

Manolis
KALOMIRIS
Triptych

Symphony No. 3 'Palamanian' • Three Greek Dances • Psará
Nikitas Tsakiroglou, Narrator
Athens State Orchestra • Byron Fidetzis



Manolis Kalamiris (1883-1962)

Triptych • Palamian Symphony • Three Greek Dances



Manolis Kalamiris is today considered the father of the Greek national school of composition. One of the most prolific Greek composers, he considerably enriched the musical heritage of modern Greece with his work, thus creating a unique point of reference. His contribution to the creation of a distinctly Greek symphonic sound has been very definite.

In the evening of 18th March 1936, Kalamiris's wife, Charikleia, found her husband writing music at the piano, his eyes streaming with tears. She asked him what the matter was, and he answered, completely shattered: "*Venizelos has just died and I have been trying to compose a funeral march to mourn the Master Builder of Great Greece.*" The score Kalamiris had in front of him was the second movement of the *Triptych*.

The work was initially to be entitled *Symphonic Triptych: Crete, "in memory of a hero"*, and was conceived with a chorus, *To the Liberation of Crete*, as its final movement. (Eleftherios Venizelos originated from Crete.) The chorus ended up as an independent piece, and it is only in recent years that its relationship with what became the *Triptych* has been acknowledged. The reasons that incited Kalamiris to compose a Postlude without choral accompaniment remain unknown up to this day. The *Triptych* finally had its première in Athens on 28th February 1943, a tragic day for both Kalamiris and Greece. On the morning of that very day the citizens of Athens buried the great Greek poet Costis Palamas (1856-1943), seizing at the same time the opportunity to demonstrate for freedom. The demonstration shattered the whole of Nazi-occupied Athens. It was on that very evening that the Athens State Orchestra had scheduled its inaugural concert. And so the first public performance of the *Triptych*, a work

written in memory of the statesman Eleftherios Venizelos, was destined to be given on the day of the funeral of Palamas, who was the other ideological mentor of Kalamiris. Kalamiris himself stood on the orchestra podium and directed his own work, which immediately took on a special symbolism: the *Triptych* grievingly sang of an era for ever gone and at the same time articulated the need for the pursuit of noble ideals.

The *Palamian Symphony* is Manolis Kalamiris's third symphony, composed after the *Levendia Symphony* [*Symphony of Manliness*] (1920) and *The Symphony of the Good and Innocent People* (1931). The *Palamian Symphony* was completed in the spring of 1955 and first performed by the Athens State Orchestra on 22nd January 1956 in Athens, under the direction of the great Greek conductor Andreas Parides (1910-2000) to whom the work is dedicated.

All three symphonies mentioned above are related to the great Greek poet Costis Palamas (1856-1943); the *Levendia Symphony* is dedicated to him, *The Symphony of the Good and Innocent People* borrows its title from one of Palamas's verses and the *Palamian Symphony* proudly bears the poet's name. Kalamiris wrote on the *Palamian Symphony*:

"Whatever good and pure I have produced is most of the times inextricably bound to Palamian verse, to the Palamian Idea. Today, in my declining years and before I set out on the ultimate journey, I wish for yet once more to sing against the backdrop of His divine lyre. And I set the Palamian Symphony as an altar, a monument of my faith to the ever-lasting Greek Art and the Poet who symbolizes it."

The work was received with great enthusiasm and was praised to the skies by almost the entire Athenian circle of musicians and intellectuals. The *Palamian Symphony* stands as one of the greatest landmarks, not only in modern Greek music but also in Greek art and

beyond. The contribution of Greek symphonic music to the challenging terrain of European symphonic composition has not yet been duly appreciated, yet the experience of listening today to such a work as the *Palamian Symphony* suggests that such contribution is far from negligible.

The *Three Greek Dances*, even though composed separately, much earlier and at different times, were joined together in 1934 to form an integral dance suite. The first dance, *Ballos*, based on the two-beat rhythm typical of this popular dance from the Greek islands, was initially composed for piano about 1917. *Idyllic Dance*, which borrows its motifs from Kalomiris's first opera *The Master Builder* (1916), was composed in 1924 by commission of the Grassi concerts, which also undertook the work's inaugural performance in Paris. It is in fact a fantasy, lacking a characteristic rhythmic pattern. In concert programmes of the time, this dance was also referred to as *The Singer's Intermezzo*, since its theme has been borrowed from the whistle flute playing

by the character of the young singer in that opera. *Dance from Tsakonia (Tsakonikos)* originates from the composer's second opera *The Mother's Ring* (1917). Written in the traditional five-beat rhythm, the original theme of this dance is embellished with phrases and themes from the opera.

The island of Psara was razed by the Ottomans in 1824, during the Greek War of Independence. Solomos composed his poem in order to describe the utter grief but also the grandeur of that tiny island which resisted and fought for liberty. Kalomiris followed in Solomos's footsteps, leading the orchestra in just a few bars to a grand culmination that gloriously emerges out of darkness and destruction.

The exact date of composition remains unknown. The work was first performed in Athens by the Athens State Orchestra on 13th November 1949.

Philippos Tsalahouris

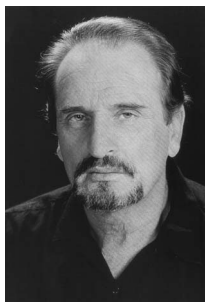
Athens State Orchestra

The Athens State Orchestra (KOA) is the principal symphony orchestra in the history of Greek music. First established in 1893 as the Athens Conservatory Student Orchestra, it changed its name to Athens Symphony Orchestra in 1911. In the mid-1920s it appeared as the Concert Society Orchestra, and in 1927 it was once more set up as the Athens Conservatory Symphony Orchestra. In early 1943, thanks to the initiative and great efforts of its director Philoctetes Economides, it was placed under state patronage and, as the Athens State Orchestra, gave its first concert on 28th February 1943. In spite of many difficulties and years of uncertainty, the orchestra has reached a high level of artistic achievement and has offered music-lovers in Greece the opportunity to know and enjoy the masterpieces of the international repertoire; at the same time it has been the leading institution – sometimes even the only one – to promote the works of Greek composers. Celebrated Greek musicians, first and foremost Dimitris Mitropoulos, have offered their talents to the orchestra, actively contributing to the establishment of the present-day Greek symphonic tradition. The podium of the KOA has been occupied by leading composers including Richard Strauss, Camille Saint-Saëns, Alfredo Casella and Gabriel Pierné, and by eminent conductors such as Walter Knappertsbusch, Stokowski, Ormandy, Munch, Horenstein, Krauss, Paré, Jochum, Markevitch, Sargent, von Karajan, Maazel and Commissiona among others. Many great soloists have also appeared as guest artists with the KOA, including Kreisler, Francescatti, Leonid Kogan, Stern, Rizzi, Casals, Piatigorsky, Mainardi, Fournier, Rostropovich, Cortot, Rubinstein, Kempff, Bachauer, Badura-Skoda, Ashkenazy, Demus, Haebler, Pletnev and Gelber among others. Apart from its numerous concerts in Athens and other Greek cities, the KOA has also participated with great success in various festivals abroad, including those in Cyprus, Romania, Turkey, France, Malta, Austria and Germany.

Byron Fidetzis

Byron Fidetzis studied in Thessaloniki and Vienna (Hochschule für Musik). He was conductor of the Greek Radio Symphony Orchestra (ERT; 1977-78), permanent conductor of the National Opera in Athens (1985-92), principal conductor of the Yekaterinburg Philharmonic Orchestra (1990-92), artistic director of the Pazardzik Orchestra in Bulgaria (1999-2000), artistic manager of the Thessaloniki City Symphony Orchestra (2000-2005) and, since 1987, permanent conductor of the Athens State Orchestra. Since 2004 he has also been Director of the same orchestra. He has appeared in many countries including Austria, Armenia, Albania, Germany, Italy, Romania, Poland, Russia, the Czech Republic, Brazil, Cyprus, Turkey, Japan, Mexico and elsewhere. He has received awards from various institutions, including the Academy of Athens. He has made more than forty recordings of works by Greek composers.

Nikitas Tsakiroglou



Nikitas Tsakiroglou was born in Athens and graduated there at the National Theatre. He has worked with the National Theatre, the National Theatre of Northern Greece, the Art Theatre, and the Amphitheatre of Yorgos Evangelatos as well as private theatre companies, interpreting classical and contemporary rôles. In 1973 he was awarded the Katina Paxinou Prize and in 1997 the Aimilios Veakis Award as best male actor. In 1997 he formed the company *Epilogi* and he has since produced successfully performances of ancient and modern drama. He has collaborated with the National Opera, the Athens Concert Hall, the Organization for the Cultural Olympiad 2004 as well as the most significant Greek directors, including Minos Volanakis, Spyros Evangelatos, Karolos Koun, and Nikos Mastorakis. He has taken part in performances of ancient drama, playing leading rôles, Orestes in the play by Euripides, Orestes in *Electra* by Sophocles, Oedipus in *Oedipus Rex* by Sophocles, Eteokles in *Seven against Thebes* by Aeschylus among others, and touring all over Greece and abroad. In 2002 he played Agamemnon in the play by Aeschylus, directed by Yannis Kokkos. Since 2004 he has undertaken the artistic direction of the National Theatre of Northern Greece.

English texts adapted from the Greek original, edited and annotated by Evangelos Christopher Tyroglou

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Manolis Kalomiris (1883–1962)

Triptychon · Palamische Symphonie · Drei griechische Tänze

Manolis Kalomiris gilt inzwischen als der Vater der nationalgriechischen Komponistenschule. Als einer der produktivsten Komponisten seines Landes bereicherte er das musikalische Repertoire des modernen Griechenland um ein Œuvre, das einen einzigartigen Bezugspunkt darstellt und einen entschiedenen Beitrag zur Entstehung eines symphonischen Tones von unverkennbar griechischer Art leistete.

Am Abend des 18. März 1936 fand Charikleia, die Ehefrau des Komponisten, ihren Mann in Tränen aufgelöst am Klavier. Sie wollte wissen, was geschehen sei, und er antwortete völlig niedergeschmettert: *„Eben ist Venizelos gestorben, und ich versuche, einen Trauermarsch auf den großen Baumeister des modernen Griechenland zu schreiben.“* Was Kalomiris vor sich hatte, wurde der zweite Satz seines *Triptychon*.

Ursprünglich sollte das Stück *Symphonisches Triptychon: Kreta* – „zur Erinnerung an einen Helden“ heißen und mit einem Schlusschor *Auf die Befreiung von Kreta* beendet werden (Eleftherios Venizelos kam von der Insel Kreta). Der Chorsatz wurde jedoch zu einem eigenständigen Werk, und erst in jüngerer Zeit hat man den Zusammenhang dieses Satzes mit dem *Triptychon* erkannt. Was Kalomiris veranlasste, an seiner Stelle ein rein orchestrales Postludium zu komponieren, ist bis heute nicht bekannt. Das *Triptychon* wurde schließlich am 28. Februar 1943 in Athen aufgeführt – an einem sowohl für den Komponisten wie das ganze Land tragischen Tag. Am Morgen dieses Tages hatten die Bürger von Athen den großen griechischen Dichter Costis Palamas (1856–1943) zu Grabe getragen und diese Gelegenheit zu einer Demonstration für die Freiheit genutzt, die die ganze von den Nazis okkupierte Stadt erschütterte. Am selben Abend sollte das Staatsorchester von Athen sein Inaugurations-Konzert geben – und so fand die Premiere des *Triptychon*, das an den Staatsmann Eleftherios Venizelos erinnerte, just an demselben Tage statt, als man Palamas beisetzte, den zweiten ideologischen

Mentor des Komponisten Kalomiris. Dieser dirigierte selbst die Aufführung seines Werkes, das sogleich eine besondere Symbolkraft annahm: Das *Triptychon* besang voller Trauer eine für immer vergangene Zeit, formulierte aber zugleich die Notwendigkeit, hohe Ideale zu verfolgen.

Die *Palamische Symphonie* ist die dritte Symphonie von Manolis Kalomiris. Sie entstand nach der *Levendia-Symphonie* [*Symphonie der Männlichkeit*] (1920) und der *Symphonie der guten und unschuldigen Menschen* (1931). Sie wurde im Frühjahr 1955 vollendet und am 22. Januar 1956 in Athen vom dortigen Staatsorchester unter der Leitung des großen griechischen Dirigenten Andreas Parides (1910–2000) uraufgeführt, dem sie auch gewidmet ist. Alle drei genannten Symphonien stehen in Beziehung zu dem Dichter Costis Palamas: die *Levendia-Symphonie* ist ihm gewidmet, die *Symphonie der guten und unschuldigen Menschen* ist nach einem seiner Gedichte benannt, und die *Palamische Symphonie* wurde voller Stolz mit seinem Namen überschrieben. Kalomiris kommentierte das Werk wie folgt:

„Zumeist ist das, was ich an Gutem und Reinem geschaffen habe, unlösbar mit Palamas' Versen und Gedanken verbunden. Jetzt, wo meine Zeit zu Ende geht, möchte ich – bevor ich die letzte große Reise antrete – doch noch einmal zu seiner göttlichen Leier singen. Ich errichte also die palamische Symphonie als einen Altar, als ein Monument meines Glaubens an die ewige griechische Kunst und den Dichter, der sie symbolisiert.“

Das Werk wurde mit großer Begeisterung aufgenommen und vom größten Teil der Athener Musiker- und Intellektuellenkreise in den Himmel gehoben.

Es gehört zu den großen Meilensteinen der

modernen griechischen Musik, der griechischen Kunst und darüber hinaus. Was die symphonische Musik Griechenlands zum anspruchsvollen Gebiet der europäischen Symphonik beigetragen hat, ist bislang noch nicht gehörig gewürdigt worden; erlebt man heute aber ein Werk wie die *Palamische Symphonie*, dann wird man bemerken, dass dieser Beitrag keineswegs zu unterschätzen ist.

Die *Drei griechischen Tänze* entstanden viel früher, zu verschiedenen Zeiten und waren demzufolge zunächst unabhängige Stücke, wurden dann aber 1934 zu einer Suite zusammengestellt. Der erste Tanz, *Ballos*, aus dem Jahre 1917 war eigentlich ein Klavierstück. Er beruht auf einem Zweier-Rhythmus, der für den volkstümlichen Tanz von den griechischen Inseln typisch ist. Der *Idyllische Tanz* bezieht seine Motive aus Kalomiris' erster Oper, *Der Baumeister* von 1916. Er entstand 1924 für die Grassi-Konzerte, die das Werk auch in Paris aus der Taufe hoben. Dabei handelt es sich in Wirklichkeit um eine Fantasie ohne charakteristisches rhythmisches Muster. In damaligen Konzertprogrammen wurde dieser Tanz auch als *Das Intermezzo des Sängers* bezeichnet, da das Thema der Pfeife entlehnt ist, die der junge Sänger in der Oper

spielt. Die Wurzeln des *Tanzes aus Tsakonia* (*Tsakonikos*) reichen in die zweite Oper des Komponisten, *Der Ring der Mutter* (1917). Das Originalthema des Tanzes ist im traditionellen Fünfertakt komponiert und wird mit Phrasen und Themen aus dem Bühnenwerk ausgeschmückt. Während des griechischen Unabhängigkeitskrieges wurde die Insel Psara 1824 von den Türken geschleift. Der Dichter Solomos verfasste sechs Zeilen, in denen er die unendliche Trauer und die Größe des winzigen Eilandes beschrieb, das um der Freiheit willen Widerstand leistete. Kalomiris trat in Solomos' Fußstapfen und führte das Orchester binnen weniger Takte zu einem grandiosen Höhepunkt, der sich glorreich aus Finsternis und Zerstörung erhebt. Das exakte Entstehungsdatum des Werkes ist unbekannt. Die Uraufführung fand am 13. November 1949 in Athen wiederum durch das Staatsorchester statt.

Philippos Tsalahouris

*Deutsche Fassung nach der
englischen Übersetzung: Cris Posslac*

Symphony No. 3 ‘Palamanian’

④ Part I

My sire was a mortal,
A fay gave me birth;

(...)
Thus roam I, a stranger,
Through solitude’s way.

English version of the poem *A Fay Gave me Birth*
courtesy of the Manolis Kalomiris Society, Athens.

⑤ Part II

And they hailed me all
and bade me thus:
“Adapt the tune, oh minstrel do,
that thy “Zourna” may aptly match
the rhythm of our merriment.

(...)
And when they came and stood me off,
a mason among masons,
and when they came and said to me:
“Gypsy, go thy way!”
and when I took the road alone,
the road of solitude,
I felt a sadness deep within,
a heavy, sobbing sadness.

⑥ Part III

...Oh enchantress, who at midnight
talkest to the stars
a commanding language!

(...)
I have talked and thou hast listened
and thou leanest towards me...
Woe! Oh Woe!
Swift though the art of thy embraces be,
in spite of all thy kisses...

(...)
...on thy bouncing and victorious breasts
I found
but a woman’s perfidy
and enslavement of the flesh.

(...)
Oh thou so near to me and yet so far,
who raisest thy imperative voice
at midnight to the stars,
and to the whole of Nature,
and when thou enfoldest me
in thy passionate embrace,
Oh woman, thou, like all the others
sly and servile,
who art thou, then?

7 Part IV

Beside the Gate of Romanus
the spacious prairie stretches
all fresh and blooming all.
And all around the gardens of the Spring
encircle it with fragrant garlands.
When April's days are nearly o'er
Even the huge, enormous fortress over there
with its mighty triple buttresses
even the fortress is fresh and green
ivy, and vine and laurel,
transform, even those spired battlements,
into flower-bedecked thickets.

(...)

They're coming! The gypsies! The gypsies!

Excerpts from Costis Palamas' *The Dodecalogue of the Gypsy* rendered into English verse by Elly Tornazakis

11 The Destruction of Psara

Upon the blackened ridge of Psara
Glory walking alone
Recalls the gallant young men:
Upon her head she wears a crown
Made of what little grass
Remained on that desolate earth.

English translation of the poem *The Destruction of Psara* courtesy of Dr Anna Christake Cornwell

Manolis Kalomiris is today considered the father of modern Greek composition. His output includes 3 symphonies, 5 operas and hundreds of songs. His brilliantly orchestrated *Triptych* was written following the death of one of his heroes, the great statesman Eleftherios Venizelos, and is an elegy to the ex-prime minister and a celebration of the liberation of Crete, the island of his birth. By coincidence, the work was premièred in Athens on the very day in 1943 that Kalomiris's other ideological mentor, the poet Costis Palamas, was buried. *Symphony No. 3* sets excerpts of Palamas's poems to music, and is one of the great landmarks of modern Greek music. The composer wrote, "I set the *Palamian Symphony* as an altar, a monument of my faith to the ever-lasting Greek Art and the Poet who symbolizes it".

Manolis KALOMIRIS

(1883-1962)

WORLD PREMIERE
RECORDINGS

Triptych for Orchestra (1937/1940)				
1 Prelude: Moderato appassionato	5:17	5 II. Scherzo		3:55
2 Interlude: In tempo di una marcia funebre	11:50	6 III. 'Love' - Lento, ma non troppo		8:53
3 Postlude: Finale	5:09	7 IV. Finale		8:19
Symphony No. 3 'Palamanian' in D minor, for orchestra with dramatic recitation (1955)*	30:39	Three Greek Dances (1934)		8:46
4 I. Moderato	9:31	8 'Ballos' Moderato		2:43
		9 'Idyllic Dance' Moderato		3:22
		10 Dance from Tsakonia (Tsakonikos)		2:41
		11 The Destruction of Psará (1949?)*		1:34

World Première Recordings • All works revised by Byron Fidetzis
Nikitas Tsakiroglou, Narrator*
Athens State Orchestra • Byron Fidetzis

The original Greek texts and booklet note, and the English translations of the narrated texts, can be accessed at www.naxos.com/libretti/557970.htm

Scores provided by the Kalomiris Society, Athens

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Playing Time
63:15



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