

## On Behalf of the Museum

In the Museum of Literature and the Arts, the music archives hold a significant place. Here are kept some 170 personal archives and collections of Armenian musicians and musicologists, totaling 130,000 materials (manuscripts, advertisements, programs, instruments, works of fine art, etc.). Here the archives of Tchouhadjian, Komitas, Yekmalian, Spendiarian, R. Melikian, Grigor Suni and other great figures in Armenian music have found a permanent resting place. Based on these archives, monographs, speeches, and scholarly articles have and are being written, and variegated collections of the works of Armenian musicians are being prepared. For instance, the academic volumes of the works of the great Komitas have and are being published largely on the basis of archival materials kept in the museum. Let us add also that in the last several years the museum's publishing house has made available to readers collections of materials on the lives and careers of Komitas' prize students, Armenak Shahmouradian and Vahan Ter-Arakelian, as well as two volumes containing the songs of the famous Armenian singer, Nikol Galanderian, a project which will be continued in the near future.

Now in this modest volume we present to our reading public another famous figure in Armenian music, Grigor Mirzaian Suni's *Sketches in Armenian Musicological History*, an unpublished work. This valuable study, representing a brief sketch of centuries-old Armenian music, we have found suitable to publish in English translation, as well, in order to give non-Armenian readers a certain understanding into that rich world of Armenian music.

The book has been prepared for publication with some editorial intrusion. Since the author, for unknown reasons, did not subject it to a final proofreading. The text has been notated, certain orthographic and punctuation corrections and some minor abridgements have been made, and a scholarly introduction has been added. Grigor Suni's extensive autobiography has been included as an addendum to the book. A copy of the original autobiography was given to the composer's family by Mr. Ferdinand Kaimakamian.

The publication of the book was mainly sponsored by Grigor Suni's grandson, Prof. Ronald Suny and his wife, pianist Armena Marderosian, to whom we express our deepest

gratitude. Our gratitude extends also to all those who, in this or that manner, participated in the publication and printing of this valuable work.

## PREFACE

The period between the beginning of 19th century until the beginning of 20th century was a crucial for the history of Armenian art. In this time, after a long, constrained silence, a big army of composers, performers, critics and musicologists emerged in the field of professional music.

Hambardzoum Limonjyan, Nikoghayos Tashjyan, Kristapor Kara-Mourza, Makar Yekmalyan, Tigran Choukhajyan, Komitas, Romanos Melikyan, Spiridon Melikyan, Hovhannes Nalbandyan, Nadezhda Papayan, Beglar Amirjan, Nerses Shahlamyan, Arshak Kostanyan, sisters Adamyán and Ghorghanyan, Armenak Shah-Mouradyan, Vasil Korganov (Barsegh Ghorghanyan), Alexander Spendaryan and the others opened a way for nowadays Armenian professional musical culture. The history of our music was composed by those individuals and evolved on its special way.

Composer Grikor Mirzaian Suni has his own unique place in this big group. He was born in 1876 in the ashough (minstrel) family with old musical traditions. He was two years old when he moved with his parents from the village of Getabek to Shoushi town. His first musical impressions are connected with his father – folk poet and singer Hovhannes Varandetsi. In 1883 Grikor became a student of the parish school in Shoushi. Under the caring and thoughtful patronage of his music teacher – priest Garegin Hovhannisyan, he studied Armenian music notation, putting his musical skills into progress. In 1891 15-year-old Grikor entered the Gevorgian seminary in Ejmiatsin. The student years were very productive for young musician. Except of serious musical trainings Suni, along with young Komitas, starts to record and research folk songs and makes attempts to make polyphony them. After graduating the seminary the future composer returns to his native Shoushi. His first concert takes place at the Khandamiryan theater in Shoushi, consisted completely of

songs elaborated by him. In the same year he went to Saint Petersburg for extending and improving his musical knowledge. He studied three years at musical schools of Rapgoff and later – of Polak. In 1898 he successfully entered conservatory becoming a student of eminent Russian composer Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov.

In Petersburg Suni wrote “Akh al vardi” (“Akh, Of Red Rose...” lyrics by Avetik Isahakyan), “Indz mi khndir” (“Do Not Ask Me,” lyrics by Hovhannes Toumanyant) and other solo songs and elaborations of folk songs, promising a bright future to him.

The most fertile period in Suni’s life is his years spent in Tiflis. After graduating from the Petersburg conservatory in 1904 he settled in Tiflis. From 1905 to 1908 he worked as teacher of music at Nersisyan school, at the same time leading the school choir, continuing the work of his predecessor, composer Makar Yekmalyan. Moreover, he organized choirs, participated in concerts, elaborated folk songs, wrote music for theatrical performances; one of them, “Aregnazan,” based on Ghazaros Aghayan’s tale, later became into an opera.

In 1904 Suni’s solo song “Akh al vardi” was published in Petersburg. In “Armenian Folk Songs” anthology, published later, four of Suni’s elaborated songs were included: “Sareri hovin mernem” (“I Love So Much the Winds of Mountains”), “Habrban,” “Saren kouga dziavor” (“A Rider Is Coming From the Mountain”) for mixed choir with piano accompaniment, as well as “Oy nazan” (“Hey, Gracious”) for piano performing.

Suni’s interest was not limited by music only. Since his early adolescence he was interested in ideas of labor movement. He was involved in national liberation movement, was a member of dashnaktsoutyoun party, and under this influence he wrote many patriotic songs and elaborated others for choir. They were famous as creations of ashough Dayi and enthusiastically were sung among liberation fighters.

As an active underground politician, Grikor Suni became a persona non grata for the Czar authorities, thus in 1908 he left Tiflis disguisedly. Thus the odyssey of his life starts: first he moved to Trepizond, later to Samsoun, Chirason, Erzurum and other cities. But those years of wanderings were not passed in vain. Suni collected, recorded and elaborated number of folk songs, organized choirs and gave concerts. From 1910 to 1914, while working in Sanasaryan school in Erzurum he even managed to create an orchestra. In 1914 Suni returned to Tiflis and involved in activity of Armenian Musical Union with

typical for him inspiration. He wrote and staged operetta performances, leading the symphonic orchestra of the Tiflis Armenian Board. Having such orchestra under his command Suni rapidly arranged and performed his symphonic works on folk songs motives – “Vana eskizner” (“Sketches of Van”) and “Arevelk” (“Orient”).

In 1918 the republics of Transcaucasia proclaimed independence. Sargis Barkhoudaryan and Grikor Suni had got delightful offers from the new established Armenian government to be the founder of a national conservatory of music in Yerevan. Suni refused and went to Tehran in 1919 for working as teacher of music. The main reason of rejection was composer’s deep disappointment from the dashnaksoutyoum party and its behavior. During his two years stay in Iran Suni was explored Persian music. In 1921, aiming to recover his health, he went to Constantinople, expecting later return to his fatherland. But in 1923, under certain circumstances Suni went to the USA with his large family. And everything started again. Suni fulfilled what Kristapor Kara-Mourza had done in past: wondering in Armenian settlements and spreading the melodies of Armenian music, evoking the conscience of possessing their own and unique music, ignoring material and moral hardships, even his state of health. In various cities he organized choruses, participated in concerts, had pedagogical activity.

Grikor Suni’s life was difficult and stormy. In his childhood after his father’s death he had to earn for family, making jewelries and participated in street concerts with ashoughs, when he was not fifteen years old. Later, inspirations and disappointments followed each other. Being a very dynamic person, he was always in the center of political and historical events and often acted harmful to his creation. Because of his wonderings he lost part of his creations and often had to start everything again, yet he never gave up because of his optimism. The optimism is the most characteristic side of Suni’s art. In spite of torturous life, often conflicting views, his music has a bright and vivid content. The theme of his songs is the gentle love lyricism, his preferred genre was dance-song along with jocose nuances typical for it, such as “Mayish yekav” (“May Came”), “Indz mi khndrir” (“Do Not Ask Me”), “Touy-touy,” etc.

Grikor Suni passed away in 1939 in Philadelphia, never having any means for publishing his works.

Unfortunately, it is difficult to say a complete opinion about his art, because most part of his works is unpublished, and the most of his archival materials is in the USA, with his descendents.

Suni did not date his study "Armenian Music," yet from number of historical facts and persons presented there it is possible to find the approximate time of its writing: 1919–1921. It is difficult to say whether it was written in Tiflis, in the frames of the activity of the Society of Armenian Music Theoreticians or had been written for publishing in press. For both cases it could have an important cognitive and teaching significance not only for professionals but also for the wide circle of music lovers.

The research presents the systematized history of the Armenian music from the pre-Christian times until the beginning of the 20th century. The author divided his study into two parts. In the first chapter he described the ancient, old and medieval musical culture of Armenia including the 13th century, i.e. the fall of Cilician Armenian kingdom, and is composed mainly from the states from the Armenian historiographers.

The musical genres and instruments of pagan and Christian Armenia are presented on a simple way and language. The diversity of them gives a chance to have an idea about the musical culture of ancient Armenia. Especially the existence of the rich group of string instruments is a result of highly developed sound-feelings and testifies the high level of ancient Armenian civilization. Suni tells in chronological order about the musical achievements of Christian Armenia, about new genres that emerged with new religion, about the existing schools, church singing, musical notation, everyday musical life and musicians.

The study was written in a copybook. Suni used one side of pages, the others remained free for his notes. There he wrote his observations about editing of some phrases. He has also some notes about the musical changes and news in Europe in respective periods. For instance, while presenting the important developments in music in the 5th-7th centuries, he compared with those of singing systematization by Pope Gregarious the Great (this systematized singing became an obligatory for all Catholic churches and famous as Gregorian chant). Suni wrote: "We do mention that to the Ambrosian syllable d, e, f, g from the 4th century Pope Gregory the Great added a, b, c, d, thus making free Gregorian [singing] from syllable."

About the 8th century he noted: “Roma in 768-814: Charles the Great spread Gregorian [chant].”

Near the subtitle “10th century” he wrote: “On 17th of May, 1050 Guido Arezzo joined.” Or, presenting the music of the 12th century he remembered French troubadours and German minnesingers. Those notations are not occasional. Suni tried to see the evolution of Armenian music as part of music’s international historical development and by comparative analysis to separate universal regularities from the strictly national, Armenian phenomenon.

Suni wrote about the Christian Armenian spiritual music beginning from the 5th century. One can ask about the music of the 6th century, so here we should note that musicology does not know any stylistically stable new trends in Armenian spiritual singing. It was mainly a period of “fermentations,” and the historical sources, that Suni used, also avoid that century.

The second chapter of the study, titled “New and contemporary period,” presents the course of revival and development of Armenian professional music from the second half of the 18th century. Several important and crucial occurrences for our music history are mentioned: appearance of new musical notation and its role and significance for the Armenians, the polyphony in Armenian musical reality, the understanding of fundamental role of typical touches of folk songs for national professional music among creating circles.

The musical culture of this period Suni presented as “secular music” and divided into three parts: peasant or folk, as a minor level, ashough (or in modern terms, folk-professional) as an average level and “social” (i.e. professional) as the upper level.

Suni researched deeply the characteristics of those three levels. During his study at the Gevorgyan seminary, along with Komitas, he studied deeply the periodicities of structural, composing, harmonic, metric and rhythmic developments of the peasant songs. As a son of ashough family, since his childhood he dealt with that form of art accumulating certain resources and knowledge in that field. As the fates decree he lived in Iran and seriously explored Persian music enriching his knowledge about the field of ashough singing. Nine years of stay in Petersburg he devoted to prospecting the European and Russian music and to state in current study in a short way everything that he explored for many years.

Suni was one of the pioneers (if not the first one) who initiated such work, and naturally he would confront many difficulties. Today the Armenian musicology has done deep enough in exploring the history of Armenian music; there are certain volume of professional literature and rich fund for the next generations. Yet, because of different reasons, there is not any published study with a simple and summarized statement of the elementary knowledge, that every Armenian musician should know. There is not any book where the history of our musical culture be presented objectively or the role of a church or historical figure in that history has been elucidated without any excessive caution. In this sense Grikor Suni has done a very thankful job, and publishing his study is an important fact in modern Armenian musical life.

MARINE MOUSHEGHYAN

## ARMENIAN MUSIC

Discussing Armenian music is the same as describing its history, its development, all the changes it has undergone from the most ancient times until the contemporary period.

Due to economic, political, geographical, climatic, religious and other circumstances, music is not the same in all nations. To discuss the history of Armenian music is tantamount to studying all the changes that have taken place in the course of time in that branch of the Armenian arts, to reveal all the distinct qualities that are characteristically Armenian. And because the character of every era and every nation is reflected in its music, as the greatest expression of soulful emotion, thus that historical survey completes

the picture of its entire cultural development. And it is from this greater point of view that the survey bears an ever greater significance.

In order to do this historical survey it is essential to use both oral and written sources. That may be easy for the modern and contemporary periods (to give concise information and to come to certain conclusions), but it is difficult and in many cases even unachievable for the medieval and ancient periods, for the simple reason that musical determinants such as the voice itself and its means of perpetuation (through notation), and especially the absence of a writing system or during the period of its primitive development, all create obstacles for the complete realization of our intentions and compel us to suffice with fragmented and disconnected pieces of information.

As is the case for all nations but especially for the Armenian nation, the ancient period in music is covered by the thick darkness<sup>1</sup> of the historical past and it is impossible to say anything with certainty. This much is known to us, that the Armenian people, like all cultured peoples, had its own songs which accompanied all the events and phenomena that shaped their lives, being passed on by word of mouth, reaching Khorenatsi<sup>2</sup> and Magistros<sup>3</sup> (11th century).

Those songs, for all intents and purposes, as Khorenatsi himself states, “We have heard by our own ears,” and were called gousanakan (minstrel) or Goghtan songs, and the singers – gousans (minstrels) or Goghtan singers<sup>4</sup>. The main homeland for these minstrel songs were the wine rich regions of Goghtn in the province of Siunik<sup>5</sup>. Both Khorenatsi and subsequent historians mention the following types of minstrel songs and stories: novels, tales, legends, sun novels, epics, recitations, dance songs, show songs, lamentations, and love songs.

Vep (story) – was a versified poem (against its verisimilar, sometimes entirely imaginary in context) which was told, sung by, as Khorenatsi says, “song novels.” Novelist signified one who told a novel, a singer (the verb to tell means to sing – tell a song, tell a game, this man is a good teller).

Zroyts (fable) – was a mixture of reality and fantasy, similar to current tales.

Yerg banits (epic songs) – was a song that recounted and praised the life of heroes.

Tvelyats yerger (recitatives<sup>6</sup>) – were songs about imaginary heroes, that were composed in chronological order that included telling a number. (To tell a number is a

certain form of singing that even today exists among minstrels and in operatic works). Europeans call that form of music a recitative. In Armenian church music there exists even today the “number” mass and telling the number of the pokhs<sup>7</sup>.

Yerg parots yev tsotsots (dance and show songs) – were happy or sad songs<sup>8</sup> that were expressed by dance or pantomime and were sung at concerts and public performances.

Geghon (ballad)<sup>9</sup> – were short lyrical songs.

Mrmounj (lamentations) – were all those melodies that mourning and lamenting women, tragic mothers<sup>10</sup>, would sing while dancing and clapping around coffins at funerals. “Dzaynarku [elegiac] lamenting women took to bury [him]” (Khorenatsi<sup>11</sup>).

Those songs were accompanied by various instruments during and after Khorenatsi’s time. For example:

## STRING INSTRUMENTS

Bambir<sup>12</sup> – served the role of today’s minstrel saz or chongoor. It had gut strings and was played with a plectrum (mzrab). It belonged to the bandura instrument family which is widespread among Asian nations and recently reached Europe. “They used to sing with bambirs.” Its other type that belonged to the same family was the metal stringed pandir, which was played with fingers bearing bone picks.

Harp or Psalm Player – was a metal instrument (a primitive form of today’s harp) with gut strings, which was also prevalent among Asian nations and especially the Jews. “David used to play the Godspoken harp...” “Aman, Asak and Etan were the head singers who used to sing with metal harps.”<sup>13</sup> In ancient times this instrument was known as a “Psaltirion” from Psalm. It had ten strings which were played by the fingertips on both hands. That instrument can still be found in various corners of Europe, accompanying this or that solo instrument (mandolin or violin).

Some church hymns are called Psalms (Psaltirion) because they were sung with that instrument. Catholicos Hovhannes Bagratuni, during the funeral of King Ashot I, mentions, “They played Christian Psalms and sounds of blessings.”

Lyre<sup>14</sup> – this instrument was made based on the harp, but its structure is more complicated and perfected. In its lower sections it has echo compartments. In earlier times it had three gut strings, but later that number reached eight to ten. It is played with a plectrum.

Jnar<sup>15</sup> or Chianoor – which must have resembled the current chianoor. It was played with strings like the Arabic ebad.

Kanon<sup>16</sup> – belongs to the lyre family, but with a simple structure. The word kanon implies that it is an Armenian instrument but let's see what foreigners have to say. In ancient Greece there was an instrument called the kanon, which had one string and was called "monochord." But that is not the kanon we know. Kanon is an Eastern stringed instrument similar to the tsitra, according to Rieman's dictionary<sup>17</sup>. It was played in Arabia and Turkey, then spread to Lesser Armenia, and from there to Transcaucasus, bearing different names among various nations.

Vin<sup>18</sup> – was a medieval Saz-like instrument, very similar to the lute. Armenian writers have passed on very scant information about it. The instrument accompanied singing and had nine metal strings.

Chandir – this appeared in later times and was the preferred instrument of the Armenian minstrels of the Middle Ages. It combined the utterances of a sad heart with the melancholic sound of the instrument. They have given the chandir many names, such as chang, cheng, changir, chunkir, chnkir, chongoor, choongoor. As to which one of these is more current, it is difficult to say, but we are using changir, because it has been recognized as such from most ancient times. The changir has maintained its existence until now in distant and peaceful villages.

I said, minstrel, take your chongoor,  
And sing something heartwarming for us,  
We long for your sweet voice,  
Say something heartwarming.

H. Hovhannisian

Very Rev. Fr. Aristakes Tevkants, who was himself a minstrel, mentions in his introduction that the chunkir was a much older instrument, placing it during the time of the Goghthn singers. “Which sensitive Soul hummed our myriad national songs, the honey-sweet songs and melodies produced by the Goghthn singers’ chunkiur, which, after a thousand years... for the last time; they still enrapture the mind, the heart and soul of many of us.”<sup>19</sup>

After discussing instruments that accompany minstrel and other songs and dances, we do not consider it superfluous to mention here also those instruments that, although they have not accompanied songs, but they have had significance in Armenian life, both in the pagan and in the Christian era.

Those instruments are mentioned by the following Armenian historians:

## BRASS INSTRUMENTS

Bugle<sup>20</sup> – “And Smbat ordered the playing of the brass bugles...” (Khorenatsi II, 46).

“Once again after a small-scale massacre the king (Trdat) ascended to the peak of Ardzan and he played the alerting bugle so the entire army would gather in one place” (Zenob, Vol. 2, 45).

“How many bugle-players are in the troop of music players” (Eghishé, 167).

“Vahan Mamikonian ordered the playing of the war bugles. And the country shook from the sound of the bugles” (Ghazar, 2, 86).

“And during Artashes’ funeral they blew copper horns in the front side, while lamenting maidens and mourning women, dressed in black, were walking in the backside” (Khorenatsi, II, 60).

“...In front of Trdat’s coffin there were melodies of God’s benediction and aroma of incense... in the backside of the coffin there were horns and harps, mourns and lamenting maidens.”

So the bugle was made of copper and resembled the present-day military bugle. It was used during war-time and peace-time (for parties and funerals).

Trumpet – This was also a copper instrument. “We honored Trdat with horns sounding loudly and horridly, with organs<sup>21</sup> and sonorous ghanons<sup>22</sup>” (“Dashants tought”<sup>23</sup>).

Horn<sup>24</sup>– Eghishé mentions this instrument. “A large horn found among the Persians.”

## PERCUSSION INSTRUMENTS

Mentioned are...the drum and the cymbal. “They were drinking wine while playing drums and dancing” and “they took great enjoyment from the dancing of the kaqav dances<sup>25</sup> and from the minstrel songs” (Grigor Vardapet, Lamentation<sup>26</sup>).

Both the cymbal and the above-mentioned trumpet are still used today in many Turkish Armenian churches during certain services on feast days.

It is not clear in what provinces under what conditions and circumstances, under whose authorship and with what melodies these above-mentioned songs were sung during the pagan period. Also were they strictly popular or secular songs, or were they at the same time spiritual, sung at only public gatherings or also in pagan temples. We can say only that prior to the historical period epic legends provided musical material, the real result of which was the appearance of epic songs and oral tales. In the course of time these songs were cultivated and refined and they later formed the foundation of larger artistic works – oral stories (“such as those gathered by the royal courts”<sup>27</sup>) about some real historic figure.

The introduction of Christianity in Armenia certainly signaled the persecution of everything pagan. The diverse epic, heroic, royal, joyful and sorrowful songs that formed the spectrum of Armenian life in the pagan era must have been subjected to the most severe treatment by dispersers of the new religion, in order to uproot the old and establish the new. And we can see from all those books that were “gathered by the royal [pagan] courts” and burned, burying in their ashes those valuable treasures of Armenia culture. These books may have contained the pagan songs notated in the khaz (music notation) system of the Assyrian and Zend languages.

Changing the life of a people is not easy. Customs that have survived for centuries are not readily forgotten, particularly if they are associated with a nation's unique and characteristic creations expressing the deepest spiritual feelings.

Like individuals, nations are always struggling in that age-old conflict between old and new, and we can even see that struggle after the introduction of Christianity in Armenia, which continues for many centuries.

Unaware of an afterlife this song of life (pagan) finds its salvation right in this world<sup>28</sup>. Even though it was oppressed, it nevertheless was sung in the XI century and even in later periods. So it is not surprising that our Christian clerical authors were not able to suppress their anger and indignation concerning those pagan songs and melodies that had been popular with the people for centuries.

Fr. Vardan Hatsouni in his valuable work entitled "Meals and Parties in Ancient Armenia" writes sympathetically about the diatribe of our historians, as if he is reading Khorenatsi's lamentation for everyone, while we consider it completely natural for people seeking a secular good time.

"I consider the subject of these ballads and party songs to be loving, romantic, and lyrical. Eghishé refers to people who have become enslaved to the 'lewd sounds' of those 'pagan songs'...The son of the Alans characterizes the songs sung at a wedding party as 'pagan' and 'witchcraft.' Shnorhali also considers those 'minstrel songs' as witchcraft ("Universal Encyclical," 42). And from later centuries we have 'joyful taghs' (lyric poems), in which the old filthy lyre is still playing, and can be compared to the 'filthy ballads' of the Byzantines...and to the 'shameful songs of the Caesarians.'"

"The real minstrels," continues Fr. Hatsouni, or at least a good number of them, had a worse position than instrumentalist which the loquacious Mandakuni has portrayed in such lively fashion. Some of them whom we might also call "charlatans" (Oskeberan Encyclical, 851), as they were actually called (Parpetsi, 511), contained filthy and stupid words. The Catholicos would hear "much jesting, foolishness, lewdness, and emptiness" in the mouths of those debauched minstrels.

Mandakuni's eloquence proves that those "debauched minstrels" were none other than actors jokingly revealing the evils of their day. Even in the presence of the Catholicos they would present comical scenes. And a little later the same Mandakuni adds... "one

must lament the senseless pranks of lewd and possessed invitees to a party who are satiated like demoniacs, and who scandalize everyone with filthy mouths, swearing about some people, gossiping about others, creating enmity among some and satirizing others...And our royal kings (and catholicoses) and noble princes viewing that stupidity 'were prone to laughter' (as Pavstos might have said)," stated Fr. Hatsouni.

That information that resulted in anger among the likes of Fr. Hatsouni nevertheless is valuable and worthy of praise. That anger emphasizes even further the circumstance that as in ancient also in medieval times there existed chansonets (singers with loose morals) who combined their song with the music of our minstrels, receiving praise as vardzaks<sup>29</sup> from our authors. Fr. Hatsouni gives additional information about them. "The artists...quite often appeared at parties. Arshak was often the target of gossip for his extreme excesses at orgies listening to the songs of female minstrels." (Khorenatsi).

"They were drinking...wine...with whores, male and female minstrels and pranks" (Pavstos).

"Some of the noblemen and soldiers violated the devoted places of God with male and female minstrels" (Nerses the Builder, 52)<sup>30</sup>.

In particular the Christian era places a strict separation between religious and secular songs, and the religious songs serve those struggling in defense of the new ideology against the more popular secular songs that have survived for centuries.

After speaking largely about secular music, we now consider it necessary to move on to the religious and stress that our authors have made certain references to religious (church) music.

We expressed our opinion about primitive pagan religious music when talking about the secular, so let's move on to the Christians.

Our religious music being strictly Christian in origin, nevertheless one should not think that it was void of pagan influence or that it doesn't embody pagan elements<sup>31</sup>.

In the early Christian period as our spiritual fathers were obliged to change to Christian certain pagan feasts and rituals which had deep roots in the nation and created the very essence of that nation (maintaining the old form but giving it a new meaning), so too would they alter the religious melodies. And indeed there are such sharakans (spiritual hymns) and religious songs, the nature of which leaves no doubt today that they were pre-

Christian and pagan (“Aravot Louso”<sup>32</sup> and others). That branch of music – the religious – has certainly had a more prosperous life in the Armenian reality than has the secular, and that life has been secured and placed in the care of many assiduous persons. It was the monopoly of certain privileged, secure, influential groups of people who even had the rule of the country in their hands. In its essence it was not subject (under given conditions) to new, outside influence and it was maintained more unadulterated, and it has reached us in present times.

As great a role as the religious institutions have played in the maintenance of Armenian religious music by adopting uniformity in all areas (in various parts of the country) the application of the music notation system ADZ, BDZ, GDZ33, etc. for Armenian songs played a similarly great role in the future<sup>34</sup>.

Already some research has been done on the Armenian music notation system. The issue is an extremely specialized one and the last word has not been said yet, thus it's left for us to remain silent for now and return again to our historiographers to see what information they have given us about religious music (in the Christian period).

#### 5th century

There is a reference to religious music notation as early as the 5th century. “Sahak the Great conducted effective classes, with the help of many Greek scholars, because he was extremely learned in music notation” (Ghazar Parpetsi, 11/25). Besides that reference there is Movses the Poet's “Words representing musical notes.”

#### 7th century

In that century during the reign of Catholicos Nerses the Builder a certain arrangement of “sharakan songs” was defined (because of the difference in the sharakans sung during Vardavar), about which Kirakos states: “Each church conducted a worship service every

day according to the meaning of the day...” And to do that “they chose wise men, who would visit every place in America and they certified this same arrangement.”<sup>35</sup>

#### 8th century

The “great philosopher” Stepan Siunetsi, a student of Movses, studied in Byzantium “both the Greek and Latin languages. He was fluent in the arts and in writing in a philosophical style.” “He composed religious songs in sweet melody – both sharakans and ktsourds<sup>36</sup>” (Stepan Orbelian). The same Stepan Orbelian writes about his (Stepan’s) sister Sahakadukht – “She was a sister (to Stepan Siunetsi) who since a child had received the conduct of monkhood and was isolated in the gorge of Garni, living with a hard life of asceticism: her name was Sahakdoukht. She was very learned in the musical arts and behind a curtain she would sit and teach many and composed sweet sounding ktsourds and melodies<sup>37</sup>, including ‘St. Mary,’ which she created in her own name.” That is to say the first letters formed Sahakadukht. From that century on the Siunik region became a center for musical education.

#### 9th century

In the 9th century we see a reference from this same Orbelian about St. Tatev (in the Siunik region).

It was full of philosophers of musical songs, deep as the sea, it was rich in the number of schools preparing celibate priests, as well as painters and incomparable writers” (Chapt. 40).

#### 10th century

In the 10th century Asoghik talks in the following manner about the prelate of the Kamrjadzor Monastery (C, 7): “Behind him was the scholar Samuel, talented in his knowledge of the Bible and in music...”

I should not forget to mention also Fr. Anania of Sanahin, the author of the Ode to Shoghakat and Deacon Hovhannes the Philosopher and genius, who wrote the Ode to Mighty King Trdat, and the holy Catholicos Nerses and his wonderful Sahak and Mesrop who composed the Ghevondian sharakan with a sweet melody and appropriate words, the beginning of which reads, “The holy church today was radiant” (Kirakos).

### 11th century

In the 11th century there is a reference about Theodore (Alakhosik) (Catholicos Toros of Honi). In the year 544 the great musician and pillar of the holy church, Catholicos Toros, died and was buried in Honi, next to Catholicos Sargis.” (Both Sargis and Toros of Honi are not placed in the order of authentic catholicoses).

This century is considered a flourishing period in music. In this century there already existed in Sanahin, as Grigor Magistros has stated, oratorical and musical schools. “And those who entered oratorical and musical schools staged performances, competitions, and beautiful vices.”

And, as Magistros acknowledges in his analysis of grammar, in that century or shortly preceding it there were certain reforms “in Armenian versification and measure of poetry and song, influenced by the Arabs. And so, as the Arabs became thus knowledgeable in the arts, so too did you, through great effort become educated in the language and literature and then in the arts.”

And then he tells how the Arabs were at that time so well educated and knowledgeable “of mathematics, music, geometry, etc.”

In that same century there is reference to a musician named Daniel, to whom Grigor Magistros had sent a letter.

## 12th century

In the 12th century Yeghia Vardapet (from Havouts Tar) made certain arrangements “in his monasteries (writes Kirakos). He beautifully arranged the order in his monastery so everyone was singing together.”<sup>38</sup>

Here there is already a reference to polyphony, and it would be impossible for the leaders of our spiritual life and the arts, who had studied in oratorical and musical schools in Alexandria, Byzantium, and Greece, not to employ to this or that degree the principle of polyphony in our lives and in our schools. The 12th century has given us two great figures in the realm of song and music. One was the reformer of Armenian church songs and melodies Nerses Shnorhali, and the other the learned song writer–musician (the author of “Khorhoord Khorin” – Deep Mystery), Khachatur Taronatsi (Kecharetsi).

During Shnorhali’s lifetime there were already shortcomings, distortions, and innovations in Armenian church songs, melodies and rituals, and the need to correct, put in order and arrange for one, universal form had been perceived for some time. With that purpose in mind Shnorhali first entered the Makinatsi and Taghinetsi monasteries, where Armenian church songs, melodies, and rituals were more authentically and faithfully preserved. He deepened his knowledge there and wrote an admonition on preserving those melodies and rituals, which is entitled “The Order of Church And Rituals...Until the Ninth Hour”<sup>39</sup> by Nerses, Catholicos of All Armenians, who returned from the Makinatsi congregation, making up for shortcomings and correcting mistakes.

Shnorhali was not only the creator of numerous sharakans (religious hymns), but also the first secular minstrel. A minstrel scent is already blowing from some of his sharakans.

After following on this secular path were the clergymen Khachatur Kecharetsi (the great musician Khachatur Taronatsi), Stepan Orbelian, Hovhannes Tikurantsi, later Catholicos Simeon, Patriarch Avetik, Petros Ghapantsi and others<sup>40</sup>, who rejuvenated the extinct Armenian poem and song and with their lyric poem formed a bridge to the secular song.

The secular nativity songs composed along the lines of Movses the Poet’s “Christmas Song” (see A. Sedrakian’s “Lyre of the Mush and Van Armenians” and G. Sherents’ “Saz of Van”) provide the most prominent examples in strengthening that bridge.

Among the famous minstrels we forgot to mention Arakel Siunetsi, Fr. Hovhannes Pluz, Mkrtych Naghash, Bishop Minas Tokharetzi, Nahapet Kuchak<sup>41</sup>, who in clerical times emphatically stressed the rights of the secular and forever secured its liberation from medieval hindrance, for the court troubadour and patriarch of all the minstrels, Sayat-Nova, the “khalki nokar” (servant of the people), who entered the run-down shack of a peasant or laborer as a consoler of the people and as a teacher. Later the baton would be passed on to Shirin and others.

Nerses Shnorhali was the creator of beautiful and sweet melodies. Kirakos says about him, “...He composed many sweet melodies and sharakans in Khosrov’s style<sup>42</sup> for the church...lyric songs, and verses, since he was responsible for the resurrection blessing in third chord<sup>43</sup>... He preached about the Divine Liturgy, its sweet melodies and its mystical sharakans. He also spoke about two gandzs<sup>44</sup>.” He wanted to say that Shnorhali had composed utilizing the Khosrov’s style, which was altogether different from the form of other sharakans. And we can truly see a balance and a logical connection between melody and words, something that is absent in other cases. Shnorhali was a contemporary to the Arabs and the Jews in regards to innovations in versification and the musical arts, which are mentioned in the Jewish Khosri writing. Grigor Magistros also mentions the Khosri writing<sup>45</sup>.

The second prominent figure of the 12th century is Khachatur Taronatsi (Kecharetsi), who was the holy and virtuous prelate of the Haghartsin Monastery famous for his knowledge, particularly in the musical arts. Kirakos Gandzaketsi adds, “There was a celebration of the holy church (Getka) and of the holy priest Khachatur Taronatsi, prelate of the holy monastery that was called Haghartsin, a holy and virtuous man and a famous scholar, especially in the music arts...He brought the khazes (music notation) from East and he enlivened bodiless melodies<sup>46</sup>, creating works of genius that were not widespread in our world at that time. He composed and taught many...and then took a well deserved rest after working very hard.”

So it appears that the music notations were initially brought from the East by Khachatur Taronatsi, lifeless melodies were enlivened by him and spread throughout Armenia.

In the history of Armenian music this figure is perhaps the greatest.

## 13th century

In the thirteenth century in Cilicia, during the time of the Rubinian Kingdom, the monastery called Arkakaghin<sup>47</sup> became the center of Armenian music.

It was in that school that “They created modulating and complex melodies (resembling divine services, they called manrousmounk<sup>48</sup>), as well as ktsourds along with complete songs.”

While thumbing through a medieval research manuscript, Father Alishan was ecstatic. In his “Sisvan” he mentions, “range of songs, that are being noted with khazes and symbols not in one, but in various ways, and more than seventeen various aghvakan melodies were noted on the margins of the pages.” From the seventy types of melodies mentioned by Alishan, the revered author of “Ayrarat,” such as agavni (dove), anmeghuk (little innocent), darbin (blacksmith), lalkan (weeping), hoviv (shepherd), etc., it appears that the majority of the melodies were secular. Alishan also gives the names of several musicians (from the same Cilician period), such as “Seniors Avag and Toros,” “Venerable Nerses” (son of Levon II), “Toros Tapronts” (the head priest in the kingdom and the former ambassador to England), “the brilliant and sagacious musicians,” “Hovsep, the greatest among an array of musicians, who was the head musician in Drazark (Van). For the arrangement of sharakans he mentions “Grikor Khoul, the honored teacher, musician, and first secretary of Sis,” who “deleted the unnecessary parts and added missing parts of Sharaknots, the copy of which calls Khlktsi” (Sisvan, 517), that is to say, as an arranger of sharakans.

After giving some desultory information from the works of our historians regarding singers and musicians of both religions and secular music in ancient and medieval times, let’s move on to the modern and contemporary period.

## Modern and Contemporary Period

After the fall of the Armenian state one period (until the beginning of the 18th century) of Armenian music has left no apparent references. From the beginning of the 18th century our so-called period of renaissance again uncovered that branch of the arts from

the ashes, and we witness how Armenian songs and musical notation (khaz), that had been long forgotten, produce new arrangers and creators. In the beginning of that century, Hambardzoum Limonjian<sup>49</sup>, a clerk in a church in Constantinople, who was familiar with the language of old music notation accommodated those musical notes (khaz) to the current European music system, selecting seven (poush, ekordj, vernakhagh, bkorch, khosrovayin, nerknakhagh, paruyk) characters, which form the Armenian music notation system<sup>50</sup>, that is well-known among foreigners, particularly Turks, who still to this day employ that system known as “Hambardzoumian.”

Being the main reformer of the Armenian music notation during that period he with his system (notating and disseminating this or that religious and secular song) not only secured its existence, but also its raison d’etre. That system developed, spread, and had its followers.

Leaders in Armenian community life and the arts studied that system. Later, during the Amira era, Baba Hambardzoum taught Armenian notation to the famous Duzian family. The priest of this same household was Fr. Minas Bzhshkian, who had a reputation as a well-known musicologist in the Crimea, Trebizond and other areas.

A short time later the second generation made its appearance. Nikoghayos Tashjian<sup>51</sup> of Constantinople published his “Textbook of Armenian Musical Notation” using that same adapted musical system<sup>52</sup>.

Music lover and sharakan scholar Catholicos Gevorg IV<sup>53</sup>, seeing a variety of notation systems in the Armenian church in various regions, tried to bring about general uniformity and sought to perpetuate our ancient sharakans through notated publications. Thus, he invited the musicologist Tashjian to Ejmiatsin as a teacher at the seminary and a specialist in Armenian musical notation.

In a short period of time Tashjian taught Armenian notation to many students and with them he notated all the Armenian church sharakans, songs, and rituals and published the results of this difficult task<sup>54</sup>.

That venerable publication of religious songs with Armenian (Hambardzoumian) notation, despite all its shortcomings, is worthy of admiration.

Armenian notation became a required subject for all schools and for the clergy. Soon that subject aroused great interest. One after the other song books appeared containing both religious and secular (national and popular) songs in Armenian notation<sup>55</sup>.

Thus, the reformer Tashjian emerged as the leading figure in this renaissance period in the history of Armenian music.

This great transformation in Armenian music produced great interest and a theory of followers.

Many people were not content with the narrow definition of Armenian notation. Because of their artistic inclinations and desire to acquire knowledge, they moved to educational and cultural centers and studied musical notation using the wide array of European music. The European music system, which had been refined for centuries and had established a certain artistic and scholarly discipline, by virtue of its cultural triumph was going to expel the weak – Armenian musical notation – from the scene and in its place the European was going to rule in dominating fashion.

All those roads that are closed to money, weapons, brutality, and to fire and the sword, are always open to peaceful cultural captivation, and the only way to counteract this is by establishing peaceful, but more forceful methods. But Armenian life, deprived of such counteraction, would dozily accept that powerful mind's powerful system. The sworn defenders of the old religion, to say the least, tried in every manner to resist, but that resistance was powerless in stopping natural progression, bringing about the inevitable result.

Tashjian, the greatest ambassador of Armenian musical notation, had an immediate student, Makar Yekmalian<sup>56</sup>, who at the St. Petersburg Conservatory had already tasted the European system and realized the great advantages it had over the Armenian. He didn't consider himself a worshiper of his deified idol. On the contrary, he demanded smashing that useless thing.

Left to wage a struggle against this powerful trend were idolaters with entrenched traditions, deprived of the real means of resistance.

These people, who lacked any preparation in their knowledge of the arts, would naturally utilize the excusable and inexcusable means that were characteristic of the weak-pretense, deception, exploration of the people's most sacred feelings, with the sole

intent of creating a resistant spirit in order not to be swept up into the flood waves. And that's how to explain the motto – “There is one God, thus church music must also be monophonic” – at a time when the pioneer European disseminator Kara-Murza<sup>57</sup> appeared (in the 1890's) with his polyphonic mass in Ejmiatsin, in his capacity as a music teacher at the seminary<sup>58</sup>.

At the same time the Nersisian School<sup>59</sup> board of education, which had handed over the governance of the school to one of the leading figures of his time, Hovhannes Spendiarian<sup>60</sup> of the Crimea, invited Makar Yekmalian, who had graduated from the St. Petersburg Conservatory as a theoretical musicologist, to teach music and religious and secular choral singing<sup>61</sup>.

Yekmalian, who had already prepared his mass for three and four voices and which had been performed under the arches of the Armenian church in the capital city of St. Petersburg, with the maestro as choral director, and which had earned the praise not only of colleagues, but also of the conservatory board and the music capella, attempted to do the same at the main church monastery in Tbilisi, hoping to receive the support of the prelate. In the monastery's mother church the mass, sung by the Nersisian School choral group under the direction of Yekmalian, not only did not bring about displeasure among the people, but had just the opposite – an enthusiastic effect – thanks to which the prelate, Bishop Gevorg Sourenian<sup>62</sup> (the present catholicos of Apostolic Armenians) appealed to Khrimian Hayrik and received permission to publish his mass for three and four voices. Khrimian, along with his approval, sent the following encyclical to Yekmalian. “It is desirable to find the basis of Ancient Armenian melodies of our ancestors, that were created and sung over the years and recorded in musical notation (khaz), the real significance and the certain sounds of which remain a mystery to us. We sing in the traditionally learned manner but we don't know if we are singing precisely the way our ancestors did.... With this encyclical we give you permission to complete your work and use it in our church. At the same time we appeal to our able and pious compatriots to generously support you, so that you will be able to publish your work...<sup>63</sup>”

This wonderful work by Makar Yekmalian was published by an extremely ardent and pious Apostolic Armenian by the name of Grigor Meghvinian.

In 1896 that work was published in Leipzig-Vienna and entitled “Singing the Divine Liturgy.” The appearance of Yekmalian’s developed mass with its polyphonic religious style replaced all the other similar but less valuable works by novice composers. Disappearing from the scene were Kara Murza’s<sup>64</sup> (Caucasus), Chilingirian’s (Western Armenian – Smyrna and Constantinople), Fr. Chorekchian’s (Nor Nakhichevan) and others’ polyphonic masses, as weaker works, that could not withstand the competition (Yekmalian).

Besides the mass, Yekmalian has also written polyphonic sharakans, such as “Norahrash,” which is unpublished...

Long before the Yekmalian mass (in the 1880’s), by the invitation and at the urging of Archbishop Ignatius Kiureghian (presently an abbot), “The Armenian Church Liturgy” for piano and a three-voiced chorus, was written in Armenian and Latin by the Italian composer Pietro Bianchini, along with a few accompanying sharakans<sup>65</sup>. Armenian religious songs were more faithfully preserved at the Mkhitarist monastery at San Lazzaro for the simple reason, that, while Catholicos Gevorg IV was trying, with the aid of Tashjian, to have the singing in the Constantinople churches recorded and popularized, just the opposite happened. The old Armenian church melodies brought to San Lazzaro from Ejmiatsin by Mkhitar the Abbot, have been maintained sacredly and immaculately at San Lazzaro.

Komitas Vardapet and Grigor Mirzaian Suni have made attempts in this regard. Komitas’ religious pieces did not find success and acceptance for the simple reason that, as a contrast to Yekmalian’s European church style, they brought nothing new to the spirit of Armenian music. Instead, they intended to stress the artificial dominance of another foreign style (Wagnerian) in Armenian religious music.

From the musical works of G. Mirzaian in the religious realm we have under our disposal “Christ is revealed among us” and Yekmalian’s requiem “Ee Verin Yerosaghem,” both of which were published (for four voices) in “Gegharvest.”<sup>66</sup> Grikor Mirzaian was one of the musicologists who promoted a purely national direction in music. According to music critics, in the above-mentioned and in other publicized but unpublished songs, he approached the subject matter with more serious interest of purpose, bringing

to light in more striking fashion the unique elements of national music, in many cases refuting the traditional forms of polyphony, generally accepted in music.

## Secular music

Secular music is divided into three main parts: peasant, which represents the lowest form of music, minstrel, which is the middle form, and urban, which is the most sophisticated creation.

## Peasant

The author of the peasant (folk) song is unknown. That song is as pure, simple and clear as the creator's soul. What we mean is that, although the author is unknown, nevertheless the song was created by someone. His primitive creation passed by word of mouth through classes of people, where it was refined (unauthentic parts were discarded and new things were added), taking on a certain form, that is only characteristic of that people, who gave it that form (folk style). That is why the folk song represents a striking expression of the soil. That song is not artificial, it is spontaneous, a real expression of a nation's emotions and moods. Every phenomenon that is an expression of life has its corresponding song. For example, horovels of planting and threshing. Songs of planting, harvesting, milling the grain, threshing, transferring the chaff, songs of the mill, baking bread, gathering and watering the flock, fixing the cart, separating skin of the wheat, pitchforking the hay, lullabies, praising the children, dancing. Wedding: praising the bride and groom, satirizing the wedding party, wrestling, mourning and joy, feast days and holidays (Vardavar – Transfiguration, Ascension, Navasard – pagan new year, etc.).

Many people have been involved in studying the melodies of these songs. Particularly worthy of attention are Komitas Vardapet (Caucasian songs) and musicologist Grikor Suni (Caucasian and Turkish Armenian songs). "The Armenian Musical Society"<sup>67</sup> has contributed somewhat by gathering and recording on a phonograph some songs of Shirak.

Benefiting this cause were musicologist Anushavan Ter Ghevondian<sup>68</sup> and Nersisian school teacher Spiridon Melikian<sup>69</sup>. The late Kara-Murza was the first to arrange and harmonize folk songs. His role was not so much in arranging songs, as much as spreading the idea of four voices among all classes of people.

In this regard a few of Yekmalian's polyphonic songs created great interest in intellectual circles, making the arrangement of folk songs in great demand. We must give the laurel for meeting this demand to our two musicologists: Komitas Vardapet and Grigor Suni.

We have already discussed somewhat attempts made by the above-mentioned to make Armenian folk songs polyphonic, but that does not signify the last word regarding polyphonic forms of folk music.

The Armenian people still have great expectations of those two unique musicologists as conveyors of the Armenian spirit. The people still want to hear their last word.

## Ashough music

After the singers of Goghtn during the Middle Ages...our troubadours appeared...

Taghasatsutyoun<sup>70</sup> in the Middle Ages developed so much, that even our leaders were enchanted by it, such as the Catholicos of Sis Hovhannes Tikurantsi, and our King Hetum II. It continued until the 18th century, when a demand is felt to liberate the Armenian song from the clergyman's cell and make it accessible and alive for everyone; in other words, to restore the sweet memory of the singers of Goghtn. Personifying that idea in the new era were Sayat-Nova<sup>71</sup> (18th century), and later - Shirin<sup>72</sup> (19th century) and in the contemporary period - Jivani<sup>73</sup> with their followers, who represent separate minstrel schools. In order to stress further those ashough (minstrel) groups, we will note in a general way their four periods.

Singers of Goghtn

Taghasatses (minstrels)

Khachatour Kecharetsi

Mkrtich Naghash  
Minas Tokhatetsi  
Kouchak Nahapet  
Ghounkanios  
Naghash Hovnatan

[Asoughs]

Ghouko Amir-Oghli  
Nitayi  
Dosti  
Toujar  
Sayat-Nova  
Ashugh Baba  
Shamchi Melko  
Kamali  
Cherkez Oghli  
Shirin  
Azbar Adam  
Tourinj  
Haves  
Keshish Oghli  
Jirani  
Miskin Oghli  
Malyoul  
Yerem Oghlar  
Yanghouni  
Mayif  
Ghayrati  
Shayti  
Alvan Oghli  
Khertegh

Yaghoub Oghli

Jivani

Jamali

Noumay

Fizahi

Sazayi

Fahrad

Paytsar

Khayyat

The Sayat-Nova school generally represents a pessimistic, romantic trend, which bears a truly Georgian inspiration.

The Shirin school, on the contrary, represents an optimistic romantic trend and bears a Turkish inspiration of the rose and the nightingale.

The Jivan school represents the national inspiration of our renaissance – a nationalist trend.

Moving on to the subject matter and general characteristics of the Armenian minstrel's songs, they are divided according to content and their chronological development into:

1. Pagan-heroic
2. Religious-ethical
3. Romantic
4. Chronological-descriptive
5. Advisory-oratory
6. National

The first one appears in the Goghtn period, the second in medieval ballads, the third in the modern and current periods, the fourth in the medieval and modern periods, the fifth during almost all the periods, and the sixth in the most recent period. As to how the minstrels used to sing their songs in the Goghtn and medieval periods, studies have not been conducted, as we can say nothing certain about that. Even in the modern and current periods very minor, almost unnoticed work has been done on melodies, and what has been done applies more to the forms of songs and versification, rather than to

melodies. For example, we know that minstrels have 1) dyoupeit, 2) gazel, 3) divani, 4) ghoshma, 5) dastan, 6) semayi, 7) myoustazat, 8) sharki, 9) moukhammaz, 10)ghelenteri, 11) darbedari, 12) yedaklama, 13) bayati, 14)gyaf, 15) shaki, 16) taghala, 17) baritavor, and emanating from them 1) the dyupeit of Kurdistan, 2) the Van dyopeit, 3) the Topkhana divani, 4) the Kyouniat divani, 5) the Mousertes divani, 6) Byupayi divani, 7) Nakarat divani, 8) Osmanlou divani, 9) the Marakya divani, 10) saghr divani, etc. forms of songs that bear foreign names, but how those songs were sung, to this day no study has been conducted.

We know only that the saz, baghlama, and kamancha, and more recently even the tar and violin have replaced the previously used instruments (bambir, etc.) of the Goghtn singers, as accompanying instruments in the modern and current periods. They have had perfectionist instrumentalists about whom legendary accounts have even be created, such as the renowned saz player, minstrel Ghoubo (who studied in Turkey under the famous Mirza Pasha), who when playing, had birds perch on his saz. “Keshish Oghli would cut the membranes of his saz and then play” indicated that he was a professional instrumentalist. The musical Nitayi played tunes that moved the strings of Sultan Mohammed’s soul and saved a group of young men, including his own son, Isahak (the future minstrel Nomayi), who were being taken from Erzeroum to Constantinople. The sweet tongued and dispositional Shirin was a completely fiery, rabid, passionate, and protesting instrumentalist, etc.

The melodies of Armenian minstrel songs are an unexplored field, that is worthy of serious study by our Armenian musicologists<sup>74</sup>. It is that study which will bring out that dimension of Armenian secular music in all its beautiful and characteristic forms. We are awaiting that beautiful day.

The third subdivision in secular music is the urban. At last a branch about which to this or that degree something substantial can be said.

Urban

(most sophisticated creation)

This branch of music was operated only in recent times. During the period of renaissance, Armenian intellectual circles expressed interest in this form of music, as well. Those intellectuals, having the kind intention of establishing similar music in Armenian life, rather than appealing to the unadulterated source of Armenian music – the people – to borrow from them and using that popular material as a basis to create a more highly artistic structure, instead, on the contrary, they opted to place Armenian words under this or that work of European music, altogether unauthentic to the Armenian soul. This is how to explain the appearance in Armenian words of Verdi's Traviata, other operas, and some musical pieces by various foreign musicians ("For our ancestral nation," "March gives us spring flowers," "Lord, protect the Armenian nation," etc.).

After such a period we see the publication of a periodical, "Haykakan Knar" (Armenian Lyre)<sup>75</sup> in Constantinople, where leaders were already showing more serious intentions. It is here that we encounter the names of Tchouhadjian<sup>76</sup>, Yeranian<sup>77</sup>, Papazian<sup>78</sup>, and others, who became advocates of having one's own, rather than borrowed songs. Tchouhadjian even went further with his attempts to create the Armenian opera, "Arshak II." Besides "Arshak II" Tchouhadjian wrote "Leblebiji Hor-Hor," "Arif" ("Kyose-Kehya"), and a series of opera – operettas, urban marches, romances, and dance music, all taken from Turkish life (and in the Turkish language), but all of this did not find any substantial respect, because it basically took the wrong direction. The mistake lies in the fact that Tchouhadjian and others did not arrange songs emanating as real expressions of the Armenian spirit. These songs could have served as material for the greatest creations with musicians giving them corresponding forms according to their broad world outlook, thus becoming the outstanding voice of the national spirit in the period of Armenian sophisticated musical creation, something that is stressed even today in the history of national music in the development of great music. Instead, these composers were altogether estranged from the Armenian life, spirit, and style. Blandly following only the European style (remaining captive to their traditional forms), they created melodies that were utterly unattuned to that life, in which they should have found fertile soil, that would grow and bear fruit and glory.

A repetition of this approach to Constantinople Armenian life was brought to the Caucasus Armenian life by Kara-Murza, who, besides his innate talents, had neither higher nor average musical training...

Since the works of a more seasoned musicologist like Tchouhadjian did not register success, it is only natural that Kara-Murza's works were subjected to the same inexorable state as his predecessor's. Among our educated musicologists in this period was Yekmalian, who had been very active in the field of Armenian religious music, but besides his musical education and training, he lacked a creative nerve and thus was unable...to make his mark...

Worthy of mention is...Nikoghayos Tigranian<sup>79</sup>, who created piano works for eastern (Persian) and in part Armenian folk songs...

After Tchouhadjian, until the beginning of the 20th century (1900), existing secular musical works (and, in general, Armenian creations) presented a most dismal picture. In the first day of the 20th century it was as if we could see rays of light on the Armenian horizon. Interest in Armenian secular music was developing and the number of people studying musical theory and composition in the capital cities was increasing. Attempts were noticeable to be free of the old reigning blandness and to create something if not Armenian, than at least eastern.

The works (solo songs) of musicologist A. Spendirian<sup>80</sup> (from the Crimea), "Ay Vard," "Mi Lar," etc. and G. Mirzaian's "Yete Mi Or," "Indz Mi Khndrir," etc., even if they did not stress the Armenian, they at least characterized a certain eastern trend.

Here more serious intentions are already noticeable, accompanied by talent and paramount musical training.

Komitas Vardapet, who has played a great role in collecting and arranging Armenian folk songs, remained, like Yekmalian, unproductive in this realm. His attempts to create new songs...in the likeness of Armenian folk songs, were, in essence, unable to enrich this realm. There was lacking any great artistic structure, there was no development of forms...the difference was only that the folk building was whitewashed and made suitable for housing, but such amenities are far from being highly artistic. The peasant building always remains peasant; it never turns into a church. But it would be different if we used the stone, brick, and wood to build a church. And finally, it is the simple truth that a copy

cannot be as good as the original. It is better to have a bad original, rather than a good copy.

In 1903 G. Suni's "Akh al vardi" and then "Mayisn yekav" and other solo songs opened a new era in the world of Armenian professional, secular music. Here the composer, free from the influence of both classical music and the Russian school, brought forth the beginning of forms and a style authentic to eastern and Armenian life. If one can really say that there exist the fruits of Armenian secular music, then its founder and outstanding representative must be considered G. Suni.

Unfortunately, unfavorable conditions in Armenian life did not afford Armenian musicologists the opportunity to publish all the feelings that had accumulated in their souls.

The future Armenian reform movement, the sparks of which we see now, perhaps will afford the opportunity to bring all of this to the surface and this give it a complete critique.

After G. Suni, musicologists R. Melikian<sup>81</sup>, Anoushavan Ter-Ghevondian, S. Barkhoudarian<sup>82</sup> appeared on the Armenian musical horizon one after the other. Melikian (in training and talent) was a fan of the European classics (Mendelssohn). Recently one can notice in his works the presence of new musical elements, but those elements have not been refined yet and it is difficult to say where they will take the composer. Ter-Ghevondian bears a severe Russian influence (Rimsky-Korsakov), although...he shows a tendency to approach the Armenian (that is with little eastern intention), as, for example, in the solo song "Kaynel em" (I am standing).

Barkhoudarian is a happy exception among the three. Because he passed through that Armenian music school, he is altogether the opposite of his two friends. He does not bear any influence. He is unique and is as outstanding a representative of the eastern style, as G. Suni is of the Armenian. This circumstance is actually a happy phenomenon, because there is a bridge to pass from the eastern to the Armenian. We have hopes that this authentically eastern musicologist will cross that musical bridge of eastern nations and reach the Armenian.

Barkhoudarian writes...for the piano. His "Caucasian Sketches" must be considered to date the most beautiful and outstanding example of piano composition.

Besides the above-mentioned musicologists the musical works in this realm played more of a negative, rather than a positive, role in Armenian life.

Concluding our remarks about Armenian music we have hopes that as the Armenian nation has its unique place in architecture, painting, and literature, it will also have a unique place in the music arts, with her own characteristic.

The appearance of the Union of Armenian composers<sup>83</sup>, its national musical direction, the intention of the Armenian government to open an Armenian conservatory of music, and the decision to invite the best representatives<sup>84</sup> of Armenian music, are a confirmation of our remarks.

Autobiography of Grigor  
Mirzaian Suni (1876-1939),  
Armenian Composer

Grigor Mirzaian Suni is one of the veteran Armenian musicologists. He is the great grandson of the Syunik region's famous ashuogh [troubadour/minstrel singer] Teymuor (Melik Hovhannes Mirza), who was invited by Shah Fatali (Fath Ali, Shah of Persia, father of Abbas Mirza) to become the head of the musicians in his palace. He was the composer of a lot of Persian songs (tasnif), such as Mirza Seyin Sigahi.

Grigor Suni is the grandson of Mrs. Mashinka (Russian) and ashoogh Dadasi Sunetsi (Atabek), who himself was the teacher of ashoogh singers Hatami and Balayi. He is the son of Hakhunts Anna and Hovhannes Varandetsi, who was famous as an illustrator, singer, and folk poet.

Grigor Suni was born September 10, 1876 in the village of Getabek in the Gandzak region. At the age of two, Suni moved to Shoushi, the capital city of Karabagh.

Suni's father was his first music teacher. In Suni's teenage years, he was called Ghali Boulboul (nightingale of fortress Shoushi). With his enchanting voice and his beautiful singing style, he became the source of admiration for contemporary master musicians and the general public.

In 1883 Suni enrolled in a parish school. At the same time, after school, he learned the art of jewelry making. That same year his father died in an accident, and orphaned Grigor was compelled to take care of his family by, besides his schooling and the honing of his craftsmanship, also singing with other musicians.

In school for the first time he got acquainted with written music. His music teacher was Rev. Fr. Garegin Ter Hovhannisian, who himself was the pupil of Nikoghayos Tashchian, a schoolteacher. Ter Hovhannisian paid special attention to Suni, and after years of hard work and dedication, in late 1889 Suni became a contemporary Armenian master musician, in the broad meaning of this word.

At this time Suni became a member of a secret group which had Poghos Zakarian and Martiros Saroukhanian as members. In 1890, the day when the Daraboulagh [a place in Karabagh] guilds were having a celebration, Suni presented his skillful works of jewelry and with the traditional slap of the headmaster Badam, he was declared a master jeweler.

That same year, Suni and jeweler Moukhan, who came from Bakou, organized a "Kargah-Shakert" student-workers union which had some success during its short one-year existence. In 1891 Suni went to Ejmiatsin and became a third grade scholarship student at the Gevorgian Seminary. The music teacher at the seminary was Very Rev. Fr. Sahak Amatouni (a student of Tashchian), who didn't really teach anything new to Grigor, but the atmosphere in Ejmiatsin inspired him toward village folk songs that he was not familiar with yet. From the very first day at the seminary Grigor befriended famous musicians Karapet Amatouni and Soghomon Soghomonian (later known as Komitas Vardapet).

Grigor was excited about folk and instrumental music, such as Soghomon's religious (sharakans [hymns] and taghs [chants] sung by village peasants) and folk songs. Amatouni was lazy but he had varied interests. He liked minstrel songs and after taking a close look at the songs he would give his valuable opinion. Grigor appreciated his older friend's opinions, because in most cases they were in agreement, but Soghomon, who

was a contributor to the “Meghoo (Bee)” and “Nor Dar” (New Century) newspapers [in Tiflis/Tbilisi], did not care much for them, especially when they pointed out distortions he made on folk songs and demanded that the collector of ethnographic songs give the authentic picture of folk expressions in songs.

The music teacher for notation, the Very Rev. Fr. Sahak Amatouni was replaced by Kristapor Kara-Mourza, who had limited training in European music (and that influence would increase in the future). Grigor immediately began taking private lessons from him on European music (basic theory and harmony), and, in return, Grigor gave him lessons on Armenian music.

Soghomon was not close to Kara-Mourza and, in addition, he led the reactionary group that waged a struggle against him, lowering himself by insisting that “God was one, so there must be one voice in music too,” to which Kara-Mourza wittingly replied, “You’re forgetting that God is the union of three beings.” This would lead to the dismissal of Kara-Mourza and his being replaced by Soghomon himself. Kara-Mourza gave Grigor all his belongings and strongly encouraged him to go to Tiflis, Moscow, or Petersburg to continue his music training and also his general education.

Grigor made his first attempt at polyphonic music, transforming some folk songs into four voices, such as “Andzrevn Yekav”, “Vay Leh, Leh”, “Sona Yar”, “Arazoun Baghouh Mean Am”, “Hov Arek Sarer”, “Yeri Yarum Oy, Oy”. During two consecutive summer vacations, he went to Tiflis (to his rich paternal uncle’s) where Dr. Tarsaidze treated his eyes and where he also took private lessons with Makar Yekmalian to enrich his musical knowledge. Bowing in reverence to Yekmalian’s musical talent, Grigor nevertheless didn’t like his drabness, visionless verbosity, and extremely conservative direction, especially the circumstance that outside of religious music, he had no other interests and he looked with disgust upon any phenomenon that had no religious stamp.

In the fall of 1895, after finishing the course at the seminary Grigor returned to his hometown of Shoushi. In the Khandamirian Theater he gave his first choral concert consisting of village songs he had collected and arranged for four voices. With the money generated from the concert and the promise of help from the Zhamharian brothers, he traveled to Petersburg to continue his education.

In Petersburg from 1895 until September of 1898, he attended Rabov's, then Bollak's school for the theatrical and dancing arts. In spite of his financial difficulties, he took lessons in voice training, piano, music, theater, and dance. Then, with Banchenko and Calafatti, he continued taking free lessons in music theory and composition.

In September of 1898, he received a scholarship to attend the state conservatory, to major in specialized music theory and composition. He passed a very successful exam for Rimsky-Korsakov, presenting in Tchaikovsky style some of his own songs, such as two romances: "Yete Mi Or" and "Indz Mi Khndrir," a song, "Arevelk," in the form of a waltz, "Sareri Hovin Mernim," an Armenian folk song, also fifteen of his collected village songs that he arranged for four voices and that captured the attention of professors Rimsky-Korsakov, Liadov, Glazunov, Solovyov, and Bernhardt.

At this time he had his own political beliefs. He was a Socialist Revolutionary. He graduated from the conservatory, spending six years there, from 1898 to the end of May, 1904, under the cleansing hand of Rimsky-Korsakov, who had no mercy for mediocrity. Grigor not only successfully completed the composition course with talented classmates like Mikhail Cherkov and Gnossin, but he also enjoyed fame as a talented composer of fugues, for which he was granted one year of free lessons. His fugues served as an example for future generations.

Even before entering the conservatory, in 1897 he tried to organize an oriental ensemble. During his conservatory period (1899), with the encouragement of Rimsky-Korsakov, Grigor sent some of his works to the censor's office, having in mind to publish them later. The songs were "Indz mi Khndrir" (lyrics by H. [Hovhanness] Toumanian), "Akh al Vardi" (lyrics by A. [Avetik] Isahakian), as well as two notebooks of folk songs for four-voice choir. These songs remained in the censor's office under lock and key for four years. Then in the Fall of 1903, Dr. A. Budaghian paid to publish these works in the Armenian "Pushkinian" Printing House. Akh al Vardi and the first volume of folk songs, "Sareri Hovin Mernim," "Habrban," "Oy Nazanum," and "Saren Kou Ga" were included in 1904 publications.

In the history of publications of Russian Armenian choral folk songs, his first volume published in 1903 had no precedent. In 1904 he wrote songs about workers that also had no precedent in Armenian life. In these songs he calls upon the serfs, laborers, and

villagers to unite “to support the cause of labor and open the road to socialism.” The members of the Dashnak Party distorted the words to “Dashnaks support the cause of labor.”

In 1899 he was given the position of church choir director which somewhat relieved his serious financial situation. During this period, using his position, he cleverly changed for the first time (before that nobody had used the method) some religious music pieces. By contrasting polyphonic voices to the homophonic, he opened a new epoch in Armenian religious music. Later on he burned these pieces along with songs that didn't, at the time, coincide with his political thinking and tendencies. If something did indeed survive there is a need to collect them, because those works may shed new light in the history of our sacred culture. His “Sourb Sourb” can be found with musicologist Gourgen Mirzoian, “Miashabat” was found in his brother's papers while “Kristos I Mej” and “I Verin” were published in different issues of G. (Garegin) Levonian's “Gegharvest” magazine.

In 1901 he finally organized the first Oriental Cultural Ensemble, which gave a performance in the Bogorodni Sobranii Hall during the annual program of the Armenian student union. In 1902 he wrote two romances, “Miayn Kez Hamar” by Ada Negri and “Mayisn Yekav” by H. [Hamazasp] Hambardzoumian. In 1903 he received a work permit from the Imperial Music Society to go to the Caucasus and organize concerts. After the first big concert in Shushi the next day, Golitsin's officers searched Grigor and placed him under their watchful eye, and canceled all his concerts under the pretext that with the proceeds from the concerts, Suni was arming the people against the government to solve the agrarian reform problems. [Prince Golitsin was Governor General of the Caucasus].

In 1904 he participated in a music competition based on Isabella Grinevskaya's “Bab” dramatic poem depicting Persian life, and from more than thirty musicologists in competition, Suni won first prize. In ten days that piece had twelve performances after which the government forbade any other performances and confiscated the text along with 18 pieces of music. That same year he organized his first quartet of refined neyer [ney is a duduk, like a wooden oboe] that became an object of admiration for Rimsky-Korsakov and Liadov. Rimsky-Korsakov even tried to include that instrument in his symphonic orchestra but the lack of a specific instrument and experienced players prevented this from happening. Toward the end of the summer of 1905, Suni, along with Armenak Ter-

Mkrtchian and Zatikian (with the nickname Smerch – Tornado), was actively involved in organizing the soldiers and sailors. Because of these activities he was pursued and searched, but that fall he accepted an invitation from the Nersissian School [in Tiflis] to replace Yekmalian.

While teaching at the Nersisian School, from September 1905 to October 1908, because of his position as a leader of agrarian reform movements in Lori, he was pursued by General Zolotaryov's group of Gendarme Cossacks and by the police. Because of this he fled to Turkey. Nevertheless he was the hero of the day in all realms of Armenian musical life, who singularly carried on his shoulders this serious responsibility.

During this period he disregarded the mentality that in school only those students who had a natural-born talent for music or had hereditary qualities could succeed in music classes. Because of this false conception 80% of the students had been freed from music classes. But Grigor Suni struggled vigorously to make music classes at the Nersisian and Hovnanian schools not only mandatory for everyone, but also a priority. Suni raised the quality of the choral groups so high that, under his direction, they were able to successfully perform choral pieces of translated operas (by Aristakesian) as well as enhance the performances of the Armenian Theatrical Company, and school and public gatherings.

He tried hard and finally succeeded in separating the church from the school. At the funeral of Archbishop Aristakes Sedrakian, the choir of the Nersisian school didn't participate. This incident created an uproar in the pages of "Mshak" which was the result of this struggle. Unfortunately, his followers were not able to carry on his achievements.

In 1906 he wrote the operetta "Aregnazan," by G. [Ghazaros] Aghayan, [opera having had?] that had no precedent in the life of Russian Armenians. Later this operetta was staged in the Artistic Theater by the Armenian Theatrical Company to benefit actor Araxian. Continuing to be in his political thinking a left Socialist Revolutionary, during this period Suni worked with a group of Dashnaks on a new revolutionary program (he belonged to an opposition "separatist" group) and played a big role in organizing workers and peasants, as well as terrorist activities.

In those days he wrote workers' songs "Hogh yev Azatuotyuo (Land and Freedom)," "Anoghok Krvi Sheporeh (The Trumpet of Inexorable Struggle)." At the end of these songs

he calls the workers, landless peasants and freedom-loving intellectuals (“to rise up and destroy tsarism, feudalism, and capitalism and to establish socialism”). He also restored some Dashnak chauvinist songs, changing their words and giving the songs a proletarian quality.

In October of 1908, a disguised Suni escaped from Batoumi to Turkey in a Laz raft. In Trabizon, Samson, and Kirason he organized very enthusiastic concerts of Armenian choral and orchestral music, as well as some Armenian-Turkish-Greek concerts. Then he traveled to Lesser Armenia and on his way from Samson to Sebastia he collected and studied folk songs and dances from the surrounding villages.

In Samson he tried to organize a break-in at the armory that belonged to the military authorities. He wanted to distribute 2000 new model rifles with millions of bullets to arm the peasants and workers. But the Dashnaks who were friendly with the Ittihad, “the authorities in Constantinople,” not only interfered with Suni’s already designed plan but also in the most vile manner (including the threat of betrayal) tried to eliminate this “dangerous” person by isolating [ostracizing] him.

It was after this that Suni wrote a song: “Rise up laborers with muscular forearms. Strike the anvil with your hammer. Crumble the old and build the new. Death to this dark system of capitalism and long live Socialism; adopt this slogan.”

Making Trabizon the center of his operations, he had an opportunity to do some research on the remnants of folk songs sung half in Armenian, half in Turkish and the life of Haynak (Armenian Muslims) who lived in the river valleys of Surmene Karatere and Yambol. In 1910 Suni moved to Erzurum where he continued the same work on a wider scale, spreading his activities into Hamshen, Jermel, Deresi, Tortum, and other nearby regions. The results of this research were enclosed in two big notebooks which he presented to the Mayilian expedition in Tiflis (to poet H. [Hovhannes] Hovhannesian) but one doesn’t know what was the fate of these notebooks.

In Erzurum while working at the Sanasarian School where Professor A. Khachatrian was principal, Suni established a new epoch. He founded a little symphonic orchestra, a choir for four voices, upgraded music lessons to the highest standards and became the favorite teacher among his students. He acted in similar fashion in the Armenian national school.

Outside of school, he established free voice and instrumental music lessons for young laborers, and with these students he formed the first Armenian workers music band, comprised of 40 individuals, which became the envy of military orchestras. He also formed an 85 member coed choir that played a great educational role in far-ranging Armenian and non-Armenian circles in towns and villages. At this time his relationship with the Dashnaks intensified, but their insults and dirty politics were useless in trying to win over the laboring masses. The unions that Suni formed with the working peasantry continued to multiply and grow strong.

Suni was not content with only this type of activity. Every year he would devote four months to collecting Armenian folk songs and music. Traveling to the provinces of Erzurum, Bitlis, and Van he would collect and study a huge number of folkloric materials (seven thick notebooks with almost 500 songs, including poems “Vren Ouzin” and “Heyran-Seyran”).

While in Turkey for those six years he rearranged “Aregnazan,” giving it a popular operatic form. He also composed “Revival,” a symphonically arranged piece in five movements. In the Fall of 1914 when the First World War broke out, his [tyuoznakya] rare works, which had been entrusted to the care of the missionary, Mr. [Robert] Stapleton, were subjected to the same fate as the treasure that had been handed over to this Christian pastor in Erzurum.

In Tiflis, Suni had his first encounter with musicologists of the new generation - Ovsanna Ter-Grigorian, Anoushavan Ter-Ghevondian, Romanos and Spiridon Melikian, [Sargis] Barkhoudarian, and [Kristapor] Kushnarian - and he engaged actively in musical life. The hustle bustle began.

Under Suni’s direction a big benefit symphonic concert was held in the Royal Theatre with more than 100 orchestra and chorus members and soloists participating. The concert featured orchestral works by Yekmalian, Suni, Spendiarian, Ter-Ghevondian, and Barkhoudarian and songs for four voices by Yekmalian, Suni, and S. Melikian. This was followed by the Music Society’s symphonic concert, where, along with the works of senior musicians, the works of our younger musicians – A. [Armen] Tigranian, Mikayel Mirzaian, D. Ghazarian – were also performed.

This was followed by the daily concerts of the Tiflis Protestant Church Symphonic Orchestra, which lasted exactly two years and had as its official leader the only Armenian conductor in Tiflis - Suni. The great demand for Armenian orchestral works spurred Suni to create original pieces and compelled him to prod others to compose, as well.

During this period he became a member of the Armenian drama group at the Zubalov public house, and for the Turkish group, he wrote a musical drama entitled "Asli and Karam," which was presented there, under Suni's direction, on several occasions.

Suni formed the Society of Armenian Musicologists along with Ovsanna Ter Grigorian, Anoushavan Ter-Ghevondian, Barkhudarian, and Kushnarian ([Aleksandr] Spendiarian was permitted membership if he came to Tiflis and wished to join). Suni began to research Armenian music and he taught at the Kamoyan Music School, led by the threesome of Yerznkian, Khanoyan, and Vardanian.

During the Republic of Armenia under Dashnak rule, he refused on numerous occasions to accept an invitation to establish a state conservatory of music within the Department for the Arts.

In 1919, during the Menshevik anarchy [...], Suni moved on to Tehran, Persia [...]. There he established, in typical fashion, musical excitement, by holding concerts and other musical programs, and researching 8 of the 12 dasgahs that had not yet disappeared from the memory of master instrumentalists.

In the fall of 1920 he left Tehran and returned to Tiflis via Mesopotamia, India, Egypt, Constantinople, and Batoum, not being able to travel through the English chain at Ghazvin (Iran) by the shortcut from Enzeli to Baku. This travel was both long and exhaustive.

In August of 1921, in a sick, decimated condition, Suni barely reached Tiflis, where he met with representatives from Soviet Armenia, and in particular with Levon Toumanian, the Tiflis representative of the Peoples' Education Commissariat. He donated his entire library to the Soviet homeland and moved to Constantinople with the clear intention of returning to Yerevan in a couple of years, after regaining his health, in order to participate in the building of a proletarian Armenia.

In Constantinople, Suni taught music and choral singing at the Berberian, Yesayan, Kentronakan [Getronagan], Hintlian, Bezazian, and Karagyozyan schools, as well as conducting the Uskudar coed choir, at the same time giving encouragement to the newly

created “Hayastan (Armenia)” of which he was one of the founding members and president of the music sector. In the shortest period of time Suni created great enthusiasm in Constantinople.

After concerts by the Uskudar chorus and separate performances by various schools, which had already commanded the attention of the entire public, Suni formed a united coed chorus, comprised of 350 singers, trained them for six months, and while he was about to announce their concert, the Kemalist crisis began, turning everything topsy-turvy and compelling him to move with his large family (9 members) to the United States of America.

Setting foot in New York on Sept. 10, 1923, Suni immediately went to work, organizing musical performances and choral concerts in all Armenian populated cities on the East coast. After a big concert in Boston, Suni became ill with inflammation of the lungs, forcing him to withdraw from his previously mobile lifestyle.

Remaining in Boston in the fall of 1923 he established the “Armenian Arts” society, holding several theatrical and musical concerts in Boston, Providence, Worcester, and Haverhill, and he participated in an “international song competition,” winning a first prize for Armenian folk songs. Then he gave several public lectures on the arts, the significance of which was how the red line of class struggle was shining, like a diamond. He was consistent, and theory and practice were united and in harmony. The coed youth had gathered around the master, championing the arts and Soviet Armenia...preparing a progressive battalion of new art...but Suni was bedridden at Deaconess Hospital with complications from diabetes. How happy would the militant prostitutes of the Armenian bourgeoisie have been if the Master had permanently left the scene. But the lion Karabaghi squeezed sour lemon on all their hopes and desires, and being out of grave danger, was now recuperating in Philadelphia, in the care of his dear friend, Dr. [Lucy] Guzelian, who saved his life.

At the end of summer in 1925 in Philadelphia, still fresh in the memory of the community were the public lectures on the arts that Suni gave to the Armenian Student Society. This was followed by the impression of the amazingly wonderful concert with a chorus of more than 100 singers at the Metropolitan Opera House on April 3, 1925. It was autumn. Suni had recovered somewhat and was already back to work.

An energetic period began in 1926. The “Hai Arvest (Armenian Arts)” Society with its musical-theatrical and dance sections became a force here once again, and the chorus was also ready and won a prize for song and performance in a competition of nations. The Society also supported and enlightened the events of all community organizations that were sympathetic to Soviet Armenia, to the proletarian homeland; isn't it true that it is now Communist?

The tempo intensified in 1927. The Children's Opera Group already had presented an opera in three acts, earning the admiration and astonishment of the community. They were surpassed by not one, but two, adult groups, that presented very complex pieces. All the Dashnak intrigues, conspiracies, and entrapments failed in this purpose. The children, the youth, families and the public, full of enthusiasm, were wholeheartedly supportive of “Hai Arvest (Armenian Arts)” and its director. It was too bad only that the Master broke his leg in three places at the “HOK” (Armenian Assistance Committee) Fall picnic and it has been six months that he has been bedridden...but he doesn't know what it means to be idle in bed.

During this period he produced a large volume of original works, solo songs, duets, choral works, a series of songs trumpeting the struggle and demands of the working class, and then arranging for four voices and multi-voice peasant songs, especially those that highlight the exploitation of the working peasantry. He also arranged many, many pieces for orchestra. Perhaps that accident was necessary (“there is always good in evil”), to bring to life all that had been stored.

But work continued, as in Philadelphia, also in Boston. Some of his students, full of energy, became conductors themselves. It was 1928-1929. Suni was back on his feet. With great enthusiasm he continued to develop his previous projects and began to create new ones. He had already formed a 50-member Russian workers choir at the Russian House, given benefit concerts for them, and participated in a glorious all-workers celebration as a memorial to Lenin.

He enhanced “Hai Arvest (Armenian Arts)” with a neatly composed string quartet, at the same time giving radio concerts with his chorus and soloists, producing great interest in Armenian songs among Armenian and non-Armenian circles.

In the summer of 1930 Suni was invited to Boston, on the occasion of the city's three hundredth anniversary, to form and conduct a big chorus and symphonic orchestra. Time was short. There were only 12 days to prepare. He reserved the right to choose the choral and orchestral works that would be played. He threw out of the program all the nationalistic (religious and secular) pieces.

In that short period of time he produced an artistically exquisite chorus of more than 100 singers and a rich, comprehensive, and challenging program which earned the unwavering enthusiasm, admiration, and thunderous applause of the entire Boston community. Let's not forget that we tore down hundreds of tricolor flags, cleansing Symphony Hall of those dirty pieces of rags that the Ramkavars had allowed in order to appease the Dashnaks. The bitterness of the Dashnak defeat could be seen those days in the polemic struggle that "Hairenik (Fatherland)" [Dashnak newspaper] was waging against "Baikar" [Ramkavar newspaper]

The Maestro's students continued his choral work and in the next two years they won two new awards for Armenian folk songs (Suni's) at international song festivals.

In the fall of 1931, the Armenian National Musical Society in New York, after dismissing their Dashnak conductor K. Mehrabian, invited Suni as their director, agreeing as a precondition to adhere to his red, class struggle policy.

In the shortest period of time, Suni turned a chorus of 30 singers into one with 119 and held several musical performances, concerts, and radio programs featuring laborer and peasant songs. In the winter of 1932, that chorus with soloists and symphonic orchestra gave a fantastic concert in the Metropolitan Auditorium on the occasion of "Armenian Song Day."

The insincere silence of "Baikar" and the overt curses of "Hairenik" were proof of the great victory of the proletariat in the field of arts. That fall, Suni was bedridden and confined to complete rest by doctors, due to dual complications from diabetes and heart disease. His students in Boston, New York, and Philadelphia are now continuing the great work that their master began, benefiting from his written suggestions, advice, and assistance, while the master himself continues unceasingly to create and to carry out the responsibilities of director of the "Banvor" (Worker) musical section, that has already published Suni's two laborers' songs - "Workers of the World-Unite" and "Soviet Armenia."

## NOTES

1 There are no written examples of ancient Armenian music, while medieval music has not been completely read as of yet. Nevertheless musicologists have succeeded in bringing to light pages from our musical past. Valuable in this regard are the numerous articles and works by Spiridon Melikian, Hakob Hovhannisian, Aram Kocharian, Alexander Shahverdian, Kristapor Koushnarian, Robert Atayan, and Nikoghos Tahmizian. We can name a few: Robert Atayan's "Armenian Musical Notation," Yerevan, 1959; Spiridon Melikian's "Sketches of the History of Armenian Music," Yerevan, 1935; Alexander Shahverdian's "Essays on the History of Armenian Music," Yerevan, 1959; Kristapor Koushnarian's "Questions on the History and Theory of Armenian Monodic Music," Leningrad, 1958 (in Russian); Nikoghos Tahmizian's "The Theory of Music in Ancient Armenia," Yerevan, 1977.

2 Suni has mentioned Movses Khorenatsi because he was the first to present a comprehensive history of the Armenians as accurately as possible until his time period, the Fifth century.

3 Grigor Magistros was one of those mentors who played a huge role in summarizing past accomplishments and reviving music education.

4 The gousans (minstrels) in ancient and medieval Armenia were creative and performing artists – singers, instrumentalists, dancers, storytellers, and professional folk actors in public theaters. In the early Middle Ages the word gousan was used as an equivalent to the classical Greek word mimos (mime). A. Koushnarian has designated two groups of gousans. The first were from aristocratic feudal lord dynasties and performed as professional musicians. The second group was comprised of popular, but illiterate gousans. Acquainting oneself with the colophons in the works of Armenian historians shows that the reaction of contemporaries was very contradictory. The gousans were sometimes criticized, sometimes praised, particularly in medieval Armenia. The adoption

and consolidation of Christianity had its standard influence upon minstrelsy, gradually altering its ethical and ideological orientation.

5 Goghthn was a region in the Vaspourakan province of Greater Armenia and bordered the province of Syounik. It was nicknamed “ginevet” (winy) because it was a famous winegrowing area.

6 The name “tvelots” or “tvelyats” has various interpretations in Armenian folklore. The most probable explanation is recognized as Manouk Abeghian’s theory, that is to say, that the name “tvelots songs” has originated from the word to tell (a story). Grigor Ghapantsian compares the Hurrian “tiv” and the Armenian “t’ov-em.” In musicology it has one meaning, which is equivalent to the term storytelling.

7 Pokh is the name given to the separate parts of lengthy units in church music.

8 The concept of tsouts, tsouyts, tsoutsk in ancient and early medieval Armenia is on the one hand tied to rituals, on the other hand to theater.

9 Vardan Hatsouni suggests that “geghon” (ballad) originated from the word “geghgegh” (trill, humming) or “geghgeghel” (to trill to quavel).

10 During the burial ritual the leader of the crying women in Ancient Armenia was called “yegheramayr.”

11 In ancient times singing at the burial rituals were specific, participating women, who would perform songs of lament. The word is interpreted also as tragic actor.

12 Bambirn or pandir, and in other versions pantir, pandern, bambir bandern, bandirn. It is considered a string instrument that has a handle and is plucked. It was no longer used after the late Middle Ages. Information has not been preserved regarding its specific use, its number of strings, its tuning. According to another theory, the bambir is considered a percussion instrument (using the root “bamb” as a basis).

13 The quotation is from Ghoukas Injijian’s “Hnakhosootyoon Hayastaneayts Ashkhari” (Venice, 1835).

14 Knar is the old Greek lyre, a stringed, plucked instrument. The structure of the four-stringed and later the eight-stringed lyre (or Armenian oodi), mentioned in ancient Armenian literature, is not clear. Sometimes it was likened to the jnar, harp, and psaltery.

15 Vardan Hatsouni, comparing the words “jnarahar” or “jnaravor” with classical Greek, translates them as “kitarahar,” taking into account kiph which was a typical,

antique, plucked instrument. It was used both as a solo and as an accompanying instrument. The first was called kipharetica, the second kipharodia.

16 The kanon is widespread in Arab countries, as well, where it is called kanoun.

17 Karl Riman (1849-1919) was a famous German musicologist. One of his numerous works is "Musiklexicon" (Music Dictionary), Berlin, 1882.

18 The vin is sometimes likened to the lyre, when the Middle Persian word vin, which means "some kind of lyre," was accepted as its root. Sometimes the word is likened also to the Sanskrit vina, which also signifies "lyre," and was used in written Vedic sources as a general name for string instruments, and in modern Hindi (beginning in the 9th century) as a name for a wind piped sitar. Vina is an Indian instrument, which has a wooden hollow frame, technically rich, and has a resonator made of dried pumpkins or some other material.

19 The quote is taken from Fr. Aristakes Tevkants' "Meghedik, Taghk, and Songs" (Tiflis, 1883).

20 The pogh (pipe) is a general term given to the epiglottis or mundshtuk wind instruments in ancient and medieval Armenia. The pogh was not only made out of copper, but also wood, bones, or horns. The quote is taken from Ghoukas Injijian's above-mentioned book.

21 In the past the organ was called a multi-wind flute (or Pan's flute). Some sources also speak of a water sounding organ.

22 It is supposed that ghanon is the well-known kanon.

23 "Dashants Tought" is the treaty signed by King Trdat III and the Roman Emperor Constantianos, according to an unconfirmed report. The quote is taken from Gh. Injijian's above-mentioned book.

24 The term galarapogh (bagpipe) can be found in Armenian medieval literature. It is believed that the instrument is of more ancient origin. This is how they called some bone, wood, or copper wind instruments with twisted stems. The quotation is from Ghoukas Injijian's above-mentioned book.

25 The kaqavich (dancer) was an actor and solo dancer in a professional theater in ancient and medieval Armenia.

26 The quote is taken from Vardan Hatsouni's "Foods and Partying in Ancient Armenia," (Venice, 1912).

27 Movses Khorenatsi, "History of the Armenians," 1,14.

28 Grikor Suni has in mind the difference in the pagan ideologies of the idealistic – Christian and materialistic. Nevertheless, paganism as a religion, is also a worship of the supernatural and offers its definition of the afterlife.

29 In the old days vardzak was the name given to a female minstrel who performed primarily but did not compose. The word "vardzak" has several connotations – female minstrel, who danced and sang, a woman with loose morals, a mime or prostitute.

30 The quotes are from Vardan Hatsouni's above-mentioned book.

31 Because Armenia was located at a political, geographical, and commercial crossroads, in political and cultural contact with both east and west, naturally it was subjected to influences, and depending on the historical circumstances, sometimes eastern, sometimes western influences have appeared in the different periods of Armenian culture. The rich, flowery style in our poems speaks to our adoption of characteristic eastern principles, while laconicism of musical thought and the logic behind composing the material speak to our adoption of the western. By becoming Christian, Armenian music acquired a new personified content, but how could it renounce that rich heritage, that was not an influence of paganism, but its legacy, refined and coordinated in its modes of expression and developed musical thought. Finally, thanks to Mesrop Mashtots and Sahak Partev, after the invention of the alphabet, the basis of Armenian Christian music became the melodies developed in Hellenistic Armenian, due to which folk-minstrel musical thought and a harmonic system formed the unique monuments of Armenian religious music.

32 The author of the poem "Morning of Light" is Nerses Shnorhali.

33 The eight voice is a melodic system in the medieval Christian music arts. It is tied to that theory about typological melodies developed in the past of several nations. During the first centuries A.D. that theory was recreated in Christian music as eight voiced, although, in reality, more than eight melodies were joined together. Over time eight voices, specific to western and eastern Christian cultures, emerged. Later, in the eastern areas several national eight voices, including also the Armenian, became separate. After the invention of

the alphabet, Mesrop Mashtots and Sahak Partev reassessed the old principle of melodies that existed in pagan Armenia and rearranged the mostly biblical songs and typological melodies, editing the first large segment in the Armenian eight voices – 4 stems (1st voice, 2nd voice, 3rd voice, 4th voice), 4 sides (1st side, 2nd side, 3rd side, 4th side), and melodies of two keys. The Armenian eight voice has experienced a great path of development and has been rearranged on a few occasions. The eight voice theory and its practical applications were codified, under the leadership of Grigor Tatevatsi, at the music school at Tatev University. A brief summary of this has reached Grigor Gapasakalian, Hambardzoum Limonjian, Nikoghayos Tashjian, and the present day.

34 Musical notation is an Armenian medieval musical writing art form, which began to develop in the 8th century. The idea and its initial realization is associated with Stepanos Suni, Grigor Grzik, Anania Narekatsi, Khachatour Taronetsi, Nerses Shnorhali, and others participated in its future development and dissemination. However, by the 17th century the key to reading those characters was lost and even today there are numerous manuscripts in musical notation which remain an enigma in musicology.

35 The quotations are taken from Ghoukas Injijian's "Hnakhosootyoon Hayastanyayts Ashkhari."

36 Ktsourd (attachment) is the most ancient type of Armenian religious song. It has received its name from being attached to biblical psalms and blessings, and consequently sing as attachments to them. It originated in the 4th-5th centuries and until the invention of the alphabet it was communicated orally. The first ktsourds were generally short songs comprised of three verses. Developing and increasing, ktsourds were collected in collections called ktsourdakan. From the 12th century on they were called sharakans, and consequently ktsourdarans were called sharaknots. In literature we sometimes encounter the word ktsoord, which is the same thing as ktsourd.

37 The melody is a type of Armenian medieval music and was sometimes used to mean dagh (musical poem). According to Nikoghos Tahmizian, the church poem, the musical poem, the melody, and the andante formed the scale. The church poem was dictatory; the musical poem was emotional compared to the declaratory; the melody was even more emotional, while the andante concluded the scale.

38 The quotations are taken from the book “Hnakhosootyoon Hayastanyayts Ashkhari.”

39 About this work see Nikoghos Tahmizian, Nerses Shnorhali: Composer and Musician (Yerevan, 1973).

40 Stepanos Orbelian – XIII-XIV centuries, historian.

Hovhannes Tlkourantsi – XV century, poet.

Catholicos Simeon – XVII century, poet.

Patriarch Avetik (or Avetik Yevdokatsi) – XVII-XVIII centuries, scribe, poet.

Petros Ghapantsi – XVIII century, poet.

41 Arakel Siunetsi – XV century, bibliographer, poet.

Hovhannes Plouz – XIII century, bibliographer, philosopher, poet.

Mkrtich Naghash – XV century, miniaturist, poet.

Minas Tokhatetsi – XVI-XVII centuries, poet. He worked as a secretary at the archiepiscopate in Lemberg (Lvov) and for that reason they sometimes called him Lovandatsi or Lehatsi (from Poland).

Nahapet Kouchak – XVI century, poet.

42 In the beginning of the 7th century under the patronage of the music loving Persian shah Khosrov II Aprvez in Ctesiphon, singer and instrumentalist Borbad and his colleague, Sargis, who had been specially invited from Armenia, undertook the task of arranging and theoretically giving meaning to Eastern songs and music. After this the development of music received a new impetus, and the new style which emerged with the standards of the time received the name Khosrovian.

43 Third side. It is one of the melodies of the Armenian eight voices, which has the following scale.

44 Gandz is one of the genres of Armenian medieval religious music. It originated from the sermon and its author was Grigor Narekatsi. Songs that were based on the words in his songs were called gandz (treasure).

45 The quotation is from Ghoukas Injijian’s above-mentioned book.

46 In the archives of Komitas there is a short study on musical notation, where, relying on the explanations given by Grigor Gapasakalian in “Music Book,” Komitas Vardapet developed the concept of bodied and bodiless khaz (musical notes) as one expression of

music-intonation that is as characters in the modulation sphere. Subsequent research of manuscripts with musical notation has shown that musical notation existed in Armenia long before Khachatour Taronatsi. (See Robert Atayan's "Armenian Musical Notation," Yerevan, 1959).

47 About the Arkakaghin Monastery see Ghevond Alishan, Sisvan, Venice, 1885, p. 254 (in Armenian).

48 The Armenian medieval musical-ritual book, the flowery musical collection was called Manrousoum (Short Study). Its one section had pedagogical significance. These manrousoum collections were also called khazbooks.

49 From 1813-1815 Hambartsoum Limonjian (Baba Hambartsoum, 1768-1839) created an Armenian music notation system, which became the transition between the old musical notation and the lined system, thanks to which a respectable heritage of national folk and religious music was preserved.

50 This system (consisted of seven letters of Armenian alphabet) correspond to the European do, re, mi, fa, sol, la, si bemol sounds (or c, d, e, f, g, a, b,).

51 Nikoghayos Tashjian (1841-1885).

52 Nikoghayos Tashjian's "Textbook of Armenian Music Notation" was published in Etchmiadzin in 1874.

53 Gevorg IV (Kerestejian, 1813-1882) – was elected Catholicos in 1866.

54 Nikoghayos Tashjian's "Recorded Music of the Diving Liturgy" was published in Vagharshapat in 1874. The first volume of "Music of the Divine Liturgy" (including also religious poems and melodies) was published in 1875, the second in 1878 in Vagharshapat. In 1875 the "Sharaknots" (Collections of Hymns) was also published.

55 Grikor Suni probably has in mind Yeznik Yerznkian's "Recorded Children's Song Book," Vagharshapat, 1880, A. Baghdasarian's "Children's Recorded Song Book," Part 1, sharakans, songs and poems, recorded by Deacon Sahak, Etchmiadzin, 1884 and other publications.

56 Makar Yekmalian's (1857-1905) polyphonized Mass is performed today during Armenian church services.

57 Kristapor Kara-Murza's (1853-1902) greatest contribution to Armenian musical history was the infusion and dissemination of polyphony.

58 Kristapor Kara-Murza was invited to Etchmiadzin in October of 1892 by Aristakes Sedrakian, rector of the Gevorgian Seminary. In November of 1893 he was relieved of his position.

59 The Nersisian School in Tbilisi was founded in 1824 through the efforts of Bishop Nerses Ashtaraketsi. For many years it was one of the leading Armenian educational institutions.

60 Hovhannes Spendiarian (1862-1932) was a distant relative of Aleksandr Spendiarian.

61 Makar Ekmalian was invited in 1891 to teach music and conduct the choir at the Nersissian School in Tbilisi.

62 Gevorg Surenian (1813?-1930) – was elected catholicos in 1912.

63 Khrimian Hayrik (1820-1907) – was elected catholicos in 1892. He issued the encyclical in 1895.

64 K. Kara-Murza, after studying M. Yekmalian's newly published work, stopped performing his own harmonized version of the Armenian Mass and became one of the first to undertake with his choir the extolling in proper fashion Yekmalian's version.

65 Pietro Bianchini's version of the Mass was published in Venice in 1877.

66 "Gegharvest" was an artistic, literary, and musical journal. It was published in Tbilisi from 1908 to 1921, but printed in Venice. Its editor was Garegin Levonian.

67 "The Armenian Musical Society" was created in Tbilisi in 1912. Its organizers were Romanos Melikian and Azat Manukian. The society intended to gather together music teachers from the Tbilisi Armenian schools and fundamentally improve music instruction. For that reason, through the efforts of the Music League (1908), that predated the society, Azat Manukian's "Pnjik" (Bouquet) collection, A. Manukian's and R. Melikian's "Musical Alphabet," etc. were published. In 1914 the society organized a scholarly expedition to Shirak. The folk songs of Shirak were recorded on the phonograph. Members of the expedition were Anushavan Ter-Ghevondian and Spiridon Melikian. The latter transcribed and published the recorded material in 1917 as "Songs of Shirak." A. Ter-Ghevondian created a series of "Studies of Shirak" for symphonic orchestra.

68 Anushavan Ter-Ghevondian (1887-1961) was a composer, musicologist, pedagogue, and public servant.

69 Spiridon Melikian (1880-1933) was a musicologist, composer, ethnographer, author of several valuable musicological works, and one of Komitas' finest students.

70 The dagh is a genre of Armenian professional monodic song writing. Its origin is ancient and its content and advanced melodic line remind one of future vocal and instrumental arias. The characteristics of the dagh are its expansiveness of form and volume, its free melodic style, the existence of flowery and instrumental-like passages, its richness of rhythm and intonation. The dagh is basically a lyric song, but it is not canonical like the sharakan, and during the service it is performed as an insert to communicate a certain splendor to important holidays. This genre of Armenian monodic song writing has progressed greatly through the centuries. There are two types of daghs - religious and secular. The first kind are expansive and developed in volume and in structure, the second are terse and concise. Daghs are reproduced in solo performances with concert-like luster. They are not only Armenian, but also generally the highest form of monodic music, while Grigor Narekatsi's daghs are the unsurpassed monuments of that music.

71 Sayat-Nova (1722-1795).

72 Shirin (Hovhannes Karapetian, 1827-1857).

73 Jivani (Serovbe Levonian, 1846-1909).

74 Of Suni's contemporaries the following have been involved in the study of minstrel music: Garegin Levonian, Moushegh Agahyan, later A. Kocharian, Robert Atayan, and others. It is worth noting Robert Atayan's "Minstrel Havasi," Yerevan, 1963; Moushegh Aghayan's "Armenian Minstrels and Minstrel Music," Yerevan, 1959, A. Kocharian "Armenian Minstrel Songs," Yerevan, 1976, etc.

75 "Armenian Lyre" was first published in 1861 by Gabriel Yeranian and Nikoghayos Tashjian. However, six months later its publication was halted. In 1862 the "Armenian Lyre" music society was established in Constantinople. Its purpose was to keep the musical spirit among Armenians alive. That same year the "Armenian Lyre" periodical began publishing again, this time through the efforts of Tigran Tchouhadjian.

76 Tigran Tchouhadjian (1837-1898) – the composer of the first Armenian opera, "Arshak II."

77 Gabriel Yeranian (1827-1867) – was famous for his song, "Cilicia."

78 Suni probably has in mind Karapet Papazian, one of the first western Armenian composers of the last century, who created the “Armenian Theater” orchestra in Constantinople.

79 Nikoghayos Tigranian (1856-1951) – played a great role in Armenian piano music.

80 Aleksandr Spendiarian (1871-1928) – the founder of Armenian symphonic music.

81 Romanos Melikian (1883-1935) – the founder of Armenian classical romances.

82 Sargis Barkhudarian (1887-1973) – multi-genre artist, pedagogue.

83 “The Armenian Musicians Theorists’ Society” was formed in Tiflis in 1919.

84 After the establishment of Soviet rule in Armenia the new government embarked upon a course of inviting the best representatives of Armenian culture and the arts to Armenia. Moving to Yerevan were Romanos Melikian (1921), Aleksandr Spendiarian (1924), Spiridon Melikian and many others. Particularly through the efforts of R. Melikian the first musical institution, the Yerevan musical studio, was established in Armenia, and this became the basis for the opening of the state conservatory in 1923. Grikor Suni, in his 1934 autobiography which he sent to Rouben Terlemezian, talks about the government plan of the first Armenian republic to open a national conservatory of music in Yerevan. Sargis Barkhudarian and Grikor Suni himself had received invitations to organize that task.