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In this mission Mesrob had the support of the Catholicos and the King, and through them naturally the royal treasury. All were equally important to his success, though we generally place greater emphasis on the moral encouragement of Sahak and Vramshabouh, disregarding or underestimating the treasury's contribution — from the substantial costs of extensive traveling to the establishment of schools, the training of students, and the work of translations which required the help of many assistants. This moral and material backing lasted for about half a century, until Mesrob's death.

And what was Gomidas' destiny?

Our people were the same political football between the Sultans and the Tsars; the same tragic circumstances prevailed, threatening our national and religious institutions. Under both regimes were the same police restrictions, physical and moral persecution in various forms, and a strict censorship that destroyed every cultural movement.

It was from the confusion of such a sad and uncertain time that the Gomidas harmony was suddenly heard, rising from the dulled sensitivity of a bewildered people and possessing its spirit. They were distant voices destined to be lost, like echoes shattering on the rocks of time, until Gomidas seized them in mid-air as the flutterings of the spirit, giving form to the moving experiences of an entire people.

The parallel ends here unfortunately.

Gomidas had no help or encouragement from anyone; he had no royal treasury on which to depend, with which he might, along with other things, realize at least one of his dreams, the founding of a national conservatory. He emerged into Armenian life without fanfare, almost by accident, and rose by himself to a solitary eminence from which to view the ages...

Beside the half century of peaceful labor that Mesrob enjoyed, Gomidas had a bare and tempestuous twenty years. Not only was he denied the means and the happiness of founding a conservatory, he was also denied the opportunity to complete the work he had begun. One can only marvel that, in spite of the obstacles he faced, he succeeded in achieving a monumental work. And

one shudders to think what character Armenian song would have today if

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Gomidas had not emerged before 1915, before the great holocaust.

It was the last moment, the last fateful moment, before our people were consigned to the four winds, to set down imperishably on paper the pure melodies that for centuries had taken wing from their lips. Twenty fateful years. After 1915, nothing survived; monasteries crumbled, pilgrimages came to an end, the ancient peasantry clinging to the land was uprooted, the tradition-revering maternal force faded. Nothing was left from which it might have been possible to collect and compile, line by line, all that it was given to Gomidas to redeem, compare, refine and present to the ages.

And not only that. Whether we admit it or not, the genius of Gomidas was inobtrusively imparted to those songs, elevating the villagers' music from its primitiveness to the heights of cultivated modern art, just as Mesrob raised the spoken, letterless language to the comparable literary beauty of our Golden Age.

This then is Gomidas, the great redeemer and founder of a national musical art that was on its way to extinction. And this is the heart-warming spiritual kinship between Mesrob and Gomidas, the twin peaks of the same culture, the mighty chains that link the old centuries with our own,

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by Shahan Berberian

GOMIDAS VARTABED

The Man and His Work

Published in Bucharest on October 22, 1936, on the first anniversary of the death of Gomidas Vartabed.

The Great Loss

Gomidas Vartabed is no more. In the poet's words "tel qu'en lui-meme enfin l'eternite le change." (1) Death had finally come to release him from the malady that had transformed him these many years, severed him from his genius, while keeping him as a distraught being before our helpless, compassionate eyes. Death had come to liberate him and at last restore him to the wonderful unity of his true self.

We may now pause before him, pause as we often must — transcending human considerations— humbly and freely to contemplate him in his purely spiritual aspect, as he is now in death received into Eternity.

I had met him, if I may be pardoned this personal reminiscence —I recall it here because it seems to me significant as a matter of general interest — I had met him in Paris about 1910 when I was just a young student. Paris in those days was experiencing one of its most vigorous artistic periods. The great symphonic concerts on Sundays, the operatic and dramatic performances given in an atmosphere of boundless rapture contributed to and sometimes brought into conflict the powerful and magical forces of music. There was the gigantic and still conquering force of the Wagnerian symphony, but then there was also the irresistible fascination and alluring enchantment of the music of Debussy and the other modern French composers who were now appearing

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He was born in Kutina (Keotahya) in 1869, of a musical family. He had lost his parents early in life and at the age of eleven was selected by lot and sent to the Kevorkian Academy in Etchmiadzin. Being a native of Keotahya little Soghomon spoke Armenian with difficulty but he could recite all the hymns and when he first sang for His Holiness the Catholicos Kevork IV, tears flowed irresistibly from the eyes of the venerable Pontiff. At Kevorkian Academy he studied his lessons eagerly and in a few months mastered his native tongue. Soon however, he discovered his real vocation and while still a student he became attracted to the art of music and the deep enchantment of folk songs. By then, the Eastern Armenians—probably under the influence of the example set by the Russians—had laid the foundations for approaching Armenian songs through European techniques. The gifted and ill-fated Kara-Murza had attempted this with folk songs and Magar Egmalian had done the same with liturgical music. Soghomon the seminarian was following in the same path. At eighteen he was already scoring rustic songs and soon afterwards he was to become acquainted with Egmalian and his work in connection with polyphonic singing of liturgical music. In 1890 he was ordained a deacon and in 1893, having completed all his courses at the Academy, he took monastic vows and was named Gomidas. To attain the art he adored he had fervently chosen the loftiest path, the path of religious life.

In 1896 the Catholicos Khrimian sent him to Berlin, sponsored by Prince Alexander Mantashians, to study at the State Conservatory of Music. At the recommendation of Joachim, the young Vartabed studied privately with Schmidt, who encouraged him to devote himself to cultivating his native folkore, a path he himself had already chosen. Gomidas Vartabed also took courses in musicology and philosophy at the University of Berlin. Three years later, in 1899, he completed his studies and returned to Etchmiadzin.

He had now reached the important stage of his career, that of gathering material for his work. He was professor of music at the Academy and choir-master of the Cathedral of Holy Etchmiadzin. He trained a choral group and also scored and developed the hymns sung in the Divine Liturgy and certain other chants for polyphonic singing. In the summertime he toured the various

regions of Eastern Armenia, treading the paths bequeathed him by our ancient and modern minstrels; this time, however, as a European-trained musician. He took part in the life of the peasants and drank of its purest source in order to learn and enjoy thoroughly the music created and lived by the Armenians, a profoundly musical nation. He collected hundreds, thousands of songs and wrote the music for them. Meanwhile he was acquainting himself with the native music of the neighboring people, the Kurds, the Persians, the Georgians. Later he would study, compare, and evaluate all of these in the light of scientific musicology. This was the second phase of the Vartabed's work of interpreting and harmonizing Armenian songs, both sacred and secular; this phase differed from the first by its more conscious approach.

In 1904 the first fruits of his art had already ripened. And he embarked on his mission, which was to make known the unique beauty of Armenian music, to create an appreciation for it, to awaken through this music a deep national consciousness and with it to reveal to the leading foreign nations the reality of a lofty Armenian culture.

First he appeared with his choral concerts in the Caucasus —Etchmiadzin, Erevan, Tiflis, Baku— then in 1906 he returned to Europe with concerts and lectures in Paris, Berlin, as well as various cities in Switzerland and Italy. All of these were amazing revelations to the cultivated audiences of Europe, just as his reports to the musicologists gathered at the International Musicological Congresses in Berlin and Paris were to be later on.

He returned to Etchmiadzin in 1907 and continued his work in all of its phases. But his artist's sensitive soul found it difficult to endure certain vexations occasioned by his environment, although these were understandable enough. With a heavy heart he left Etchmiadzin in 1909.

He came to Constantinople and henceforth his career was a triumphant journey across an ocean of popular acclaim. This was the period in which the Vartabed was redoubling his efforts to go everywhere and into whatever field his missionary vocation called him. Constantinople, Egypt; back again to Paris and Constantinople; his concerts, his lectures, and his own personality diffused an ever-growing and ineffably heartfelt enthusiasm which adorned with its

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And for the same reason, in his Divine Liturgy, Father Gomidas even refrained from marking the measures with bars as required by the European system of scoring.

The rhythmic structure of Armenian music has animation, freedom, and variety. In a note on this subject found among his papers Father Gomidas says:

In Armenian music the measures are not divided according to the rule governing accentuation but according to cadence. We know that European music is based on the regular arrangement of accents and Armenian music on beats. Light and heavy beats succeed one another exactly as short and long syllables do in poetry, and the accents are entirely free. There are two kinds of accentuation, grammatical and logical, namely of words and of meaning. The accent of the word has a close affinity to the basic note of the melody but the accent of the meaning is always one or several notes higher than the basic note; although sometimes if the melody is subdued the accents of the meaning and the word coincide.

There are distinct rules for arranging short and long syllables with which measures and beats are formed.

In Armenian music the beats correspond to the meter in poetry; they form a succession of long and short syllables and not a succession of accents, as in European music. The use of the accent is absolutely compatible with the spirit of blank verse.

Now this resembles the rhythm of ancient Greek music but only insofar as it is applied to Greek poetry. Thus, in the Armenian song there are characteristic types of rhythmic units of long and short, accented and unaccented syllables, and different types of these characteristic groups put together form the musical measure. And these measures grouped together comprise the musical phrase. And these measures grouped together comprise the musical phrase. Recurrent whole phrases constructed in this fashion create the complete rhythmic form of the composition and the feeling of a rhythmic unity.

The song Bingol is a case in point. (We mark the short syllables with "v"s, the long syllables with dashes, the accented beats with the accent mark; commas are used to divide the distinct groups, and slashes to divide the measures):

✓ ˊ —, ✓ ✓ ˊ — /
In-chu bin-gole me-tar?
In-chu kar-oyin arar?

✓ ˊ —, ✓ ✓ ˊ —
Paghi pel-pule ge-tar,
Anter u geri dar-ar, (twice)

✓ ✓ ✓ ˊ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ˊ ✓ /
Te le me konte hapon dekh konte /

(twice)

✓ —, ✓ —, ✓ ˊ — /
Dekh-kon dekh-kon dekh-konte /

✓ —, ˊ ✓, ✓ ˊ —
hapon konte dekh-konte, etc.(twice)

Isn't this in the style of the ancient Greek rhythmic form? Compared with this structure, which permits unlimited rhythmic modulations within the same piece, European classical music with its predilection for isochronism, appears to have, from the rhythmic standpoint, a rather meager structure. Here the system being much more complicated, the Armenian song compared with the European classical music becomes rhythmically more stirring, lively, and diversified. This is another reason why masters of modern European music find it so gratifying to listen to Armenian music.

The discovery of the nature of the rhythmic structure in Armenian music will forever redound to Gomidas Vartabed's credit.

The other rule about the rhythm in Armenian music which he has noted is equally important, namely the accentuation of words in Armenian singing. He has pointed out that in the relationship of words and music, Armenian music has achieved that which composers of operatic music — and at that only the great ones like Wagner — have been able to achieve in European music, namely to establish a thorough concordance between the meaning of the words, their accentuation, and the musical accentuation of the melody. In Armenian songs poetic and musical accents complement one another, whereas European composers, even some of the great ones, are unmindful of this. Armenian words, observes Father Gomidas, were originally accented on the penultimate syllable and folk music has respected this rule by accenting this syllable not only rhythmically but also by placing on it an even higher note or at least a note as high as the next one, i.e., the unaccented final syllable.

The discovery of these rhythmic rules has given us the fundamental directions for singing and playing Armenian melodies and upon these Father Gomidas has based his method of singing and teaching these songs.

of these facts Armenian music was revealed as one of those rare arts called upon to give a vivid perception of the ancient Greek and Aryan music, now lost.

The Composer

Gomidas Vartabed became eminent and successful as a theoretician of Armenian music because he was not a scholar who merely studied his theme superficially, objectively, but a genuine artist who had from within understood, grasped, and lived it; an artist who had gained the fundamental intuition for discerning the very essence of the Armenian Musical Style, in the light of which he had found and then revealed to others the key to the original principle of Armenian music. And the rules thus revealed were in turn to guide him—as I said before—towards his main artistic goal.

What was Gomidas Vartabed's merit as an artist, a creative artist?

At this point people who underestimate him shrug their shoulders and say: "Gomidas Vartabed was not and could never become a creative musician, he was simply a compiler and harmonizer of songs." But the question is not quite so simple. It is true that he himself did not create; the few well-known pieces actually composed by him, generally written for festive occasions, are small and second-rate and he himself did not consider them important. Was the ill-starred Father Gomidas not able, might he not have been able, to contribute his own personal compositions to Armenian Music? We must not judge. We cannot give a verdict. He had never given much thought to it. Moreover, he believed, as we do, that he had more urgent tasks to perform and those he did accomplish. But he was snatched away too soon from the world of art and creative work; in fact, when he was about forty-five years of age and at the pinnacle of his creative maturity. All of his close friends knew that he had already prepared the groundwork for the **magnum opus** which was to be his own contribution to music, namely an opera based on Hovhannes Toumanian's **Anoush**, for which he would devise a new Armenian orchestra of European instruments plus some Armenian and Near-Eastern instruments, particularly flutes. What would that composition have been like? I have reason to believe that it would have been invaluable. He had sung and played for me the Prelude which had impressed me deeply.

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But disregarding all of this and considering only Gomidas Vartabed's arrangements and harmonizations of Armenian religious and secular songs, it would be very wrong indeed to compare his achievements with the work of any regular musician versed in all phases of music, or even with a potentially gifted musician.

Father Gomidas has, in fact, endowed his harmonization with such novelty of scoring and originality of style, that they transcend the limits of ordinary harmonization and join the ranks of original and treasured creations.

His greatest accomplishment in regard to Armenian songs has been that of understanding, in the broadest sense of the word, the unique esthetic value of their essence and a penetration into their distinctive spirit. He has approached Armenian religious and secular songs with supreme and justly self-assured discrimination and, guided by his intuition about the essence of the Armenian Musical Style—inherited, as it were, from an ancestral musical genius—he has separated the purely Armenian songs from the alien tunes. Again, in the light of that intuitive faculty, he has polished these selected songs by divesting them of elements originating from alien or popular distortions which had been superimposed on them and had warped their quality. And so he restored them to their original, vigorous splendor.

Armenian Melodies Purified

Moreover, by the irrevocable verdict of his accurate perception, our sacred songs were divested of the layers of inane drawls, Eastern grace notes, languid and enharmonic utterances, which later centuries had deposited on them. The purely Armenian melody, whether sacred or secular, which emerged from this purifying process, is a simple one, of sober and virile lines, solemn even in its joyous vein, and blissful in its moods of sadness. It is rational in its structure, yet amazingly vivid, profoundly vibrant, as well as forceful and gracefully pleasing, and—the supreme mystery of its ineffable charm, I might say sublime charm—a majestic, soul-stirring ascent towards a mystical divine presence. 4

mi The Armenian melody thus transmitted to us by Gomidas Vartabed, with its logical clarity, its virile force, its pure moderation, is unmistakably Western-Aryan; and yet with its heart-warming tenderness, its fanciful mood,

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The Selection of Harmonies

At first he made a discriminating selection of those harmonies and harmonic successions which he used in setting to polyphony both folk as well as religious melodies. These are not the European classical harmonies and harmonic successions used, for example, by Egmalian in his Divine Liturgy. In his harmonization Father Gomidas resorted less and less to the repetitious use of the classical third which—as I said before—would have distorted the harmonic potentialities of these songs, and often discarded them entirely. Instead he made frequent use of chords based on fourths and fifths and especially new dissonant chords which lend a felicitous highlight to the distinctive harmonic features of these songs.

“A Garland of Melodies Around the Main Theme”

Then again, he had his own method of harmonizing. By the proper admixture of counterpoint, “horizontal” as against “vertical” scoring, which creates polyphony not by merely placing chords under the main theme but by adding an accompaniment of one or more different though related melodies, he would weave a garland of melodies around the main theme and produce polyphony. This polyphonic style of composition which is characteristic of the modern European symphonic style, preserves the essentially melodic quality of the Armenian songs. These accompaniments are Father Gomidas’ own inspired compositions, each one revealing and fulfilling a potential facet of the main theme, not stifling it, not distorting its spirit, but recreating it with numerous facets and making the main theme more tangible, more elaborate, and expressive.

Finally, thanks to his solicitude to add something picturesque, something of local color to these harmonizations, and by evolving wonderful choral sound effects, he succeeded in preserving the native environment, the atmosphere of these songs—their musical climate, as it were—because Father Gomidas was a Poet-Painter-Musician like Wagner or Debussy, rather than an Architect-Composer like Bach or Saint-Saens.

In the harmonies Father Gomidas has composed around the main theme of a song we sometimes find that he has evoked the echoes which that song would arouse in the Armenian mountainside, as in *Sareri Vrov Gnats’* or in

Call Vartabed: the beating of the drums and the tapping of the steps accompanying the dance tunes, **Hov Lini**, **Sona Yar**, and in the marvelous nuptial song **Aravodun** ...; the village courtyard echoing faintly with the tinkle of goatbells when the goats are milked, as in the little masterpiece **Hing ets unim**; the gentle ripple of waves in **Lusnake Anush**, another masterpiece. Compare these with the merely harmonic sounds of the usual European chorales. In Gomidas' works you will find a peerless rendition of exquisite shadings such as I have encountered only in three of Debussy's chorales set to the poems of Charles d'Orleans, and in a few Russian choral works. Of course, European music, especially modern music, has contributed magnificent impressionistic pictures to the gallery of musical art but they are all symphonic works and we rarely find in them that grandeur of choral art which Father Gomidas has attained.

The Influence of French and Russian Music

Naturally, the Vartabed did not achieve this perfection all at once. His early works, particularly his harmonizations of religious music, are crammed with the close harmonies of the German classical and romantic schools. However, as he came to know modern French and Russian music, in the course of his visits to Paris, his taste and artistic perception grew immeasurably finer and aided too by his own instinct he achieved that unexcelled perfection in the art of choral composition.

And so we have come to possess in the treasury of Armenian sacred music Gomidas Vartabed's priceless work, the Divine Liturgy of the Armenian Church.(3) We have his wonderful harmonizations of some of the hymns. In the genre of folk music, his marvelous suites will live with abiding grace in the ranks of the finest musical creations.

By linking the small songs together, according to their subject and musical quality, Father Gomidas has fashioned garlands of songs. He has created little musical masterpieces by grouping together songs with a heavy, slow rhythm and by contrasting them with melodies of a light and sprightly rhythm.

And he has drawn across, or rather through, our enraptured hearts a chain of these songs that embody the whole life of the Armenian people, who

magnetism, an inner charm, to uplift their hearts and their voices and through them to convey this rapture to the listening crowds, who were uplifted and carried off irresistibly in the surging waves of musical spirituality.

A Most Exceptional Musical Director

And it was this great enthusiasm of the enraptured audiences that rang through the unceasing applause. At times it seems as though the ancestral spirit had been aroused in these Armenian crowds. The long-dormant national consciousness which suddenly animated their hearts, coursed through their veins, and brought tears to innumerable eyes.

Gomidas' Choir often sounded like a modern orchestra. There is a well-known story about an Italian musicologist who attended Gomidas Vartabed's concert in Alexandria and wished to go backstage to see what kind of instruments were concealed there that gave the choir the sonority of an orchestra. Unlike the conventional European choirs, his was not composed only of voices of different ranges, sopranos, altos, tenors, and basses, each with its own individual timbre. I said before that Gomidas Vartabed's choral works were designed to create a musical tableau and this he achieved with consummate art, in the presentations of his choral groups, by means of different nuances in voice production, with their diverse component parts, and lastly by means of that feeling which pervaded and exalted all of these, namely the irresistible spirit emanating from Gomidas Vartabed's personality and pervasive soul.

Unquestionably, Father Gomidas was one of the most outstanding and exceptional musical directors of our time.

The Singer: Not ~~A~~ Voice, but a Soul

He was great as a director perhaps because he was even greater as a singer. After the concerts when his choirs had finished singing and he sat at the piano to sing, he made one forget his singers and chorales. People often ask: "Have you heard Gomidas?" "Was his voice very beautiful?" "What was his voice like?" When Gomidas Vartabed sang, who gave a thought to his voice? There have been and there are many beautiful voices, undoubtedly more beautiful than his. But few singers like him have ever come or will come to this earth. Of course, his voice had remarkable range, depth, and power, sustained by an

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—and this is the essence of his character— but the spark of a national genius, A kind of impersonal vision guided him in his work and a sort of impersonal animation filled him and pervaded all his activities. This is the secret of that personality that was a prophet and an apostle; it is with these traits that the image of his personality will go into history. This is why the artist and the churchman became fused in his person, to form an unbroken beam of light. He carried within himself that spirit and it felt holy, it gave him faith. Because of his personality and his nature it was as if someone from the distant time of Saints Sahak and Mesrob had passed through Armenian life and into Armenian history.

The unity of his very being . . . held together with tremendous will power and intense effort. Alas, that body —that substance which is subject to other laws— was destined to profit by the cruel chance afforded by the Great Tragedy, as if to avenge the violence done to it, as it has done with other great men. And so the gifted and ill-fated Father Gomidas lived the most tragic of destinies. While remaining alive before our eyes and in the eyes of the world, he was stricken in his most precious part, in his very unity. Mental illness shattered that unity and as the supreme irony kept him for years before our eyes, as a living but unrecognizable spectre of himself.

Death has now come to erase that spectre. Eternity has received him and returned him to us as he really was. Eternity has taken into itself and has given to us, with his unity fully restored, the real Gomidas, the Soul of Gomidas, the blessed Gomidas of Armenian Music.

Let us keep him forever alive and ever present for our own sake.

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- (1) Mallarme on the death of Edgar Allan Poe.
 - (2) This entire collection has now been published in Armenia.
 - (3) We would have had another Liturgy which was to be, as he used to say, his most important religious work composed for mixed choir in five or six voices and based on the main themes of the Divine Liturgy of Julfa, published by Miss Amy Apgar, which Father Gomidas considered the purest of the Armenian liturgical themes. We would have had it, that is, if the Great Tragedy had not intervened. The important parts of his work had already been composed but it is astonishing that no trace of them has been found among his papers. Where have they disappeared?

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but only Armenian, and found its most authentic expression through Gomidas' Armenian genius.

This is why it would be essential for any singer to know Gomidas in order to make Armenian song understandable, to make it compatible with Armenian spirit, in short simply to be able to sing Armenian. To do this, one does not have to be a specialist or an accomplished musician. Rather ours is an invitation to study attentively the word and melody of folk songs as compiled and reconstructed by Gomidas, and through them grasp the differing character and style of Armenian song. It is with this realization, with the adoption of the Gomidasian style and spirit, that the singer will be able to deliver the Armenian folk song, or any song with a degree of authenticity. This cannot be refuted. Before Gomidas, no one was able to enchant an entire people with the pulsating excitement of real Armenian singing. Is not this reason enough for today's singer to study Gomidas more earnestly?

Gomidas, however, particularly in the reality of contemporary Armenia, is not our only musical heaven. After him came other creative minds, and still others are yet to come, to add to the treasures we have. We must grant, however, that Gomidas is the indispensable yeast which must infect us if we are to sing Armenian.

All the songs reconstructed by Gomidas and bearing the stamp of his genius, reveal Armenian song, together with its singing style, as clear and brisk. The sliding and gurling oriental techniques are as alien to it as the uneven and prolonged tonalities are boring and repulsive. Even if most of our songs are sad, this is a relatively recent development, and surely the result of continuing oppressions. It was injected into our songs during later centuries and was not an inherent part of earlier compositions. This sadness represents, not a national spiritual sickness, but nostalgia and the yearnings of the immigrant, maledictions hurled at those who bring pain and death, outbursts of love and satire, sometimes innocent, but at the same time in a language embellished with strong and colorful images — the result and the proof of the clear poetic inspirations of our people.

Those singers who, without communion with such experience, discern

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by Alexander Shahverdian

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THE HERITAGE OF THE GOMIDAS MUSIC

The musical creations, the arrangements of our folk songs for voice and piano accompaniment which we have studied and described, represent the basic, essential, and focal part of the musical heritage from Gomidas — only arrangements, and that not prolific. Isn't that heritage too modest? But let us answer through a contrary question: are there many composers like Gomidas who have worked modestly and unselfishly and have reflected so many facets of human life—the epic, the toil, the portrayal of social oppression and protest, the lyricism of life, the festivities, and many other phases of the life of the peasantry, all of which Gomidas had ingrained in his music with an extraordinarily vital force and feeling, picturesque and brilliant.

Let us briefly generalize on the theories which spring from the foregoing observations and characterizations and specify the several important aspects of his musical style.

As a true classicist whose work had unresolved but vitally significant new problems, Gomidas has seen no need to indulge in common, laudative apologetics.

The critical analysis of Gomidas' creations, their scientific description, especially the establishment of their correct chronological sequence must become the basis of a discriminating and well founded appraisal. In that heritage there

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example. That same principle has been in effect in the arrangement of "Haberban" — not a simple repetition of fourteen measures, but a unified development where two couples combine in a more highly organized composition. Let us recall the wide expansion of "Andouni," and the development effected through an intense internal movement throughout its development within thirty-eight measures.

Gomidas marvelously utilized the principle preferred by folk singers — a series of simple melodies in a unified whole, the principle of combining and linking one cycle of songs. Simple examples are "Sarerı Vrov Gnatz" and "Yeri, Yeri, Yeri jan," or "Alakiaz" and "Khungi Dsar." Here he is combining two songs which even though internally related, offer a contrast in time and disposition. We have already examined more complex unification, even more enriched and developed in one melody in the course of our analysis of "Dsirani Dsar."

In the analysis of the monumental choral music "Gali Yerk," it becomes evident that that music was no mere mechanical unification of folk melodies, nor an ordinary montage.

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The central problem of the Gomidas style is the problem of polyphony. As the most important medium in the development and enrichment of homophonic folk melodies, the Gomidasian polyphony has effectively solved the foremost experiment of contemporary international musical culture. In the extremely complex and historically important problem of combining it with the original values of a national art form, its character and means of expression. The concrete forms whereby Gomidas has effected the solution of that major problem are numerous. But that it is a very interesting and absorbing subject for a special theoretical study. Our task here is to ascertain Gomidas' principle in this question.

Rejecting the mechanical, normative, scholastic, ancient and "predetermined" harmony, through the intuition of a musical genius, Gomidas chose the path of creative intonation of melodies, a development which sprang from the very content and character of his melodies, from the internal order of its mode of expression. It is thus that the organization and originality of the

Gomidasian polyphony is ascertained. Speaking of the polyphonic development of folk melodies, Gomidas himself has stated the problem as follows: "To preserve the style and spirit of the rustic melodies." He thus suggested the search for varied and differentiated methods, selectivity, crystalization, so as to be able to have the song conform to its character and its possible mode of expression.

Through his creations Gomidas has energetically dissipated the supposed sadness, pitiable monotony, lachrymose emotionalism attributed to Armenian music. Gomidas strove for a correct understanding of the major mode in Armenian music. He has stubbornly explained the significance of not only the Ionic but also of harmonic tetrachords as the basis of our national music, he has stressed the major character of the songs of toil. He heard also a series of Phrygian melodies to the accompaniment of major harmony, as in "Guzhn Ara," "Eroom Em." The major mode inundates such sorrowful and moving songs as "Andouni," "Dsirani Dsar," "Sareri Vrov Gnatz." Thus the contrast of light and shade is rendered more brilliant.

The music of Gomidas, by virtue of its broad view of the varied phases of human life is essentially optimistic, manly, satiated with creative power and a deep faith in man.

1/2 ↓ by Gomidas Vartabed

DANCE AND THE CHILD

Before going into the subject I have chosen, I feel it is necessary to explain the significance of the musical training of children on the work of our future national education. Music or singing is a discipline that evolves from the emotions. Whatever feelings a child may be moved by, he will express those feelings in special songs. Song is one form of expression of inner spiritual feeling; and is therefore movement. And because dance is itself a movement, it becomes closely linked with song. Whatever the nature of one's feeling, song and dance will evolve in appropriate form. It can thus be understood how important are the attention and care given to music in the education of a child.

Dance is a phenomenon of the most fundamental significance; it encompasses all the arts. As a means of expression, the dance has a very important part in the artistic and scholastic life of the student, because it is important for the student to realize that all disciplines, whether music, sculpture, architecture, are some form of movement. Dance exists in all beings. Is not the life of the entire universe a dance? For man, there are two kinds of dance: the one,

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the methods used in handling a given situation. These are read and discussed at the seminar, then extracted and a curriculum worked out to be taken back and used in all the schools. A student transferred from one school to another is not jeopardized and finds it very easy to pick up in the new school where he left off in the old. Here, on the contrary, a student may have to start all over again, or repeat a subject, or learn other languages in order to continue his education.

I do hope that my discourse has proved of some help.

This is a transcript of notes taken at a lecture given at a Teaching Seminar conducted at the Yessaian School in Constantinople in 1912, and was published in 1928 in *Everyone's Yearbook*, No. 1801 (Amenoon Daretzooytz), pp. 478-484.

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Melody, expressed by musical instruments or the human voice — either together or separately — reflects the vigor and inflections of the rhythm of the dance.

Basic to all dance — and unchanging — are three elements: rhythm, rhyme, and melody, which are common to all nations. However, the level of its expression depends on heritage and culture, which in turn evolve from internal and external influences on the people themselves. Thus, in order to determine the distinctive nature of a nation's dances, it is imperative to examine its outside influences. For example, eastern peoples ordinarily enjoy emphasizing the beat by clapping in rhythm. All of the onlookers — both young and old — suddenly take up the beat and clap in unison; although instruments often provide the rhythm, the clapping is inseparable from it.

Occasionally, during the clapping, comments are shouted to the dancers in praise or encouragement. During this constant clapping, the shouted comments inject a fresh spirit, amusing to the spectators and inspiring to the dancers.

In order to determine the distinctiveness of the Armenian folk dance, one must examine all expressive movements separately.

1. **Types of movements:** stomping, walking, swaying, swerving, tapping, circling, swinging, and hopping.
2. **Directions of movements:** forward, back, up, down, right, left, bending, and standing in one spot.
3. **Measure of movements:** slow, medium paced, fast, joyous, heavy, light.
4. **Character of movements:** sure, free, gentle, mild, haughty, vivacious, quiet, humble, elegant.

The Armenian folk dance does not have any movements or expressions that excite passion; its feelings are communicated, not through wild, seductive and frenzied motion, but through the dance-song itself.

The contents of these dance-songs generally express longing and praise, satire and humor, and — naturally — love.

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2. **Hand and arm movements** can be classified as waving and swaying. During the dance, the hands are positioned (a) palms down in the horizontal attitude when the arms are extended, (b) overhead and a bit forward with the fingers curled and the palms facing inward, and (c) hanging at the sides in the normal position. The arms have the same general placements as described for the hands. Both hands and arms wave and sway as follows:

a. Up and down in keeping with the movement of the torso, the hand and arm movements emphasize the nuances of the words in the song.

b. Clapping such as:

All the dancers clapping in rhythm with the beat of the music (or song). All dancers — by prearrangement — turn alternately left or right and clap hands with their temporary partner, keeping time with the music.

3. **Torso movements** include swerving and swaying. Both of these movements must be done lightly and with grace and charm, all the while continuing the up-and-down and side-to-side motions as the circling to left, or to right and the forward-and-back movement continues. There are instances where sudden and complete spins are made, spinning to the right or to the left, or sudden leaps forward or to the rear. (The latter two are indigenous to the seacoast villages of the State of Van.)

4. **Head movements** — The Armenian does not change the position of his head while dancing; usually the head is tilted a bit looking either to the right or to the left or straight ahead. In the event that the head is moved, it is done in such a way as to be unnoticeable, not ever violently or abruptly.

The tempo of the Armenian folk dance is not the same from beginning to end. It starts slowly, then gradually increases to a medium tempo, from which it speeds to a very lively rhythm and, having reached its zenith, the rhythm reverses, getting slower and slower until it reaches the opening pace; the enthusiasm of the dance soars and declines with the pace.

"Bahr" (dance) means circle, round, amble, circumference. In some places the definition has been made more distinct by saying "circle dance" (glor bahr). There's another name by which the dance is known (to Armenians) — i.e., "yalyll," which might be based on a Turkish word "yaly" meaning hoop or

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circumference, thus the equivalent of the word "bahr." The particle "-li" at the end of the word means "like" or "similar to" which gives it the same meaning as circle dance. The second definition of the word "yayli" is spring or springy as when jumping, again relating to the same meaning. The third meaning — summer — has no bearing on the first two and is not related to the idea of dance at all.

Armenian national dances are all group dances. These group dances are deep-rooted among the peasants, who cling to the old ways while they create the new. The circle dance takes the following form. The group chooses a leader — usually, someone who is a good singer and dancer — to head the line. The group might consist of all men, or all women, or be mixed. The dancers line up on the leader's left or right, as necessitated by the particular dance to be performed. They then proceed using one of the following arrangements, depending on the dance chosen:

1. The hands, raised or hanging at the sides, are clasped with that of the persons on either side.
2. Instead of clasping hands, again raised or hanging, the pinkies are hooked together.
3. Arms criss-crossed by extending the hands behind the person on either side and holding the hand of the second on one's left or right.
4. No holding hands, in any manner, close ranks shoulder to shoulder and dance as one.
5. Each person places his hands on the shoulders of the persons on either side — i.e., left hand on right shoulder of person on left and right hand on left shoulder of person on right.
6. Arms circle the waist of the person on either side.

The dancers either tilt and turn their heads in one direction (left or right) or look straight ahead, or starting with the leader, each pair turn face to face as they dance. In the dances where the shoulders are grasped or the waists encircled, the group very often closes ranks with the leader and the dancing is continued in a full closed circle. Thus, the Armenian peasant, when asked, will call it "dance" (bahr) or "circle dance" (glor bahr).

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The shorter dance-songs have the following formulas:

$$4 = 2 + 2$$

$$6 = 3 + 3$$

$$6 = 2 + 2 + 2$$

$$5 = 3 + 2$$

$$5 = 2 + 3$$

$$7 = 4 + 3$$

$$7 = 3 + 4$$

etc.

To move or change from one meter to another is easily noticeable. Furthermore, their succession is such that they complement each other, creating an indivisible unity.

The meters or measures most frequently used are 2/4 and 3/4 time, with many conventional and unconventional variations, as follows:

$$4/4 = 2/2 + 2/2$$

$$6/4 = 2/2 + 2/2 + 2/2$$

$$6/8 = 3/8 + 3/8$$

$$7/8 = 3/8 + 2/8 + 2/8$$

$$7/8 = 2/8 + 2/8 + 3/8$$

$$7/8 = 2/8 + 3/8 + 2/8$$

$$5/8 = 2/8 + 3/8$$

$$5/8 = 3/8 + 2/8$$

$$8/8 = 2/8 + 3/8 + 3/8$$

$$8/8 = 3/8 + 3/8 + 2/8$$

$$8/8 = 3/8 + 2/8 + 3/8$$

etc.

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Armenian folk dances are quite quickly disseminated. Shrines and various religious ceremonies figure significantly in this because they provide occasions for the various villages to vie with one another in the presentation of their local songs and dances. On their return the pilgrims tell their neighbors

all that was seen or heard — the dances and the dance-songs — meanwhile **stamping** them with local flourishes. Peasant weddings are another means whereby the songs and dances of one village are quickly passed to another since any wedding guest is apt to vie with others to show what is new in his own village, and to contribute to the wedding festivities. This is especially so for the women who are friends of the bride and stay up all night **reminiscing**, dancing and singing.

And then, there are the four seasons of the year — each a continuing subject for songs. Spring, bedecked with buds and flowers, awakens peasant's feelings and stirs his heart; summer, the season to work in the fields — young and old — when singing seems to make the hot sun less burning and the work less burdensome; autumn and the harvest, when the grain is in, and the barns are full — a time for unlimited rejoicing; and, finally, white-robed winter when there is nothing to be done save relax with song and dance. But when the forces of nature upset the peasant's hard-won gains, his happy, cheerful songs are replaced by sad ones.

In the village, it is an accepted custom that young men and young women and newlyweds dance on all occasions, but adults dance only at weddings. In cities, however, since the middle of the 19th century — especially in the Caucasus — everyone dances: adult and child, married or single, elderly men and women; but the poetic content of the innocent and natural folk dance has become artificial and hedonist.

Armenians, and more especially city dwellers, dance the circle dances, the Caucasian dances, and the ballroom dances with orchestral accompaniment. The latter two are no longer in the folk-dance category and are not considered to be typically Armenian. Thus, ballroom dancing is more prevalent among the wealthier Armenian communities in the cities.

Folk dances are of countless varieties, each with its own name. It would be of great interest to investigate and document the history and development of each of these dances, but unfortunately the cost would be prohibitive, and we must leave such a project for some later more propitious time.

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The choice was Soghomon.

On September 15, 1881, Soghomon Soghomonian was accepted in the Seminary of Etchmiadzin as a student. Because of his scholastic excellence in all subjects, especially in music, he became outstanding among all the students. Soon he mastered Armenian notation and became an expert in musicology. Diligently he continued to transcribe church and folk music, and study hymns.

Soghomon graduated from the Seminary in 1893. Catholicos Mugurditch Khrimian ordained him "Apegha" (monk) and named him Gomidas, after the well-known catholicos of the Middle Ages. Gomidas was appointed instructor of music of the Seminary the same year. He conducted the choir and organized a national orchestra. The songs of Gomidas, transcribed and compiled in a song book during 1891-94, indicate how enthusiastically he had kept himself busy in accumulating and cultivating the folk melodies.

The leaders of the church treated the young musician with favor, encouraging him in every way. He received the rank of Vartabed in 1895. He had no desire to go higher.

During 1894-95 Gomidas had his first article published in "Ararat," the monthly paper of Etchmiadzin, in which he collected a series of songs "The Antiquities of Agn," which he had transcribed.

In order to specialize in musical theory, in the autumn of 1895 he left for Tiflis, at that time the center of musical life in Trans-Caucasia. There, Magar Egmalian took interest in the young musician, and offered to teach him harmony.

Through the intercession of Khrimian Catholicos, in May 1896 a scholarship was secured from A. Mantashiants and Gomidas was sent to Berlin. There for three years he worked hard studying musical theory, composing, and learning to play piano and organ.

A year later he was recommended to the musical faculty as a teacher for the preliminary class in the same school.

These were not easy achievements. In one of his letters, Gomidas complained about the difficulties of mastering piano playing. He was 26-27 when he started to study piano. "My fingers have been stiffened, my bones hardened;

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departed for Paris, where he performed before enthusiastic audiences. During that period, Gomidas had his articles and songs published. In 1907 a collection of songs was published in a magnificent volume, "Armenian Harp" (Hai Knar). This book consisted of six songs for a choral group and six songs for solo performance, with piano accompaniment.

Gomidas was happy in his creative work and the reception accorded his performing talent. Soon he left for Switzerland, and on the invitation of the Armenian community, he presented concerts and delivered lectures in Zurich, Geneva, Lausanne, and Berne. From there he went to the monastery of Mekhitarists in Venice, where he declared that the folksong is the richest and culturally the most valuable of our music and criticized the music of so-called "national" songs.

On September 30, 1907 Gomidas returned to Etchmiadzin and for three years, virtually cloistered in the monastery, he worked constantly teaching in the Seminary, leading the choral group, collecting songs, studying and doing research. During those days he conceived the idea of setting "Sasna Dzurer" to music. In a letter addressed to Hovhannes Toumanian, in May 24, 1908, he wrote: "I started some time ago and have written much for your 'Anoush'." Then he complained: "Each time I am well disposed to work, I feel discouraged the words don't seem to correspond to the music, and something seems to be missing."

Occasionally Gomidas conducted concerts in Erevan, Tiflis and Baku. While at first he took delight in the seclusion of the Monastery of Etchmiadzin, he later felt that he was being suffocated within its narrow confines, where most of the people were indifferent or were inimical towards his profession. Gradually he felt more pressed. Gradually the contention sharpened between Gomidas and those who represented the existing environment, and eventually Gomidas felt compelled to leave.

From the autumn of 1910 to the spring of 1916 represented the last part of Gomidas' active life. In Constantinople he organized a mixed choir consisting of 300 people and named it "Koosan." Gomidas was looking for a cultural environment that would accept and nurture his ideologies, but he did not find