

The Theatre of Australian Hellenism in Historical Perspective

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RÉSUMÉ

Bien que le théâtre des Grecs en Australie, comme écriture littéraire et comme production théâtrale, est presque aussi vieux que la poésie et la prose, les deux derniers genres ont tendance à être considérés comme les plus dominants dans "la littérature". Alors, à tort ou à raison, ce théâtre de la diaspora, avec son histoire dans son ensemble, est généralement considéré comme une matière à part entière et, par conséquent, il est rarement inclus dans les études sur l'histoire de la littérature australienne de l'hellénisme.

Cet article, basé sur des années de recherche sur l'hellénisme australien, vise à fournir un ensemble cohérent sur le développement, l'évolution, les réalisations et la contribution du théâtre en langue grecque mais aussi en langue anglaise du début du vingtième siècle jusqu'à aujourd'hui, sous les multiples aspects de la société australienne. Pour présenter une image plus complète cet article examine le théâtre de langue grecque et anglaise tant comme écriture littéraire que comme représentation scénique.

ABSTRACT

Although the theatre of the Greeks in Australia, as literary writing and as stage production, is almost as old as poetry and prose, the two latter genres tend to be treated as the dominant ones in "literature". So, rightly or wrongly, this diasporic theatre, with its history as a whole, is generally considered a separate subject, and as a result it is rarely included in studies on the literary history of Australian Hellenism.

This article, based on my years of research on Australian Hellenism, aims at providing a cohesive account of the theatre, its development, achievements and contribution from its beginning in the early twentieth century until today under the multifaceted conditions of Australian society. To present a more comprehensive picture this article examines the course of both Greek and English-language playwriting, as well as stage performances.

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1. Scope

The theatre of Australian Hellenism¹, both as literary writing in dialogical form² and as stage production, is a cultural element which has significantly illuminated the overall ethnic³ picture of the Greeks in Australia. Unfortunately, though, irrespective of its importance in the more complete projection of Hellenism's profile in Australian society, as well as its essential role and contribution to Greek community life, until today this dynamic and popular element, in both its aspects, is still awaiting full research and study.⁴

Despite the lack of academic recognition in both Australia and Greece, the locally written and performed plays have always been popular and enjoyed a warm reception from audiences throughout Australia. Not all dramatic works written by the Greeks in Australia have been staged. Several, either because they lacked theatrical plot or proved inappropriate for staging, remained only part of theatre literature, a phenomenon not unknown even among writers of Greece.⁵ Nevertheless, the significance of every play is that it tells its readers and spectators, as well as the theatre historian much about the period in which it was written as it does about the period it reflects, and that because it is a cultural product conveying the values and the attitudes of its time. This is why a play as a cultural activity, no matter how old it is, should not be discarded as out-of-date. It may no longer be a reliable secondary source, but it can never cease to be a valuable primary one.

The theatre of Australian Hellenism has played a central role in the formation of Greek culture in Australia and, together with the theatre of the rest of the Greek diaspora, has contributed to the expansion of the definition and the boundaries of the Greek theatre of modern Greece, as well as of global modern Greek culture. Furthermore, the contribution of the theatre of the immigrant Greeks in Australia, together with that of other ethnic groups, is that they have laid the foundations for a multicultural theatre, a concept which reflects the core of present and future character of Australian society itself.

This achievement of the immigrants of non-Anglo-Celtic background was realised but not without serious difficulties and frustrations, such as the lack of adequate financial support, facilities, and full time trained actors. They were workers first, supporting their families, and then playwrights, actors, directors, and other theatre staff, attempting to present productions of a professional level. Theatre, especially in the past, was practised mainly as a form of community entertainment (sometimes the only one available) and release from social stress, rather than as a significant artistic experiment, or

as a serious, and at the same time, enjoyable commentary on the conditions and happenings of society. These immigrants had emigrated to Australia rarely out of free choice but mainly for economic and political reasons. They might have been to some extent content from the economic point of view, but those with interests in the theatre and the arts in general, though amateurs, faced deep disappointments due to the limited opportunities to express their artistic talent and interests, the restricted number of locally produced plays, the lack of recognition and financial rewards, etc. They did it simply out of love for the theatre and personal enjoyment.

Despite these perennial difficulties, a number of interesting and worthy plays have been written and many others have been staged successfully, making their creators' efforts highly laudable. These plays, together with the large number of "imported" ones from Greece, have created an overall significant theatre movement in Australia's Greek communities.

This dynamic theatrical activity, from the beginning of the twentieth century until today, has been coordinated and projected via two channels: by branches of social organisations and by independent groups. The first has consisted of the theatre groups sponsored by panhellenic, regional and community associations, brotherhoods, leagues, etc. The second consists of those set up by individuals or groups whose aim was to stage plays for entertainment and, many at the same time, for philanthropic, patriotic, and other intentions: to assist earthquake victims in Greece, refugees of the Asia Minor Catastrophe, Greek orphans of the wars, etc.; to support community schools, childcare centres, retirement villages, etc.; or to contribute to Australian national causes, such as flood and bushfire relief, the Royal Blind Society, and the Australian Red Cross through its Greek branch. These works were either locally written or borrowed from the Greek repertory of the homeland. Naturally, the independent theatre initiatives predated the associational branches of organisations, usually as part of the programs of social events (Greek national celebrations, school festivals, etc.) in the form of short patriotic, bucolic or satirical sketches, farces, etc.

Surveying the contribution of Australian Hellenism to the theatre with locally written and produced plays, we realise that, despite the fact that quantitatively it has been less productive than poetry and prose, it is represented by an interesting range of works including social and political satire, comedy, patriotic drama, and even the comidyll, as well as musical comedies and revues. In particular, the comidyll and the musical comedies

and revues were well served mainly by two exponents, the first by Constantine Kyriazopoulos of Melbourne and the other two by Demetrios Ioannides of Perth, Western Australia.

From the viewpoint of influences and inspiration, which have shaped the physiognomy of playwriting by Greeks in Australia, three main sources emerge: the Greek *paroikia*, the broader Australian society and the immigrant's native land not only in its general sense (Greece, Cyprus etc.) but also in its more geographically specific one (village, island, city).

The Greek *paroikia* is reflected through its community characters, the routine pace of its daily life, the problems of the Greek immigrant family, the contrasts between older established immigrants and the recently arrived, the significance of the *kafeneio* in the Greek community, etc.

Australia has exercised its influence in many different ways, with matters such as the different social and cultural ideas, mores and lifestyles, the Greek immigrant's difficulties in settling in the new social environment, the psychological consequences for the individual and the family, the creation of feelings of disillusionment, alienation and isolation, the unexpected physical environment of the new country, etc.

The immigrant's native land has proved equally dynamic and varied with subjects such as Greek rural life, customs, the Greek landscape, etc., including, of course, subjects deriving from politico-military and social upheavals there, as well as physical disasters, such as the Asia Minor Catastrophe, World War II, the military dictatorship, the Turkish invasion of Cyprus, earthquakes, etc.

The early written plays were mainly satires on the community (they reappeared from 1970) or romantic and patriotic works, essentially imitations of plays written in Greece. The local plays modeled on the plays of the homeland, or even those brought haphazardly from Greece in order to fill the existing vacuum created by the scarcity of local works of the type of *Golfo* by Spyros Peresiadis or *The Shepherdess' Lover* by Dimitris Koromilas, or even "imported" plays reflecting the Greek middle and lower middle classes of the time, beyond the entertainment they provided, did not tackle the serious issues confronting the Greeks, such as the struggles of immigrant life and their traumatic experiences in an adverse, dominant social environment.

World War II gave rise to some locally written political satires, while from the 1960s onwards a number of playwrights finally turned their focus to the

emotional and psychological problems relating to Greek immigrant identity and the individual's dilemma of being divided by his deeply rooted ties with Greece as birthplace and his immigrant ties to Australia as adopted homeland. This was a delicate subject as it reflected internal family conflicts, especially between parents and children and the precarious issues rising from the process of social adjustment.

Since the beginning of the 1980s, and particularly in contemporary times, we encounter dramatic and comedic works, written in both the Greek and English languages, which reveal that their creators have been inspired by the phenomena of immigration, *xenitia* and immigrant identity, and have attempted to positively connect Greek culture and Greek identity with the dominant Australian culture and thereby promote awareness and initiative. A main reason for this is the changing consciousness of the Greek immigrant in Australia, reflecting the changing context of attitudes and social perspectives, as well as intercultural and intersocial relationships. Now the Greek immigrant in Australia, assisted by contemporary social attitudes and official policies, sees himself and his family as permanent residents of this country, thus gradually abandoning the odysseic dream of final return to the native land.

From the viewpoint of language, the theatre of the Greeks in Australia, as in other countries as well, has not been written and performed only in Greek. Many plays, mainly in recent decades, are written and performed in English. They are composed by Australian-born playwrights of Greek origin, individuals who emigrated to Australia in childhood, and adult Greeks who, before emigrating, lived for years in countries where English was also used in everyday communication and who feel more comfortable expressing themselves in English, addressing in this way the readership and audiences of both the Australian and English-speaking Greek communities.

The first English-language plays appeared as early as towards the end of the decade of the 1920s. These were written by the immigrant Edward Parry, whose mother was Cypriot and his father Welsh, and appeared in the pages of the Sydney newspaper *Panellinios Kiryx* [Panhellenic Herald], but they were never staged.

In Greek-language works, sometimes the playwright intentionally uses, in the same work, words of both the purist and demotic forms, reflecting corresponding language phenomena of the playwriting in Greece, while in other cases (mostly in satirical plays) uses *Greeklsh*, that is hellenised Australian words (usually words with a Greek ending), loan words from

Australian English or even loan translations (Greek expressions which are translations of corresponding Australian ones) (Kanarakis, 2007, pp. 215-217). In this way, thematically and linguistically, the Greek playwright of Australia has formed today a theatre reflecting social conditions which they experience daily, written and performed in a vocabulary which the Greek immigrants of Australia created themselves. This enhances their sense having their own theatre.

Those plays written and performed in Greek dialects and local idioms, primarily produced to entertain people from certain regions of Greece, are extremely few. One such play was performed in the Pontian dialect in Melbourne in 1957, the first in this dialect, while in 2005 another one-act play in the same dialect was staged in Sydney by a visiting Pontian theatre group of the Thessaloniki Arts Society in front of a huge, enthusiastic audience.⁶ Others have pursued this with the intention of contributing to the maintenance and promotion of their native regions, such as the Cypriot Maro Gemetta in Melbourne. In the end, the Greek linguistic medium used by the playwrights (Modern Greek Koine or Modern Greek Koine mixed with *Greeklish*, or dialectic Greek) invigorates the element of Greekness or Greek identity.

2. Historical development⁷

2.1. *The early years*

Since the first official Greek Communities in Australia were founded as early as 1897 (the Community of Melbourne and Victoria) and 1898 (the Community of Sydney and New South Wales), it is not surprising that, despite their meagre numbers⁸ the first theatre performance, according to my research, took place in 1912 in Sydney. The play was *The Lyre of Old Nicholas* by the Athenian playwright Demetrios Kokkos (Kanarakis, 1985, p. 75 and Kanarakis, 1991², p. 57). This play, like others by the same author, belonged to the *comidyll*, a fashionable new kind of play in Greece of the generation of the 1880s (Demetrios Koromilas, Demetrios Kokkos, Nicholaos Laskaris, Babis Anninos and others) which, together with the *revues*, followed the period of the pastoral dramas (See also Kambanis, 1948⁵, p. 357). This modernist, lively musical comedy with its songs, folklore elements, demotic language and heroes of the people, proved very popular in Athenian theatres as it moved away from the romanticism of the

time to naturalism, reflecting realistic every day life in non-urban settings (See also Dimaras, 1975⁶, p. 360; Politis, 1975², p. 178).

The Lyre of Old Nicholas, which enjoyed tremendous success, was performed by Greek immigrants of Sydney and produced under the direction of the Ithacan George Payzis, who had only emigrated to Sydney in December 1910 and would play a pioneering and catalytic role in the Greek community theatre of Sydney (Kanarakis, 1985, pp. 73-78 and Kanarakis, 1991², pp. 56-60).

Therefore, the beginning of Greek theatre in Australia was marked by the staging not of a locally written play but of an “imported” one from Greece, written by an established writer of the time to fill the vacuum created by the lack of local immigrant playwrights, resulting in a subsequent lack of plays on subjects regarding immigration and in particular, the Greeks’ immigrant life in Australia. This was a need which would persist for quite a few years, as did the easy tendency to present plays by writers in Greece or to host theatre groups from Greece. The first professional group to visit Australia was the Christoforos Nezer-Theodore Pofantis-Gerasimos Kourouklis group, invited in 1922 by the Greeks of Sydney to present a series of performances, among which they staged *Oedipus Tyrannus* in the Sydney Conservatorium (Kanarakis, 2003, p. 61). Later the Krinio Pappa-Spyros Mousouris group toured Australia in 1950, and among other plays presented in Sydney, they staged Sophocles’ *Antigone*, Alexander Bisson’s *The Unknown Woman* in which Payzis himself played the Public Prosecutor Flerieu and the *Scandal in a Girls’ High School* by Gregorios Xenopoulos, adapted from Hungarian (Kanarakis, 2003-2004, p. 202). They were followed by Costas Hadzichristos and his group in 1959, Nikos Stavridis and his group in 1979, the Athens Drama Company sponsored by the Australian Elizabethan Theatre trust in celebration of the 2500th anniversary of the birth of classical Greek Theatre, which presented *Iphigenia in Aulis* and *Lysistrata* as well as the choreodrama *Electra*, and others.

Another point worth noting is that *The Lyre of Old Nicholas* was staged in the Sydney Greek Community school celebration, one of the earliest such events on record of what ever since would become a frequent phenomenon. This reflects the social role of the theatre in the Greek community especially in its early years as it did not function as an autonomous form of art but was embodied in community activities, such as school and Greek national celebrations, and, therefore, short one-act sketches comprised part of the variety of the whole program. It also reflected the traditional idea of the educational value of the theatre, compensating thus for the shortage of other

sources of knowledge, a concept the Greek immigrants had brought with them to their new homeland helping with the maintenance of their language, their customs and their Greek consciousness. At the same time the theatre was also used as a means for supporting philanthropic causes, not only of Greek community concerns but also of Greece and even international ones, impressive when one considers the small size of the Greek population in Australia at that time.

Such a philanthropic cause would be the inspiring factor for another landmark, namely the writing of the first play by a Greek immigrant in this country. It was the one-act comedy, *The Inconsiderate Guest*, by the polyglot medical doctor from Adrianople Constantine Kyriazopoulos⁹ who, in his own words, borrowed the idea for his play from the diary of the Athenian writer Constantine Skokos. The result was his writing of *The Inconsiderate Guest*, staged on 17 October 1917 during a celebration organised in support of the orphans of World War I by the Greek Women's Society of Melbourne, the President of which was his wife. This play proved so popular among the Greek public of Australia that it was re-staged, even quite a few years later, as for example as part of a Greek play evening organized by the Greek Women's League in aid of Greek war relief on 24 November 1943 in Adelaide, presented together with another two one-act locally written satires, *The Solicitor's Mishap* and *Wow! Dollars*.

The Inconsiderate Guest was also published in 1923 in Athens by the publishing company A. Pallis, thereby becoming the first work in the whole field of literature by a Greek immigrant of Australia to be published in book form. In keeping with the Kyriazopoulos' philanthropic nature this publication raised money for Greek orphaned children.

Despite the promising start in 1917 with Kyriazopoulos' both locally written and staged play, it remained an isolated case because no other plays written and staged by Greek immigrants would appear until the early 1930s. The plays which continued to be staged were from Greece and thematically were frequently quite irrelevant to the immigrant experience and way of life; those written locally but not staged remained part of literary writing.

In the meantime, the year 1915 had witnessed another significant event, the founding in Sydney of the Greek Philodramatic Society (also known as the Greek Drama Lovers Society), the first Greek theatre group in this country, as well as the fourth earliest among the Greek cultural panhellenic and even regional associations in Australia.¹⁰

The inspiration for the founding of the Greek Philodramatic Society was George Payzis, who dedicated himself totally to the art of the theatre. He co-founded the Society with the Arcadian Alexander Grivas, a prominent community figure of the time and subsequent owner of the Sydney newspaper *Panellinos Kiryx*.¹¹ Payzis also attracted the cooperation of several like-minded Sydney Greeks who assisted him with the successful staging of many plays while, at the same time, he gained the whole-hearted support of the Greek community public of Sydney as well as of the whole of the state of New South Wales. The aim of the Greek Philodramatic Society, apart from the regular quality production of plays in the Greek language by Greek and non-Greek writers for entertainment, was also to attract the interest of the Greek immigrants to the theatre arts. Apart from theatre performances, it organised philanthropic and other activities (support of the war effort of World War I, the Sydney Hospital, the building of the Greek Orthodox Church of Sydney Ayia Sophia, etc.), making a significant social contribution to the Sydney Greek community as well as to the wider Australian society.

The importance of this endeavour is made even more apparent by the fact that in 1915 the Greeks in the entire state of New South Wales numbered just over 800 (Cf. Tsounis, 1971, p. 50 Table I). Unfortunately, however, the functioning of this significant cultural association came to an abrupt halt in 1921 because of the opposition of the Greek Church in Australia to its activities, and, in particular to its co-founders, both prominent community figures and supporters of the institution of the Community.

Payzis' artistic and intellectual contribution, as a poet, a stage producer and an actor in Greek and English-language plays,¹² to the Greeks of Sydney and New South Wales for over seventy years from his arrival in Sydney in 1910 until the end of his life in 1984 proved invaluable. He founded several theatre groups and directed, staged and acted in many plays in Greek and in English. Specifically, apart from the Greek Philodramatic Society, he also founded the Greek Theatre Group of Australia (1931) with co-directors George Pyrpassopoulos and the writer and actor Homer Regas, the Metropolitan Amateur Theatre Group of Ayia Sophia (1936), the Theatre Group (1939), the Greek Arts Group of Australia (1952) and the Greek Theatre of Australia (1963). He staged more than 60 plays (Greek plays, others in Greek translation, as well as a few in English): dramas, comedies, operettas and revues.¹³

Payzis' career in theatre also included many years' work as an actor both in Greek and English-language plays (his English stage name was 'H. A. Haggard'). In 1970 Payzis also wrote his only play, *The Grandmother*, a one-

act dramatic yet humorous piece of work (Kanarakis, 1992, pp. 79-81). Reflecting the discord between the Greek Orthodox Church and the Greek community in Australia, particularly in relation to its consequences on families and *paroikia* primarily in Sydney in the 1920s and later again in the 1960s, he was pressured not to stage it.

Payzis has been singled out as a rare case in the history of Greek theatre in Australia because of his total dedication to the idea of the theatre and because, for so many decades (from 1910 to the end of his life in 1984) among so many amateurs, he was one of the most “professional”.

Although the decades of the 1920s and 1930s saw quite a lot of theatre activity in Sydney, due almost exclusively to Payzis’ efforts, the plays which were staged continued to be by non-immigrant writers, with the exception of a few one-act sketches, some published in the Sydney Greek press, their writing stimulated frequently by the Church-Community conflict in Sydney and the resulting divided spirit among the Greeks of New South Wales. They have remained largely part of theatre literature. An indicative example is the one-act satire *Meeting of Meetings* published in *Panellinios Kiryx* (30 March 1932, p. 2) by a regular contributor under the pseudonym “Single-saddled” (Kanarakis, 2000, p. 94, fn. 23). However, during this period there were several plays staged by amateur groups, associations, Greek schools and even individuals in other capital cities, as well. These include a few plays, mainly by writers of Greece, performed in Melbourne, Adelaide, Brisbane and Perth. In Melbourne particularly, the two community associations, the Greek Amateur and Philanthropic Association ‘Orpheus’ and the Ithacan Philanthropic Society ‘Ulysses’, staged *The Slave Woman* by Peresiadis and *Morpho* in early 1930 and 1932 correspondingly, the latter’s proceeds offered to the Greek school of Melbourne. In Adelaide in 1932 a local amateur group presented with great success two one-act plays, *The Crazy Gambler of the Foreign Land* (drama) and *A Woman in the Barracks* (comedy), by the Adelaide resident Constantine Panayiotidis. In Brisbane the Greek national drama in verse, *Athanasios Diakos*, of the nineteenth century metropolitan writer Leon Melas, was staged in the Hellenic Club in 1933 as part of a fund-raising activity and produced by the Egypt-born Efstratios Venlis, founder of the Greek press in Australia. In Perth the six comedies (*The Uncle from Australia*, *An Unwilling Bridegroom*, *Aunty Pulcheria*, *Queen of Spades*, *It’s Sour Grapes* based on a well known Greek character in Perth, and *Ananias in Australia* humourously depicting the passion of some Greek immigrants for horse racing and wagering), as well as five patriotic dramas (*Photo*, *The Heroine of Souli*, *The*

Female Slave (thematically relating to the Greek Revolution of 1821). In *Glory's Mountain Retreats* (the epic of Crete during World War II) and *Blood-Stained Easter*), all by the prolific Athenian immigrant Demetrios Ioannides,¹⁴ were written and staged there in 1939-1940.

Despite other rather short-lived theatre groups, two quite active groups appeared in the 1930s and continued throughout the war years and much later. They belonged to two community organisations of leftist orientation, the Greek Workers' League 'Demokritos' in Melbourne founded in 1935¹⁵ and the Greek Atlas group in Sydney founded in 1939.

While this was the situation with Greek-language playwriting, with the English-language it was somewhat different. The earliest English-language plays appeared towards the end of the 1920s and were one-act plays by the immigrant Edward Parry, a resident of Sydney. Probably because of his background, the content of his plays was not entangled in the Church – Community discord of the time. They appeared in the pages of *Panellinos Kiryx*, but were never staged. In the decade of the 1930s we encounter English-language plays staged both in Sydney and Perth. In Sydney Raoul Cardamatis, an immigrant from Athens, who before his emigration to Sydney had studied medicine at the university of Berlin as well as philosophy in connection with the theatre under the Austrian producer Max Reinhardt had staged in Germany works of Strindberg, Goethe and Shakespeare. Similarly, all his productions in Australia dealt with non-Greek plays in English translation. The only Greek play he produced was an Ancient Greek tragedy and that also in English.

Cardamatis' first production in Australia was the play *Art and Mrs Bottle* for the Players Club in the early 1930s. In 1933 he formed his own impressionist theatre company and began the work which was to make him a renowned and respected figure in the Australian world of theatre. His productions included G. Hauptman's *Hanenle's Dream*, Rostand's *Cyrano de Bergerac* (for the Theatre Royal), Casella's *Death Takes a Holiday*, Strindberg's *The Ghost Sonata*, several works by Moliere and Chekov, Mary Stuart's *Night Must Fall*, and as late as the end of November 1949 Oscar Wilde's *Salome*. Cardamatis exhibited a fine intelligence and made sensitive use of the resources of the theatre. He was undoubtedly an artist, a creator, although an unusual case in the early decades of Australian Hellenism's theatre.¹⁶

Specifically, in 1931 Ioannides wrote and presented the romantic melodrama *Beauty and the Boss* and in the following years five musical revues (*The Gypsy Princess*, *Australomania*, *Australian Merry-Making*, *Viennese Nights*

and *The Athenian Nights* with exceptional success, especially the last which in 1939 was staged three times in Perth and once in Fremantle) and three musical comedies (three-act operettas: *The Queen of Hearts*, *The Newcomer to Australia* and *Somewhere in Perth*). With Parry's death in 1945, Ioannides' in 1947 and Cardamatis' a little later, English-language playwriting dies too, not to reappear until the late 1950s.

2.2. World War II and the Post-War Years

The outbreak of World War II revitalized nationalism among the immigrant Greeks of Australia, exercising an impact upon the arts including a renewal of theatre activity as well as of its dynamism and themes. It is interesting that now remarkable Greek-language playwriting and stage production are also noticed in Melbourne, although plays in Greek continued to be produced with the same enthusiasm in other cities with Greek populations. The main playwrights and producers in Melbourne were two Ithacan friends, Stathis Raftopoulos (Kanarakis, 1985, pp. 194-197 and Kanarakis, 1991², pp. 140-142) and Nikos Fiambolis (Kanarakis, 1985, pp. 200-201 and Kanarakis, 1991², pp. 145-146).

In the decade 1940-1950 Raftopoulos, a playwright, actor and poet, wrote seven comedies on subjects reflecting community life: the two-act play in verse *The Dowry-Hunter* (1946, staged in 1948), four one-act plays *In the Army*, *Seeking an Employee*, *The Vagabond at Court* and the *Greek Daddy* (all written in 1948, staged in 1950), the two-act farce *Lost Dreams* (1950), as well as the one-act comedy *Bride from Greece*, written and staged in 1955. Of his seven comedies, six were staged, all in Melbourne. In 1947-1951 he got involved with the Greek school of Melbourne, directed by the well-known teacher Alexandra Vrahna, and contributed to the staging of Psathas' *Von Dimitrakis*, *My Little Self* and others.

Fiambolis, a playwright, actor and versifier, also wrote and presented on stage in Melbourne a comic monologue of patriotic content (*Mussolini Learns the Greek Alphabet*, 1950 and 1952) and several comedies, staging them in Melbourne and later in Newcastle, the most successful being *The Business Agent's Debts* which revolved around the bankruptcy of a Melbourne Greek business agent. He wrote it in 1948 and produced it with Raftopoulos in 1950 in Melbourne.

One characteristic of the theatre of those years is that it did not produce any viable playwrights. The comedies, sketches, and revues written and

staged in Melbourne by Raftopoulos, Fiambolis and another one or two immigrants, such as Takis Douvaras, and even the few comedies written in Adelaide were simply light-hearted plays reflecting the spirit of the times, and were composed to entertain. In many cases, the playwrights of these times wrote and staged their plays for Greek or Australian philanthropic purposes and war relief. So, the importance of the Greek immigrants' plays of those times lay mainly in their contributions to the cultivation of the Greek theatre tradition in Australia.

The decade of the 1950s proved more successful in stage productions due mainly to the gradual post-war increase of Greek immigration to Australia, especially after 1952¹⁷ an event which would have wider consequences for the future development of Australian Hellenism in general. This influx invigorated the community with new enthusiastic and talented individuals in the theatre art and, at the same time, it boosted the numbers of the audiences.

Another result was the appearance of new theatre groups, for example, the theatre group of the Union of the Greeks from Egypt and the Middle East with flourishing repertory until today, the group of Olympiakos which was founded in 1949 but began its stage performances in 1950 with D. Bogris' *The Engagement Celebration*, followed by plays such as Elias Venezis' *Block C* (1952), Sophocles' *Antigone* (1954) which was staged to raise money for charity, and other works produced successfully throughout this decade in both Melbourne and Adelaide. Another group, organized in Melbourne in 1952 by a new immigrant (1950) from Himarra of Northern Epirus, Petros Simos, and his friend Nikos Fiambolis, despite the enthusiasm of its founders, like so many others, proved short-lived, especially after Fiambolis moved from Melbourne to Newcastle in 1954. The plays Simos staged were all written by him and were inspired, with one or two exceptions, such as the two-act comedy *The Kind-hearted Boy* (performed in August, 1953), either by his grief for the loss of Northern Epirus to "foreign occupants" as in the one-act comedies *At School* and *Northern Epirus and Hodja*, both staged in 1952, or by subjects relating to Greece, either of patriotic content such as the historic drama *Women of Mount Pindos*, staged in 1952 to benefit the war orphans in Greece, or about environmental catastrophes as in the three-act social drama *The Earthquake Victims* staged to raise funds for the survivors of the 1953 earthquakes on Ithaca, Cephalonia and Zakynthos. Incidentally, Fiambolis had leading roles in all of Simos' plays, except for *The Earthquake Victims* where Simos himself took a leading role, and the *Women of Mount Pindos*.¹⁸

From this point on we notice a gradual increase in the writing of plays by local writers and, with the exception of Petros Simos, frequently on local subjects. This means that increasingly we are moving towards a more authentic community theatre. In parallel there was a growth in the publishing of plays in the press and book form. The first in this period seems to have been *Tonia Mantouri* by the Kytherian Anargyros Fatseas of Sydney. A drama which was never staged, it appeared serialised in the Melbourne journal *Ikoyenia* (1 October 1957 to 1 August 1958), and focused on the life of a Greek immigrant woman in Australia, confronting Greek social customs such as matchmaking and the dowry.

In the decade of the 1950s Adelaide and Perth were also sites of interesting theatre activity thanks to, apart from school celebrations and fund-raising purposes by brotherhoods and regional associations, the conscious efforts of the newly founded company “Aristophanes” in Adelaide and the Progressive Youth Association “Athena” in Perth.

An equally, perhaps even more impressive picture in theatre activities was revealed in Sydney, not only in the variety of productions, but also in the skill and experience of the producers. Takis Kaldis, who emigrated from the island of Lesbos to Sydney in 1950, proved to be both a capable producer and leading actor. He played a key role in the founding of the Greek Artists Company (1954) and later, the Fine Arts Society (1956). Kaldis offered quality theatre productions to the Greeks of Sydney as well as of Melbourne, Newcastle, Wollongong, Canberra and elsewhere, both as producer as well as a leading actor in some twenty plays. He continued until the end of the 1960s when he quit the theatre for a career in journalism and politics. By that time he had also worked as producer and actor with the Greek group Atlas, with which he gave one of his memorable performances in Jaroslav Hašek’s satire *The Good Soldier Švejk* which was so successful that he staged it twice, once with the Greek Artists Company and another with Atlas. Furthermore, he had revealed his talent for acting even in roles of Ancient Greek tragedies, as in Sophocles’ *Oedipus Tyrannus* staged in 1954 by the noted Sydney producer of the time Chrysostomos Mantourides.

Mantourides, born in Cairo of Cypriot parentage,¹⁹ had emigrated to Sydney in February 1949 when George Payzis was continuing his theatrical activities in that city. Mantourides brought theatrical experience as both producer and actor from Cairo and immediately embarked on his own long career, which would prove equally impressive as Payzis’. Completely dedicated to the art of the theatre, as a stage producer, director and actor, Mantourides’

rich talent also found expression in stage design, painting, sculpture, and some literary writing. His career in Australia falls into two distinct periods, 1950 to the end of 1962 and 1963 to 1979. In the first period, a period of “experimentation and searching”, he founded the Sydney Hellenic Theatrical Group and, starting his Australian career in Sydney with the seventeenth-century drama in verse of the Cretan School *The Sacrifice of Abraham* by Vitsentzos Kornaros, in which he played Abraham (1950),²⁰ he staged another six plays – Melas’ drama *The Black and White*, four comedies (Melas’ *Educating Father* and Psathas’ *The Nervy Chap*, *Kiphisophon* and *The Crazy People of Our Days*) and the highly praised *Oedipus Tyrannus*. In this success Mantourides, apart from producing and directing, also played the two roles of Zeus’ priest and the leader of the chorus. Towards the end of 1962 Mantourides reorganized his group, enriching it with new immigrant actors, under the title Greek Artists Group and a logo which he designed himself.

In both periods, Mantourides successfully staged over thirty plays with a number of repeat performances, as well as theatrical contributions (patriotic sketches, musical evenings, etc.) to community activities. His entire repertoire was impressively extensive, ranging from Ancient Greek tragedies to modern Greek plays by Melas, Psathas, Xenopoulos, Kambanellis, Katiforis and Mourselas, as well as foreign works in translation by Chekhov, Tennessee Williams and others. Finally, his courageous and imaginative character inspired him to write and stage in 1960 an innovative version of Karagiozis (*Karagiozis, the Doctor*), a first for Australia, but a venture only attempted once before in Greece, with Photos Politis’ satire *Karagiozis, the Great* staged by the Royal Theatre in Athens. Another innovation was the staging in 1972 of Nikos Kazantzakis’ tragedy *Christopher Columbus*, until then not presented on stage even in Greece. Mantourides staged *Christopher Columbus* in Sydney in a world premiere, with unexpectedly remarkable success. His last premiere was Sophocles’ *Antigone* (1977) but his last production was a repeat of Richard Nash’s comedy *The Rainmaker* (1979), just a year before his untimely death at the age of sixty-five.

Something worth noting is that in his extensive repertoire,²¹ Mantourides did not neglect to stage works by local Greek playwrights on Greek immigrant subjects, such as Theodore Patrikareas’ *Throw Away Your Harmonica, Pepino* (1963), a drama based on the immigrant’s life in Australia, and *The Uncle from Australia* (1964), a comedy centering on a Greek immigrant who, after thirty-five years in Australia, returns to his village rich and in search of a bride.

The end of the 1950s also saw the reappearance of English-language playwriting with *The Foreign Born* by the previously mentioned Anargyros Fatseas. Fatseas wrote it for ABC television and it deals with Greek immigrant life in Australia in a warm and humourous style. Later, in 1971, he would write another English-language play, under the same title and thematically similar, but this time for the theatre. Both remained unpublished and unstaged.

At that time Brisbane, capital city of the state of Queensland, would also produce her Greek exponent of the theatre, Tassos Emmanuel who emigrated with his parents to north Queensland in 1913 when only a few months old. Although he began with Greek-language sketches which he wrote in 1946 for the League of Greek Youth of Brisbane, he would switch to English-language plays in 1964. They were two one-act comedies on the life of Greek immigrants in Queensland, *Bush Town Story* and *Here Comes the Bride*, staged in that year by the company Art Theatre of Brisbane and again in 1977 by the AHEPA of Brisbane in his Greek translation version. A few years later he would write in English *The Red Rooster*, a play he had originally written in Greek. Based on the subject of Greeks involved in drugs, it was staged again by AHEPA in 1979 under his direction. Apart from Emmanuel's staged plays there are two (the English-language *The Case of Wattle Street* and the Greek-language *The World Is Gone Berserk*), which are still unperformed.

Emmanuel and Fatseas' English-language plays would remain isolated attempts in the repertory of Australian Hellenism until the end of the decade of the 1970s when English-language playwriting activity appeared.

The main Greek-language playwrights, however, offering plays mature in themes, more complex in structure, and dealing earnestly with immigrant subjects, made their appearance from the mid-1950s to the end of the 1960s: Lambis Paschalides from Cairo and Theo Patrikareas from Lakonia. Both Sydney residents, they wrote and staged their works in that city.

Paschalides— a poet, prose writer, journalist, and playwright had many previous stage successes of one-act plays and revues written by him and produced by his own company, such as the revue *Hanging Out All Your Dirty Washing* (first prize in the Panhellenic Revue Competition in Alexandria, 1947) or by other Greek companies, such as his revue *Under the Palm Trees* (1949) staged by the Kalouta Sisters, Rena Dor and others, in Egypt, Syria, the Sudan, Palestine, Suez, Cyprus and elsewhere. A talented actor, he

performed in his own Greek plays as well as those of international writers.²² In 1955, only seven months after his arrival in Australia, he directed and produced in the Sydney Conservatorium five one-act plays under the general title *Five Masterpieces* (*She [The Ship] Was Spanish*, *The Trifles*, *For One Button*, *The Little Bride of Death*, and *The Little House-Keepers*), the first three of which he himself had written and the other two he had translated from French.²³

Patrikareas, a playwright, actor and producer,²⁴ has had five of his plays: *Throw Away Your Harmonica*, *Pepino* (made into a film in 1974 entitled *The Promised Woman*), *The Uncle from Australia* (first staged in 1964), *The Suitors* (first staged in 1966), *Zorba Teach Me to Dance* (1988 adaptation based on Kazantzakis' corresponding novel), and the 1989 Greek State Theatre Award winning *The Divided Heart* (first staged in 1992), successfully produced in Sydney and elsewhere in Australia. The second was also screened on Greek state television in 1974. Additionally, the first two plays were published in book form, the first in Athens in 1984 (reprinted in 1989), and the second in Sydney in 1973 and reprinted in Athens in 1987. Finally, these two plays together with *The Divided Heart* were published in English translation in an independent volume under the title *Antipodean Trilogy* by RMIT University of Melbourne.²⁵

In that time, Evangelos Bollas, was the first Greek immigrant to write plays of political and social content reflecting the conditions in his times and also see them performed. From Alexandria, Egypt, he arrived and settled in Sydney in December 1955, after a long career as a journalist with Alexandrian newspapers since 1940. He resumed his journalism career, working for Greek newspapers of Sydney, but was soon involved in the socio-political affairs of the Greek community in Australia.

Bollas' plays and poems sometimes deal with immigrant social problems, particularly those relating to the Greeks of earlier times and often with political events and conditions in Greece and Cyprus during the time of the Junta, all of them written in a satirical vein. Although his plays remained unpublished, because of their contemporary subjects, they were staged in Sydney. His first play was *Unemployment* (1963/4), followed by a satire against the Junta entitled *The Bird* (1969).

This socio-political interest of his was consistently reflected into the 1970s and 1980s, until a few years before his death, in the plays *The Polytechnic* (successfully staged in 1973, 1980 and 1982), *The Letter* (a satire about the

Greek pensions scandal in Sydney in 1978) and two anti-Junta satires *The Dictator and the Conscience* and *The Mother's Curse* (1983). He also wrote the one-act plays *Marikoula – or, Our Life in Australia* and *Under Attila's Boot* and performed in various plays including Psatha's *A Fool and a Half*, Patrikareas' *The Suitors*, his own work *The Polytechnic*, and others.

2.3. *New Horizons*

The 1970s saw Australia officially and quite radically changed with the development of the new ideology and policy of multiculturalism.²⁶ Multiculturalism rejected assimilation and viewing the increased diversity of Australian society as cultural and economic enrichment endorsed the existing cultural pluralism. As a result, a more general acceptance of the immigrants, as well as indigenous people, as equal members of Australian society emerged, followed by encouragement of their artistic expression. Then, federal organizations were especially set up for the translation of this policy into action, including the Australia Council (1973), its branch the Community Arts Board, and particularly for writers, the Literature Board, the aim of which was to assist with the development of a national Australian identity through immigrant artistic expression. They began funding writers, painters, etc., and in this case, playwrights for the translation and/or staging of their works. Consequently this new government policy and in particular the economic and psychological support it offered, encouraged the establishment of more permanent theatrical groups and an increase in theatre activities.

Efforts of the 1970s consist of several plays written and staged in the Greek communities, mainly of Melbourne and Sydney, focusing on the theme of immigration. Chronologically, among others, there are: the *Revue*, comprising short sketches and produced by University of Melbourne Greek students (1974), *Scenes from the Life of a Greek Immigrant* by Vassilis Trikaliotis in collaboration with the drama workshop of the Greek Progressive Youth of Australia (Melbourne, 1975), *For a Plate of Food* by the same Melbourne group (1978), and the satire *From Newtown to Vauclose* by Vaggelis Mygdalis under the pseudonym Z. K. Melas with the United Artists Mavrakis group (Sydney, 1979). In 1979 two comedies, *I AM a Greek, with a Stubborn Head* (The Genuine Greek) and *Perdikis and His Perdikoula*, both on topical subjects were written by Lambis Kalpakidis, the first published in book form in Melbourne but both have yet to be staged.

In the mid-1970s, another Melbourne immigrant, Con Kassimatis from Athens, started writing plays which attracted considerable interest. In 1977

he staged his comedy, *A Know-All Priest* twice in Melbourne with his own cast, while later in 1982 he staged *Baptize Me a Communist* and the political satirical revue *With PASOK in Charge, a Wedding at the Town Hall*.

A further significant event occurred in April 1980 with the organization of a competition in script writing by the Laiki Skini of Melbourne for a work on immigrant life, the first such competition in Australia.

The first prize of the Laiki Skini group was shared by John Vasilakakos' *The Identity* (Melbourne), a drama portraying the conflicts between Greek immigrant parents and their Australian-born children, and Vasso Kalamaras' *The Breadtrap* (Perth), a drama exploring the disastrous conditions and problems of Greek immigrant families after the collapse of the tobacco industry in Western Australia in the early 1960s. Both plays were staged in Melbourne in 1981 by the Laiki Skini and were later published as books.²⁷ Furthermore, these two plays continued to enjoy success in the following years as well. Kalamaras, who has also proved a very capable poet and short story writer, saw another of her plays *Holiday in Greece* produced in English in 1984 by the Patch Theatre and received the "Play of the Year 1984" award again from the same theatre. Her collaboration with the Patch Theatre continued with her next work, the one-act play *Phryne*.

In 1987 Kalamaras' play *Karagiozis, the Rich* was produced in Sydney and Canberra by Stavros Economides' Theatre of Art of Australia and in 1992 a second Karagiozis play, *Karagiozis Down-under*, was performed in English in Perth. In addition, with a grant from the Arts Council of Western Australia, she wrote her two-act historical drama *Olympias: Mother of Alexander the Great* which was published in 2001 by Owl Publishing of Melbourne in separate Greek and English editions.

Kalamaras is the first Greek-language woman playwright in Australia, while the first English-language woman playwright of Greek origin (Kytherian parentage) is the Melbournian drama teacher Tes Lyssiotis.²⁸ Her satire *Robert M – the Big M* was successfully staged by the Why Not Theatre in Melbourne in 1978. The content of this play was a first as it dealt with a mainstream Australian subject – the former Prime Minister Robert Menzies. It was the first of a number of original plays which she would write and produce in English, all of them dealing with immigrant issues (quite frequently with the Greeks of Australia) and the complexity of the concept of multicultural identity.

Lyssiotis' first professionally produced play was the bilingual (English and Greek) *I'll Go to Australia and Wear a Hat* (1982) which focused on the theme

of immigrant reality. Up until now Lyssiotis has written and staged fourteen works, twelve for the theatre (including a trilogy comprising *A White Sports Coat* (1988), *The Forty Lounge Café* (1990) and *Blood Moon* (1993),²⁹ interrelating Australia as the adopted homeland, Greece as the motherland and Greek family life),³⁰ one for television (*English As a Second Language*, 1984), and one for radio (*A Small Piece of Earth*, 1986). Additionally, her play *Paradise* is included as a contribution to literary writing in Helen Nikas' anthology *Mothers from the Edge* (Melbourne, 2006, pp. 223-230). Lyssiotis is not only the first English-language immigrant woman writer of Greek origin in Australia but also one of Australia's recognised playwrights today.

From the decade of 1980, more plays by Greek immigrant women have been staged and several of them have appeared in book form. In recent years, the Greek women playwrights have become increasingly productive. Today, apart from Vasso Kalamaras and Tes Lyssiotis, successful playwrights include Sophia Ralli-Catharios of Sydney, Koula Teo and Maro Gemetta of Melbourne, as well as the English-language writers Angela Costi and Susan Alexopoulos of Melbourne.

Sophia Ralli-Catharios, a prolific playwright, has written and produced seven plays since 1991. Of them her drama *Iphigenia South of the Capricorn* (1991) was also produced in New York in 1994 by director Achilles Lavides in his Village Studio. *Flesh and Germ* (1994, 1997), under the title *Minotaur's Children*, was performed in Herakleion, Crete in 1999 and awarded "Best Play" at the Pan-Cretan Theatre Games. *Preferably Gardenias* and *Transit* were published in Athens in 1989 and a one-act play, *The Three Faces of a Mirror*, was included in Helen Nickas' aforementioned anthology (pp. 159-170). In addition, several of Ralli-Catharios' dance dramas have been performed in Sydney, two in Toronto, Canada, and one in Crete, while some others are written but have yet to be staged.

Ralli-Catharios moves comfortably from comedy and satire to drama and tragedy. Thematically, she transcends the limits of Greek immigrant life in Australia. In *Iphigenia South of Capricorn* she blends the ancient Greek mythical Iphigenia with modern Iphigenia (the immigrant in Australia),³¹ giving thus a new social perspective to the tragic deed of personal sacrifice, or by interplaying cultural and social differences to transcend community experiences for better understanding of human relationships as in *Crossroads* (staged in 1991 in English and in 2008 in Greek in Canberra and Sydney) where she successfully explores the spirituality of two cultures of ancient origins: the Greek and the Aboriginal.

Another prolific playwright has been the Melbourne resident Koula Teo. Until now she has written and directed ten plays as well as another nine one-act plays for children's theatre. Teo's works, whether comedies or dramas, focus on the family and social problems encountered by immigrants, especially Greeks living in the multiethnic, multicultural cauldron of Australian society, as well as the psychological conflicts they experience in everyday life. She began her theatre career in 1990 with her comedy *Her Majesty, Mama*, which was awarded the second prize in a Sydney script competition in that year. This was also her first play which was performed out of Australia, in Crete, in 1996 by the Panhellenic Immigrant Theatre founded in Hania the year before. In 1997 the same theatre group would present her well known play *A Pair of Socks*³² in a number of cities in Crete, receiving first prizes for the best female role and stage direction and second prize for best performance at the Cultural Theatre Games in Herakleion, as well as then presenting both plays in Thessaloniki and Athens. *A Pair of Socks* was first staged in Melbourne in 1992, in 1995 in Sydney by the Art Theatre as well as in 1996 in Adelaide, while in 1994 it was published in Melbourne by Dionysos Books.

A third woman playwright, notable in her own way, is the Cypriot Maro Gemetta. She first appeared in 1991 with her play *Our Easter Then* staged in that year by the Sunshine Parents and Youth Association in Melbourne. Since then she has written a number of plays (historical, folkloristic, etc.) such as *The Old Maid*, *Noblewoman Antzoulina*, *The Wedding of Maroulis and Michalis*, *The Neighbours* and others. Gemetta's main aim is to keep the Cypriot culture alive and promote it through her work, and she consistently uses the Cypriot dialect in all her plays. Gemetta's plays have been performed (usually under her stage direction) in Cyprus and in Melbourne. In 2005 she was awarded a special distinction by the State Government of Victoria for her contribution to the maintenance and promotion of the Greek-Cypriot culture in that state.

An English-language playwright of Cypriot origin, who has written and has had her work performed, is Angela Costi. In 1996, a year after her return from Greece and Cyprus where, under an Australian National Languages and Literature travel grant, she had studied classic Greek theatre, Costi completed her first and best known play *Panayiota* in which she explores the intense conflict and cultural differences experienced by second and third generation Greek Australians of Cypriot origin. In September of that year the play was adapted for radio and produced on ABC Radio National and in

June 1997 it was first performed in Melbourne. It has also been published in the journal *Australasian Drama Studies* (Queensland University Press, 1998) and selected by the Australian Script Centre for its '99 *Collection*. Other plays and poetic narratives by Costi include *The Sounds of Incense* produced by ABC Radio National (1998), *Welcome Matt* (City of Kingston, 2000) and *Shimmer* (City of Darwin, 2001), all receiving critical acclaim. The second promising English-language Melbournian woman playwright, and also actress, is Susan Alexopoulos who wrote and staged in 2005 in Melbourne with noted success her first play, the bittersweet autobiographical comedy *By Night We Tremble*.

There are several other women writers who have not yet seen their works staged, nevertheless they have contributed, each according to her talent, to the theatre as literary writing. The works include: in Sydney, Yota Krili's bilingual socio-political drama *Christina's Case* and Pipina Ellis' *Gifts of Love, Dionysiacs*, and *The Aunt* (all published in 1998) and *Theatre 2000* consisting of three plays published in 2000 and *Theatre 2006* comprised of three plays published in 2006, all focusing on social issues; in Melbourne, Dina Amanatides' social dramas *Dangling in Mid-Air* (Tsonis Publishing, 2000) and several sketches (presented in her short story collections *Bodies of Stone* (1990³), *The Seed of Peace* (Greek edition 1990², English edition Argo Publishing 1993) and *Human Characters* (Tsonis Publishing, 1997)), two of which (*As Long As There Is Still Time* and *Greek Retirement Home*) were performed by Greek community schools, and Vasso Fares' comic drama *Of Saintly Hunger* (Tsonis Publishing, 2003); as well as in Adelaide Georgia Xenophou's comedy *Cousin Casanova*.

Despite the impressive demographic increase of Greek women in Australia since World War II (from 25. 8% of the Greek population in 1947 to 49. 4% in 2001) (Kanarakis, 2003, p. 106, fn. 8) and the dynamic presence of Greek women playwrights in the theatre art of Australian Hellenism, both qualitatively and quantitatively, they still number fewer than men.

Comparatively with the past, despite the significant decline of Greek emigration to Australia in the last two decades (420 in 1989-90, 280 in 1993-94, 187 in 1995-96, 155 in 1996-97, 111 in 1997-98, 142 in 1998-99, 99 in 2003-04, 147 in 2006 (January-August) etc. (Kanarakis, 2000, p. 141, fn. 38; Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2007) but thanks to the continuing post-1970s psychological and economic encouragement of the new policy of multiculturalism in Australia, and also due to the traditionally cultural interest and creative desire of the Greeks in the arts, the number of

Greek playwrights and those involved in theatre productions – like those of poets and writers – have increased impressively, giving us plays of all kinds and at an accelerating pace, both as literary writing and as stage production.

Among the many male playwrights who have continued their contribution in the eighties and the following decades, indicatively I mention the Melbournians Costas Alexiadis and his two works *Metamorphosis* staged in 1982 by the Greek Theatre of Australia in Melbourne and in 1985 in Lefkada, Chios and Kalamata, Greece as well as the unstaged ones *Bonegilla* (1981) and *Neither Here Nor There* (1984); Gregory Andreas whose play *Youth* was produced in 1984 by the Jika-Jika Theatre Group of Melbourne; John Vassilakakos whose second play *Attention, Fragile* was staged in 1985 in Adelaide by the “Bonds” Theatre of the Diaspora in collaboration with the Arts Centre, within the cultural activities of Flinders University Greek Students Organisation, in Thessaloniki within the First Helliniada Festival by the Thiasos Paroikia group in 2003, in the same year on the island of Lefkada and in Melbourne, and a third one *Ravings* (eight one-act monologues) on the life of the Greek immigrants of Australia, not yet performed or published; Dimitris Katsavos and his plays *The Mistake* (1986), *Holy Money* (1987), *How Are You, Community* (1988), *The Community in Utter Chaos* (1989),³³ and *Machinist Wanted* (1993); George Katsaros with *Fasouli’s Story* (1988), and in Sydney George Kazouris and his plays *Mother’s Last Visit* and *Life Is Beautiful*, both staged in 2003 by the Thiasos Paroikia in Melbourne and the latter also in Sydney in 2003 by the Arts Theatre and repeated in 2006 in Melbourne by Thiasos Paroikia. Two of Kazouris’ sketches, *What a Wonderful Brother!* and *Almost a Divorce*, have been published, the first in the Sydney magazine *Tachydromos* (No. 10, April 1980, pp. 24, 94) and the second in Kanarakis’ anthologies (1985, pp. 444-450 and 1991², pp. 334-340).

More plays have been written and published during this period than in any other, both as books or in duplicated form, and are waiting to be staged, therefore their impact lies in theatre literature. Some of these plays are *My Splendid Son* (1997, self-published) by Sotiris Mantalvanos of Melbourne, *Lost Homelands* and *Working Together* (in manuscript form) by Stasinios Makris of Adelaide, as well as the drama in verse *The Beggar’s Heart* (1980, duplicated edition) by John Koukouliatas, *The Pensions of Shame: The Greek Conspiracy* (1994, self-published) by Costas Souliotis (pen-name of Costas Tsavelas) and *A Branch of Basil* (2004, self-published) by Gregory Chronopoulos, all three Sydney writers.

The most productive and staged Greek-language playwrights of this

period, however, are George Makridis of Sydney and Vasilis Georgarakis of Melbourne.

Makrides has written more than ten plays (several dramatic comedies or satires), three of which have been included in 1998-99 in the journal *Hermes O Logios* (Marrickville Municipal Library, Sydney) and four performed in Sydney and Melbourne. The first play he wrote was *The Hot Tip*, a dramatic comedy which was performed under the title *Grandpa, My Dear Grandpa* by Thiasos Paroikia in Melbourne in 1999 and 2002 and published (duplicated edition) in 2002. The other three staged plays are *A Room to Let* and *Invitation for a Better Life* performed by Thiasos Paroikia in 2000 and 2003, and *Maria of the Patris* [ship] staged in 2004 in Sydney by the Art Theatre under the title *Loves, Passions and Tales* and repeated in 2006 in Melbourne by Thiasos Paroikia under the first title. Finally, Makrides' long service to the theatre and the quality of his work were recognized in 2002 when his play *The Honour of Conscience* was awarded the second prize by the Panhellenic Writers' Society in Athens.

Georgarakis is the most staged and acclaimed Greek-language playwright of this period, mainly focusing on human psychology frequently filtered through the political (though not party political) ideology of his characters. His production totals over twelve plays, two of which, *Jack and Jack* and *Boyfriend*, are written in English. The first was included in the 1991 Ethnic Street Theatre Group's production under the general title *200 Years Only? They've Got to Be Joking!*, while others such as *The Return* (1987) and *The Reunion* (1988) remain unpublished and unperformed.

Georgarakis made his first appearance with a one-act play (*A Room to Let*) which was staged successfully in 1984 in Melbourne. After a three-year period of silence he re-emerged with *An Indictment Against Whoever Is Responsible* (three short independent one-act plays) which was performed within the Antipodes Festival in Melbourne (1987), while in December of that year it was also published in the Melbourne journal *Antipodes* (No. 22, pp. 5-11). The success was so notable that for several years afterwards this trilogy was performed in Australia, Greece (Thessaloniki within the First Helleniada Festival by Thiasos Paroikia, 2003) and the USA (New York by the Center of Hellenic Civilization theatre group, 1996 together with another two plays by the same writer, *Third Bench on the Right* and *Shadows of the Past*). It was not the first time *Third Bench on the Right* was staged with impressive success. In 1991 it was restaged with his other play *Sunday's Breakfast* and the play *A Life's Summer* by the Australian-born Sydney

playwright Vasilis (Bill) Kokkaris, in one performance by the Take Away theatre group in Sydney, repeated by Thiasos Paroikia in 2002 in Melbourne and 2003 in Thessaloniki. Other of Georgarakis' Greek-language plays can be added to his long list of staged successes, including *The Bridegroom from Greece* performed in Melbourne, Canberra and elsewhere (2002), *The Visit* at La Trobe University, Melbourne (1989) and *An Early Autumn* by the Laiki Skini in Melbourne (1991).³⁴

The English-language theatre production from the end of the 1970s until today is not restricted to Tes Lyssiotis' works, however. There have been others (first as well as second generation immigrants) who have contributed to English-language theatre. Some examples are George Haralambopoulos' *An Arvo at the Soccer* produced in Melbourne in 1980 in collaboration with the Why Not Theatre, Nicolas Tsoutas' *The Age of the Innocents* staged by the Sydney group All Out Ensemble in 1985, Stelios Kourpetis' *Poison and Cold* staged under his direction in 1988 and *(Lonely) Rider on the Storm*, Gregory Andreas' *Happy*, a black comedy dealing with alienation and the elusive happiness of repatriation to a small village in Greece, staged in 1990 in Sydney by Underground Theatre Productions, *What's the Difference* by Takis Soros, Janet Elefsiniotis and Suat Yilmez (of Turkish origin) staged by the Ethnic Street Theatre Group, as well as Dimitris Katsavos' *Let's Celebrate*, Janet Elefsiniotis' *Celebration Minister*, Costas Alexiadis' *Australia 40, 000BC – 2088AD*, Costas Giannopoulos' comic plays of ethnic humour *You Can't Teach An Old Wog New Tricks*, *Where Did the Daygo?*, *When You're Dancing*, *Greek to Greek*, *How Much Is that Woggy in the Window?*, Christos Tsiolkas' *Who's Afraid of the Working Class* (in collaboration with Andrew Borell, Patricia Cornelius and Melissa Reeves), *Viewing Blue Poles*, *Elektra AD* and *Non Parlo di Salo* (about the Italian filmmaker, poet and activist Pier Paolo Pasolini), Bill Kokkaris' *Night Journeys* staged in 2007 by Sydney's professional Greek-Australian company Take Away Theatre and his other credits including *Parthenon Air* (2002) and *To Baraki* (1999), as well as *It's a Mother* (2005) and *It's a Father* (2006) which he wrote for Sydney's Sidetrack theatre, as well as other English-language playwrights. Here must also be included the acclaimed English-language Melbournian novelist, poet and playwright Tom Petsinis. He is known for a number of plays including *The Drought* and *the Thief*, the first shortlisted for the Victorian Premier's Literary Award, also having won the Wal Cherry Playscript of the Year in 1993, and both performed by Anthill Theatre, as well as for *Salonica Bound* commissioned by Melbourne's Playbox Theatre.

All this proves that, especially during the last few decades, the activity and vigour in theatre production, script writing and publishing appears significantly increased, while quite a few other plays remain unperformed and unpublished. At the same time, several theatrical groups have appeared and continue their activities in the capital cities, some of them belonging to cultural or regional associations and fraternities, such as Dimokritos' Greek Progressive Youth of Australia (est. 1980) and the Theatre Section of the League of Greeks from Egypt and the Middle East (est. 1952), both in Melbourne, school theatre groups, Greek Community theatre groups, etc. Others have been functioning on an independent basis, such as Sakis Feidogiannis' Laiki Skini (est. 1976), the Experimental Theatre, Nikos Skiadopoulos' Drama School and Theatre Organisation Yefyra (1974-91),³⁵ Dimitris Katsavos' Immigrant Theatre of Australia (est. 1991), Thanasis Makrigiorgos' Thiasos Paroikia (est. 1990)³⁶, and the Greek Theatre of Australia (est. 1981), the Diaspora Group, Anna Maniatakou's theatre group (1990), the Greek Australian Theatre Association of Victoria (est. 2003), Costas Makrigiannakis' Touvla Theatre (est. 1990), The Troupe (est. 1977), and others in Melbourne, Stavros Economides' Art Theatre [of Australia] (est. 1984), the Hellenic Theatre Group (SEK) (est. 1981), the Greek Artists' Group, the young graduates of St Spyridon's College theatre group 'Curtain' (est. 2005), the Greek Theatre founded by the Greek Community, Theatre of Comedy (est. 1973) by Petros Printezis who nine years earlier had founded the Petros Printezis Comedy Theatre, and others in Sydney, Max Mastrosavvas' Theatre of Dreams in Adelaide (est. 1990) and his Youth Theatre of Dreams (est. 2002).

Finally, an additional proof of the robustness of the theatre of the Greeks in Australia is that within the past few years there have been successfully organized theatre festivals, such as the Greek Comedy Festival first organized in 2005 in Melbourne by the Greek Theatre of Australia and Thiasos Paroikia for the latter's fifteen-year celebration of its founding, with more festivals in the following years and even Australian Greek script writing competitions, such as that in 2002 sponsored by the World Council for Hellenes Abroad (SAE), Office of Oceania, within the 2001-2004 Cultural Olympiad.

3. Conclusion

Viewing the theatre of Australian Hellenism (Greek and English-language) from its early uncertain steps at the beginning of the twentieth century until today, we realize that, going through many phases of development and

diversification, it now constitutes an unquestionable reality, with its own local themes and identity and its own lexicon, while quite frequently works of quality exploring contemporary Greek-Australian themes and those of multicultural Australia are written by local Greek immigrants and by Australian-born persons of Greek origin, as well, adding in this way to its distinctive character, although Greece and Cyprus are still valuable sources of plays for staging.

Furthermore, despite the problems which local groups frequently face (lack of finances, proper facilities, and in most cases permanent premises, but also experienced stage and costume designers, theatre technicians, or actors with sufficient education in the theatre, etc.), many people offer their enthusiasm and talent to the theatre as actors, producers, musicians, etc., on a steady basis.

The final conclusion is that, despite the difficulties mentioned, the dynamism and individuality of the theatre of the Greeks in Australia which have grown and developed during almost one hundred years, and which are obvious today, give us confidence that Greek theatre, while it will continue to maintain unbreakable ties with the theatrical tradition of Hellenism, has a bright and steady future in the land of the Antipodes. After all, a significant and highly appreciable contribution of the Hellenic theatre to its Greek audience in Australia – as well as in the other countries of the Greek diaspora – has always been, apart from the valuable entertainment and enjoyment it offers, first the assistance in maintaining the Greek language, second the learning and better understanding of Greek civilization and culture, and third the preservation of the ties with Greece as their homeland (or the home of their ancestors) through the theatre *logos* and *praxis*, in no small part due to the conscientious endeavours of its creators.

NOTES

1. “Hellenism”, in the sense of a people, a geographical place, or a political or intellectual history, should not be confused with “Greekness” which is the ethnic identity of the Greek people. Furthermore, Hellenism takes a dynamic confrontational stand towards the “others” whereas the Greek identity, like any type of identity, is defined with itself as the point of reference (See also Tsaousis in Tsaousis, 1983, p. 18).

2. For the classification of theatre writing as a literary genre, along with poetry and prose, see, among others, Dimaras, 1975⁶, p. 162 and Mastrodimitris, 1976², pp. 22-23.
3. The definitions of ethnicity are many and varied. The most comprehensive are those on which ethnicity is determined on the basis of shared values and cultural traditions and a sense of common descent, as well as recognition of difference from other peoples by people of that ethnicity and by others. In this sense, for two most representative definitions see P.L. van den Berghe, 1967, p. 242 and Abdul A. Said and Luiz R. Simmons, 1975, p. 67.
4. For a diachronic, though in some cases partial, picture of the theatre of the Greeks in Australia, see mainly T.[akis] K.[aldis] "The Greek Theatre in Australia", *O Krikos* (London), Vol. 8, Nos 79-80 (July-August 1957): 112-114 [In Greek]; George Michelakakis, "Aspects of Greek Theatre in Australia" (tr. Dina Tourvas), *Multicultural Arts Today in Australia (M.A.T.I.A.) Theatre*, Australia Council, [1985], pp. 16-20; Stavros Panyperis, "The Community Theatre: Part 1. Where It Came from and Where It Is Going", *Paroikia* (Melbourne), Vol. 1, No. 6 (May 1986): 60-61, "Part 2. The 'Thriving' Decade and Today's Problems", *Paroikia* (Melbourne), Vol. 1, No. 7 (June 1986): 68-70 [In Greek]; Despina Pieri-Georgiou, "From the History of the Greek Theatre in Australia", in Koula Teo, *A Pair of Socks*, Melbourne: Dionysos Books, 1994, pp. 105-119 [In Greek]; George Kanarakis, *Aspects of the Literature of the Greeks in Australia and New Zealand*, (Series: Hellenism of the Diaspora, No. 2), Athens: Grigoris Publications, 2003, especially chapters 2 and 7 [In Greek]; George Kanarakis, "The Theatre as an Aspect of Artistic Expression by the Greeks in Australia", *Modern Greek Studies (Australia and New Zealand): A Journal of Greek Letters* (Sydney), Vol. 11-12 (2003/2004): 198-211 and George Kanarakis, "The Theatre Production of the Greeks in Multicultural Australia", in Tilemachos Moudatsakis, comp. *Theatre, Diaspora and Education*, Rethymno: E.DIA.M.M.E., University of Crete, 2007, pp. 43-54 [Symposium Proceedings, 22-23 July 2006. In Greek]. For information on the life and theatre activities (playwriting and performances) of a number of playwrights since the beginnings of the twentieth century, see George Kanarakis, *Greek Voices in Australia: A Tradition of Prose, Poetry and Drama*, Sydney: Australian National University Press, 1991², passim.
5. An indicative example is that of the well known novelist, short story writer, essayist and critic George Theotokas who also wrote historical plays but without success on the stage (See also Politis, 1975², p. 265).
6. The Greek dialects have inspired the Greek immigrants quite extensively in writing poetry and prose, with most usual dialects being the Macedonian (including local idioms, such as of Kitros, of Velvendos, and Kavakliotika), Cypriot, Cretan and Pontian (See Kanarakis, 2003, pp. 189, 223-234).

7. Due to the limitations of space for this article, children's theatre will regrettably be omitted.
8. In 1891 the Greek-born residents in the state of Victoria were 202 and in New South Wales 255 out of a total of 482 in the whole of Australia, while in 1901 there were 181 and 392 respectively out of a total of 878 (These numbers are based on the data of the Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics for those years. See also Tsounis, 1971, 50 Table I).
9. Kyriazopoulos graduated from the School of Medicine, University of Athens, in 1891 and took specialised studies in pathology and obstetrics in Paris. In 1902 he settled in Melbourne becoming one of the first qualified Greek doctors in Australia. Later, in 1921-1923, he became Honorary Consul General for Greece in Melbourne.
10. The four earliest Greek associations in Australia were the Greek Philodramatic Society in Sydney (1915), the Greek Society in Melbourne (1912), the Castellorizian Brotherhood of Western Australia in Perth (1912) and the Hellenic Society of Queensland (also known as the Hellenic Club) in Brisbane (1913).
11. For the life of Alexander Grivas, see George Kanarakis, 1997, pp. 111-137.
12. From 1906 to 1910 Payzis studied theatre at a drama school in Athens and regularly attended theatre performances. In Sydney, he enrolled at the Repertory Theatre Society for three years (1912-1915) under Gregan McMahon (Kanarakis, 1985, pp. 73-78, and Kanarakis, 1991², pp. 56-60).
13. Some of the plays Payzis staged in Greek or in Greek translation included: *The Rag* by Dario Nicodemi (1931), *The Canary* by N. Laskaris (1935), *Golfo*, *Esme the Turkish Girl*, *The Slave Woman* and the *Dance of Zaloggo* by S. Peresiadis (1939), *The Unknown Woman* by A. Bisson (1950), *Scandal in a Girls' High School* adapted from Hungarian by Gregorios Xenopoulos, directed by himself and staged by Krinio Pappas and Spyros Moussouris when on tour in Australia (1950). He also directed the plays by D. Psathas, *My Little Self* (1953), *Von Dimitrakis* (1953), *The Thief Is Shouting* (1963), *Vicious Circle* (1969), *The Indomitables* (1979), *Philoumena Mantourano* by Edouardo de Filippo (1981), and others. The plays he staged in English included *Dream Faces* with the Panhellenic League in Australia (1925), the Russian play *Life is Calling* with the Australian theatre group Workers' Art Club Players (1925), *The Brass Door Knob* and *Miss Evans* with the Metropolitan Amateur Theatre Group of St. Sophia (1936), Robert Sherwood's *The Petrified Forest* with the Jewish Youth Theatre (1939), as well as *Sir Hugo*, *Uncle Vanya* etc. The last play he staged was Xenopoulos' *Stella Violanti*, a resounding success, in 1982 at the age of 90, just two years before his death.
14. Demetrios Ioannides, a cosmopolitan Athenian raised in Smyrna, spent much of his adult life in Port Said, Egypt and Australia, had a talent for music, literature and journalism. Of his verse, short story writing and playwriting (in Greek and

- English), the last saw him more productive, more original, and of higher quality (Kanarakis, 1997, pp. 155-176).
15. The theatrical activities of this organization were re-invigorated in the 1980s with the founding of a theatre workshop entitled Greek Progressive Youth of Australia (Pieri-Georgiou, 1994, p. 109).
 16. See also Mary Comino, 1949, p. 8.
 17. After 1952's signed agreement between the two governments for assisted emigration – then Australia being a member of the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration (ICEM) established in Geneva – the numbers increased dramatically: 1, 979 arrivals in June 1952-July 1953, 5, 361 in 1953-1954, 12, 885 in 1954-1955 and 17, 896 in 1964-1965 (Department of Immigration, *Australian Immigration: Consolidated Statistics No. 3, 1969*, p. 36).
 18. Simos showed his talent even before his emigration to Australia, as with the three-act patriotic work *Days of the Greek Epos in Albania* written and successfully staged in Kerkyra in 1946 with a group of Himarra refugees. Additionally, he wrote poetry and translated short stories from Italian and Albanian.
 19. For an extensive reference to Mantourides' life and theatre activities in Egypt and Australia, see Kanarakis, 1993, and Kanarakis, 1997, pp. 179-209.
 20. Mantourides staged this play in 1950, 1955 and 1977.
 21. For Mantourides' full repertoire of staged plays, see Kanarakis, 1993 and Kanarakis, 1997, pp. 179-206, especially pp. 207-209.
 22. Among other roles he played Polymestor and the "spirit" of Polydoros in *Hecuba* by Euripides (Cairo, 1940), Mr Knox in *Fanny's First Play* by George Bernard Shaw (Alexandria, 1947/48) staged by Karolos Koun with Melina Mercouri in the role of Margaret and Koun in the role of Mr Duvalé, Uncle Linus in his own play *She [The Ship] Was Spanish* (Sydney, 1955), Topaze in Marcel Pagnol's play of the same name, and Archibald in *My Cousin from Warsaw* by Louis Verneuil.
 23. The play *She [The Ship] Was Spanish* was published in the Sydney periodical *Tachydromos* (September 1979, pp. 13-14). For Paschalides' extensive theatre activities, see Kanarakis, 1985, pp. 250-251 and Kanarakis, 1991³, p. 186.
 24. As regards Patrikareas' interest in production and acting, in 1965 he staged in Sydney Alejandro Casona's play *The Trees Die Standing*. He also staged and acted in *Block C* by Elias Venezis (as the colonel), the *Good Soldier Švejk* by Jaroslav Hašek (as the pawnbroker), his own plays *The Suitors* and *The Uncle from Australia*, and others.
 25. For more information on Patrikareas, see Kanarakis, 1985, pp. 333-336 and Kanarakis, 19912, pp. 246-248.
 26. See, among others, Castles in Freeman and Jupp, eds, 1992, pp. 184-201; Kanarakis, 2003, pp. 100-101, 163; Doumanis in Clogg, ed., 2004, pp. 150-162.

27. Vasilakakos' play was published in Greek in Athens by Gutenberg in 1982 (reprinted in 1986) and Kalamaras', in bilingual form, in Melbourne by Elikia Books in 1986.
28. For Lyssiotis' work, see Tsefala in Moudatsakis, 2007, pp. 121-125.
29. The play *Blood Moon* moved beyond Australia and in 2008 was produced successfully in Volos, Greece within the activities of the Research Stage of the regional Municipal Theatre.
30. The trilogy has been printed in book form under the title *A White Sports Coat and Other Plays* (Sydney: Currency Press, 1996).
31. On the transcendence of time and place in modern theatre, see Ralli-Catharios, 2005, p. 4. Also for the significance of the Ancient Greek myth in her playwriting, see her 2000 conference paper (Sancta Sophia College, University of Sydney) "The Ancient Greek Myth in Contemporary Greek Writing for Community Theatre in Australia", pp. 1-14.
32. The title reveals Teo's play on words, between the Greek word *kaltses* and the English word *cultures*, the way the latter is pronounced by many Greek immigrants.
33. *The Community in Utter Chaos* consists of eight one-act sketches, seven written by Dimitris Katsavos and one (*Greek Community Bus*) by Sotiris Mantalvanos.
34. For a first approach to Vasilis Georganakis' contribution to the theatre, see Nick Sky's Honours Thesis submitted to the Department of Modern Greek, La Trobe University, Melbourne, November 1992.
35. In 2006 Skiadopoulou undertook the directorship of the newly founded Theatre School of the National Centre for Hellenic Studies and Research, La Trobe University.
36. According to Thanasis Makrigrigios in the Melbourne newspaper *Neos Kosmos* (3 October 2002, p. 9), Thiasos Paroikia re-started the Greek Theatre of Australia twelve years after its demise, and both groups run in parallel but with different repertoires.

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