¹⁴ Katina Konstantopoulou-Paxinou (1900-1973) was a famous Greek actress also known in the U.S.A. during the 1940-1950 decade. She has interpreted many roles in American films. In 1944 she won the Oscar for the support role of Pilar in *For whom the bell tolls*. Although she was regarded as one of the major Greek actresses, she had also excellent musical education and began her career in Greece in 1920 as a lyric singer.

¹⁵ Scenery and costumes by Y. Tsarouchis. According to Minotis (1981, p. 115) Tsarouchis was informed by the newspapers for the Minotis- Callas collaboration and asked him to work with them.

at “La Scala”¹⁶. Callas chose the same opera in order to present it in the theatre of Epidaurus in 1961, directed by Minotis and conducted by Nichola Rescigno¹⁷.

Callas arrived in Greece in Onassis’ yacht in order to start rehearsing¹⁸. Her remuneration reached the amount of 5.000 dollars per performance, a sum of money that she decided once again to provide to the “Maria Callas’ Scholarship Foundation” (Καθημερινή ζωή, 1961, August 06, p.2, Θεατρικά Νέα, 1961, August 07, p.2 and Η Κάλλας αποθεώθη ως «Μήδεια», August 08, 1961, p.3). The premiere of the opera, which was almost postponed because of the last minute bad weather, took place in 6 August, and according to the Hellenic Tourism Organisation data was attended by 17.000 spectators, among them many Greek politicians and artists (Θεατρικά Νέα, 1961, August 07, p.2 and Καθημερινή ζωή, 1961, August 08, p.2)¹⁹. A week later, on 13 August was the second concert and the audience reached 17.500 spectators. It is worth noting that 2.000 people were left without a ticket!

At the meantime another situation of tension was to begin. It is worth noting that since its opening in 1954, the Epidaurus Festival only included ancient Greek drama performances given by the National Theatre of Greece, hence, performances from other operatic groups were not allowed²⁰. Therefore, in 1954 there were only representations of Ancient Greek Tragedy given at the theater of Epidaurus (Gini, 2003, July 13, p. 7) and since 1957 performances of Ancient comedy have been established (Mountraki, 2003, July 13, pp. 8-9 and Prousali, 2001, March 18, p. 17). Due to a limited number of seats, performances of ancient drama were also given in other ancient theaters, like the restored ancient theater of Delphi and the Herodium (Chlepa, 2003, June 29, pp. 28-29). Callas’ two performances, in 1960 and in 1961 were just an exception. Nevertheless, the director of the National Theatre, Emilios Chourmouzos (1904 - 1973), reacted to the performance of Medea (Καθημερινή ζωή, 1961, August 01, p.2), a fact that evokes many questions as such: Why did Chourmouzos not react a year later to the representation of Norma?

Looking back at the Kathimerini newspaper, where Chourmouzos used to be a columnist, we find one article that was published several days after the performance of Norma (Chourmouzos, 1960, August 31). In this article Chourmouzos argues against opera representations in Epidaurus, something that cancels a tradition of many centuries that connects this venue to ancient drama²¹. Moreover, he

¹⁶ Minotis directed the same play starring Magda Olivero in 1967 in Dallas and in 1968 in Kansas.

¹⁷ Y. Tsarouchis: scenery/costumes, M. Vourtsis: Chorus Conductor, Maria Chors: Choreography. With Modest and Vikers in the leading roles. The opera has been discussed for many extras that were on the scene of which 100 people were soldiers who served their military service in the nearby town of Nafplion.

¹⁸ The musicians were against the filming of the rehearsals by the French television shift, because their legal rights were not paid. Nevertheless, it had received Callas’ authorization as well as the authorization of the Greek National Opera for using the rehearsals in a television program on Callas (Θεατρικά Νέα, 1960, August 02, p.2).

¹⁹ Reported 15,000 spectators (Η Κάλλας αποθεώθη ως «Μήδεια», August 08, 1961, p.3, see also Bastias, 2005, p. 477).

²⁰ In September 1935, twenty-one years before the establishment of the institution of the Epidaurus Festival, Dimitri Mitropoulos, pianist, composer and conductor, appeared in the theater of Epidaurus with some members of the symphony orchestra of the Conservatory of Athens. Similar concerts were given by Mitropoulos and the ancient theaters of Delphi, Corinth and Sikyon.

²¹ As for the Director of the National Theatre, it is necessary to display some aspects of the ancient drama and opera in order to give a global perspective. His works are indicative: Chourmouzos, on one hand, devalues the role of music in ancient drama, and, on the other hand, disagrees with the comments about the exaggerated role of music (Chourmouzos, 1952 January, p.110). He concludes that music “distorts” drama and it converts it into melodrama, which, according to him, is “fake”,

put the blame on the Archaeological Council that, for the sake of tourism, accepted the performance in Epidaurus and added that Norma could have been played in the Herodium, or in the Panathenian Stadium “if Callas wanted to satisfy her artistic ambition”.

Chourmouzos’ point of view is shared with Mr Papathanassopoulos, professor of acoustics at the National Polytechnic University, who, in a letter to *Kathimerini* (Papathanassopoulos, 1960, September 02), supported the opinion that Epidaurus is not suitable for staging musical performances, not only because of the sanctity of the place but also because of the acoustics, that is not helpful at all for music. The theatre, he claimed, was only suitable for poetry events with theatrical performances being part of this tradition.

Nevertheless, in 1960 Chourmouzos had not reacted to the representation of Norma but a year later, his point of view triggered a great debate between the National Theatre of Greece and the Greek National Opera with the performance of Medea ending up in a personal debate between Chourmouzos and Minotis. Namely, Chourmouzos although he knew about the collaboration between the Opera House and Minotis, wrote a letter to the Director of the Opera House, Mr. Bastias, informing him that he had not given permission to Minotis to work with the Opera House for the production of Medea (Θεατρικά Νέα, 1961, May 16, Λόγοι και Αντίλογοι, 1961, May 18 and Πνευματική και Καλλιτεχνική κίνηση, 1961, May 16). Moreover, he threatened that, if the National Opera dared to use Minotis to the detriment of the National Theatre, in that case the National Theatre would not participate in the Athens Festival. Minotis at the same period was directing at the National Theatre the ancient tragedy, The *Phoenissae*. Chourmouzos, perhaps deliberately, scheduled the performances at the same time with the rehearsals in Epidaurus, to cause difficulties and exacerbate the situation.

After Chourmouzos’ letter to Bastias, Minotis wrote to the Director of the National Theatre and asked for permission to work with the National Opera (Minotis, 1961, May 18). Chourmouzos also responded (Chourmouzos, 1961, May 19) giving permission and at the same time calling him to continue fulfilling his obligations towards the National Theatre. As a result, Minotis had to supervise the rehearsals of Medea in Epidaurus and at the same days interpret a role and direct The *Phoenissae*. Thus, Minotis was divided between Athens and Epidaurus to rehearse for Medea and, at the same time, participate in The *Phoenissae* (Bastias, 2005, p. 476).

Maybe it was because of Chourmouzos’ reactions, that Minotis provoked rumors about him resigning, along with Paxinou, from the National Theatre (Εθνική Λυρική Σκηνή, 1961, July 30, p.2, Θεατρικά Νέα, 1961, July 29, p.2 and Η ελληνική θεατρική σκηνή, 1961, August 20, p.8). The press wrote a lot about this rumor but Chourmouzos claimed that he had not been informed (Θεατρικά Νέα, 1961, July 30, p.2). Also, he added that the National Theatre had no intention to stop its collaboration with Minotis and Paxinou (Θεατρικά Νέα, 1961, July 30, p.2). The couple, however, did

foreign, and outlandish and cannot be adopted by the Greek mentality. He somehow supported the superiority of ancient drama over melodrama and, of course, he maintained that each of these two genres has its own specific space of projection and display (Chourmouzos, 1978, p.200).

not leave after the representation of The *Phoenissae* but only when they were persecuted by the dictatorship in 1967.

What did cause Chourmouzos' behavior? At this point it is necessary to mention one other event which has no direct relation to that performance but it is important to note, as it outlines some aspects of Minotis' character: in the autumn of 1960 Minotis was directing the Merchant of Venice and at the same time performing the role of Shylock. Before the opening night, the National Theatre had placed, as usual, at the main entrance of the building an advertising banner providing information about the play. Minotis' name appeared on the second line, before the name of the main actress Vasso Manolidou, who was playing the role of Portia. Minotis demanded his name to go first, but Chourmouzos explained that according to the tradition of the National Theatre the name of a female protagonist goes first, unless the main role belongs to a man. Chourmouzos also underlined that this parameter in that case was not applicable. Minotis was annoyed and stopped rehearsing, presenting an objection to the Licensing Committee for Actors (Επιτροπή Αδείας Ασκήσεως Επαγγέλματος Ηθοποιού). However, the final decision was against him (Kanakis, 1999 pp. 314-316 and Kritas, 1998, p. 130). Nonetheless, the director of the National Theatre had a peculiar character (Prousali, 2001, March 18, p.15)²².

Shortly after the end of Medea's performances B. Papathanassopoulos prepared a second letter (Papathanassopoulos, 1961, August 17,) in order to highlight the inadequacy of Epidaurus to accommodate musical events. It is not known today whether the professor knew Chourmouzos personally or whether he just seized the opportunity for personal benefit. However, some arguments- about the acoustic and the sanctity of the place- were used by both men to persuade the public about the inappropriateness of Epidaurus, proposing the Herodium as the ideal place for musical performances. This fact created suspicion about a connection between them. As far as the question about the acoustics of the theatre of Epidaurus is concerned –of course it is not to be analyzed in this study- modern studies testify the suitability of that theatre (Tzekakis, 1999, July 25, pp.11-12 and Bosnakis, 1999, July 25, p. 18)²³. Consequently, the argument about the acoustics of the ancient theatre of Epidaurus is incorrect.

Furthermore, the argument about the acoustics and the sanctity of the theater are being refuted by other elements: Studying the ancient Greek texts we realize that poetry in ancient Greece was inseparable from the music and that is why the term “μουσική [music]” meant the combination of speech and melody. Music and poetry were always together. As a result, the ancient drama, tragedy and comedy, were always accompanied by music, composed by the poet himself, not only for the

²² It is worth noting that at the same time with the performances of *Medea*, another conflict between Chourmouzos, Nana Mouskouri and Manos Hadjidakis was created. In fact, Manos Hadjidakis for reasons of art solidarity and comradeship withdrew his music from *Erofilis*, so in the end it was performed without music. Actually, the manager of the National Theatre deliberately avoided giving to the press Mouskouri's name, as a result, her name was missing from the advertising articles in the press as well as from the program of the National Theatre. However, the conflict between Mouskouri and the National Theatre was initiated a year before when the administration of the National Theatre rejected Mouskouri's appearance in *Lysistrata* (Καθημερινή ζωή 1961, August 24, p.2, Θεατρικά Νέα, 1961, August 24, p.2 and Θεατρική Σελίδα, 1961, August 26,p.2)

²³ Επίδαυρος το Αντηχείο-το Θαύμα, 2007, March 31 and Vasilantonopoulos, S. Zakynthinos, T. Chatjantoniou, P. Tatlas, N.A. Skarlatos, D. Mourzopoulos, Y, 2004.

chorus but also for the speaking part of the drama. We might be talking about a type of musical recitation. In other words, a genre –recitation– was born. In fact, from various ancient sources we learn that among the instruments used for the background music of the ancient drama were: lyre [λύρα], cithara [κιθάρα] (a kind of lyre which differed as regards the speaker, the size and the sound), flute [αυλός], trumpets [σάλπιγγες], cymbals [κύμβαλα], shells [όστρακα], rattles [κρόταλα], drums [τύμπανα] and tambourines [ντέφια]. Besides, as it is known today, the birth of the opera by a group of intellectual people, followers of Plato, in Florence, came as an attempt to revive the ancient Greek tragedy. Likewise, the argument for the sanctity of the site of Epidaurus is also incorrect. So, how can the sanctity of the place be affected if the theater had been created for performances there were dominated by music and how could such a place, lack proper acoustics?

And what about Bastias' and Minotis' arguments on the question of the place's sanctity (Bastias&Minotis, 1961, August 01, p.5 and Θεατρικά Νέα, 1961, August 01, p.2)? Bastias respects these objections; however, he argues that there is no sanctity in the place but gravity. It is quite normal for any ancient theatre to accommodate modern performances as well as any theatrical modernity, for example modern revival of ancient drama, including opera. So that the effort of the Opera House not only does it reduce the importance of the ancient theatre of Epidaurus, but it elevates it, too. Minotis claimed that if any artistic or tourist interest designated the place only for representations of ancient drama, any other type of events could not be justified in any way. Additionally, comic performances²⁴ were nonetheless accepted in the Epidaurus theatre, so an opera performance by Callas not only does it reduce the theatre's status but it also restores its seriousness.

As for Chourmouzos' and Papathanassopoulos' point of view, either they ignored the role of music in the ancient Greek drama, or they overlooked it for some reason. However, for brevity's sake, we just have to relate Chourmouzos' beliefs and reactions which do not seem justified for another reason: Chourmouzos with A. Terzakis, novelist (1907-1979) and I. M. Panagiotopoulos, author and educator (1901 – 1982), were the three-member artistic committee of the Athens Festival. During their term, except for the performances of ancient drama, performances of classical music, opera and other sorts of entertainment were excluded (Vavlidis, 2003, June 29, p. 14). In fact, Chourmouzos realized that via Callas' performances in Epidaurus theatre, melodrama tended to be established. Chourmouzos, as a matter of fact, was against the establishment of melodramatic performances not only because he saw that he was losing the National Theatre's monopoly in Epidaurus but also that Minotis was becoming an established opera director with the National Greek Opera. Aptly the author of the column "Eleftherostomies" in the newspaper Eleftheria (August 05, 1961, p.2) parodied the situation by making a wry comment:

"It is possible that next year Chourmouzos will perform in Epidaurus himselfAs far as Callas, Minotis and Paxinou are concerned, they are going to disappear. But I'm afraid that the spectators will disappear, too!"²⁵

²⁴ He makes use of the Greek term «τερπνά». Probably he means the comedies of Aristophanes, which were performed in Epidaurus. It is worth noting that Minotis was a supporter of the tragedy.

²⁵ Original text: «τον επόμενο χρόνο φαίνεται ότι θα παίξει μόνο στην Επίδαυρο ο Χουρμούζιος και θα εξαφανιστούν πραγματικώς και Κάλλας και Παξινού και Μινωτής. Αλλά φοβούμαι και οι θεατές».

However, while Bastias announced that Callas would perform also in 1962 in Epidaurus (Θριαμβευτική υπήρξε εις το θέατρον της Επιδαύρου η δευτέρα παράστασις της Μήδειας με την Κάλλας, 1961, August 15, p.7, Θεατρικά Νέα, 1961, August 15, p.2 and Καθημερινή Ζωή, 1961, August 15, p.2) that did not happen. Apparently he tried to use his acquaintance with the great soprano to reinforce the presence of National Opera in Epidaurus. However, this wish did not come true because Medea was the last official appearance of the artist in Greece. There are a lot of speculations explaining that. One of them is the soprano's voice problem. Another speculation is her poor health, a cause that forced her to cancel her appearances (Bastias, 2005, p. 480). Secondly, considering that the two of the three appearances she made from 1957 to 1961, were accompanied by conflicts that perhaps reminded her the past, i.e. the period after the Italian and German occupation in Greece before she left to go abroad in 1945. Maybe this is the reason why Callas did not want to continue her appearances in Greece.

The Greek audience could enjoy the greatest Greek soprano, when she had reached the pinnacle of her career. Maybe, if these conflicts about Epidaurus-that also involved her directly or indirectly-had not existed an important institution could be established in Greece with Callas' presence. However, Callas' two performances in Epidaurus opened the way for other type of performances to be staged in the ancient theatre, apart from ancient Greek drama.

Undoubtedly, the presence of the Diva in Epidaurus was a great event and the first step to abolish the monocracy of the Greece National Theater in Epidaurus. Even though the Diva's presence in Epidaurus meant that the National Theatre's monopoly was over, it took 13 years until, in 1974, another theatre company performed on the orchestra of this monumental theatre: it was the legendary Theatro Technis by Karolos Koun, that became a counterbalance of the somehow academic stagings of the National Theatre.

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