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Cover: Aeschylus, *Hiketides* at the Delphic Festival in 1930.

Contents

Tradition Revived - The Open-air Performances of Greek Tragedies in France, Italy, Greece and Russia (1860-1960)*

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In 1995, during the Third Meeting of the International Society for the Classical Tradition (ISCT) in Boston, Hellmut Flashar pointed out that ancient plays have never been performed as often as in modern times.[1] It is obvious that the history of theatre in the 20th century cannot be written without lengthy chapters on modern performances of ancient Greek plays. In several instances, these performances can be regarded as landmarks in the history of theatre: Max Reinhardt's *Oedipus the King* in Munich and Berlin in 1910, the performances of Aeschylus and Euripides by the Greek Piraikon Theatron in the 1960s or Ariane Mnouchkine and the Théâtre du Soleil in the early 1990s, Tadashi Suzuki's interpretation of *The Trojan Women* in Tokyo in 1974 (also performed at the Olympic games in Los Angeles in 1984), Peter Stein's *Antikenprojekt* (Antiquity Project) in 1974 and his 7-hour-long *Oresteia* (1980), the same trilogy by the female group Raivoisat ruusut (Furious Roses) in Helsinki in the 1990s or the Euripides productions of the Royal Dramatic Theatre (Dramaten) in Stockholm in 1996-1997.[2] Of course, some ambitious performances ended in fiasco, like Mauno Manninen's production of Euripides' *Bacchae* in Helsinki in the 1960s.

In this article I shall focus on an important chapter in the reception of Greek plays, especially tragedies, namely the performances given in the ruins of ancient Greek and Roman theatres and amphitheatres and in other open-air venues (temple areas and stadiums) in the latter part of the 19th century and in the 20th century, until the beginning of the 1960s, when the Epidaurus festival had established its fame. Performances of Greek and Roman plays have occasionally been given in surroundings other than ancient theatres or other classical monuments[3] but, except for the performances

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* This essay is a revised version of several papers on modern performances of Greek dramas read on various occasions between 1997 and 2002, for which I am indebted to Professor Pirkko Koski (University of Helsinki), Dr. Leena Pietilä-Castrén (Finnish Institute at Athens) and Dr. Raimo Tuomi (University of Turku). Parts of this essay are included in my book *The Emperor as a Satirist and Other Essays from European Cultural Heritage* (in Finnish, *Keisari satiirikkona ja muita tutkielmia Euroopan kulttuuriperinnöstä*, 1998).

1 Hellmut Flashar's paper, "Aspects and Problems of Performing Ancient Drama on the Modern Stage", was read at the Third Meeting of the International Society for the Classical Tradition (ISCT) in Boston, March 8-12, 1995.

2 On modern performances of ancient dramas, see Nostrand 1934; Salosaari 1964; Trilse 1975; Styan 1982; Steiner 1984; Walton 1987 (Arnott's, Bakopoulou-Halls' and Beacham's essays); Flashar 1991; McDonald 1992; Westman 1992 (Kindlundh's essay) and Easterling (Burian's and Macintosh's essays). See also the articles in the magazine *Teatteri* 6/1991 and 3/1997.

3 See Macintosh 1997, 294, 303, 304.

in Russia, they fall outside this discussion. I shall give an overview of previous research carried out by theatre historians, cultural historians and classical scholars interested in the reception of the classical heritage since Romanticism. I will present examples of how performances in Southern France, Russia, Italy and Greece reflect different modern values and ideologies, despite the fact that they were all Greek tragedies on open-air stages. Evidently their ideological meaning became even more important because such performances in big open-air theatres were able to attract very large audiences. I shall also present some reflections on Finnish and Swedish-speaking Finnish writers as they give us an impression of Northerners' experience of Greek plays in 'authentic' settings.

General Background

At the beginning of the 19th century, Greek dramas were often performed at schools and universities. But scholars, impresarios and actors did not forget the fact that in antiquity tragedies and comedies were performed in large, open-air theatres. This gave impetus to the idea of reviving that ancient tradition. At first, performances of Greek tragedies were held in ancient amphitheatres in Southern France during the second half of the 19th century. By the outbreak of the First World War (1914), such performances were taking place in Syracuse in Sicily. Later (1927), in Delphi in continental Greece, some efforts were made in order to revive the tradition there. Most famous, however, have been the festivals at Epidaurus since 1953.

It is also worth mentioning here that in addition to open-air performances of Greek tragedies we also find plays based on other mythologies. In Finland in the 1910s, the poet Eino Leino (1878-1926) founded the so-called Helkanäyttämö (Helka stage), for which he wrote a work based on the Finnish national epic *Kalevala*.[4]

If we look at the open-air performances of Greek plays from the 1860s onwards in a larger context, we can find several underlying phenomena, starting points and parallel trends which are interesting from the viewpoint of the present study. Firstly, Romanticism had awakened a general interest in ancient ruins. One of the most famous of ancient monuments was of course the Colosseum of Rome, which in the early 19th century had become a tourist attraction, having its own local guides and frequently being depicted on souvenirs.[5] It is not a mere coincidence that such an interest in ancient ruins and monuments was noticed by early 20th century sociologists, as witnessed by Georg Simmel's essay *Die Ruine. Ein ästhetischer Versuch*. Simmel emphasizes that ruins are a more meaningful phenomenon ("Sinnvollere, bedeutsamere Erscheinung") than fragments of other destroyed works of art: "[d]ie Ruine des Bauwerks /.../ bedeutet, dass in das Verschwundene und Zerstörte des Kunstwerks andere Kräfte und Formen,

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[4] Leino's project was a disaster but in its context - compared with other contemporary open-air theatres and plays with mythic themes - it was an interesting undertaking. Concerning the Helka stage, see Mäkelä 1997, 153-165. The same can be said of the Savonlinna opera festival organized by the Finnish opera singer Aino Ackté (1876-1944) during the same decade. For a treatment of the Savonlinna opera festivals organized by Aino Ackté, see Savolainen 1995, 17-65. On medieval Olavinlinna (St. Olof's Castle) in Savonlinna as a place for ceremonies and performances, see Sarantola-Weiss 1996.

[5] See Pietilä-Castrén 1989, 149-150, 161-164; Szegedy-Maszak 1992. An interesting impression of the Colosseum is given by Alexandre Dumas in his 1844 novel *The Count of Monte Cristo*, see Riikonen 1998, 112-113.

die der Natur, nachgewachsen sind und so aus dem, was noch von Kunst in ihr lebt und was schon von Natur in ihr lebt, ein neues Ganzes, eine characteristische Einheit geworden ist."[6]

The interest in ruins coincides with the development and new discoveries of archaeology. The excavations in Pompeii had begun at the end of the 18th century, followed in the late 19th and early 20th century by Schliemann's, Dörpfeld's and Arthur Evans' excavations, which enjoyed worldwide fame.

In studying the modern performances of ancient plays it should be remembered that they were just one example of the many great spectacles that became popular at the end of the 19th century. The most famous of these spectacles was, of course, the Olympic games, which were revived by Baron Pierre de Coubertin in 1894. The interest in open-air performances in ancient theatres coincides with the period from 1870 to the First World War, characteristic of which were 'invented traditions'[7]. Here we could speak of 'revived traditions', as exemplified by the performances of Greek plays in (amphi)theatres and the Olympic games in stadiums modelled after the ancient ones. These revived traditions typically succeeded in attracting mass audiences. Sometimes the Olympic games and the theatre performances went hand in hand: at the Berlin Olympics in 1936, Aeschylus' *Oresteia* was performed under the direction of Lothar Müthel.[8]

At the same time, prior to the First World War, when ancient dramas were being performed in ancient theatres and amphitheatres, the new art form, cinema, was also showing an interest in themes taken from ancient history and myth. In this respect, early cinema is a direct continuation of the 19th century historical novel (Bulwer-Lytton, Sienkiewicz, and others) and its spectacular and melodramatic scenes. The Fall of Troy, the Fire of Rome, the Destruction of Pompeii, the Return of Ulysses, etc., were adapted for the cinema, especially in Italy.[9] In the film adaptations we encounter the same spectacular nature and exaggerated gesticulations that were typical of the open-air performances of the time. Moreover, the same actors often played the roles of classical heroes in both theatre and film.

The open-air performances of Greek plays were closely connected with speculations about the contrast between north and south. There were, for example, Victorian authors who maintained that the nature of Attic tragedies was in a way determined by the climate. In the Victorians' opinion the ancient world was connected

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6 Simmel 1993, 125. We can say that the ruins - be they temples, triumphal arches, gateways, aqueducts, theatres or amphitheatres that can be seen all over Europe, North Africa and Asia Minor - became in themselves symbols of the culture and power of ancient Greeks and Romans. As a symbol of Roman omnipotence, the circular (oval) form, which we find in amphitheatres, seemed very apt. The main character in Eino Leino's novel *The slave of luck* (1913 in Finnish, *Onnen orja*), Dr. Johannes Tamminen, hears the penates of Rome saying to him: "The essence of Rome is the circle. /.../ It includes eternity. The essence of Rome is eternal peace and harmony amidst the small swell of time." Leino 2001, 515. The image is taken from René Schneider's book *Rome. Complexité et harmonie* (Paris 1908), see Oksala 1986, 56. - Since the main character of Leino's novel wants to be a modern *civis Romanus*, he has assumed British nationality.

7 Hobsbawm 1983, 6-7; cf. Biddiss 1999, 125.

8 Flashar 1991, 164-168; Berghaus 1996, 299. According to Flashar (1991, 165), the production of the *Oresteia* in Berlin in 1936, was "[d]as einzige eindeutige Beispiel für eine handfeste Inanspruchnahme der antiken Tragödie für die Ziele des Nationalsozialismus". The monumental architecture of the Olympic games was of course based on ancient models; on the ideological background, see Cancik & Cancik-Lindemaier 1999, 189-195.

9 On classical antiquity in the cinema, see Solomon 2001, Salmi 1993a and Salmi 1993b, 256-273. On early Italian films, see Solomon 2001, 4-5.

with sun, daylight and open air. This can also be seen in Dostoevsky's famous story *The dream of a ridiculous man* (1877), where the main character dreams about bright sunshine and blue-green sea in the Greek Archipelago.[10]

Ancient Drama in the Amphitheatres in Provence

The open-air performances of Greek dramas in the modern period did not begin in Greece or Italy, but in France. An important reason for this was the increasing number of French translations of Greek dramas. There were, for example, several new translations of Sophocles' tragedies. From 1840 to 1850 more than ten new translations of *Oedipus the King* were written, both in verse and prose. Aeschylus was not as popular; his plays were replaced by Shakespeare and Victor Hugo. Theatregoers did not respond to Euripides' scepticism and pessimism until the end of the 19th century.[11]

Nineteenth century interest in the theatre of classical antiquity reached its apogee in the open-air performances in Provence. As early as in the 18th century, Rousseau had noticed the ruins of ancient theatres in France and their suitability for performances,[12] but it was not until the 1860s when the idea of staging plays in the ruins of Roman theatres and amphitheatres first surfaced. Previously they had been used for other purposes, e.g. the amphitheatre of Nîmes (ancient Nemausus) for bullfights.

The first performances of Greek plays in old amphitheatres produced little response. This changed when the Comédie française visited Orange (ancient Arausio) in 1888 and performed *Oedipus the King* with Mounet-Sully (1841-1916) in the title role. Thousands of spectators attended and the performance was a great success. Six years later *Antigone* was performed in the same location with Jeanne-Julie Bartet (1854-1941),[13] 'la divina Bartet', in the title role.

During the Third French Republic, open-air performances enjoyed considerable status as almost official festivities – commonly called the Bayreuth of France.[14] It was a question of "un théâtre bourgeois plus pompeux", as Roland Barthes characterizes the Comédie française.[15] Despite their conservative nature, they offered ideas for future authors and theatre directors, including Gordon Craig, who saw *Oedipus the King* and *Antigone* in 1894, and Gabriele D'Annunzio, who assisted in the production of the *Eumenides* in Orange in 1898.[16] At the end of the 19th century, such performances were

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10 Also according to Virginia Woolf, Greek tragedies were performed in the open air on very hot days. Woolf 1945, 40-42. These notions about performances in hot sunshine were erroneous: the greatest festival in ancient Greece was held in late March, when the weather could be unstable. On one occasion the festival was cancelled because of snow. Besides, several impressive scenes in Greek tragedy took place in pre-dawn darkness. Jenkyns 1980, 172.

11 Salosaari 1964, 6.

12 Leduc-Fayette 1974, 122-123.

13 Nostrand 1934, 178; Salosaari 1964, 9; Steiner 1984, 9.

14 Salosaari 1964, 10.

15 Barthes 1965, 535.

16 Beacham 1987, 317.

17 Salosaari 1964, 10. One of the most famous actresses of the time, Sarah Bernhardt (1844-1923), made a great impression in plays based on ancient myths. Both Mounet-Sully and Sarah Bernhardt were admired also by Nordic visitors, such as the Finnish writer Katri Bergholm, who later described them in the roles of French classical dramas and in Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*. Bergholm 1944, 44-415; Cf. Cavling 1900, 90.

very common, and Nîmes and Arles (ancient Arelate) joined Orange as popular venues. The lavish nature of these performances was based on impressive scenes with massive choruses, draperies and torch processions, not to mention renowned actors and actresses.[17]

Such performances, and the declamation and gesticulation of celebrated actors, gradually produced critical reactions as well. This is exemplified by a passage in *Sodome et Gomorrhe* by Marcel Proust, where Monsieur de Charlus regards Sarah Bernhardt's and Mounet-Sully's art as 'tripe' ('caca'). When the latter appears on stage in the amphitheatre at Nîmes, only then can one speak of a revelation or metamorphosis.[18] In the first part of his memoires, the Russian writer Ilya Ehrenburg tells how he laughed at Mounet-Sully when he roared like a wounded lion. Only afterwards did he understand the greatness of the French actor and the nature of the art of theatre.[19]

The success of ancient masterpieces in open-air theatres generated in France a need for new dramas based on classical themes. Several lesser talents and provincial poets wrote plays for open-air theatres with themes from Greek mythology based on conventional Romantic or Parnassian[20] views about Antiquity. Although they often were of mediocre quality, they nevertheless became popular and had a devoted following.[21]

Roland Barthes (1915-1980) was one of the well-known thinkers who participated in the open-air performance of a Greek tragedy. In his student days, Barthes was a member of a theatre group that aspired to perform Greek tragedies and Roman comedies. In the courtyard of the Sorbonne in 1936, the company performed the *Persians* by Aeschylus. The performance took on a political dimension because on the very same day the Front populaire came to power in France. A couple of years later Barthes went to Greece, where he made comparisons between his image of the age of antiquity and his experiences of the great changes that had taken place in modern Greece.[22] In 1987, the theatre group of 1936 received public recognition for its performance of *The Persians* at the Sorbonne, thus commemorating the performance fifty years earlier.[23] The performances of Greek plays also paved the way for the antique style drama of the 20th century, the French Neohellenistic drama (Anouilh, Cocteau, Gide, Giraudoux and even Sartre with his play *Les Mouches*). Of course, this trend was by no means limited to France.[24]

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[18] Proust 1954, 469.

[19] Ehrenburg 1980, 93, cf. also 114, 351 and 484. Cf. Cavling, 1900, 93: "[Mounet-Sully] hvilken i 20 år har spelat tragisk hjälte med samma oföränderligt öppna mun." On the reception of Mounet-Sully's Oedipus, see also Macintosh 1997, 279, 286-287. - Of course, Oedipus' cry represents a challenge to actors. Laurence Olivier, for instance, told of his interpretation as follows: "The detail most remarked upon in this performance [London 1945-1946] was the cry Oedipus must give when the whole truth of the Message, in this case conveyed by an old shepherd, is revealed to him. 'Oh, Oh,' is given in most editions. After going through all the vowel sounds, I hit upon 'Er'. This felt more agonized and the originality of it made the audience a ready partner in this feeling." (Olivier 1982, 117)

[20] The so-called Parnassian school presented respectful and nostalgic attitudes to the ancient past.

[21] Salosaari 1964, 11-12; Nostrand 1934, 189-318 ("Bibliographie annotée du théâtre antique et à l'antique en France de 1840 à 1900").

[22] Calvet 1990, 58-62.

[23] Calvet 1990, 59. Roland Barthes also wrote an essay on Greek theatre for the *Histoire des spectacles* (1965 513-536), where he briefly characterizes the traditions of performing Greek plays in France, including the performance of *The Persians* at the Sorbonne in 1936 (Barthes 1965, 535).

[24] Brecht, for instance, wrote his *Antigonemodell* in 1948. In Finland, where the performance of Anouilh's *Antigone* in 1947 reflected post-war sentiments and Finland's difficult political situation (Riikonen 1998, 163-165), neo-classical dramas were written by Rabbe Enckell (1903-1974). In her play *Eros ja Psykhe* (1959; Eros and Psyche) Eeva-Liisa Manner (1921-1995) adopted the use of anachronism, which we know from French Neohellenistic drama.

Italy and Greece

In Sicily, in the cultural territory of ancient Greece, the Syracusan festival began in 1914 with Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, directed in the manner of Max Reinhardt.[25] After a break caused by the First World War, the performances were continued with the second play of the *Oresteia* trilogy, the *Libation-bearers*. The third part, *Eumenides* was not performed until after the Second World War. Between the wars, the programme included *Oedipus the King* and *The Bacchae* in 1922, and Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes* and Sophocles' *Antigone* two years later. As well as these tragedies, the programme included one comedy, *The Clouds* by Aristophanes, and two satyr plays, the *Cyclops* by Euripides and the fragments of *The Trackers* by Sophocles.[26] The tradition of ancient drama became more firmly established when the Istituto Nazionale del Dramma Antico was founded in 1925. This linked the Syracusan performances with the Fascist cultural programme, which sought to nourish the national spirit by appealing to the great cultural achievements of antiquity on Italian soil.[27] Also in 1925, the Istituto Nazionale di Studi Romani was founded in order to propagate Roman cultural heritage.[28] One of the most extraordinary examples of Fascist cultural politics was the performance of *Oedipus the King* in the ancient theatre of Sabratha in 1937. Sabratha in Libya belonged at that time to Italy. Mussolini himself was present, and behaved with the gestures of a Roman emperor.[29] After the Second World War, the performances of ancient dramas in Syracuse resumed.[30]

Tatu Vaaskivi (1912-1942), a Finnish novelist and critic, attended a performance of Euripides' *Hecuba* in Syracuse in 1939. Vaaskivi described this performance in the chapter entitled 'As a foreigner in Syracuse' (Muukalaisena Syrakusassa) in his travel book *Cranes to the south...* (*Kurjet etelään...* 1946). Vaaskivi's colourful description is worth quoting here in its entirety:

"A fifteen minute walk from the present day town [Syracuse], under the open sky, I saw an authentic performance of a Greek play one afternoon. For several years now, the Istituto Nazionale del Dramma Antico has given performances in ancient amphitheatres in Italy. It is a happy coincidence that I am in Syracuse on that very day of May when Euripides' "Hecuba" is being performed in the most impressive amphitheatre of the Greek colonies, on Hiero's own stage. The broken rows of stone benches are completely filled with people. Only the modern scenery, with its stylised papyri and castle towers, breaks to some extent the suggestive "Grecian" general tone. The clashing of the cymbal quickly deadens the cries of the ice-cream sellers; the noisy audience suddenly becomes quiet. Due to the excellent acoustics of the amphitheatre, I can hear up to my stone seat every line of the Italian verse translation by Manlio Faggella.

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25 Beacham 1987, 318.

26 Flashar 1991, 163.

27 Beacham 1987, 320. - In connection with the festival in Syracuse a *bollettino* was published that was devoted to the performances and to various aspects of ancient theatre and drama. The magazine developed into the remarkable periodical *Dioniso*.

28 Härmänmaa 2000, 150, 165.

29 Beacham 1987, 322. - Italian cinema before 1945 provides excellent examples of how the Italian fascists and Mussolini used antiquity for their ideological purposes. See for instance Salmi 1993, 69-77, who discusses the Italian film *Scipio Africanus*. Salmi also considers its reception in Finland.

30 Beacham 1987, 322; for a list of performances in Syracuse, see Beacham 1987, 326-327.

Booming portentous music comes from invisible caves; it makes the Grecian peplums of the chorus girls and the light green veils of the danseuses flutter. Seen from the heights of the amphitheatre, every group on the stage melts into one impressive all-encompassing movement. The pantomimes directed by Rosalia Chladek are like a great visual accompaniment to the grief of Hecuba. The diminishing and increasing booming of the brass drums, the playing of flutes and singing of the chorus create a dizzying atmosphere.

I try to analyse the interpretation of Hecuba by Rina Morelli as I would a usual theatre performance - in vain! My thoughts go their own restless ways. It connects the modern performance with the great chorus plays of the Temenids; it enchants my eyes like the magic potion in the Arabic tales. It is as if time's clock was going backwards and I could see mirror-images of those tragedies which the contemporaries of Epicharmus saw from the same seats. The ghost of Achilles appears; the bodyguard of Agamemnon walks over the stage in his resplendent silver armour; ancient shields, whose hides have been painted with allegorical figures of animals, are shimmering in the sunset. When the play reaches its great climax and the blinded Thracian king stumbles onto the stage, the audience puts their binoculars to their eyes. The effect is quite the same as in Euripides' own time: the people want to see blood and they are allowed to do so! The rumble of drums increases. The wonderful dialogue of Hecuba and Polymestor sounds again like an echo from the time when the tired Hellenic soul refreshed itself with the same theatrical devices in the same amphitheatre."[31]

Although Vaaskivi is describing the performance of a play from Greek antiquity, it is worth noting that the performance in the old theatre awakens oriental associations in him: "it enchants my eyes like the magic potion in the Arabic tales". On the other hand, Vaaskivi regards the contemporaries of Euripides as tired people for whom the plays bring consolation. Vaaskivi mentions only indirectly that the performance in 1939 emphasized such Fascist ideals as heroic suffering, discipline and military virtues. Neither did he notice that the *mise-en-scène* had associations with the Nazi architecture in Nuremberg.[32]

In mainland Italy, in Fiesole (ancient Faesulae) near Florence, *Oedipus the King* was performed in 1911 with Gustavo Salvini (1859-1930), one of the famous Salvini family of actors, in the title role, and *The Bacchae* of Euripides (together with Torquato Tasso's *Aminta*) in 1912. The performances in Fiesole were continued after the First World War.[33] One of the Nordic visitors who attended the Fiesolean performances was Emil Zilliacus (1878-1961), a Swedish-speaking Finnish writer and classical scholar at the University of Helsinki. In a letter to the cultural magazine *Nya Argus* he criticized the performance of Euripides' *Bacchae* in Fiesole in 1913. Zilliacus found the Fiesole performance a mixture of dilettantism and high artistry. However, due to the natural setting and the milieu, which were in harmony with the play, the overall impression was

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[31] Vaaskivi 1946, 233-234. A year before, in 1938, Syracuse was visited by the journalist and school teacher Ilmari Lahti. His description (1938) of the performance is very general; he briefly mentions that expressionistic devices were used.

[32] Cf. Beacham 1987, 323. - Nazi architecture and its Greek elements were described by Olavi Paavolainen in his travel book *Kolmannen valtakunnan vieraana* (1936; *As a Guest in the Third Reich*).

[33] Beacham 1987, 317.

strong and fascinating.[34] The ancient theatre of Ostia, the port of Rome, joined the other venues when a group of young amateurs performed Plautus' *Aulularia* in 1922. Professional actors later played Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes*, Sophocles' *Antigone* and Aristophanes' *Clouds*. The Ostian performances were supported by the Istituto Nazionale del Dramma Antico.[35]

In the 1930s, classical dramatic texts were performed in Paestum, between the temple of Neptune and the Basilica (Fig. 1). Instead of including tragedies, the programme consisted of other works using dramatic dialogue, the idylls of Theocritus and the mimes of Herondas. Along with these works, choruses and dances from *Agamemnon* (Fig. 2) and *The Bacchae* were also performed. Special attention was paid to music composed by Ildebrando Pizzetti, Giuseppe Mulè and Pietro Ferro and choreography by Minnie Smolkowa Casella.[36]

Fig. 1. Spectators in front of the 'temple of Neptune' in Paestum.

Between the World Wars even Horace's words *dicitur et plaustris vexisse poemata Thespis*[37] were kept in mind in Italy when the Fascist organisation Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro sought to promote its ideology through art. It was for that purpose that the touring theatre (teatro ambulante) Il Carro di Tespi was created. It could move its actors, sets and all theatre requisites very quickly from place to place, making various kinds of stage productions possible in marketplaces and other open-air settings.[38]

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34 Zilliacus 1913, 110.

35 See Enciclopedia dello spettacolo (Vol. VII, 1960, 1414-1415): Ostia. - M. Corsi's *Il teatro all'aperto in Italia* (Milano-Roma 1939), where Ostia performances are discussed on pp. 120-125, was not available to me.

36 Taglè 1995. Taglè gives detailed information about the organization of the festival, including public transportation and the sale of tickets; see also the posters and photographs, fig. 1-46.

37 Hor. *Ars* 276.

38 Volpini 1956; see also the description of the Carro di Tespi by von Born 1936, 65-69.

Fig. 2. The program of classical performances in Paestum in 1932.

In the independent Greek state classical plays were sporadically performed. In Athens, in 1867, Sophocles' *Antigone* was performed in the theatre of Herodes Atticus in connection with the marriage celebrations of King George I of Greece. *Antigone* was performed with music by Felix Mendelssohn, originally composed for the performance of the play in Berlin in 1841. It is interesting that in Greece the somewhat odd combination of Sophocles and Mendelssohn, Greek tragedy and German Romanticism, as Hellmut Flashar aptly calls it, was considered satisfactory even later.[39] In 1900, Aeschylus' *Prometheus* was performed in the Olympic stadium of Athens under Linos Karzos's direction.[40]

In Delphi the poet Angelos Sikelianos (1884-1952), together with his wife Eva Palmer, founded festivals, which took place only twice, in 1927 and 1930. The programme included Aeschylus' *Prometheus*, which was joined in 1930 by *The Suppliants*. Sikelianos and Palmer aimed at great authenticity. Their point of departure was the idea that ancient vase paintings could provide them with reliable information about the movements and gestures of the chorus as well as about the costumes. The archaic way of performing was emphasized in the music by Konstantinos Psachos, which was based on Byzantine musical traditions.[41] But all the problems involved in the archaic way of performing were present: the performances did not hang together as cohesive units, but instead consisted of separate gestures and figures, as in an ancient frieze. The local population of Delphi and its

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39 Flashar 1991, 91. Mendelssohn's music was used in the remarkable production of *Antigone* in Covent Garden (1845) where Creon's role was played by the great English actor John Vandenhoff, who had studied and taught classical languages; see Hall 1997, 292-293. - Mendelssohn's music was also used in Swedish productions of *Antigone*. Sophocles' play was performed in Sweden in 1860, but as early as in 1841 the choir Orphei Drängar included choruses from *Antigone* in their repertoire. The first performance of *Antigone* by a professional theatre in Sweden (1884) followed German models, but Mendelssohn's music was used even as late as in 1925 in a performance in Helsingborg; see Kindlundh 1992, 190-193.

40 Flashar 1991, 162.

41 Flashar 1991, 161-162. - Konstantinos Psachos (1874-1949) was both a musicologist and a Byzantinist.

surroundings were able to participate in the performances organized by Sikelianos and Palmer,[42] although, as Aliki Bakopoulou-Halls reminds us, the communist newspaper *Rizospastis* regarded them as a nostalgic effort of the bourgeoisie to revive an ancient culture.[43] The performances at Delphi were a great experience for all who saw them. The spectators, among them several journalists, had come first from Athens to Itea by ship and then continued by cart.

The same route was taken by Emil Zilliacus, who described Delphi in his travel book *Pilgrimages in Greece* (*Pilgrimsfärder i Hellas*, 1923).[44] After the Second World War, the performances of Greek plays in the theatre of Herodes Atticus in Athens and in the theatre at Epidauros in the Peloponnese achieved worldwide fame.[45] The work of such great Greek directors as Dimitris Rondiris, Alexis Minotis and Karolos Koun was closely connected with theatrical productions of ancient dramas.[46] In most of their productions they relied on translations into Modern Greek, but in some cases ancient Greek was used as well.

After the Second World War, increasing numbers of Finns visited Greece. The first to attend the festivals of Epidaurus from Finland was Arvi Kivimaa (1904-1984), who at that time was the director general of the Finnish National Theatre. He described his experiences in his travel book *To Greece in 1956* (*Kreikkaan 1956*). Kivimaa's account of Epidaurus is a tale of bad luck. The organizers of the festival had sold too many tickets, with the consequence that many people, among them Kivimaa, were prevented access to the theatre and could not see the performance of Sophocles' *Antigone* by the Greek National Theatre. Kivimaa noted that the mayors of three towns were dismissed as a result of the bad organization. The situation at Epidaurus reminded Kivimaa of circus entertainments for the masses in the Roman Colosseum. To top it off, after his return to the hotel, there was an earthquake. Despite these accidents, Kivimaa's great enthusiasm for Greece did not diminish; neither did he blame the organizers. He was not destined to see *Antigone* at Epidaurus, as he noted rather fatalistically.[47]

Kivimaa received some recompense, however, in the form of the plays which he saw in Athens. He attended there a performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and an adaptation of the *Eternal Wandering* by Nikos Kazantzakis. The performance of the *Ecclesiazusae* by Aristophanes made him forget the disappointment at Epidaurus. Inspired by the performance of that play, Kivimaa discussed the performances of Greek tragedies on modern stages, their difficulties and possibilities. According to Kivimaa, it is not possible to direct an ancient Greek tragedy in the same way as in ancient Greece. Therefore, his travel book includes a criticism of the historico-archaeological interpretation. Instead of searching for authenticity, which is impossible to achieve, one has to determine the basic features on which the liveliness of the play is based and which guarantee its vital force. Only these elements can move the modern spectator and awaken

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42 Flashar 1991, 162.

43 Bakopoulou-Halls 1987, 267.

44 Zilliacus 1923, 58-59.

45 Bakopoulou-Halls 1987, 287-295 (lists of performances in the theatre of Herodes Atticus and in the theatres of Epidaurus and Dodona).

46 On the work of these directors, see Bakopoulou-Halls 1987.

47 Kivimaa 1957, 103.

in him the sacred emotion that the ancient spectators felt on the stone benches in the theatre of Dionysus, in the magic circle of the tragedy of his time, as Kivimaa eloquently puts it. The eternal truths of the ancient Greek myths are liberated from their textual form; as eternally human, they in this way reach the heart of the modern spectator.[48]

Göran Schildt (1917-), who is renowned for his travel books, was another prominent Swedish-speaking Finnish traveller to Greece. His accounts of ancient theatres and theatre performances are more extensive, especially in his book *In the Wake of Odysseus* (*Odysseus kölvatten*, 1951). In addition to his recollections of a student performance of a Greek play in Paris,[49] he also writes about the theatre buildings in Fiesole and Sicily, in Taormina and Syracuse, and about the great impression which they made upon him. He regards the theatre of Fiesole as the most beautiful Roman theatre, with its view of the hills and cypresses.[50] The place which he especially recommends to his readers is Epidauros. In the moonlight, the theatre fills the spectator with the same feelings of fear and terror that Aristotle spoke of in his *Poetics*. Schildt paints an idyllic picture of a meal he had there with local shepherds.[51]

In his description of Epidaurus, Schildt also discusses the history of the theatre and theatre buildings, as well as the history of the drama, taking as his starting point Nietzsche's idea that drama was born of satyr feasts in honour of Dionysus. Schildt's point of view is interesting for noting the relationship of the performance with the spectators' awareness of participation in a festival. However, in Schildt's opinion, along with the diminishing role of the chorus, the ability of the spectator to experience the drama with the help of purely artistic curiosity increased until, in modern cinematic performance, the awareness of the spectator that they are participating in a common festival is completely absent when he is sitting in the anonymous darkness of the cinema.[52]

Revolutionary Theatre in Russia

The open-air performances of ancient drama were of course not limited to the ancient sites. The development of the open-air theatre in Russia immediately before and after the Revolution of 1917 offers some interesting views, as Katerina Clark points out. The open-air theatre seemed to be a very suitable vehicle for promoting new ideas and revolutionary purposes. Followers of Nietzsche regarded the Greek type of open-air theatre as a place where all social classes could experience together the ecstatic Dionysiac rite. Not even the Northern climate of St. Petersburg could prevent this: as the city once had been claimed to be the Nordic Venice, why could it not become also the Nordic Athens?[53] In the eyes of the Russian intelligentsia, St. Petersburg - or Petrograd as it was called at that time - had become a city-state or polis, like Athens, Venice or Florence.[54]

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[48] Kivimaa 1957, 118-119.
[49] Schildt 1952, 205.
[50] Schildt 1952, 205-206.
[51] Schildt 1952, 206-214.
[52] Schildt 1952, 210-213.
[53] Clark 1995, 135.
[54] Clark 1995, 138.

Faddei F. Zelinsky (Tadeusz Zielinski) was in many respects the primus motor of the enthusiasm for antiquity, and also influenced the great Russian philosopher and literary historian Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975).[55] Not only did Zelinsky introduce Isadora Duncan, who came to dance in St. Petersburg in 1913, but he also led the movement that aimed at reviving the tradition of Greek open-air theatre.[56] For his part, Mikhail Bakhtin participated in organizing an open-air performance of Sophocles' *Oedipus in Colonus*.[57] Zelinsky had also translated the dramas of Sophocles into Russian and provided them with extensive introductions. He was the editor of the Russian edition of Nietzsche's Collected Works as well, although this project remained unfinished.[58] Moreover, Zelinsky wrote about ethical questions connected with tragedy, speculating about the third Renaissance, which could take place in Russia.[59]

Other important persons in such activities were Adrian Piotrovsky (1898-1938), the illegitimate son of Zelinsky, and Sergei Radlov (1892-1958), the son of Ernest L. Radlov, who was an expert in ancient philosophy. From their families they each had a classical background, and both were Zelinsky's students.[60] Piotrovsky and Radlov translated Greek plays into Russian. In his new translations, Radlov tried to capture a kind of Nietzschean and Wagnerian 'spirit of music', by using for the first time the Greek trimetre in his Russian translations.[61] Piotrovsky and Radlov also organized mass spectacles in order to come closer to the Greek spirit through the theatre performances. Instead of reviving ancient Greece they tried to find a kind of greater Greece. One of their most interesting undertakings in this respect was a play called *The Fight of Salamis* (1919), which Piotrovsky and Radlov wrote for school children. By representing the contrast between Greece and barbaric Persia, they wanted to show how the Greeks became conscious that they were the cradle of culture.[62] Underlying this was the German dream about a kind of Greek totality, originating from the ideas of Nietzsche and other German thinkers whose ideas were propagated in Russia by Zelinsky and V. V. Ivanov.[63]

There were several points of departure for the new mass theatre: as well as Greek tragedy, they included such theatrical forms as the medieval mystery play and the traditions of *commedia dell'arte* together with the so-called *balagan* as its Russian equivalent.[64] Starting from some Symbolist ideas, the meaning of theatre was underlined in several connections. Extreme ideas in this respect were presented by Nikolai Evreinov

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55 It is worth considering here why Mikhail Bakhtin was so interested in open-air performances of Greek dramas. This question is closely connected with his views of carnivals and carnivalism. The idea of breaking all kinds of limits and boundaries was typical of Bakhtin's thinking; for instance, in carnival, as a genre, the boundary between the scene and the audience disappears. The idea of crossing the boundary between the stage and the audience recurs also in Nikolai Evreinov's theatre theory, see Volkov 1996, 274. Carnival and theatre (in the usual meaning of the word) were opposites to each other. Thus, in order to become lively, theatre had to approach the carnival. At the same time the spectators became active participants in the performance. Clark 1995, 125, 128-129.

56 Clark 1995, 136.

57 Peltanen 1984, 48.

58 Laine 1997a, 18-20; Laine 1997b, 21.

59 Laine 1997a.

60 Clark 1995, 119-120; on Radlov, see also Volkov 1996, 284-285.

61 Clark 1995, 89.

62 Clark 1995, 137.

63 Clark 1995, 138-139.

64 Clark 1995, 82.

(1879-1953). Having as his basic idea that "man is a theatrical creature", he referred to "the theatricalization of life" and then thought that people could be healed with "theatre therapy" - an idea originating from Aristotle's catharsis.[65]

Conclusion

Modern performances in ancient theatres and amphitheatres provide an important chapter in the reception of classical antiquity. The plays were able to attract a very large audience. At the same time, local people, who otherwise could hardly have had any access to the heritage of antiquity, gained some idea of ancient drama, and on occasion were even able to participate in the productions. They can be seen in a larger context: performances in impressive settings with renowned actors were the theatrical counterpart to other public occasions or art forms connected with antiquity, such as the Olympic games, or historical novels and films with themes taken from ancient history and mythology. They also reveal an interest in portraying the past 'authentically'. Open-air performances in ancient theatres were also ideologically adaptable, because they could reach a wide audience. The performances in Provence as 'official' festivals of the bourgeoisie of the Third French Republic, performances with Fascist heroic ideals in Italy, or revolutionary theatre in Russia exemplify different interpretations of antiquity.

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[65] Etkind 1997, 124-125. Piotrovsky and Radlov were of course not the only ones who were interested in ancient Greek theatre. Katerina Clark also refers to I.A. Fomin, a representative of Neoclassicism, who on an island created a new amphitheatre in Greek style for mass performances. Clark 1995, 136.

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List of Figures