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A Brief Historical Overview of Armenian Sacred Music and Neumes

The sacred music of the Armenian Apostolic Church, like other Christian music traditions, is the result of the fruitful relationship between the oral and the written traditions. Dialogues with other liturgical cultures and musical exchanges with both Latin and Byzantine Churches gave birth to an ecclesiastical musical tradition, born in proximity to Christian Antiquity, which has survived, despite significant obstacles, to the present day. The study presents in a diachronic manner the central moments of the evolution of the Armenian liturgical chant, its great reformers and poets/hymn writers, the system of musical notation that managed to bear the entire hymnographic corpus specific to this millennia old tradition, and the theoreticians that decisively contributed to the development of Armenian ecclesiastical music.

Anna Arevshatyan

Komitas and Grigor Gapasakalian. Neumological Connections

In his neumological studies Archimandrite Komitas (Sghomon Sghomonian, 1869-1935), founder of the Armenian national composers' school, musical, folkloristic and medievalist studies, has referred in detail to the neumological observations of Acolyte Grigor Gapasakalian (1740-1808), whose works are among the first ones devoted to Armenian national musicology. As Komitas' neumological rough copies evidently show, he not only widely used works by François-Joseph Fétis, Guillaume André Villoteau, Oskar Fleischer and Eghia M. Tntesian, but also gave great importance to Gapasakalian's musicological treaties. Studies show that in his neumological investigations, Komitas mostly followed principles set up by Gapasakalian, considering him the most skilled and credible writer. In almost every page of Komitas's neumological manuscripts, one can see references, citations and comparisons with Gapasakalian's neumological explanations. Even now, these explanations, alongside investigations made by Komitas, can be a great contribution to the decipherment of Armenian *khazq* (neumes).

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The Key to the Armenian Neumes

Komitas Vardapet devoted twenty years of his life to explore the medieval Armenian music and its neumes system. Unfortunately, Komitas's experiences in exile had left him psychologically disturbed and mentally exhausted, so he was incapable of returning to his work or publishing his discoveries; his notes were never heard of again.

The article opens a long-locked door into the ancient world of Armenian liturgical music, being based on Komitas's research. It simply tries to rediscover the long-lost "key" for understanding thousands of pieces of medieval Armenian music and to interpret the composer's research.