

# ԱՐՎԵՍՏԱԳԻՏՈՒԹՅՈՒՆ

## ART

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### KOMITAS AND THE WAYS OF DEVELOPMENT OF ARMENIAN MUSIC (TO THE 150<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF KOMITAS)

*“Armenian music is not only far from being wretched and sorrowful – it is power and vitality by itself, capable of nourishing the philosophy, the soul of the people, because music is the most pristine mirror of the nation, its most expressive and alive reflection: alive – as long as that nation is alive, strong – as strong is the nation that gave birth to it.”<sup>1</sup>*

**Komitas**

**Key words:** *the founder of Armenian national classical music school, the advocate of Armenian music, the researcher, the teacher, the singer, the choirmaster, the ways of development of Armenian music.*

September 26, 2019 marks the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Komitas – the Catholicos of the Armenian song and the highly acclaimed son of the Armenian people. ...And exactly 84 years ago, on October 21, 1935, at 6 am, far from his Homeland, his sensitive heart stopped beating. It happened in the faraway country

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<sup>1</sup> Գրական նշխարք Կոմիտաս վարդապետի բեղուն գրչին, Մոնթրեալ, 1994, էջ 69:

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of France, which had witnessed his academic and concert triumphs, and where he had spent the last decades of his life. At the funeral rite on October 27, orations were delivered by Professor Kurt Zaks – on behalf of the International Music Association, Amedee Gastou – on behalf of the French Music Association, Ara Partevyan – on behalf of Armenian musicologists and composers, Hayk Semerjyan – on behalf of Komitas's students...

At the close of the ceremony, the coffin with the remains of Komitas Vardapet was lowered into the small chapel in the basement of the Armenian Church in Paris to be moved to Armenia as soon as circumstances allowed. It was accomplished in May 1936<sup>2</sup>. Under the aegis of the Commission, headed by President of the Composers Union of Armenia Mushegh Aghayan, after the heartfelt speeches of Komitas' close friend Panos Terlemezyan, musicologist Ruben Terlemezyan, to the tune of Komitas's "Chinar es", sung by Haykanush Danielyan<sup>3</sup>, the composer's remains were interred at the Yerevan Pantheon, next to the tomb of Romanos Melikyan. Years later, the Pantheon and the surrounding Park were to be named after Komitas.

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Komitas was a highly acknowledged epoch-making phenomenon in the Armenian music culture, about whom unprecedented numbers of research papers, monographs<sup>4</sup>, dissertations, collections<sup>5</sup>, articles, memoirs, and literary works have been and are being written. The multitude of these works has paved the way for the initiation of Komitas studies<sup>6</sup>, a significant contribution to which has been made by NAS RA Institute of Arts<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 33.

<sup>3</sup> Հայաստանի կոչնակ, Նիւ Յորք, յունիս 13, 1936, էջ 569:

<sup>4</sup> Cf. **Բրուտյան Յ.**, Կոմիտաս, Ե., 1969: **Գասպարյան Ա.**, Կոմիտաս, Ե., 1947: **Գյոհակյան Գ.** Կոմիտաս, Ե., 2000: **Թահմիզյան Ն.**, Կոմիտասը և հայ ժողովրդի երաժշտական ժառանգությունը, Փասատենա, 1994: **Թերլեմեզյան Ռ.**, Կոմիտաս, Ե., 1992: **Յոլյան Ի.**, Կոմիտաս, Ե., 1969: **Շախկույան Տ.**, Կոմիտասի ստեղծագործության վաղ շրջանը, Ե., 2014: **Սաֆարյան Խ.**, Կոմիտաս սքանչելագործ, Ե., 1999: **Геодакян Г.** Комитас, Е., 1969: **Шавердян А.** Комитас (ред. Р. Атаян, Н. Тагмизян), 1989: **Gyodakyan G.**, Komitas, Yerevan, 2014, etc.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Կոմիտասական, հ. 1, Ե., 1969, Կոմիտասական, հ. 2, Ե., 1981.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. **Սահակյան Լ.**, Կոմիտասագիտությունը հայ երաժշտագիտության մեջ, Ե., 2010.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. **Ասատրյան Ա.**, ՀՀ ԳԱԱ արվեստի ինստիտուտը և Կոմիտասի ստեղծագործական ժառանգության ուսումնասիրությունը, Կոմիտասը և միջնադարյան երաժշտական

During his short creative life, Komitas carried out efficient activities in many fields of music, having largely preconceived the further paths of evolution of Armenian music.

**A. Komitas – the founder of Armenian national classical music school.**

Basing on the achievements of his predecessors and the vast international experience, he created the national style of Armenian music, anchored in the Armenian folk song. In January, 1897, Komitas wrote from Berlin to Gevorgyan Theological Seminary inspector Karapet Kostanyan, “My teacher keeps saying, ‘Your people has created its own noble musical style, which, like a common thread, runs through all your writings and compositions. I call that style Armenian’, he said, ‘because it is a novelty in the music world known to us’<sup>8</sup>. Along with the solo and choral music, his oeuvre included compositions like “Sipana qajer” and piano dances, as well as scenes from “Anush” – the opera, which, unfortunately, remained unfinished. The finished pieces are: the song of fairies “Yekeq, quyrer” and “Vush-vush, Anush” choruses, Saro’s declaration of love “Axji anastvatz” (based on the tune of “Lur-da-lur”, the Kurdish shepherd pipe song, played on the violin for Komitas by the distinguished writer and public figure Vrtanes Papazyan in Etchmiadzin, and promptly notated by Komitas<sup>9</sup>), Anush’s “Asum en urin”, Saro’s “Ah, Anush, Anush” recitative, Anush’s monologue with the center part “Asum en mi or”, the “Axjik bakhtavor” song with the “Hambarcum yayla” refrain, Saro’s third song “Barcr sarer”, the “reaper’s”<sup>10</sup> song “Sirun axjik”, etc. R. Atayan remarks that “these pieces do not make a complete opera but just melodic themes, contours of the song part of the opera. Even so, they are of great artistic value”<sup>11</sup>.

The reasons for leaving the opera incomplete were many, the main of them was Komitas’ over-busy schedule, which included, on the one hand giving classes at the Seminary, conducting the choral group of Mother See, doing research work for the compendium of the International Music Association, preparing textbooks,

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մշակույթը, գիտական հոդվածներ, Կոմիտասի թանգարան-ինստիտուտի տարեգիրք, Ե., 2016, էջ 197–210: **Asatryan A.**, NAS RA Institute of Arts and the Study of Komitas’ Creative Legacy, International review of Armenian Studies, Yerevan, 2018, # 1 (16), pp. 162–171.

<sup>8</sup> **Կոմիտաս**, Նամակներ, Ե., 2000, էջ 85:

<sup>9</sup> **Աթայան Ռ.**, Կոմիտասի «Անուշ» անավարտ օպերայի ուրվագրերը, Կոմիտասական, հ. 2, Ե., 1981, էջ 59:

<sup>10</sup> The “brother passer-by” was changed for a “reaper” by Komitas.

<sup>11</sup> **Աթայան Ռ.**, op. cit., p. 56.

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co-editing with Mher Abeghyan the lyrics of folk songs and on the other hand the lack of musical instruments. “In my cell, I have a very small (4 octaves) organ. Well, it is what it is; for a pauper his shack is a castle”, he wrote to M. Tumanyan<sup>12</sup>.

No less important was that Komitas did not have a professionally written libretto at hand, and he had but little experience in writing symphonic music.

**B. Komitas saved the Armenian peasant song from oblivion.** His efforts in this field are comparable with the deed of Mesrop Mashtots. Here is the Catholicos of All Armenians Vazgen I's apt remark, “Just as Saint Mesrop uncovered from chaos and crystallized the sounds of the Armenian language, presented the gem of his native tongue to his nation and the world, so did Komitas Vardapet – he excavated, purified and brought into the world the pristine spring of the Armenian song. Incessantly and tirelessly, with ever renovating vigor and passion, he shared the light of the Armenian song with his people”<sup>13</sup>.

Through all his life, Komitas had been collecting and notating Armenian, Kurdish and Turkish folk music. Regrettably, he had not seen his work published<sup>14</sup>.

Komitas was convinced that “those who want to compose culturally valid Armenian music, should base their work on Armenian folk songs, be guided by the stylistic principles of these songs, otherwise, the music they write will not be Armenian music”<sup>15</sup>.

**C. Komitas polyphonized Armenian folk songs and sacred melodies,** and thereby created national polyphony. Music teacher at the University of Vienna, Professor Viles Eton wrote, “I am surprised at Komitas' extraordinary capacities. He perceives the folk song perfectly, then makes an arrangement of exquisite taste and precision. All those songs that I heard personally from Komitas and studied, prove that Komitas is phenomenal both as an arranger and polyphonist”<sup>16</sup>. The renowned German conductor and music critic Alois Melichar

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<sup>12</sup> Կոմիտաս, Նամակներ, էջ 50:

<sup>13</sup> Գյողակյան Գ., op. cit., p. 79.

<sup>14</sup> Through the efforts of the musicologists of NAS RA Institute of Arts, Komitas' ethnographic legacy has been published in the 9<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> volumes of the academic edition of the collection of Komitas' oeuvre.

<sup>15</sup> Տեր-Առաքելյան Վ., Նյութերի ժողովածու, Ե., 1998, էջ 107:

<sup>16</sup> Զոպանյան Ա., Երկեր, Ե., 1988, էջ 477:

remarked in his letter to Margarit Babayan, "...Komitas is a matchless master: his harmony is incredibly complicated and bright, his solo and choral compositions are hard to be excelled"<sup>17</sup>.

**D. Komitas – the advocate of Armenian music**, the apostle of Armenian song both among the foreigners and us, Armenians. The ultimate goal of his life was to show the world that Armenians do have authentic music of their own<sup>18</sup>. In his quest for truth, Komitas was steadfast: he even endangered his relationships with his dear teacher Makar Yekmalyan, who regarded Armenian music as a branch of Persian-Arabian music, thus denying its uniqueness. The *G* and *D* issues of 1898 of the "Ararat" journal came out with Komitas's review of the "Chants of the Divine Liturgy of the Armenian Apostolic Church. Transcribed and arranged by M. Yekmalyan. Published by P.G. Meghuinyan. Leipzig, Breitkopf and Härtel; Vienna, the Mkhitarist Congregation Press, 1896". Komitas highly praised Yekmalyan's newly published "Liturgy". He wrote, "Esteemed Mr. Yekmalyan has planted the first flourishing grove in the barren field of our chants. We heartily rejoice that we, Armenians, can now pride ourselves on keeping abreast with advanced art and music"<sup>19</sup>. Thereafter, he continued, "Our music in its spirit and style is as oriental, as Persian-Arabian music. Meanwhile, neither Persian-Arabian music is ours, nor ours is part of that music, although influenced by the latter. The same as our language: it is a branch of the Indo-European family of languages – like Persian, Kurdish, German and many others, but Armenian is neither German, nor Kurdish, nor Persian"<sup>20</sup>.

Komitas arrived at the conclusion that Armenian folk and sacred music builds upon conjunct tetrachords, and thereby it differs from the European major and minor scales. He said, "The melodies of both our folk and church music, which are like brother and sister, use the same four-note system. The ones made differently are alien. Hence, the secret of our melodies is known, and it would be

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> **Կոմիտաս**, Հայն ունի ինքնուրոյն երաժշտութիւն, Ազատամարտ, Կ. Պոլիս, 1913, N 1316.

<sup>19</sup> Գրական նշխարք Կոմիտաս վարդապետի բեղուն գրչէն, էջ 110:

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, p. 100.

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wasted efforts to look for passages, corresponding to European Major, Minor, or Dur, Moll modes in our music. We won't find such, because they do not exist"<sup>21</sup>.

Yekmalyan's response to show how upset he was appeared in a later issue of the "Ararat".

Despite the high esteem and gratitude toward Yekmalyan, Komitas – a dedicated scholar and musician – could not compromise on the truth in order to maintain good relations with his teacher – a quality that does not happen very often today. M. Yekmalyan never forgave Komitas. On March 6, 1905, he passed away in Tiflis, in his 49 years of age with deep resentment against Komitas in his heart...

On March 20, the choral group of the Gevorgyan Seminary under Komitas sang at the funeral dirge for M. Yekmalyan in Ejmiadzin Cathedral<sup>22</sup>.

In April 1899, on Professor Oscar Fleisher's initiative, the Berlin branch of the International Music Association was established. Komitas was elected Association member to present Armenian music. At May 10 session of the Association, Komitas gave a presentation "Armenian Church and Secular Music" in German. O. Fleisher's reaction followed, "...Komitas's speech on Armenian sacred and folk music will remain unforgettable. It was the first presentation of its type, made in Berlin, and I surmise that up until now; there hasn't been anything like that even at the Paris World Fair"<sup>23</sup>.

O. Fleisher scheduled a second presentation by Komitas on Armenian folk and sacred music and a concert for June 14. Komitas began with explanations regarding the difference between the structures of Armenian folk and sacred melodies, then performed Kurdish, Persian and Turkish songs, expanded on the distinction between these and Armenian melodies<sup>24</sup>. A month later, on July 16, President of the International Music Association O. Fleisher wrote, "Your insightful presentation highlighted the depths of the music which had hitherto

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<sup>21</sup> Կոմիտաս Վարդապետ, Ուսումնասիրություններ եւ յօդուածներ, Գիրք Ա, Ե., 2005, էջ 92:

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Մազմանյան Մ., Հայ երաժշտական կյանքի տարեգրություն. 1901–1910, Ե., 2006, էջ 97:

<sup>23</sup> Գրական նշխարք Կոմիտաս վարդապետի բեղուն գրչին, էջ 14–15:

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

been closed for us, which has a lot to teach us – Western people. ...It would be priceless if you decided to publish Your studies”<sup>25</sup>.

On April 1–3, 1905, concerts in the hall of the Artistic Association in Tiflis featured a four-part choir of 60, conducted by Komitas Vardapet, and on April 6 Komitas delivered a speech on church and folk music in the hall of the Hovnanyan Women’s Gymnasium; he sang a few passages to demonstrate his statements.

On December 1, 1906, in the grand hall of the “Salle des Agriculteurs”, the “Armenian Union of Paris” and Arshak Chopanyan organized a concert of Armenian music, featuring Shushanik and Margarit Babayan sisters, students of the Paris Conservatory Armenak Shahmuradyan and P. Mughunyan, a choral group of 30 singers, directed by Komitas. The program included Komitas’s solo and choral works<sup>26</sup>, arranged and polyphonized by him, as well as piano dances. The concert got warm coverage in the press. Lois Laloy wrote in *Le Mercure musical*, “It would never occur to any of us, except, perhaps, a few very competent individuals, that there is art as beautiful as that, which is neither European, nor Oriental – the world’s only art on its own, with incredible euphony, deep genuine feelings and noble senses. Gentle, slightly winding melodies, versatile and vivacious rhythms – music that stems from one’s heart and flows on like cool, fresh and clean water. There is sun in these songs – not the scorching sun of the Arabian and Persian deserts, but some gilded ray of earthly light, whose warmth is tenderly touching the mountains’ whites, the forests’ greens, and sparkles in the rippling brooks. Those who locate paradise of Eden in Armenia, at the foot of Mount Ararat are not mistaken. Because that land with so sad a history is a truly select land, whose nature lavishly and generously shares its gifts with humans”<sup>27</sup>.

In *Le Monde musical* we read, “Here is a novelty, a revelation that takes us far away and makes us live the life of a forgotten nation. Do people still not see the profile of that tall black apparition, whose shadow gets longer for the towering head cover? Do people still not feel the mystery in those songs, their sweet melancholy, their resonant luxury, which glorify the Almighty, or sing praises of nature’s beauty, like the much loved “Hov [Breeze]”, “Khunki tzar [Incense tree],

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Մազմանյան Մ., op. cit., p. 117–118.

<sup>27</sup> Հոսպանյան Ա., op. cit., p. 474.

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“Barerar andzrev [Wholesome rain]”, “Sireli yez [Best-loved ox]”, or else, the irresistible vigor of their dances?..”<sup>28</sup>.

On June 1, 1907, in the Grand Hall of the Geneva Conservatory, Komitas conducted a concert featuring a choir, set up of Armenian and Russian students. The proceeds of two thousand franks went to aid the hungry in Van. Then he lectured in Geneva, Lozanne and Berlin. In July, Komitas and A. Chopanyan headed for Venice to carry out research work at the manuscript library of the Mkhitarist Congregation. At Murad-Rafaelyan school of Venice Komitas lectured on Armenian folk and church music. He wrote to K. Kostanyan from Lozanne, “Italy is very beautiful, but our woeful land is so much more beautiful”<sup>29</sup>.

On April 1, 1908, at the Baptist Church in Baku, the choir under Komitas performed 24 songs and tunes from his own works. Prior to the concert, Komitas spoke about Armenian music.

On May 20, 1910, Komitas stopped in Batumi on his way to Kutahya to give lectures and concerts. Two concerts were given in Kutahya: on July 25 – for a male, and on July 26 – for a female audience. Komitas conducted a four-part choir, assembled of the local school students, himself acting as a soloist<sup>30</sup>. Then trips to the cities of Afyonkarahisar, Eskisehir, Bursa followed. On September 12, a choir of 90 performers gave a concert under Komitas’s direction. On September 25, Komitas arrived in Constantinople and set about creating a new choir. On November 21, in the Winter Theater in Petit Champs, Komitas gave the first concert of the mixed choir of 300 choristers, thereby ruining the troublemakers’ and the Patriarchate’s plots and hindrances.

On April 6, 1911, Komitas left Izmir heading for Egypt to give concerts and lectures in Alexandria and Cairo in the months of April and May. The author Tigran Kamsarakan commented on June 16 concert, “...Last night ... we saw you singing and talking, joking and charming us. It was like we went on a pilgrimage to Armenia, or, to put it even better, you brought a piece of Armenia to us, Armenians of Egypt. We thought, an Armenian clergy could only bring some myrrh from Etchmiadzin; you – for a split second – moved Masis and Aragatz here... Who says mountains don’t walk×!..”<sup>31</sup> Komitas headed for Paris, thence

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<sup>28</sup> Գրական նշխարք Կոմիտաս վարդապետի բեղուն գրչին, էջ 54:

<sup>29</sup> Կոմիտաս, Նամակներ, էջ 96:

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Մազմանյան Մ., op. cit., p. 183.

<sup>31</sup> Գրական նշխարք Կոմիտաս վարդապետի բեղուն գրչին, էջ 26:



for Berlin, Dresden... In June, 1912, he was back to Paris, then held lectures in England, came back to Berlin, Leipzig, and in late July returned to Constantinople. On 1-15 June, 1914, Komitas took part in the conference of the International Music Association. The participants, in addition to the planned presentations “On Armenian ‘Khaz’ Studies” and “On Armenian Rural Music”, requested for a third one that would shed light on bar, tempo, accentuation and rhythm in Armenian music.

Komitas’ adoration of Armenian folk song inspired the people around him. A. Chopanyan recalled, “One day I invited for breakfast him and some Armenian and European friends, the talented Italian sculptor Andreotti and our Tiran Aleksanyan among them. Komitas sang to perfection “Ari, ari qe matagh”, “Kali yerg”. Andreotti was beside himself with sentiments, ‘You, Armenians, have such music and do not travel from city to city to show it across the globe!’, he burst out. Komitas said, ‘I have polyphonized it; had you heard a choir’s performance, you would be much deeper impressed’. Andreotti objected, ‘No, there is no need of any arrangement or choir. You come onstage just by yourself and sing these magnificent songs in the magnificent way you have just done’”<sup>32</sup>.

Komitas disseminated Armenian song among Armenians, too – he “urged” us to love it. He brought Armenian song back to his own people. Before, the Armenian folk song was little known beyond Armenia, even in such centers of Armenian intellectual life as Constantinople, Tiflis, Venice, Moscow, Baku. The “national” songs with patriotic content were usually sung to European tunes – borrowed either from operas or popular songs (“Ari im sokhak”, “Mer hayreniq”, etc.).

The younger generation was unaware of authentic Armenian music. Komitas with his inherent charisma began spreading the knowledge through his publications, his lectures and concerts here and there with his on-the-spot assembled choral groups, and was able to overcome the indifference and ignorance of the Armenian people toward their own song.

**E. Komitas – the researcher.** He is the founder of new Armenian musicology<sup>33</sup>. With his studies, Komitas laid the groundwork for musical

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<sup>32</sup> Cf. **Չոպանյան Ա.**, op. cit., p. 473.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. **Կոմիտաս**, Հոդվածներ և ուսումնասիրություններ (հավաքեց՝ Ռ. Թերլեմեզյան), Ե., 1941: **Կոմիտաս Վարդապետ**, Ուսումնասիրություններ եւ յօդուածներ, Երկու գրքով, Գիրք Ա., Ե., 2005, Գիրք Բ., Ե., 2007:

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folkloristics and musical investigations of the Middle Ages. Issues E and H of the journal “Ararat” published Komitas’ (then Sghomon Sghomonyan) article “Armenian Church Melodies”<sup>34</sup>.

In the article “Armenian Church and Folk Music”, which came out in German in Berlin, Komitas wrote, “Armenian church and folk music is based not on the European octave, but on a tetrachord system: the last sound of the previous tetrachord is the first sound of the following. In Armenian music, dominating is the major tetrachord, whose outer notes remain fixed, while the inner pitches change... All Armenian melodies are made up of various combinations of these six tetrachords”<sup>35</sup>.

This invention of Komitas was further elaborated by Christopher Kushnaryan, based on whose work Edward Pashinyan evolved his theory of universal super-modal tonal system.

Of particular importance were Komitas’s efforts toward decipherment of khazes, the Armenian music notation system. The research work of around 20 years – from 1893 through the end of his creative life – brought significant results. In his letter to Garegin Khachatryan, dated March 15, 1910, he wrote, “Indeed, I found the key to Armenian khazes. I can even read some simple writings, yet I am far from finishing. In order to penetrate into the mystery of every single khaz, I need to dig deep in dozens of manuscripts; sometimes it takes months. Meanwhile, right now, I have 198 khazes at hand – those with names, not to mention the multitudes of nameless ones”<sup>36</sup>.

**F. Komitas – the teacher.** Having succeeded Kara-Murza at Gevorgyan Seminary, Komitas promptly introduced the European style of notation to facilitate the students’ familiarization with the world music. Komitas’ most cherished aspiration was to give Armenian children the opportunity to receive music education, to found institutions preparing national music professionals, ideally – to have national conservatory. He managed to overcome all the arising challenges. The proceeds from the many concerts of the Gusan Choir, as well as from the

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<sup>34</sup> Cf. also **Կոմիտաս**, Հայոց եկեղեցական եղանակները, Գրական նշխարք Կոմիտաս վարդապետի բեղուն գրչին, Մոնթրեալ, 1994, էջ 71–86: **Կոմիտաս**, Հայոց եկեղեցական եղանակները, Կոմիտաս Վարդապետ, Ուսումնասիրություններ եւ յօդուածներ, Գիրք Ա., էջ 55–75:

<sup>35</sup> Գրական նշխարք Կոմիտաս վարդապետի բեղուն գրչին, էջ 115:

<sup>36</sup> **Կոմիտաս**, Նամակներ, էջ 72:

lectures he had given in 1910, in Constantinople, were carefully put aside for the conservatory-to-be. On June 12, 1911, Komitas wrote to Margarit Babayan from Cairo, “I hope to open a music school in Constantinople, yet for the time being it is all words; we’ll see the result when these fellows here get down to work”<sup>37</sup>. In a later letter to her, dated March 28, 1912, we read, “Now I have doubled all my efforts to make this venture of mine reality – to found a music school. I am working on getting a permanent building for it – to be sure it’ll last. It takes a while. Never mind, I don’t give up. Some day I will take you here to show my brainchild”<sup>38</sup>.

The media warmly welcomed Komitas’s idea to found a conservatory. To raise funds, a concert of the Gusan Choir was organized on April 1, 1912 at the Winter Theater in Petit Champs. The Choir gave concerts during the months of April and May, and all the proceeds went toward the future conservatory.

Komitas created an accomplished pedagogic system, in which the teacher’s role in educating the younger generation was given top priority. In mid-September 1912, Komitas lectured on “Child and Dance” to hundreds of music teachers and professionals of Constantinople. In particular, he said, “If a child does not understand what you teach, it is your fault, because you failed to understand the child’s soul. You need to get into their state of mind and grow up with them. It is only due to the wrong upbringing that geniuses-to-be grow into thieves...”<sup>39</sup>. Then he continued, “Dear teachers, sisters and brothers, please, be careful and cautious in doing your job of an educator. Yours is an extremely delicate profession. You are called to teach the young – our nation’s future. The wrong path taken ultimately ruins the nation...”<sup>40</sup>

One of Komitas’ cherished wishes was to publish music textbooks in the Armenian language. He set to this task actively and authored several textbooks, such as: “Music History”, “Elementary Music: a Course on Theory and Practice”, “Harmony”, etc...

Komitas’ thoughtfulness for his students never faded. Thus, he sent a message to Erzurum, worrying about the career of his favorite student Armenak Shahmuradyan, “Tell Armenak that he should not get stuck in Erzurum, he ought

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid, pp. 25–26.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, p. 25.

<sup>39</sup> Գրական նշխարք Կոմիտաս վարդապետի բեղուն գրչին, էջ 213:

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, p. 214.

### Komitas and the Ways of Development of Armenian Music

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to go to Italy to perfect his vocal skills”<sup>41</sup>. At the concert on November 3, 1913 in Constantinople, A. Shahmuradyan performed superbly. Komitas came on the stage arm in arm with his student and, to the accompaniment of thunderous applause, presented him with an exquisite gold token. “On that day, one could witness an emotional scene going on backstage after the concert: Komitas gave an emotional hug to Armenak Shahmuradyan, his once seminary student, while the Gusan choristers and musicians were clapping and showering them with fresh flowers... Komitas – the great teacher – got very emotional. He kissed the hero of the day on the forehead and said, ‘My only dream is to hear you in our own operas...’”<sup>42</sup>.

Among Komitas’s students were also Vahan Ter-Arakelyan, Barsegh Kanachyan, Mihran Tumatjan, Vagharshak Srvandztyan, Vardan Sargsyan – these are the names of those who continued the cause of their Teacher and contributed immensely to the progress of Armenian music.

**H. Komitas – the outstanding singer.** The talent of singing he inherited from his parents. “The kinfolk on both my father’s and mother’s side were loud-voiced”, Komitas wrote in 1908 in his autobiography. ‘My father and uncle, Harutyun Soghomonyan, were citywide known psalm-readers at St. Theodoros Church. The songs originated by my Dad and Mom in the Turkish language and tunes (some of them I notated in 1893 in my Homeland), are still sung with great delight by the elders in our town”<sup>43</sup>.

It was due to his wonderful voice that Soghomon succeeded to turn the wheel of fortune.

On March 15, 1870, still at about six months of age, Soghomon lost his mother. His Grandma Mariam took the further care of him. When in January, 1880, Soghomon finished the national school in Kutahya, his father sent him to Bursa to continue his schooling. Unfortunately, his father passed away in a few months, on May 17, so he had to quit and return to Kutahya. There he sang psalms at St. Theodoros Church. It is hard to guess what turn the life of the poor orphan would take, but... “In 1881, our parish priest Archimandrite Gevorg Derdzakyan was to go to St. Etchmiadzin to be consecrated as a bishop’, Komitas recalled later. ‘The Catholicos of All-Armenians Gevorg IV, the founder of

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<sup>41</sup> Շահմուրադյան Ա., Տարոնի Սոխակը, Ե., 1998, էջ 8:

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, pp. 12–13.

<sup>43</sup> Գրական նշխարք Կոմիտաս վարդապետի բեղուն գրչին, էջ 3:

Gevorgyan Seminary in St. Etchmiadzin, had ordered that the parish priest took an orphan with him to study at the Seminary. Among the twenty orphans, the lot fell on me, and the priest took me to St. Etchmiadzin”<sup>44</sup>. Thus, on October 1, Archimandrite Gevorg Derdzakyan and Soghomon appeared before the Catholicos. “The Patriarch was seated in the throne, such a stately old man... Began asking me questions. I was struck dumb, stood stiff and understood nothing of what he said, because he spoke Armenian, while my fellow townspeople and I<sup>45</sup> spoke only Turkish. All the subjects at school were taught in the Turkish language, so even though I could write and read Armenian, I understood none of what I read. The Patriarch, seeing I didn’t speak Armenian, said in Turkish, ‘You came here in vain, in our Seminary the subjects are taught in Armenian’. What I did was – without a hint of shyness, with childish naivety and all unexpected bravery – I told him, ‘I came here to learn Armenian’.

‘Oh, well, do you have voice? Can you sing?’

‘Yes, I have and I can’.

‘What kind of songs do you know?’

‘Any kind – Armenian, Turkish, church songs, secular songs’.

‘Very well. Do you know ‘Luis Zvart’?’

‘I do.’

While I was singing ‘Luis Zvart’, I saw tears rolling down on the Patriarch’s gown.

‘Take him to the Seminary’, he ordered Bishop Vahram Mankuni, his chancellor”<sup>46</sup>.

As a student in Berlin, Komitas was auditioned (in April 1899) by Richard Schimdt. The characteristic given was as follows: “The voice includes the entire range from high tenor to low baritone, 2 and  $\frac{3}{4}$  octaves, 20 notes... the flexibility of a tenor and the softness of a baritone blend in that voice”<sup>47</sup>. Years later, Tiran

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> They say that decades prior to that, it was prohibited to speak Armenian in Kutahya. The tongues of those who spoke were cut off. So the Armenians in Kutahya feared to speak their mother tongue.

<sup>46</sup> Գրական նշխարք Կոմիտաս վարդապետի բեղուն գրչին, էջ 8:

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 14.

## Komitas and the Ways of Development of Armenian Music

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Aleksanyan remarked, “He is number one in the world; I have never heard a singer like him. He is a living musical instrument”<sup>48</sup>.

**H. Komitas – the incredible choirmaster.** “Those who happened to study under the supervision of Komitas or sing in the bigger or smaller choirs assembled by him”, Mihran Tumatjan remembered, ‘can evidence how, with a single word, or a casual remark, or an unexpected facial expression he managed to unite us, to make us focus on the Armenian song sung in the Armenian language, with heartfelt emotions and the most refined taste. Likewise, as a choirmaster, during the general rehearsals of the choir, or at the culminating moments at the concert, Komitas’s prolific and multifaceted talent burst out of his bodily structure, like an invisible soul soaring in the infiniteness”<sup>49</sup>.

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Thus, the further progress of Armenian music proceeded along the pathway envisaged by Komitas, while the prerequisites, necessary for its implementation, only appeared in Soviet Armenia.

1. The State conservatory was founded in Yerevan, intended to actively erect the building of Armenian professional music; by the December 1946 Decision of the Council of Ministers of Armenia, the Conservatory was justly named after Komitas.

2. The Composers Union of Armenia united professionals into a powerful composition school, which spread Armenian music across the globe. On the one hand, original works were composed and, on the other, arrangements of folk songs became indivisible parts of the Armenian composers’ creations – not only vocal or choral, but also all kinds of musical ensembles.

3. A globally known school of vocalists, instrumentalists and conductors has been established.

4. By May 13, 1932 Decision of the Council of People’s Commissars, the Opera Theater was founded in Yerevan (presently, the Al. Spendiaryan National Theater of Opera and Ballet), which made its official debut on January 20, 1933 with Al. Spendiaryan’s *Almast*; productions of operas and ballets by Armenian composers succeeded one another.

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<sup>48</sup> Ջուպանյան Ա., op. cit., p. 473.

<sup>49</sup> Կոմիտաս սքանչելագործ, էջ 29:

5. In April 1937, the first professional choir appeared in Armenia – the State Choir of Armenia, made up of 25–30 singers (presently, the world-renowned National Academic Choir of Armenia, whose long-time leader is National Hero of Armenia Hovhannes Tchekidjian).

6. Music schools for children were opening in Yerevan and elsewhere in Armenia.

7. Textbooks on nearly all the subjects of music theory in the Armenian language were prepared and published: “Harmony”, “Polyphony”, “Analysis of Musical Compositions”, “History of Armenian Music”, “Armenian Folk Music”, as well as music textbooks for secondary schools.

8. Armenian musicology made significant progress and acquired better characteristics. One of the departments of the newly founded (1958) Institute of Arts of the Academy of Sciences of the Arm. SSR was the department of music; in 1965, the section of folk music opened. In keeping with Komitas’ precept, NAS RA Institute of Arts continues collecting, systematizing, deciphering and studying Armenian folk dances and songs.

9. Owing to the efforts of several generations of musicologists of NAS RA Institute of Art, the 14 volume collection of Komitas’ works has been published.

On September 26, 1949, on Komitas’ birthday, the Council of Ministers of the Arm. SSR passed a resolution on the academic edition of Komitas’ complete works; the implementation was placed on the Arm. SSR Academy of Sciences. The editorial board included Robert Atayan, Mushegh Aghayan, Samson Gasparyan, Christopher Kushnaryan, Matevos Muradyan; the initial volume of Komitas’ works came out in 1960 with Martiros Saryan’s fly-leaf, and the concluding one (vol. 14) – in 2006.

Publication of the academic edition of Komitas’ works was a truly momentous phenomenon in the music life of the Armenian people, and an event of strategic importance for our nation.

As a matter of fact, Komitas’ influential personality all by himself, all alone, deprived of any support, in the absence of Armenian statehood, had predetermined the further paths of development of Armenian music art.

... Komitas loved flowers very much. They say, fresh flowers – his favorite roses and carnations – were everywhere in his home, filling the space with their sweet fragrance. Once, in a talk with P. Terlemezyan, Komitas said, “Dear Panos,

I have a feeling that my death will be a happy one: my favorite flowers will be always there on my tomb”<sup>50</sup>.

Indeed, there are always fresh flowers at Komitas’ monument (erected in 1955, sculptor Ara Harutyunyan) in the Komitas Park and Pantheon in Yerevan. They symbolize the love and respect of the grateful Armenian people for their distinguished son, memories of whom will never fade.

## ԿՈՄԻՏԱՍԸ ԵՎ ՀԱՅ ԵՐԱԺՇՏՈՒԹՅԱՆ ԶԱՐԳԱՑՄԱՆ ՈՒՂԻՆԵՐԸ (ԿՈՄԻՏԱՍԻ ԾՆՆԴՅԱՆ 150-ԱՄՅԱԿԻ ԱՌԹԻՎ)

ԱՍԱՏՐՅԱՆ Ա.

Ամփոփում

*Քանալի բառեր՝ հայ ազգային դասական երաժշտական դպրոցի հիմնադիր, հայ երաժշտության պրոպագանդիստ, գիտնական հետազոտող, մանկավարժ, երգիչ, խմբավար, հայ երաժշտության զարգացման ուղիները:*

Կոմիտասը դարակազմիկ երևույթ է, հայ երաժշտական մշակույթի այն բացառիկ երախտավորը, որի մասին գրվել են և շարունակվում են գրվել անսխալեալ թվով հետազոտություններ, մենագրություններ, ատենախոսություններ, ժողովածուներ, հոդվածներ, հուշագրություններ և գեղարվեստական ստեղծագործություններ:

Կոմիտասն իր ստեղծագործական ոչ երկարատև կյանքի ընթացքում ծավալեց բազմակողմանի ու արդյունաշատ գործունեություն՝ մեծապես կանխորոշելով հայ երաժշտական արվեստի զարգացման հետագա ուղիները:

Կոմիտասը հայ ազգային դասական երաժշտական դպրոցի հիմնադիրն է. իր նախորդների նվաճումների և համաշխարհային հարուստ փորձի օգտագործման ճանապարհով նա ստեղծեց հայ ժողովրդական երգի վրա խարսխված հայ երաժշտության ազգային ոճը: Կոմիտասը մոռացությունից փրկեց հայ գեղջուկի երգը, բազմաձայնեց հայ ժողովրդական երգն ու հոգևոր եղանակները՝ ստեղծելով ազգային բազմաձայնությունը (պոլիֆոնիան):

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 154.



Կոմիտասը հայ երաժշտության քարոզիչ էր՝ հայ երգի առաքյալն՝ ինչպես օտարների, այնպես էլ հենց հայերի համար: Նրա կյանքի նպատակներից էր համոզել աշխարհին, որ հայն ունի իր ինքնուրույն երաժշտությունը: Կոմիտասը գիտնական հետազոտող էր՝ հայ նոր երաժշտագիտության հիմնադիրը: Իր ուսումնասիրություններով նա սկզբնավորեց երաժշտական բանագիտությունը ու երաժշտական միջնադարագիտությունը:

## КОМИТАС И ПУТИ РАЗВИТИЯ АРМЯНСКОЙ МУЗЫКИ (К 150-ЛЕТИЮ СО ДНЯ РОЖДЕНИЯ КОМИТАСА)

АСАТРЯН А.

### Резюме

**Ключевые слова:** *основатель армянской национальной школы классической музыки, пропагандист армянской музыки, ученый-исследователь, педагог, певец, хормейстер, пути развития армянской музыки.*

Творчество Комитаса во многом предопределило дальнейшие пути развития армянского музыкального искусства.

Комитас – основатель армянской национальной школы классической музыки; опираясь на достижения своих предшественников и богатый мировой опыт, он создал национальный стиль армянской музыки, основанный на армянской народной песне. Комитас спас от забвения песню армянского крестьянина, сделал многоголосной армянскую народную песню и духовные мелодии, тем самым создав национальную полифонию.

Он был пропагандистом армянской музыки, миссионером армянской песни как среди чужих, так и среди самих армян. Став основателем нового армянского музыковедения, он своими исследованиями положил начало музыкальному фольклороведению и музыкальной медиевистике.