

Byzantine choir at the Mitropolis

By MANOLIS POLENTAS

ONE of the most discriminated against elements of modern Greek music is Byzantine music which, together with the demotic song, constitutes the base for what we call Greek music without the by-products that are consumed en masse.

One of the main reasons explaining the lack of popularity of Byzantine music - though it seems to be making a real comeback in the last ten years or so - is that it is often confused with being music just for churchgoers. The truth is that Greece's best composers - be it **Mikis Theodorakis** or **Christos Leondis**, but also the older school of *rebetes* such as **Vassilis Tsitsanis** - have studied and were influenced by Byzantine music.

You can be orthodox about your faith or agnostic and even atheist and still lose yourself in the beauty of Byzantine music. And your opportunity could not be a better one than that offered to you tomorrow evening, when **Petros Gaitanos**, a fine young singer, and a 40-member Byzantine choir, will deliver Byzantine hymns in the **Athens Mitropolis** (Cathedral).

Gaitanos, who has been training in Byzantine singing for a decade now but who is also a popular singer with four albums to his credit, told a press conference



Petros Giatanos' voice will sing Jesus' Passions

yesterday that, "this is a moment I've been waiting for all my life: To sing and breathe in this cathedral, the Passions of Christ."

Yes, the concert will take place inside the Mitropolis and the spirit will be that called for by the

character of the days before Easter. A musical and narrative trace of Christ's Passions, the betrayal, the apprehension and the subsequent crucifixion; the mourning of the Virgin, the burial, and the Resurrection.

The 29-year-old, Drama-born Gaitanos first recorded an album of more or less popular music with composer **Stamatis Spanoudakis**, some three years ago. Most Greeks know him from that album, which is not exactly what he can do best, though the album was a very good one nonetheless. All his recordings are the outcome of happy collaborations with composers **Yiannis Spanos**, **Christos Nikolopoulos**, colleagues such as **Arleta**, **Eleftheria Arvanitaki**, **Yiorgos Dalaras** and **Manolis Mitsias**. With this last-mentioned fine singer Gaitanos also shares the same passion for Byzantine musical tradition. Yet his most important collaboration has been that with his teacher, **Manolis Hadjimarkos**, the one person whom the singer considers his mentor and most valuable contributor to his success.

Organised by the *Athens Municipal Cultural Centre*, the concert will be prologued by the city mayor, **Dimitris Avramopoulos**. Also, introductory comments will be delivered by **Athanasios Angelopoulos**, professor of theology at Aristotleion University in Thessaloniki.

There is no admission charge. The concert will begin at 6.30pm on Wednesday.

Athens Mitropolis (Cathedral): Mitropoleos Street, off Syntagma Square.