

The Chorus Song in Education

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In the Greek education system, choral singing is taught as an optional subject within general education. In primary education, a choir functions during the afternoon as part of a cultural and creative framework. In order to take part, students remain at school after the end of their compulsory syllabus, and this is suggested to students in the last four grades. In the morning sessions, choirs are formed during music education lessons and their main aim is to take part in performances for school or national celebrations, without taking into consideration the pupils' vocal abilities.

In secondary education, students may participate in a choir for up to two hours per week, as an extra-curricular activity. This is part of the teaching duties and counts as working hours for music teachers.

The High Schools for Music were founded in 1988. Here students participate in various kinds of music groups such as a choir, an orchestra, a folk group etc. In public sector schools there is a general lack of facilities and teachers often lack specific training, consequently being unable to implement the necessary methodology. Despite these adverse conditions, recent years have seen a gradual increase in the number of school choirs and an improvement in the quality of most of them.

An example is the 4th Pan-Hellenic Meeting of School Choirs

that took place in Karditsa in February 2012. A total of 52 school choirs from Greece and abroad participated, with an aim of encouraging school units to form important choirs.

In 2000, the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs instituted the organization of the annual Pan-Hellenic School Cultural Games, to promote culture among students and the connection of education with the arts: events included competitive Choir Festivals. Unfortunately, in recent years this institution has weakened.

The repertoire of the choirs consists mainly of Greek music (both traditional and more modern), parts of 'serious' pieces of music as well as popular songs of different styles and musical currents. A crucial aid to the educator remain the anthologies of suitable music, one for the elementary school and one for the junior high-school. These include the scores of different pieces as well as instructions for the teaching procedure.

Important choirs have been set up at many Greek universities, especially at the colleges of music. They are mainly formed of students from various departments as well as graduates with a special interest in choral singing.

Since 2007 the Conservatories of Music include choir conducting departments. Previously, anyone who wished to study in that field would attend seminars held by Greek conductors who had studied abroad.

In the choirs of the conservatories, student attendance is compulsory, especially in theoretical and vocal subjects; consequently, the major conservatories of the country have active choirs with well-trained singers. Their repertoire ranges from the Renaissance to the present day.



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