



Greek Association "Hermes", Constantinople / Istanbul

Summary :

"Hermes" was a Greek cultural association, which functioned in Constantinople (Istanbul) between 1877 and 1922. Its members were among the Greek intellectual elite of the time and the upper strata of the Greek society. Along with its philanthropic activities, and sometimes complementary to it, the association organized musical events and endeavoured to cultivate music.

Date

1877-1922

Geographical Location

Constantinople (Istanbul)

1. Founders, Members and Achievements

The Greek Association "Hermes" was founded by three graduates of the High School of [Pera](#), K. D. Kostarakis, I. A. Zervoudakis and A. K. Stefopoulos in 1877 ¹ First, it was named "Cleio" (the muse of history in Greek mythology) yet soon it was renamed as Hermes, one of the Olympian gods, god of literature and poetry, of commerce and invention. Soon after its foundation, many intellectuals from [Constantinople](#) and Athens joined the association. The following brief list of honorary members gives an idea about the high intellectual quality of the association: Achilleas Paraschos, Odysseas Ialamos, Christos Hatzichristou, Angelos Vlachos, Sappho Leontias, Andreas Spatharis, Iroklis Vasiadis, Alex. Rizos Rangavis, Matth. Paranikas.

According to its constitution, which was published in 1885, "Hermes" was founded in order to support the schools of Constantinople which needed financial help, and especially to support the parish school of Panagia in Pera. Furthermore, it would supply books for poor students and publish a periodical.² The founders of "Hermes" were aiming not only at the intellectual improvement of a closed circle of elites but at a wider "enlightenment". Hermes maintained a Sunday school for public in [Tatavla](#), whose members taught "general lessons" regularly. These lessons were about practical ethics, history, geography, biomechanical chemistry, health and anthropology.³ It also established a library and a reading room for the public in 1881, which included a rich collection of books, the latest newspapers of Constantinople, Athens and Bucharest, and periodicals published in the Ottoman Empire and in Greece. The association defended the Greek cause in Macedonia with resolution; in January 1880 it declared its decision about supporting the schools of Macedonia. Except giving a considerable weight to music regarding its activities, Hermes supported the sports as well. On 21 September 1908, it organized a gymnastic and athletic celebration which was joined by all the [Greek athletic associations](#) from the centre and the suburbs of Constantinople.

2. Greek Association "Hermes" and Music

Regarding the fact that, beginning from the 1890s, in the [Greek daily press](#) of Constantinople "Hermes" appears as the "Music Association Hermes," we should devote a special attention to its musical activities. Already in 1879, "Hermes" had a music council established with the aim at "studying music beginning from ancient times, as well as at reviving and disseminating the zeal of Greeks about the studying of music".⁴ In 1885 an agreement with the parish school of Panagia was made, according to which the association would donate extra revenue to the school which would come from the annual fees of its members, concerts and theatre plays. Furthermore, it would donate 25% of its revenue to the school, if its yearly revenue excess would exceed 100 liras. This agreement was tacitly annulled in July 1886. Yet from 1885 onwards the association gave a special importance to the cultivation of music, it encouraged the youth to be occupied with music and founded a music school which consisted of departments for vocal and instrumental music, including a choir and an orchestra as well. In 1888 the banker Christakis [Zografos](#) donated a piano to Hermes.⁵ In December 1892, Konstantinos Kalliadis, the head of the association and [Megalos Ritoras](#) of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, gave a speech about the charm of music during the annual celebration of the association.⁶ According to a letter dated from December 1898, written by Stefanos Noulis, the former chairman of the association "Hermes", to Konstantinos Vlastaris, head of the Central



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Board of Trustees of [Stavrodromi](#), "Hermes" dissolved in 1894. However, after four years some of its previous members founded the "Music Association Hermes". The letter seems to express the wish of the founders of the new association, to reclaim the wealth of the older which had been transferred to the [Zografeio school](#).⁷ After 1898 the frequency of the news in the Greek daily press about the concerts taking place at the Music Association "Hermes" shows that it was one of the important agents of musical activities in Constantinople at the turn of the century. In 1912, Hermes announced the foundation of its new music school in which piano, stringed instruments, music theory and choir lessons would be offered by Gez de Hegyei (one of Liszt's students), Marie du Chastain and Caggia respectively.⁸ However, the performance of its choir during the annual celebration of the association in 1914 seems not to have been very successful. Regarding the repertoire, Hermes was sympathetic to the works of particular composers of the Greek Kingdom, i.e. Samaras, Lambelet and Karrer, who endeavoured to create the Neohellenic music.⁹ Like all the other Greek cultural associations, "Hermes" too was closed in the aftermath of the Greek-Turkish war in 1922.

1. Mamoni, K., "Ο Ελληνικός Σύλλογος Ερμής Κωνσταντινουπόλεως (Greek Association Hermes of Constantinople (1877-1922))," *Η Καθ' ημάς Ανατολή* (1993), pp.71-91. The following references to the periodicals and to the constitution of the association are derived from Mamoni's article.

2. *Κανονισμός του εν Κωνσταντινουπόλει Ελληνικού Συλλόγου Ερμού* (Constantinople 1885).

3. *Ερμής Β'* no. Κ', June 1880, p.763.

4. *Ελληνικός Σύλλογος Ερμής Α'*, no. ΣΤ', March 1879, p.191.

5. *Ανατολικός Αστήρ*, no.13, 31 December 1888.

6. *Κήρυξ*, no.21, 1 February 1893, pp. 317-322.

7. 9/21 December 1898, Letter no.125, Αλληλογραφία της Κεντρικής Εφορείας της Ελληνικής Ορθόδοξου Κοινότητας Σταυροδρομίου, *Αρχείο της Ελληνικής Ορθόδοξου Κοινότητας Σταυροδρομίου*, University of Athens.

8. *Μουσική*, vol. 1, no.1, January 1912, p.30.

9. *Μουσική*, vol. 3, no.30, June 1914, p. 178.

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| | Μαμώνη Κ. , "Ο Ελληνικός Σύλλογος Ερμής Κωνσταντινουπόλεως (1877-1922)", <i>Η καθ' ημάς Ανατολή</i> , 1993 |
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Glossary :

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| | Megalos Ritoras |
| An high-rank official, Orator of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople. | |



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Sources

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