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PREFACE by L.A. Bourgault-Ducoudray

This collection is far from containing all the folk songs that we have brought back from our mission in Greece and the Orient. The large number of airs of all kinds that we gathered in the course of our four-month stay justifies us in regarding the Orient as an inexhaustible musical mine.

This first volume contains almost all the popular melodies that we collected in Smyrna, and only a few of those that we collected in Athens. It contains none of the popular songs that we notated in Constantinople, and none of the very many dance melodies that we collected in Constantinople, Smyrna, Athens and Megara.

None of the melodies that make up this collection had previously been notated. [1] In order to be able to fix them in written form we had to rely on the generosity of the people who had them in their memories. Among them there must be some very old ones; we are aware of the extent to which certain favorite tunes, which are the true expression of the temperament of certain races, are perpetuated by tradition and memory. It is impossible for us to set even approximate dates for these songs. All we can say is that most of these melodies, even assuming (which is not proven) that they are not very old, are built on the principles of the ancient scales. In the West one finds the application of these scales in the melodies of Plainchant; but these latter, being deprived today of their primitive rhythm and character, are like mummies when compared with the living melodies of the East.

The melodies we have collected are distinguished by the flexibility of their melodic contours and the independence of their *andamento*. They are no less striking in terms of their rhythms than in terms of their modes. Very often, in order to transcribe these rhythms into notation, we had to write different rhythms within each tune. These rhythms, though irregular, are natural; indeed, from their very irregularity they derive something that is more expressive and striking. Their existence is so intimately linked to that of musical thought, that it would lose all its character and all its charm, if one tried to confine them within the unity of measure enshrined in European art.

In notating these melodies, we have endeavoured to reproduce them as we heard them, to photograph them, so to speak, respecting in them everything that broke with the habits of European music, both from the point of view of rhythmic regularity and as regards their modal make-up. During our travels we had the good fortune to encounter people whose willingness to assist in a task which their good memories and their felicitous musical organisation enabled us to achieve with assuredness. The prime intention of our work was, first, to notate the melodies that they sang to us as precisely as possible; and then, later, to harmonise them. We made it a rule never to alter the melody for the sake of harmony; on the contrary, we made harmony obey the melody, endeavouring to preserve in our accompaniments the character of the mode to which the melody belonged. If one were to remove from this collection the accompaniments and some of the refrains, it would remain purely and simply the faithful reproduction of what we heard.

In our work of harmonization, we have not systematically banned the use of any chord. The only harmonies which we have outlawed are those whose character seemed to us to contradict the modal impression engendered by the melody which was to be harmonized. Our efforts were aimed at widening the circle of modalities in polyphonic music, not at restricting the resources of modern harmony. We could not allow ourselves to be chained by the rules of the past in an attempt that escapes them; if she has to find imitators, it is a sanction that only the future holds for her.

It would be good if we have succeeded in demonstrating the fruitfulness in the application of polyphony to oriental scales! The music of the Orient, hitherto immobilised by the exclusive use of melody, might then embark on the new career which polyphony opens to it; Western polyphonic music, confined exclusively to the use of two modes, the major and the minor, might then finally emerge from its long seclusion. The result of this enlargement would be to provide Western musicians with brand new sources of expression and with colours that have hitherto not been encountered in the musical palette.

We have thought it necessary to add to this preface an introduction containing an exposition of the formation of the diatonic scales and an overview of the use of these scales in ancient music, in plainchant, in Greek ecclesiastical music, and in popular songs of the East. Although our publication has an aesthetic rather than theoretical intent, it will not be uninteresting for a reader seeking new musical impressions to discover the laws by means of which they produce these impressions. To facilitate this work, we have followed each of the melodies in this collection with a few observations which will help the reader, sometimes to recognize in the particular instance an application of the general principles formulated in the introduction, and sometimes to point out the exceptions made to these principles.

The theoretical explanations that we give are the result of observation of the facts. Reading several books, and in particular the first volume of Mr Gevaert's work (*Histoire et Théorie de la Musique de l'Antiquité* – History and Theory of the Music of Antiquity), has been a very useful for us. We have also enlisted the valuable assistance of two French musicologists, Messrs Emile Ruelle and Potier de Lalaine.

Before concluding, we would like to thank the people who, during our trip, kindly assisted in our studies. Without the courtesy with which they let us draw on their memories, we would not have been able to put together the elements of this collection, in which each of them can claim their share of collaboration. So we have placed at the head of each song the name of the person from whose mouth we first heard it, as well as the place where we notated it.

Paris, 31 July 1816.

L.A. Bourgault-Ducoudray

NOTES

1. With the exception of three that we found written in Oriental notation, and which we have transcribed into European notation.