

Greek Composers for Choral Music

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composer, conductor

It is impossible for us to know exactly when composers first began to create choral music in the European style. Until only 30 years ago, judging by available data, it was believed that choral creation started in the 19th century in the Ionian Islands. But in the 1980s, new data about an unknown Cretan composer reversed our historical perspective.

The composer known as Francisco Leontaritis from Heraklion in Crete, who lived in Milan in the middle of the 16th century, composed 76 motets, three Catholic Masses and numerous madrigals.

Subsequently, history records the following composers of choral music: Nikolaos Mantzaros (1795-1872) from Corfu, who composed music on a poem by Dionysios Solomos, Greek National Poet, entitled *Hymn to Freedom* for four part male choir with piano accompaniment. One section of this is the Greek National Anthem. He also composed two Catholic and one Orthodox Mass, as well as numerous choral pieces.

Spyros Samaras (1861-1917) from Corfu, studied and lived in Corfu, Paris, Milan and Athens, where many of his operas were performed. Among his numerous choral works (mainly patriotic songs), there is the *Olympic Hymn*, which was first performed during the Olympic Games in 1896.



*Download the
music score
of the
"Olympic
Hymn"*

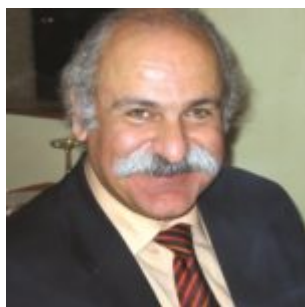
Three more composers came from Corfu, Eduardos Labelet (1820-1903), Napoleon Labelet (1864-1932), and Georgios Labelet (1875-1945); Pavlos Carrer (1829-1896) came from Zakynthos, Spyridon Spathis (1852-1941) from Nafplio, and Dionysios Lavrangas (1860-1941) from Cephalonia.

Alekos Aenian (1907-1983) also distinguished himself on the Greek choral scene. He showed a special talent as a choral composer and conductor, as well as a music teacher.

In the 20th century more composers of choral music appeared: Yiannis Konstantinidis (1903-1984), Nikos Astrinidis (1921-2010), Michalis Adamis (1929), Theodoros Antoniou (1935), Konstantinos Kydoniatis (1908-1996), Argyris Kounadis (1924-2011), Andreas Nezeritis (1897-1980), Iannis Xenakis (1921-2001), Alekos Xenos (1912-1995), Yiannis Christou (1926-1970), Manolis Kalomiris (1883-1962), Sotos Vasiliadis (1905-1990), Marios Varvoglis (1885-1967), Dionysios Visvardis (1910-1999), Stefanos Vasiliadis (1933-2004), Yiannis Ioannidis (1930), Yiannis A. Papaioannou (1910-1989), Giorgos Sisilianos (1920-2005), Mikis Theodorakis (1925), Giorgos Zervos (1947), Alkis Baltas (1948), Dimitris Kapsomenos (1937-1994), Konstantinos Th. Evangelatos (1948), Marielli Sfakianaki (1945), Michalis Travlos (1950), Nikos Fylaktos

(1950), Stathis Oulkeroglou (1955), Dimitris Lionis (1955), Christos Samaras (1956), Nikos Christodoulou (1959), Iosif Papadatos (1960), Kostis Kritsotakis (1973), Nikos Platyrrahos (1965), and others.

Greek choirs prefer to sing choral arrangements of folk and popular songs rather than original choral pieces. And many composers work more as choral arrangers than as choral composers. However, it is also very common to see the conductors themselves arranging songs for their own choirs. These arrangements rarely go beyond the level of the simple placing of chords, and do not seek to establish higher artistic principles.



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