

The Greek Flutist Eurysthenes Ghisas. From the Athens Conservatory to the Vienna Court Opera

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Abstract: Concerning the notable figures in the History of Modern Greek music, musicological research brings to light mainly facts about the life and works of composers who have left an oeuvre for future researchers and audiences. But there is an equally important field of research in the performance of a composition; therefore, due attention should be paid to the performers.

This presentation will seek to acquaint the international musicological community with Greek flutist Eurysthenes Ghisas, an award-winning musician of international acclaim. From Athens, Ghisas had a brilliant career in Western Europe during the last decade of the 19th century. He was the principal flutist of the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra and gave concerts as a soloist all over Europe.

He was a unique, and rare artist because of his admirable career and success and the difficult conditions under which he was raised and educated. An orphan, he studied at the Athens Conservatoire as an orphanage inmate without the moral and material support of his parents and family. Moreover, the slowly developing Athenian musical life did not provide adequate stimulus or an artistic and intellectual milieu comparable to that offered by great Western European musical institutions, educational establishments, and musical ensembles with a long tradition.

Despite all these difficulties, Ghisas managed to bridge the gap between the Greek and Western European reality and become one of the top flutists in late 19th-century Europe. This piece of research is original for the most part and is mainly based upon the Press of the time and archival material; it showcases significant documentary evidence on this musician against the background of the era in which he lived.

Keywords: Eurysthenes Ghisas, flute, Athens Conservatory, 19th-century music education in Greece, Roman Kukula, Böhm flute, Vienna Conservatory, Vienna Court Opera.

Introduction

The Kingdom of Greece was founded in 1828, and in 1830 the London Protocol acknowledged Greece as an independent, sovereign state. It was stated that the government would be monarchical; in 1832, the three Great Powers offered the throne to seventeen-year-old Prince Othon, son of King Ludwig I of Bavaria. Diplomat Ioannis Kapodistrias was appointed the first governor of the newly founded kingdom.¹

The first capital of the Kingdom of Greece was Aegina, since 1829 Nafplion, and in 1834 Athens took over this role. Athens was a very small town, with a population of only 7.000, devastated by a long war and diseases. It was little more than a village, full of scattered antiquities, ruined buildings, and shacks only recently liberated from Ottoman rule. The administrative structure of the new state was practically non-existent, and the development of the economy and the secondary sector would have to start from scratch. There were no roads, no urban planning, no public squares, no land-improvement works or space for public buildings. At the social level, there was no urban tradition or class-based stratification as was the case in the West: the social foundations upon which the development of the Western civilization had been based did not exist in Greece. For this reason, Athens and, subsequently, the other Greek towns could not assimilate western culture, though the ruling classes imitated its most superficial aspects through their financial power.²

During the early years after the liberation from the Turks, the intellectual and artistic standard of the Athenian population was very low and equivalent to the existing stimuli. The Turkish occupation had alienated Athens from the significant progress made in the field of arts and sciences in Western Europe during the Renaissance and the Enlightenment. Under these circumstances, Greek society was backward in culture, art, and science: there was no possibility, no real need, or the will on the part of the Athenians for the creation of opera houses, theatres, concert halls, conservatoires, academies, or schools of music and the other arts. Education was a privilege of the few. Some private educational establishments, like the Arsakeion Girls' School and the Didaskaleion, were accessible only to the wealthy, higher classes.³ Besides, in public education, there was a lack of infrastructure and staff

¹ Dimitrios Aggelatos, *Hellas. The history and the culture of the Greek Nation from the beginning until today. The Greek nation. The times after the fall and the Modern Greek state*, Vol. 2 (Athens: Papyros Publishing Organisation, 1998), 91, 121-125.

² Katy Romanou, *Greek Art music in Modern times* (Athens: Kouloura, 2006), 109-111.

³ Kostas Baroutas, *Musical life in Athens in the 19th century: Concerts, Recitals, Melodrama, Folk Song, Music Criticism* (Athens: Ph. Nakas, 1992), 13.

which rendered systematic teaching of instrumental music unfeasible.⁴ The fundamental needs of survival and employment challenged the citizens of Athens. Moreover, their musical background and knowledge of music were influenced by the East rather than the West.

However, the presence in Athens of Otho, his retinue, and other European diplomats and officials necessitated the existence of military ensembles (bands), which accompanied the king in his public appearances. The military band members were German at first, but soon more musicians were needed. In November 1843, the first army music school was founded to educate army future band members, with Ernst Michael Mangel, who came from Hungary and taught wind instruments.⁵ At the same time, the need for opera houses⁶ and concert halls arose, where the European officials could for listen to the kind of music they were accustomed to. From the 1840s onwards, the first opera houses appeared in Athens, where Italian troupes presented Italian operas⁷ (Fig. 1).

⁴ About the main types of schools in the Kingdom of Greece, the position of the music lesson in their programs and the objectives of teaching music in Greek schools of the 19th century, see: Maria Barbaki, "The educational goals of the music lesson in the schools of Greece in the 19th century", in *Conference Papers of the 5th International Conference "International and European Trends in Education and their impact on the Greek Educational System"*, Vol. 1, ASPETE-GAPMET, ed. Katerina Kasimatis, Maria Argyriou (Athens: September 26-28, 2014), 210-218; Katy Romanou and Maria Barbaki, "Music education in Nineteenth-Century Greece: Its institutions and their contribution to urban musical life", *Nineteenth-Century Music Review* 8 (2011), 57-84: 77-78, http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S1479409811000061, [doi:10.1017/S1479409811000061](https://doi.org/10.1017/S1479409811000061).

⁵ Spyros Moutsenigos, *Neohellenic music. A contribution to its history* (Athens: 1958), 307; Baroutas, *Musical life in Athens*, 18.

⁶ About the operative activity in Athens during Ottoman period, see: Konstantinos Sampanis, "The opera in Athens during the Ottoman period (1833-1863) through press publications and travelers of the time" (Ph.D. diss., Ionian University, 2011).

⁷ Giorgos Sakallieros, "Transitions of style and texture in Greek Art music (19th-20th centuries): A historical and critical Approach," *Mousikologia* 20 (2011), 215-238: 219.

Figure 1

View of Athens in 1841.⁸



As the time passed, musical life in the capital became more complex. The 1870s marked a progressive trend in every aspect of Greek social and intellectual life, characterized by the blossoming of various societies and institutions.⁹ Gradually, short- or longer-lived music associations, such as music and philharmonic societies, wind bands, mandolinatas, and choirs) were opened, and ensembles were formed that disseminated music to the lower classes. These schools and ensembles were originally under the supervision and guidance of German musicians, as well as some important Ionian musicians and composers that began to settle in Athens from 1850 onwards and proved a decisive influence on Athenian musical life.¹⁰ The Athens Conservatory was founded in 1872, and it was the first music institution in the capital of Greece. Since then, music teaching was reinforced by a more general musical education, which supplemented the study of an instrument with lessons in advanced theory.

⁸ Source: <http://www.paliaathina.com/gr/pages/413/mia-spania-apeikonisi-tis-athinas-toy-1841.html> (accessed 25/1/2021).

⁹ Maria Barbaki, "The first musical societies of Athens and Piraeus and their contribution to musical education (1871-1909)" (Ph.D. diss., National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, 2009), 15.

¹⁰ Sakallieros, "Transitions of style and texture," 220.

1863/1864-1883: Childhood and adolescence in Athens. The Hadjikonsta Orphanage and the Athens Conservatory

This was the background against which Eurysthenes Ghizas was born, an exceptional case in 19th-century Greek music. He is the first Greek flutist with a significant career in Greece and abroad as a soloist and principal flutist in great European opera orchestras. After graduating from the Athens Conservatory, he left Greece to continue his music studies abroad. He kept traveling, giving concerts, and going on tournées in Europe and America until his early death in 1902.

He was born in 1863/1864¹¹ in Athens into a well-to-do family, for which little information is known. At a young age, he became an inmate of the Hadjikonsta Orphanage after his father's death, who had been head of that institution.¹²

The Hadjikonsta Orphanage was founded in 1856 in Athens. This institution contributed significantly to the education of destitute boys in Greece. Music was taught since 1873 and was considered by its administration as a vital part of the curriculum. "The relief and enjoyment that are instilled every day into the orphans' pure souls through music are not only important and fertile but also necessary and indispensable within the institution," according to a report of Hadjikonsta Orphanage.¹³ Inmates entered the institution between their 8th and 12th year and left at 15. They were taught reading, writing, basic arithmetic, music, drawing, and

¹¹ According to the Archive of the Archdiocese in Vienna, Ghisas was born on 1.5.1864 (following the Julian Calender). Petros Stergiopoulos, "Dear Mr Ghisas...; Gustav Mahler invites a Greek flutist to the Vienna Philharmonic," *Neos Mousikos Hellinomnimon* 5 (January-April 2020), 5-57: 7, 8, 54. Although according to the Greek National Documentation Centre, the Greek National Hellenic Research Foundation and the research of Athanasios Trikoupis in the Historical Archive of the Friends of Music Society and in the Archive of the University of Music and Performing Arts in Vienna, Ghisas was born in 1863. "Gkizas Evrysthenis," National Documentation Centre, accessed May, 4, 2020, <http://pandektis.ekt.gr/pandektis/handle/10442/60513>; Athanasios Trikoupis, "Greek students at the first Conservatory in Vienna (Konservatorium der Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Wien). A historical approach through the Institution's Archives," *Greek Musical Celebrations 2014*, 10th year – dedicated to the hundredth anniversary of the founding of the Thessaloniki State Conservatory– (2014), 1-10: 1, 4.

¹² Barbaki, "The first musical societies," 197.

¹³ *Annual review of the Georgios and Aikaterini Chatzikostas Orphanage for the year 1905* (Athens: Estia, 1906); *The celebration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Georgios and Ekaterini Hadjikonsta Orphanage, on October 25th 1931* (Athens: Pysos Printing House, 1931), 12; Maria Barbaki, The role of music in the education of young male workers in nineteenth-century Greece: the case of charity institutions," *Music Education Research* 17:3, 327-339: 330-331, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14613808.2014.930113>.

religious catechism. In addition, they were trained in one of the following sectors: sewing, shoemaking, joinery, blacksmithing, and weaving.¹⁴

Ghisas chose to be trained in sewing¹⁵ so that after his graduation, he could become a tailor. However, he took his first music lessons during that period, and his gift for music showed. He participated in many activities organized inside and outside the Orphanage. He acquired considerable experience, at a relatively early age, as a flutist in the wind orchestra of the Orphanage, which consisted of thirty orphans.¹⁶

The collaboration between the Hadjikonsta Orphanage and the Athens Conservatory began in 1873, which turned out to be very important for Ghisas' future. From 1872, the first year of operation of the Athens Conservatory, flute teaching was included in its curriculum, and Panayiotis Aktipis was the first flute teacher. Many important flutists graduated from his class; among them, Eurysthenes Ghisas was the most outstanding.¹⁷

In 1873, the Conservatory's first wind orchestra consisted of orphans, and its operation lasted from 12.5.1873 until 30.6.1876.¹⁸ This way, the Athens Conservatory gained more students, and the Orphanage offered its inmates high-standard skills free of charge.¹⁹

Ghisas' name first appeared in the *Register of male students* of the Athens Conservatory on 12.5.1873, in which he was the 13th student for that year. The 10-year-old orphan was registered as a "tailor" with other inmates of the Hadjikonsta Orphanage. Furthermore, it is worth noting that he got the highest grade in vocal lessons and began studying the flute with Aktipis on 4.2.1874.²⁰ As a flutist of the

¹⁴ *Rules and regulations of the Georgios and Ekaterini Hadjikonsta Orphanage* (Athens: N. G. Inglessi Royal Printing House, 1892), 12; *Rules and regulations of the Georgios and Ekaterini Hadjikonsta Orphanage* (Athens: Ioannis Varotsis Printing House, 1913), 4; *Deltion tis Estias* 123, 6.5.1879.

¹⁵ *Register of male students 1873-1874*, Athens Conservatory Archive.

¹⁶ Maria Barbaki, "Mousikoi thiasoi, wind-bands in Athens in the end of 19th century," *Polyphonia* 6 (2005), 7-34: 7, 9, 19.

¹⁷ Theodora Iordanidou, "The Flute Class and the Presence of Flutists in the Athens Conservatory from the Beginning of its Operation until 1940," in *Proceedings of the 11th Interdepartmental Musicological Conference "Modernity and Tradition" (on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of Nikos Skalkotas' death)*, ed. Ioannis Fulias et al. (Thessaloniki: Hellenic Musicological Society, 2020), 105-122: 109-114.

¹⁸ The other two bands were the *Band of Technicians and Industrialists* (duration of operation: 19.4.1875-11.12.1878) and the *Parnassos Society Band of Indigent Children* (duration of operation: 1.6.1883-1.9.1884). Myrto Fatourou, "Bands related with the Athens Conservatory through the Conservatory's archive material and press" (Master diss., Ionio University, 2016), 14, 35, 39, 63.

¹⁹ Maria Pachnisti, "The Athens Conservatory (1871-1873): about its foundation through its archive sources" (Master diss., Ionio University, 2016), 52; Stergiopoulos, "Dear Mr Ghisas...; Gustav Mahler invites," 9.

²⁰ *Register of male students 1873-1874*. Athens Conservatory Archive.

wind orchestra, he also received music lessons from Franz Emken²¹ and Georg Geidemberger.²²

His teachers at the Athens Conservatory soon detected the potential of the musically gifted child. As an inmate of the Orphanage, Ghisas participated in his first student concert on 9.3.1875. He performed, along with three flute classmates, the work *Flute Quartett [Tetraphonia Plagiavlon]*, composed by Alexandros Katakouzinou,²³ curator of the Conservatory.²⁴ He probably also participated as a wind orchestra member at the

²¹ Franz Emken was born in 1.1.1822 in Epste in, Bavaria. He initially enlisted as a volunteer in the Greek military wind orchestras. In addition to his teaching duties at the Hadjikonsta Orphanage, from 1877 to 1884 he taught clarinet, double bass and conducting of a wind orchestra at the Athens Conservatory. Kalogeropoulos, «Εμκεν Φραντς [Emken Franz]», *The Dictionary of Hellenic Music*, Vol. 2, 190; Barbaki, “The first musical societies,” 181 and Fatourou, “Bands related with the Athens Conservatory,” 19, 20;

Barbaki, “*Mousikoi thiasoi*,” 9; Fatourou, “Bands related with the Athens Conservatory through the Conservatory’s archive material and press,” 12, 13.

²² Georg Geidemberger or Gaidemberger was born in 1826. He was a Bavarian musician and conductor of the 19th century and a distinguished member of the Greek Military Music, of which he was also chief musician for several years. In 1852 he enlisted as a volunteer musician having served for five years in the music of the Bavarian army. In 1862 he was promoted to chief musician and in 1878 he was awarded the Silver Cross of the Savior. In 1890 he was promoted to lieutenant chief musician and was appointed music teacher at the School of Guards (Σχολή Ευελπίδων) until 1893. He taught mainly brass in many bands of Athenian music societies. He was deputy director of the Philharmonic Society *Euterpi* in all the years of its operation, where he taught violin and brass. From 1874 to 1894 he taught cello, brass, instrumentation and conducting of a wind orchestra at the Athens Conservatory. In addition, he had taught and conducted the band of the Hadjikonsta Orphanage and the *Band of Technicians and Industrialists*. In 1884 he took over the direction of the band of the *Parnassos* Literary Society, which previously belonged to the Athens Conservatory. Geidemberger played also an important role in the musical development of Piraeus, being in charge of the band of the Zannis Orphanage since 1887 and for about five years. Moreover, he took over the band of the music association of Pireus, *Melpomeni*, (1872-15.9.1874) and conducted the band of the Piraeus Philharmonic (9.1892-1894). He died in August 1894. There is an article in the newspaper *Efimeris* that describes in detail his contribution. (*Efimeris*, 10.8.1894). Takis Kalogeropoulos, «Γαϊδεμβέργκερ Ροδόλφος [Gaidemberger Rudolph]», *The Dictionary of Hellenic Music. From Orpheus to the Present Day*, Vol. 1 (Athens: Gialleli Edition, 1998), 434; Barbaki, “The first musical societies,” 180, 181; Fatourou, “Bands related with the Athens Conservatory,” 19, 20.

²³ Alexandros Katakouzinou (1824-1892) was the first who took over the management of Athens Conservatory informally from its foundation in 1871 until 1891. He had been the director of the choir of the Holy Trinity Church in Odessa and came to Athens in 1870, invited by Queen Olga. In Athens Katakouzinou founded and conducted the polyphonic choir of the palace church, while teaching at Arsakeion and at the Athens Conservatory. Additionally, he composed operas, school songs and music for performances of ancient Greek tragedies. Romanou, *Greek Art music in Modern times*, 115.

²⁴ Eurysthenes Ghisas, Anastasios Tzavaras, Michael Daskalakis, and Menas Moschonas were the four flutists who took part in that concert. Student Concert Programme of 9.3.1875 at the Athens Conservatory, Athens Conservatory Archive.

performance of *Poikilodiai* (a potpourri of excerpts) from Bellini's *Norma* at the same concert.²⁵

On 23.5.1876, he took part in the second student concert of the Athens Conservatory, in which the Wind Orchestra and the Conservatory Theatre Orchestra, under the direction of Geidemberger, performed mostly opera excerpts. Ghisas' name is also included in a student concert of June 1877 in which teachers and students participated under the direction of Katakouzinis: the proceeds were donated to the National Defense Fund.²⁶

After studying for four years at the Conservatory as an inmate of the Hadjikonsta Orphanage, Ghisas' graduation examination took place in 1878, and he passed with top marks and distinctions. After that, Aktipis asked the Conservatory Council to allow Ghisas to continue studying at the Conservatory in his class as a select student to improve his technique.²⁷ After that, 16-year-old Ghisas enrolled in Aktipis' official flute class in 1879 and attended lessons for four years until 1883.²⁸

His apprenticeship with Aktipis, Geidemberger, and Emken must have played a significant role in developing his musical perception. Young Ghisas set an example for the other students to follow, won scholarships, and, through his accomplishments, became famous in the artistic circles of the Conservatory and the entire city. As a result, he was hired as a member of the orchestra of the *Boukouras Theater* by impresario Kostopoulos in 1879.²⁹ In that orchestra, he could perform many famous operas by European composers, such as Bellini, Verdi, and Gounod. 18-year-old Spyros Samaras also worked in the Boukouras Theater orchestra during that year and conducted his *Sinfonia*,³⁰ which was probably his first symphonic work.³¹

Ghisas repeatedly excelled in annual exams as a student in Aktipis' official flute class. He took part in many concerts organized by the Conservatory and in charity concerts, either as a soloist or an orchestral member. On 17.5.1880 he participated in a concert with his colleague Nikolas Staes, teacher of the Conservatory, and the talented cellist Rodolfo Geidemberger. Excerpts from Wagner's *Parsifal* were first

²⁵ Student Concert Programme of 9.3.1875 at the Athens Conservatory, Athens Conservatory Archive.

²⁶ Barbaki, "The first musical societies," 294, 300.

²⁷ "Aktipis' request 15.5.1878. Incoming Documents 1878," *Correspondence*, Athens Conservatory Archive.

²⁸ Fatourou, "Bands related with the Athens Conservatory," 17, 18; Barbaki, "The first musical societies," 197.

²⁹ Kostopoulos hired flutist Tzavaras too. *Efimeris*, 25.2.1879; Barbaki, *ibid.*

³⁰ Stella Kourmpana, "Young Samaras in Athens," *Mousikos Hellinomnimon* 10 (September-December 2011), 11-18: 15, 16.

³¹ Stergiopoulos, "Dear Mr Ghisas...", 16.

performed in Greece, and the proceeds were donated to Rodolfo Geidemberger to continue his cello studies abroad.³²

1883-1887 Studies at the Vienna Conservatory

In 1883, the minister of education Konstantinos Lombardos awarded Ghisas a scholarship of three thousand drachmas to continue his studies in Vienna upon the recommendation of M. Renieris, President of the Council of the Athens Conservatory. His performance in the entrance exams at the Vienna Conservatory³³ impressed the members of the jury. They were surprised and positively impressed by the high level of a young musician who had studied music in Greece.³⁴

Ghisas began studying at the Vienna Conservatory in September 1883 in Roman Kukula's³⁵ flute class. Harmony, counterpoint, and composition were three more subjects that Ghisas studied in Vienna.³⁶ Kukula's teaching method, based on Theobald Böhm's system, is dominant until now. Ghisas was probably aware of it, although it is a matter of research if Aktipis was familiar with the Böhm flute and if he had taught some basic principles in Athens. It would also be interesting to know if Ghisas performed on an old German-system flute or a Böhm flute in his entrance exams at the Vienna Conservatory. Nevertheless, the young Greek flutist was so talented that he became acquainted with the new flute quickly and effectively, so both his audition and his first examination at the Vienna Conservatory in the winter

³² Barbaki, "The first musical societies," 308, 315.

³³ The Vienna Conservatory (Konservatorium der Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Wien) is one of the first institutions for musical education in Europe. It was founded in the second decade of the 19th century and renamed to Vienna State Academy of Music during the first decade of the 20th century. Trikoupis, "Greek students at the first Conservatory," 1.

³⁴ Dionysios Lavragas, "Kallitechnia. Eurysthenes Ghisas," *Ta Panathinaia*, III, 15.12.1902, 152.

³⁵ Viennese flutist Roman Kukula (1851-1908/1909) was Associate Professor in the Vienna Conservatory since 1881. Two years later, he became officially flute Professor after the death of his mentor Albert-Franz Doppler (1821-1883), a renowned virtuoso flutist, composer and founder of the Vienna Court Opera. Kukula was a proponent of the new Böhm system, and flute candidates were examined according to that system in their entrance exams (audition). At the same time, he was principal flutist in the orchestra of the Vienna Court Opera, and showed great respect and appreciation for Gustav Mahler. Christian Merlin, *Die Wiener Philharmoniker Band I: Das Orchester und seine Geschichte von 1842 bis heute*, trans. Michaela Spath (Wien: Wiener Philharmoniker, Amalthea Verlag, 2017), 64-65; Christian Merlin, *Die Wiener Philharmoniker Band II: Die Musiker und Musikerinnen von 1842 bis heute*, trans. Michaela Spath (Wien: Wiener Philharmoniker, Amalthea Verlag, 2017), 94; Stergiopoulos, "Dear Mr Ghisas...; Gustav Mahler invites," 21. For a photograph of the artist see: <https://oldthing.de/1905-Roman-Kukula-Floetist-flutist-Wien-Oesterreich-Austria-Floete-flute-Portrait-0030661664> (accessed 15.1.2021)

³⁶ Trikoupis, "Greek students at the first Conservatory," 5.

of 1884 were successful.³⁷ Ghisas was already a mature musician when he started his studies in Vienna, proving the importance of his apprenticeship in Aktipis' class.

Ghisas' first concerts in Vienna

Ghisas more than justified the recommendation of his teachers in Athens: while still a second-year student at the Vienna Conservatory, he passed all his exams with top marks and frequently acted as a substitute in the orchestra of the Vienna Court Opera when his teacher Kukula was absent.³⁸ His choice of and preference for Ghisas indicates that Kukula deeply trusted and appreciated the skills of his Greek student. Being principal flutist in a top-class orchestra requires excellent responsibility, musicality, the ability to cooperate with the other orchestra members, perceive the conductor's wishes, and collaborate well with other musicians –mainly with the other woodwind principals–, and lead the flute section. It is certain that Kukula, a mature flutist, trusted twenty-year-old Ghisas enough to choose him among all his students and other flute players to be his substitute.

Being the principal flutist in the orchestra of the Vienna Court Opera should be a great challenge for a second-year student who would have had a different experience previously. Nevertheless, he performed many concerts as a member of the orphanage wind orchestra and the opera orchestra of the *Boukouras Theater*. These performances markedly helped him cope with this highly demanding job.

Very soon, Ghisas' great success in Vienna became well known back in Athens, and the Athenian press started reporting on the activities of the young Greek flutist. Furthermore, the *Annual Activity Report* of the Athens Conservatory refers to his achievements with flattering comments:

[Ghisas] justified his teachers' recommendations and the Council's choice. He is making great progress in his studies in Vienna, and he has been chosen to substitute for own teacher in the orchestra of the Vienna Court Opera when he is absent. This indicates how much they value his musicality.³⁹

Ghisas not only participated in concerts as a member of the orchestra of the Vienna Court Opera but while still an undergraduate student of the Vienna Conservatory, he gave recitals. In 1887, he graduated from Kukula's class with unanimous distinction, first prize, and a silver medal. The latter had also been given to Kukula eight years

³⁷ Stergiopoulos, "Dear Mr Ghisas...", 21; Kalogeropoulos, *The Dictionary of Hellenic Music*, Vol. 1 "Γκίζας Ευρυσθένης [Ghisas Eurysthenes]," 503.

³⁸ *Deltion tis Estias* 443, 23.6.1885, 2.

³⁹ Music and Dramatic Society, *Activity Report from 1.1.1883 to 31.12.1885* [Μουσικός και Δραματικός Σύλλογος, *Έκθεσις των Πεπραγμένων από 1ης Ιανουαρίου 1883 μέχρι 31ης Δεκεμβρίου 1885*] (Athens: Anestes Konstantinides Printing House, 1886), 8.

earlier. During the award ceremony, Ghisas performed *Chanson d' amour*,⁴⁰ a very popular piece in Vienna, composed by Doppler.⁴¹ Moreover, *Deltion tis Estias* wrote about his graduation:

The Athens Conservatory graduate, Mr. Eurysthenes Ghisas, took his graduation examination at the Vienna Conservatory with great success. Among many candidates, the young Greek flutist received his diploma, first prize and a medal of honour. The value of this medal is excellent, in view of the fact that, among 150 graduates of this institution, only 18 have been awarded it, and in the flute class, the last one was awarded eight years ago.⁴²

Concerts in Europe

After graduating from the Vienna Conservatory in 1887, Ghisas visited many European cities, especially those with sizeable Greek expatriate communities, to give concerts. In the meantime, Panayiotis Aktipis died suddenly in 1886, and in Athens Conservatory, it was expected that Ghisas would be the successor of his former flute teacher. Two pieces of evidence indicate that when Ghisas was still in Vienna during August 1887, he was notified via telegraph that he was appointed flute Professor at the Athens Conservatory. The first one is a poster of the concert given in Baden on 5.8.1887, where Ghisas performed music by the composer Terschak. This poster mentions Ghisas as a “Vienna Conservatory award-winning virtuoso flutist and flute professor of the Athens Conservatory” (Fig. 2). The second one is the *Weekly Report [Deltio tis evdomados]*, according to which: “The Vienna Conservatory honors graduate Mr. Eurysthenes Ghisas has been appointed flute teacher in our Conservatory.”⁴³

⁴⁰ *Neues Wiener Tagblatt* (Tages-Ausgabe), 13.7.1887.

⁴¹ Stergiopoulos, “*Dear Mr Ghisas...; Gustav Mahler invites,*” 24.

⁴² *Deltion tis Estias* 547, 21.6.1887.

⁴³ Stergiopoulos, “*Dear Mr Ghisas...; Gustav Mahler invites,*” 26, 27.

Figure 2

Poster of the concert by the pianist Irma Willer with the collaboration of Eurysthenes Ghisas and the cellist Moriz Schildkrett in 5.8.1887 in Baden.⁴⁴



He returned from Vienna to Athens via Trieste and Odessa, two cities with large Greek communities at that time, and he performed concerts that received enthusiastic reviews from the local press, such as the following:

The expatriate flutist Eurysthenes Ghisas recently appeared in a brilliant concert. Many important Greek people were present, and the entire audience was impressed by the performance. The Greek artist is highly skilled, and he makes his flute seem alive when blowing into it. His sound is magic. In all the Trieste press are found reports about this concert. The next day Mr. Ghisas performed at the German club, where lots of people of many nationalities applauded him. Mr. Ghisas left Trieste to return to Greece.⁴⁵

Ghisas became very famous in Greece, especially Athens, after his great success in Vienna and his first concerts in Odessa and Trieste. He was equally recognized as the

⁴⁴ Stergiopoulos, *ibid.*, 27.

⁴⁵ *Deltion tis Estias* 568, 15.11.1887, 1.

Corfiot composer Spyros Samaras (1861-1917),⁴⁶ who also enjoyed broad appreciation from Greek and European audiences and the press. The *Akropolis* newspaper reports on these two former colleagues at the Athens Conservatory:

As Samaras presents his opera *Flora Mirabilis* in many theatres, thus glorifying himself and our country, Ghisas will follow in his colleague's footsteps. These two artists will represent Greece in the western world. We present to the music world of Europe one composer and one soloist who are no ordinary musicians; they are artists of great skills.⁴⁷

The Press follows Ghisas closely and urges him to disseminate Greek music:

Greece will show the whole music world a star flutist, E. Ghisas. But his mission is much more important [...] Greece needs to have its own National Music School, and we hope that Mr. Ghisas will set the fundamental principles of it. Besides, we are informed [...] that this is also his ambition.⁴⁸

However, it was not Ghisas but three Greek composers who set the fundamental principles of the Greek National School through several articles, manifestos, and compositions. They were Dionysios Lavragas, Georgios Lambelet at the end of the 19th century, and Manolis Kalomiris in the early 20th century.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Indicative bibliography for Samaras' life, work and career: George Leotsakos, *Spyros Samaras (1861-1917): The Great Injustice* (Athens: Benaki Museum Publications, 2013); Dimosthenis K. Fistouris, "The melodic line and the vocal writing in the operas of Spyros Samaras (Musical-dramatic analysis and aesthetic interpretation)" (Ph.D. diss., National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, 2011); Aris Garoufalis and Haris Xanthoudakis, "Archival documents of the Athens Conservatory for Spyros Samaras," *Mousikos Hellinomnimon* 9, 2011, 19-33; Kostas Kardamis, "Spyros Samaras and the Corfu Philharmonic Society", in *Spyridon Philiskos Samaras Anniversary Volume for the 150th Anniversary of his birth*" (Corfu: Corfu Philharmonic Society, 2011), 80-114; Stella Kourmpana, "Young Samaras," 11-18.

⁴⁷ B. "Kallitechniki Kinisis. Mr Eurysthenes Ghisas," *Akropolis*, 11.5.1888.

⁴⁸ "Mr Eur. Ghisas in Odessa," *Akropolis*, 21.12.1887.

⁴⁹ Two Ionian composers, Dionysios Lavragas (1860-1941) from Kefalonia and Georgios Lambelet (1875-1945) from Corfu, paved the way for the creation of the Greek National School of Music, following the example of other countries in Eastern Europe, Russia, Scandinavia and partly the Mediterranean, which existed from the middle of the 19th century. These two forerunner composers were active in the direction of the creation and operation of the Greek National School of Music through some of their compositions, such as *First Greek Suite* [Πρώτη Ελληνική Σουίτα] by Lavragkas and *The Village Fair* [Η Γιορτή] by Lambelet. In addition, in the case of Lambelet, this was also achieved through written texts. These are his article "National Music," published on 15.11.1901 in *Panathinaia* magazine and his text "Nationalism in Art and Greek Folk Music," published in the series *Epiphylides* by Eleftheroudakis in 1928. Both of them present and analyze the roots, aspirations and goals of the Greek National School of Music. Leading figure of the National School in 20th century, both ideologically and synthetically, was Manolis Kalomiris (1883-1962). Giannis Belonis, "Manolis Kalomiris' Chamber Music" (Ph.D. diss., National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, 2003), 14, 15; Dimitrios A. Hamoudopoulos, *The rise of Art music in Greece and the creation of the National School. Reviews and Thoughts* (Athens: Estia Bookstore, 1980), 63-65. More details about the conditions for the creation of the National School, its characteristics and its ideology, see: Olympia Fragou-Psychopaidi,

During 1888, Ghisas traveled widely, appearing in numerous concerts. After Trieste and Odessa, he performed in Constantinople, Braila, Corfu, and Thessaloniki. At that time, Thessaloniki was under Ottoman rule, yet a large proportion of the population of this town were Greeks who shared this town with Ottomans, Jews, and Armenians. In Thessaloniki, Ghisas collaborated with the brilliant pianist Dimitrios Lalas (1844-1911). Lalas had returned and was living in Thessaloniki after a long period of studies and work in Germany. He was a gifted pianist and probably conductor of the Thessaloniki Philharmonic Society.⁵⁰ Ghisas and Lalas gave their successful concert on 2.3.1888 at the "Italian Theatre." They performed the *Fantaisie caractéristique*, op. 16, by Joachim Andersen, and the *Fantaisie Pastorale Hongroise*, op.26, by Albert Franz Doppler, both works for flute and piano. Then Lalas performed three pieces for a piano solo by Mendelssohn, and at the end, Ghisas performed a piece by Wilhelm Popp for a flute solo. The audience was enraptured, and Ghisas was presented with a wreath made of gold-plated bay leaves.⁵¹

During 1887 and 1888, there were numerous reports in the press about Ghisas and his performances. However, there is no mention of him teaching at the Athens Conservatory, although he was supposed to have replaced Aktipis in 1887. Moreover, the present research in the Athens Conservatory archives has yet to find evidence of any teaching activities of Ghisas in that institution.

After five years of absence, Ghisas performed a concert in Athens on 31.3.1888, which was an artistic highlight of that year.⁵²

All the Athenian music lovers, politicians, diplomats, and intellectuals were present [...] Mr. D. Stefanovik Skylitsis was interested in sponsoring this new

The National School of Music. Problems and Ideology (Athens: Foundation of Mediterranean Studies, 1990).

⁵⁰ Dimitrios Lalas had studied in Munich and had subsequently worked with Richard Wagner. Between Wagner and Lalas had developed a strong friendship. Bibliography for Dimitrios Lalas: Sabine Koch, "From Wagner and beyond: Demetrios Lalas' apprenticeship and career in West Europe," in *7th Interdepartmental Musicological Conference under the aegis of the Greek Musicological Society*, ed. Ioannis Fulfias et al. (Thessaloniki: Greek Musicological Society, 2016), 156-162; Eleftheria Daleziou, "The Composer Dimitris Lalas and the Macedonian Paian: Two unpublished letters from the Ion Dragoumis Archive in the Gennadeios Library," *Mousikos Hellinomnimon* 10 (September-December 2011), 19-25; Stella Kourmpana, "Aspects of Wagnerism in the Greek 19th century" (Ph.D. diss., Ionian University, 2017), 77-102; George Leotsakos, "Dimitrios Lalas. The Macedonian student and intimate of Richard Wagner (1844-1911)," in *Wagner and Greece*, Athens Megaron Music Hall, 1992, 207-245; Petros Papageorgiou, "Dimitrios Stergiou Lalas and his work," *Macedonian Calendar 1913*, 227-238.

⁵¹ "From Thessaloniki," *Efimeris*, 18.3.1888. For a gravure of Ghisas's portrait, published in the *Poikili Stoa* magazine in 1888, see https://www.searchculture.gr/aggregator/edm/pandektis_prosopa/000085-10442_60513 (accessed 12.12.2020).

⁵² Barbaki, "The first musical societies," 315, 316.

Marsyas of Athens [...] The audience was enchanted from the beginning of the concert, which started with Andersen's *Fantasia* [...].⁵³

This concert was not only an artistic event but a social one as well. Many eminent Athenian members did not miss the opportunity to listen to the famous Greek flutist, even if they had never heard the sound of the flute before. Among them was Dimitrios Stefanovik-Skylitsis, a wealthy expatriate. He had heard Ghisas for the first time in Constantinople and declared that he would send the Greek flutist to Paris at his own expense to study music composition.⁵⁴

Studying in Paris

Indeed, the Stefanovik-Skylitsis brothers financed Ghisas' music studies in Paris for the next two years.⁵⁵ Before going to Paris to continue his music studies, he performed three concerts for the Athens Conservatory.⁵⁶ One of them, given on 3.5.1888, was a benefit event for the needy Aktipis family.⁵⁷ About this last concert, the local press reports that "...although the Conservatory concert hall is not ideal from the point of view of acoustics, Mr. Ghisas was excellent. His fellow artists and himself gave a very successful concert".⁵⁸ The fact that Ghisas gave these concerts proves that, although he chose his career as a flutist in Europe over that of teaching at the Athens Conservatory, he was not unaware of the institution that hatched him.

There is no evidence to date about Ghisas' studies in Paris. It is unknown whether he studied exclusively composition or both composition and flute. Nor is it known where he studied. Had the Paris Conservatoire accepted him, or did he receive private lessons? In any case, no music composed by Ghisas has been found.

During his stay in Paris, Ghisas appeared in many concerts, with many reports about them. One of them was organized by the Greek community to celebrate the Greek Independence Day in 1889.⁵⁹ Ghisas's pianist, Michael Veloudios,⁶⁰ and violinist

⁵³ "A Celebration of the Flute," *Nea Efimeris*, 92, 1.4.1888, 4.

⁵⁴ *Nea Efimeris*, 72, 12.3.1888, 3.

⁵⁵ Barbaki, "The first musical societies," 197.

⁵⁶ The concerts were given on 16.4.1888, on 3.5.1888 and on 14.5.1888. Kalogeropoulos, *The Dictionary of Hellenic Music*, Vol. 1, "Ακτίπης Παναγιώτης [Aktipis Panayiotis]," 94; "Ghisas Eurysthenes," 503; Barbaki, "The first musical societies," 302, 304.

⁵⁷ *Efimeris*, no. 124, 3.5.1888, 3.

⁵⁸ *Efimeris*, no. 114, 23.4.1888, 3; *Efimeris*, no. 125, 4.5.1888, 2.

⁵⁹ Greek Independence Day is celebrated on March 25th.

⁶⁰ Veloudios had graduated from the Paris Conservatoire. Trikoupis, "Greek students at the first Conservatory," 5.

Ioannis Saripolos performed a “brilliant concert”⁶¹ “consisting of varied and difficult pieces of music composed by excellent composers before a large audience”⁶² and were warmly applauded.

On 7.5.1889, the day after the Grand Opening of the Paris International Exhibition, Ghisas participated in a concert at the Trocadero Palace⁶³ along with the French flutist Léon Fontbonne,⁶⁴ a graduate of the Liège Conservatory⁶⁵ (Fig. 3). The report on this concert bore the title “A duel of flutists,”⁶⁶ which indicates the high artistic standard of the two musicians. In the same concert, Fontbonne dedicated his composition *Olga Gavotte* to Queen Olga,⁶⁷ who was in the audience. At the same time, Ghisas played another composition by Fontbonne, *Pastoral*, in another concert, on 16.11.1890⁶⁸ and three years later in Patras.⁶⁹ Ghisas’ collaboration with acclaimed and renowned musicians undoubtedly contributed to maintaining and improving his artistic level.

⁶¹ F. Bolognini, “Paris, the 25th of March,” *Efimeris*, no. 92, 2.4.1889, 1, 2.

⁶² Many Greek nationals and important people from Greece, such as Dimitrios Vikelas, Yannis Psycharis, Ioannis Polemis attended that concert. F. Bolognini, *ibid*.

⁶³ The Trocadero Palace was built by architect Gabriel Davioud for the 1878 World Fair and hosted various events and concerts, mainly during international exhibitions until 1936. In 1937, it was renovated, and during 1985-2006 it was renovated again. Prominent orchestras and chamber music ensembles have performed in its two concert halls. One of them was the ensemble of the Wind Chamber Music Association headed by Paul Taffanel, founder of the French Flute School and professor at the Paris Conservatoire. “Trocadero,” Wikipedia, accessed January, 15, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trocadero#The_old_Palais_du_Trocadero; “Gabriel-Jean-Antoine Davioud,” *Oxford Reference*, accessed January, 15, 2021, <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095702342>; Edward Blakeman, *Taffanel: Genius of the flute* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 86, 87, 136.

⁶⁴ Léon Fontbonne was born in Clermont-Ferrand in central France in 1859, and moved to Belgium with his family as a child. There he was apprenticed as a newspaper printer and then turned to music studies. He studied flute and composition at the Conservatory of Liège with Edouard Tricot, and received his degree with distinction in 1877. Returning to France, he continued his studies, this time exclusively in composition, and began working as a flutist in symphony orchestras in Paris. From 1883 to 1908, he was flutist in the official orchestra and band of La musique de la Garde républicaine, where he became first flute, and often played the piccolo. He was a famous musician during the Belle Époque in France, and after working for 25 years as an orchestra musician, he continued as a composer, concert agent and conductor. He died in Paris in 1940. Bernard Duplaix, “Léon Fontbonne,” transl. Robert Bigio, Robert Bigio flutes pages, accessed February, 2, 2021, <http://robertbigio.com/fontbonne.htm>

⁶⁵ Stergiopoulos, “Dear Mr. Ghisas...”, 31.

⁶⁶ “A duel of flutists,” *Akropolis*, 17.5.1889.

⁶⁷ *Akropolis*, 1.6.1889.

⁶⁸ M. D. “Ghisas’ Concert,” *Nea Efimeris*, 18.11.1890.

⁶⁹ “Mr. Ghisas’ Concert,” *Efimeris*, 18.6.1893.

Figure 3

French flutist Léon Fontbonne.⁷⁰



Georgios Athinogenis, the wealthy Greek banker, based in Constantinople, visited Ghisas on one of his trips to Paris and offered him a precious present. “A silver flute manufactured with great art and value.”⁷¹ There is no further information about this instrument, although it was probably a Böhm flute. Stergiopoulos claims that it was bought in Paris, and manufactured by a French instrument maker, maybe Louis Lot.⁷²

Tournées

Ghisas gave recitals during 1890 in Marseille, Brussels, Alexandria, Athens, Ermoupolis (Syros Island), Vienna, and then in several cities in America. The American recitals brought him a reward of 50.000 drachmas.⁷³ The following year, he toured the Balkans and collaborated with the famous Catalan harpist Esmeralda Cervantes.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ Source: <http://robertbigio.com/fontbonne.htm> (accessed 2.2.2021).

⁷¹ *Nea Efimeris*, 11.11.1889.

⁷² Stergiopoulos, “Dear Mr Ghisas...; Gustav Mahler invites,” 33.

⁷³ *Nea Efimeris*, 25.12.1890; Stergiopoulos, *ibid.*, 33, 34; Kalogeropoulos, *The Dictionary of Hellenic Music*, “Γκίζας Ευρυσθένης [Ghisas Eurysthenes],” 504.

⁷⁴ For Cervantes’ life and career, see: Zoraida Isabel Ávila Peña, “Música, textos y filantropía en Esmeralda Cervantes: una arpista de la España romántica” (Ph.D. diss., University Complutense of Madrid, 2015).

During this period, the number of Ghisas' recitals in Greece decreased. One of his last Athens concerts was held on 15.11.1890, in which Ghisas collaborated with pianist Michael Veloudios, Swiss violinist (...) Nicole and cellist Rodolfo Geidemberger.⁷⁵ It was a cultural highlight of that year and the Athenian press reported on it for days.⁷⁶

In the summer of 1893, Ghisas appeared again in Greece. This time he did not play in the Athens Conservatory, but in Patras, Faliron, Kifissia, and at the Zappeion Megaron in Athens. The latter was a benefit concert for the artisans's guild. On 24.11.1893, he performed again in Thessaloniki with pianist (...) Bastianini, and in 1902 he visited Constantinople for another brilliant concert. This was his last one in a place with a large Greek population.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ "Ghisas' Concert," *Nea Efimeris*, 14.11.1890; "Eurysthenis Ghisas' Concert in the Conservatory," *Nea Efimeris*, 15.11.1890; "Ghisas' Concert," *Nea Efimeris*, 17.11.1890; M. D. "Ghisas' Concert," *Nea Efimeris*, 18.11.1890.

⁷⁶ Barbaki, "The first musical societies," 316.

⁷⁷ Stergiopoulos, "Dear Mr Ghisas...; Gustav Mahler invites," 35.

Principal Flutist in Opera Orchestras of Hamburg, Wiesbaden, Vienna

Ghisas' ever-decreasing concerts in Greece show his desire and intention to settle in Europe and to work there as an orchestra musician or a flute soloist. From 1890, Greek reports already inform us that Ghisas was hired as principal flute at the Vienna Court Opera.⁷⁸ However, the existing evidence shows that this did not happen until 1899. Before returning to Vienna, he lived in Hamburg (his wife's native town) and Wiesbaden. In both cities, Ghisas was the principal flutist in the opera house orchestra and continued giving recitals in many cities, such as Munich, Paris, Odessa, and Smyrna.⁷⁹

In 1898, Ghisas lived in Wiesbaden and started corresponding with Gustav Mahler (1860-1911). Mahler had also graduated from the Vienna Conservatory and, since September 1898, had held the position of director of the Vienna Court Opera. As evidenced by surviving correspondence kept today in the Austrian State Archives, Mahler invited Ghisas to take the place of principal flute in the orchestra. In his letters, Mahler informed Ghisas about his salary (1.380 forints) and the pension he could receive after working for 24 years (1.920 forints). Furthermore, there is detailed information about the exact time of Ghisas' appointment, according to which he worked in the Wiesbaden Opera until 1.12.1898, and from 1.1.1899, he stated that he could take up service in the Vienna Court Opera, and so he did⁸⁰ (Fig. 4).

Ghisas answered immediately, accepting Mahler's invitation. In his letter, he mentioned: "[...] in these duties I want to expend all my strength, diligence and dedication, to prove myself worthy of the great honor of this important position." His answer expresses appreciation for his future director, along with feelings of respect, satisfaction, warmth, and a sense of responsibility for the position assigned to him.⁸¹

⁷⁸ *Nea Efimeris*, 25.12.1890.

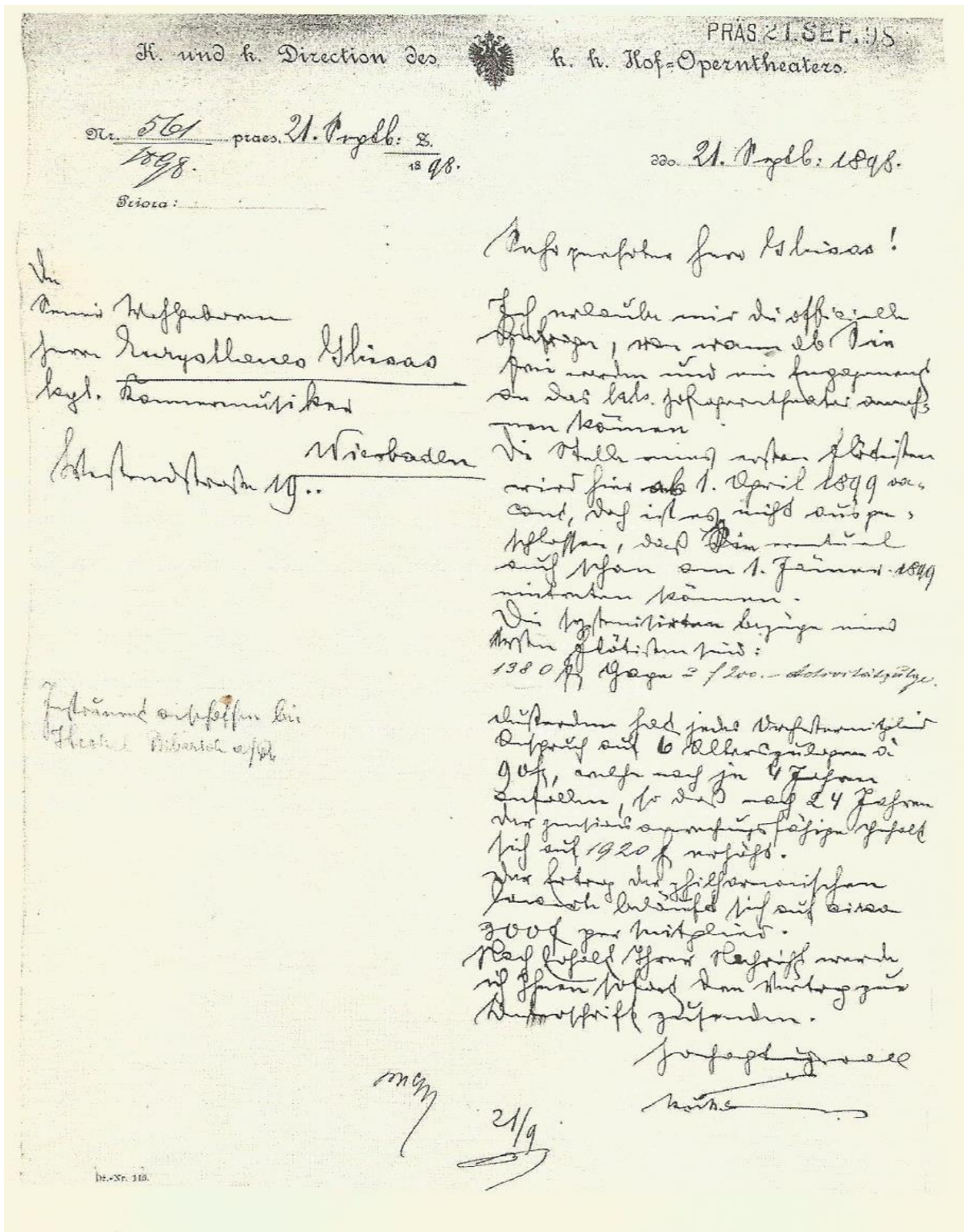
⁷⁹ Kalogeropoulos, *The Dictionary of Hellenic Music*, Vol.1, "Γκίζας Ευρυσθένης [Ghisas Eurysthenes]," 504; Stergiopoulos, "Dear Mr Ghisas...; Gustav Mahler invites," 37, 38, 40.

⁸⁰ Wiener Stadt und Ladesarchiv. Bestad/Einheit/Nr: 140 OPER/1898/550-765; 174 GEN:INT/1898/1300-1699, 70 SROPER/VERTRAGE G-J-561. The correspondence is quoted in an original text, and translated into Greek following research by Petros Stergiopoulos in the Vienna Archives at: Stergiopoulos, "Dear Mr Ghisas...; Gustav Mahler invites," 44-51.

⁸¹ Stergiopoulos, *ibid.*, 48, 49.

Figure 4

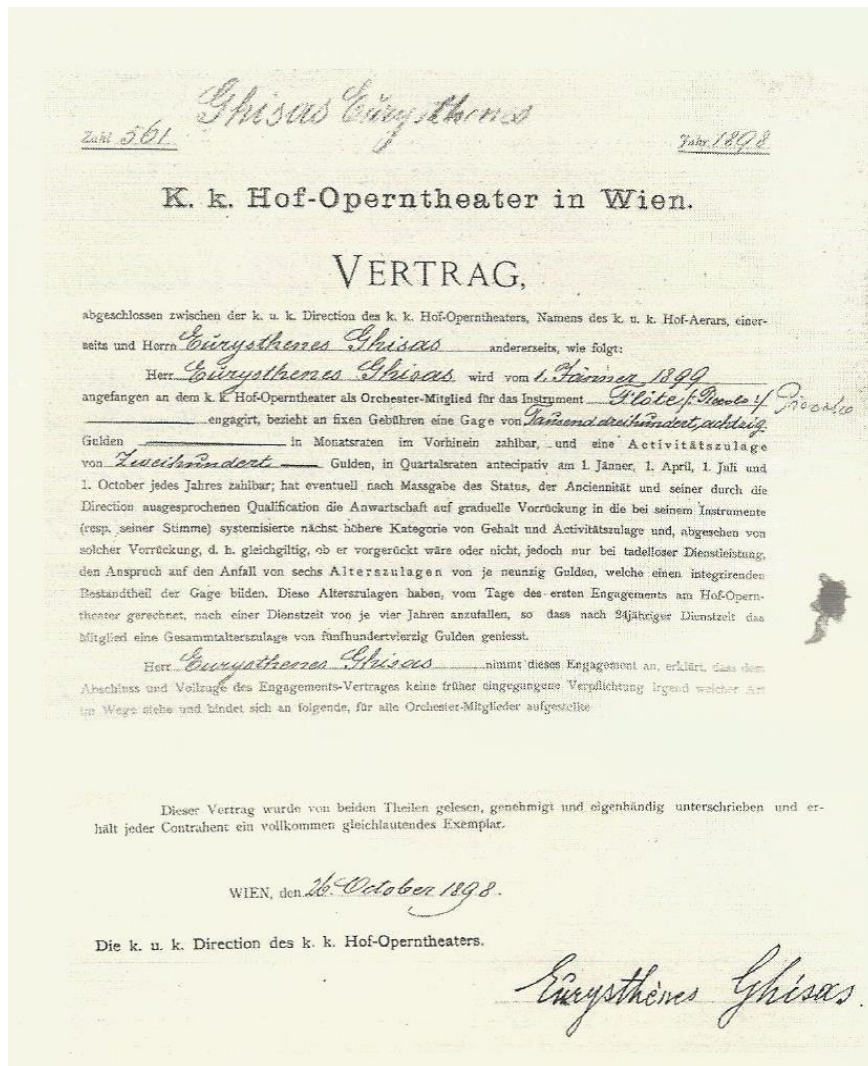
Mahler's letter to Ghisas on 21.9.1898.⁸²



⁸² Source: Stergiopoulos, *ibid.*, 45.

Mahler's invitation and decision to appoint Ghisas as principal flutist — probably without any audition— was highly honorary, especially for a Greek musician in the late 19th century. During this period, his reputation had grown enormously, making him one of his generation's most popular, sought after, and leading flutists throughout Europe. Another factor that may have contributed to this assignment is the fact that Ghisas had been tested as principal flutist in the orchestra of the Vienna Court Opera during his studies as Kukula's substitute, and his performance as a member of the orchestra must have left very positive impressions on the other musicians. Probably Wilhelm Jahn, the opera's director before Mahler, and the orchestra musicians had informed Mahler about Ghisas' quick adjustment to the orchestra while still young, and had assured Mahler about the suitability of Ghisas, confirming that he would be ideal for this position (Fig. 5).

Figure 5

Ghisas' contract with the Vienna Court Opera.⁸³

⁸³ Source: Stergiopoulos, "Dear Mr Ghisas...; Gustav Mahler invites," 52.

Ghisas signed his contract on 26.10.1898 and began working there on 1.1.1899, succeeding the former principal flutist Anton Unger. Details about his duties, obligations, his annual salary, and the way of receiving his payment were recorded in this contract. However, it is noteworthy that the newspaper “Die Zeit” reports one day after Ghisas’ death in 1902, that he had worked as principal flutist in the orchestra of the Vienna Court Opera for thirteen years. We may assume that Ghisas had collaborated with this orchestra temporarily, before he permanently and formally took his position at the beginning of 1899.⁸⁴

Vienna was, therefore the last stop of the great Greek flutist who settled in an apartment on Johann Strauss Gasse.⁸⁵ He was officially a member of one of the greatest orchestras in the world. He played with famous conductors, such as Mahler, who had been the director of the opera since 24.9.1898.⁸⁶ Despite his high status and prestige in the orchestra, Ghisas did not refuse support from his compatriots whenever they asked him, frequently appearing in concerts organized by the Greek community of Vienna. This fact shows his character’s simplicity, generosity, and willingness to support the Greek expatriates of Vienna.⁸⁷

Ghisas’ achievements include his participation in the orchestra of the famous Bayreuth Festival.⁸⁸ The Bayreuth Festival Orchestra is well known for inviting highly qualified musicians, and Ghisas’ participation in this world-famous festival is further proof of his reputation as an outstanding flute player. According to the Festival Programmes,⁸⁹ he participated in the Festivals of 1896, 1899, and 1902,⁹⁰ but it is questionable if he also participated in the Festivals of 1897 and 1898.⁹¹

⁸⁴ Stergiopoulos, “Dear Mr Ghisas...; Gustav Mahler invites,” 40, 52.

⁸⁵ Manolis Kalomiris, *My Life and my Art (Memoirs 1883-1908)* (Athens: Ministry of Culture and Sciences. Manolis Kalomiris Society, 1983), 56.

⁸⁶ Stergiopoulos, “Dear Mr Ghisas...; Gustav Mahler invites,” 41.

⁸⁷ Kalomiris, *My Life and my Art*, 57.

⁸⁸ Richard Wagner was the founder and the first director of the famous festival “Bayreuther Festspiele,” which began in 13.8.1876 in Bayreuth. “Historie,” Bayreuther Festspiele, accessed January, 11, 2021, www.bayreuther-festspiele.de/festspiele/historie/

⁸⁹ *Bayreuth 1896, Praktisches Handbuch für Festspielbesucher*, herausgegeben von Friedrich Wild (Leipzig und Baden-Baden: Constantin Wild's Verlag), 11, *Bayreuth 1899, Praktisches Handbuch für Festspielbesucher*, herausgegeben von Friedrich Wild (Leipzig und Baden-Baden: Constantin Wild's Verlag), 11 και *Bayreuth 1902, Praktisches Handbuch für Festspielbesucher*, herausgegeben von Friedrich Wild (Leipzig und Baden-Baden: Constantin Wild's Verlag), 31.

⁹⁰ His participation in the 1902 festival is also confirmed by Kalomiris, in: Manolis Kalomiris, “My Art and my Desires (Excerpt). A Greek musician in Vienna (Eurysthenes Ghisas) B’,” *Noumas* 389 (25.4.1910), 5-7: 5.

⁹¹ Kourmpana, “Aspects of Wagnerism in the Greek 19th century,” 104-106.

In the middle of 1901, Kalomiris started his music studies in Vienna, where he met the 37-year-old Ghisas for the first time. He warmly welcomed Kalomiris, helped him find lodgings, and since then, the two Greek musicians became friends. Ghisas gave Kalomiris free tickets for several concerts (*Philharmonische Konzerte*) of the Vienna Court Opera on Sundays under Mahler's baton.⁹²

Kalomiris writes about Ghisas in a way that shows that he greatly appreciated and admired the flutist. He calls him "a legend" and informs us about Ghisas' taste in music. "A truly excellent [...] eminent expatriate artist with a deeper worth, a special flutist, with his gods, Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven, Schubert, and his apostles, the Romantic composers. There were Wagner and Brahms a little further, and beyond that there was almost nothing for him."⁹³

Despite professional success, Ghisas' life was not easy. Although he lived in Vienna with his wife, their marriage was not happy, and there was no evidence of any children. "His wife came from Hamburg, was unbearable and made him unhappy, though he was very fond of her."⁹⁴ In addition, although Ghisas' income was high, huge debts, resulting from a spendthrift lifestyle, weighed him down.⁹⁵

The two friends were gradually drifting apart when, in the early winter of 1902, Kalomiris learned that Ghisas had got erysipelas and was in the Franz Joseph Hospital on the outskirts of Vienna. Kalomiris went to visit him, but it was too late. Earlier in the morning of that day, 1.12.1902, Ghisas had passed away (Fig. 6). Kalomiris, devastated by the loss of the great Greek flutist, modestly and movingly describes his funeral ceremony in the Greek church.⁹⁶

⁹² Kalomiris, *My Life and my Art*, 57, 59.

⁹³ *Ibid*, 56.

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 57.

⁹⁵ Stergiopoulos, "Dear Mr Ghisas...; Gustav Mahler invites," 40, 57.

²⁸ Kalomiris, *My Life and my Art*, 64, 65.

Figure 6

Extract from the record of Ghisas' death in the Vienna Archbishopric Registry.⁹⁷

1869	Dr. Anton Bruckner Dr. Max Schuppan Anton Schuppan	1. Dezember 1902 1/2 6 Uhr 24.)	Wohnort: Wien IV. Johann Strauss- gasse n. 26, 2. Stock Thür 17 Sterbeort: K. Franz Joseph- Spital	Eurysthenes Ghisas, Musiker geboren am 1/5 1864 in Athen, Griechenland, verheiratet Mutter: u. a. Athen, Griechenland	/ - / 38
		Lauchige Zellgewebs- entzündung der Brust		Am 4/12 1902 am Wiener Central-Friedhof.	

Moreover, Kalomiris remarked that

All the refined and elegant ladies and gentlemen of the Greek community could not collect funds to buy this great artist a proper grave, so Ghisas was buried in a common grave, more or less like Mozart.⁹⁸

On the other hand, a large part of the Vienna Court Opera staff, led by Mahler himself, honored Ghisas with their presence as he deserved, and the Vienna Court Opera covered the cost of his funeral.⁹⁹

Ghisas died very poor and left many debts. His creditors confiscated his furniture, which was of small value. Due to his sudden and so premature death, apart from the vacancy of his position in the orchestra, the last hopes both for the teaching position of the flute at the Athens Conservatory and for a succession of Kukula at the Vienna Conservatory were dashed. Ghisas was ambitious to succeed Kukula and become a flute professor at the Vienna Conservatory. According to Kalomiris, "Ghisas was sure that when Kukula left the Vienna Conservatory, he would be the next flute professor."¹⁰⁰ When the two Greek musicians had met by chance for the last time

⁹⁷ Source: Stergiopoulos, "Dear Mr Ghisas...; Gustav Mahler invites," 54.

⁹⁸ Kalomiris, *My Life and my Art*, 64, 65.

⁹⁹ *Ibid*, 65.

¹⁰⁰ Kalomiris, "My Art and my Desires (Excerpt)," 5.

about three weeks before Ghisas' death at the Vienna Conservatory, where Ghisas was acting as a substitute for Kukula, the Greek flutist had confessed to Kalomiris: "If I become flute professor at the conservatory, my income will double, not to mention the great honor; I will have fulfilled all my goals..."¹⁰¹

Epilogue

Eurysthenes Ghisas was an exceptional case, a very gifted musician. His remarkable career is significant not only for the history of 19th-century Greek music but also for the history of European music. He was neither a conductor nor a composer, an opera singer, pianist or violinist, artists who are generally given more opportunities for a soloist career, for participating in chamber music ensembles, or getting a position in a symphony orchestra, and who get a more comprehensive response from the public and different treatment from the press, as is the case to this day. He was a Greek flutist who significantly contributed to the history of the flute in Europe. It is no accident that Ghisas is mentioned in books and biographies about world-class flutists, such as Adolph Goldberg.¹⁰²

He was an ambassador of western Europe's art and music, especially in Greece. In the big cities of Greece, the Balkans, and everywhere in Europe where a Greek community was numerous, the audience became familiar with many works of the flute repertoire—both solo and chamber music—thanks to Ghisas. Audiences' response was always enthusiastic, and so were the press reviews.

His collaboration with important musicians, such as Dimitrios Lalas, Esmeralda Cervantes, and Léon Fontbonne, places him among the artistic elite of that period in Greece and abroad. In addition, he is the only Greek flutist until today who occupied so many positions as principal flutist in leading European opera orchestras in Hamburg, Vienna, Wiesbaden, and in the famous Bayreuth Festival.

Very few Greek musicians of his generation, or even of later generations, can compare with Ghisas' brilliant career and with the glory and recognition, he enjoyed among internationally acclaimed conductors and musicians, as well as European audiences. His achievements gain in importance if we consider that this man came from an orphanage; moreover, he received his basic musical education in Athens at a time when that city was artistically backward compared to the great European musical centers.

His innate talent enabled him to make such impressive progress in relation to other musicians, especially those from musically developed countries and to be on a

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Adolph Goldberg, *Porträts und Biographien hervorragender Flöten-Virtuosen – Dilettanten und Komponisten* (Möck: 1987).

par with them. This indisputable fact makes him such an important figure in Greek and European music.

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