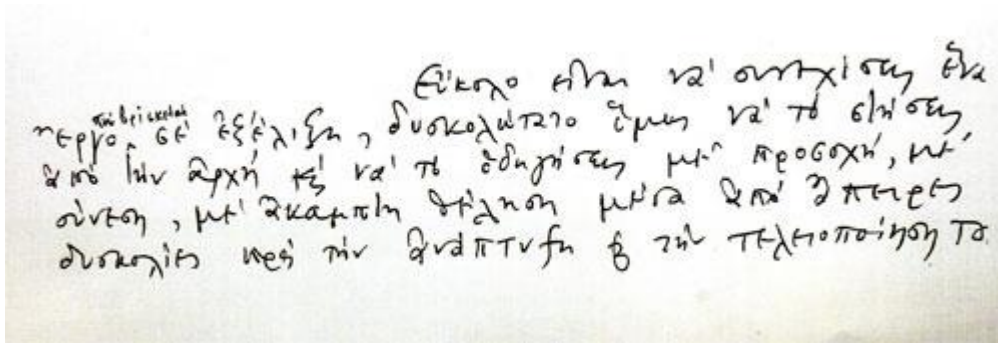


SOLOM MICHAELIDES (1905 – 1979)



Solon Michaelides with his fiancée
Kalliopi Moridou in Limassol,
21 st of August 1932



Hand-written note by Solon Michaelides



The young maestro, Solon Michaelides, with the first orchestra and mixed chorus of the Concert Club of the Limassol Conservatoire at the RIALTO theatre in Limassol on the 18th of May 1935

Composer, musicologist, maestro, instructor, judge and congress participant, director and trade unionist, Solon Michaelides had a charismatic personality enjoying the glamour of a world wide reputation, having dominated the music world in both Cyprus and Greece .

He was born in Nicosia on the 12 th of November 1905. Michael Hadjikyriakos from Orunta was his father and Eleni Solomonidou from Kyrenia was his mother. Nine months after Solon's birth, who was Eleni's first child, she died from puerperal fever. Solon had since that moment been looked after by his grand mother, Despina Solomonidou in Nicosia , on his father's accord.

At thirteen years old, he got possession of his first music instrument, a guitar, being the gift of his schoolfellow, Stelios Ghiorgallides, in exchange for Solon's assistance at school.

He attended classes regularly at the Pan Cyprian High School and then he enrolled in the teachers' college there. He graduated in 1925 and was awarded a distinction as well as the gold medal of the "Greek Brotherhood of the Cypriots in Egypt ."

Over the next years, he worked as a teacher at the municipality. At the same time he was recruited as a guitar and theory teacher at the State Conservatoire in Nicosia . Yet, despite the fact he was a self-instructed guitarist, he excelled in this discipline.

While at the Cyprus Conservatoire, Solon Michaelides was at the same time a teacher and a student. Assisted by the principal, Isaiah Kalmanovitch, a Russian pianist of Jewish origin, he learned how to play piano and attended advanced classes in harmony. He attended the correspondence courses of the London TRINITY COLLEGE OF MUSIC and he graduated in 1930, being awarded the Diploma of Teaching the Higher Level Theory Courses.

The Cyprus Conservatoire played an important part in Michaelides' carrier but also in his personal life. He met, there, Kalliopi Moridou, who was Isaiah Kalmanovitch's piano student and she later attended Michaelides' theory classes.

In 1931 Solon Michaelides and Kalliopi Moridou got engaged. The same year, Moridou graduated as a piano teacher from the London TRINITY COLLEGE OF MUSIC and started her carrier as a teacher in Limassol.

Solon Michaelides afforded to go to Paris for further studies, enjoying the moral and financial support of the Morides family. He attended the ECOLE NORMALE DE MUSIQUE and the SCHOLA CANTORUM and in 1934 he was awarded the composition diploma. Paris opened new horizons to the Cypriot musician. In that artistic and intellectual centre, Michaelides studied intensively, keeping ceaselessly abreast with the musical evolutions and in 1933, he composed his first work, which is the symphonic poem "DE PROFUNDIS", inspired from the "Life in the Grave" by Stratis Myrivilis.

In 1934 he composed the symphonic sketch "AT THE VILLAGE WEDDING" for flute and strings. During that period he also composed other works.

Michaelides came back to Cyprus in August 1934 to get married with Kallopi Moridou at the tabernacle of the Alamanou Saint George's Abbey. The couple took up its residence in Limassol.

From that year on, Solon Michaelides was committed very actively in his job and changed substantially the setting of the music world in Limassol. It was the beginning of a long and rich musical tradition.

In October 1934, he and his wife instituted the Limassol Conservatoire, while he was becoming the founder of the first orchestra in Cyprus as well as the first Greek Concert Club. A few months later, Michaelides set up a mixed chorus, composed of many people and started giving a number of lectures on music. He therefore, developed an unusual activity as an artist, which marked indeed the cultural world in Limassol and the whole Cyprus, since the concert groups of the Limassol Conservatoire toured all the towns on the island and gave concerts.

Since it was the beginning of a professional and cultural activity course for Solon Michaelides, a very fruitful period was launched from Limassol, in the field of composition and musicological research. It was a period, marking as the starting point in his life as a creator and composer, during which a great many important works as well as musicological reports of his, were brought out.

In 1936, the symphonic image: "KAKAVAS' FEAST", inspired by Costi Palama's "Didekalogos tu gyftu", the "Two Byzantine sketches" for strings and the serenade "Tafos" versed by Costis Palamas, in 1949 the final form of the symphonic poem "De Profundis," the "prayer of the modest" versed by Zacharias Papantoniou for baritone and piano, in 1954 the "archaic suite" for flute, oboe, harp and strings and others.

Conducting the orchestra of the Limassol Conservatoire's concert Groups, Solon Michaelides interpreted some of his works. In 1939 he placed the bands of the Limassol Conservatoire's Concert Groups under the protection of the Limassol ARIS club. From 1941 to 1956 he also worked as music teacher at the Greek Grammar School and at the Limassol Higher Girls' School. Later, these schools were named after Lanition Greek Grammar School.

In his capacity as a teacher of the secondary education, Michaelides brought to school both his tireless mood for work and his ardour for music and creation. He set up excellent mixed choruses and composed music for school theatre performances. He managed to attract the pupils' interest by making a great approach and inspired them feelings of love and devotion to music.

In 1945, at the end of the war, his famous book on "harmony of modern music" was eventually printed. It was an edition of the Limassol Conservatoire and caused the Greek composers and music critics to feel excited about it. On the 2nd of May 1946, Manolis Kalomiris made a presentation on it at the Athens Academy. Yet, while in Athens keen comments were made on the "harmony of modern music". The Athens State Orchestra interpreted again some more Michaelides' works. The composer has intensively been active in Great Britain as an artist, being

involved in many fields indeed. He went there in 1946 for a one-year scholarship. Then, the B.B.C. Philharmonic Orchestra interpreted works of his.

When the Cypriot musician was forty two, he already became famous abroad as a composer, having a real inspiration and as a great musicologist on modern music. His staying in London for a while helped him penetrate widely the European society, where he was constantly either a member of international committees or a speaker at congresses or a maestro and he acted as such until the end of his life.

Michaelides and his wife were among the first Cypriots to travel a lot. He simultaneously made tremendous efforts to establish his life as an artist in Cyprus. In 1950 and 1952 he organised and monitored a couple of big and important events, which were a landmark in the history of the musical course of the country. This is related to putting on the H. PURCELL's opera "Dido and Aeneas" as well as the J. HAYDN's oratorio "The Creation", which were indeed the first opera and oratorio staged before the Cypriot public.

In 1957 he was appointed Director of the Thessaloniki State Conservatoire. Michaelides assuming these duties at the head of the Conservatoire was the beginning of a flourishing era for the foundation indeed. While carrying on his duties as the Director of the Conservatoire, he taught harmony, history of music morphology, counterpoint, escape and composition. The number of classes of higher theory kept on increasing constantly.

Solon Michaelides was an enthusiastic and devoted teacher and many of his students are now brilliant professionals. His contribution to the musical education of the Greeks is considerably important and will be so for ever thanks to his works, which he has bequeathed to us.

Shortly after his being set up in the capital of the north of Greece, he managed to have the Symphony Orchestra of North Greece – S.O.N.G. created, assisted by other important personalities who coordinated their actions with his. In 1966 the S.O.N.G. was transformed in State organism acting independently from the Conservatoire.

Having a forceful personality, managerial skills and being well-equipped, Michaelides played a determining role in the musical life of Thessaloniki and was established as the director as well as the maestro. Reputed Greek and foreign artists visited Thessaloniki, accepting his invitation to collaborate or conduct the State orchestra. However, the theatre was swarming with the people of Thessaloniki, who did not attend it to enjoy necessarily the performances given by worldwide known artists. A big rush of people was observed each time Solon Michaelides conducted the orchestra with a soloist from Thessaloniki acting jointly.

Michaelides was, at the same time, a composer and created significant works over this period of time, like the symphonic poem "Kypriaka Eleftheria" created in 1959, the "Anthem of the Republic of Cyprus" in 1963, the "Greek Suite" for piano, as well as for violoncello and piano, in 1966, the "Concert" for piano and orchestra in 1966 and cetera.

In November 1970 he retired from the State Conservatoire and the Thessaloniki State Orchestra and moved to Athens. Afterwards, Michaelides pursued his artistic activities, conducting orchestras in Greece and abroad as an invited guest maestro.

Solon Michaelides' big contribution to the Greek musical world was greatly appreciated and this went beyond the esteem of the musicians and the public in his person. Besides, he was appointed in various councils and was awarded distinctions and cetera. The Greek world has been fond of the works he has composed, of which a great number is often executed by Symphony Orchestras in the country, as well as by various soloists.

In Athens he wrote works, which served as a "Tribute to the Prisoners' Tombs": in 1974 « In Memorial » for string orchestra, in 1975 "Eulogy and Lament for Cyprus" serenade versed by Yiannis Ritsos, in 1976 the symphonic icon "My Kyrenia", in 1979 the work for chorus "My Kyrenia" versed by Kypros Chrysanthou and cetera.

Solon Michaelides is considered a remarkable figure among the modern Greek composers and mainly those of the Greek School as it had been established in the post-1930 period. He has also been established as a unique figure in Cyprus since he is considered the prevailing representative of the Cypriot School. Yet, Michaelides, goes beyond the narrow national context. "The objective for a national entity should be to remain alive as such in a genuinely world instrument", he used to say.

Solon Michaelides' musical expression is a very personal style in the composition. The composer uses a lot of the specific features of the Greek music both the ancient and the Byzantine one. The unique tone and the prominent rhythms of the Cypriot folk music, are not neglected either. He gets from non Greek and Cypriot musical compositions what sounds closer to his own temper and determines his own musical language since the very beginning, while composing his works, combining however ethnic features in a modern style, which constitutes his basic aspiration.

While studying in Paris, he was excited about the French impressionism. The Cypriot composer felt attracted by the impressionistic music's movement and fluidity, as well as its light forms. He could combine its obvious impressionistic vocation with the use of the ancient Greek scales very easily. The ethnic features in his work came up through the use of the Cypriote folk motives too or even of Byzantine hymnody's.

Michaelides selected his topics from life around him, the Greek literature, the Byzantine tradition, the Greek antiquity, the struggle for freedom and the tragic modern history of Cyprus.

On the 20th of October 1977 his famous work "The Music of Ancient Greece, an Encyclopaedia" was presented before the Athens Academy. Bringing out this work constituted the publication event of the Greek musicology for 1977, as well as a big achievement in this field, on an international level.

Meanwhile Michaelides set to the Greek version of the Encyclopaedia. "It is not translatable" he used to say, "The whole thing should be drafted again, in Greek this time."

During the last year of his life he was working ceaselessly consuming all his remaining forces on this book. In March 1979 he finished it and wrote the epilogue of the manuscript on "Jesus Christ was resurrected".

The Limassol Mayor and the members of the Municipal Council were not suspecting whatever regarding his state of health being aggravated because of a lung tumour and invited the composer to attend an event, which they would organise to his honour, to declare him a Fellow Citizen and confer to him the gold medal of Limassol. Solon Michaelides accepted the invitation and lived the very last days of his life, hoping that he would travel again back to Cyprus.

However, this trip would be the last one and yet very different from the others. On the 10th of September 1979, Solon Michaelides took a last glance at his mailing and slept for ever in Athens. The artists' world in Greece said goodbye to him at the memorial prayer, in the Athens A cemetery and then his corpse was transferred to Cyprus upon a request of the Republic of Cyprus. The Ayia Napa church in Limassol, situated in the ex neighbourhood of Michaelides couple, was swarming with lots of people to say adieu to him. The ARIS chorus was chanting during the memorial service. During his burial, on the 13th of September, the ARIS chorus interpreted for the first time Solon Michaelides' last work, the choral "My Kyrenia" in Ayios Nikolaos cemetery in Limassol.

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