



Summary :

Prominent figure in music in Greece, founder and main representative of the Greek National School of classical music.

Date and Place of Birth

December 14th, 1883, Smyrna

Date and Place of Death

April 3d, 1962, Athens

Main Role

Composer

1. Early Years

Manolis Kalomoiris is the founder of the national school of Greek classical music and member of the Academy of Athens. He was born in [Smyrna](#) on the 14th of December 1883; his father, Ioannis Kalomoiris, was a doctor from Karlovasi of [Samos](#). His mother, Maria Chamoudopoulou, the daughter of a baker from [Vourla](#), was born and brought up in Smyrna. Manolis Kalomoiris lost his parents at a very early age. Although he lived in Smyrna until he turned eleven, his childhood marked the rest of his life. Even when he was away, he used to visit Smyrna every summer. His parents' house was in the quarter of St Catherine. Years later, Kalomoiris remembered: 'Like most houses in Smyrna, it had a big covered "yard" above a basement. [...] We lived on the first floor. There was a big hall and a roofed verandah leading to a nice terrace sheltered with a vine arbour, where the moon played its airy and odd games during the starlit nights'.¹

The people who marked Kalomoiris' childhood were his grandmother, the so-called 'Nené', and a cousin of hers, Tsatsa Marouka. They made him love fairy tales and folk songs, which later became apparent in his works: '[...] I was charmed by my grandmother's songs and fairy tales. She knew lots of folk songs and every night and every morning she would lull and wake me up either with the song "Lyngos, the gallant [*leventis*, from the Turkish *levent*] bandit chief" or the song "Forty brave men from Livadeia" [...]'.² Other vivid tender memories of the composer come from the period of Lent, when the kites (*tserkenia*) filled the sky of the city, and the summer nights, which were spent while they were sitting on the benches outside the houses.

In his birthplace, Kalomoiris makes his first steps in music at the age of seven. It was then that he took his first piano lessons at the Palladion Girls' and Infant School of the Paschalis brothers. His tendency towards composition appeared early on. He preferred to improvise rather than play the scales and etudes of his teacher, Digenis Kapagrossas from Zakynthos. In Athens, where he lived with his mother and uncle between 1894 and 1895, he received music lessons from Timotheos Xanthopoulos from Smyrna, who was famous for his songs and marches at the time. In 1899 the family moved to Constantinople. Kalomoiris continued his music studies there by Sophia Ioannidou-Spanoudi, to whom the composer, according to his own words, owed 'a great part of his spiritual and artistic' exaltation.³

2. Student Life

In August 1901, after he graduated from the Greek-French Lycee of Chatzichristos, he left for Vienna. At the conservatory he completed his studies by Wilhelm Rauch and August Sturm, studied theory and solfege by Lehrer Foll, harmony and counterpoint by Hermann Gradener and history of music by Maudyzewski. At the same time, he attended the performances of the Vienna Opera and the concerts of the Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Gustav



Mahler. In Vienna, he first performed as a pianist during a festive concert of the Greek community, on 25 March 1902. In 1903 he composed his first works: three songs for voice and orchestra in his own lyrics – ‘Melancholy’, ‘Anakreonteion’, ‘Bayadera’– and the ‘Oriental Painting’ for a piano. The same year he met his future wife, Charikleia Papamoschou, a fellow student at the Conservatory. Thanks to his German fellow students, Kalomoiris discovered the revolutionary trends of musical ‘modernism’, which was going to shake the conservative Austrian capital: ‘Outrageous theories about unconventional inspirations, program music, dissonance and abolition of form were going around among young musicians [...]’.⁴ Despite his confusion caused by these theories, the first creative period of the composer was marked by the strong influence of the German Romantic School.

3. 1906-1918

In 1906, he was offered the post of a piano teacher at the Obolensky music school in Kharkov, Russia. He was impressed by the role the national school of Russian classical music played in the musical life of the country. During his stay in Kharkov, he composed the ‘Romeiki [Greek] Suite’ for orchestra, the songs with lyrics by Alexander Pallis (including ‘Aphrodite’, ‘Girl from Molyvos’ and ‘Girl from Roumeli’), as well as the ‘Nocturne’ for piano. On 11 June 1908, his compositions were first performed in Athens. Between 1911 and 1919, Kalomoiris taught piano, harmony and superior theoretics at the Athens Conservatory. In 1912-1913, he composed the ‘Magic Herbs’ (*Magiobotana*) for voice and orchestra, on poems by Kostis Palamas. His next works were: in 1915, the ‘Masterbuilder’, a musical drama based on a text by Nikos Kazantzakis, and in 1917, his first opera, ‘Mother’s Ring’ (*To dachtylidi tis manas*), based on a text by Giannis Kambysis. In 1918, the composer was appointed inspector general of Military Music and published the first version of the cycle for voice and orchestra ‘I Love You’, with lyrics by Kostis Palamas.

4. 1919-1939

Following a conflict with the director of the Athens Conservatory, Georgios Nazos, Kalomoiris resigned and founded the Hellenic Conservatory in 1919. In 1920, he composed his first symphony, the ‘Symphony of Levendia’ for mixed chorus and orchestra, as well as a symphonic poem for voice and orchestra, the ‘Peddler’ (*O pramateftis*), based on poems by Ioannis Gryparis. This work along with the two 1921 ‘Rhapsodies’ for piano initiated the second creative period of Kalomoiris, marked by musical impressionism and French harmony.

In 1923, the composer lost his son, Giannakis, in a tragic accident. The consequences of this dreadful event restricted the creativity of the composer for a while. Three years later, Kalomoiris left the Hellenic Conservatory and founded the National Conservatoire. Moreover, in 1926, he composed the ‘Besieged but Free’ (*Eleftheroi poliorkimenoï*), a score for voice, chorus and orchestra, based on the poem by Dionysios Solomos, the national poet of Greece. In 1931, he wrote his Symphony No. 2 ‘of the Good and Innocent Folk’ (*Ton anideon kai ton kalon anthropon*) for mezzosoprano, mixed chorus and orchestra. Aiming at encouraging Greek opera, Kalomoiris founded the National Opera Group (*Ellinikos Melodramatikos Omilos*) in 1933. In 1935, he composed the ‘Symphonic Concerto’ for piano and orchestra. The next year he was elected president of the Union of Greek Composers. In 1937, he composed the symphonic poem ‘At St. Loukas’ Monastery’ (*St’ Agiou Louka to monastiri*), with lyrics by the poet Evangelos Sikelianos; this composition is original, since Kalomoiris introduced recitation instead of singing. That same year he also composed the ‘Triptych for Orchestra’.

5. 1940-1962



In 1940, the collection of poems 'Evening Legends' (*Vradynoi thryloi*) by Kostas Chatzopoulos gives Kalomoiris the opportunity to perfect and permanently impose on Greek music lovers a form often connected to the representatives of the German Romantic School. It was the cycle of songs accompanied by piano. In the same year, Kalomoiris completed his first symphonic poem, inspired by a novel of Kostis Bastias: 'Minas the Rebel, Pirate of the Aegean' (*Minas o rempelos, koursaros tou Aigaiou*). The second symphonic poem, 'The Death of the Valiant Woman' (*O thanatos tis antreiomenis*), was about the resistance of Greek women against the conquerors and was written three years later. In 1943, he also composed 'The Life and Sorrows of Captain Lyras' for narrator, four soloists and orchestra, based on a text by Kalomoiris himself. For two years (1944-1945), the composer was appointed general director of the National Opera of Greece. In 1945, he was elected a member of the Academy of Athens and presented the opera 'Dawn' (*Anatoli*), with a libretto by Giannis Kambysis. The second cycle of songs titled 'You Passed by' (*Perases*), with lyrics by Kostas Chatzopoulos, was completed in 1946. In his opera 'Shadowy Waters' (*Ta ksotika nera*), in 1950, he first used the text of a foreign poet, the Irish William Butler Yeats. Among the last works of the composer were the 'Palamas Symphony' (Symphony No. 3) for dramatic recitation and orchestra, and the 'Concertino for Violin and Orchestra'. Both were composed in 1955. However, Kalomoiris was not fortunate to see his last opera, 'Konstantinos Palaiologos', on stage. He died in Athens on 3 April 1962.




6. The Musical Style of Kalomoiris

Although Kalomoiris' music belongs to the western European classical music, his works are full of elements from Greek traditional music, the most important probably being the priority given to the vocal part. The composer imposes it and even incorporates it into forms that completely lacked vocal parts according to the western European standards. Metrical structures from the Greek folk tradition, such as the famous 'kalamatianos', in 7/8 time, are used as 'national values', as it happens in the part 'Leventika' of the 'Symphony of Levendia' (Symphony no. 1). What is more, modal forms are often behind the western tonal scales, while the melody is to a great extent enriched with melismas and chromatic modulations. Finally, entire parts of folk songs and ecclesiastical hymns appear perfectly harmonised in his works, as it happens in the 'Dance of Zalongo' and the 'Christos Anesti' (Christ is risen, from the Greek-Orthodox Easter mass) from 'The Death of the Valiant Woman', as well as the 'Ti Ypermacho' (a Greek-Orthodox hymn to Virgin Mary) in the finale of the 'Symphony of Levendia'.



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1. Καλομοίρης, Μ., *Η ζωή μου και η τέχνη μου* (Athens 1988), p. 18.
 2. Καλομοίρης, Μ., *Η ζωή μου και η τέχνη μου* (Athens 1988), p. 16.
 3. Καλομοίρης, Μ., *Η ζωή μου και η τέχνη μου* (Athens 1988), p. 46.
 4. Καλομοίρης, Μ., *Η ζωή μου και η τέχνη μου* (Athens 1988), p. 93.
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	Σολομωνίδης Σ. , <i>Σμυρναίοι Ακαδημαϊκοί Ιωακείμογλου-Καλομοίρης-Σεφεριάδης</i> , Αθήνα 1966
	Λεωτσάκος Γ. , "Αναφορά στη μουσική ζωή της Σμύρνης", <i>Επίλογος</i> , 1993, 370-382

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	Manolis Kalomoiris http://www.kalomiris.gr/

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