

Ancient Dramatic
Chorus through the
Eyes of a Modern
Choreographer

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Zouzou Nikoloudi

By

Katia Savrami

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PREFACE

It was not until relatively recently – since what is generally known as the ‘performative turn’ in scholarship on ancient Greek drama pioneered notably by Oliver Taplin and Gregory Sifakis¹ – that the Greek plays have been seen as dramatic scripts, only fully realized in performance. It has taken even longer for scholars to recognize all three of the elements that contributed to those ancient performances – speech, song and dance.

However, the privileging of the spoken word over song and dance in discussions of the ancient plays in the modern world is hardly surprising. The authority of Aristotle’s *Poetics*, where *opsis* is relegated to the bottom of his hierarchy of the components of Greek tragedy, can be readily invoked in defence of any text-focused approach to Greek drama. Equally, the paucity of evidence about ancient music (there is only one extant papyrus fragment from the first choral ode of Euripides’ *Orestes*) together with the scant information concerning ancient Greek dance in general (there are very few vase-depictions and only much later, written accounts) have meant that very little is actually known about the choral odes at the heart of the ancient theatrical performances.

Ancient dance, in particular, has received very little serious scholarly attention until recent times. The relatively low status of the dancer in the modern world has had much to do with this. In the mid-nineteenth century, when the dancer was accorded equal status to the prostitute, at least one eminent critic argued that there was no dancing at all in Greek tragedy because ‘...the notion of the dancing is so contrary to all notions of tragedy...’.² But by the end of the nineteenth century, and especially following Nietzsche’s *The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music* (1872), where the singing/dancing chorus was put back into discussions of Greek tragedy, Greek dance finally began to attract attention amongst scholars and artists alike. The French musicologist, Maurice Emmanuel using chronophotography as analogy, believed that it was possible to animate the depictions on ancient Greek vases in order to recover the lost

¹ Two pivotal studies are: Oliver Taplin, *Stagecraft of Aeschylus* (Oxford 1977); Gregory Sifakis, *Parabasis and Animal Choruses* (London 1971).

² G.H. Lewes, ‘Was dancing an element of the Greek chorus?’ *The Classical Museum* 2 (1845): 344.

dances of ancient Greece.³ There were also practitioners at this time, who were less interested in reviving Greek dance than in adopting it as model for aesthetic, political and social reasons: the ancient Greek dancer was considered to be untrammelled by the strictures of the modern balletic tradition; and the free-flowing Greek garments were considered to symbolize liberation from the oppressive and, especially, patriarchal structures of the modern world.

Isadora Duncan and Maud Allan were pioneers in this bare-foot, tunic-clad, liberatory turn to Greek dance, which was to lay the foundations for what is now known as Modern Dance. Another lesser known, but hugely important, pioneer was Eva Palmer-Sikelianos, whose connections with the Provincetown Players in New York, combined with an intimate knowledge of Greek and Byzantine cultures, informed her striking choreography and directorial decisions for her productions of Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound* and *Suppliants* at the Delphic Festivals in Greece in 1927 and 1930 respectively. It was the founders of the Provincetown Players, George Cram Cook and Susan Glaspell, who planted the seeds for the festivals during their stay with Palmer and her husband, the poet Angelos Sikelianos in Greece in the early 1920s. Palmer's work with choruses didn't simply stem from her scholarly researches in Europe following her meeting with Isadora and Raymond Duncan in Paris and later with her husband, the poet Angelos Sikelianos, in Greece. Instead, Palmer was at the centre of a group of young, intellectual, liberated and often 'Sapphic' women, including Duncan herself, many of whom like her had hailed from North America, and who were profoundly interested in, what the French Symbolist poet Mallarmé dubbed, *écriture corporeale*.⁴ These women had very often received their initial training in the American version of Delsarte's system of movement pioneered by Genevieve Stebbins.

³ Maurice Emmanuel, *La danse grecque antique d'après les monuments figurés* (Paris 1896).

⁴ Artemis Leontis, 'Greek Tragedy and Modern Dance: An Alternative Archaeology?' in K. Boshier, F. Macintosh, J. McConnell and P. Rankine (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Greek Drama in the Americas* (Oxford 2015).

Furthermore, Palmer's career didn't simply fade after 1930, as is often suggested, with the decline in both her marital and financial fortunes. Far from simply being reduced to directing the occasional American college production in the post-war period, her collaboration with Ted Shawn make her a key figure in the history of Modern Dance that extends, through its Greek-inspired movement patterns, from Isadora Duncan to Martha Graham, via Palmer and Shawn.

I have dwelled here at some length on Palmer, who herself makes an appearance in this volume, because her case is representative of many female pioneers in Greek dance who have been overlooked, and very often deliberately marginalized, in histories of modern dance. In Britain, the names of Ruby Ginner and Irene Mawr were all but forgotten until recently.⁵ Yet the 'Greek Dance' that is still practiced in UK dance schools, and even at the Royal Ballet School, is based on their method. Their choreography of Greek choruses in the professional theatre from 1910-late 1930s and also their own Ginner-Mawr School of Dance and Drama caused sufficient stir outside of Britain to make Eva Palmer invite them to participate in the 1930 Delphic Festival.

The subject of this volume, Zouzou Nikoloudi, who founded the dance company Chorica in Greece in 1966 and similarly devised a new training method of international standing, is also at risk of being forgotten. Trained by Koula Pratsika, who had herself danced as one of two chorus leaders in Palmer's *Prometheus Bound* at Delphi in 1927, Nikoloudi devised a system of movement that was informed fundamentally by Dalcroze's Eurhythmics. After assisting Rosalia Chládek with the choreography for a 1960 production of *Medea* in Athens, for which she also danced the part of Medea I, Nikoloudi went on that year to choreograph the choruses for Karolos Koun's landmark production of *The Birds* for Theatro Technis. When the *Birds* toured to London as part of the World Theatre Season at the Aldwych Theatre in 1964-5 it, its use of the chorus proved revelatory to British audiences at a time when the chorus was still considered to be a problem for modern performances. In 1962 Nikoloudi choreographed Sophocles' *Ajax*, directed by Takis Mouzenidis, for the Greek National Theatre, where she worked consistently as a free-lance choreographer throughout her career.

⁵ The AHRC-funded 'Pioneer Women: early British modern dancers' project (2008-2010), a collaboration between the University of Surrey and the National Resource Centre for Dance focused particularly on the work of Ruby Ginner and Madge Atkinson. Ginner and Mawr were amongst the first teachers at what is now known as The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, University of London.

Like many of these neglected women choreographers and teachers of dance, Zouzou Nikoloudi was much loved by her students. One of the strengths of this study is that as a former student herself, Savrami can provide rich insights into Nikoloudi's training method as she endeavours to put Nikoloudi back into dance history and into the history of theatre in modern Greece.

Fiona Macintosh
Professor of Classical Reception
University of Oxford

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INTRODUCTION¹

Trying to meet an increasing demand, particularly during the 20th century, researchers and scholars of dance have developed various research tools to be employed in the description, analysis, interpretation, and evaluation or re-evaluation of dance's practical nature through the use of written speech and precise methods and criteria. The expressive means of dance is the human body which is considered to be one part of the human being's triune substance: mind-body-soul. Dancing is executed as a combination of various cerebral functions which include technical and expressive skills of the human body and also self-cognition during the interpretation of a dance movement in space and time. Dance through that prism "offers a unique way of knowing the world"². In choreography artists express their understanding of human body, technique, gender, aesthetics, social and political values, and through their choices "[they are] theorizing corporeality while dance scholars [are] theorizing what dance is"³ by means of their theoretical research. It is an important fact that in the case of dance the purposes of both these categories of professionals can be considered as types of parallel research which are not independent of one another but in a state of continuous communication, thus mutually enlightening and informing each other. Consequently, we could argue that "the writing becomes a translation of the dancing [...] capable of having a conversation [...] a duet"⁴.

Bearing in mind the aforementioned characteristics of research in dance and, moreover, first, after watching performances of the *Chorica* [Khoriká] dance company (active between 1966 and 2003), which was founded and directed by the choreographer Zouzou (Calliope) Nikoloudi (1917-2004), and, second, after attending Nikoloudi's classes on the direction of choral performances, the following query emerged in my mind: how could one be guided in choreographing the choral odes of

¹ It must be pointed out that all non-English quotations have been translated into Greek by the author Katia Savrami unless otherwise stated.

² Foster 2005: 25

³ Foster 2005: 31

⁴ Ibid.

ancient Greek drama given that their original movement sequences have only partially survived through the remains of ancient imagery⁵, whereas all technical details and the entirety of their form are missing?

All the available written and archaeological sources⁶ concerning the chorus of ancient Greek drama provide only fragmentary evidence regarding its form, as well as the manner and rhythm of its movement: information which is insufficient as far as dancing and staging are concerned. This scarcity of evidence results in an inability of being specific, because in order to reconstruct dancing one has to understand the overall way in which the text in verse, based on the ancient metrical patterns, had been coordinated with the movement during the performance. Moreover, certain details about dancing and the melodic speech that accompanied it can be gathered from written sources, but there exist no clues about the complete performance and the exact parameters of the composition of choral odes.

Being a dance researcher specialised in choreology⁷, with theoretical and practical knowledge on the subject but without a classicist's grasp of the issue of ancient dance, I felt that to find an answer to my question I should initially turn to the Aristotelian definition of tragedy. In this definition (passage 1449^b21-28 from the 6th chapter of the *Poetics*), Aristotle speaks specifically about the play and indirectly mentions its receiver/spectator, but he does not refer at all to the playwright.

“The explanation for it seems rather simple: the way the maker behaves as a person does not follow any kind of normality or necessity and, according to Aristotle, the accidental [...] cannot become a subject for scientific study”⁸.

Keeping in mind the above, the book in hand focuses on the creative work of the choreographer Zouzou Nikoloudi, but without claiming to present an all-embracing theory about the performance of the dance

⁵ Prudhommeau (1991) 84-85.

⁶ Webster 1970: 1-99

⁷ Choreology studies dance using specific tools for analysing its technique, the choreography or an individual dancing event and examines the intrinsic characteristics of dance alongside everyday movement and human behaviour as parts of dance. The subject of choreology is occasionally complemented and expanded through its dialogue with already existing theoretical approaches to dance, for instance aesthetic, historical, sociological or anthropological ones, depending on its research goal and the artistic works it deals with each time. See Savrami 2012: 36-39

⁸ Tsitsiridis 2010: 25-26 (translation mine), and cf. Aristotle *Met* E 1027a28: “and that there is no science of it (i.e. of the accidental)”.

elements of ancient drama in a contemporary context. Further, it centres on the choreographies for choral odes of ancient Greek dramas that she devised with her dance company *Chorica* [=Choral Odes], posing the following two questions:

1. Which were the views that Nikoloudi eventually adopted about ancient dramatic art and how were they influenced by her teachers? Which elements from her own training did she employ in educating actors and dancers to perform the choral odes and how were these elements linked to the existing material from our sources about ancient drama and more specifically tragedy?
2. How did she apply her views and the above elements in practice during devising and composing choreographies with her company?

Moreover, this book delves into the history of *Chorica*, which has been a significant dance company that promoted Greek culture worldwide. In particular, apart from introducing the choreographer's ideology and her aesthetic choices, this book highlights the pursuits, the goals and the trajectory of a company devoted to the presentation of choral odes of ancient drama in Greece and abroad during its three periods of activity.

The first period lasted from the foundation of the company in 1966 until 1975, when due to financial reasons it was forced to shut down; this first period of activity is discussed later in this book. From 1988 through to 1990 the company produced some work, but this activity was temporary; this period will not be presented here. Because of financial difficulties the company's activities were suspended in 1990 and until 1995 no performances were given. The last period of *Chorica* activity extended from 1995 to 2003 and this period is equally examined in the book.

The book is divided into two parts. The first contains the choreographer's education and training and the influence they exerted on her and the ideology she eventually formed. More specifically, references are made to pioneers of German Expressionistic dance, specifically focusing on Nikoloudi's teachers, their opinions about movement, the idiosyncrasies of each one of them and the connections that can be drawn with the views she later held regarding the actors' and dancers' training for the choral odes. There are also references to her dancing, teaching and choreographic experience. In the last chapter of the first part some conclusions are drawn on how she had been influenced by the existing sources about ancient dramatic art and particularly tragedy.

At the beginning of the second part there is a reference to *orchesis* (=dance), the way the chorus functions in ancient drama, and also to the sources and the researchers' questions about the performativity of the choral odes in a contemporary context. Next are examined the individual elements from the written sources about the choral odes in ancient drama and how they have been mirrored in Nikoloudi's choreographic practice. Her artistic and aesthetic choice to present only the choral odes and not complete dramas is emphasised, while the way she worked with the chorus is discussed and compared with the prevailing practical approaches to choral odes and ancient drama performances during her time. Also in this part, issues concerning the efficient boost, development and continuation of *Chorica* by Nikoloudi herself are analysed while also the general attitude of the state towards professional dance companies is presented.

The adopted method of analysis has two axes. Firstly, the extracts that had been presented in a dance form (not only the lyric ones, like *parodoi* [=entrances of the chorus] and *stasima* [=choral odes], but also some spoken parts, like prologues or episodes) are tracked down within the ancient plays choreographed by Nikoloudi; for these parts the way she has handled the text is analysed. Secondly, and through the application of a choreological method of analysis, the overall choreographic style of the choral odes (choruses) is identified and pointed up; further, since Nikoloudi's aesthetic choices are mainly focused on movement and music, these two elements are discussed in more detail.

The research contained in this book deals with the way Nikoloudi directed and interpreted the choral odes based on her personal "beliefs", thus it does not aspire to draw a generalising conclusion regarding the contemporary staging and performance of the ancient theatrical chorus. To use her own words, the "source of tragedy" is epitomized in the triptych "speech-music-*orchesis*"⁹.

As a consequence, the conclusions for each part of the book are presented separately, while there is also a Postscript rounding off the whole discussion.

In order to carry out this research I have exhaustively studied the unclassified archive of Zouzou Nikoloudi which is kept at the Benaki Museum: I had to obtain special permission to do this. In addition, I searched through the physical archives of the National Theatre, the Greek Radio & Television (ERT) and the Athens & Epidaurus Festival, as well as the libraries at the Theatre Museum, at the Departments of Theatre Studies of the University of Patras and the National and Kapodistrian

⁹ Nikoloudi Archive: Lecture in Kalamata, 28/11/1999.

University of Athens. It has been essential in my opinion to use material from sources such as theatre programs and press releases from relevant performances and to exploit all available written and internet sources that contained reviews, interviews, comments and references to Nikoloudi; I have used interviews given to me by her collaborators, too. At the same time, I have studied and analysed Nikoloudi's choreographies for choral odes from ancient drama using the only available source: a videotape recorded in 1995 that comprises extracts from the tragedies *Agamemnon*, *Eumenides* and *Bacchae*, the comedy *Birds* and the production *Figures from Oresteia*. This is a recording of a show including all the above five works that had been commissioned by the Kalamata International Dance Centre. The above film, directed by Takis Hadjopoulos, won an award at the Concours International Video Dance in Cannes in 1996. In general, I have made use of primary and secondary sources¹⁰, written, visual and acoustic, which constitute the only available material on Nikoloudi's work.

¹⁰ For the historical research on dance as an art form see Layson 1994: 18-21

PART ONE

CHAPTER ONE

INFLUENCES: KOULA PRATSIKA AND EVA PALMER-SIKELIANOS

“I adored Western music because I have studied it and I was brought up with it. For many years there had been nothing else I could understand apart from that. I can say now that I have discovered Greek music through Manos Hadjidakis’ work for *Birds*. It was there that I admired the beautiful Greek elements that Hadjidakis had rendered in such an artistic way¹.”

Zouzou Nikoloudi graduated from Arsakeion School. She studied music with Gina Bachauer, piano with Waldemar Freeman, and music theory and composition with Marios Varvoglis, Thrasyvoulos Georgiades and Menelaos Pallantios. As a young girl she also studied dance at Koula Pratsika’s school. Koula Pratsika (1899-1984) herself had returned to Greece after studying dance at the branch of Émile Jaques-Dalcroze School (originally in Hellerau) in Laxenburg² close to Vienna, which had been set up and directed by Dalcroze’s student Christine Bear³. She had also studied kinesiology and gymnastics at Biberach an der Riss in Baden-Württemberg in Germany and she had been a pioneer in dance education for her time. More specifically, she introduced the training in rhythmic gymnastics⁴ in Greece and based it on Dalcroze’s system called “Eurhythmics”⁵. Her ideal had been to “educate Greek children through

¹ Nikoloudi Archive: Interview to C. Vounelaki, in *To Vima* newspaper 1/11/1998.

² While Pratsika studied abroad, she had the opportunity to find out how much Europeans appreciated ancient Greek tragedy and Greek civilisation in general during that time.

³ See Pratsika 1991: 18-19.

⁴ See Kefalou-Chors 2001 and Kynigou-Flampoura 2011.

⁵ The system that Dalcroze invented, combined sound with movement and it was designed in a way that could help musicians in their training but also students who don’t know music, so that they could all realise music values through kinetic memory. “What was special about Bear was the fact that she insisted more in

rhythm, dance and music and, based on eternal Greek patterns, to follow the correct and unique road towards learning: the road of love”⁶; these are the words of Marios Ploritis. Indeed, Pratsika’s ideal aimed towards an educational system that could prove the most reliable way of approaching and understanding Greek heritage: culture, spirit and speech. These had been more or less the same issues to which all researchers and pedagogues referred⁷ since the foundation of the modern Greek State.

The issue of “love” that Ploritis mentions is essential in education and this shall become more clear in the discussion that follows, which concerns the pedagogical values in art and in education more generally. In the arts any theoretical knowledge, any knowledge about how a person thinks and operates in the world (objective knowledge) assumes the person’s feelings, emotional images and experiences, hopes and fears (subjective knowledge). Pedagogues are responsible for the transmission of such knowledge and they also aim at the development of autonomous people, who are considered precious for every educational process and for any social coexistence as well. As Hirst remarkably points out in his book about the Curricula:

“A complete person should be skilled in the use of speech, symbol and gesture, factually well informed, capable of creating and appreciating objects of aesthetic significance, endowed with a rich and disciplined life in relation to self and others, able to make wise decisions and judgements [...]. These are the aims of general education for the development of the whole person⁸.”

Nikoloudi adopted almost similar views on education, arguing that:

“Every parent, every teacher should consider the great responsibility they have towards their children and think that sharpening of children’s brains is not enough. Each human being has a triune substance, it consists of

physicality than Dalcroze who had been her tutor” (from the interview that Maria Gazi gave to me on 1/11/2013).

⁶ Ploritis 1991: 178-179.

⁷ See Rigas 2000. Yiannis Hamilakis writes about primary and secondary education: “[N]ational imagination is not simply a narrative and discursive process but also a topographic and iconographic project, in which the textbooks’ extensive reference to the material culture of the past, and especially of the classical past facilitates the construction of the imagined *topos* of Hellenism in the national pedagogy.” (Brown and Hamilakis 2003: Introduction, n.p.).

⁸ Hirst 1974: 54-55. For adult learning through experience see Roger and Horrocks 2010.

mind, body and soul [...] and we should prepare our children so as they become able to create a better world, more humane thus happier⁹.”

Pratsika’s school was initially located

“[in] a small studio space at Massalias street, with Poly Matey¹⁰ playing the piano—she used to be an amazing pianist—and herself [Pratsika] teaching her unforgettable classes with such faith and love that all of us left the school feeling almost tipsy. She possessed the unique charisma of conveying her own enthusiasm and her love for Greece through the delight of movement¹¹.”

There at first, and later during the 30s in the “Koula Pratsika School of Dance” at 55 Omirou street¹², the space specifically designed to be a “Professional Dance School” (title awarded in 1937) by George Kontoleon (1896-1952), Pratsika spent the rest of her life devoted to dance. Nikoloudi studied at Pratsika’s professional dance school but never graduated since her family would not allow her to. Nevertheless, in this school she was taught Gymnastics [Rhythmische Gymnastik], Eurhythmics, Music, Dance and Anatomy, and also courses of general education as, for instance, Ancient Tragedy, Greek Folk Dances, Art History and Literature. In order to further broaden her students’ knowledge Pratsika organised lectures and concerts in her school and collaborated within this framework with the most important artists and intellectuals of her time; some of the people she worked with were Angelos Sikelianos, Ioannis Sykoutris, Stratis Myrivilis,

⁹ Nikoloudi Archive: Lecture in Kalamata, 28/11/1999.

¹⁰ Polyxeni Matey (1902-1999), a Eurhythmics teacher and Pratsika’s cousin, had collaborated with Carl Orff (1895-1982) and she subsequently transferred his educational system to Greece. This system aimed at training small children who have not been taught music, in speech, movement and rhythm in order to familiarise with it and take part in musico-kinetic ensembles. There was a small orchestra consisting of xylophones, metallophones, percussion instruments, flutes, bells, triangles, cymbals etc. Each student used a different musical instrument; some of them moved following the music they heard and others combined movement with speech responding to the music. Everything happened simultaneously and then everybody changed position so that all of them would experience every “part” of the ensemble.

¹¹ Nikoloudi Archive: Interview to C. Vounelaki, in *To Vima* newspaper 1/11/1998.

¹² Until 1950, besides Pratsika’s School a few more dance schools existed in Greece: namely, those under the direction of Zouroudi-Antypa, Manon Renieri and Adam Morianov for classical ballet and Margarita Zordan for Dalcroze’s Eurhythmics.

Kostis Palamas, Ilias Venezis, Pantelis Prevelakis, Simon Karas, Angeliki Hadjimichali, Nikos Skalkotas, Menelaos Pallantios, Poly Matey, Linos Politis, Yannis Tsarouchis¹³.

Georgousopoulos observes¹⁴ that most of the women—because only women engaged in dance at that period, since it was a taboo for men¹⁵—who worked on choreographing ancient Greek drama and supported its performances had been Pratsika’s students, like Rallou Manou, Zouzou Nikoloudi, Agapi Evangelidi, Maria Chors, Maria Kynigou-Flampoura, Lena Zampoura, Maro Bournazou, Kaiti Tsilimigra¹⁶.

Pratsika’s views on dance and the Greek character were based on Greek tradition and *orchesis*. She had been influenced by Eva Palmer-Sikelianos (1874-1952), the American wife of Angelos Sikelianos (1884-1951), with whom she worked during the Delphic Festival¹⁷ of 1927 taking part as one of the two chorus leaders¹⁸ in the performance of Aeschylus’ *Prometheus Bound*. In order to direct, choreograph and design the costumes for the performance of *Prometheus Bound* that Palmer-Sikelianos was planning since 1924, she was guided by two particular phrases from classical philosophy:

¹³ See Nikoloudi 1991: 152

¹⁴ Georgousopoulos 1991: 126

¹⁵ Nikoloudi comments that “anything that has happened in choreography until recently—because nowadays we start seeing some very important men, like Mantafounis whom I deeply appreciate—has been women’s work” (Nikoloudi Archive: Interview to Fotini Pipili in *Pantheon* magazine – unknown date).

¹⁶ For more details about the history of dance in 20th-century Greece, see Barbousi 2014.

¹⁷ This Festival was the offshoot of Sikelianos’ inspired dream about the Delphic Idea and with a view of Delphi becoming again the “navel (*omphalos*) of the Earth”, the centre of an international amphictyony (= league of states), where through its revival, the spirit of ancient Greek civilisation would become the base for the unification of the international spirit, leading humanity to psychological and spiritual redemption. See Palmer-Sikelianos 1992.

¹⁸ Pratsika, then an employee of the Bank of Greece, after encouragement from the tour guide Maria Veloudiou, contacted Eva Sikelianos and expressed her interest in working with her for the performance of *Prometheus Bound* at the Delphic Festival. Vasilis Rotas in his article “The Content of Delphic Festival. After the Excitement; Facing Reality”, mentions that the chorus and the actors had not been properly coordinated as an ensemble but everybody’s moves appeared disparate. The set was romantic like the false rocks created for the parks, as were the mask, the costume and the melodramatic delivery of *Prometheus*. Maria Yiagaki sung with repulsive yodels, but Pratsika’s singing was theatrical and emotional. See <http://www.theaterinfo.gr/abouttheatre/greektheater/delfikesgiortes/index.html>, [accessed August 2014].

“[O]ne from Plato’s *Republic* and one from Aristotle’s *Poetics*: tragic chorus is the union of poetry, music and gymnastics [and] the tragic chorus expresses through the use of movement the character, the peripety and the actions of the actors¹⁹.”

For Palmer-Sikelianos, the chorus was the heart of tragedy²⁰ and to achieve its centrality in practice she created a “chorus that sings and dances and expresses in its movements every dramatic emotion”²¹. To assemble the group of performers for the chorus of the Oceanids she selected girls²² from the members of the Lyceum Club of Greek Women (Lykeion ton Ellenidon) coming from Athenian bourgeois families²³, but she expressed her reservations to the extent that “upper class girls were not suitable since they had adopted Western manners and they could not really represent the elements preserved from ancient Greece”²⁴. The music for the production of the tragedy was composed by the musician and musicologist Constantinos Psachos (1866-1949) who had studied Byzantine and ancient Greek music.

“Byzantine music possessed also a very significant functionality: the constant connection of speech with music [...] [we refer to] the use of the method that the church and the people preserved in a free original synthesis²⁵.”

¹⁹ Palmer-Sikelianos 1992: 123-124. See also Payne’s remarks on Palmer Sikelianos: “She had a strange power of entering the mind of Ancients and bringing them to life again. She knew everything about them – how they walked and talked [...] how they latched their shoes [...] what songs they sang, and how they danced, and how they went to bed” (1960: 102).

²⁰ As, of course, it was the case in antiquity. See analyses by: Emmanuel 1896; Lawler 1964; Prudhommeau 1965; Webster 1970; Naerebout 1991 and 1997; Raftis 1991.

²¹ Palmer-Sikelianos 1925.

²² Her initial intention was that members of the chorus should be “either middle class girls or peasant women, beautiful in their rusticity [...] but later the idea of peasant women was abandoned since their tan was not uniform so as to combine well with the archaic costumes” (Glytzouris 1998: 151). This idea was thus dismissed out of fear that it would adversely affect the overall aesthetic result.

²³ Moreover, according to Nikoloudi, “Pratsika used to be rather a bourgeois socialite wearing high heels and hats, brought up in a house revering the German music tradition, until Eva discovered her. Her soul would stir and through them [Eva Palmer and Angelos Sikelianos] a whole new world opened before her eyes; a world she looked for but could not find.” (Nikoloudi Archive: Lecture in Kalamata, 28/11/1999).

²⁴ See Glytzouris 1998: 150-151

²⁵ Glytzouris 1998: 150.

In order to achieve the aesthetic result she aspired to, she had to educate the bourgeois girls selected to take part in the chorus in the most appropriate way. Their training involved two elements: music and dance lessons, as well as frequent visits to the National Archaeological Museum of Athens. Music lessons were mainly focused on the theory of Byzantine music—which was considered most appropriate to underscore speech²⁶—while dance lessons highlighted the “Apollonian posture in dance [which is] the insulating movement of the pose found on vases”²⁷ and how it was connected with specific gaits²⁸; hence the visits to the Museum for observation and study of the images on the ancient vases²⁹. Furthermore, Palmer-Sikelianos was very much inspired by Greek traditional dances and particularly “syrtos” and “ballos”, the step patterns of which she adopted for the choreography of six verses in the third stasimon³⁰. Unfortunately, the girls of the chorus were not equally interested and they considered their theoretical training to be excessive; they were only interested in the choreography and the dance moves. Palmer-Sikelianos worked very hard rehearsing for two consecutive summers in order to avoid a mechanical movement of the chorus in relation to singing. The choral odes

“were almost autonomous shows of dance and music, quite independent from the rest of the performance, while their text was not apprehensible since the emphasis had been laid on their pantomimic presentation through music and dance”³¹.

It was only during the first rehearsal in the actual ancient theatre of Delphi together with the musicians that the desirable result was achieved³².

Palmer-Sikelianos designed the costumes for the chorus and the actors all by herself³³, in an innovative act for that time, using patterns inspired by

²⁶ See Pratsika 1998.

²⁷ Glytzouris 1998: 150.

²⁸ “Yet the gait itself has either a strictly pantomimic use like the rest of the elements [...] or it works in a supportive and emphatic role” (Glytzouris 1998: 155).

²⁹ The archaeologist and university professor A. Keramopoulos remarked (1927) that the whole dance had been composed from numerous images of works of ancient Greek art, statues, bas-reliefs and vase paintings. See Pratsika 1998.

³⁰ See Glytzouris 1998: 155-156 and Sampatakakis (forthcoming).

³¹ Glytzouris 1998: 157

³² Again, Glytzouris 1998.

Greek nature and Greek vase paintings; she wove them on a loom and then Elli Margariti embroidered them. Pratsika said about the costumes:

“In all our rehearsals, for a very long time, we used to wear continuously the actual tunics of the performance. [...] In the end, the costumes had become part of our own selves. [...] Each one of its folds dropped organically around our bodies. [...] It was a costume that along with its wonderful folds danced with the tragic chorus; the costume danced with us³⁴.”

What Pratsika gained from this first encounter with the chorus of Greek drama during the Delphi performance has been exactly what she had been looking for: namely, the opportunity to examine ancient dance and the integration of elements from Greek tradition and rhythm in the art of dancing through philosophical reflections within a dynamic quest for a more authentic cultural identity.

Pratsika's experience next to Palmer-Sikelianos³⁵ had been decisive for her, despite the fact that she later followed a different route in forming her

³³ The Sikelianos residence, which now belongs to the European Cultural Centre of Delphi, houses the Museum of Delphic Festivals. The exhibits of the museum are items from the Delphic Festivals (1927 and 1930), costumes and masks from the ancient drama productions at the ancient theatre of Delphi, along with personal objects of Angelos and Eva Sikelianos.

³⁴ Pratsika 1998: 126. It is worth quoting from Dorf's (2016: 9) analysis: “Ann Cooper Albright argues that the only archeologically correct element of the Delphic Festival were the costumes, made with Palmer Sikelianos's hand-woven fabrics, and hand-beat metal helmets. She asserts that authenticity in costume (Palmer Sikelianos used silk which was not available to ancient Greeks), music, and dance, was sacrificed for the drama (Albright 2010: 71), but it is clear from Palmer Sikelianos's writings, that all modern concessions in archaeological correctness were painfully made. It is not that archaeological correctness should not be sought out; it is just that it is impossible in a modern world. The tensions between archaeology and ethnography, the past and the present, the archive and the repertoire continued to haunt Palmer Sikelianos throughout her project.”

³⁵ Yannis Sideris in his book *The Ancient Theatre on Modern Greek Stage 1817-1932* (in Greek) and more specifically in the chapter “The International Theatrical Revolution I, Eva Palmer and Angelos Sikelianos, The Spouses-Leaders” writes: “[...] Modern Greek Theatre derived from European Theatre as far as its sources and its various ways it developed are concerned, thus Delphic Festivals originate from the latter as well. This fact is evidenced, suggestively enough, by the announcements in the Greek press about productions of ancient dramas taking place abroad, by the direct influence of two stars (Ristori and Mounet-Sully), as well as by the articles about dance performances with archaic subjects in Europe.

own views on ancient dance and Greek tradition. What Pratsika characteristically used to say when she taught was: “Never copy from vase paintings; these belong to the museums and they are dead. Greece is light, rhythm and spirit³⁶.”

The exact three words that Pratsika used in her teaching—light, rhythm, spirit—have been directly linked with the discussions of that period regarding cultural identity³⁷. During the first quarter of the 20th century Greece was in a dynamic relation with both the East, culminating in the population exchange following the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923, and the West³⁸, in an attempt to define itself and establish its identity. On one hand, the newly formed country as a political entity tries to be incorporated into Europe; on the other, it resists any Western influence and insists on “remaining culturally self-reliant”³⁹. These parallel endeavours of incorporation and resistance have been imprinted on the formation process of the political and cultural identity of modern Greece.

The cultural requirement for introversion is what accentuated the term “Greekness” (*ellinikotita*)⁴⁰ both inside and outside the country’s borders,

There are also references about similar performances and dance shows in America [...] thus multiplying the above-mentioned influences to the effect that the European are linked with the American in the face of Eva Palmer, the American woman who offered such services to our country like no-one else from her continent ever did. This occurred after Greece had been unveiled to her through the efforts, for about twenty years, of Sikelianos and through the affair he had with her [...] Of course, the Festivals are an ideological bridgehead inspired, in general terms, by Sikelianos, but their performative and dancing parts are specifically works of Eva. [...] At the same time this has been an amalgam of foreign values with the folk, or the popular, culture with the aim of promoting it. Eva had digested and wisely rendered into Greek many of the European elements.” (1976: 321).

³⁶ Nikoloudi Archive: Interview to C. Vounelaki, in *To Vima* newspaper 1/11/1998.

³⁷ Tsaousis 1983: 15-25.

³⁸ According to Tziovas, the Greek Orthodox identity that existed during the Ottoman occupation “acted as a differentiating and isolating means in an attempt to preserve the cohesion and particularity of the Greek-Christian community, thus any attempt at a cultural identity had been a defensive or introvert one.” However, the newly formed independent Greek state tried to be incorporated in an “international system of isolated political entities”, thus seeking to shape a political identity based on extroversion with its eye turned to Europe. (2006: 51). See also Hatziosif 2002.

³⁹ Tziovas 2006: 51.

⁴⁰ The Delphic Festivals of 1927 and 1930 were supported and highly favoured by the audience possibly because “through them ‘Hellenism’ kept its uninterrupted

ideologically connecting the modern cultural aspirations with ancient Greek culture and its philosophy, and also with the traditions of modern Greek civilisation, in an attempt to highlight the unity, continuity and cohesion of the Greek nation. Nikoloudi refers exactly to this framework of Greekness in the following lines:

“The request for defining Greekness was expressed vigorously for the first time in the wake of the Sikelianos couple[’s initiatives]. The Delphic Idea managed to draw together intellectuals from Greece and abroad. I still remember how the Francophile and the Bavrophile group of architects used to oppose each other during the time of my father, while the entirety of the intellectuals gazed outside [Greece]⁴¹.”

In the 30’s, after the cultural experience gained from the Delphic Festivals, there is an attempt to move towards a cultural identity that is extrovert⁴² and “dynamic, considering Europe as a comrade and Hellenism as a constant becoming”⁴³. Nikoloudi refers to this:

“We had started searching for Greece within ourselves and this impacted on us as something great, sacred, spiritual and deeply personal. Until then we used to undervalue our own stuff, we wrongly considered the ‘kalamatianos’ dance for example as rustic⁴⁴. It was at this point that we

historical sequence, but also proved to be a metaphysical essence of universal value (almost of mythological proportions), under the name of ‘Greekness’. As an example and in the light of the above, the material world, which included the ancient theatre of Delphi, defined historical sequence by itself [...] giving a strong ideological message [...] and also the superiority of the nation. This was a ‘Greek’ landscape under a ‘historical’ perspective. But at the same time it was the ‘earth’s omphalos’, a new ‘universal’ metropolis” (Glytzouris 1998: 164).

⁴¹ Nikoloudi Archive: Interview to C. Vounelaki, in *To Vima* newspaper 1/11/1998.

⁴² It is characteristic that “by employing a selective process, the educated elites in Western societies willingly adopt a part of the classical archive and they idealise it. It is as a consequence of this ‘imagined’ Greece that the idiosyncratic conception of the relationship between modern and classical Greece was formulated.” (Patsalidis 1997: 121).

⁴³ Tziovas 2006: 51.

⁴⁴ “This attitude forms a different version for the archetypical understanding of tradition that begins with Theophilos and Makrygiannis [as they were introduced] by Seferis and continues with the discovery of ‘rebetika’ songs by Hatjidakis, the artistic-popular [music] by Theodorakis and the Choreodrama by Rallou Manou based on Karagkiozis shadow theatre. The archetypical traits of the popular art forms are now transformed and modernised to bourgeois spectacles, sounds,

discovered the Anastenaria ritual that comes from such a long time ago. This is because through rhythm the experiences of the past have remained alive; the rhythm is the living connection between ancient Greece and our times. [We have been able to realise that after our studies] with Angeliki Hadjimichali [folklorist], Simon Karas [musician, Greek traditional music and instruments], Koula Pratsika [dance] and all these very important persons who built the bridge with our own tradition⁴⁵.”

choreodramas and set designs, thus they are nationalised. This whole exploitation process of the archetypal popular material, which became widely appreciated in Theodorakis' and Hadjidakis' music, was initiated during the 30's generation. In the works of the two composers we can see how the cultural ideology of that generation still survives through the emaciation of the popular, the co-existence of Greek and Western elements and the transformation of popular culture into high art.” (Tziouvas 2011: 472).

⁴⁵ Nikoloudi Archive: Interview to C. Vounelaki, in *To Vima* newspaper 1/11/1998. See also Roilou 2009: 251-257; more generally on this issue: Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983.

CHAPTER TWO

TRAINING IN DANCE

“I adored dance ever since I was a child; I wanted to become a dancer when I grew up¹.”

Zouzou (Calliope) Nikoloudi was born in 1917. She was the only child of the architect Alexandros Nikoloudis² and his wife Maria Skassi, who had German³ and Italian⁴ origins and was an offspring of the third generation of the Fix family as her great-grandfather had come to Greece with King Otto’s retinue⁵ as his private brewer. Nikoloudi’s mother had been raised in a very conservative milieu, under the strong influence of Catholicism. She had been brought up in a bourgeois family, taught by foreign teachers who followed strict principles, thus it was inconceivable that her daughter could ever become a dancer⁶. Yet, despite these unfavourable circumstances

¹ Nikoloudi Archive: Lecture in Kalamata, 28/11/1999.

² “My father wasn’t only an intellectual but an artist as well. Unfortunately he was brought up completely under Western influence since he had lived for many years in Paris. And I say that judging from my own experience since it was a disgrace at that time to dance Greek dances or to hear Greek songs. This stuff was only for peasants; in our salons we should dance only waltz. Thus my father who returned to Greece after spending twenty years in France naturally wanted to apply his Western mentality on the buildings he designed. He was never interested in and he never even approached Greek tradition” (Nikoloudi Archive: Interview to C. Vounelaki, in *To Vima* newspaper 1/11/1998). For more details on Alexandros Nikoloudis see Kotsaki 2007.

³ Her father was Karolos Fix.

⁴ Her mother was Yakinthi Skassi.

⁵ German education was prevalent in the newly formed country of Greece, one reason being the Bavarian origins of its royal family. At the beginning of the 20th century many theatre and dance artists, like Thomas Economou and Koula Pratsika and later Dimitris Rondiris and Zouzou Nikoloudi, studied either in Vienna or in Germany and they were strongly influenced by the artistic views of German-speaking Europe about ancient drama. See Arvaniti 2010: 31.

⁶ Pratsika and Nikoloudi were distinguished Greek women, members of eminent families of Patras and Athens respectively; although they both came from