

Hubert Pernot – Paul Le Flem

**ΔΗΜΟΤΙΚΕΣ ΜΕΛΩΔΙΕΣ ΑΠΟ ΤΗΝ ΧΙΟ. ΝΕΑ ΓΡΑΦΗ
ΑΠΛΟΥΣΤΕΥΜΕΝΗ ΚΑΙ ΔΙΟΡΘΩΜΕΝΗ ΥΠΟ ΜΑΡΚΟΥ
Φ. ΔΡΑΓΟΥΜΗ. ΦΙΛΟΙ ΜΟΥΣΙΚΟΥ ΛΑΟΓΡΑΦΙΚΟΥ
ΑΡΧΕΙΟΥ ΜΕΛΠΩΣ ΜΕΡΛΙΕ. ΑΘΗΝΑ, 2006.**

[Hubert Pernot – Paul Le Flem

FOLK MELODIES FROM CHIOS. NEW SIMPLIFIED
AND CORRECTED NOTATION BY MARCOS PH. DRAGOUMIS.
THE FRIENDS OF THE MUSICAL ETHNOLOGICAL ARCHIVE
OF MELPO MERLIER. Athens, 2006.]

This luxurious volume is the second edition (much revised and enlarged) of a pioneering work in Greek ethnomusicology: Hubert Pernot, *Mémoires populaires de l'île de Chio, recueillies au phonographe par — et mises en musique par Paul le Flem*, Paris: Nouvelles Archives des missions scientifiques et littéraires XI, 1903.

This is the collection of Greek folk music “au phonographe” that Hubert Pernot (1870–1946) was the first to make, when in 1898–99 he visited Chios, still under Turkish rule,¹ on a mission entrusted to him by the French ministry of education. However, Pernot, a linguist and professor of Modern Greek at the Sorbonne, did not know any music, and the valuable wax cylinders, on which he had recorded the music and were kept in the Sorbonne, and not found until after the Second World War. On the other hand, Paul le Flem (1881–1984), who transcribed the music from the cylinders for the first edition, in 1900–1902, was an accomplished musician but had not the least experience of Eastern folk music and did not know any Modern Greek. Since the disappearance of the cylinders, his transcriptions are the only documentary evidence of Pernot’s fieldwork, but as shown in the second edition reviewed here, they are not very reliable.

The second edition contains the 114 Greek folk songs and instrumental melodies recorded in Chios by Pernot, both as notated by Le Flem and as corrected by the musicologist and director of the “Musical Ethnological Archive of Melpo Merlier”, Marcos Dragoumis. The two versions of each melody are presented on facing pages in the central part of the work (pp. 15–247, with the misleading heading “Supplement 1”), le Flem’s transcription *in verso*. All were masterly copied by Thanasis Moraitis, who is also responsible for the editing of the texts.

¹ The island was liberated in 1912.

This central part of the book is preceded by an “Introduction” by Marcos Dragoumis (pp. 9–10); a text on Hubert Pernot by Octave Merlier (pp. 11–12), republished from a memorial volume on Hubert Pernot in the periodical *Nea Hestia* (vol. 491, Athens 1947); and a biographical note on Paul le Flem (p.13) translated from Michel Fleury’s note on a CD of the French composer’s symphonic music (Marco-Polo 8.223655).

Following the main part, on pp. 249–282 the entire texts of the songs are given; on pp. 283–286 there is an index of their incipit; on pp. 287 an index of the villages where the songs were recorded; and on p. 289 a bibliography and a brief discography of recent recordings of folk music from Chios.

As Marcos Dragoumis states in his “Introduction”, the first edition of this collection provided Maurice Ravel with four of his *Cinq mélodies populaires Grecques* (1904), composed to highlight a conference on Greek and Armenian music by the musicologist Pierre Aubry with live music in Paris, in 1904. We may add that Pernot’s collection also provided Ravel with the melody of his sixth Greek *mélodie*, the *Tripatos* for voice and piano (1909), which was published posthumously (1938). The songs were translated for Ravel into French by the polyglot musicologist and music critic Michel-Dimitri Calvocoressi (of Greek origin); in fact, he provided the composer with both Pernot’s collection and the collection by Pericles Matsas² used for the remaining *mélodie*.³

“Corrections” in ethnomusicological works are usually and justifiably dubious; in this case they are convincing and absolutely detectable.

According to Dragoumis, in his “Introduction”, the first doubts about le Flem’s transcriptions were expressed by Samuel Baud-Bovy (1906–1986), the Swiss musicologist and conductor, whose research and publications of (and on) Greek folk songs are among the most important and influential in the field.

Dragoumis, who combines scientific training with pure musicianship and many decades of contact with Greek traditional music, and for whom clarity is the goal of all his scientific work, observed in his meticulous reading of Le Flem’s transcriptions, a number of incongruities

² Published with the following French title on its bilingual cover: *80/Mélodies Populaires Grecques /pour/ chant avec accompagnement de piano ou pour piano seul /Recueillies et Harmonisées/ par/ Périclès A. Matza./ Propriétaire Editeur pour tous pays/ F.Adam/ Constantinople [1883].*

³ Nos 1, 2, 4 and 5 of Ravel’s *Cinq mélodies populaires Grecques* are from Pernot’s nos 74, 25, 104 and 41 respectively; no 3 is no 75 in Matsas’ collection. Ravel’s *Tripatos* is no 14 in Pernot’s collection (See examples 1 and 2 below).

and decided to correct Le Flem's versions in order to render the melodies' substance immediately appreciable.

One may safely generalize by saying that Le Flem's notation does not demonstrate any feeling for the liberty taken by singers and instrumentalists to breathe and adorn their melodies. It is in rhythm that his transcriptions are especially problematic. They might fit to the metronome's pendulum, but not to the dancers' steps. He changes the meter in order to include a prolongation that to Dragoumis' understanding is a *fermata*; he adds a beat in order to notate a motif that Dragoumis gives as an ornament. Le Flem was, obviously, unaware of the asymmetrical compound dancing meters applied in Greece, as in the rest of the Balkans⁴ and proceeds to make unnatural divisions of melodies in 7/8 or 9/4 (=2+2+2+3). Also, there are quite a number of cases where Dragoumis detected and corrected misplaced accented syllables.

Besides transforming Le Flem's transcriptions into danceable dances and "singable" songs, Dragoumis, for the sake of clarity, transposed all melodies (some key signatures of which are densely crowded) to white-key scales, making immediately apparent their modality (which is commonly identified in Greece as "re mode", "mi mode" etc.)

Most of the above types of corrections are demonstrated in the two examples, taken from the *Tripatos*, used by Ravel.

14. Χέρια που δεν είδεν ήλιος Le Flem

Example 1. Le Flem's notation of *Tripatos*

⁴ Inexplicably called "Bulgarian", only!

14. Χέρια που δεν είδεν ήλιος
(Τριπιάτος)

Δραγουμίης
(Νιένητα)

Example 2. Dragoumis' corrections on Le Flem's notation of Tripiatos

The importance of this edition for Greek musicology may not be grasped unless the contribution to it by all the French named persons mentioned is realized.

Melpo Logotheti-Merlier (1889–1979) was a Greek musicologist married to the French Octave Merlier, director of the Institut Français of Athens.⁵ Melpo Merlier met Hubert Pernot during her post-graduate studies in Paris and it was under his influence that she became interested in Greek traditional music.⁶ In 1929 they completed the project of a large-scale recording of Greek music on technologically advanced equipment which Pernot had brought from Paris. The importance of this project lies in the care taken to record music (and plain narration for the study of Greek idioms) from thousands of Greeks from Asia Minor who had flooded the mainland of Greece after their forced expatriation from their centuries-old homeland, in 1922. In 1930–31, Pathé published 222 records, containing 665 pieces of Greek traditional music. It was then that the Musical Ethnological Archive of Melpo Merlier (whose “Friends” published the book hereby presented) was founded and it is in this institution that the precious records of this important project are kept. Marcos Dragoumis, head of the institution since 1976, has done considerable work in studying and publishing their contents.

Katy Romanou

UDC 784.4.089.6(495.83)

⁵ Under Merlier's directorship, The Institut Français published a number of studies related to Modern Greek culture, including the first ever serial edition of scores by Greek composers.

⁶ She had studied the piano and musicology.