

EMILIOS RIADIS' GALATEIA: AN UNFINISHED WORK

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Abstract. *Riadis, a composer whom could be largely placed within the scope of the national concept, has been notorious for reworking and reshaping his works or even leaving them unfinished. His 1912–1913 attempts to write an opera on a libretto by Ch. J. Jablonski were never realised in full, although a substantial amount of music has been found in his archival remains. However, a statement that appears in one of the pages draws the attention of the researcher. There, Riadis states: “Emilios Eleftheriadis, Macedonian, A. / Sept. 1912 Paris, with the hope to do something better and Greek later”. Based on the above comment, I will try and discuss the concept of “Greek” as Riadis seems to address it. Furthermore, I will attempt to see fragments of the opera and why these might not “fit” in the Greek concept that he seems to be having in mind.*

Keywords: opera, Greece, mythology, national, Macedonia

Emilios Riadis, a composer who can be viewed largely within the framework of the national concept, was notorious for reworking and reshaping his works, or even leaving them unfinished. His attempts in 1912–1913 to write an opera based on a libretto by Ch. J. Jablonski were never realized in full, although a substantial amount of music was found in his archival remains. A statement that appears on one of the pages is particularly striking, where Riadis writes: “Emilios Eleftheriadis, Macedonian, September 1912, Paris, with the hope of making something better and more Greek very soon.” In what follows, I will explore the concept of “Greek” as Riadis seems to invoke it and will attempt to examine fragments of the opera to see why they might not “fit” into the Greek concept that he seems to have in mind.

Emilios Riadis is rightly numbered among those recognized as integral members of a movement to promote and project national sentiment in their compositions, sometimes spiced up with a touch of cosmopolitan flavor and a wider perspective for musical matters. This national school was established by Manolis Kalomiris during the first decade of the twentieth century and was supported by

composers such as Petros Petridis, Giannis Konstantinidis, and others.¹ Riadis belongs to this category of composers about whom many say that they admire their language, both musical and verbal, yet they remain largely in the shadows, mostly unperformed, left alone with the admiration and nothing more. In such cases, the composer is deeply appreciated by colleagues and music connoisseurs but more as a public figure than as an artist, retaining an eclectic connection with his contemporary surroundings but in reality remaining undiscovered either in his own time or later. Riadis wrote music that he continuously revised, and his compositional output includes songs, chamber and orchestral music, incidental music and other things.² Researchers claim that he wrote about 200 songs, with a vast majority of them still remaining either unpublished or lost.³

Emilios Riadis (the pen name of Emilios Khu) was born in Thessaloniki, at that time still Ottoman and vastly cosmopolitan, in 1880 as the son of the Austrian pharmacist Heinrich Khu and Anastasia Grigoriadou-Nini.⁴ He started learning music in his home town with Dimitrios Lalas (1848–1911) and continued his studies at the *Königliches Conservatorium für Musik* (currently the *Hochschule für Musik und Theater München / Music Academy of Munich*) as a student of Felix Mottl (1856–1911). In 1910 he moved to Paris, where he lived, worked, and continued his studies with Maurice Ravel (1875–1937), among others. He was acquainted with French music circles and was truly influenced by the cosmopolitan musical flavours of Paris. He returned to Thessaloniki in 1915, where he was appointed a piano professor at the *Κρατικό Ωδείο Θεσσαλονίκης* (State Conservatoire of Thessaloniki), of which he became vice-director in 1918. He remained in this position till his death in 1935 after a series of strokes. Riadis was also a noteworthy poet who published his poems under the pseudonym Emilios H. Eleftheriadis.⁵ His poetic talent went along with his musical capabilities, and he frequently used his own poems when he was composing songs. A part of the admiration for the composer's output may well derive also from the admiration for his poetic work, which was highly acclaimed during his lifetime.

1 There are many references to this Greek national school. One source in English is Jim Samson, *Music in the Balkans* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 302–325.

2 Manolis Kalomiris, “Ο Αιμίλιος Ριάδης και η Ελληνική μελωδία” (Emilios Riadis and Greek melody), in *Nea Hestia* 41 (1947): 594–596.

3 George Leotsakos, “Riadis [Eleftheriadis; Khu], Emilios”, in *Grove Music Online*, ed. Deane Root (2001), <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000023340>.

4 Kaiti Romanou, *Έντεχνη ελληνική μουσική στους νεώτερους χρόνους* (Greek Art Music in Recent Years) (Athens: Kouloura Editions, 2006), 189–191.

5 According to various sources, his first poetic compilation was published in Thessaloniki under the title *Σκιάι και Όνειρα* (Shadows and Dreams) in 1907; but copies are difficult to find.

As mentioned above, a part of his artistic character was the continuous revisiting and reshaping of his previous works, an occupation that took a heavy toll on his work and its rhythm of completion. He was yet another composer who became notorious for his perfectionism, for continually going back over his works, recomposing certain passages and changing small details or even larger chunks of music. This meant that the material in each piece accumulated several different versions, even layers, even for published scores. Therefore, his archive contains a plethora of reworked and unfinalized scores and, as happens in cases like these, many abandoned works.

His national sentiment was emphasized and presented through pieces such as *Μακεδονικές Σκιές* (Macedonian Shadows), *5 Μακεδονικά Τραγούδια* (5 Macedonian Songs), *9 Μικρά Ρωμείικα Τραγούδια* (9 Little Romeika Songs), and *Ελληνικά Τραγούδια* (Greek songs), but also through his harmonizations of sacred works for mixed choir or for children's and men's choir. Thessaloniki, his birthplace, played an extremely important role in his compositional output; on several occasions his home town was the focus of his musical world; he treated the city both as a landmark and as an icon.⁶

A large part of Riadis's music and archival material has been gathered by the wife of his brother, Eliza Riadis, who in 1978 decided to entrust it for preservation and further development to Imini Tzermia-Sakellaropoulou,⁷ who in 2000 wisely decided to donate the part of Riadis' archive in her possession to the Μουσική Βιβλιοθήκη της Ελλάδος "Λίλιαν Βουδούρη" του Συλλόγου Οι Φίλοι της Μουσικής (Music Library of Greece "Lilian Voudouri" of the Friends of Music Society). Another part of the archive came through Belgium and was entrusted to Alikì Goulara, the wife of the notary attorney of the Riadis family. According to Maria Dimitriadou-Karagiannidou, the latter part of the archival material in the possession of Alikì Goulara was donated in 1988 to the library of the Κρατικό Ωδείο Θεσσαλονίκης (State Conservatoire of Thessaloniki) and has been kept there ever since. A few years ago, the part of his archival papers donated to the Μουσική Βιβλιοθήκη της Ελλάδος "Λίλιαν Βουδούρη" (Music Library of Greece "Lilian Voudouri") it was digitized to be made freely available on the web, in an effort to make his music accessible both to musicologists and performers. This material has been made available through the Digital Collections section of the Μουσική Βιβλιοθήκη "Λίλιαν Βουδούρη" του Συλλόγου Οι Φίλοι της Μουσικής" (Music Library "Lilian Voudouri" of the Friends of Music Society). Thanks to a fortunate decision, the

6 Alexandros Charkiolakis, "Emilios Riadis' *Jasmins and Minarets*: The landscape of a multicultural city", paper presented at the 14th International RIDIM Conference on Music Iconography – Visual Intersections: negotiating East and West, Istanbul, Turkey, 5–7 June 2013.

7 Imini Tzermia-Sakellaropoulou, "Ο, τι θυμάμαι από τη μαθητεία μου κοντά στον Αιμίλιο Ριάδη" (What I remember from my apprenticeship with Emilios Riadis), in *Thessaloniki* 4 (1994): 361–369.

two major parts of the Riadis archival material were brought together on this platform, after the inclusion of the material that is still held at the Music Library of the Κρατικό Ωδείο Θεσσαλονίκης (State Conservatoire of Thessaloniki).⁸

Galateia is one of three operas that Riadis started working on but never managed to finish. The others are *La route verte* and *Un chant sur la rivière*. The archival material for *Galateia* occupies 291 double-sided pages of manuscript paper and pages of libretto attempts. The text exists in three autograph versions with many corrections one upon the other. On page 27 of the libretto manuscript one reads that both the text and the music were written by the composer and that the libretto is based on a text by a P. Ch. Jablonski.⁹ A similar title and information appear also on page 59, on the last and less evasive version of the libretto in a clearer handwriting.¹⁰ The third version of the libretto seems to be the most processed of all, with significantly fewer corrections. Unfortunately, it has been impossible to find more information about P. Ch. Jablonski, the author of the poetic book that Riadis mentions as his departure point for the libretto.

The main idea of the opera is inspired by the myth of Galatea and Pygmalion of Cyprus. The original myth refers to King Pygmalion of Cyprus, who falls in love with a sculpture that he saw.¹¹ Nevertheless, the operatic text refers initially to Ovid's version in *Metamorphoses*, in which Pygmalion is a sculptor who crafts a statue with which he falls in love.¹² Eventually, in answer to Pygmalion's prayers, the goddess Venus brings the statue to life and unites the couple in marriage. The outcome of this wedding is a child named Paphus, the name of one of the main cities in Cyprus. This is the point where the story ends in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. However, other writers in later years decide to retell the story with many alternative extensions and various endings. In one that is widely spread, and which Riadis uses for his libretto needs, Galatea falls in love with Rennos, the brother of Pygmalion. Rennos, although deeply enchanted with Galatea, resists his feelings and actually punishes Galatea with death. At the end of the story Pygmalion is seen devastated, holding the hand of the dead Galatea. Since Riadis never realized a final version of this work, we are not sure what other kinds of alterations of the story may exist. In any case, the basic outline is the one mentioned.

8 The Emilios Riadis Digitized Archive, <https://digital.mmb.org.gr/digma/handle/123456789/15354>

9 Eimilios Riadis, Manuscript of the libretto of the opera *Galateia*, 29, <https://digital.mmb.org.gr/digma/bitstream/123456789/33833/1/document0a.pdf>, 53.

10 Ibid., 117.

11 Emmi Patsi-Garin, *Επίτομο λεξικό Ελληνικής Μυθολογίας* (Companion to Greek Mythology) (Athens: Chari Patsi Publications, 1969), 656.

12 For the Ovidian text see: <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=urn:cts:latinLit:phi0959.phi006.perseus-eng2:10.243-10.297>.

The myth of Pygmalion and Galatea appears for the first time in Philostephanus' history of Cyprus. Then it was retold in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and since then has never seemed to be out of fashion. The basic Pygmalion story has been widely transmitted and represented in the arts through the centuries. There are several musical elaborations of references to the myth, among them Jean-Philippe Rameau's 1748 opera *Pigmalion*, Franz von Suppe's operetta *Die Schone Galathee*, and Gaetano Donizetti's first opera *Il Pigmalione*.

The myth of Galatea and Pygmalion was very much present in France, especially during the eighteenth century, as J. L. Carr argued in an article published in 1960 in the *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* entitled "Pygmalion and the Philosophes: The animated statue in 18th century France."¹³ The author discusses the impact of the myth on French art of all kinds at that time and also since then. Riadis was very much a part of French contemporary culture, especially during the years 1910 to 1915 when he lived in Paris. He began working on *Galateia* in June 1912, as is indicated on the first page of the score. We would expect an intellectual like Riadis to have a broad understanding of cultural perspectives, so the choice of a topic such as the myth of Pygmalion and Galateia would not seem inconceivable as a topic of interest to the composer. Incidentally, the same myth gained some fame in Riadis' contemporary scene of Greek literary production. For instance, Spyridon Vasiliadis (1845–74) wrote a drama called *Galateia* in 1870 and published it in 1873,¹⁴ one that breaks with the Ovidian tradition and places Renos, Pygmalion's brother, in an equal position within the action of the myth. There is no evidence that Riadis knew about Vasiliadis' drama, although the two works seem to follow parallel routes in terms of storytelling. Another issue that could not be resolved, one that might have given us some indication about the inspiration behind this unfinished opera, is the fact that there also seems to be no connection between Vasiliadis and Jablonski.

Going back to the archival material and moving on to the musical text that is available we come across several interesting things. The prelude and first act exist in a spartito form with some indications of orchestration here and there and quite a few corrections. It is obvious that this is a work in progress that needs to be finalized and then orchestrated, something that never happened for act one, at least in the papers that we have available. One of the interesting indications though comes in the end of this batch, where Riadis makes the following note: "Emilios Eleftheriadis, Macedonian, September 1912, Paris, with the hope of making something

13 Joseph L. Carr, "Pygmalion and the Philosophes: The Animated Statue in 18th-Century France", in *Journal of Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 23/3–4 (1960): 239–255.

14 Spyridon Vasiliadis, Γαλάτεια, vol. 8: *Theatrical Library* (Constantinople: Typografeio I. Pallamari, 1882).

better and more Greek very soon.”¹⁵ This is written at the end of act one and is the only thing written in Greek throughout the whole score. Riadis comprehends his work as something that is not a part of his Greek identity, or at least not as much as he would like it to be. Judging by the available manuscripts and the orchestrated part of the work, Riadis musically moves within contemporary European trends: a well-crafted aria at one place, a duet and an elaborated orchestration somewhere else. Throughout the available pages one cannot spot an appeal to his Greek soul in terms of the musical material, since there is a profound lack of exotic scales or augmented seconds or even the tune of a folk or folk-like melodic pattern. Instead, Riadis refers mostly to his well-established European (or even French) soul in order to draw inspiration. Is this the reason why he never finished working on this opera? Was he feeling guilty for not being consistently Greek? Did he place this work in a wider group of works that are not within the national realm in which he fervently believes? Such (mainly rhetorical) questions arise when the researcher comes across the musical text of the composer. Obviously, one cannot exclude the usual Riadis practice, the tendency to leave incomplete works behind in order to work on something different, or to continue revising previous work and never being satisfied with the outcome. Probably we will never know, since the composer did not justify such decisions in other texts, letters, or diaries. Unfortunately, we can only guess. However, it remains very interesting to see how he perceives this project. The indication “Macedonian” added next to his name seems to function as an indicator that over-stresses his origins. It seems like an effort to establish an even stronger identity with reference to a specific *topos* (Macedonia) apart from the obvious referral to the nation.

The archival material that the researcher has available draws a comprehensive compositional timeline. The available manuscripts are organized in four different folders,¹⁶ each of which includes several pages of both libretto and compositional attempts. The first folder contains the libretto, with three manuscripts in total. One is a libretto that includes two acts, whilst the other two contain manuscripts that refer to a libretto with three acts. The last attempt at the text seems the most complete of all, and one can presume that this was the finalized libretto text. The assumption that the work was meant to have three acts can be drawn from this. The second folder contains Riadis’ attempts to complete the spartito draft of the Prelude and first act of the opera, an attempt that seems to bear fruit since we are left with a manuscript that is at least legible. The third batch of archival content

15 Emilios Riadis, Manuscript of the first act of the opera *Galateia*, 144, <https://digital.mmb.org.gr/digma/bitstream/123456789/33833/2/document0b.pdf>, 99.

16 Emilios Riadis, available material for *Galateia* appears here: <https://digital.mmb.org.gr/digma/handle/123456789/33833>.

refers mainly to the spartito of the second act, containing also just a few draft ideas for the third act. This is again in Riadis' sloppy handwriting style, with more things missing in the process but at least giving a fair shape to where the work was heading during this second act. The fourth and final folder contains a full orchestration of the second act and some opening lines of the third act Prelude that was encountered also in a spartito form in the previous batch of pages.

According to a note that appears on page 205, the last page of the second act, it was concluded on the 21st of November 1912.¹⁷ This means that it took Riadis about three months to complete the second act in a spartito form, and six months in total since the project started materializing. These calendar indicators that we come across throughout the manuscript at hand seem extremely systematic and suggest a work that is progressing at a rather good compositional pace. In the first pages of the manuscript Riadis writes that he began composing *Galateia* in June 1912, finished the draft of the first act in September of the same year, and concluded the draft of the second act on 21 November, again in the same year. Furthermore, on the first page of this part of the archival material, a note that seems to have been added at a later stage announces that "I commenced the instrumentation of the 2nd act on Wednesday [2nd of January] 1913."¹⁸ This note goes hand in hand with the last batch of the archival material, where we see for the first time that a whole act including both scenes is orchestrated in an efficient and comprehensive way. The composer presents a full orchestration, and from a quick comparison of the orchestration with the spartito, it appears that he has been rather punctual by not omitting or deviating from the compositional ideas that were included in the spartito. The orchestra is a large romantic ensemble according to the trends of the era. Furthermore, Riadis goes so far as to include an orchestrated glimpse of the third and final act according to the finalized libretto text of the work.¹⁹ Although this is a part that we have not seen in spartito form, it seems that Riadis was going full steam in the creative process towards the completion of act three directly into a full score form instead of his usual tactic of orchestrating from the autograph spartito. Nevertheless, this seems to have been only a gleam in his compositional trends and outputs. The third act was never completed, not even in a spartito form. If this were available, one would have been able to reorganize the material that has been preserved and at least have a complete work in a spartito form. Unfortunately, this was not the case.

17 Emilios Riadis, Manuscript of the second act in spartito form of the opera *Galateia*, p. 205, <https://digital.mmb.org.gr/digma/bitstream/123456789/33833/3/document0c.pdf> (p. 108 of the pdf file).

18 Ibid., p. 148 (p. 5 of the pdf file).

19 Emilios Riadis, Manuscript of the second act in orchestrated form of the opera *Galateia*, p. 154, <https://digital.mmb.org.gr/digma/bitstream/123456789/33833/4/document0d.pdf>, 158.

Another awkward decision in the compositional process of *Galateia* is that, for unknown reasons, Riadis decided to start orchestrating from act two onwards. Therefore, the first act remains unprepared in that sense. No one can guess why the composer went down this road when he started working on the orchestration; but this practice reveals a behavioural characteristic of the composer.

The last handwritten page of the archival material²⁰ contains various notes that have to do with those magical inspirational moments when a composer just needs a piece of paper to mark down an idea. This blank page is evidently being treated as a scrapbook for all those flashing moments and thematic material that could have been potentially used either as ideas for act three or as orchestration decisions for act one. Moreover, these creativity glimpses might have been used later as material for the inevitably recurring revisions. Fervent creativity is largely visible and traceable if one actually sees the manuscript, which reveals how Riadis used it in order to write both upside and downside.

Not much can be said about the music itself, apart from remarks that one can make from looking at the scribbled and smudged manuscripts, especially the orchestrated second act. There, one can see that Riadis had the capacity to complete and deliver fine tunes and melodic structures that made a great deal of sense. The voice treatment is careful and accurate, developing a musical language that is at the same pace with his contemporaries in Europe, and orchestration practices that reveal a composer with imagination and craftsmanship. Since there has never been a reconstruction or even a recording of any part of the work, one can only examine the digitized manuscripts that exist and make one's own decision about the compositional quality of Riadis' music. In any case, his operatic efforts never came to fruition, along with quite a few of his attempts to compose complete works.

His identity was always a strong, integral part of his creative self. His straightforward *Hellenicity*, if one can excuse the bombastic term, was something that needed constant reassurance. *Galateia* derives from the mythological world of ancient Greece, but in the eyes of Riadis it is not "Greek" enough. This seems to be the meaning of the note that he adds at the end of act one, when he is apologizing and hoping to make something more "Greek" in the future. It seems that for him, "Greek" is what it contains the *apoechos*, the subconscious sound of his homeland. Therefore, *Galateia* is not "Greek enough"; but if one wanted to add a profane note, one could say that *Galateia* might have been considered "European enough" or "French enough." Although there might have been hundreds of reasons why Riadis would not complete a piece, one could argue in the most arbitrary way that *Galateia* was never completed because it was not "Greek enough," and that

20 Ibid., n.n., 170.

this would have been an important reason for the composer to abandon it in due course, even if he was apparently drawn into fervent and punctual (by his own measures and terms) composition of the work. We will never know, of course, where this would have taken us. The only certain conclusion would have been that Greek (and European in that sense) musical output would have benefited if we had available more – complete – works by a composer with the talent of Emilios Riadis.