

Concise Grammar, or Elementary Principles of Music with Application on Guitar, by N (Nikolaos) Flogaitis, National Typography, Aegina, 1830: Influences' Investigation concerning the First Hellenic Music Manual

Συνοπτική Γραμματική, είτε Στοιχειώδεις Αρχαί της Μουσικής Μετά Προσαρμογής εις την Κιθάραν, Ν (Νικόλαος) Φλογαΐτης, Εθνική Τυπογραφία, Αίγινα, 1830: Ανίχνευση των Επιδράσεων στο Πρώτο Ελληνικό Εγχειρίδιο για την Τονική Μουσική

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[Please consider the brief “Supplement for Foreign Readers” in the end of the paper for useful historical information. Terms’ explanation is also provided for certain cases throughout the text.]

Firstly, I would like to use some of the given time in order to remark that Terminology (as well as Musicology) is primarily a scientific field, not a methodological tool, as it is often, mistakenly believed to be –with all the consequences that this consideration may carry. Beyond that, it’s a personal belief that in whatever concerns fields’ methodology, History is the one that holds the reins and it will always have to survive the Scylla of uncontrollable generalization and the Charybdis of inflexible case-study. So I must apologize in advance, for disappointing anyone who might have been expecting just a list of words (either way, terminological doing [*πράττειν*] is not the same as lexicography.) Instead, by using tools from the field of Terminology, I will narrate to you an extremely interesting story about the way in which an effort occurred in order to establish musical knowledge in Hellas –a State, at that time still dying and half-independent, under conditions of poverty and chaos.

Concise Grammar... is not exactly a book *about* tonal music, as often, for the sake of convenience, even I refer to it, as if it was the output of an authorship initially designed for this purpose. Its priority is to do exactly what the masthead indicates, meaning to be a grammar instruction tool: it studies musical order in connection with the instantiate that is obligated to represent. Nikolaos Flogaitis stands as an observer of the neo-Hellenic state’s first steps, in front of an inconceivably rich musical life, which we cannot imagine today;

beginning with the analysis of stage's instantiate he separates the different *elements* and then stepping on the ability of language [*ομιλεῖν* or *speech*] to articulate things he establishes relationships that combine them together again. In this case, we actually have an *author* and a *method* (as he actually refers to himself and to his work), not a writer or a book with some sort of new content.

Allow me to be descriptive for a moment, in order for me to provide you with the exact image of the book that I'm speaking of. This work is constituted by a few pages, namely one page as special citation to I. Kapodistrias to whom the book is dedicated to, the prologue, main body and one page for a catalogue of hellenic-italian musical terms that are used throughout the book; then follow some hand written pages of musical examples and in the end a catalogue of subscribers. It was printed in Aegina, by the National Typography, in 1830. Except for its editor, the jurist Nikolaos Flogaitis, and Ioannis Capodistrias, there is also mentioned the name of the doctor Georgios Glarakis, who is presented to us also as an active participant of this undertaking. At last, speaking of its content as we understand it today, we have the following categories of musical matters:

1. Definition of Music as the *science that concerns itself with the configuration of Melody, Symphonia, and Harmonia made by sounds*. Depending on the way of musical practice, distinction is made between *vocal* and *instrumental* music, as well as between *characters* or *styles*.
2. Basic musical knowledge such as clefs, duration etc.
3. Sound production and configuration of climaxes.
4. Musical schemata.

It is also worth mentioning that there are also some historical notes on the prologue (where Flogaitis proves that music coming from 'Enlighted Europe' is in fact a kind of reformatory act upon Ancient Greek music) on one hand; on the other hand we can also trace in his text some aesthetical observations.

Bearing in mind everyday life in Greece around the 1830s one can easily understand that we are looking upon an oddity. The tragic biotical conditions and the significant difficulty in fulfilling even basic human needs such as finding food and cleanliness, make this particular print look like an unnecessary luxury. Even if we suppose that it didn't aggravate the State's financial condition –based upon the fact that it was published by the subscriptions' system– the fact that two of the highly positioned by the Governor employees, that were already have enough problems because of their important position (N. Flogaitis was at that time Secretary of Sea Law, meaning that he had to handle piracy matters –one of the two State's major

headaches along with robbery in land) to be occupied for this purpose is absurd. In Aegina we did have music teachers, Lesbios and Abramiadis, who could have taken the job of a method; instead, we do not find them mentioned, not even as subscribers. And then, what is the high value of this text that makes it worthy of the characterization “precious, historical source”? A modern musicologist could find it rather simple or naïve and indeed, tedious.

If we were to comment, we would say that these three personalities were rather passionate with the arts; if we were to make assumptions we would say that this book was probably necessary as helpful material for the lesson of music in schools; and, if we were to gossip we would be looking for friendships or animosities. But, I have already told you from the beginning that we shall see History: which demands understanding and speaks through the interpretation of facts.

Two doctors and a jurist seem like a surgical team that will proceed in a rather dangerous operation (the two doctors are aware of the danger, which is probably why they had invited a person who knows the Law to make a stand for them.) This was actually true for many things back then. When you are holding in your hands a mixed, multicultural population, a religious community (known as “Rum Millet”) and an Empire, when all you want is to construct the Hellenic Nation, a society of civilians and a State, two are the possible choices: either you will impose (violently indeed) a pre-fixed model of governing, or (more diplomatically) you will find a way to combine things. The second one is precisely the road that Kapodistrias tried to follow. So, the Secretaries (much the same as today’s ministers) are some sort of Governor’s deputation and people-observers: they were supposed to go wherever a problem was traced (we will call this problem ‘lack of homogeneity’ because population was deeply contradictory to its depths) in order to see if a law could be established so that the preferred result of homogeneity –as homogeneity is defined in a State, not an Empire– could finally be created. This was a very difficult job that required educated people (with knowledge) but most importantly, people with prestige (doctors or lawyers, because these were the specialties felt to actually be prestigious, a clear residue from Ottoman Empire) and people of the Enlightenment (meaning those who had philosophically established the idea of “Hellenic State”; in fact, many of them had actually fought during the Hellenic Revolution).

This was exactly the personality and job of N. Flogaitis, who noteworthy, had fought alongside of Alexandros Ypsilantis. He writes that he had committed himself to a task above his powers and this note is something more than just a rhetorical scheme of exaggeration. The ‘difficulty’ has nothing to do with the sufficiency of language (a matter that I will explain below); it was neither the question of his having the required musical knowledge; he has to

win the great challenge, common for all governmental ventures at that time, to prove that the State can embrace multi-formation and through a fair method, to place it in correct order. He was the most appropriate man, in the most appropriate position; Glarakis was beside him in anything that had to do with the correctness of this order, because he was a man involved in many governmental committees.

The publishing of this book, as an action reveals for start a multi-dimensional musical reality which, in order for the official state to concern itself with it, was deeply social in character, meaning it was either collective as a practice or often appeared as a common practice accompanying various social activities. It is also secular and religious by no distinction. (Flogaitis does not deny this religiousness considering that he embodies it as a distinct but equivalent *character*; his problem is notation because it is that point in which he wants to bring the 'innovation' of the Enlightened Europe.) Finally, it is mainly vocal (as a chant or song). If music could actually unite people, as a common and broadly exercised activity, then it would be very useful for pursuing, the very much wanted, state homogeneity – and the state would have lost a valuable ally if it had overlooked its potential. *Concise Grammar...* is not a didactic tool but the declaration of an undoubted governmental/ musical policy, as respectively was the edition of *Guidebook for Inter-Didactic Method* by Sarazin for schooling purposes.

But, why must a Grammar be composed? Because this is the only appropriate way (method) because of, on one hand the generally low educational level, and on the other hand, the desirable homogeneity of National State that must be accomplished through diplomacy. I don't wish to be tiresome here with a complicated analysis of grammar; instead, I will also be representative, by giving an example (and I hope educationally useful too). A Grammar functions like those books for children with which a child is taught the order of the reality surrounding him/ her –which is in fact immeasurable considering its formations. Let us take as an example the concept of "cat"; we see inside a book the image of a cat (the *element* exists in reality that a child has already seen; the image is the *sign*) above the image we see the word *cat* and if we press on the image we hear a cat's sound. Now watch how Flogaitis combines Ancient Hellas, New Hellas and Enlightened Europe. Let's take for example the group of notes and choose randomly the concept of an A. Somewhere in reality we do have an 'A' as a natural phenomenon and people who sing know it empirically (it exists as an *element* of reality). So, how do we transform experience into knowledge? By using this trick: Flogaitis takes from Enlightened Europe (what else?) notation and says 'this is the image of your A upon staff' (dot is his *sign* that is why Flogaitis uses the word *φθογγόσημο* [combination of words

tone and *sign*]; he takes from Ancient Hellas cords' division and he says 'this is how it is technically produced' but also 'this is how it has an Hellenic meaning appropriate for us'; he baptizes the tone with the Hellenic letter A, the testifier that an unruptured continuity exists between old (ancient) and new Hellas; finally, on the guitar's arm he shows where exactly we find A, as if by pressing a sound button. 'All these innumerable A's around you', says Flogaitis, 'have this particular order'. Foucault writes that Grammar, allows sympathy to be developed between different things during their common approach, in such a way that in the end, it transforms them. They are no longer letters, signs and sounds, it is not music European or Hellenic, or whatever anyone might consider as differentiation; it is a united musical method that, although everything is so different in neohellenic reality, combines all these elements under the same text, that exists as a whole because of the logical flow of lettered enumeration, as a, b, c... etc.

For the contemporary researcher this is the charm and the difficulty of *Concise Grammar...* We know only few things about musical reality around 1830s and we feel exhausted by the need of all these paradigms for the sake of representation. There is a specific example that in my point of view, it reveals to what level Flogaitis uses language for purposes of representation, when he wants to explain what we know as *chamber music*. He uses the expression *domestic* [*οικιακή* meaning for home] *music* and there was nothing more to be done in a State where even the new building for housing war orphans is actually characterized as a *hut*. How else could he communicate with people who, if in fact had a 'house', the interior would probably lack separating units? Flogaitis, sure that he is going to treat language with violence, will not omit to place in a parenthesis the French expression: *style pour la chamber*.

I will close here the matter of the neohellenic language's sufficiency which I left unexplained above: we are at an epoch where language wishes to be pure, meaning specifically correct Hellenic and this is something entirely different from the archaism in which linguistic inquiries will ebb later, from the middle of the 19th century and on. Flogaitis writes in his Prologue, that when he didn't know the meaning of old words he dared to make some new ones; the awe that is hidden inside the verb *dare*, has to do with his personal dilemma, if he accidentally treated the so beloved language of his ancestors with impiety, not the question of the words' adequacy. Of course, the problems caused by the heterogeneous language are many as well, but as a follower of Enlightenment's ideas he believes that language will find its way to a correct meaning sooner or later.

According to my opinion (which I try to establish with scientific criteria) it is incorrect to extract the words of this text and compare them one by one with similar words of another method in some foreign language (I mean to evaluate them speaking of their correctness or sufficiency in general); it is not possible to compare them with the vocabulary of other, neohellenic grammars of music that are published later, not to mention with different structures as are dictionaries. It will be prolific if our comparison stays focused on the method, meaning the choice of composing a Grammar in the first place and this is truly the field in which Flogaitis is affected –vocabulary and musical species are his roots. If it is not possible as human beings during infancy to be taught in any other way, this implies with no doubt that we can see the same method of providing musical knowledge all around the world –no matter what the populations’ various vocabularies were. (Let’s bear in mind sacred parables which are common everywhere as methodology and function under the same way from the educational point of view.)

Consequently, the appearance of a Grammar must be assumed as profitable, considering as profit its educational prospects. With *Concise Grammar...*, considering also our temporal distance, we have an extra, double profit: firstly, a unique witness of musical reality at that time; secondly, an extremely precise Hellenic vocabulary for many concepts that we name today with foreign words. A good example is the word *διάζευξις* [it means dividing something but in way that it is still left united] what we call staccato. Of course Flogaitis does not draw distinction between point and long point (he uses both symbols as signs of the same element) a fact that if combined with the lack of dynamics’ vocabulary we see vocal music in action as music without abrupt changes in volume –this precisely is the musical world as stage and representation and the historical value of our document.

However with grammars something is lost. It is analyzed by Nietzsche in *The Birth of Tragedy* tries to discover its archaic form by contemplating it before Socrates and before Plato by whom the world begins to be perceived as performance. The philosopher will speak of a dichotomy between *apollonian* and *dionysian* –the latter is lost when the will [*βούλησις*] to leave things to the immeasurable reality from which we initially collected them, is gradually abandoned (unless of course we make Art). Thus, a Grammar represents the multi-dimensional reality in the ‘spacious comfort’ that is suitable for it (I will borrow here this expression from Kazantzakis’ excellent translation of *The Birth...*); it is well done, if it is has been done well. It is a hymn to human Logos that, as it is believed, can put things in an order superior than the natural; this is why a Grammar creates a double-faceted aspect, with Encyclopedia and Microcosmos being its two faces (anyone who remembered Bartók at this

point made a fair enough connection). But what happens with dionysian? I wonder, are we ever taught that Art is not obligated to answer to reality? In any way however, it is certain that as a grammar does not constitute the origin of Philology, similarly a musical grammar does not constitute the origin of Musicology.

The content of *Concise Grammar...* will eventually change even there where vocabulary remains the same, when forty five years later the Ideology that allowed sympathy among its things in the first place will change. For Flogaitis music *makes the man more socialized* but for Julio Ennigg music is supposed to *unite populations that were previously separated* –and these are two completely different starting points. Most importantly, “alea jacta est” [the crucial decision is made] as Julio Caesar would say. Music reality perceived as performance means music separated from dance (which becomes gymnastics’ lesson) and speech (which becomes a matter of metrics and poetry). Music, as capable of shaping ethos [*ἠθοποιούσα*] and deserving the ‘martyrdom’ of a Grammar is raised to the sphere of Philosophy, it is classified as *science*, and the european, romantic question about arts that are meant to be taught together will never be expressed in Hellas since then.

Supplement for Foreign Readers

Hellas will gain its independency in 1830, after nine years of war against Ottomanian Empire. The Hellenic Revolution started when Alexander Ypsilantis invaded Iassy and declared Greece a free country. Since 1827, Ioannis Capodistrias was declared as the first Governor of Greece. He was a doctor (like Glarakis) who was practicing his profession with no profit. His murder in 1831 will close the first period of Neohellenic State.

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