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**Compte-rendu de Samuel N. Dorf, Performing antiquity:
ancient Greek music and dance from Paris to Delphi,
1890-1930, 2019**

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Dorf, Samuel N., *Performing Antiquity: Ancient Greek Music and Dance from Paris to Delphi, 1890-1930*, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2019. 221 p. ISBN 9780190612092. \$74.00.

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Ancient Greek music and dance are increasingly present in the reception studies, and Dorf's book succeeds in giving an overview of performances of the Belle Époque and the Années Folles, although this is not an exhaustive study. It focuses on a few colourful figures and their own representation of ancient Greek music and dance. Therefore, the reader should not expect data on the epigraphic or papyrological texts with musical notation discovered in this period, although Dorf considers carefully the first Delphic hymn and the way Théodore Reinach edited it. Even if we can regret some mistakes in facts or details, this book sheds light on a particular small world of scientists and artists, who shared a passion for Antiquity and who regularly met in the Parisian salons. According to Dorf's well documented and stimulating analyses, a node of this network is doubtless Natalie Clifford Barney and her "Temple de l'Amitié" in the garden of her house in Paris. She was courted by Salomon Reinach, Théodore's brother, who not only edited the two Delphic hymns found in the French excavations of Delphi (1893) and asked Gabriel Fauré to arrange the first one for a public audience in Paris (1894), but also worked with Maurice Emmanuel on a tragedy *à la grecque*, *Salamine*. Barney was a queer icon, loved by Liane de Pougy, Renée Vivien, and Eva Palmer (before she got married with Angelos Sikelianos). These are the main characters of this book, which reads like a novel—it is full of anecdotes, including Dorf's personal experiences.

After a first chapter dedicated to methodological and heuristic tools, each chapter of the book concentrates on one or two characters of this prestigious casting: Fauré / Reinach, Barney, Emmanuel and Palmer Sikelianos. The final chapter not only gives conclusions, but also presents some reflections on "Scholars and Their Objects of Study; or, Loving Your Subject". (Dorf does not attempt to hide his affection towards all of these people, especially Barney.) From 1890 to 1930, the number of performances based on ancient Greek music and dance increased, whatever this music might have been: a full reconstruction of a fantasized part or a scientific enquiry, which, however, may be biased. Thus, the main topic of the book is how archaeological discoveries have influenced the contemporary vision of ancient Greek music and dance, or, more often, how authors did not change their own perception of Antiquity despite these discoveries. In that perspective, this book is a very challenging and welcome study.

In the first chapter, Dorf exposes thoughtfully his methodology and the operative distinctions, which can be made between reperformance and re-enactment, authentic and "authentistic" performances (Taruskin), archive and repertoire (Taylor).¹ These notions help to understand the status of performances which aim not only at delivering something (not integrally) preserved from Antiquity such as music and dance, but also at giving an idea of the feelings that the ancient performers and audience may have experienced during the performance. Dorf shows well that scholars worked with performers and performers read books of scholars, so that the border is never hermetic: scholars and performers both love the past and want to recover something lost. For instance, Barney, as a Lesbian, wanted to find in Sappho a kind of mirror of herself and strived to talk with her, as in a dream. Furthermore, Dorf argues that the technical revolution of photography and archaeology have influenced the way scholars and performers looked at the past. According to him, listening to ancient Greek music is like looking at a photograph of the dead: although the presence of the dead is illusion, the emotion is sincere. Finally, Dorf remarks that photographs of performances are often more loquacious than musical sources.

¹ R. Taruskin, *Text and Act: Essays on Music and Performance*, New York / Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995, 99-143; D. Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*, Durham NC / London: Duke University Press, 2003.

The second chapter starts with the evocation of the hidden piano Théodore Reinach put in his house on the French Riviera, the Villa Kerylos, which looks like an ancient Delian house. The author considers this instrument as a metaphor of Reinach's relationship with past and present: his editions of the first Delphic hymn are presented as accurate, but they are the result of a combination between the modern French and the ancient Greek aesthetics. Dorf points out that Reinach had little critical distance with the object of his study, although he aimed at re-enacting antique sensibilities in the present as well as showing how ancient Greek music actually was, not through the prism of neo-classical aesthetics. Hence, the hidden piano is a way to protect the past from the present, while maintaining a kind of authenticity. Dorf also suggests that Fauré's arrangement was probably more influenced by his own vision of Antiquity (as in the *Pavane*) than by the ancient melody: his accompaniment is very conservative. Although Dorf's remarks are relevant, one may regret the many historical and factual errors on the Delphic hymns : only a part of the second hymn is a paeonic paeon, since there is also one processional tune in another rhythmical pattern; they were not composed for the Pythian Games, but for a Pythaid, an Athenian procession; *tekhnitai* does not mean "chorus of professional singers", but "corporation of musicians". However, his musicological analyses are enlightening, especially when he compares the editions of 1894 and 1914, showing that the second edition better fits modern ears, for instance by avoiding chromaticism. Reinach had a modern sensibility, as shown by his comparisons with Wagner and modern instruments. To sum up, Dorf argues that Reinach edited Greek music as a lover: he wanted to feel it alive.

The third chapter focuses on Barney, who tried to re-enact ancient Greek musical arts as neo-Greek rites. Her performance aesthetics were widely influenced by ancient Greek homoeroticism. She wanted to embody a certain antique Greek queer *ethos*, by approaching Sappho through her own perception of contemporary Lesbianism: Barney and Vivien used Sappho's poems to express love to each other (Barney's letters have just been published).² Moreover, she wanted Sappho's poems to be performed with reproductions of ancient Greek garment and instruments, as if there were the historical background of the queer identity. Louÿs' *Chansons de Bilitis*, which Debussy put to music, gave her the licence to have her own vision of Antiquity. As Dorf points out, we almost know nothing about Sappho's music, but one should at least underline that she was supposed to have designed the ancient Mixolydian scale, whose shape is known. Dorf uses Wood's concept of "Sapponic voices",³ which imply secret intentions and Lesbian eroticism. Performing Sappho in open air appears as a way to invent an ancient Greek repertoire, since there is no archive. It is also interesting to notice that Penelope Duncan, Sikelianos' sister, took part to those performances by playing Greek folk tunes, supporting the idea that the music of Greek mountain peasants was the same as in Sappho's times.

Chapter four is dedicated to what Dorf calls "Performing scholarship for the Paris Opéra", that is the attempt of Maurice Emmanuel to apply his theories on ancient Greek music and dance to a tragedy inspired by Aeschylus' *Persians*, *Salamine*. This event was a failure, and even if he wanted to compose *à l'antique*, critics compared it to Debussy's music and the choreography was traditional, since Emmanuel wanted to show that the ballet was closer to ancient Greek dance than modern dance. Emmanuel's method for reconstructing ancient dance is based on chronophotography (Marey's photographic gun) to compare the movements of dancers and their depiction on ancient vases: the problem is that he trusted the objectivity of the machine, but did not realize that his analyse of pictures was not objective. So, this performance was rather an opportunity to fulfil theories.⁴

Chapter 5 concentrates on the two Delphic festivals organized in 1927 and 1930 by Eva Palmer Sikelianos⁵ and her husband. Her approach in reconstructing ancient arts for the *Prometheus Bound*

² Natalie Clifford Barney et Liane de Pougy, *Correspondance amoureuse*, ed. by S. Robichon et O. Wagner, Paris: Gallimard, 2019.

³ E. Wood, "Sapponics", in *Queering the Pitch; the New Gay and Lesbian Musicology*, Ph. Brett, E. Wood and G.C. Thomas (ed.), New York / London: Routledge, 1994, 27-66.

⁴ Unfortunately, Dorf does not take into account Corbier's *Poésie, Musique et Danse: Maurice Emmanuel et l'hellénisme*, Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2010.

⁵ On Eva Palmer, see also A. Leontis, *Eva Palmer Sikelianos: A Life in Ruins*, Princeton: University Press, 2019.

was new, because it was based on archival research (dance iconography, ancient treatises) as well as on living practices (Byzantine and folk). For Barney, Reinach and Emmanuel, Western culture is a heritage of ancient Greece, and they tried to recover this envisioned Greece, whereas Palmer is almost engaged in a post-colonialist process: she wanted to get rid of this western point of view. All her lifestyle was an attempt to re-enact ancient Greek performing arts. Like the hidden piano, Palmer's weaving loom is a metaphor: this is a way to repair the world (Sedgwick's reparative turn)⁶ and to fight against mechanization. She used both archaeology and performance, but her main criterium was emotion: the most important in Greek tragedy was *pathos*, even if music or dance were not accurate, and that is why she relied on living performances. She got the idea to combine liturgical Byzantine music with folk songs. Interestingly, when she brought her own perception of ancient Greek arts to repertoire, she wanted to fix it into new archive (scores, photographs and silent movie).

Chapter 6 is the opportunity to engage a wider reflection on how scholars deal with their objects of study. Dorf examines how the love one may feel for a research field may prevent from objectivity. Although all the heroes of this book loved ancient Greek music and dance, they did not proceed the same way. Scholars use performance to be sure that their theories do not die, which is paradoxical: books are better preserved than performances. Performers use scholarship to get inspiration but what they seek for is to embody the past. This is not only a history of performances, but also a history of love: once again, Barney is in the middle, since she was loved by Palmer as well as Salomon Reinach, who gathered so many documents as possible on the relationship between Barney and Vivien. Sappho's poetry, Delphic hymns and any depiction of ancient arts require a reperformance, because of love. As Dorf says, "performing antiquity (or any past) is one way of making peace with the unrequited love of scholarship" (p. 157).

To conclude, this book is full of sound arguments, but sometimes I suspect that Dorf is himself influenced by his own vision of what happened in Barney's social circles. The best example is the subtitle "from Paris to Delphi": the author claims that there was a transportation of ancient-like performances from Parisian salons to the Delphic festivals. The general idea is true, in that Western scholars interpreted ancient Greek music and dance from an etic point of view, whereas Palmer and Sikelianos tried to find a Greek authenticity in an emic approach, especially through ethnomusicological enquiries in Greece. And yet, Dorf is wrong about the facts, especially the première of the first Delphic hymn, which he writes took place in Paris in April 1894, with Fauré's harmonization, hence he can argue that Palmer Sikelianos makes the first attempt to "give Greece back to Greece". In fact, the première took place in Athens, in March 1894. The melody was arranged by Louis Nicole, a Swiss composer living in Athens, and the hymn was performed by four Greek singers.⁷

⁶ E. K. Sedgwick, "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, or, You're So Paranoid, You Probably Think This Essay Is About You", in *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*, Durham NC / London: Duke University Press, 2003, 123-151.

⁷ It is a bit pitiful that the author did not take into account Bélis' articles on Théodore Reinach: A. Bélis, "Théodore Reinach (1860-1928) et la musique grecque", in S. Basch, M. Espagne et J. Leclant (ed.), *Les frères Reinach*, Paris: AIBL, 2008, 165-176; "Théodore Reinach et les partitions grecques", in A. Laronde et J. Leclant (ed.), *Un siècle d'architecture et d'humanismes sur les bords de la Méditerranée = Cahiers de la villa « Kérylos »* n° 20 (2009), 253-278.