

## NAS RA INSTITUTE OF ARTS AND THE STUDY OF KOMITAS' CREATIVE LEGACY

ASATRYAN A.

instart@sci.am

NAS RA Institute of Arts has provided a valuable contribution to the study of the creative legacy of Komitas. The efforts of several generations of the Institute staff towards the emergence and development of Komitas studies are irrefutable.

### **1. The academic publication of Komitas' Collection of Works**

On September 26, 1949, the day of the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of birth of Komitas, the Armenian SSR Council of Ministers took a decision to publish the academic edition of Komitas' Collection of Works, entrusting the implementation to Armenia Academy of Sciences (AS).

On January 25, 1950, Session 4 of the Presidium of the Academy decides to commence the publication of Komitas' Collection of Works. The editorial staff included Robert Atayan, Mushegh Aghayan, Samson Gasparyan, Christophor Kushnaryan and Matevos Muradyan. In 1960, the first volume of the Collection with Martiros Saryan's flyleaf came out.

Prior to that, the Section issued Komitas' Ethnographic Collection in 1950<sup>1</sup>.

As is known, "the substantial portion of Komitas' 'papers' (the composer's written legacy) were kept in the Patriarchate of Constantinople. Later on they were handed over to the Komitas Commission of Trustees in Paris. Said Commission obtained a number of valuable manuscripts from various individuals

---

<sup>1</sup> Կոմիտաս, Ազգագրական ժողովածու: Հայ ժողովրդական երգեր և պարերգեր, հ. II, կազմող՝ Մ. Աղայան, խմբ.՝ Խ. Քուչնարյան, Ե., 1950, 175 էջ, 1 թ. նկ.:

and, upon printing some of the pieces, sent the collected material to Yerevan Museum of Literature and Arts”<sup>2</sup>.

The transfer of Komitas' manuscripts to Yerevan was to a greater extent made possible thanks to the efforts of NAS RA Institute of Arts (formerly – the Section of History and Theory of Arts), particularly, its head Ruben Zaryan and scientific secretary Matevos Muradyan.

On December 23, 1953, Session 23 of the Presidium of Armenia Academy of Sciences approved Ruben Zaryan as head of the Section of History and Theory of Arts of the Academy<sup>3</sup>. Shortly, correspondence got underway between R. Zaryan and the Armenian singer (mezzo-soprano), pianist, musicologist and pedagogue Margarit Babayan. Ruben Zaryan later on related that, thanks to it, “the substantial portion of Komitas' archive was received and made available to the Commission (the Komitas Commission of Trustees – A.A.)”<sup>4</sup>. Subsequently, the correspondence with M. Babayan was taken up by Robert Atayan<sup>5</sup>.

Thanks to the efforts of several generations of musicologists of NAS RA Institute of Arts, during the following decades (1960–2006) Komitas' Collection of Works came out in 14 volumes, prepared for publication by Robert Atayan and Gevorg Gyodakyan. For the first time ever, Komitas' full musical legacy became available. It included:

Solos (volume 1, 1960, edited by R. Atayan; volume 4, 1976, edited by R. Atayan; volume 5, 1979, edited by R. Atayan);

Choirs (volume 2, 1965, edited by R. Atayan; volume 3, 1969, edited by R. Atayan; volume 4; volume 5);

Piano pieces (volume 6, 1982, edited by R. Atayan);

Patarag [Liturgy] (volume 7, 1997, edited by R. Atayan);

Spiritual compositions (volume 8, 1998, edited by R. Atayan, G. Gyodakyan, D. Deroyan);

---

<sup>2</sup> Աթայան Ռ., Կոմիտասի երաժշտական ժառանգությունը, Կոմիտասական, հ. 1, Ե., 1969, էջ 7:

<sup>3</sup> See: Ասատրյան Ա., ՀՀ ԳԱԱ Արվեստի ինստիտուտ – 50, Ե., 2010, էջ 31:

<sup>4</sup> Զարյան Ռ., Մարգարիտ Բաբայան, Մայրամուտից առաջ, Ինքնապատում, հատոր երրորդ, Ե., 2012, էջ 335:

<sup>5</sup> See: Կոստանդյան Ն., Մարգարիտ Բաբայանը և Կոմիտասի երկերի ժողովածուի ակադեմիական հրատարակությունը (Կանթեղ, 2016, № 1, էջ 219–233):

Musical ethnographic legacy in volumes 9–14: volume 9, Armenian folk songs, Book A, 1999, compiled, edited and commented by R. Atayan; volume 10, Armenian folk songs, Book B, 2000, compiled, edited and commented by R. Atayan; volume 11, Armenian folk songs, Book C – “Ethnographic Collection”, part 1, 2000, compiled, edited and commented by R. Atayan; volume 12, Armenian folk songs, Book D – “Ethnographic Collection”, part 2, 2003, compiled and commented by R. Atayan, editors R. Atayan, G. Gyodakyan; volume 13, Armenian folk songs, Book E, Collection of Folk Songs (“Contrapuntal”), facsimile edition, 2004, compiled and commented by R. Atayan, editors R. Atayan and G. Gyodakyan; volume 14, Armenian folk and ashugh songs, tunes, Turkish songs, Kurdish songs and tunes, 2006, compiled and commented by R. Atayan, editors R. Atayan and G. Gyodakyan.

The academic publication of Komitas’ Collection of Works was a phenomenon of great strategic importance and of exclusive significance for the musical life of Armenians worldwide.

## 2. Scientific Studies

Valuable contributions to Komitas studies are such research works as: the studies “Komitas” (2000), “Komitas” (1969) and “Komitas” (2014) by Gevorg Gyodakyan; the monographs “Komitas” (1992) by Ruben Terlemezyan and “The Early Period of Komitas’ Creative Work (1891–1899)” (2014) by Tatevik Shakhkulyan, as well as the research articles and presentations by Matevos Muradyan, Robert Atayan, Gevorg Gyodakyan, Karineh Khudabashyan, Anahit Grigoryan, Anna Arevshatyan, Anahit Baghdasaryan, Tatevik Shakhkulyan and others. Incidentally, in 2011, the series of articles by the young researcher T. Shakhkulyan was awarded “The Best Research Work” Prize of NAS RA in the Arts, Language and Literature category.

The three pillars of Komitas studies conducted at NAS RA Institute of arts are worth to be singled out: the academic efforts by Matevos Muradyan, Robert Atayan and Gevorg Gyodakyan promoted the advancement in the field.

**Matevos Muradyan** was first heard of in 1950, when his article “The Place and Significance of Komitas in the History of Armenian Music”<sup>6</sup> appeared in the

---

<sup>6</sup> Մուրադյան Մ., Կոմիտասի տեղն ու նշանակությունը հայկական երաժշտության պատմության մեջ, Տեղեկագիր, 1950, № 11, էջ 31–46:

Arm. SSR AS Bulletin, Issue 11. It was timed to commemorate the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the composer's death<sup>7</sup>.

M. Muradyan was the first to publish in Armenia Komitas' letters to Arshak Chopanyan (Historical-Philological Journal, 1958, N 1)<sup>8</sup>. The letters covering the period from 1902 to 1914 shed new light on Komitas' creative and musical-social activity, gave detailed description of his political beliefs and views on the national-liberation movement of the Armenian people against Sultanic Turkey. They also reflect Komitas' hopes for the liberation of the Armenian people – related with the Russian revolution. M. Muradyan supplemented the letters with corresponding brief comments.

Years after, in 1969, M. Muradyan examined Komitas' letters to Arshak Chopanyan and Margarit Babayan, basing on which he put forward “some important issues related with Komitas' life, activity and oeuvre”<sup>9</sup>.

M. Muradyan returned to Komitas in 1969, the year of the composer's centennial anniversary. His article “Komitas' Last Visit to Armenia” came out in the Historical-Philological Journal, N 4<sup>10</sup>. “Komitas' last visit to Armenia proved very fruitful. During two months he worked in matenadaran, the manuscript library, made tours of various districts and villages, communicated with his compatriots, heard and recorded songs of rural Armenians, saw with his own eyes the situation in Ejmiatzin Holy Cathedral, met with some of his friends and relations, found answers to many questions of great interest to him, such as – whether any changes for the better happened, whether the situations favored his return, whether his return would be welcomed by the spiritual authorities. The answers were in the negative. Komitas set out for a journey back to Constantinople never to return. It was only 23 years after that his body was brought to Armenia as priceless and sacred remains. The composer was buried in the Republic Pantheon to mingle with the soil of his homeland”.

---

<sup>7</sup> The research papers printed in the AS journals are covered below.

<sup>8</sup> Մուրադյան Մ., Կոմիտասի անտիպ նամակները (ՊԲՀ, 1958, 1, էջ 245–267):

<sup>9</sup> See: Մուրադյան Մ., Կոմիտասի նամակները (ԼՀԳ, 1969, № 11, 35–42):

<sup>10</sup> Մուրադյան Մ., Կոմիտասի վերջին այցելությունը Հայաստան (ՊԲՀ, 1969, № 4, էջ 61–69):

In the year of the composer's centennial jubilee, Matevos Muradyan's two articles – "Yekmalyan's Patarag as Evaluated by Komitas"<sup>11</sup>, and "Komitas' Plans to Develop National Musical Talents" – were printed in the first volume of The Komitassiad<sup>12</sup>.

Ten years after, in 1979 and 1980, M. Muradyan's series of articles, dedicated to the 110<sup>th</sup> anniversary of birth of the composer, entitled "Komitas' Activity in Constantinople", appeared in the Historical-Philological Journal<sup>13</sup>.

Another decade passed, and in 1989, by the decision of the Scientific Board of the Arm. SSR AS, the publishing house of Armenia Academy of Sciences released M. Muradyan's monograph "Outlines of the History of Western Armenian Music in the XIX – early XX centuries". In Part 2 – "Western Armenian Music in the First Decades of the XX Century" – Paragraph 2 of Chapter 1 is entitled "Komitas' Activity in Constantinople"<sup>14</sup>. The next paragraph examines the activities of Komitas' pupils<sup>15</sup>; Paragraph 2 of Chapter 2 – "Folk Music" – offers the analysis of Komitas' musical and ethnographic legacy<sup>16</sup>.

Prior to that, in 1970, Chapter 2 – "Komitas and Formation of Armenian Classical Music" – in Part 2 of the monograph "Outlines of the History of Western Armenian Music in the XIX – early XX centuries" – the author described the composer's path of life and worldviews, examined his oeuvre, musical ethnographic legacy, musicological investigations and performing art<sup>17</sup>.

In the second volume of The Komitassiad, M. Muradyan's "Komitas and

---

<sup>11</sup> Մուրադյան Մ., Եկմալյանի Պատարագը Կոմիտասի գնահատությամբ, Կոմիտասական, հ. 1, Ե., 1969, էջ 218–229:

<sup>12</sup> Մուրադյան Մ., Ազգային երաժշտական ուժերի պատրաստման կոմիտայան ծրագրերը, Կոմիտասական, հ. 1, Ե., 1969, էջ 230–239:

<sup>13</sup> Մուրադյան Մ., Կոմիտասի գործունեությունը Կոստանդնուպոլսում (Ծննդյան 110-ամյակի առթիվ) (ՊԲՀ, 1979, № 4, էջ 14–24): Մուրադյան Մ., Կոմիտասի գործունեությունը Կոստանդնուպոլսում (ծննդյան 110-ամյակի առթիվ) (ՊԲՀ, 1980, № 1, էջ 115–125):

<sup>14</sup> Մուրադյան Մ., Ուրվագիծ արևմտահայ երաժշտության պատմության (XIX դար և XX դարասկիզբ), Ե., 1989, էջ 236–267:

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, pp. 267–277.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, pp. 287–291.

<sup>17</sup> Մուրադյան Մ., Հայ երաժշտությունը XIX դարում և XX դարասկզբում, Ե., 1970, էջ 406–510:

Presentation of Armenian Music in Europe” was printed (1981)<sup>18</sup>.

**Robert Atayan's** article “The Principle of Folk Song Harmony in Komitas” was the researcher's first experience in analyzing some problems of Komitas' musical style. The article was published in 1949, Issue 9 of the Arm. SSR AS Bulletin<sup>19</sup>.

The article “Komitas' Musical-Ethnographic Legacy”, printed in 1969, Issue 2 of the Historical-Philological Journal<sup>20</sup>, gave a holistic picture of the 8 collections of the formerly unknown and only recently discovered folk songs, put on paper by Komitas. They are kept in the Komitas archive.

Within the framework of celebrations of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of birth, R. Atayan took up several issues of Komitas' creative legacy<sup>21</sup>. Having prioritized the principal problems of Komitas studies, such as finding the composer's works, specifying the time of their creation and tracking the process of shaping of his style, the researcher justly observes that the investigation of the newly discovered rural songs and the long known arrangements revealed a full picture of emergence and development of the stylistic features of Komitas' creation. From this perspective, harmonization (polyphonic arrangement) of the songs becomes an issue of primary importance. Concurrently, R. Atayan made the topic of Armenian urban folk song in Komitas' oeuvre a subject of another research work<sup>22</sup>.

R. Atayan also referred to the years of study in Berlin, which turned out to be a major period in Komitas' creative career<sup>23</sup>. Basing on archive documents, the scholar offered a detailed account of the courses Komitas attended.

---

<sup>18</sup> **Մուրադյան Մ.**, Կոմիտասը և հայ երաժշտության ցուցադրումը Եվրոպայում, Կոմիտասական, հ. 2, Ե., 1981, էջ 15–24:

<sup>19</sup> **Աթայան Ռ.**, Ժողովրդական երգի ներդաշնակության սկզբունքը Կոմիտասի մոտ (ՀՍՍՀ ԳԱ Տեղեկագիր, 1949, № 9, էջ 87–113):

<sup>20</sup> **Աթայան Ռ.**, Կոմիտասի երաժշտական-ազգագրական ժառանգությունը (ՊԲՀ, 1969, № 2, էջ 43–62):

<sup>21</sup> **Աթայան Ռ.**, Կոմիտասի ստեղծագործական ժառանգության մի քանի հարցեր (ՊԲՀ, 1969, № 4, էջ 15–29):

<sup>22</sup> **Աթայան Ռ.**, Հայ քաղաքային ժողովրդական երգը Կոմիտասի ստեղծագործության մեջ (ԼՀԳ, 1969, № 11, էջ 27–34):

<sup>23</sup> **Աթայան Ռ.**, Կոմիտասի ուսումնառությունը Բեռլինում (ՊԲՀ, 1980, № 2, էջ 48–59):

The first volume of The Komitassiad begins with R. Atayan's informative article "Komitas' Musical Legacy"<sup>24</sup>. The author described and evaluated the materials, specifically, the recordings of folk songs and musical pieces, contained in the Komitas fund at the Charents Museum of Literature and Arts, as well as published some newly found and deciphered originals.

The second volume of The Komitassiad included two articles by R. Atayan: "A Rough Version of Komitas' Opera "Anush""<sup>25</sup>, and "Elements of Polyphony in Armenian Folk Music"<sup>26</sup>.

Promising was **Gevorg Gyodakyan's** entry to Komitas studies, marked by release of the monograph "Komitas" [Rus.] in the year of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the composer's birth.

The Historical-Philological Journal, Issue 4, 1969, included G. Gyodakyan's article "Komitas and the World Musical Art" [Rus.]<sup>27</sup>, where he wrote, "Komitas came onto the creative arena when music art had a hard time, many traditional beliefs had turned upside down, when *novel* was not always a synonym for *progressive*, and the quests for novel were often formal and self-sufficing. Komitas' principles of organizing musical material arose from the desire to penetrate into folk art as deep as possible, express the gist of folk music as full and accomplished as possible. History proved that it was one of the most efficient ways of true renewal of music art of our times".

G. Gyodakyan's "Komitas' Style and the XX Century Music" published in the first volume of The Komitassiad, did not remain unnoticed<sup>28</sup>. The author concluded the article as follows, "Komitas' innovative principles are quite obvious. They show not only within the framework of Armenian national music, but, to a greater scale, in the perspectives of the world music art. First and foremost, Komitas is great because he was able to elevate the solutions of the most topical

---

<sup>24</sup> Աթայան Ռ., Կոմիտասի երաժշտական ժառանգությունը, Կոմիտասական, հ. 1, Ե., 1969, էջ 7–83:

<sup>25</sup> See: Աթայան Ռ., Կոմիտասի «Անուշ» օպերայի ուրվագրերը, Կոմիտասական, հ. 2, Ե., 1981, էջ 42–82:

<sup>26</sup> Աթայան Ռ., Բազմաձայնության տարրերը հայ ժողովրդական երաժշտության մեջ, Կոմիտասական, հ. 2, Ե., 1981, էջ 143–157:

<sup>27</sup> Геодакян Г. Комитас и мировое музыкальное искусство (ՊԲՀ, 1969, № 4, էջ 70–82):

<sup>28</sup> Գյոդակյան Գ., Կոմիտասի ոճը և քսաներորդ դարի երաժշտությունը, Կոմիտասական, հ. 1, էջ 84–120:

problems of own, national culture to the level of solutions of the problems of the XX century world music art. He did not just rely on the experience and attainments of his predecessors, but he belonged in the ranks of those who laid the foundation for the entirely novel musical thinking”<sup>29</sup>.

Studying Komitas' legacy became G. Gyodakyan's lifetime devotion. The first volume of “The Renowned Seminarians” included an article about Komitas, also authored by G. Gyodakyan<sup>30</sup>. One of the essays in the monograph “Paths of Formation of Armenian Classical Music”<sup>31</sup> tells about Komitas. The publication of the research work in English about Komitas became G. Gyodakyan's *swan song*.

### 3. The Komitassiad

NAS RA Institute of Arts realized publication of research on some issues of Komitas' legacy in the two volumes of The Komitassiad (1969, 1981).

In 1969, within the framework of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the composer's birth, by the decision of the Scientific Board of the Institute of Arts of Arm. SSR Academy of Sciences, the affiliated publishing house issued the first volume of The Komitassiad under the editorship of Robert Atayan. The editorial team included Robert Atayan (chief editor), Gevorg Gyodakyan, Nikoghos Tahmizyan, Levon Hakhverdyan and Matevos Muradyan.

“Komitas' extensive legacy in its every aspect – musical ethnography, creative work, scientific studies, performing art, as well as his activities in the social and enlightenment spheres – is of great scientific, historical and theoretical interest. Along with the publication of the great musician's Collection of Works, AS Institute of Arts initiated by the said volume the issuance of scientific studies of certain aspects of the composer's legacy. Volume A of The Komitassiad, timed to the centennial anniversary of Komitas' birth, mainly covers theoretical investigation of the composer's musical and scientific works, of his creative style and interpretation of compositions. Such volumes with a more extensive involvement of authors and material will periodically appear in the future as well”<sup>32</sup>.

---

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, pp. 119–120.

<sup>30</sup> Գյոդակյան Գ., Տ. Կոմիտաս վարդապետ, Նշանավոր ճեմարանականներ, Պրակ Ա, Մայր Աթոռ Ս. Էջմիածին, 2005, էջ 315–324: See also: Գյոդակյան Գ., Հայ երաժշտության հանճարը, Էջեր հայ երաժշտության պատմությունից, Ե., 2009, էջ 73–84:

<sup>31</sup> See: Геодакян Г. Стиль Комитаса и музыка XX века. Пути формирования армянской музыкальной классики, Е., 2006, с. 96–129.

<sup>32</sup> Ինստիտուտի կողմից, Կոմիտասական, հ. 1, Ե., 1969, էջ 5:



In 1981, by the decision of the Scientific Board of the Arm. SSR Academy of Sciences Institute of Arts, the second volume of The Komitassiad came out. It contains articles and researches on Komitas' life, activity and oeuvre, as well as publications of the composer's written legacy – from opera “Anush” and the collection of spiritual songs of 1893<sup>33</sup>.

The year 2019 marks the 150<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of Komitas. NAS RA Institute of Arts is planning to hold a scientific session dedicated to the great event, and to publish the third volume of The Komitassiad.

#### **4. Komitas' Scientific Biography**

Back in 1973, studying of Komitas' scientific biography was prioritized in the “20 Year Perspective Plan of the Scientific Research Work at the Institute of Arts”. Komitas' scientific biography, prepared by Khachik Samvelyan, appeared in fragments in several issues of the “Sovetakan arvest” [Soviet Art] and “Ejmiatzin”; of late, a comprehensive album dedicated to Komitas came out in Armenian and English translation; the compilers, however, failed to mention the name of NAS RA Institute of Arts...

In conclusion, we can state that, for decades, NAS RA Institute of Arts has invariably been the center of Komitas studies.

## **ՀՀ ԳԱԱ ԱՐՎԵՍՏԻ ԻՆՍՏԻՏՈՒՏԻ ՆԵՐԴՐՈՒՄԸ ԿՈՄԻՏԱՍԻ ՍՏԵՂԾԱԳՈՐԾԱԿԱՆ ԺԱՌԱՆԳՈՒԹՅԱՆ ՈՒՍՈՒՄՆԱՍԻՐՈՒԹՅԱՆ ՄԵՋ**

ԱՍԱՏՐՅԱՆ Ա.

### **Ամփոփում**

Ծանրակշիռ է ՀՀ ԳԱԱ Արվեստի ինստիտուտի ներդրումը Կոմիտասի ստեղծագործական ժառանգության ուսումնասիրության գործում: Հատկապես պետք է նշել.

---

<sup>33</sup> We do not proceed to the detailed analysis of The Komitassiad volumes, since it has already been done by Lusineh Sahakyan, Head of the Chair of Music History at Komitas Yerevan State Conservatory, in her research “Komitas studies in Armenian musicology”. See: **Սահակյան Լ.**, Կոմիտասագիտությունը հայ երաժշտագիտության մեջ, Ե., 2010:

1. Կոմիտասի Երկերի ժողովածուի ակադեմիական հրատարակությունը (1960–2006),
2. Գիտական ուսումնասիրություններ՝ Գևորգ Գյոդակյանի «Կոմիտաս» (2000), «Комитас» (1969) և «Komitas» (2014), Տաթևիկ Շախկուլյանի «Կոմիտասի ստեղծագործության վաղ շրջանը (1891–1899)» (2014) մենագրությունները, ինչպես նաև Մաթևոս Մուրադյանի, Ռոբերտ Աթալյանի, Գևորգ Գյոդակյանի, Կարինե Խուդաբաշյանի, Աննա Արևշատյանի, Անահիտ Բաղդասարյանի, Տաթևիկ Շախկուլյանի և այլոց գիտական հոդվածները:
3. «Կոմիտասականի» երկու հատորները (1969, 1981),
4. Կոմիտասի գիտական կենսագրությունը (2015):

## **ВКЛАД ИНСТИТУТА ИСКУССТВ НАН РА В ИЗУЧЕНИЕ ТВОРЧЕСКОГО НАСЛЕДИЯ КОМИТАСА**

АСАТРЯН А.

### **Резюме**

Весьма весомым является вклад Института искусств НАН РА в изучение творческого наследия Комитаса. В результате многолетних скрупулезных научных исследований коллективом научных сотрудников института были подготовлены и изданы следующие работы:

1. Академическое издание Собрания сочинений Комитаса.
2. Научные исследования: монографии «Կոմիտաս» (2000), «Комитас» (1969) и «Komitas» (2014) Геворка Геодакяна, «Ранний период творчества Комитаса (1891–1899)» (2014) Татевик Шахкулян, а также научные статьи Матевоса Мурадяна, Роберта Атаяна, Геворка Геодакяна, Карине Худабашян, Анны Аревшатян, Анаит Багдасарян, Татевик Шахкулян и других.
3. Два тома «Комитасакана» (1969, 1981).
4. Научная биография Комитаса (2015).