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The Issue of Armenian Cultural Identity as Expressed in the Choral and Vocal Music of Komitas Vardapet

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in Music

by

Vasken Aristakes Ohanian

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The Issue of Armenian Cultural Identity
as Expressed in the Choral and Vocal Music
of Komitas Vardapet

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Doctor of Philosophy in Music
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Professor Ian Krouse, Chair

Komitas Vardapet is one of the most influential figures in the history of Armenian art and folk music, inspiring generations of Armenian composers and pioneering ethnomusicological practices still in use today. As a result of his musical education, he had very particular and controversial opinions about what it means for music to be Armenian. While these opinions, expressed in his writing, are sometimes vague and seemingly contradictory, three principles continuously arise in his descriptions of Armenian musical identity. These principles are the relationship between melody and mode, the relationship between melody and language, and the relationship between melody and harmony.

To better understand how these elements shape Komitas's conception of Armenian musical identity, this dissertation will begin with an examination of Komitas's musical education to better understand his perspective and biases, exploring his studies in Etchmiadzin, Tiflis, and

Berlin. The next section will give an overview of the Armenian modal system, outlining the general guiding principles of the modes, their construction, and their melodic characteristics. The final section will analyze Komitas's choral and vocal works, emphasizing the relationships between language, melody, mode, and harmony to show how Komitas embodied his conception of Armenian musical identity in practice through his compositions.

Accompanying this monograph is my concerto for choir, entitled *Chasing Suns*. Like Komitas, who straddled the Eastern and Western musical traditions, *Chasing Suns* is a work in twelve movements in which six of the movements are in English and six are in Armenian. The texts set in this work are by Bliss Carman, Komitas, George Herbert, Edgar Allen Poe, e.e. cummings, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Heranush Arshagian, Kahlil Gibran, Misak Medzarents, and Aurelius Johnson, as well as traditional Armenian hymn texts. The final chapter of this monograph will discuss *Chasing Suns*, its structure, and elements of my compositional processes.

The dissertation of Vasken Aristakes Ohanian is approved.

Münir N. Beken

Melissa Bilal

David Samuel Lefkowitz

Ian Krouse, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2025

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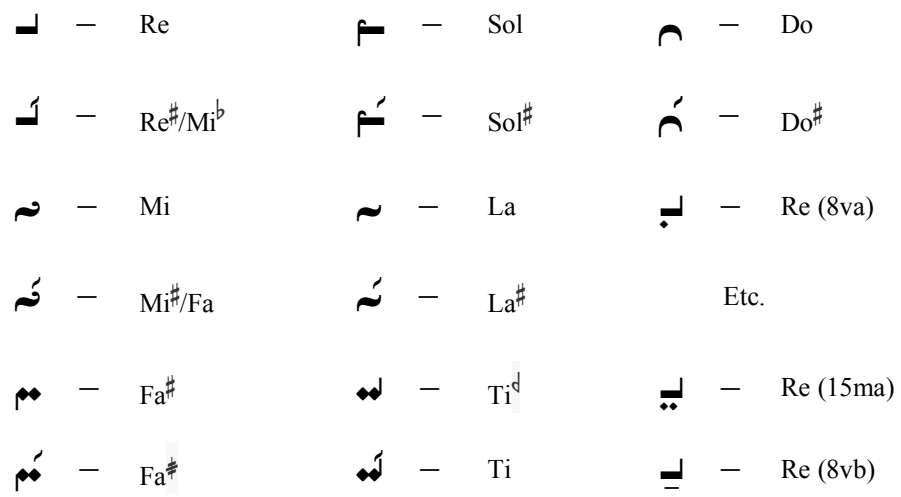
Basic Hampartsum Pitch Notation



The pitches here are given with Movable-Do solfege syllables instead of note names. The reason for this is due to a discrepancy in Komitas's transcriptions between his early and late work. In Komitas's early works, ▂ is written as D. In my estimation this is the correct transcription as it reflects the Greek modal system, and consequently the Western Church Modes, for which the first mode is Dorian on D (Re). However, in later works, Komitas changes ▂ to C, possibly as a result of the shifting of his perspective to a more major/minor focused view of Western music, based on the Ionian mode on C (Do). Because Robert Atayan and other prominent Armenian musicologists use the latter method when transcribing Hampartsum notation from Komitas and others, like Arshak Brutyan, I will also use ▂ to indicate C, but with the understanding that that C carries the solfege syllable Re. This will also be useful in analyses which use transposed versions of the modes.

Additionally, in his 1897 article, “Armenian Church Music of the 19th Century,” Komitas denotes as Mi, Mi♯, Fa, Fa♯, clarifying that Mi♯ and Fa are not enharmonically equivalent. Notably, in that denotation, he uses to mean Fa. Because the tuning for is closer to Fa♯ than Fa, and most other transcriptions of Hampartsum notation label it as such, I will also use as Fa♯.

Turkish *Makam* Microtonal Accidentals

	Theory	Armenian Practice		Theory	Armenian Practice
	1 comma flat (~22.6415 cents)	(~15 cents flat)		1 comma sharp	(~15 cents sharp)
	4 commas flat	(~15 cents sharper than ♭)		5 commas sharp	(~15 cents sharper than ♯)
	8 commas flat	(~15 cents sharper than ♭♭)		8 commas sharp	(~15 cents flatter than 𝄪)

One comma (i.e., Holdrian Comma) in Turkish Makam theory is ~22.6415 cents. This monograph will not use these accidentals in the same way as in Turkish *Makam* theory (i.e., within the context of a 53-EDO octave). It will use them in the manner described in the “Armenian Practice” columns to more closely reflect how Armenian performers play these microtones. Please keep in mind that the accidentals in the “Armenian Practice” columns are also theoretical themselves. In practice, they are not always played exactly as prescribed, and the degree to which the accidental is emphasized can change depending on many factors, including the aesthetic tastes of the performer. For more information, see Chapter 3.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I feel like I have had the most incredible experiences since I started the PhD program in Compositoin at the Herb Alpert School of Music at UCLA. I've met so many wonderful human beings, friends, mentors, and even enemies that have changed my life for the better. There are so many people I need to thank, and I'm going to do my best not to leave anyone out.

First and foremost, thank you to my committee: Prof. Münir Beken, Prof. Melissa Bilal, Prof. David Lefkowitz, and Prof. Ian Krouse.

Professor Beken, we have only known one another for a brief time, but I love that every time we speak, my perspective of the world of music changes. I am so grateful for your guidance and your kindness. I hope our paths continue to cross in the future.

Professor Bilal, ever since we met, you've always been so supportive of me, not just in my research, but as a member of the Armenian music community at UCLA. Without you, I may have never been able to learn oud from a world class player like Antranig Kzirian. I'm thrilled that you are now the Director of the Armenian Music Program. I know that in your hands, the program will continue to thrive and grow at UCLA. Շատ շնորհակալ եմ։

David, when I came to UCLA, I felt like I was lost, without a voice in the composition world, and I had been suffering from severe imposter syndrome for quite a while. You, as my first composition teacher at UCLA, are the one who helped me quickly get back on track. I learned so much in that year of lessons with you, and I will forever be grateful. Thank you.

Ian, you are the reason I came to UCLA. Listening to your music, I had a feeling that we were similar in our perspectives on music and composition. The more we have gotten to know each other, the more I realize just how right my gut feeling was. I've never left a lesson or a class with you feeling anything less than inspired. Thank you for everything.

Thank you also to the rest of the composition faculty. Prof. Danielpour, thank you for reminding me how to trust my intuition and teaching me how to better advocate for myself. To Kay, we didn't always see eye to eye, but thank you for expanding my horizons. I always learned something new from our discussions.

To Antranig Kzirian, my oud teacher, my brother, without you and everything you taught me about oud, Armenian folk music, mode, etc., it wouldn't have been possible to write this dissertation. Thank you so much, I am so grateful that we met and got to work together. I am sure we are going to see more of each other over the coming years.

Thank you also to all my colleagues in the composition department, both graduate and undergraduate students. You have been like a second family to me these past 4.5 years. Every one of you is so talented. I have heard pieces by all of you that are so good that I wish I had written myself. Every day you inspire me to become a better composer, musician, and friend.

Speaking of friends, I don't think ever in my life have I been blessed with as good of friends as I have now. I wish I could name and thank you all individually, but then these acknowledgements would be longer than the rest of the monograph. However, there are some of you without whom finishing this dissertation would have been infinitely more difficult if not impossible.

To Sona, I have had such fun with you these last nine months or so, talking about Armenian folk music, scouring the web and UCLA in our struggles to find resources we know exist somewhere but can't find, sharing what we do find, and commiserating about what we can't. It has made the writing of this dissertation all the more enjoyable.

To Andreas, I love that we can talk about anything. You're the only person I've ever know who I can get into heated debates with discussing music, philosophy, ethics, etc., and still

return to being the best of friends with no grudges and no lingering resentment. You keep me sharp and honest. Thank you.

Carlos, knowing you has made me a better person and a more complete human being. *Chasing Suns* might be the best piece I have written to date. It's so full of life and free from the angst that was rampant in my earlier compositions. I would not have been able to write it if we never met. I've learned so much from you and the positivity, the wonder with which you move through the world. I'm humbled every day to know you, and I'm eternally grateful that I can call you my friend.

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Thank you to the Liveright Publishing Corporation for granting me permission to set e.e. cummings's poem, "l(a," as part of my concerto for choir, *Chasing Suns*.

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And finally, thank you to the all the scholars, musicologists, ethnomusicologists, etc. who work and have worked to broaden our understanding of Armenian music over the centuries. The research in this dissertation rests on the shoulders of your achievements.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

As a young Armenian-American composer, there was a period of time when I was preoccupied, trying to understand and incorporate "Armenian-ness" into my compositions. In my early undergraduate studies, I informed my music by drawing inspiration from Armenian music, especially lullabies from my childhood. I had little to no knowledge of the context of the music I was drawing on; I just composed and arranged the music in a manner that felt right at the time given my 13 years of training in Western Art Music.[1] Yet, the more I tried to dive into my Armenian heritage, one of the questions that I continued to find myself asking was, "What does it really mean for music to be Armenian?"

From my studies these past several years, I have come to understand just how debated and polarizing that question can be, both inside and outside of the Armenian community and especially amongst Armenian musicians of backgrounds in differing genres of music. Part of the reason that question is so contentious is because of Armenia's historic geographical location. Armenia has stretched at times from the Caspian Sea to the Mediterranean and Black Seas, placing it in the middle of conflict zones between larger kingdoms and empires. As a result of frequent existence under foreign rule, Armenians began to develop a sense of urgency, especially at the end of the nineteenth century, about "preserving" Armenian culture. The prevailing concern was that Armenia's history and culture was in danger of being lost due to the influence of the cultures of larger occupying powers.

[1] For the purposes of this dissertation, the term "Western Art Music" refers to what is commonly called "Classical Music" or "Western Classical Music."

Komitas Vardapet, considered by many present-day Armenians as the godfather of Armenian music, was born during a time when Armenia was part of the Ottoman Empire; prior to that, it had also been part of the Persian Empire, the Byzantine Empire, and others. In 1912 in a letter to his longtime friend, Arshak Chopanyan, Komitas wrote, "From the very beginning, our country has been a tasty morsel for advancing empires and the powers that surround us."[2] The concern of preserving Armenian culture was a driving impetus for his educational, ethnographic, and compositional works, which all focused on preserving the "essence" of Armenian music.

The Armenian Church at Etchmiadzin, Komitas's main benefactor, shared this concern, especially in how it pertained to Armenian sacred music. In 1895 they sent Komitas to Tiflis to study European harmony with Makar Yekmalyan, one of the first Armenian composers to set the Armenian liturgy for four-part choir, and to study the fundamentals of European harmony. As the church had done in 1889 with Deacon Gevorg Chorekchyan,[3] they then sent Komitas to Berlin in 1896 to learn the principles of Western Art Music. The original plan was for Komitas to enter the Royal Conservatory. He was admitted as an auditor by then director, Joseph Joachim; however, after further testing, Joachim determined that the conservatory was not a good fit for Komitas as it would have been a step back in his training.[4] Instead, he recommended that Komitas study composition, harmony, counterpoint, piano, etc. privately with Richard Schmidt while auditing classes by Heinrich Bellermann, Oskar Fleischer, and Max Friedländer at

[2] Komitas Vardapet, *The Letters of Komitas Vardapet*, trans. Nazareth Seferian (Oakville, Ontario: Mosaic Press, 2021), 193-194.

[3] Deacon Chorekchyan studied at the Leipzig Conservatory. When he returned to Etchmiadzin in 1894, he taught at the Gevorgian Theological Seminary where he was one of Komitas's teachers. However, after several years of study in Berlin, Komitas seemingly held Deacon Chorekchyan in low regard. In an 1898 letter to the seminary's administrator, Karapet Kostanyan, requesting additional study funds, Komitas wrote a post-script stating, "My predecessor [Chorekchyan] would not have managed [in] over five years even 1/10th of that which I have done in this short [two-year] period." Komitas, *The Letters of Komitas Vardapet*, 48.

[4] Ibid., 27-30.

the Frederick William University. The education Komitas received, especially from Fleischer with his expertise in folk music, played a fundamental role in Komitas's compositional and ethnographic work.

Komitas began the main body of his work shortly after returning to Etchmiadzin in 1899. When he wasn't teaching at the Gevorgian Seminary, directing the choir there, he spent his time conducting ethnographic research in remote Armenian villages, collecting Armenian folk melodies. He collected folk melodies from remote villages specifically, because he believed that those villages had little contact with other cultures, and therefore, the Armenian quality of the music there was more "pure."[5] Komitas not only meticulously categorized the melodies he collected, but also diligently documented both the context surrounding them and the daily lives of the villagers who sang them.[6] In not neglecting the anthropological and sociological aspects of the Armenian tradition, he helped pioneer the field of ethnomusicology, paving the way for the work of others, such as Béla Bartók.[7] Much of his ethnographic research informed his compositions, which in turn informed the lectures and concerts he produced. The goal of these lectures and concerts was, ultimately, to inform and educate others, especially the Europeans, on the virtues of Armenian music and what he believed distinguished it from other Eastern musical traditions.

Despite the significance of Komitas's accomplishments and the high regard with which modern Armenians hold him, Komitas was neither the first nor was he alone in his desire to

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[5] Komitas Vardapet, *The Letters of Komitas Vardapet*, 117.

[6] Komitas did not personally collect all of the compiled folk melodies in the *Collected Works*. Some of them were collected by his students.

[7] Sirvart Poladian, "Komitas Vardapet and his Contribution to Ethnomusicology," *Ethnomusicology* 16, no. 1 (January 1972), 83-84.

preserve Armenian musical identity. For example, the Mekhitarist Order, a Catholic Armenian monastic order, was founded in 1701 by Mekhitar of Sivas in an effort to bring Armenian society back to what Mekhitar perceived as its medieval cultural and religious roots. In the middle to late eighteenth century in Istanbul, there was a revival of Mekhitarist thought, supported largely by the Duzyan family,[8] patrons of Armenian cultural study, performances, and education. The collective musicological efforts of Hampartsum Limondjian, Anton & Yakob Duzyan, and Minas Pzhshkian as a part of this movement in the early nineteenth century led to the development of a new system of Armenian notation, Hampartsum Notation. The old notation system and its neumes, or *khaz* (IPA: [χɑz]), to this day remain lost to time. In older Armenian manuscripts of sacred monodic melodies from the Middle Ages, or *daghs* (IPA: [dɑʁs]), the *khaz* notation itself still existed, however it was the ability to interpret them was lost by the beginning of the nineteenth century.[9] Limondjian decided to repurpose the old *khaz* into a new system of notation which bears his name today. Due to the ease with which one could record melodies in Hampartsum notation, it would later prove to be integral to the ethnographic work of Komitas and other ethnomusicologists.[10]

Komitas also had contemporaries in his ethnographic and compositional work, such as Arshak Brutyan and Kristapor Kara-Murza. They both differed in methodology to Komitas. Arshak Brutyan took a much more Eastern approach to transcribing Armenian folk melodies. Unlike Komitas, who strove for simplicity in his transcriptions of folk music and removed many

[8] The Duzyan family were part of the *amira* class in Ottoman Society. The *amiras* were the economic elites of the Ottoman Armenian communities; they were patrons of education and culture. For more information, see Jacob Olley, "Writing Music in Nineteenth-Century Istanbul: Ottoman Armenians and the Invention of Hampartsum Notation" (PhD thesis, King's College London, 2017), 47.

[9] Olley, 97.

[10] Ibid., 113

of the melodies' ornamentations, Brutyan left them in. His research on the Armenian *ashugh*[11] tradition is a key resource in their study, especially since Komitas largely neglects the *ashugh* tradition, as he did not view it to be "real" Armenian music.[12] Komitas also held similar sentiments about the compositions and folk collections of Kristapor Kara-Murza, even though Kara-Murza was briefly his teacher at the Gevorgian Seminary. In a letter to his friend, Arshak Chopanyan, he criticized folk songs collected by Kara-Murza near the Tiflis area as being "damaged so badly that the poor songs have lost their color and any trace of their ethnicity, and their form now resembles the songs of tribes from Little Russia, since they have been sung the same way rather than in our national style."[13]

Again, the question arises, what is this "national style" to which Komitas is referring? Komitas's work is unquestionably indispensable and influential in the field of Armenian musicology, but unfortunately, the gaps remaining in his work, caused primarily by Komitas's omissions and biases, obfuscates some of his beliefs, findings, and conclusions. In addition to his aforementioned dismissal of Armenian *ashugh* music, he neglects many other aspects of music from historic Western Armenia. For example, $\frac{5}{8}$, $\frac{7}{8}$, $\frac{9}{8}$, and $\frac{10}{8}$ are meters commonly found in Western Armenian music, but they are practically non-existent in Komitas's compositions and collections. The omission of the Armenian $\frac{9}{8}$ meter (sub-divided 2+2+2+3) is particularly puzzling, because the *tamzara*, one of Armenia's most popular national dance forms, is defined by this meter. There are numerous different *tamzaras* which vary by village, and yet, in the

[11] *Ashughs* (IPA: [aʃuʁ]) were medieval Armenian minstrels.

[12] Brigitta Davidjants, "Identity construction in Armenian Music on the Example of Early Folklore Movement," *Folklore: Electronic Journal of Folklore* 62 (2015), 195.

[13] Komitas, *The Letters of Komitas*, 71-72.

entirety of Komitas's folk collections, he has only recorded two. Of those two *tamzaras*, only one of them is a genuine *tamzara* (i.e., Volume 14, #141 of Komitas's *Complete Works*). The other (i.e., Volume 10, #86) is labeled as a *tamzara*, but is in a 𝄞, which by definition would make it a *laz bar* rather than a *tamzara*. Why is it that Komitas, one of Armenia's most cherished composers, overlooked a dance form that is so deeply ingrained in Armenian culture even to this day?[14]

There are also several problems with Komitas's treatment of melodies within the Armenian modal system. The Armenian *Ութ Ձայն* (Western Armenian IPA: [ut tsajn]), or eight tone system, or *Octoechos*, is a part of the Eastern tradition and thus related to *makam*, *dastgah*, and the Greek *Octoechos*. As the name suggests, there are eight modes, or *yeghanags*, divided into four *tsayns* (tones) and four *goghms* (sides).[15] Additionally, each of the eight modes has a *tartsvadzk* (turned) form, and the eighth mode has three *sdeghi* (dactyl) forms. Each of these nineteen base modes (of which there are also many regional variations) can be directly linked to a *makam*. For example, Mode VI, The Third Side Mode (ԳԿ), is the equivalent of *Makam*

[14] For a more in-depth criticism of Komitas's transcriptions, see Hachig Kazarian's book, *Western Armenian Music: From Asia Minor to the United States*, or his lecture, "Western Armenian Music: An Artist's Perspective," given at California State University Fresno on March 9, 2024.

[15] Transliterating Armenian into roman script is always a challenge. There are at least three different main dialects of Armenian (Western, Eastern, and Persian). Even taking into consideration the differences in pronunciation between these dialects (e.g., the inversion of many voiced and unvoiced consonants between dialects), Armenians within each dialect group have developed numerous differing methods of transliteration. For the purposes of this monograph, I have elected to use mainly Western Armenian pronunciations as it is the dialect that I grew up speaking. When necessary, I will include either the original text in Armenian script or a transliteration using the International Phonetic Alphabet, and sometimes both. However, when quoting sources using a different transliteration method, I will keep the original transliteration from the source. I will do the same for names which have a widely accepted transliteration (e.g., Komitas Vardapet (Eastern Armenian) rather than Gomidas Vartabed (Western Armenian).

Saba.[16] There are two main issues with Komitas's treatment of the modes. First is that Komitas appears to have mislabeled and, in some cases, incorrectly transcribed and/or misrepresented some of the modes in both his folk and liturgical collections. The clearest case of this happens with *Makam Saba* (ԳԿ). One of the defining features of *Makam Saba's* scale is that its base *Saba* tetrachord is similar to the first four notes of a minor scale, but with the fourth scale degree lowered a half-step. However, in nearly all of Komitas's transcriptions of *Makam Saba* the fourth degree is not lowered, making it more closely resembling *Makam Ussak*[17] (ԳԿ). As a consequence of this change, this not only erases the true character of *Makam Saba* from Komitas's interpretation of Armenian music, but significantly affects his harmonization of *Makam Saba* melodies in his compositions.

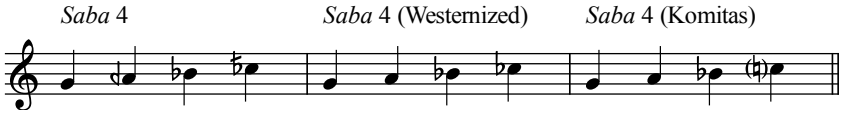

Figure 1.1. *Saba* tetrachord as performed, as in Western notation, and as in Komitas's works.

The second problem with Komitas's approach to the Armenian modal system is that microtonality appears to be missing in the notation of Armenian melodies. Microtonality is a key component of Middle-Eastern modal systems, and by removing it, or neglecting to finding a notational alternative when changing it to Western notation, it removes a key element of the modes. This makes understanding the idiosyncrasies of the Armenian modal system through

[16] Both the terms *"tsayn"* and *"yeghanag"* can be used synonymously with the words "mode" and "*makam."* For the sake of ease, when referring to a specific mode, I will generally favor the *makam* name of the mode with the corresponding Armenian shorthand in this monograph instead of the full translated name of the mode.

[17] Pronounced [uʃːʃak].

Komitas much more difficult, because modes begin to become indistinguishable based upon pitch alone. For example, without microtones, the *Buselik, Ussak,* and *Saba* tetrachords, as present in Komitas's work, all seem identical.

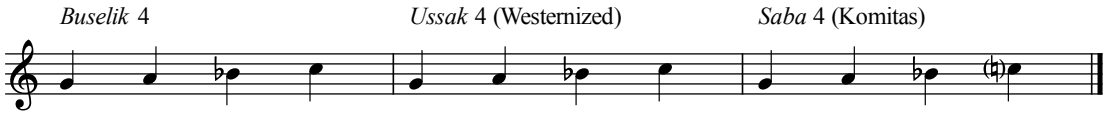

Figure 1.2. Komitas's westernized *Buselik*, *Ussak*, and *Saba* tetrachords.

In the above figure, in Western notation, these three tetrachords all have the same pitch content. In actuality, however, *Buselik* is the only tetrachord accurately represented. Both *Ussak* and *Saba* have their second scale degree lowered by one comma, and *Saba*, as previously mentioned, has a flat fourth scale degree.[18] Thankfully, other characteristics of the modes, such as the dominant tone, melodic cadences, melodic behavior,[19] etc., can help one overcome the difficulty of identifying the Armenian modes within an equal-tempered context, but, again, part of the modes' character is lost.

I believe many of these issues in Komitas's work can be explained by his attempts at channeling this Eastern art form through the viewpoint of the Western Art medium. While there were undoubtedly benefits to Komitas's training in Berlin, it, aided by his underlying belief that Western music was more evolved than Eastern music, left holes and unanswered questions in

[18] All micro-tonal notation in this dissertation will be shown with accidentals from the Turkish *Makam* system of notation. Therefore, the quarter-flat of the second scale degree is not a 24-EDO quarter-flat. It is a lowering by the equivalent of one Holdrian comma (~22 cents) in the Turkish *Makam* system, although modern Armenian performers tend to perform this quarter-flat less flat, i.e., closer to 15 cents flat for reasons outlined in Chapter 3. See the List of Symbols for a complete list of accidentals and their meanings.

[19] *Seyir* in the Turkish Makam system is the modal behavior of a melody.

Komitas's interpretation of "Armenian identity" in music.

In this monograph, I will analyze and examine Komitas's works in an effort to better understand and demonstrate more clearly what "Armenian musical identity" meant to Komitas. The scope of my analyses will focus mainly on Komitas's choral and vocal compositions, because they make up the overwhelming majority of Komitas's compositional output. However, even in doing so, it will inevitably become necessary to discuss aspects of Komitas's folk collections, because the majority of Komitas's secular compositions utilize folk melodies from those collections. "Dzirani Dzar" (Apricot Tree), for example, uses three collected folk melodies (#141-143 from Volume 10 of Komitas's *Complete Works*).

I will also be referring to compositions with heavy utilization of folk melodies, like "Dzirani Dzar," as "compositions" rather than "folk arrangements." In my view, the usage of folk melodies in Komitas's concert works are transformative in nature, warranting the "composition" moniker. This is no different to me than why we would consider Béla Bartók's *Five Hungarian Folk Songs* or his *Rhapsody No. 2* as "compositions" and not "folk arrangements." In a similar vein, when I refer to "art music," whether Western, Eastern, or otherwise, I am referring to music created with the intent to be performed in concert, whereas I use "folk music" to refer to music intended for daily life, i.e., the collected melodies that make up volumes 9-14 of Komitas's *Complete Works*.

As a final caveat to my analyses, I will frequently be using the terms "Western" and "Eastern" to refer to music, traditions, and culture from Europe and the Middle-East/West Asia. While Komitas appears to place some degree of value judgement on these terms, viewing the Western tradition as more evolved, I myself do not. I do believe, however, that Komitas's bias toward Western art music and training in combination with his goal of discovering what he

believed to be the “true” Armenian musical identity caused his compositions to bridge some of the gaps between the Eastern and Western traditions.

CHAPTER 2: KOMITAS'S MUSICAL TRAINING

To better understand Komitas's perspective and approach to his work, we must begin by understanding the nature of the training he underwent. In the previous chapter, I gave a brief overview of Komitas's musical training, but this chapter will discuss specifics of his training and how they affected his work. The first portion of Komitas's education, mostly in Etchmiadzin, gave him tools for understanding the Eastern musical tradition. This training was foundational for his understanding of the Armenian Modal System and melody. The second portion of his education, mostly in Berlin, shaped his understanding of the Western musical tradition.

Komitas's Eastern Training

Although Komitas was born in Kütahya, Turkey to a musical family (both his parents composed songs in the Turkish language, and his father and uncle were cantors at the local St. Theodoros Church), his musical training did not begin in the home. Komitas's mother died in 1870, about a year after he was born, and his father died in 1880, leaving him orphaned and in the care of his paternal grandmother. In 1881, due to his beautiful singing voice, he was selected from a group of twenty Armenian orphans by the high priest to enroll as a student at the Gevorgian Seminary in Etchmiadzin. It was at this seminary school where Komitas's real education and musical training began.

The Gevorgian Seminary was unlike other similar schools in Armenia at the time; the education tended to be more secular by comparison.[20] As part of his general education, Komitas

[20] Harry Begian, "Gomidas Vartabed: His Life and Importance to Armenian Music" (EdD diss., University of Michigan, 1964), 7.

studied Turkish, Russian, French, and of course Armenian (which he did not speak prior to attending the seminary). Other various subjects including literature, geography, and painting.[21] His early musical training concentrated mainly on Armenian sacred music, the Armenian modal system, and its notation. This is the time period that he likely would have first learned about the Armenian modal system and notational system (Hampartsum notation) using Nigoghayos Tashjian's *Դասագիրք Եկեղեցական Ձայնագրութեան Հայոց [Textbook on Ecclesiastical Notation]*. From his letters, it is clear from Komitas was intimately familiar with the textbook, supported by the fact that his Armenian notation teacher, Ghevont Vardapet Jemararian, was a student of Tashjian's.[22] Tashjian himself was a student of Kapriel Yeraian, in turn a student of Hampartsum Limondjian, the creator of the Armenian system of notation. Tashjian was also the first non-clergy instructor of music at the Gevorgian Seminary during the years 1873-1879.[23] His duties in addition to teaching, included notating Armenian sacred music sung at the Holy See in Etchmiadzin. This was part of the church's efforts during the period of 1867-1882 to record and standardize Armenian sacred music.[24]

The significance of this context surrounding Komitas's education is that it shows the nature of the academic environment around him and speaks to the broader mindset around scholars in Armenia at the time. Komitas was receiving a mix of sacred and secular education from a rigorous seminary in Etchmiadzin at a time when "preserving Armenian sacred music"

[21] Violet Vagramian, "Gomidas Vartabed: Pioneer of Armenian Folk Music," *The Choral Journal* 22, no. 3 (November 1981), 2.

[22] Begian, 13.

[23] Ibid., 33.

[24] Ibid., 16.

and "preserving Armenian culture & identity" were two of the church's most pressing concerns. For Komitas, a man who was ordained *sargavak* (a deacon) in 1890, *apegha* (a monk) in 1893, and finally *vartabed* (a priest) in 1895,[25] the church's concerns would have certainly made an impression on him.

Some of this influence from the atmosphere in Etchmiadzin is evident from his achievements and activities at the seminary. Komitas took his studies and musical activities very seriously. His fellow students and teachers held him in high regard for his ability to learn quickly and for his beautiful voice. By the start of his fourth year at the seminary, he became the chief cantor at the Holy See. In his autobiography he wrote, "When Catholicos Gevorg IV used to attend services at the cathedral, my friend, who also sang well, and I used to stand on either side of his chair and sing our solos from there. As we sang, the Catholicos's tears fell and flowed down to hide in the folds of his white beard."[26] In his musical studies, Komitas quickly mastered Hampartsum notation, garnering himself a reputation as a skilled notator.[27] After about four years of study, he started to take an interest in Armenian folk music, notating as many as he could. Due to the diversity of the students and faculty at the Gevorgian Seminary, Komitas had exposure to a plethora of folk songs from villages across historic Armenia through his colleagues. Considering the number of folk songs he was collecting at his young age, the amount of singing he was doing at Etchmiadzin, and the reverence his colleagues and teachers

[25] More specifically, a *vartabed* is a celibate priest who the church has recognized for scholarly achievement and church service. This is also where the name "Komitas Vardapet" originates. "Vardapet" is his title, and "Komitas" is the name bestowed on him upon when he was ordained an *apegha*. Komitas's birth name was Soghomon Soghomonian.

[26] Komitas Vardapet, "[Komitas Vardapet's Autobiography from June 24, 1908 in Etchmiadzin]," *[Armenian Monthly]*, (May 1924), 85.

[27] Begian, 10.

had for him, it is clear Komitas developed a high level of musical understanding and an exceptional ear from his training at the Seminary.

Komitas's Western Training

Komitas and Kristapor Kara-Murza

Komitas's first major exposure to Western Art Music came from Crimean-born Armenian composer, Kristapor Kara-Murza. In 1892, Komitas's final year at the seminary, Catholicos Makar I appointed Kara-Murza as an instructor of music and the seminary's choir director. In many ways, Kara-Murza's career was a model for what Komitas's career would eventually become. Kara-Murza was a composer and choir director. Both prior and during his tenure at the seminary, he traveled around Armenia organizing choral concerts of Armenian music. From the period of 1885-1902, he organized an estimated 248 concerts in 47 cities.[28] Like Komitas, Kara-Murza was also a collector of Armenian folk melodies, with a particular affinity for Armenian *ashugh* music, which he would teach to the seminary choir.

Kara-Murza came to Etchmiadzin with the intent to Europeanize the musical training at the Gevorgian Seminary. He taught his students the fundamentals of Western notation, Western theory, and how to organize and rehearse a multi-part choir. The students generally responded favorably to his methods. However, the religious leadership was not happy with his criticisms of Armenian music. He openly criticized Armenian monodic music as being rudimentary, and favored Western-style part-singing and polyphony. His beliefs also caused him to be critical of Hampartsum notation.[29] While Hampartsum notation is more useful than Western notation for

[28] Begian, 20.

[29] Ibid., 19-20.

quickly recording the notes and rhythms of a melody, its interpretation is less precise from a Western perspective. Two different cantors could interpret the same *sharagan* (hymn) very differently. This is in part because some elements of the Eastern musical style are fluid. For example, in many contexts, the pitch of the second degree of an *Ussak* tetrachord is variable; it can change depending on the trajectory of the melody and sometimes can change over the duration of a single note.[30] Additionally, ornamentation is often not shown with the Hampartsum notation, and each performer will ornament differently according to their tastes. As a result, it is less suited for part-singing and polyphony than western notation, which needs to be more rigidly controlled in order for the contrapuntal melodies to be coherent.

Kara-Murza's open criticism of Armenian monodic music and its notation are likely what led to his dismissal after just one year at the seminary, even though the curriculum change was well-received by the student body. As there are no surviving memoirs that I am aware of, it is difficult to determine how exactly Komitas felt about Kara-Murza's methods. On one hand, in letters written after his time in Berlin, he criticized and seemed to show disdain for Kara-Murza's work. On the other, much of Komitas's career paralleled that of Kara-Murza. For example, he criticized Kara-Murza's attempt to westernize Armenian music, but would later fail to identify westernization and Western bias in his own work. At the same time, just like Kara-Murza, he collected folk songs, composed, and put on concerts of Armenian music both within Armenia and in Europe.

[30] For more information, see Chapter 3.

Tiflis and Makar Yekmalyan

After graduating from the Gevorgian Seminary School in 1893, Komitas was ordained as an *apegha* and succeeded Kara-Murza as the school's music instructor and choir director. In his downtime, he continued to study Armenian ecclesiastical music and visited nearby villages to collect folk songs. It was during this time period that he published his first scholarly article, "Հայոց Եկեղեցական Եղանակները Եղանակները" [Armenian Ecclesiastical Melodies] in 1894. However, to continue his Western music education, he needed to go to Tiflis, Georgia. In the summer of 1895, after having been newly ordained a *vartabed*, Komitas traveled to Tiflis with the blessing of Catholicos Mgrdich Khrimian I to study at the conservatory there. However, upon arrival, Makar Yekmalyan advised him against enrolling. According to a letter that Komitas wrote to Etchmiadzin from Tiflis, "Mr. Makar Yekmalyants is completely advising against gaining admission to the conservatory, and considers starting the music school here to be pointless and useless for me. He was so kind as to say that he would go over musical theory with me in great detail. In general, many people advise studying musical theory with Yekmalyants."[31]

Having himself trained in both the Eastern and Western musical traditions, Yekmalyan was probably the perfect mentor for Komitas at this stage of his career. Yekmalyan was a former student of Nigoghayos Tashjian and had studied at the Imperial Conservatory of Music in St. Petersburg with Rimsky-Korsakov and Tchaikovsky. Earlier that same year Komitas came to Tiflis, the Armenian church had also adopted Yekmalyan's setting of the *badarak*, the Armenian Liturgy, as the first official four-part, polyphonic *badarak* in the history of the Armenian church. Furthermore, the thriving Armenian community in Tiflis, accounting for about a third of the population of the city, was beneficial to Komitas's education. The Armenian community in

[31] Komitas, *The Letters of Komitas Vardapet*, 22.

Tiflis was a cultural and educational hub; it regularly supported the arts, presenting concerts of both Armenian and European music.[32] Studying in Tiflis provided Komitas his first opportunity as an adult to experience a thriving, secular side of the Armenian community.

The core of Komitas's private studies with Yekmalyan for the first two months centered on Western harmony and its implementation. Following that, he would study instrumental music and vocal music into the Spring. There are two noteworthy observations from the curriculum of this second portion of study. In an October 1895 letter updating Etchmiadzin of his course of study, Komitas wrote that he will only be studying instrumental music "…up to the extent that it is necessary for harmony and vocals," and that his vocal music studies "…should not take up that much time, especially since I need only the practical side."[33] Komitas's second statement seems to indicate that Komitas felt he had a mostly complete theoretical understanding of Western vocal music. If so, we might speculate that this portion of his lessons with Yekmalyan consisted mostly of sight-singing and solfege at an advanced level. The first statement seems to indicate that, on the whole, Komitas was less interested in Armenian music without text. This makes sense, given that the church sent Komitas to receive Western musical training partly with the intention of having him help notate and preserve Armenian church music. As there is no music without text in officially sanctioned settings of the Armenian liturgy, deeper study into instrumental music writing would have seemed unnecessary to him. This not only explains why the majority of Komitas's work is for voice and choir, but it also gives a clue to one of his considerations when identifying music as Armenian, namely, language.

[32] Begian, 32-33.

[33] Komitas, *The Letters of Komitas Vardapet*, 23.

The main difference between instrumental and vocal music is that text plays a critical role in the creation of vocal music. The flow and meter of the text informs the structure and rhythm of the music, and the music magnifies the meaning and emotion of the text. If Komitas's ambition was to understand what determines "Armenian identity" in music, then it logically follows that he would focus his efforts on vocal music, because the Armenian language itself is a defining feature of that music, perhaps even more so than in instrumental music. Evidence that Komitas was cognizant of this relationship between language, music, and identity is apparent in his criticisms of other Armenian composers. A common criticism that he levies on them is that their music does not demonstrate the characteristics of the Armenian language. In a 1909 examination of Ruben Ghevorghyan's *Singing the Holy Mass: A Simple Arrangement for 4-Voice Choirs in School's and People's Churches*, he makes many criticisms regarding the rules of the Armenian language, concluding the review by stating, "The music of each nation springs from the four indivisible elements of that nation's language – measure, modulation, pronunciation, and spirit. These are the things that form the worlds of our thoughts and emotions. Until we study in detail the four characteristics mentioned above, until we understand their rules and use them, we cannot have a perfect harmonization of any spiritual or worldly song."[34]

The main goal of Komitas's training with Yekmalyan was to prepare for entrance exams to a top European conservatory. The initial plan was to attend the Imperial Conservatory in St. Petersburg, following in Yekmalyan's footsteps. Yekmalyan would be traveling to St. Petersburg himself with six singers and a conductor in the summer of 1896. If Komitas was able

[34] Komitas, *The Letters of Komitas Vardapet*, 154-156.

to train under Yekmalyan and become skilled enough to be able to be the conductor of that ensemble, he would have been able to receive a salary of 50-60 rubles for his work and go to St. Petersburg.[35] With this goal in sight, Komitas frequented the choral rehearsals at the Nercessian School, where Yekmalyan was director of the choir. He took private lessons in both vocal and instrumental music (piano) in addition to his private study with Yekmalyan. Through those rehearsals, he further developed the rehearsal techniques and conducting ability he would use later in his career when organizing concerts across Armenia and Europe. However, the plan to study in St. Petersburg ultimately fell through. Instead, the church was able to secure funds from a benefactor, Russian-Armenian oil baron, Alexander Mantashian, to send Komitas to Berlin to continue his Western studies.

Komitas and François-Joseph Fétis

Before delving into Komitas's training in Berlin, it is necessary to discuss his relationship to the work of Belgium composer and musicologist, François-Joseph Fétis. While in Tiflis, he sent two separate letters to Etchmiadzin requesting that the seminary's manuscript library send him a copy of the five volumes of François-Joseph Fétis's *Histoire générale de la musique*. It is unclear just how familiar Komitas was with Fétis's work prior to Tiflis, but it undoubtedly influenced Komitas's work as he makes references to it in his articles and essays.

[35] Ibid., 271.

Table 2.1. Contents of *Histoire générale de la musique*.

Vol.	Bk.	Subject
I	1	Music of the Peoples of Semitic Origin: A. Music in Ancient Egypt
	2	B. Music of the Chaldeans, Babylonians, Assyrians, and Phoenicians.
	3	C. Music of the Hebrews
II	4	D. Music of the Arabs, Moors, and Kabyle
	5	Music of the Arian Peoples: Music of the Peoples of India
	6	Music of the People of Arian and Turanian Origin Music of the People of Persia and Turkey
III	7	Music of the People of Asia Minor and Greece
	8	Music of the Italian People: A. Music of the Etruscans B. Music in Greater Greece C. Music of the Romans D. Music of the People of Sicily
IV	9	The Ecclesiastical Chant of the Orient
	10	The Ecclesiastical Chant of the Occident
	11	The State of Music in Europe from the Fifth Century through the End of the Eleventh Century
V	12	Music of the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries [in Europe]
	13	Music of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries [in Europe]

In thirteen books spanning the five volumes, *Histoire générale de la musique* covers the musical histories of cultures spanning the silk road from Europe to China and Japan. One of the striking features about this text are the similarities to Komitas's articles on Armenian music. Each section of the book uses an all-encompassing approach to detail the musical history of each culture. The general formula begins with a basic history of the people, followed by the culture's origins and lineage from ancient peoples, and then other contextual information. Only after outlining the historical context does Fétis discuss modal and rhythmic systems, using musical examples to demonstrate the musical systems in context. The final portion of each study ends with organological descriptions of musical instruments. Komitas does not copy this formula exactly, but in his articles, he covers similar elements, documents and categorizes the details just

as meticulously as Fétis. For example, in his article, "Armenian Peasant Music,"[36] Komitas begins the introduction with the organology, followed by a detailed description of the evolution of one example of a folk song, followed by contextual information about Armenian folk music, and concluding with a detailed categorization of Armenian rhythms and metrical systems.

The following passage from the preface to *Histoire générale de la musique* is also reflected in Komitas's work:

> *Par la nature de son sujet, l'historien est donc obligé d'aborder les sciences de l'anthropologie et de l'ethnologie. Les études de linguistique ne lui sont pas moins nécessaires, car il ne doit rien négliger de ce qui peut l'éclairer sur les rapports des peuples dont les systèmes de musique ont de l'analogie. L'importance de ces études est bien plus grande qu'on ne serait tenté de le croire au premier aperçu, car on essayerait en vain d'expliquer certaines particularités de la musique d'un peuple de l'antiquité si l'on séparait ce people de sa souche, et si ce n'était que dans sa musique même qu'on en cherchât le principe.*
>
> English translation: By nature of the subject, the historian is therefore obliged to make use of the sciences of anthropology and ethnology. The study of linguistics is no less necessary for him, because he should not neglect anything that can illuminate the relationships between the people and their music systems by way of analogy. The importance of this study is much greater than one might first think, because one would try in vain to explain certain peculiarities of the music of an ancient people if they separate the people from their origins, and only search for the principles of the music within the music itself.[37]

In addition to an emphasis on the importance of the relationship between language and music, this passage by Fétis stresses the importance of deeply understanding a culture to be able to

[36] Komitas, *The Letters of Komitas Vardapet*, 13-61.

[37] François-Joseph Fétis, *Histoire générale de la musique depuis les temps les plus anciens jusqu'à nos jours* vol. 1, iii.

understand its music. Komitas was very comprehensive in his ethnographic work, detailing even the daily lives of the villagers whom he was studying. In his 1914 article, "The Plowing Song of Lori as Sung in the Vardablour Village," he catalogues not only the minute details of the song, including a list of all the melodies utilized intervals, but also the number of plows, the number of yokes, which families field they plow first, and more.[38]

As a final thought, Fétis published another work in 1867 titled *Traité complet de la théorie et de la pratique de l'harmonie [A Complete Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Harmony]*. One of the central concepts of this work is the idea that European tonality evolved through four phases. According to Fétis's theory, this first phase, the "unitonic," is based in plainchant, harmonically consonant, and does not modulate as a result. Monteverdi transitioned music into the second, "transitonic," phase by relating the diatonic and chromatic scales through the use of natural dissonances like the tritone which allowed for the advent of the dominant seventh chord. The third phase introduced emotion to music by gaining the ability to modulate to many different keys, earning it the name "pluritonic." Fétis credits Mozart as the innovator of this developmental style of tonality, and lists Rossini and Beethoven as other significant practitioners. The fourth and final phase of Fétis's theory is the "omnitonic." In this phase, alterations to chords are so frequent that the key, scale, and/or mode of the chord become too complex to determine, because modulation to any of twenty-four Western keys are possible. Wagner and his Tristan Chord are Fétis's prime example of "omnitonicism."[39]

It is possible that Fétis's theory is the reason that Komitas viewed Western Art Music in the late 1800s as more evolved than Armenian music. While I have not found concrete evidence

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[38] Komitas Vardapet, *Essays and Articles: The Musicological Treatises of Komitas Vardapet*, trans. Vatsche Barsoumian (Pasadena, CA: Drazark Press, 2001), 71-101.

[39] Fétis, *Histoire générale…* vol.1, xliii-xlix.

that he was familiar with *Traité complet de la théorie et de la pratique de l'harmonie*, given that Komitas was intimately familiar with *Histoire générale de la musique* and that Fétis's theory of tonal evolution is hinted at in Komitas's letters seem to imply that he might have studied *Traité complet de la théorie et de la pratique de l'harmonie* sometime either during his education in Tiflis or in Berlin.

Komitas in Berlin

Komitas arrived in Berlin in June of 1986 with the intention of enrolling in the Royal Berlin Conservatory. However, in a meeting with Joseph Joachim, the renowned Hungarian violinist and the conservatory's director, Joachim determined that enrolling in the conservatory would not be suitable for Komitas, just as Yekmalyan had in Tiflis. He recommended instead that Komitas enroll in a private conservatory run by Richard Schmidt. Concurrently with his private studies with Schmidt, Komitas enrolled in the Friedrich-Wilhelm Royal University, taking courses from Fredrich Bellermann, Oscar Fleischer, and George Friedländer. Komitas's studies in the three years from 1896-1899 encompassed the bulk of his Western musical education. Thanks to his regular correspondence with the Holy See, we have a nearly complete account of all Komitas's coursework during this time period. Beginning on the next page is a table detailing studies in Berlin. Each semester accounts for six months of study.

Table 2.2. Komitas's coursework in Berlin[40]

Semester	Course Title	Instructor
Winter 1896	Richard Schmidt Conservatory	
	Harmony	Schmidt
	Modulation of the Classical Masters	"
	Strict Style in Music Composition (Ecclesiastical)	"
	Counterpoint and Fugue in Free (Modern) Style including Choral	"
	Piano	"
	F.-W. Royal University	
	Sixteenth Century Music History	Fleischer
	Musicological Exercises in the Instrument Museum	"
	Elements of Music Composition	"
Summer 1897	Richard Schmidt Conservatory	
	Form	Schmidt
	Piano	"
	Modern Counterpoint	"
	F.-W. Royal University	
	History of Medieval Music from the Beginning of Christianity	(Not Listed)
	Music History of France and the Netherlands	"
	Introduction to the History of Church Music	"
	Musicological Practice in the Royal Instrument Collection	"
Winter 1897	Richard Schmidt Conservatory	
	Form	Schmidt
	Composition	"
	Piano	"
	Voice Training	"
	F.-W. Royal University	
	Music of Ancient Greece	Bellermann
	Aesthetics of Music	Fleischer
	Organology	"
	Musicological Practice	"
	General History of Music	Friedländer
Summer 1898	Richard Schmidt Conservatory	
	Instrumentation for Standard Orchestra	Schmidt
	Instrumentation for Large Symphony Orchestra	"
	The Ordinary Orchestra in Conjunction with Singing in the Lower Art-Forms of Vaudeville	"
	The Symphony Orchestra in Conjunction with Vocal Music in Opera and Oratorio	"
	The Orchestra and its treatment	"
	Solo Singing	"
	Combining Instruments and Voice	"

[40] Komitas, *The Letters of Komitas Vardapet*, 31, 36, 39, 42-44, & 49.

Summer 1898 (Continued)	F.-W. Royal University History of Medieval Music from the Beginning of Christianity to Franco of Cologne German Music History (Part 3) from Handel and Bach Onward History of Notation Musicological Practice in the Instrument Museum General History of Music from the 1700s Onward Musicological Practice (Exploration of Select Musical Artworks)	 Bellermann Fleischer " " Friedländer "
Winter 1898	Richard Schmidt Conservatory *Continuing Instrumentation and Orchestration from previous semester* F.-W. Royal University Practice in Counterpoint Over the Music of Ancient Greece Medieval Music History Music History of the 1900s Musicological Practice Mozart's Life and Work German Lied Musicological Practice	 Schmidt Bellermann " Fleischer " " Friedländer " "
Summer 1899	Richard Schmidt Conservatory Composition Vocal Pedagogy Voice F.-W. Royal University Unknown Course Unknown Course	 Schmidt (unclear) " " "

Many of these courses would have been standard curriculum for German music students of the time. Komitas had studied some of these topics with Yekmalyan prior to reaching Berlin. However, he retook courses like harmony and counterpoint at the direction of Richard Schmidt in order to rebuild the foundation of his musical understanding.[41] Many of the musicological and aesthetics courses, however, would have been new material and played a key role in shaping Komitas's attitudes towards Armenian musical identity.

[41] Komitas, "[Komitas Vardapet's Autobiography from June 24, 1908 in Etchmiadzin]," *[Armenian Monthly]*, 84-85.

In the winter semester of 1897, Komitas took a course in the "Aesthetics of Music" [*Ästhetik der Tonkunst*] with Oskar Fleischer. To understand the effect this course may have had on Komitas's understanding of music, one can look to Komitas's Post-Berlin writing about Armenian music. In a letter to Archbishop Mattheos Izmirlyan, Patriarch of Constantinople, Komitas wrote, "I have not written a mass for two voices. Picturing the varied contents of the mass, one cannot write a monotonous arrangement that will only be in two voices, three voices, or four voices from the start to finish. It has to be done according to the requirements of musical philosophy or esthetic rules…"[42] The terms "musical philosophy" and "esthetic rules" are a noteworthy shift in language from Komitas's Pre-Berlin writings. This raises the question, what did he learn in Berlin, particularly in the Aesthetics of Music course, that might have contributed to this mindset?

Various opposing voices shaped the discourse in Germany surrounding the aesthetics of melody in the nineteenth century.[43] However, in his book *Wagner's Melodies*, David Trippett writes that in Germany, generally speaking, "most aesthetics of this period taught that art was to express in outward, sensibly perceptible forms the inward spiritual life of human beings."[44] Therefore a melody, in order to adequately express an emotion, must also be crafted contextually and through association to tradition. Motives and melodic formations are arbitrary on their own, but gain significance through their patterning, repetition, and transformation. In the Armenian

[42] Komitas, *The Letters of Komitas Vardapet*, 132.

[43] For the purposes of this monograph, we will mainly focus on aesthetics of music concerning melody, because the Armenian music of this time that Komitas was studying was almost entirely monodic. Although he does make criticisms of other composers' harmonizations of Armenian melodies, he directs those criticisms mainly to their lack of understanding of functional harmony. Chapter 4 discusses Komitas's view of functional harmony in Armenian music more in depth.

[44] David Trippet, *Wagner's Melodies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 62.

musical tradition, as well as other Eastern traditions, this view extends beyond melody and to the modal system. A *yeghanag* (IPA: [jɛʁɑnɑg]), or mode, is defined not only by its pitches, but also by its melodic behavior, idiomatic motives, and expressed emotion.[45] For example, the *sharagans* are composed usuing idiomatic melodic patterns, each is associated with an emotional state specific to the mode. In the liturgical calendar, each day is associated with a mode and therefore also an emotion.

Another common view expressed in German aesthetics is, once again, the importance of the relationship between melody and language. As seen in a statement by Stephan Schütze, "The art [of melodic composition] consists in bringing each accent into a melodic course so that a really beautiful melody results, so that it sounds as though the text had only given the opportunity for a beautiful melody, while the feeling therein believes only to be examining the text, and to understand it completely."[46] The focus of language in this instance is part of an effort to help establish a German national identity in melody and separate it from the Italian musical style.[47] Komitas's efforts to separate Armenian music from Turkish, Persian, Arabic, etc. are a direct parallel to this line of thinking. Given Oskar Fleischer's musicological practice in the study of folk music, he likely believed in using linguistics as a tool when distinguishing between elements of identity in folk music.

Komitas likely would have learned this ideology from Fleischer in his Musicological Practice courses, the second noteworthy aspect of his education in Berlin. Fleischer was a

[45] As previously mentioned, *yeghanag* and *tsayn* can be used interchangeably to refer to a mode. Depending on the context, *yeghanag* can also mean mood or weather. See Chapter 3 for more on the Armenian modal system.

[46] Trippett, 66.

[47] Ibid., 67.

proponent of comparative musicology, which he described by saying, "The task of comparative musicology is similar to that of comparative linguistics, that is, to carefully examine the treasures of each folk music in order to clearly distinguish the truly and originally national from that which penetrated later from abroad or was borrowed from elsewhere," in his article, "A Chapter on Comparative Musicology."[48] In practice, Fleischer achieved this by comparing melodic units rather than scales and modes. We see this reflected in Komitas's work after the completion of his music education. The most he ever mentions the scales of the Armenian system is in his first article (before Berlin), "Armenian Ecclesiastical Music." He compares the Armenian modes to the Western scale, and states that they are modes used in other Eastern cultures, even giving the related *Makam* names. However, Komitas's articles after Berlin less frequently reference the modes with their *Makam* names, and when they do reference them, there's a clear effort to distinguish the Armenian modes from those of other Eastern traditions.

This change in approach coincides with a shift in tone in his letters written from his final semester in Berlin on. The tone of his writing became markedly more assertive, confident, and even borderline arrogant in some cases. The shift in his tone demonstrates the high level of esteem he had developed for his newly-honed abilities, having studied in a prestigious Western college where he was well-respected by his professors. His future studies in Armenian identity would come through the lens of his Western training.

It is important to note that however clear it might be that Komitas was viewing Armenian music from a Western perspective, he himself did not believe he was westernizing the Armenian musical tradition. He wholeheartedly believed Armenian was an Eastern tradition, and through

[48] Ulrich Morgenstern, "Folk Music Research in Austria and Germany: Notes on Terminology, Interdisciplinarity, and the Early History of *Volksmusikforschung* and *Vergleichende Musikwissenschaft*," *Musicologica Austriaca: Journal for Austrian Music Studies* (September 25, 2015), 10.

his work, he believed he was bringing it closer to the level of "evolution" seen in Europe. His work, therefore, attempted to remain within the framework of traditional Armenian music, but at the same time, developing it using Western compositional techniques. When he witnessed Armenian composers creating Armenian music that was too Western, he would criticize it, like in the case of Kara-Murza's "Russian-style" arrangements of Armenian folk songs.[49] Instead, he advocated for music that emphasized the relationship between melody, language, and harmony.

[49] Komitas, *The Letters of Komitas Vardapet*, 71-72.

CHAPTER 3: THE ARMENIAN MODAL SYSTEM

Finding reliable resources on the specifics of the Armenian modes, especially in the English language, has been a challenge. Because the system has traditionally been passed down orally through generations over many centuries up until roughly the nineteenth century, there is a notable amount of variance between sources. Serkoyan, Tahmizian, and Outier's article, "Recherches sur la genèse de l'octoéchos arménien," documents variations among some of the prominent resources.[50] I also found that of the few English resources I was able to find, some of them could be unclear at times and sometimes, in my opinion, borderline misleading in their presentation of the modes. Furthermore, with the exception of Hachig Kazarian's *Western Armenian Music* and Kristapor Kushnaryan's *Armenian Monodic Music*, none of the sources sufficiently discuss the microtonal elements of the modal system.[51]

This chapter will not be a comprehensive description of the Armenian modal system; it will only cover what is necessary to have a basic understanding of the system and aid in the discussion of Komitas's approach to Armenian musical identity. For example, this chapter will not delve too deeply into the emotional function of the modes or provide a detailed catalogue of all the idiomatic melodic motives/patterns for every mode. These characteristics would be better addressed in their own separate text, one dedicated solely to the theory of the Armenian modal system. To my knowledge, a comprehensive text of this nature, one that expressly documents

[50] N. Serkoyan, N. Tahmizyan, and B. Outtier, "Recherches sur la genèse de l'octoéchos arménien," in *Essays on Armenian Music*, ed. Vrej Nersessian (London: Kahn & Averill for the Institute of Armenian Music, 1978), 107-127.

[51] Nigoghayos Tashjian's *Textbook on Armenian Ecclesiastical Notation* also uses microtones (to an extent) in its notation of the modes by nature because all the music is notated in Hapartsum Notation. However, I have only seen Kushnaryan and Kazarian notate the microtones in Western notation.

the modes, their behaviors, scales, etc., discusses some nuances of regional interpretations (e.g., Western Armenian versus Eastern Armenian), and demonstrates their relevance in a modern context, does not exist. In my estimation, the closest to a comprehensive text that exists currently is a combination of Kushnaryan, Kazarian, and Serkoyan-Tahmizian-Outier's works.

Until such a text is written, my hope is that this chapter can serve as a general resource on the Armenian modal system from its foundational elements to the modes themselves. In designing this chapter, I endeavored to create the kind of introductory resource that I myself was looking for when I first began researching the Armenian modes, one that would be useful not only for the study of Komitas's music, but also for general Armenian music scholarship. This chapter will draw mainly from the previously mentioned texts, Tashjian's *Textbook on Armenian Ecclesiastical Notation*, Kazarian's *Western Armenian Music*, Kushnaryan's *Armenian Monodic Music*, and Serkoyan-Tahmizian-Outier's article "Recherches sur la genèse de l'octoéchos arménien." Additionally, I will be relying on insights learned in my oud studies with Antranig Kzirian and my over a decade of experience singing early Western music from Gregorian chant to High-Renaissance polyphony. This chapter will begin with the construction of the basic Armenian diatonic scale, including common alterations. Then, it will discuss the main tetrachords and pentachords of the system, describing methods they can be combined to create new scales. It will conclude with descriptions of all the main modes and how they can be organized.

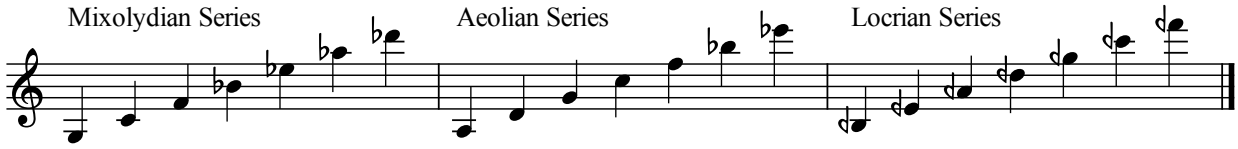


Figure 3.1. The Three Series of Perfect Fourths in the Armenian Modal System.

According to Kristapor Kushnaryan, the Armenian modal system is based on a combination of three series of perfect fourths: a Mixolydian series, an Aeolian Series, and a Locrian series.[52] Each series is named not for the scale that results from its series of fourths, but for the starting pitch of the series within the context of the Greek modes. For example, the Mixolydian scale begins with the solfege syllable "Sol" and the Mixolydian series builds fourths above the note "Sol," but the pitches of the Mixolydian series themselves create a Locrian scale. Any series of seven consecutive perfect fourths will form a Locrian scale. Therefore, in theory, it is also possible to think about the three series as sets of consecutive Locrian scales, but that way of thinking is less useful for combining the three series into one aggregate scale.

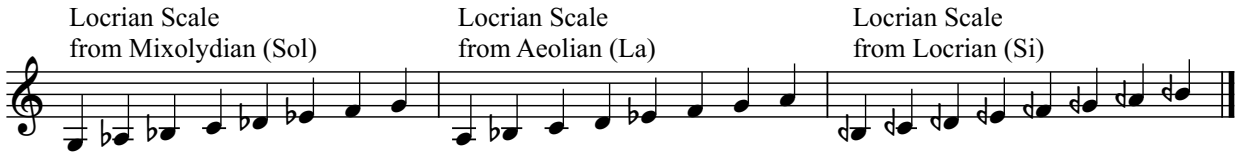


Figure 3.2. The Mixolydian, Aeolian, and Locrian Series as Locrian Scales.

[52] Kushnaryan outlines the founding principles of the Armenian modal system in *Armenian Monodic Music: History and Theory*, ed. by Robert Atayan and trans. by M.H.P. McCarthy (Yerevan: Ankyunacar Publishing, 2016), 313-339.

The intervallic distance between each of these series, Mixolydian to Aeolian and Aeolian to Locrian, is the interval of a major second. However, the major second between the Aeolian and Locrian series is what Kushnaryan refers to as a "narrow major second."[53] The reason for this, is because the Locrian series is slightly flatter than the Mixolydian and Aeolian series. Kushnaryan notates this slightly flatter quality with a small tick next to the pitch name (e.g., `a, `b, `c, etc.).[54] He also does not specify exactly how much flatter the Locrian series pitches are compared to the Mixolydian and Aeolian series. Based on my oud studies and my observations listening to Armenian folk musicians, the Locrian series pitches are approximately 15 cents flatter than the Mixolydian and Aeolian series pitches.

I believe the specific reason the Locrian series is approximately 15 cents flat is due to its relationship to the Mixolydian series. If the root pitch of the Mixolydian series is Sol, and the Locrian series is treated as a major third away in just-intonation, then the Locrian series' root (Ti$^{\flat}$) would be ~13.7 cents flatter than an equal-tempered major third.[55] This might explain why, according to Kazarian, Armenian performers tend to emphasize microtones to a lesser degree than other Eastern traditions.[56] The microtones in the Armenian modal system are born out of the intervallic relationships created by the nature of the Locrian series being one comma flat (~15

[53] Kushnaryan, 316.

[54] Instead of Kushnaryan's method, I will use Turkish *Makam* accidentals in the manner I laid out on page xi, as I find these accidentals to be a little clearer in their representation of microtonality. However, I will also still refer to them as "comma flats" and "comma sharps" even though I am not using them in the context of the Turkish *Makam* Theory.

[55] Because, the difference between 13.7 cents flat and 15 cents flat is indiscernible to most people, I consider these degrees of "flatness" to be effectively the same. There are many possible explanations for the difference and many possible theories for what the original tuning might be, but that is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

[56] Hachig Kazarian, *Western Armenian Music: From Asia Minor to the United States* (Fresno, CA: The Press at California State University, Fresno, 2023), 392.

cents). By comparison, a theoretical one comma flat in the Turkish *Makam* system is more pronounced at ~22.6514 cents flat. This is because the microtones are the result of dividing the octave, which spans 1200 cents, into 53 equal divisions.

There is a potential pitfall with the theory that the slightly flatter Locrian series pitches are derived from just-intonation. In the context of just-intonation, a perfect fourth is 498 cents (compared to 500 cents in equal temperament). Therefore, as a series extends in both directions, pitches that would be octave equivalent in an equal-tempered context, would differ significantly in tuning. For example, after ascending twelve perfect fourths from Sol, the root of the Mixolydian series, the high Sol would be 24 cents flatter than the low when octave-displaced to the same level.

Unfortunately, Kushnaryan does not specify whether the perfect fourths he lays out in *Armenian Monodic Music* are equal-tempered or in just-intonation. If he was thinking in equal-temperament, he would be combining two different tuning systems to describe the Armenian modal system. I believe it is more likely that Kushnaryan was solely using just-intonation, because his book is heavily influenced by Komitas's musicological work, which itself appears to have be in just-intonation (see Table 4.1). It is possible that Kushnaryan neglected or overlooked the effects of the 498-cent perfect fourth because they become most perceptible only in the extreme high and low registers, which Armenian monodic music typically does not use. However, this is just my speculation, and more research is needed to explain this inconsistency.

It is also important to note that there is much debate amongst theoreticians and practitioners of the Eastern musical traditions on how microtonality should be performed. This dissertation will not venture into the specifics of these debates. The usage of microtonal accidentals is solely for the purpose of acknowledging and demonstrating that the Armenian modal system is part of the Eastern musical traditions and does utilize microtonality in practice.

Even though he recognized that the Armenian modal system was part of the Eastern system, Komitas removed microtonality from his own work. Therefore, when I discuss Komitas's music in Chapter 4, it will become necessary to do my analyses without microtonality. However, I feel it is important, regardless, to include them in this chapter on mode in order to document and reaffirm their existence.

The Diatonic Scale of the Armenian Modal System

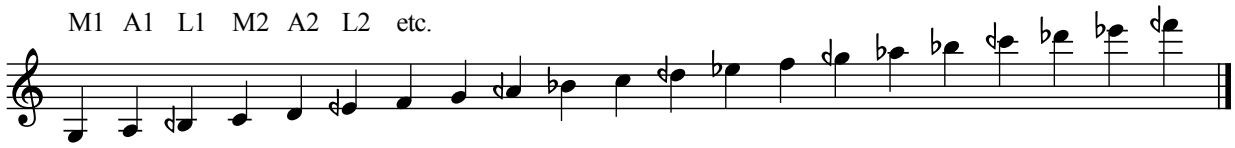


Figure 3.3. The diatonic aggregate of the Armenian modal system.

When the Mixolydian, Aeolian, and Locrian series are combined, they create a diatonic aggregate scale that is the basis for the majority of the modes in the Armenian system.[57] The tetrachords and pentachords used to make the scales for the Armenian modes are created by taking any series of four or five consecutive pitches of the diatonic aggregate scale. Kushnaryan classifies these tetrachords and pentachords as "links," named based on which series its starting pitch originates from, Mixolydian, Aeolian, or Locrian.[58] For some tetrachords and pentachords, additional alterations are applied to emphasize important scale degrees in a mode. These alterations include chromatic alterations and High Locrian substitutions.

[57] I have limited the scope of the diatonic aggregate scale in example in Figure 3.3 to 7 notes each of the Mixolydian, Aeolian, and Locrian series. However, theoretically, the diatonic aggregate scale can extend infinitely in either direction.

[58] Kushnaryan, 345-347.

Before delving into the specifics of tetrachord construction and alteration in the Armenian modal system, there are a few characteristics of the diatonic aggregate scale that are worth discussing. As a result of the alternating series of the scale, all intervals take on both a primary characteristic (i.e., major, minor, perfect, augmented, or diminished) and a secondary characteristic (i.e., wide, narrow, or pure) depending on which series the notes originate from. For example, a third above the first degree of the Locrian series (L1 in Figure 3.3) to the second degree of the Aeolian series (A2) results in a third with a primary trait "minor", and a secondary trait "wide," whereas a third from A1 up to M2 results in a third with a primary trait of "minor" and a secondary trait "pure."[59] The secondary identifying traits of these intervals results in phenomena not seen in the Western musical tradition, such as naturally-occurring diminished octaves. When creating an octave above any Locrian pitch, the upper pitch will come from the Mixolydian series, resulting in a diatonic, wide, diminished octave (e.g., L1-M4 which is B♮ up to B♭). Another difference is that augmented fourths, major sevenths, and whole-tone tetrachords do not exist in the diatonic scale. In order to create these intervals, alterations must be made to the diatonic scale.

Common Alterations to Tetrachords and Pentachords

Alterations to the diatonic scale serve to reinforce important pitches in a tetrachord, pentachord, or mode. In the majority of instances, the altered pitch is one from the Locrian series, although there are also common alterations for Mixolydian and Aeolian series notes, depending on the circumstances.

[59] For a full list of non-pure intervals in the diatonic aggregate scale, see Kushnaryan, 317-318 & 320.

High Locrian substitution

High Locrian substitution occurs when a Low Locrian series note is raised by 1 comma, such as B$^{\flat}$ to B. According to Kushnaryan, High Locrian substitution follows the rules below:[60]

1. Not all Locrian notes are raised; normally one or two will be raised, and three only in rare cases.
2. High Locrian notes replace and do not appear alongside the low ones, especially in succession.[61]
3. Both the High and Low Locrian variants are treated as the same degree of the mode.

A common use for the High Locrian is when a Locrian pitch lies below a tonic pitch of the mode. The substitution in this situation reinforces the importance of the tonic pitch. Alternatively, another way to think about it is that the gravity of the tonic pitch draws the tuning of the Locrian pitch up towards it. This can apply to either octave of the tonic pitch. When it leads to the lower tonic pitch in the lower tetrachord of the mode, we can think of the High Locrian substitution as part of a "pre-extension" to the mode.

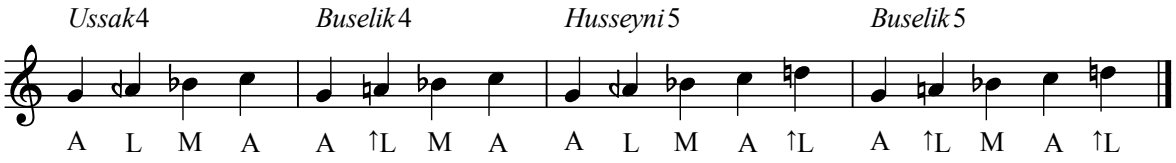


Figure 3.4. Examples of High Locrian substitution in the formation of the *Buselik* tetrachord, the *Husseyni* pentachord, and the *Buselik* pentachord.

[60] Kushnaryan, 326-327.

[61] This rule does not supersede the concept of "fluid pitch" seen in the performance practice of the modes, which is discussed later in this chapter.

The other common usage of the High Locrian happens solely in Aeolian pentachords. Normally, diatonic fifths over Aeolian pitches are narrow perfect fifths as the upper pitch is from the Locrian series. However, by altering that Locrian pitch with its High Locrian substitution, it is possible to create a pentachord that spans a pure perfect fifth. This is especially desirable in modes in which the Aeolian pentachord is part of the upper structure of the mode, in order to create a perfect octave between the mode's lower and upper tonic pitches—the Fourth Side Mode (ԳԿ) – *Makam Ussak* is a good example of this. In Figure 3.4, we have four Aeolian tetrachords/pentachords, three of which apply the High Locrian substitution. The first *Ussak* tetrachord uses no substitution; the *Buselik* tetrachord uses one High Locrian substitution on the second degree; the *Husseyni* pentachord utilizes one High Locrian substitution on the fifth degree to make a pure perfect fifth against the tonic; the *Buselik* pentachord makes use of both usages of the High Locrian.

Chromatic alteration

Chromatic alteration serves the same basic function as High Locrian substitution, reinforcing important tones of the mode. However, chromatic alterations are naturally more versatile because they can be applied to the note of any series, Mixolydian, Aeolian, or Locrian—although, chromatic alterations of Locrian notes do not occur in tandem with High Locrian substitutions. Additionally, while it is most common to reinforce the tonic pitch or the root of a tetrachord, the chromatic alteration can also be used to reinforce the dominant tone. Often, the dominant tone is either the perfect fourth above the root (for tetrachords) or the perfect fifth above the root (for pentachords). Perhaps the clearest demonstration of chromatic alteration is the difference between the *Ussak* and *Hijaz* tetrachords.

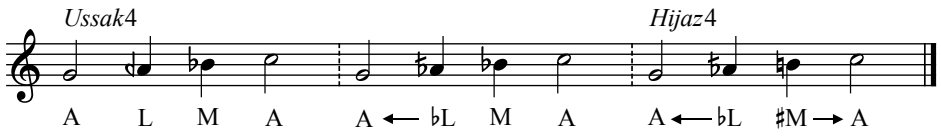


Figure 3.5. Chromatic alteration applied to an *Ussak* tetrachord to create a *Hijaz* tetrachord.

Both the *Ussak* and *Hijaz* tetrachords are Aeolian class tetrachords. *Ussak* is unaltered, derived straight from the diatonic aggregate scale. *Hijaz* uses the same base tetrachord, but the second degree (Locrian series) is chromatically lowered by a narrow half step to support the lower Aeolian note, changing the interval between the first and second degrees from a narrow major second to a wide minor second. Simultaneously, the third degree (Mixolydian series) is chromatically raised to support the upper Aeolian note, changing from a pure major second to a pure minor second between the third and fourth degrees of the tetrachord. The result of this double alteration also creates the narrow augmented second between the second and third degrees that is stereotypically associated with the Eastern musical tradition. By combining the concept of chromatic alteration and High Locrian substitution to the framework of the three series of fourths, we now have access to all the possible pitches of the Armenian modal system and can begin building its tetrachords and pentachords.

The Tetrachords and Pentachords of the Armenian Modal System

Tetrachords and pentachords are the building blocks of the Armenian modal system. They can generally be categorized in three groups based upon which series their starting pitch originates (Mixolydian, Aeolian, or Locrian). Figure 3.6 shows the majority of tetrachords and pentachords used in the Armenian modal system. I have omitted those that are less commonly

used in Komitas's work. I have also used names for these structures based on the names of equivalent tetrachords or pentachords[62] in other Eastern traditions. Additionally, trichords do theoretically exist in the Armenian system. However, because they can be explained through the framework of tetrachords and pentachords, I do not find a real benefit to including them in this dissertation.

Finally, it is important to stress that the figures below are not strict structures; they are basic frameworks for understanding the tetrachords, pentachords, and modes. Part of the art of performing in the Eastern tradition is the practice of fluid pitch, whereby a pitch's tuning, alterations, etc. in the tetrachord may be changed depending on the context of the melody or even the whims of the performer. In tetrachords or pentachords that use microtonal accidentals, I will also include their Westernized versions and any alternate versions by Komitas.

[62] *Jins* (sg.) or *ajnas* (pl.) in Arabic; *cins* or *cinsler* in Turkish.

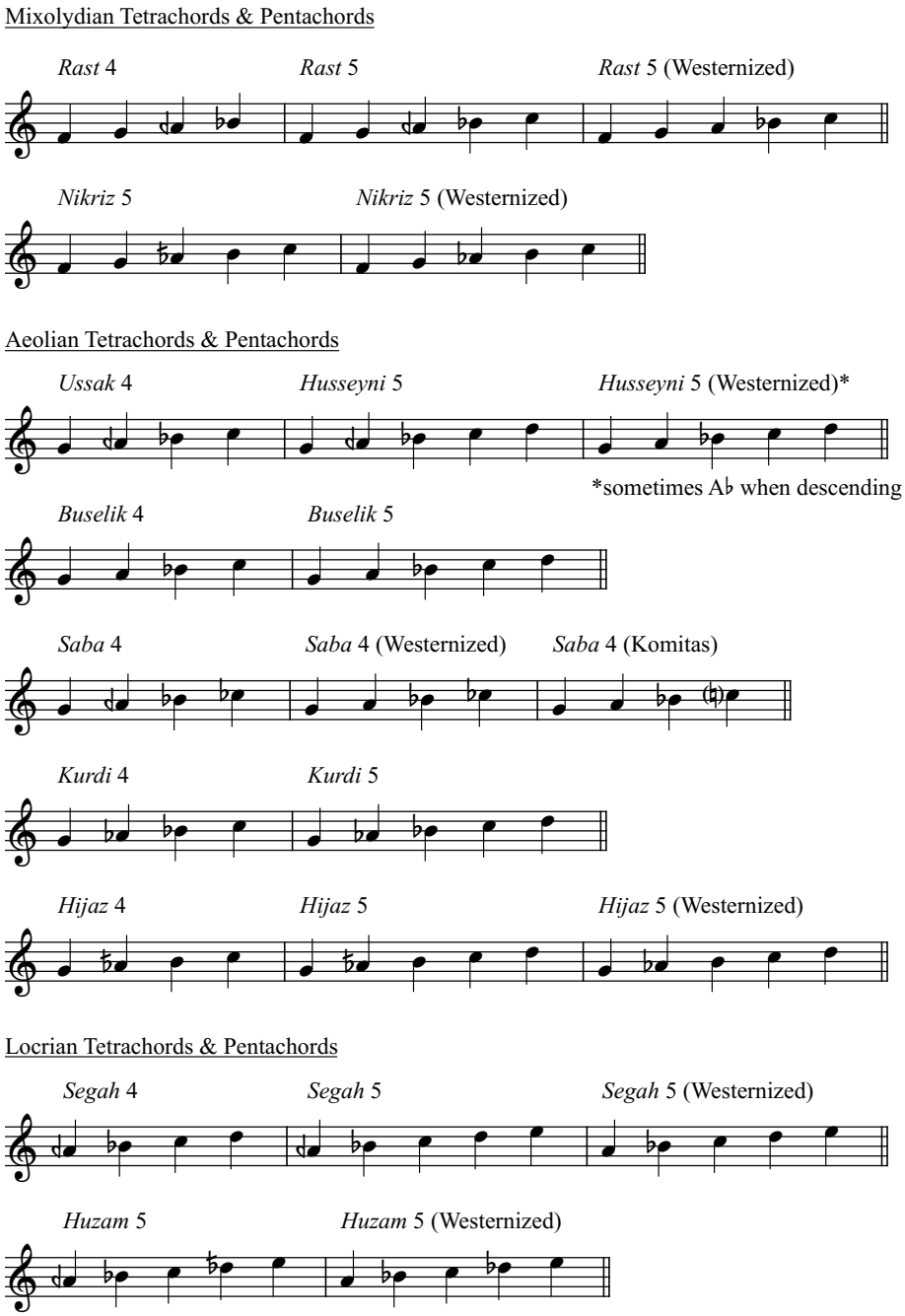


Figure 3.6. The tetrachords and pentachords of the Armenian modal system.[63]

[63] The tetrachords and pentachords in this figure are written in a transposition where Do is B♭ instead of C. The reason for this is because Komitas, in his later works, switches from using D to C for the note *Push* (▃) or Re. Because the editors of Komitas's *Complete Works* chose to use B♭ for Do in his transcriptions, I will also do so here out of convenience. For transcriptions of the modes with Do as C, see Appendix A.

The *Huzam* pentachord is a variant of the *Segah* pentachord. Some texts refer to both of these variants as *Segah*.

Constructing the Armenian Modes

The term "mode" comes from the Latin *modus*, meaning manner, method, or way, and in some contexts, it can even mean "bound" or "limit." The Armenian words for "mode" are *yeghanag* (եղանակ) and *tsayn* (ձայն). Both these words tend to be used interchangeably, but literally translated, the word *tsayn* means "sound" and is most often used to mean "tone" or "pitch." The word *yeghanag*'s literal meaning is closer to *modus* (i.e., manner, method, or way), but can also mean "melody," "mood," or "weather."[64] *Yeghanag* is usually used when referring to the specific mode of a piece. These alternative definitions of *yeghanag* and *tsayn* are important because pitch (or scale), method, mood, etc. all play a vital role in the creation of the Armenian modes.

Combining tetrachord and pentachord structures

The scales for the *yeghanags* are combination of two, three, and sometimes more tetrachords and pentachords. There are two methods for combining tetrachord and pentachord structures. The most common method is to make the final pitch of the lower structure the first note of the upper structure. The identity of the lower structure will determine the identity or family of the mode.

[64] *Yeghanag* is also synonymous with *dastgah* in Farsi and *makam/maqam* in Turkish/Arabic.

Because the Armenian names for the main modes are formulaic in nature (e.g., First Side Mode, Third Tone Mode), I will also use the equivalent *makam* names—such as *Makam Segah* or *Makam Hijaz*—when discussing the modes, in order to more easily distinguish between them.

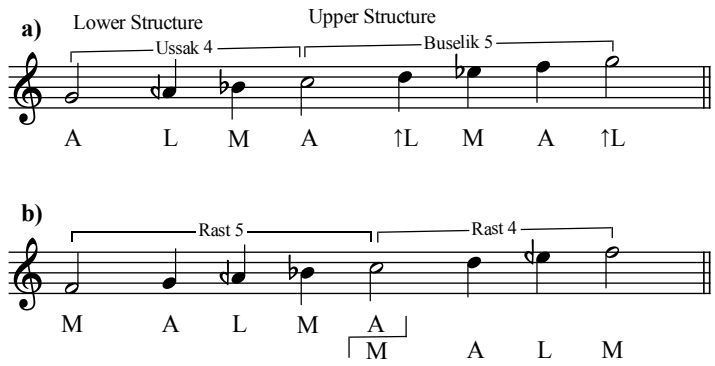


Figure 3.7. Conjoined tetrachordal and pentachordal structures.

Sometimes when conjoining structures, the sequential pattern of the perfect fourths series remains unbroken (see example *a* of Figure 3.6), but it is also possible to reinterpret the conjoining pitch as originating from a different series. In example *b*, the lower structure is a *Rast* pentachord which ends on C from the Aeolian series. In order to join another *Rast* structure, we must pivot from the Aeolian C, reinterpreting it as a Mixolydian C. In doing so, we are able to restart the sequential pattern of the perfect fourths series anew. In these situations, we can see why using High Locrian substitution to create perfect fifths in Aeolian series pentachords is beneficial. By doing so, pivoting to another series becomes easier, more seamless, and allows the combination of the structures to feel more like a cohesive scale.

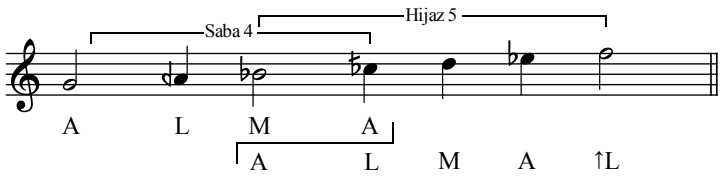


Figure 3.8. Overlapping structures: *Saba* tetrachord & *Hijaz* pentachord.

The other method for combining structures is by overlapping them, whereby the first note of the upper structure is the same as one of the interior notes of the lower structure, usually the third degree. In Figure 3.8, the third pitch of the *Saba* tetrachord is the first pitch of the *Hijaz* pentachord. As with conjoined structures, in order to make an Aeolian series pentachord like *Hijaz* from the third degree of *Saba* we must pivot to Aeolian from the Mixolydian third degree (B♭). However, this overlap creates an issue with the fourth degree of the lower structure. Ordinarily, the fourth degree (Aeolian series) of a *Saba* tetrachord is a chromatically altered downward with a 5-comma flat, in this case C down to C♭. Meanwhile, the second degree (Locrian series) in *Hijaz* is also chromatically lowered, but it usually sits 1 comma higher (C♭) than its Aeolian counterpart in *Saba*.

This problem occasionally arises when combining structures, especially when pivoting between series. The solution to resolving this conflict lies in the melodic practice of the Eastern system. Generally speaking, Eastern melodies tend to remain within one tetrachord or pentachord at a time. The beauty and complexity of the melody comes from how the music transitions between structures and modulates to other modes. As a result, the correct pitch, C♭ or C♭, depends on which structure the melody is living in. If the melody resides in the lower structure, *Saba*, then C♭ is correct; if the melody resides in the upper structure, *Hijaz*, then C♭ is correct.

Melodic behavior and mood

As we have started to touch upon in the previous example, the pitches of a *yeghanag* cannot define it alone. According to Kazarian, "Each melodic structure must be analyzed with specific reference to the scale of ascent, scale of descent, starting note, ending note (*finalis*),

most frequently used or principal tone, highest tone, lowest tone, tessitura, and common or stereotyped motives."[65] Each mode has a tonic and dominant pitch—the naming of which has nothing to do with the tonic and dominant harmonies of Western Art Music—and drone pitches. The tonic pitch, sometimes referred to as the *finalis*, establishes the tonal center of the mode and is almost always the concluding pitch in a melody. It is always the first degree of the lowest structure of the mode (excluding pre-extension structures), although it is not always the first note sounded in a melody. The dominant pitches are analogous to the reciting tones in Western church modes. They tend to feature prominently in melodies, although certain modes emphasize them more than others. Most often they are the first degree of the upper structure or the third degree of the entire mode.[66] Drone tones provide the majority of the harmonic context of a mode. Each mode has at least two drone tones which change during performance depending on the phrases of the melody.

However, even tonic pitch, dominant pitch, and drone tones are not always sufficient for identifying a mode. For example, the *Makam Ussak* (the Fourth Side Mode - ԳԿ) and *Makam Beyeti* (the First Tone Mode *Tartsvadzk* – ՍՋ *դարձուածք*) use the exact same tonic and dominant pitches, structures, drone tones, etc. What differentiates these modes are their melodic behaviors. These behaviors, *seyir* in the Turkish *Makam* system, not only establish the specific idiomatic motives and the general method melodic development in each mode, but they also establish the mode's mood and character. There are three basic behavior types: ascending, descending, and ascending-descending.[67] In the list of *yeghanags* later in this chapter we will

[65] Kazarian, *Western Armenian Music*, 392.

[66] In modes with three structures, it is often the first degree of the middle structure.

[67] Ibid., 387-473.

briefly outline the basics of these behaviors specific to each mode, but for now, these are broad generalizations for the rules of modal behavior:

1. **Ascending melodies** tend to start and finish around the low tonic pitch. They will mainly use the lower structure and pre-extension of the mode. The melodies can rise towards the high tonic into higher structures, especially in longer, more complex melodies, but will eventually fall back down to the low tonic.

2. **Ascending-descending melodies** tend to start around the dominant pitch, using the upper structure. They can ascend to the 8va of the lower structure or post-extension, but will ultimately end by descending into the lower structure, concluding on the low tonic pitch.

3. **Descending melodies** tend to start around the upper octave of the tonic pitch and use the 8va-transposed version of the lower structure. As the name implies, they will usually descend to the upper and lower structures towards the low tonic. They can end with the low tonic or rise again to end at the high octave.[68]

Naming and Organizing the Modes

I will now present the basic Armenian church modes in the order they appear in the Armenian *Octoechos* (Ութ Ձայն). The sacred modes of the Armenian *Octoechos* are the same as the Armenian secular modes, though there may be more variations of these main modes within the secular tradition. The *Octoechos* is an organizational structure of eight modes that make up the basis of Armenian sacred music. Several different ancient sacred traditions use a common system of eight modes, such as the Greek, Byzantine, Coptic, etc., however, each tradition differs in the tonal structure of its *Octoechos*.[69]

68 Eric Ederer describes a fourth, "descending-ascending" melodic behavior in *Makam and Beyond* which he sometimes uses as a *seyir* for some *makams*, such as *Makam Hijaz*: "descending/ascending ↓↑ (*inici-çıkıcı*: beginning around the dominant and moving mostly in the lower region before rising to the upper octave of the tonic and falling to the tonic)." Eric Ederer, *Makam and Beyond: A Progressive Approach to Near Eastern Music Theory* (Santa Barbara, CA: Plum Loco Publishing, 2015), 26.

69 Kazarian, *Western Armenian Music*, 387.

In my descriptions of the modes, each *yeghanag* will be shown in Western notation using Turkish *Makam* accidentals for microtonal notation. Important pitches and structures will be also be shown with the Western notation. See the table below for a key to the different notation types. Where possible, underneath the Western notation, the mode will be written in Hampartsum notation based on Tashjian's *Textbook on Armenian Ecclesiastical Notation*.[70] With each *yeghanag* there will also be a short description of its behavior and some of its typical melodic concepts. Again, it is important to reiterate that the descriptions that will follow are basic frameworks for understanding the modes, not exact documentation of them. Melodic behavior, variation, substitution, and alteration are all important artistic elements of performing the modes, so a strict cataloguing of the modes is impractical, and some would argue that it is impossible.

Table 3.1. Key for the Western notation of the *yeghanags*.

Ordinary Notes of the Scale	Quarter-notes in the scale
Tonic Pitch	Whole-note in the scale
Dominant Pitch and 8va Tonic Pitch	Half-note in the Scale
Drone Tones	Whole note at the beginning of the scale. Secondary drone tones in cue sized notation.
Pre/Post-Extension Structures	Eighth notes
Common first pitch other than Tonic	Quarter note, adjacent to pre-extension underneath tonic
Alternative Pitches	Split stem note
Alternative Descending Structures	Cue-sized notation in the scale

[70] See List of Symbols for a guide to the Hampartsum notation.

In some modes, the Western notation will be different than Tashjian's version in Hampartsum notation. These will be denoted with an asterisk. Any notes in Hampartsum notation enclosed in parentheses are not present in *Textbook on Armenian Ecclesiastical Notation*.

The Armenian *Octoechos*

The Armenian *Octoechos* is organized into four *tsayns* (Ա, Բ, Գ, Դ). Each mode has a tone mode, *tsayn* (Զ), and a side mode, *goghm* (Ը), to create 8 total *yeghanags*. Each *yeghanag* has a *barz* form (the primary form) and least one *tartsvadzk* form (the modulated form). When a piece of music uses the *tartsvadzk* form, it may 1) start in the *barz* and modulate to *tartsvadzk*, 2) start in *tartsvadzk* and move to *barz* 3) start in *barz*, move to *tartsvadzk*, and conclude in *barz*, or 4) start and finish in the *tartsvadzk* form.[71] Some modes have a *vernakhagh* (literally translated: "upper play") which is a variation of the mode characterized by descending behavior. *Sdeghi* are variants of the modes which were not originally part of the Armenian *Octoechos*, but were developed over time from approximately the twelfth to the seventeenth centuries by Armenian composers through the gradual expansion of their musical vocabulary.[72]

<u>Mode I: (ԱԶ) First Tone – *Makam Heftgah*</u>

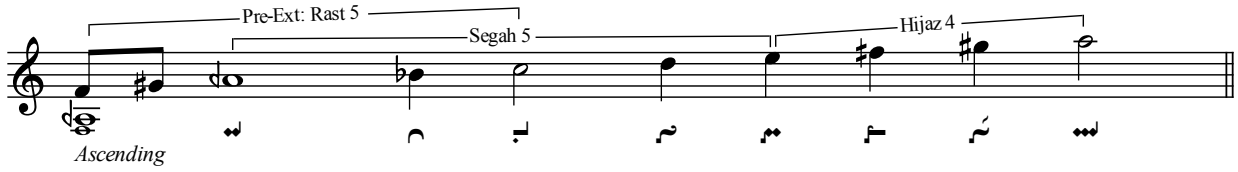


Figure 3.9. Mode I: (ԱԶ) First Tone – *Makam Heftgah.*

Makam Heftgah is a Locrian series mode with an ascending melodic behavior. The most important notes of this mode are Ti♭ (tonic), Re (Dominant), La♯ (Leading Tone), and Sol. The

[71] Kazarian, *Western Armenian Music: From Asia Minor to the United States,* 389-390.

[72] Kazarian, *Western Armenian Music: From Asia Minor to the United States*, 391.

pre-extension for this mode is a *Rast* pentachord that overlaps with the lower structure on the third degree. The second degree of the pre-extension is raised (La♯), which is not typical for *Rast* structures, but done in order for the note to serve as the leading tone and better reinforce the gravity of the tonic pitch. This alteration likens the pre-extension to *Hijaz*, even though it is not a true *Hijaz* structure. This is evident by the existence of some notated melodies in *Makam Heftgah* in which the leading tone is not raised, leaving the pre-extension with its original *Rast* character. Melodies in *Makam Heftgah*, tend to begin in the pre-extension and center around the tonic pitch up to the dominant. This mode is characterized by its interplay between the pre-extension and the lower structure pentachord.

Accessory Mode I: (ՈՉ) First Tone *Tartsvadzk – Makam Beyeti*.

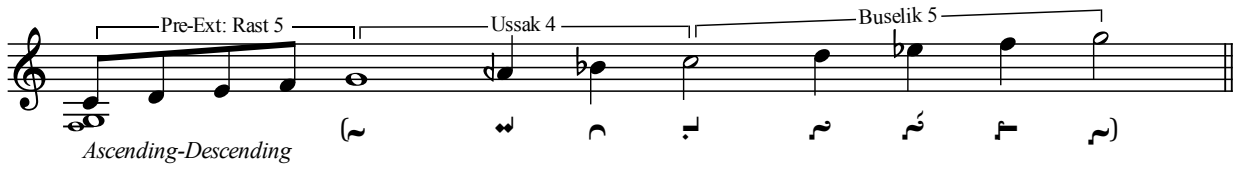


Figure 3.10. Accessory Mode I: (ՈՉ) First Tone *Tartsvadzk – Makam Beyeti*.

Makam Beyeti is an Aeolian series mode and the *tartsvadzk* form of the First Tone *yeghanag*. The scale of this *yeghanag* is the taken from scale of the final *yeghanag* (ԳԿ *Makam Ussak*). The tonic of *Makam Beyeti* is always a step lower (La) in relation to the tonic of *Makam Heftgah* (Ti♭). The leading tone, along with degrees one (tonic), three, and four (dominant) of the lower tetrachord (*Ussak*) are the most important notes of this mode. Note that the leading tone (Sol) is not raised. The third degree of the lower structure is the most common note of the mode

and is used in half-cadences. A common melodic device is to emphasize the pure minor sixth between the tonic pitch (La) and the third degree of the upper *Buselik* pentachord (Fa) and then descend to the dominant pitch.

Mode II: (Ա.Կ) First Side – *Makam Segah*

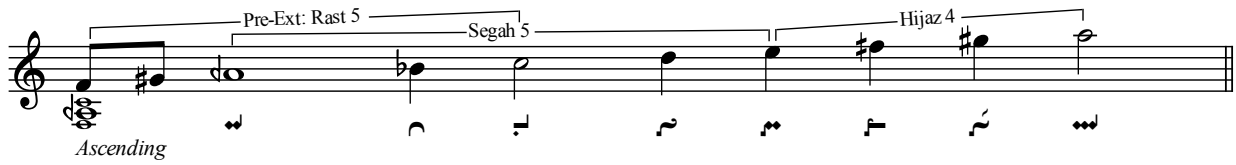


Figure 3.11. Mode II: (Ա.Կ) First Side – *Makam Segah.*

Makam Segah is identical to *Makam Heftgah* in nearly every way. It uses the same constituent notes as well as the same tonic, dominant, and leading tone pitches. The only difference in pitches is the additional availability of Re as a drone tone. *Makam Segah* also has an ascending character; however, its melodies tend to focus more on the *Segah* pentachord, especially the dominant pitch, than on the pre-extension. As a result, a variant of *Makam Segah* will utilize a flat fourth degree (Mi♭) due to the pull of the dominant pitch. In some melodies, when the trajectory of the melody is downward, the fifth degree (Fa♯) will be lowered (Fa).

Accessory Mode II: (ԱԿ) First Side *Tartsvadzk – Makam Buselik*

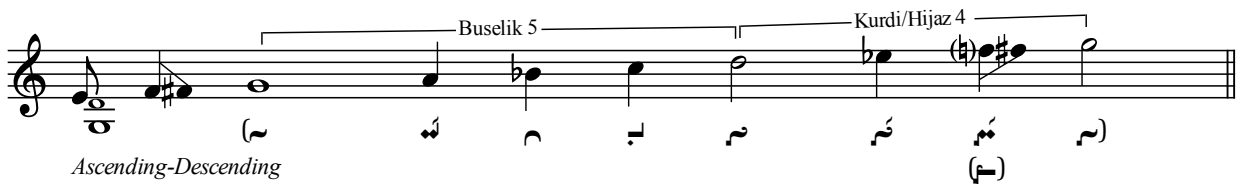


Figure 3.12. Accessory Mode II: (ԱԿ) First Side *Tartsvadzk – Makam Buselik.*

Makam Buselik is an Aeolian series mode and the *tartsvadzk* form of the First Side *yeghanag*. The tonic of *Makam Buselik* is always a step lower (La) in relation to the tonic of *Makam Segah* (Ti♮). There are many variations of this mode; however, the lower structure is always a *Buselik* pentachord, taken from the *Avak yeghanag* (ԲԿ) and transposed up a perfect fifth. There are two main options for the upper tetrachord. In Tashjian's *Textbook on Armenian Ecclesiastical Notation*, he wrote that the upper structure of the mode is the same as the upper structure of the primary mode, *Makam Segah*, transposed as appropriate, i.e., a *Hijaz* tetrachord on Mi.[73] The other option is to use a *Kurdi* tetrachord, likening the mode to the Western Aeolian mode. The main notes of this mode are the six notes spanning from the La (tonic) to Fa. In the *Buselik* pentachord, the third degree (Do) is used as decoration for the second and fourth degrees, depending on the trajectory of the melody. The dominant pitch is the fifth degree (Mi). The leading tone in *Makam Buselik* is Sol♯, but frequently, the opening note of this mode is natural Sol leading to La, the lower tonic. In some melodies, this mode makes frequent use of the natural Sol, however, the final cadence always utilizes Sol♯. When approaching cadences, the

[73] Nigoghayos Tashjian, *[Textbook on Armenian Ecclesiastical Notation]* (Vagharshapat: Printing House of the Holy Catholicos in Etchmiadzin, 1874), 39-40.

melody will often use descending melodic patterns from the high dominant down to the low Sol♯ in preparation the final resolution on La.

Mode III: (ԲՉ) Second Tone – *Makam Husseyni*

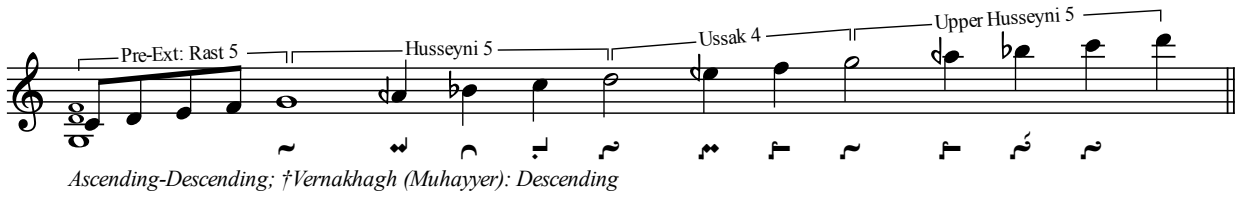


Figure 3.13. Mode III: (ԲՉ) Second Tone – *Makam Husseyni*.

Makam Husseyni is an Aeolian series mode with a similar scalar pattern to (ԳԿ) *Makam Ussak.* The lower structure is a *Husseyni* pentachord, and the upper structure is an *Ussak* tetrachord. In practice, the second degree of the upper *Ussak* tetrachord is fluid. It is common practice to raise it when the trajectory of the melody is rising to create a *Buselik* tetrachord. Some performers will even significantly lower it when descending to almost make a *Kurdi* tetrachord. The most important note in this mode is the dominant pitch (Mi), followed by the tonic (La) and the fourth degree of the lower tetrachord (Re). *Makam Husseyni's* ascending-descending character melodies open by rising from the tonic pitch, the fourth degree, or both up to the dominant. The bulk of the melody will center around the dominant before descending to the fourth degree and then finally back down to the tonic. Because this mode is characterized by the heavy influence of the dominant pitch, it is a perfect illustration of the concept of "fluid pitch". The second degree of all structures in this mode fluctuate depending on the trajectory of the melody. When the focus of the melody is the dominant pitch, the tuning of the second

degrees are altered in the direction of the dominant. When the focus of the melody is returning to the tonic, the tuning of the second degrees are altered in the direction of the tonic.

Makam Muhayyer is the *vernakhagh* variation of *Makam Husseyni*. It uses the same structures as *Makam Muhayyer*, but is differentiated by its descending character. Melodies begin and center around the high octave with the highest *Husseyni* pentachord. Eventually, the melody will descend to the upper structure, and from there the melodies conclude in the same manner as *Makam Husseyni*.

Accessory Mode III: (ԲՋ) Second Tone *Tartsvadzk – Makam Shed Hijaz Humayun* (on Mi)

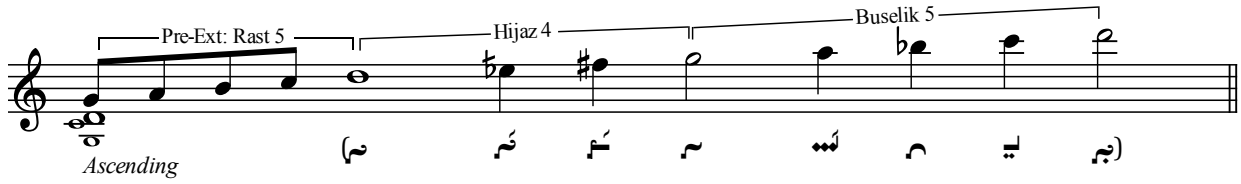


Figure 3.14. Accessory Mode III: (ԲՋ) Second Tone *Tartsvadzk – Makam Shed Hijaz Humayun* (on Mi).

Makam Shed Hijaz Humayun is an Aeolian series mode and the *tartsvadzk* of form of the Second Tone Mode. The moniker "*shed*" signifies that the mode is transposed from its original tonic. In this case, the tonic is a perfect fifth higher (on Mi) than the tonic of regular *Makam Hijaz* (on La). This transposition means that the tonic of this mode begins on the dominant pitch of its primary mode, *Makam Husseyni*.[74] In contrast with the majority of the other forms of *Makam Hijaz*, this *Shed Hijaz Humayun* has an ascending melodic character instead of

[74] In some versions of the Second Tone Mode, the *barz* and the *tartsvadzk* forms share the same tonic pitch. For more information, see Kazarian, *Western Armenian Music*, 414.

ascending-descending. The most important notes of this mode are Mi (tonic), Re (leading tone), and La (dominant).

Mode IV: (ԲԿ) Second Side – *Avak Yeghanag*

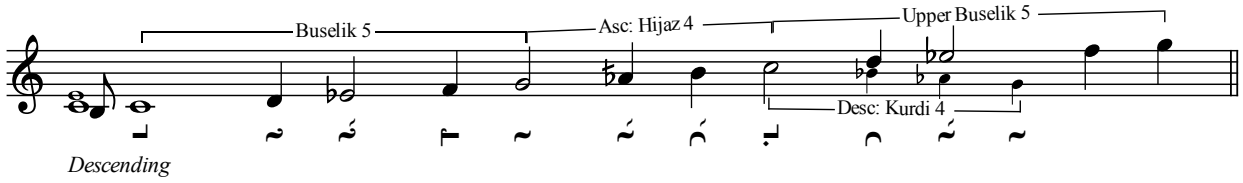


Figure 3.15. Mode IV: (ԲԿ) Second Side – *Avak Yeghanag.*

The *Avak Yeghanag* is an Aeolian series mode with a descending behavior. This mode is named *Avak* —the Armenian word for "grand," "high," or "oldest member"— because of its similarities to the first mode of the Greek *Octoechos*, Dorian. The *Avak Yeghanag* is one of the most inconsistently documented modes in the Armenian traditions. The version by Yeghia Dndesian is nearly identical to the Hypo-Dorian mode. The version presented in Figure 3.15 is the one laid out in Tashjian's *Textbook on Armenian Ecclesiastical Notation*, because it is most similar to examples of the *Avak Yeghanag* melodies in Komitas's collected works. However, the advanced exercises of *Avak Yeghanag* in Tashjian's textbook use a version that is closer to Dndesian's, consistently utilizing Ti instead of Ti♭ or Ti♭ and Do instead of Do♯ as in Figure 3.15.[75]

Melodies in this mode begin in the high octave tetrachord and will descend into the upper structure on La. The third degree of the *Buselik* pentachord is the dominant tone and is

[75] See Tashjian, 29.

used so frequently that it is often mistaken for the tonic pitch. A common cadence in *Avak Yeghanag* is to descend from the dominant third degree down to the leading tone before resolving up to the tonic, usually in the high octave. In Tashjian's version of the mode, cadences always use Do♯ for the leading tone; Dndesian uses Do.

Accessory Mode IV: (ԲԿ) Second Side *Tartsvadzk – Makam Shed Hijaz Humayun* (on Re)

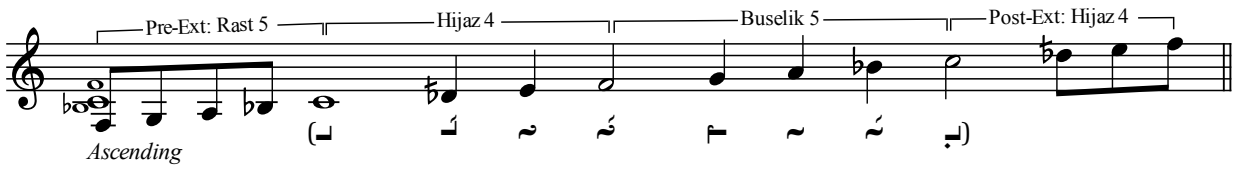


Figure 3.16. Accessory Mode IV: (ԲԿ) Second Side *Tartsvadzk – Makam Shed Hijaz Humayun* (on Re).[76]

Makam Shed Hijaz Humayun on Re is the *tartsvadzk* form of the Second Side Mode. According to most sources, including Tashjian, the *Avak Yeghanag* does not have a *tartsvadzk* form, but in Kazarian's book it does. That version is presented here. This mode carries the same characteristics as (ԲՋ *tarts.*) *Shed Hijaz Humayun* on Mi, but transposed. The transposed tonic pitch is the same as the upper octave tonic of *Avak Yeghanag*.

[76] Notated down an octave.

Mode V: (𝔓𝔔) Third Tone – *Makam Hijaz*

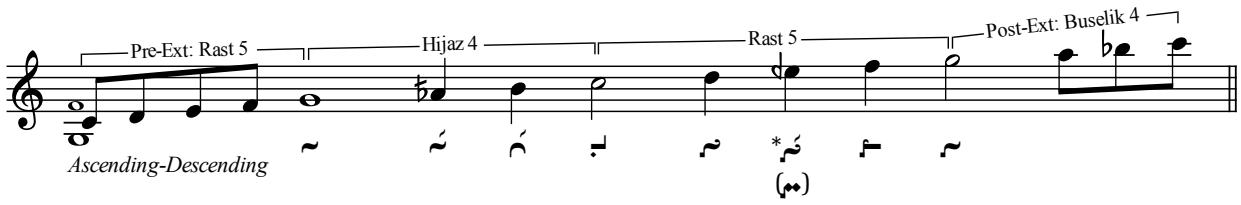


Figure 3.17. Mode V: (𝔓𝔔) Third Tone – *Makam Hijaz*.

Table 3.2. Construction of the four main variants of *Makam Hijaz*.

Hijaz Variant	Lower Structure	Upper Structure
Hijaz	*Hijaz* Tetrachord	*Rast* Pentachord
Humayun	*Hijaz* Tetrachord	*Buselik* Pentachord
Uzzel	*Hijaz* Pentachord	*Ussak* Tetrachord
Zirguleli	*Hijaz* Pentachord	*Hijaz* Tetrachord (Sol♯ Leading tone)

Makam Hijaz is an Aeolian series mode with an ascending-descending character. There are four main variants of *Makam Hijaz* (see Table 3.2) which can shift from one to another, even within a single piece of music. Most melodies emphasize the lower *Hijaz* structure around the dominant pitch, but the most important notes of this mode are La (tonic), Re (dominant), Mi (dominant in pentachord variants), and Sol. The third degree of the upper structure is a fluid pitch that serves to decorate Sol when ascending by becoming Fa♯, and Mi when descending by becoming Fa. The alterations to Fa are the defining trait of the different forms of *Makam Hijaz*.

Accessory Mode V: (Գ) Third Tone *Tartsvadzk – Makam Evej*

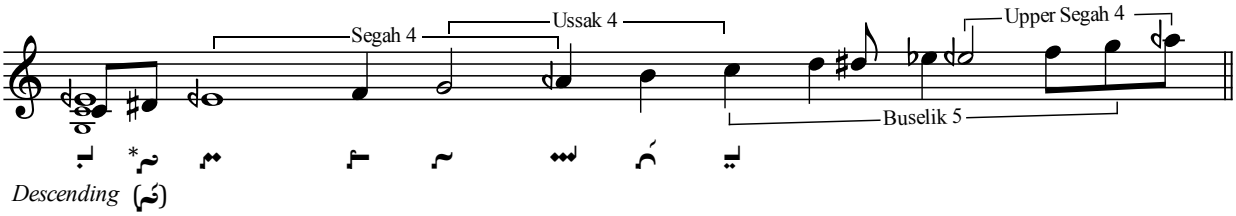


Figure 3.18. Accessory Mode V: (Գ) Third Tone *Tartsvadzk – Makam Evej*.

Makam Evej is a Locrian series mode and the *tartsvadzk* form of the Third Tone Mode. The version of the Third Tone *tartsvadzk* mode described by Kazarian, and the version in Tashjian's textbook differ greatly. The version shown above is the one by Kazarian. In the figure I have included Tashjian's version, notated in Hampartsum notation one octave down. The tonic of *Makam Evej* is a third below the tonic of *Makam Hijaz*. The descending character melodies of this mode begin in the high octave around the tonic. The note Re, the sixth scale degree, is frequently used to ascend to the high tonic to open a melody. As in *Makam Segah*, this relationship between the tonic and the Re below it can be used to create a "major" sounding sonority reminiscent of *Makam Rast*. However, when the melodies descend from the high octave to the sixth degree, a *Buselik* pentachord is also used, changing the high octave from Fa♯ to Fa.

Mode VI: (ꜦꜤ) Third Side – *Makam Saba*

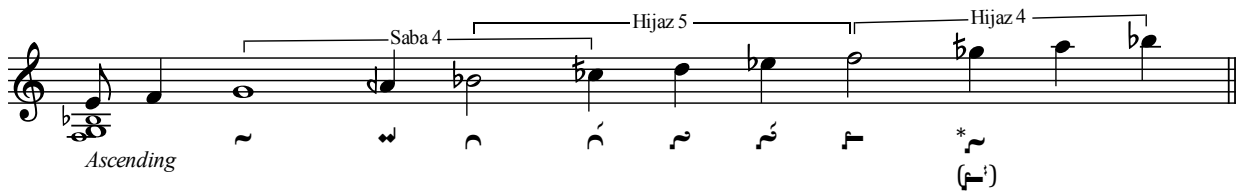


Figure 3.19. Mode VI: (ꜦꜤ) Third Side – *Makam Saba*.

Makam Saba is an Aeolian series mode and an example of a mode with three primary structures. The lower *Saba* tetrachord structure and the middle *Hijaz* pentachord structure overlap on the third degree of *Saba*; the upper structure is a *Hijaz* tetrachord conjoined on Sol to the *Hijaz* pentachord. As a result of its three constituent structures, the tonic pitch (La) does not repeat in the high octave in *Makam Saba*. The tonic (La), the dominant (Do), the leading tone (Sol), and the fourth degree (Re♭) are the most important notes of this mode. Sol is both a common opening note and the primary cadential drone tone. The fourth degree is the most recognizable feature of this mode. Without it, there is virtually nothing to distinguish *Makam Saba* from *Makam Ussak* if their melodies are restricted to the lower structure, because their pitches and ascending behavior would be identical.

Accessory Mode VI: (ԳԿ) Third Side *Tartsvadzk – Makam Hijaz Humayun*

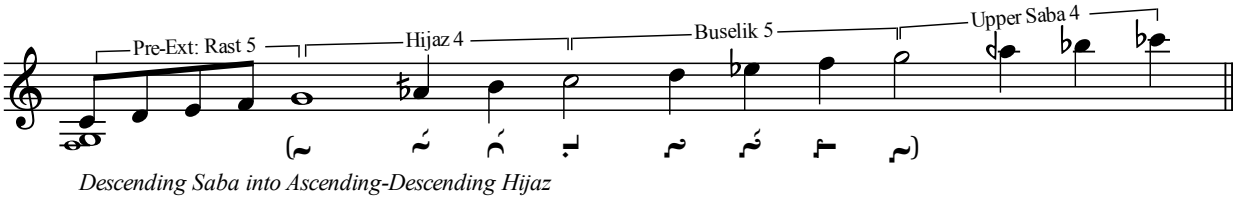


Figure 3.20. Accessory Mode VI: (ԳԿ) Third Side *Tartsvadzk – Makam Hijaz Humayun*.

Makam Hijaz Humayun is an Aeolian series mode and the *tartsvadzk* form of the Third Side Mode. In addition to sharing a tonic with *Makam Saba*, its primary mode, *Makam Hijaz Humayun*, when used as the *tartsvadzk* form has a unique melodic behavior pattern from the rest of the *Hijaz* variants. When used as a *tartsvadzk* form, melodies in this mode begin in the high octave in the mode of *Makam Saba* with a descending character. It will then modulate to the ascending-descending *Makam Hijaz Humayun* before concluding by modulating back to the lower *Makam Saba*.[77] The relationship between *Makam Saba* and *Makam Hijaz Humayun* is the defining feature of the Third Side Mode *tartsvadzk*.

[77] Kazarian, *Western Armenian Music*, 444-446.

Mode VII: (ԳՀ) Fourth Tone – *Makam Neva*

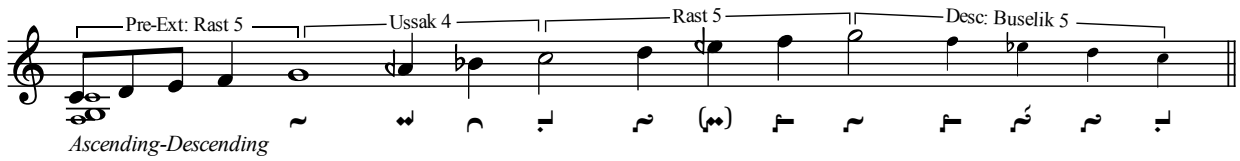


Figure 3.21. Mode VII: (ԳՀ) Fourth Tone – *Makam Neva*.

Makam Neva is an Aeolian series mode, and very similar to *Makam Beyeti*. They both use an *Ussak* tetrachord as their lower structure, but *Makam Neva* uses a *Rast* pentachord in the upper structure instead of *Buselik* pentachord—though sometimes *Makam Neva* can also use a *Buselik* pentachord when the trajectory of the melody is descending. Both modes also have an ascending-descending character, but *Makam Neva* often uses the leading tone (Sol) as an opening note in its melodies.

Over time, *Makam Isfahan*, which utilizes the same scale as *Makam Neva*, but with a lowered sixth degree, also came to be associated with the Fourth Tone Mode. According to Kazarian, *Makam Neva* is likely the original version of the mode, however there are numerous *sharagans* and songs in *Makam Isfahan* that separating it from the Fourth Tone Mode does not seem feasible.[78] Apart from its scalar construction, *Makam Isfahan* differs from *Makam Neva* in that Re is a common starting note.

[78] For more information, see Kazarian, *Western Armenian Music: From Asia Minor to the United States*, 448-449.

Accessory Mode VII: (ԴՁ) Fourth Tone *Tartsvadzk – Makam Huzam*

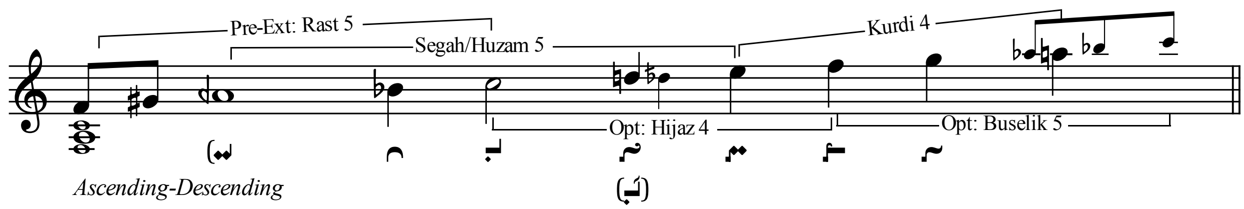


Figure 3.22. Accessory Mode VII: (ԴՁ) Fourth Tone *Tartsvadzk – Makam Huzam*.

Makam Huzam is a Locrian series mode and the *tartsvadzk* form of the Fourth Tone Mode.[79] It is very similar to *Makam Segah* in its construction with either a *Segah* or *Huzam* pentachord in the lower structure, but uses a *Kurdi* tetrachord in the upper structure. However, *Makam Huzam's* main difference is its ascending-descending melodic character. The dominant note (Re) features prominently. Within the construction of *Makam Huzam*, there is an option to modulate to *Makam Hijaz Humayun* off the dominant pitch. As a result, the lower tonic is not repeated at the high octave, like in *Makam Saba*. The ascending-descending melodies in *Makam Huzam* can also often center around the fifth degree (Fa$^{\sharp}$), especially utilizing the dominant pitch and the sixth degree (Sol). In some cases, the fifth degree of the mode is tonicized using Mi$^{\sharp}$, similar to how the tonic pitch (Ti^{d}) can be tonicized using La$^{\sharp}$ from the lower extension.

[79] The Fourth Tone Mode has two additional *tartsvadzk* form in Tashjian's textbook, one is written with the same constituent notes as *Makam Chargah* ( ).

Mode VIII: (ԳԿ) Fourth Side – *Makam Ussak*

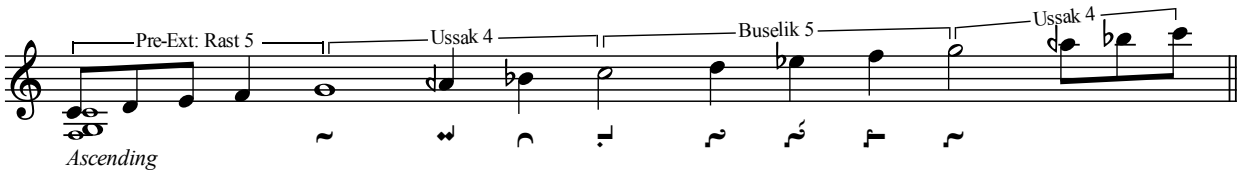


Figure 3.23. Mode VIII: (ԳԿ) Fourth Side – *Makam Ussak*.

Makam Ussak is an Aeolian series mode and the final *barz* form mode of the Armenian *Octoechos*. It is identical in construction to *Makam Beyeti*, but uses an ascending melodic behavior. The leading tone (Sol) is both the most common opening note to the mode and the cadential drone tone. The third degree is commonly emphasized, like in *Makam Saba*, and its often the final note at half cadences.

Accessory Mode VIII: (ԳԿ) Fourth Side *Tartsvadzk – Makam Rast*

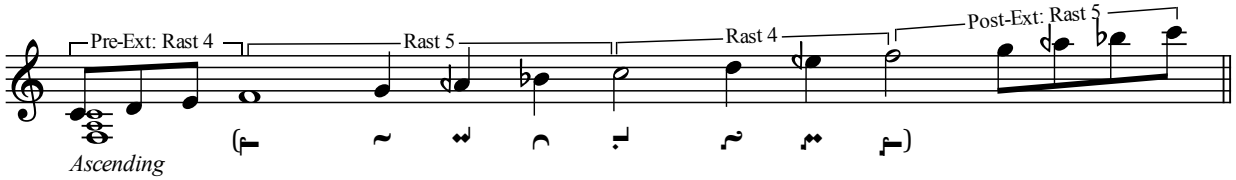


Figure 3.24. Accessory Mode VIII: (ԳԿ) Fourth Side *Tartsvadzk – Makam Rast*.

Makam Rast is the *tartsvadzk* form of the Fourth Side Mode, and the only Mixolydian series mode of the sixteen *barz* and *tartsvadzk* modes in the Armenian *Octoechos*. It is constructed of entirely *Rast* pentachords and tetrachords. The tonic pitch lies a pure major second below the tonic of *Makam Ussak*. Melodies in *Makam Rast* tend to focus on the lower

Rast pentachord structure, beginning by rising up to the dominant pitch (Re), and then descending to Ti♭, decorating it with a *Segah* flavor using La♯. Another common alteration is to replace the upper *Rast* tetrachord with a *Buselik* tetrachord, especially when the melody is descending. These alterations are what differentiate *Makam Rast* from the Western major mode.

Fourth Side Mode VII: (ԳԿ) *Sdeghi* Variation Modes

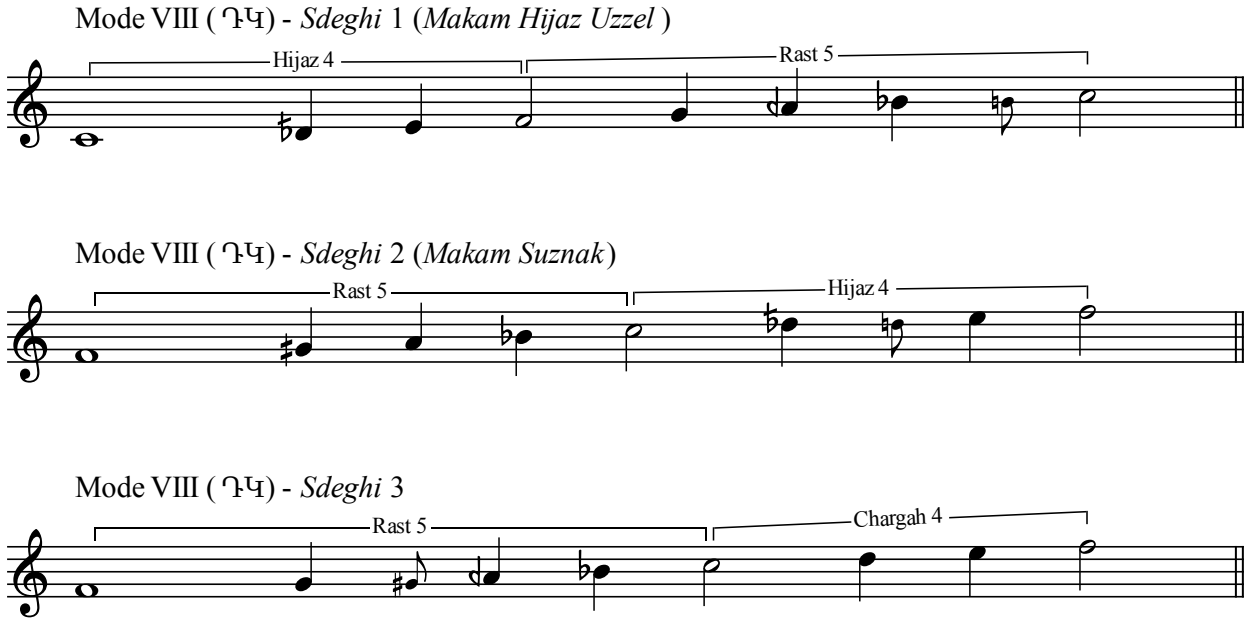


Figure 3.25. Fourth Side Mode VII: (ԳԿ) *Sdeghi* Variation Modes

The Sdeghi Variation Modes are evolutions and developments of the Armenian modal system. Because their melodies did not fit the descriptions of the other sixteen modes, they were added as an addendum to Mode VII, the final mode. Unfortunately, there is a paucity of information on the *sdeghi* modes. The modes notated in Figure 27 are taken from Kazarian. The first *sdeghi* seems roughly equivalent to the *Uzzel* version of *Makam Hijaz*. Because this version

of *Hijaz* does not appear anywhere else in the Armenian *Octoechos*, a development to *Hijaz* becoming an addendum mode would appear plausible. The second *sdeghi* mode is reminiscent of *Makam Suznak*, a variant of *Makam Rast* which uses a lower structure *Rast* pentachord and an upper structure *Hijaz* tetrachord. In Kazarian's notation, however, both the second and third degrees are written 1 comma higher than one would expect for a *Rast* tetrachord. I have been unable to determine if this was intentional on Kazarian's part or if it is an editorial mistake. I was also unable to find an equivalent *Makam* for the third and final *sdeghi* variation, though it seems to be another variation of *Makam Rast*.

Table 3.3. The organization of the Armenian *Octoechos.*

Tsayns	***Goghms***
First (Mode I) *Makam Heftgah* *Tartsvadzk – Makam Beyeti*	**First (Mode II)** *Makam Segah* *Tartsvadzk – Makam Buselik*
Second (Mode III) *Makam Husseyni* *Tartsvadzk – Makam Shed Hijaz Humayun* (Mi)	**Second (Mode IV)** *Avak Yeghanag* *Tartsvadzk – Makam Shed Hijaz Humayun* (Re)
Third (Mode V) *Makam Hijaz* *Tartsvadzk – Makam Evej*	**Third (Mode VI)** *Makam Saba* *Tartsvadzk – Makam Hijaz Humayun*
Fourth (Mode VII) *Makam Neva* *Tartsvadzk – Makam Huzam*	**Fourth (Mode VIII)** *Makam Ussak* *Tartsvadzk – Makam Rast* *Sdeghi* 1 – *Makam Hijaz Uzzel* *Sdeghi* 2 – *Makam Suznak* *Sdeghi* 3

Alternative Methods of Organizing the Armenian Modes

As previously mentioned, the organization of the Armenian *Octoechos* is closely linked to the procession of the Armenian liturgical calendar, but this organizational method has shortcomings when it comes to secular Armenian music, which uses the same modes. For

example, while it does show some modulation possibilities within each *tsayn*, it is less apt at demonstrating modulation possibilities across different *tsayns*. It also excludes many variants of the individual *yeghanags*. There are two alternative approaches one could implement to organize the modes into categories. The first is organizing them by their series into Mixolydian, Aeolian, and Locrian. However, the problem with this method is that while the Locrian and Mixolydian series would be a manageable size, there are too many Aeolian series modes; their category would be too broad to be useful. The second method follows the spirit of the first, but instead of sorting by series, it sorts the modes into families based on their lower structures. In doing so, some of the modulation possibilities become easier to see. For example, as we already established, *Makam Ussak* and *Makam Rast* are modulation areas for one another. Because *Makam Husseyni* and *Makam Ussak* are in the same family, there is potential for *Rast* to serve as a modulation area for *Makam Husseyni* as well.[80]

Table 3.4. Armenian modes organized into families.

***Rast* Family**	***Segah* Family**	***Ussak* Family**	***Buselik* Family**	***Hijaz* Family**
Makam Rast *Makam Suznak* *Makam Chargah* *Etc.*	*Makam Segah* *Makam Heftgah* *Makam Huzam* *Makam Evej* *Makam Mustear* *Etc.*	*Makam Ussak* *Makam Beyeti* *Makam Husseyni* *Makam Muhayyer* *Makam Neva* *Makam Tahir* *Makam Isfahan* *Makam Saba* *Etc.*	*Makam Buselik* *Makam Sehnaz Bus.* *Makam Nihavend* *Etc.*	*Makam Hijaz* *Makam Humayun* *Makam Uzzel* *Makam Zirguleli* *Makam Nikriz* *Etc.*

[80] For more on *Makam* modulation theory, see Ederer, *Makam and Beyond*, 69-108.

CHAPTER 4: KOMITAS'S CHORAL & VOCAL COMPOSITIONS

When taking into consideration the sum of Komitas's musical training in both the Eastern and Western traditions, we can begin to understand more clearly his perception of Armenian musical identity from an analytical perspective. The Armenian monodic tradition establishes the framework for the musical identity, and the techniques of the Western art tradition are tools that alter and embellish that framework. An apt metaphor for Komitas's approach to understanding Armenian musical identity would be to think of colored lights and filters. A blue filter (symbolizing equal-temperament, polyphony, Western harmony, etc.) used on a yellow light-source (symbolizing Western monodic music) would produce a green light (Western art music). The same blue filter on a red light-source (symbolizing Armenian monodic music) would produce a purple light (Komitas's conception of Armenian music).

In 1909, Komitas reviewed a mass setting by Ruben Ghorghanyan which was created in an attempt to make the Armenian mass easier for the public to sing. On his advice, the chancery at Etchmiadzin rejected Ghorghanyan's mass without relaying Komitas's specific feedback. Ghorghanyan in turn wrote to Komitas directly for an explanation. In Komitas's letter responding to the inquiry, he outlined three main criticisms:

> a. The melodies are foreign and do not match the style and spirit of Armenian spiritual music.
>
> b. The rhythm has been disrupted. There are foreign accelerations and excesses, which do not originate in the basic spacing rules of our language.
>
> c. The harmonization does not have a common style, a common unity, and does not match the style of music.[81]

[81] Komitas, *The Letters of Komitas Vardapet*, 156-157.

The first two points (a & b) deal primarily with melodic characteristics of Armenian music and the final (c) deals with harmony. By analyzing Komitas's approach to these topics in his own compositions, we can better understand his perception of Armenian musical identity.

Melody in Komitas's Compositions

Melody and Mode

Komitas's first point is a complaint that frequently he levies against other Armenian composers, which seems to refer to differences in modal qualities of so-called "foreign melodies" and Armenian ones. However, this is a criticism that he did not make prior to studying in Berlin. In his 1886 article, *Armenian Ecclesiastical Melodies*, published prior to Berlin, Komitas would draw direct parallels between the *barz yeghanags* and their related *makams*. However, after Berlin, he made a concerted effort to draw a distinction between *yeghanag* and *makam*. For example, in a 1907 letter to Archbishop Vahram Mankuni, he included an entire section criticizing the *makam* or European modes used in an Armenian mass setting, using statements such as "…composed in the spirit of the Turkish *Sikeah* and Arabic tunes."[82] These kinds of statements demonstrate that over the course of his studies, Komitas developed a belief that there is a crucial connection between mode and identity, or in his words, "style" or "spirit."[83]

[82] Komitas, *The Letters of Komitas Vardapet*, 117.

[83] As previously noted, evoking a particular emotion or mode is one of the defining characteristics of a mode in the Eastern tradition. However, due to the subjective and abstract nature of this characteristic, we will focus on more tangible aspects of the modes.

Komitas's westernization of the Armenian modal system

Though Komitas recognized the difference between the Eastern and Western musical traditions, he inevitably needed to make Western-style alterations to the Armenian modal system in order to be able to adapt Armenian music for European style concerts. Because many of the concerts took place in Europe using local performers, the music had to be understood by musicians with Western training. The most immediate change that he made was converting the Armenian modal system into twelve-tone equal temperament. The reason for this change is that Hampartsum notation, though very useful for recording Armenian melodies, divides the octave into fourteen unequal divisions. As each individual note has a unique glyph, the notation is both easy to write and easy to distinguish in relation to other notes. By contrast, Western notation requires a staff, clef, meter, etc. to be understood. However, if the aim is to create four-part choral compositions using Western polyphonic techniques, as was the case with Komitas, the Western notational system is more practical. Added to this, Komitas did the majority of his composing from his harmonium, a twelve-tone equal tempered instrument.

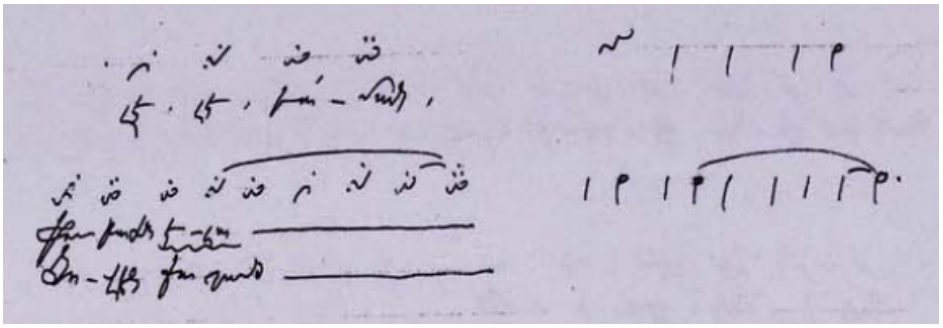


Figure 4.1. Facsimile of the opening phrase from "Le, le, yaman" from Komitas's folk collection.[84]

[84] Notated in Hampartsum notation (left) and the rhythm renotated in Western notation (right). Komitas Vardapet, *Complete Works* vol. 13, 102.

The inherent difficulty in transitioning to a twelve-tone equal tempered system is that the microtonality of the Armenian system is lost. It would be easy to rationalize this loss by claiming Komitas disavowed microtonality. After all, this is the same person who in his 1898 article, "Music of the Divine Liturgy," wrote, "…we take a simple tetrachord and rearrange its intervals on the basis of semitones. In Persian, Turkish, and Arabic music they even make use of the impractical and senseless [third], [quarter] tones."[85] However, Komitas's true relationship with microtonality is more complex.

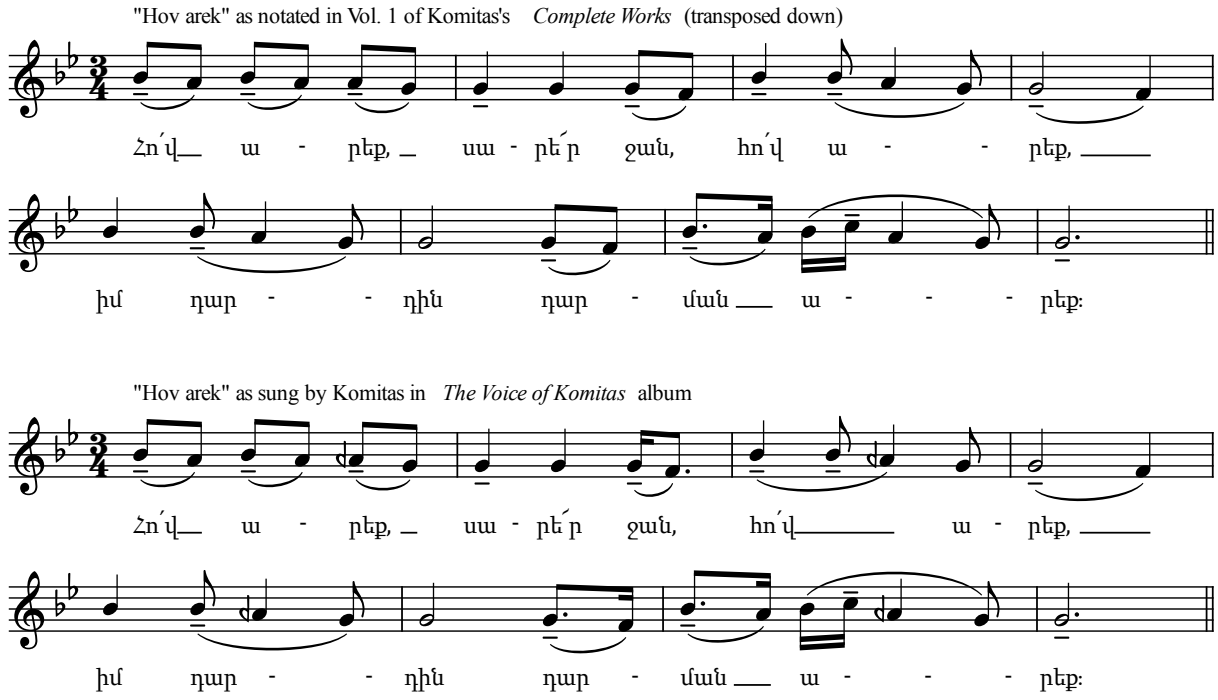


Figure 4.2. Comparison of notated "Hov arek" to Komitas's recording.[86]

[85] Komitas Vardapet, *Essays and Articles*, 186.

[86] Original melody as notated by Komitas, *Complete Works* vol. 1, 17, mm. 5-12. Audio transcription by Vasken Ohanian from Komitas, Armenak Shahmuradian, and Vahn Der Arakelian, *The Voice of Komitas*, recorded Paris 1912 (New York: Traditional Crossroads, 1995), Track 2.

In Paris in 1912, Komitas and his pupils, Armenak Shahmuradian and Vahan Der Arakelian made audio recordings of some of Komitas's compositions and collected folk songs. These recordings were produced and released in 1995 in an album titled *The Voice of Komitas*. The first six tracks of the album contain recordings of Komitas singing a capella. What is remarkable about the recording is that in modes which utilize microtonality and fluid pitch, he sings them accurately. In "Hov arek," [Հո՛վ արե՛ք] a song in *Makam Ussak* (ԲՉ), Komitas sings the second degree with fluid pitch, using microtonality when the melody is descending (see Figure 4.2).

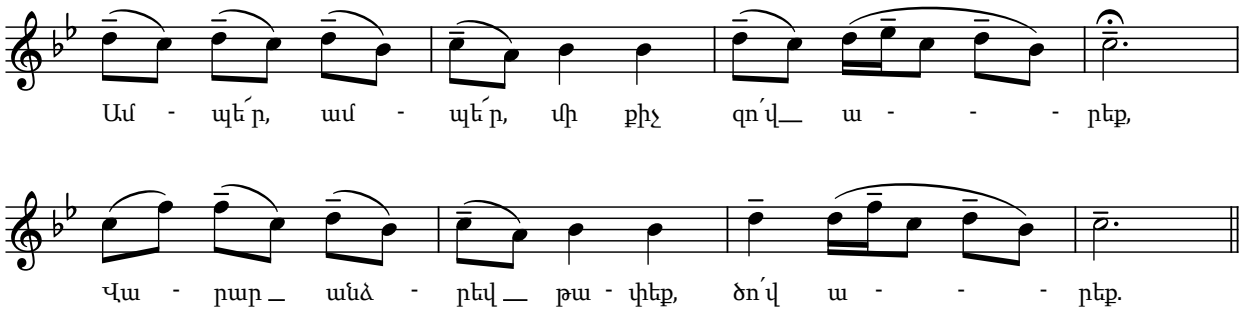


Figure 4.3. Melody for the *Buselik* pentachord structure of "Hov arek" (transposed).[87]

The use of A♮ as the descending second degree of the *Ussak* tetrachord (on G) of the lower structure is deliberate, and cannot be explained away by lack of intonation or recording quality. Komitas was extensively trained as a singer and highly lauded for his ability, so it does not stand to reason that he would sing out of tune unintentionally. Additionally, in the exact same recording, when singing the upper *Buselik* pentachord structure, which lies in a more

[87] Komitas, *Complete Works* vol. 1, 19, mm.29-36. Note that A is sung natural in this context because the emphasis is on the dominant tone (C).

difficult tessitura of the voice to sing, there are no discrepancies between what he sings and what is notated in the music. The only note that is altered in the entire recording is the second degree of the *Ussak* tetrachord (A♭).

These recordings demonstrate that Komitas was both aware of and practiced the microtonality of the *yeghanags*. Why then did he not include them in his Western notation of Armenian music? Although unusual and not standardized, examples of Western notation of microtonality existed at this time; even Fétis, whose work Komitas was familiar with, used symbols to denote microtones. One reason is that, from a practical perspective, Komitas composed using a harmonium, a twelve-tone equal tempered instrument, which he requested the Gevorgian Seminary purchase for him prior to his return to Etchmiadzin from Berlin.[88]

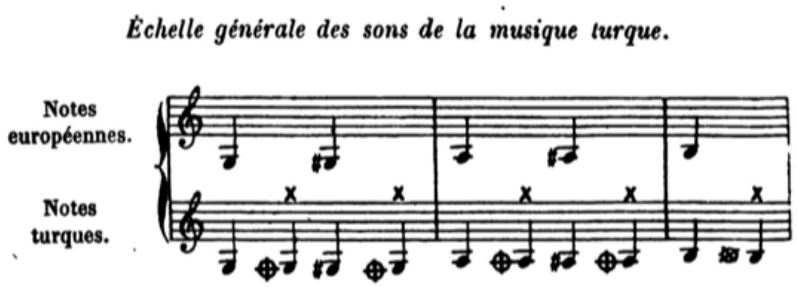


Figure 4.4. Example of microtonal notation used for Turkish music by Fétis.[89]

From an ideological perspective, however, the reason Komitas did not use microtonal notation is because he did not believe Armenian music was microtonal, but that it used more divisions of the octave than the Western system. In his 1897 article, "Armenian Church Music in

[88] Komitas, *The Letters of Komitas Vardapet*, 44-45.

[89] Fétis, *Histoire générale*... vol. 2, book 6, 354.

the 19th Century," he compares the division of the Eastern and Western octaves, noting that the Armenian uses 15 chromatic pitches (including the octave doubling) in the octave to the Europeans 13 pitches.[90] The result is that the pitch Mi♯ is enharmonically equivalent to Fa, and La♯ is not enharmonically equivalent to Ti♭. This also creates a situation where the diatonic major scale is tuned differently in Armenian music than for European music—whereby the fourth degree is lower and the seventh degree is higher in the Eastern system.

Table 4.1. Comparison of the Eastern and Western tuning of the diatonic major scale according to Komitas.[91]

Eastern	1	9/8	5/4	11/8	3/2	5/3	11/6	2
Western	1	9/8	5/4	4/3	3/2	5/3	15/8	2
	Do	Re	Mi	Fa	Sol	La	Ti	Do

The problem is that if, as Komitas believed, Armenian music is not microtonal and only based on a tuning system with more divisions of the octave, then by that definition, Turkish music, which uses 53 divisions of the octave, is also not microtonal. Komitas's assertion is just incorrect. The fact that, as he claims, Armenian music uses 14 divisions of the octave by definition makes it microtonal.

[90] Including the high octave pitch. Komitas, *Essays and Articles*, 155-156.

[91] Ibid.

There are two issues with these ratios given by Komitas. The first is that in this table, he is comparing the Eastern diatonic scale to ratios of the Western diatonic scale in just intonation. By this time period in Europe, would have been conceptualizing music in a twelve-tone equal tempered context, which obviously tunes differently than just-intonation. It is possible that he is making a comparison to the European church modes, but Komitas makes no clarifying comments in the article.

The second issue is that without the inclusion of ratios for all the chromatic pitches, it becomes impossible to know from this chart alone how to tune the additional notes of the Eastern octave, rendering the table almost completely useless.

There is also the issue that with no indication to differentiate between those 2 additional divisions, such as that Mi♯ is not enharmonically equivalent to Fa, and La♯ to Ti♭, those relationships are lost when notated in the Western style.[92] When Komitas's student, Armenak Shahmuradian, sings in tracks 7-15 in *The Voice of Komitas*, accompanied by equal-tempered instruments, he sings in twelve-tone equal temperament. This contradiction seems to indicate that for Komitas, subtle differences in pitch content and secondary intervallic characteristics (i.e., wide, narrow, pure) in the Armenian modal structures are non-essential and can be neglected for the purposes of "elevating" Armenian music to the level of the Europeans. If that is the case, many of the modal structures of the Armenian *yeghanags* become identical in pitch and intervallic relationships. Consequently, the melodic behaviors become not only the determining characteristic of the mode, but also likely what makes a mode Armenian in Komitas's mind.

Melodic behavior as a signifier for Armenian identity

The importance of melodic behavior for Komitas is especially apparent in modes based on the Aeolian series structures, excluding the *Hijaz* family structures. Without the 15-cent lowering of the Locrian series pitches, the *Ussak* and *Buselik* tetrachords are identical. As a result, *Makam Beyeti, Makam Ussak, Makam Buselik* (*Kurdi* upper structure variant), and in some instances *Makam Neva* and *Avak Yeghanag* all use nearly identical scales. Their melodic behavior therefore becomes essential to their identification. Take, for instance, the following musical examples of cadential phrases (Figures 4.5 & 4.6):

[92] Notably, even Fétis does not use microtonal notation for his descriptions of the Armenian modes.

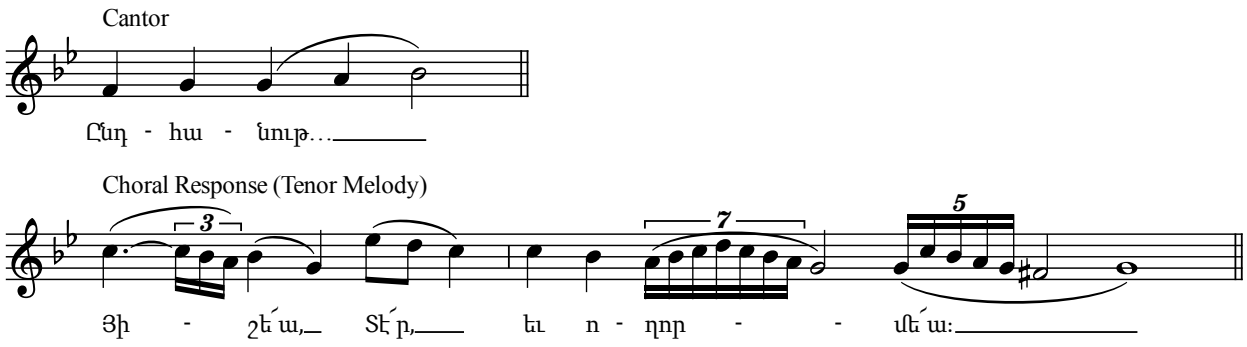


Figure 4.5. Responsory excerpt in *Makam Buselik* from Komitas's mass setting.[93]

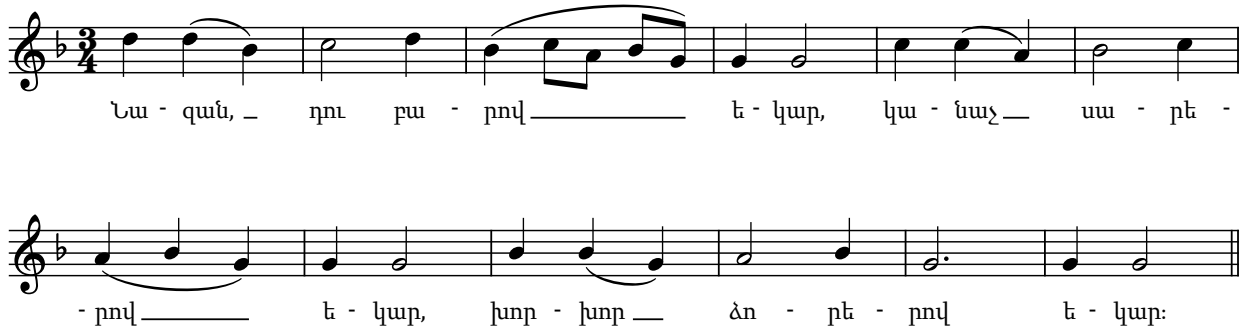


Figure 4.6. Closing phrase of Komitas's "Hoy Nazan."[94]

The first is the last in a series of responsories from Komitas's mass, "Hishadagutyunk yev hishya, Der" [Յիշատակութիւնք եւ յիշե՛ա, Տէր] in *Makam Buselik*, and the second is the closing phrase of Komitas's "Hoy Nazan" [Հոյ Նազան] in *Makam Husseyni*. Both these *yeghanags* have a tonic of La (ﻻ) and a Dominant on the fifth, Mi (ﻣ), and have nearly the same constituent pitches. What differentiates them is their melodic behavior, especially the manner which they approach the cadence. "Hishadagutyunk yev hishya, Der" begins on natural degree 7 moving up to the low tonic. From there it rises to the sixth degree before descending back down

[93] Transposed to G, Komitas, *Complete Works* vol. 7, 58.

[94] Ibid. vol. 12, p75.

to the leading tone (raised degree 7) and resolving to the tonic. "Hoy Nazan" begins on the dominant and descends, resting on occasionally in the fourth-degree area, before resolving to the tonic from the third. Both these closing phrases are idiomatic of their respective modes. While in a Western framework, they could be categorized in the minor mode, from an Eastern framework they are unique modes.

The emphasis on modal behavior might also help to explain the reason for the erasure of *Makam Saba* in Komitas's work. As an Aeolian series mode, Komitas might have decided to remove the chromatic alteration to the fourth degree in order to group the Aeolian series modes together. Another possibility may have been that Komitas felt the mode with the lowered fourth degree was a foreign "corruption" in the mode. In "Music of the Divine Liturgy," he wrote, "The difference between [Armenian] modes and other Eastern modes is that whereas they augment or diminish the compass of the tetrachord, we take a simple tetrachord and rearrange its intervals on the basis of semitones."[95] By this logic, a lowered fourth degree would make the mode foreign because it creates an outer interval of a diminished fourth instead of a perfect fourth for the lower structure.

Nevertheless, the problem remains that *Makam Saba* and *Makam Ussak* become indistinguishable as a result of Komitas's alteration. Without the diminished fourth, even melodic behavior is not sufficient to differentiate between them because the behavior, tones, and cadences are very similar. Komitas never addressed the issue directly, and I have been unable to find any resources that describe how to differentiate between the two modes in Komitas's work.

[95] Komitas, *Essays and Articles*, 186.

Therefore, unfortunately, the resource for identifying modes in *Makam Saba* are in transcriptions that have labeled the mode, such as in "Karun a" [Գարուն ա].[96]

The use of melodic behavior as the identifying characteristic of a mode is important in Komitas's work because he uses mode to also assign national identity. Volume 14 of Komitas's *Complete Works* contains his transcriptions of folk music from Eastern Turkey (#159-176). Many of the modes of these transcriptions use labels differentiating them from Armenian modes, such as "Turkish *Hijaz*" [Թիւրքիւ Հիճազ], "*Şarkı Ussak*" [Շարքը Ուշշաք], etc. As far as pitch content and overall melodic patterns, they are the same as in Armenian melodies.

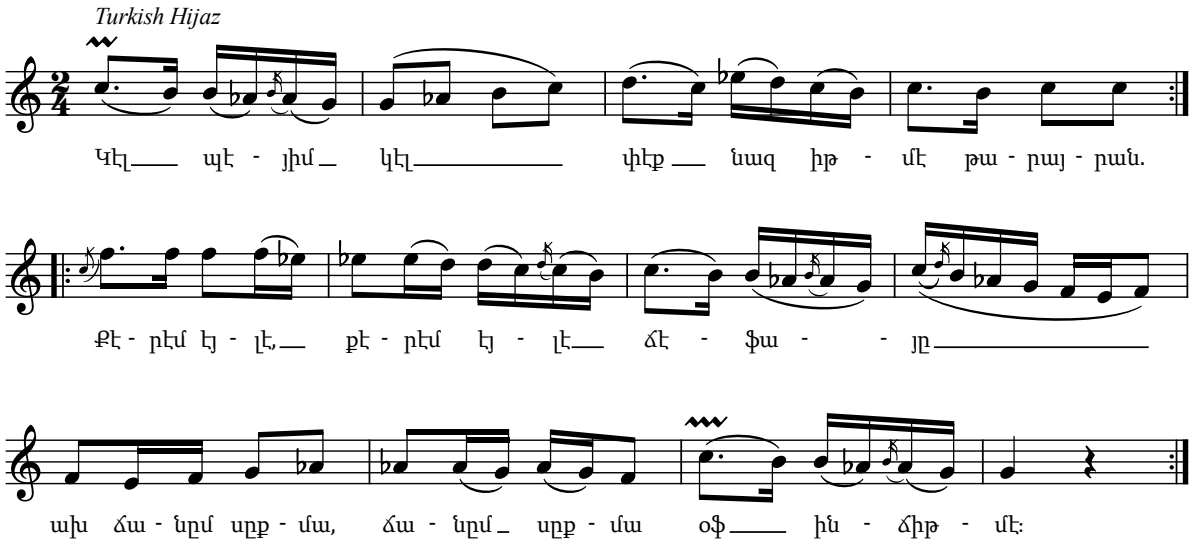


Figure 4.7. Komitas's transcription of "Gel beyim" as sung by Hagop Meliksetigian.[97]

For example, in "Gel beyim," labeled by Komitas as "Turkish *Hijaz*," the ascending-descending melody begins at the dominant pitch, Re (C), using the lower structure, but with

[96] See Komitas, *Complete Works* vol. 9, 71.

[97] Komitas, *Complete Works* vol. 14, 97.

melodic emphasis toward the dominant. In the second phrase, the melody uses the upper *Buselik* tetrachord structure and over the course of four measures descends down into the pre-extension. Finally, in the last phrase, the melody uses the lower tetrachord, revolving around the tonic pitch and cadences. This character is also idiomatic of "Armenian *Hijaz*." Below is Komitas's transcription of the Armenian folk song, "Sareri vrov knats," which uses "Armenian *Hijaz*" and its melodic pattern. It begins around the dominant note in the first phrase and descends down to the tonic in the second. As this is a shorter melody, it does not make use of the upper tetrachord or pre-extension to the same extent as "Gel beyim," but if the melody were more expansive, it would have been entirely appropriate to do so.

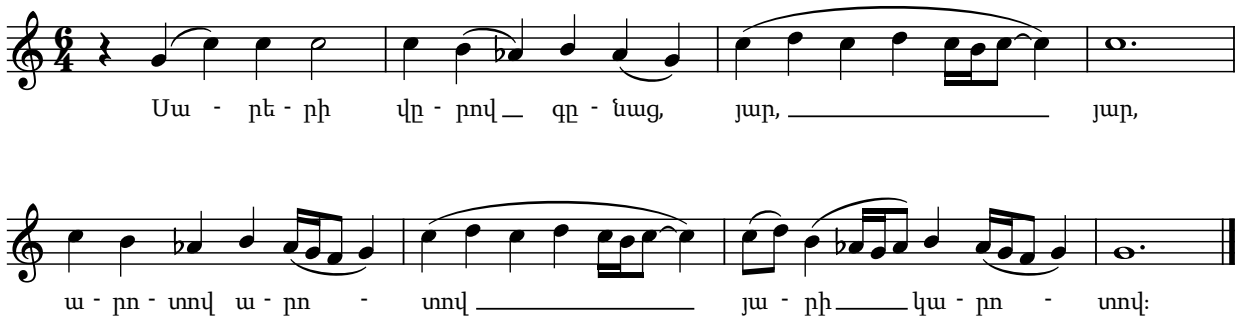


Figure 4.8. Komitas's transcription of "Sareri vrov knats."[98]

Although the overall behaviors of "Gel beyim" and "Sareri vrov knats" are the same, what is different is the disparity in the amount of ornamentation used in the melodies. "Sareri vrov knats" uses no ornamentation. By comparison, "Gel beyim" uses many grace notes and two mordents, one on the opening note and a longer one at the final statement dominant pitch to signify the cadence. In all of Komitas's work, he never uses the mordent as an ornament for

[98] Komitas, *Complete Works* vol. 11, 73.

Armenian melodies. He believed, rightly or wrongly, that the extensive use of ornamentations was a foreign corruption to Armenian music. In his 1914 lecture in Paris for the International Society of Music, he compares the numerous embellishments in what he calls the "Turkish style" and "Persian Style" to the "Armenian Style," giving musical examples. Unfortunately, the examples were performed by Komitas live and not notated, so there is no way of knowing the exact nature of the ornamentations he sung. However, his statement from that lecture that best summarizes his view is, "You have no doubt noticed that the purity, the clarity, and the naturalness of the Armenian melody are lost in the particularly copious coloration and guttural trills common to Persian music."[99]

The concept of simplicity, purity, naturalness, etc. come up frequently in Komitas's writing and are foundational in his formulation of Armenian musical identity. These terms are abstract by nature, and in using them, Komitas imposed his subjective personal aesthetic tastes on his supposed objective view of Armenian music. Ghorghanyan himself made this observation in response to Komitas's review of his work.[100] Regardless, Komitas's aesthetic tastes separate his view from those of other Armenian composers and musicologists. Arshak Brutyan was an Armenian musicologist who conducted his ethnographic research mainly in Eastern Armenia and on *ashugh* music. Unlike Komitas, his transcriptions freely use grace notes and ornamentations. For instance, we can compare Komitas and Brutyan's versions of "Grung."

[99] Komitas, *Essays and* Articles, 169.

[100] See Komitas, *The Letters of Komitas Vardapet*, 386-391.

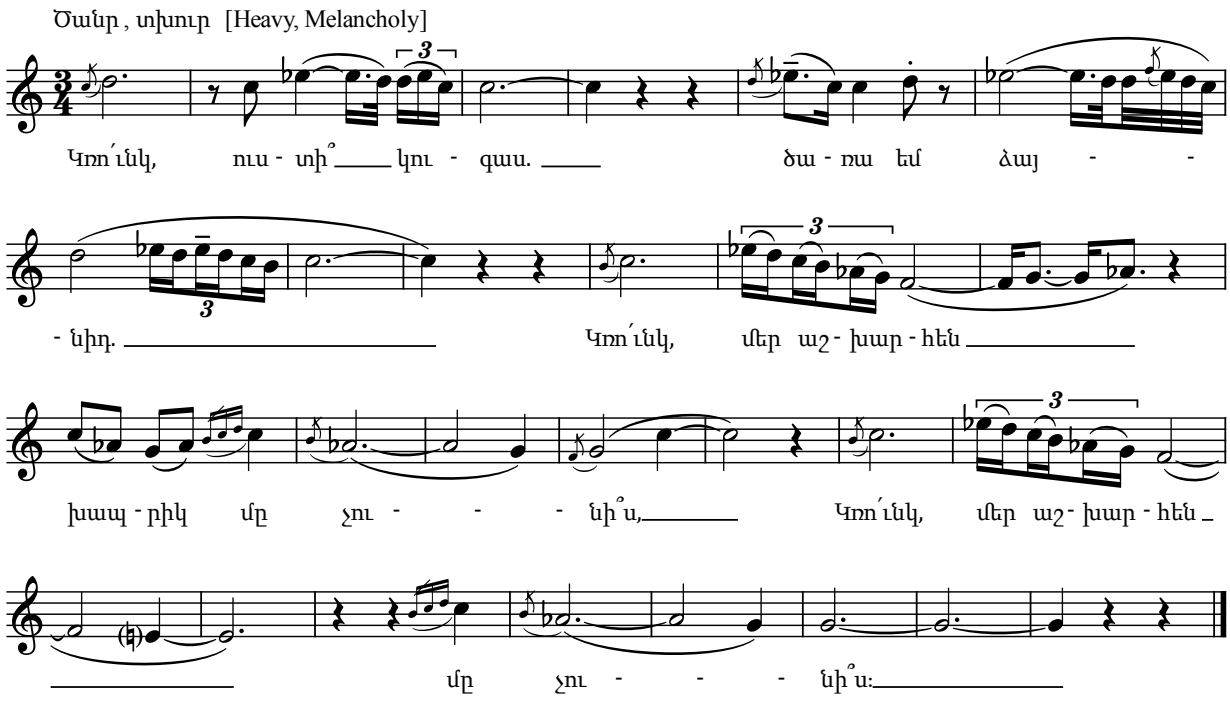


Figure 4.9. Komitas's version of the melody from "Grung."[101]

"Grung" is a melody in *Makam Hijaz*, and it falls under a category of melodies labeled *dzanr*, or heavy. *Dzanr* melodies are slow and florid, often showcasing the vocal prowess of the singer. Despite the slow tempo, they are typically notated with shorter rhythmic durations. Komitas has two versions of this melody in the *Complete Works*. One is in the folk collection (Vol. 10, p. 103, #136). The other, the version above, is the more ornate, accompanied version from Vol. 1. This version is representative (approximately) of the upper limit of ornamentation that Komitas uses in his work. Most of the ornaments are single grace notes, restricted to the beginning of a phrase or before a longer held note. One could also argue that the grace note that begins the melody does not function as an ornament, as it carries the first syllable of the word, *grung*—IPA: [gərung]. The only group of three grace notes comes on the word "մը" [mə],

[101] Transposed to G from A. Komitas, *Complete Works* vol. 1, 101-103.

introducing the cadence each time. The only real florid ornamentation is on the word for "your call/voice," ձայնիդ [tsajnit]. Komitas's affinity for simplicity also extends to the accompaniment of "Grung." Though it makes full use of the range of the piano, the texture is sparse; there are only 10 instances where three or more keys are struck simultaneously in the entire 35 measures of the composition.

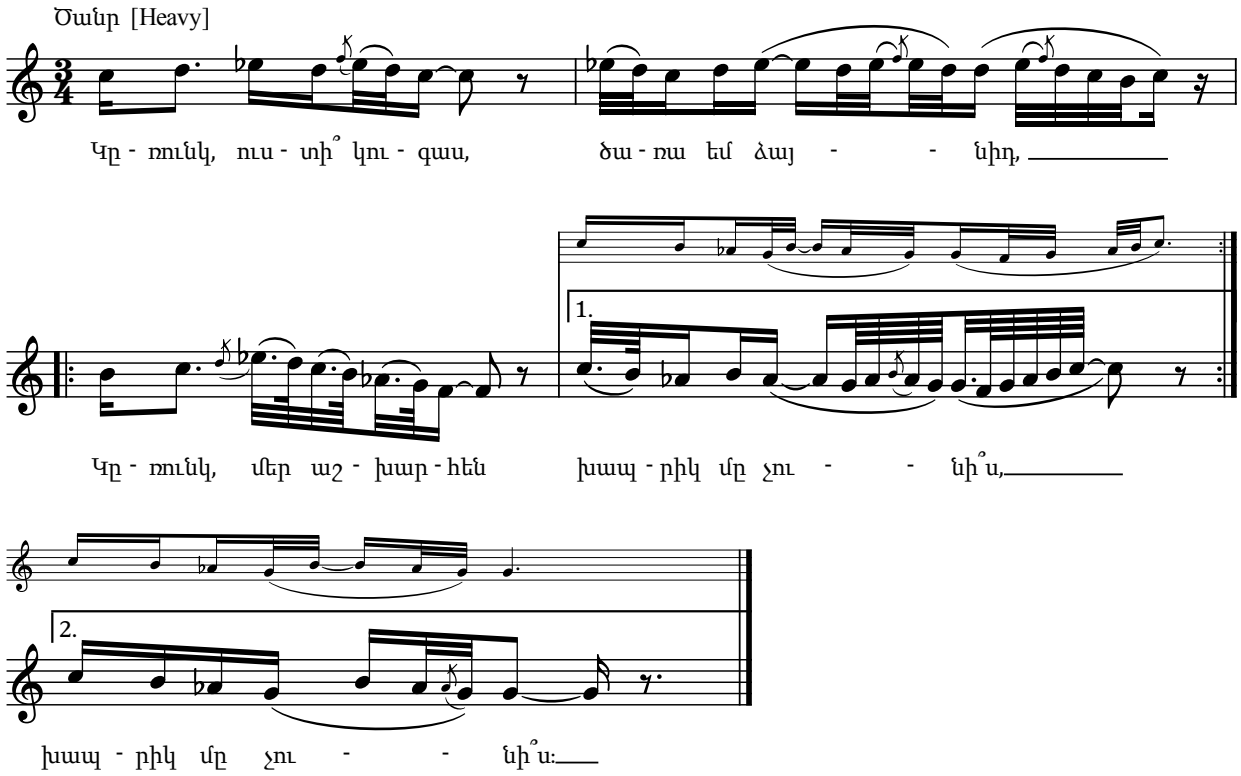


Figure 4.10. Brutyan's transcription of "Grung."[102]

Brutyan's transcription also uses single grace note ornaments, but they are not restricted to the beginnings of phrases or by preceding longer held notes. They are even used in the middle

[102] Arshak Brutyan, *[Plebian Whispers]*, compiled, ed., annotated, and preface by Margarit Brutyan (Yerevan: Amrots Group, 2002),144.

of florid melismatic ornaments, of which there are more than in the Komitas. For the Brutyan, the florid melismata are used at cadences, where Komitas opts to use sustained pitches, such as on չունՙիս [tʃunis].

Melody and Language

The discussion of simplicity also brings us to the subject of Komitas's second criticism of Ghorghanyan: "The rhythm has been disrupted. There are foreign accelerations and excesses, which do not originate in the basic spacing rules of our language." One other difference between Komitas and Brutyan's renditions of "Grung" is the space that Komitas gives the music through sustained notes and fewer ornamentations which allows the sung text to flow more naturally like the prosody of spoken text.

The prosody of the opening text when spoken is "կ-**ռունկ,** ուս-**տի՛** կու-**գաս** ծա-**րա** եմ ձայ-**նիդ**" [gə-**rung**, us-**di** gu-**kas**, dzɑ-**rɑ** jɛm tsɑj-**nit**], with stressed syllables in bold. Komitas's setting follows this pattern, placing stressed syllables on beats 1 or 2 and elongating them. The unstressed syllables sound on the off-beats. There are only three exceptions. For "կռունկ," this is accomplished with a grace note before the beat. "Ծառա" comes on the beat, but is part of a larger trajectory towards the word, "ձայնիդ." Additionally, the emphasis of the downbeat on the syllable "ծա" is also undermined by a grace note ornament before the beat. The last exception is the unstressed first syllable of "ձայնիդ," which lands on the first beat of the measure without a grace note. However, Komitas balances this by elongating the second syllable for over double the duration of the first.

While we could point out that Brutyan's transcription misaligns the rhythmic stresses of the text by placing unstressed syllables on downbeats, it is likely this is an editorial error made

when converting the Hampartsum notation to Western notation, as shifting all the measure lines one sixteenth note to the right corrects almost all the errors. Therefore, it is more appropriate to make a comparison with Kristapor Kara-Murza's version of "Grung," which is set for solo voice and a choral accompaniment that enters on the repetition of the final phrase. Because the choir mainly consists of drone, we will only examine the melody in the solo section.

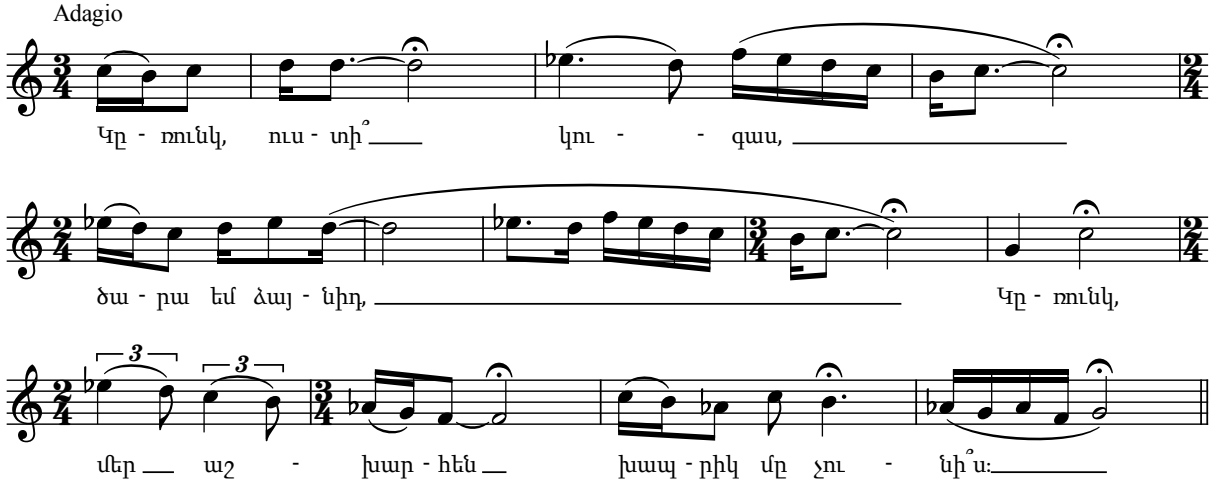


Figure 4.11. Kara-Murza's version of "Grung."[103]

Kara-Murza's "Grung" from the very beginning sets the first three words with beat emphases on the weak syllables, opposite to the inflections of the spoken text. On the word "կուգաս," he attempts to use the same text stress technique as Komitas by elongating the stressed second syllable, "-գաս," double the length of the weaker first syllable. However, because the second syllable lands on beat three, the weakest of the three beats in the measure, the technique fails. In the fourth measure, he changes meter from $\frac{3}{4}$ to $\frac{2}{4}$, presumably in order to have

[103] Transposed to G. Krikor Pidedjian and Kristapor Kara-Murza, *[Kristapor Kara-Murza]* (Yerevan: [EPK hrataraktchutyun], 2013), cxlii.

the most important syllable of the phrase, the "-ի" of "ձայնի," land on a downbeat. Yet, again, he undermines the emphasis by syncopating the rhythm of "ձայնի," causing the second syllable to come one sixteenth note before the downbeat. As a result, the inflection of every word in measures 4-7 is reversed without good reason. Additionally, the disparity in the length of syllables of the word "ձայնի" makes the text setting awkward because the second syllable is over fourteen times longer than the first. These are likely the kinds of "errors" that Komitas referred to when he criticized musical settings for not adhering to the spacing rules of the Armenian language.

Metric considerations

A key component to making music honor the spoken cadence of the language is the music's meter. In Komitas's mind, Armenian is a triple-meter language, evidence by the fact that the most commonly used meters in his works are triple meters, such as $\frac{3}{4}$, $\frac{6}{8}$, $\frac{9}{8}$, etc. However, it would be more accurate to say that Armenian words tend to stress words "long-short" or "short-long" as opposed to even stressing of syllables. Therefore, using simple meters would be the easiest way to represent those rhythms. For example, a common rhythm in Armenian is "long-short" followed by "short-long;" in $\frac{6}{8}$ this becomes | ♩ ♪ ♪ ♩ |, also called the Georgina Rhythm. Because "long" and "short" are subjective concepts, however, $\frac{6}{8}$ is not the only meter that can express | ♩ ♪ ♪ ♩ |.

In Western Armenian music, the Georgina Rhythm is expressed as | ♩. ♩ ♩ ♩. | using a $\frac{10}{8}$ meter. According to Hachig Kazarian, Komitas essentially erases $\frac{10}{8}$ from his conception of

Armenian music by converting $\frac{10}{8}$ songs into $\frac{6}{8}$. Figure 4.12, taken from Kazarian's book, *Western Armenian Music*, compares the differences between the $\frac{10}{8}$ meter of Western Armenian Georgina Rhythm to Komitas's version in $\frac{6}{8}$. The $\frac{6}{8}$ Georgina does exist in Armenian music, but it tends to be more common in Eastern Armenia.

To conjecture Komitas's reasons for the erasure of $\frac{10}{8}$, Komitas was composing, in part, with the intention of creating concert works of Armenian folk music suitable to the sensibilities of European audiences. Perhaps he felt that if he were able to impress them, he will have succeeded in elevating Armenian music to the next phase of development. Because $\frac{10}{8}$ is a common rhythm in other Eastern musical traditions, especially Ottoman Art Music, he may have felt it necessary to align Armenian music closer to the Western style by using simpler meters.[104]

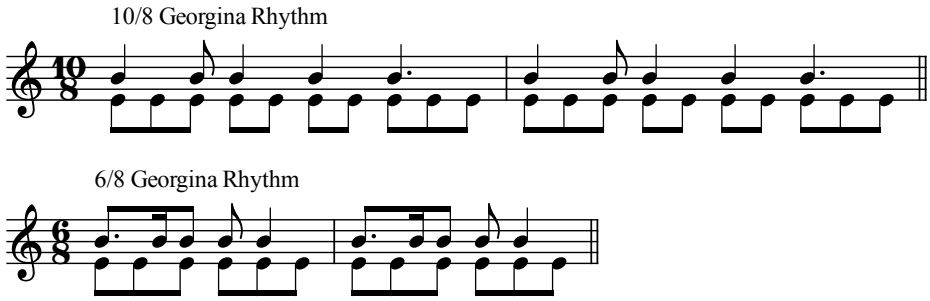


Figure 4.12. Comparison of the $\frac{10}{8}$ and $\frac{6}{8}$ Georgina Rhythm.[105]

[104] Kazarian vehemently makes this same argument, claiming Komitas made many transcription errors in the process of westernizing Armenian folk music. For more detailed information, see Kazarian, *Western Armenian Music: From Asia Minor to the United States*, 19-106.

[105] Kazarian, *Western Armenian Music*, 71.

The effects of language on the shaping of Armenian identity can be seen even back to the Middle Ages and the development of *khaz*. When comparing the difference between the closely related Greek neumes and Armenian *khaz*, Robert Atayan points out that grammatical differences in the languages caused some Greek neumes to be rendered unnecessary in the Armenian *khaz*.[106] Komitas, who himself also studied *khaz*, would have been cognizant of how the Armenian language affects music. Though not all may agree with Komitas's rhythmic and metrical choices in his expression of Armenian musical identity, many, like myself and Kazarian, agree with him that the Armenian language is profoundly vital to the shaping of an Armenian musical identity.

> "…musical intonation by its origin and historical development is very closely related to speech intonation. The artistic expressions of speech intonation, its meaning and emotion comprise one of the characteristic features of melody. A melody, being the most important expression of the musical mind, is continuously enriched with new forms for the realization of speech intonation borrowed from the spoken language. At the same time, recitative in its turn comes often very close to the actual music which is the melody."[107]

Harmony in Komitas's Compositions

The final critique of Ghorghanyan, "The harmonization does not have a common style, a common unity, and does not match the style of music," summarizes Komitas's perspective on the relationship between harmony and Armenian musical identity. Komitas's harmonic language developed as an outgrowth from the melodic materials he was using. Tertian harmony derived

[106] Robert Atayan, *The Armenian Neume System of Notation*, ed. and trans. by Vrej Nersessian (Richmond, Surrey, England: Curzon Press, 1999) 17-26.

[107] Atayan, 17.

from the contrapuntal interactions between voices serve as the primary basis for Komitas's harmonic language. Naturally, because the Armenian modal system is different from the European, even when applying Western contrapuntal techniques that he learned in Berlin, he developed a different mechanism of harmonic progression, one based on the relationship between the three series of perfect fourths, the foundation of the Armenian modal system. However, he did not use this harmonic style immediately after his studies in Berlin. He developed it over the course of the approximately fifteen years after returning to Armenia.

Komitas's Early Harmonic Language

Komitas's early choral works, written while near the end of his tenure in Berlin, were heavily influenced by European harmonic practices. They used mostly diatonic, functional harmony with spurts of chromaticism. For example, "Der, getso tu əzhays" (*Տէր, կեցո՛ դու զհայս*) and "Hayrig, Hayrig, ko hayrenik" (*Հայրիկ, Հայրիկ, քո հայրենիք*), though containing some elements that are not common within the Western harmonic practice, can be analyzed with a Roman numeral analysis that follows diatonic harmonic principles.

As seen in the analysis in Figure 4.13, Komitas begins in G. The opening 6-measure phrase of "Hayrig, Hayrig" begins with a voice-exchange from I^6 to I using a passing $V^6{}_4$. The vi^7 chord in measure 2 then uses neighboring predominant motion to iv/vi followed by a double suspension in the tenor and bass to move to vi^6 on the downbeat of measure 3. Measures 3 & 4 use a series of pivot-chord modulations to get to A minor, landing on a dominant chord in measure 5. Komitas prolongs the dominant chord on the downbeat by moving to $vii^{\circ 4}{}_2$ and then using chromatic lower neighbors in the upper three before returning to V. The triple chromatic

lower neighbor notes in the upper voices incidentally also create an ambiguous half-diminished seventh chord.

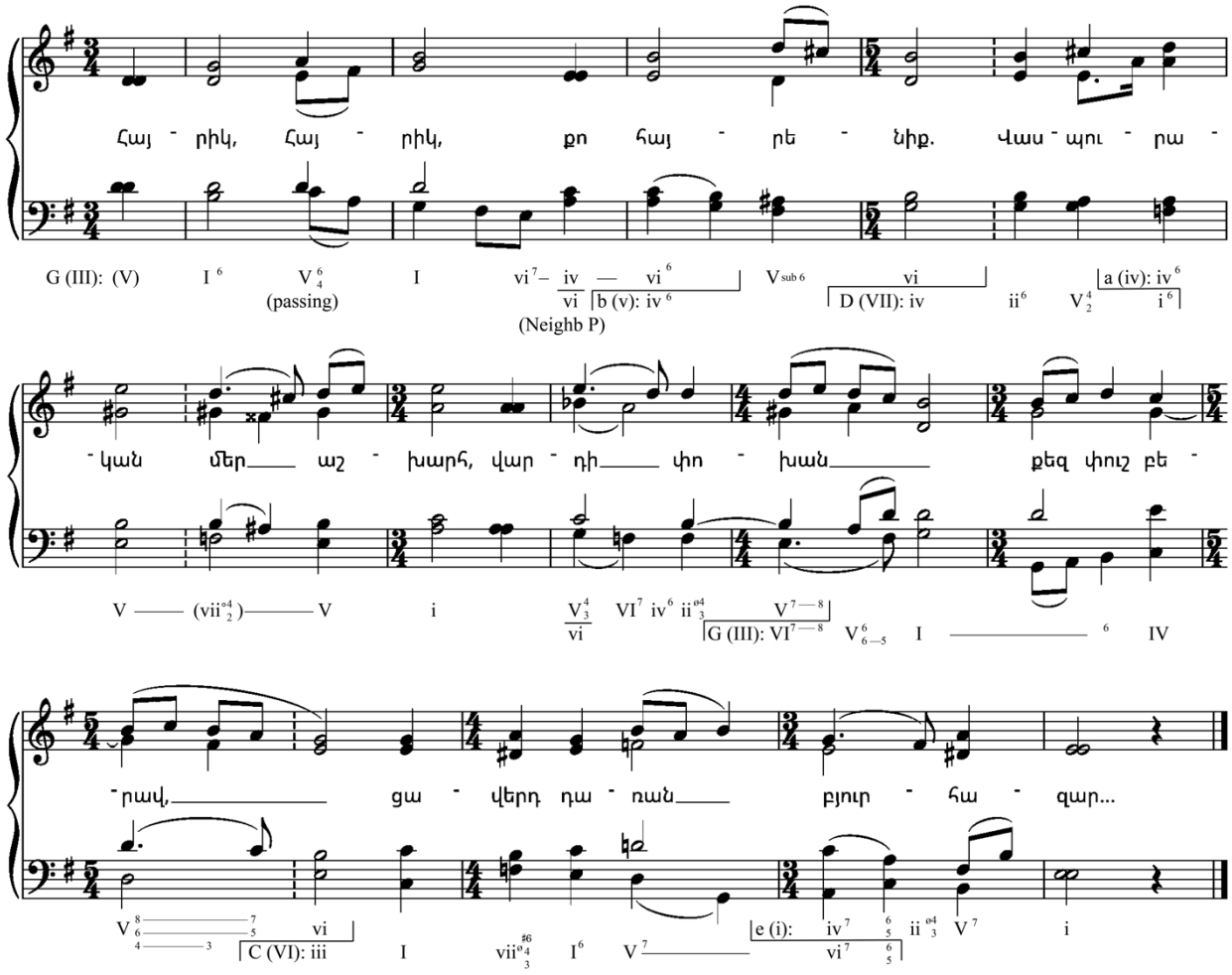


Figure 4.13. Reduction and harmonic analysis of "Hayrig, Hayrig, ko hayrenik."[108]

Komitas makes particular use of these half-diminished seventh chords in his music. In measure 11, he uses $vii^{ø4}{}_3$ with a raised third as a dominant-functioning harmony. Though this is

[108] Taken from Komitas, *Complete Works* vol. 4, 51, mm. 1-14. The final 7 measures of the original, which are a repetition of the music from measures 7-13 notated here, are omitted.

something that one can find in the music of Richard Strauss, it is not entirely certain whether or not he learned these usages of the half-diminished seventh chords while studying in Berlin, though it is likely. What does seem to be clear, however, is that these harmonies were formulated through the process of thinking about the music contrapuntally. In both measures 5 and 11, the half-diminished seventh harmonies are born from neighbor tone motion. This is also why, in other works, Komitas uses ii ^{ø7} as a dominant functioning chord, making use of the common tone between i and ii$^{ø\,7}$. Later Armenian composers who were influenced by Komitas's music also used and expanded on these harmonies. For example, Koharik Ghazarossian, in the first variation of her *Eight Variations* for piano inspired by "Shushiki" by Komitas, uses ii$^{ø7}{}_{\#3}$ as the dominant functioning chord of the final cadence.

Though some of the more Western harmonic principles disappear in Komitas's later style, "Hayrig, Hayrig" demonstrates another harmonic and structural technique that he continues to use in his later works. Komitas frequently uses the key of III as the starting key for melodies in Aeolian series modes that have a dominant pitch on the fifth degree, such as *Makam Buselik*, *Makam Husseyni*, and *Avak Yeghanag*. By starting a piece in the key of III he can make use of the dominant pitch in a context where it is the third of the tonic harmony. He will then conclude the piece in i, using the *finalis* as the root of the tonic harmony. This creates a modulatory dichotomy in Komitas's works in which III and i are analogous to the relative major modulations in minor keys in the Western musical tradition.

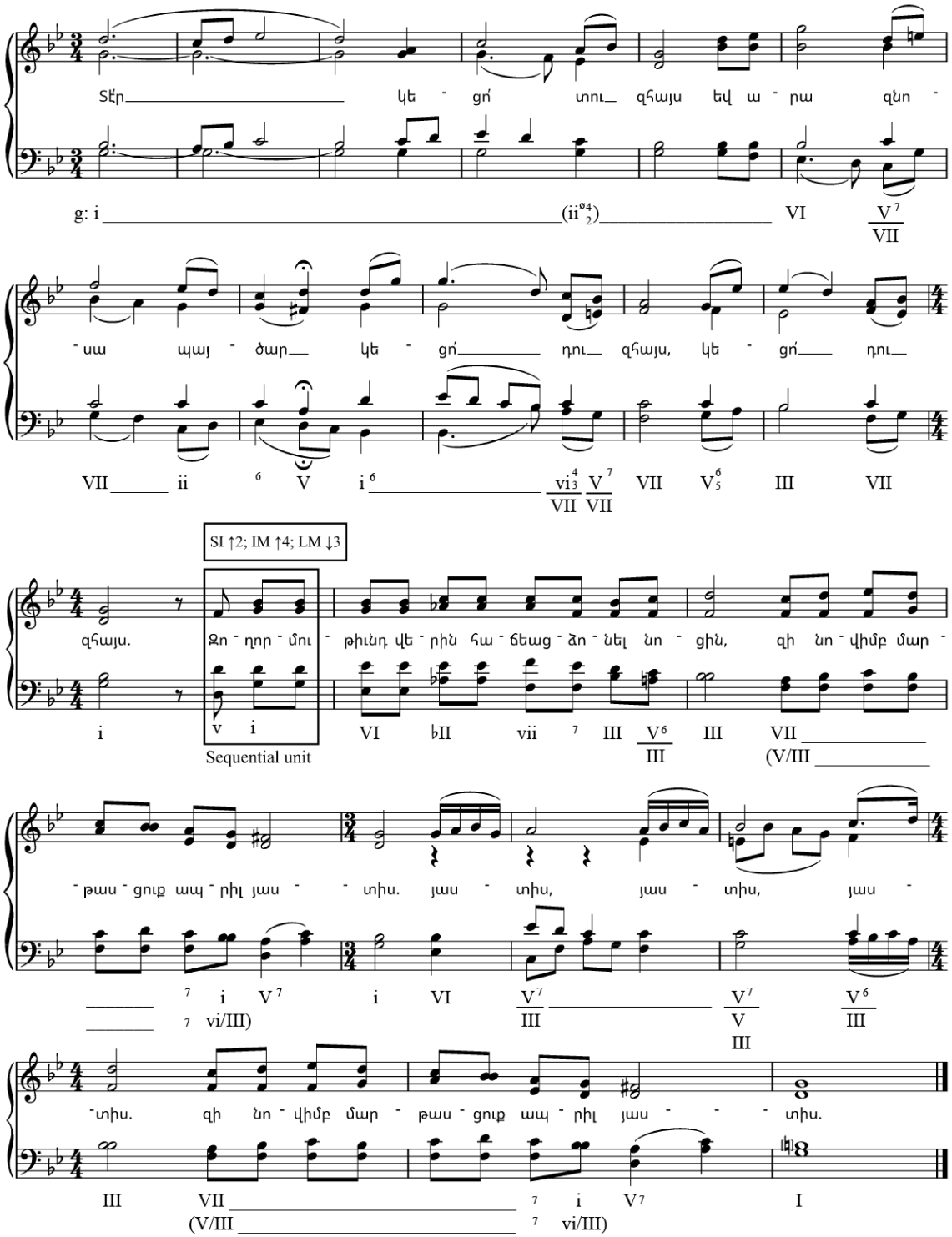


Figure 4.14. Reduction and harmonic analysis of "Der, getso tu əzhays."[109]

[109] Taken from Komitas, *Complete Works* vol. 5, 64-65, mm. 1-21. In the original, the second verse (measure 22 to the end) repeats nearly exactly with the exception of the Picardy third in the final chord (shown in brackets).

"Der, getso tu əzhays" uses several different Western techniques in addition to those from "Hayrig, Hayrig" to harmonize the *Makam Buselik* melody. The most out of character with later Komitas choral compositions is the sequence in measures 12-13. The sequential unit repeats 2.5 times with a sequential interval of a second up, an internal motion of a fourth up, and a linking motion of a third down. Even though there are Armenian melodies which could easily lend themselves to sequential harmonization, such as the B section melody of "Dzirani Dzar" (Ծիրանի՛ ծառ),[110] Komitas does not employ the technique in later works, as he becomes inclined more towards contrapuntal techniques over harmonic ones.

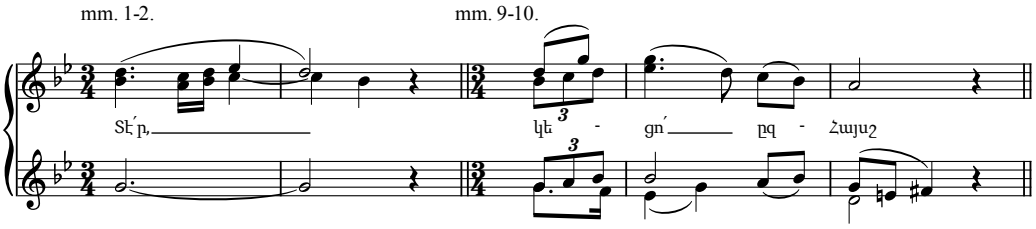


Figure 4.15. Western style suspensions in earlier versions of "Der, getso."[111]

Following the opening parallel motion between the tenor and soprano over the bass and alto drone in "Der getso," the upper three voices descend in a manner reminiscent of *fauxbourdon*. Additionally, the Picardy third at the cadence calls back to the Renaissance and Baroque eras in Europe. In earlier versions of "Der, getso" there are more examples of Renaissance style polyphonic techniques. The examples in Figure 4.15 show two instances of 4-

[110] See "Dzirani Dzar," measures 11-15. Komitas, *Complete Works* vol. 1, 38.

[111] From ibid. vol 4, 111-112.

3 suspensions, the second of which, the Alto I part uses a highly idiomatic Renaissance figure to embellish the suspension.

Of the non-Western features of this work, the use of modal cadences is most noteworthy. Komitas makes frequent use of the VII harmony (using the natural 7th scale degree), especially at cadence points, as opposed to vii˚ (leading tone 7th scale degree in minor). The cadence from measure 11-12 is a variation of a cadence seen in the work of Makar Yekmalyan, as in the intonation of "I verin Yerusaghem" (*Ի վերին Երուսաղէմ*). Komitas's differs only in the inversion of the chords and the order of the two chords preceding the resolution.

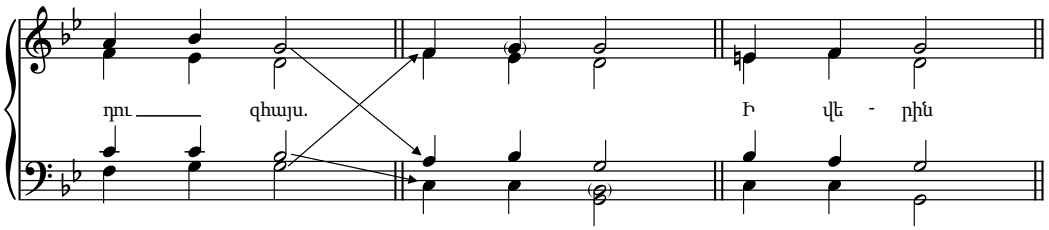


Figure 4.16. Similar use of VII in Komitas's "Der getso" and Yekmalyan's "I verin Yerusaghem."

Komitas's Mature Harmonic Language

Komitas's later works use a harmonic style that, though tertian in nature, is more reliant on the Armenian melodies themselves than on European harmonic principles. In my analyses of Komitas's choral and vocal works, I believe I have discovered a key to understanding Komitas's mature harmonic language by creating harmonic lattices derived from the three series of perfect fourths that form the foundation of the Armenian modal system.

Constructing Komitas's harmonic lattices

To visualize how harmonies progress in Komitas's later works, we can begin by laying out the Mixolydian series of perfect fourths on a line. Like the series of perfect fourths themselves, the line extends infinitely in both directions, eventually circling back on itself once all the pitch possibilities have been exhausted. Each pitch on the Mixolydian line represents the root of a major triad. Above the Mixolydian line and offset to the right, we add an Aeolian line. We align the pitches in the Aeolian line so that the Aeolian harmonies are a major second higher than the closest Mixolydian harmony to its left. Each pitch on the Aeolian line represents the root of a minor triad. We can then repeat this process again above the Aeolian series for the Locrian series. Each pitch on the Locrian line represents the root of a diminished triad.

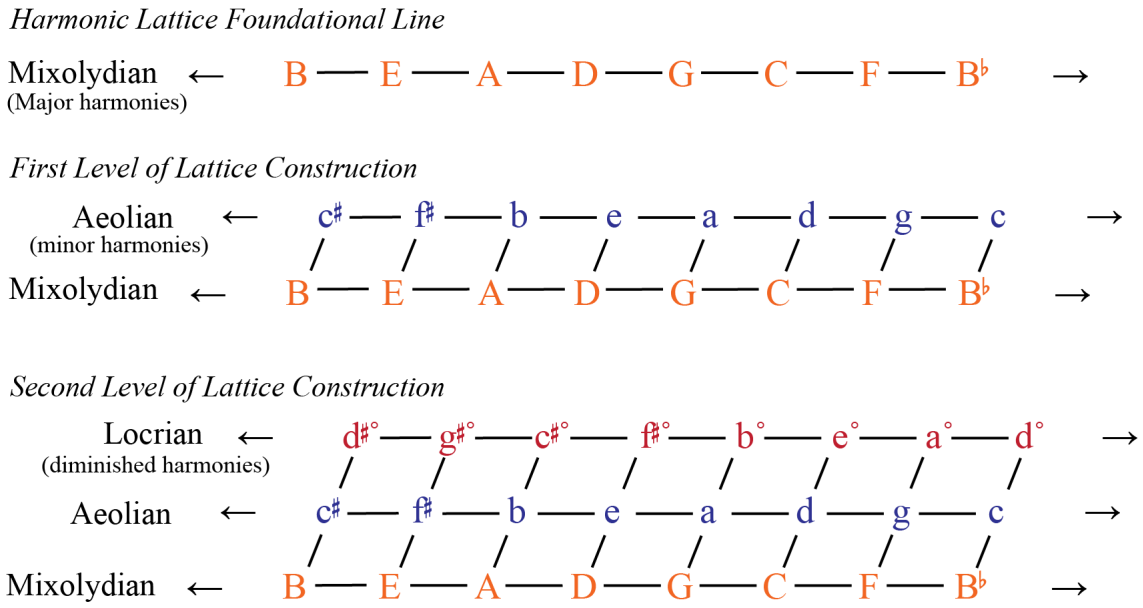


Figure 4.17. Building Komitas's harmonic lattice.

To complete the lattice, we repeat the process once more at the interval of a minor second above the Locrian line to place another Mixolydian line. The top and bottom Mixolydian lines

are the same line. Through this procedure, we have now created a lattice of chordal possibilities for the aggregate diatonic scale of the Armenian modal system in the shape of interconnected diamonds (Figure 4.18). Theoretically, we could continue adding lines infinitely, but because the top and bottom Mixolydian lines are the same, we can consider all possible movements between series accounted for. [112]

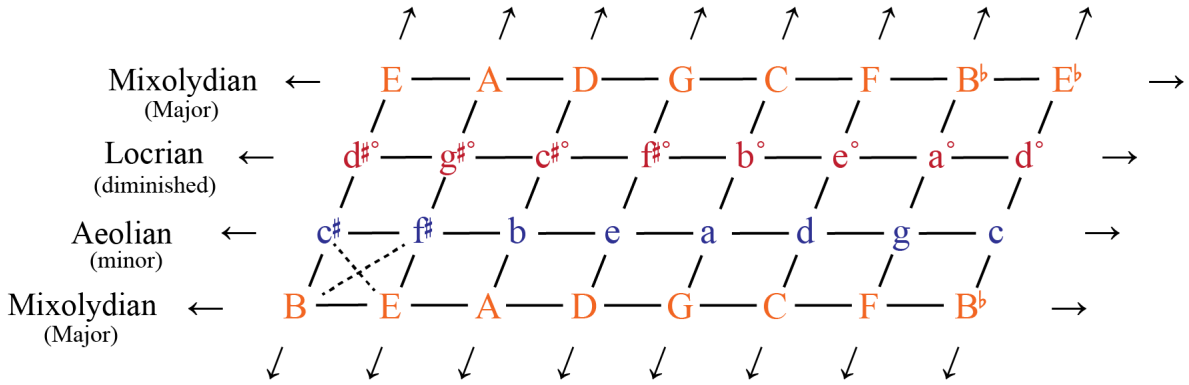


Figure 4.18. The complete harmonic lattice.

[112] As a brief aside, Béla Bartók, also known for his ethnographic work, made use of similar diamonds as well as a means for progressing through tonal centers (as opposed to major, minor, and diminished harmonies in Komitas) in some of his works. However, his diamonds are constructed with a perfect fifths series on one axis (diatonic dominant relationships) and diminished fifths series on the other (Bartók-dominant relationships). I learned this analytical technique for Bartók's music from Elinor Armer, who was the longtime instructor of graduate seminars on Bartók's String Quartets at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music.

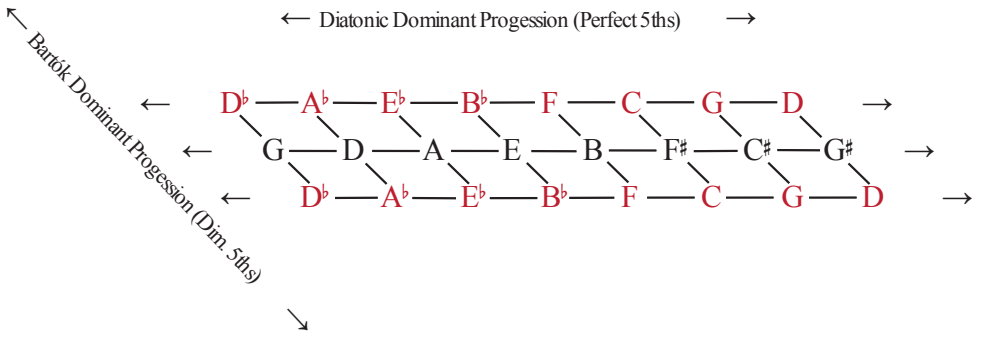


Figure. Bartok's harmonic diamonds.

Komitas's harmonies progress along the paths of the diamond lattice. They will always move one pathway at a time or within a single diamond, and they do not use more than one at once. For example, the D major harmony on the Mixolydian line cannot progress directly to the B diminished harmony on the Locrian line.

Simple implementation of the harmonic lattices in Komitas's music

Komitas's "Haprpan" (*Հարբրան*), from the set of songs for the *Hay Knar* publication in 1907, demonstrates the diamond lattice technique. Many various "Haprpan" folk melodies exist, varying by region or village. Komitas's "Haprpan" is a combination of two versions, the first in *Makam Beyeti* and the second in *Makam Husseyni*.[113] We will use an excerpt from the work using the first melody. Because *Makam Beyeti's* structures do not use any chromatic alterations and are conjoined in a manner that that does not interrupt the melodic progression of Mixolydian, Aeolian, and Locrian series (See Figure 3.7), they provide a clear and simple demonstration of harmonic progression along the lattice.

[113] Komitas, *Complete Works* vol. 13, 65 & 91.

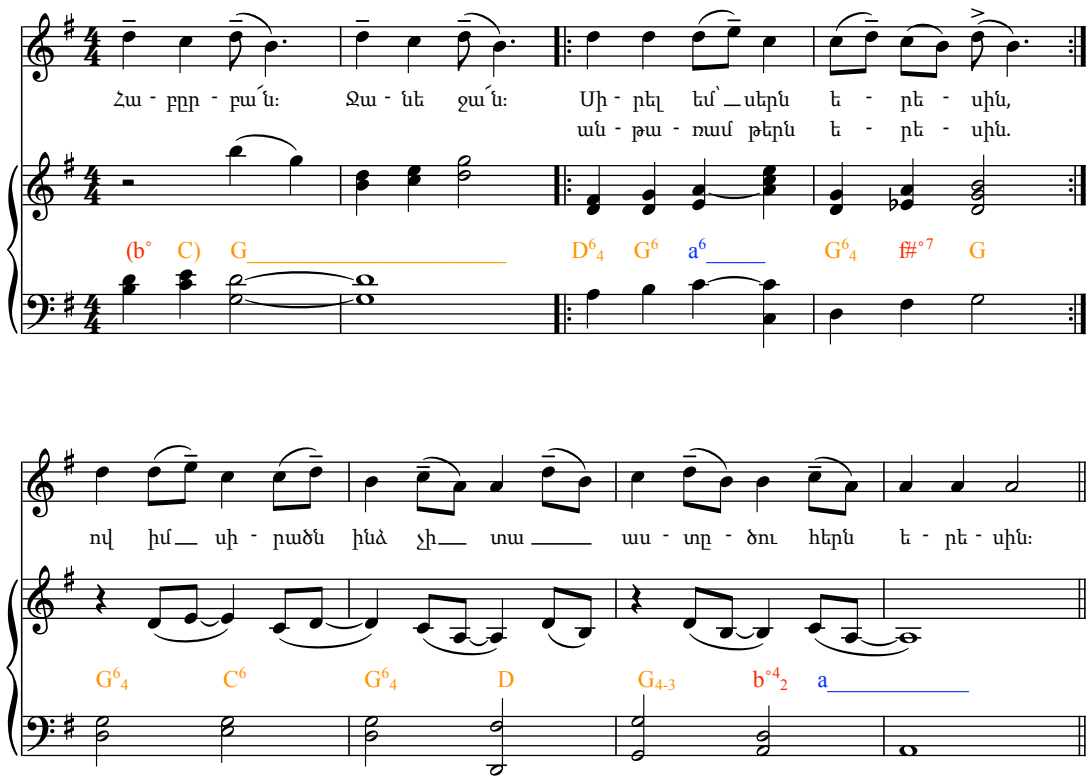


Figure 4.19. Progression of harmony in "Haprpan."[114]

All the harmonies in "Haprpan" exist and progress the paths of the diamond lattice according to along the following cross-section of the harmonic lattice:

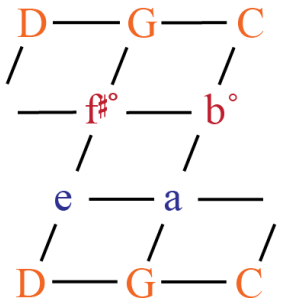


Figure 4.20. The harmonic lattice for "Haprpan."

[114] Measures 2-10 with simplified piano accompaniment. The tenor and soprano lines have also been combined. From Komitas, *Complete Works* vol. 1, 17.

If we follow the harmonic analysis in Figure 4.19 and map the progression of harmony onto the lattice in Figure 4.20, the how Komitas moves along the harmonic lattice becomes clear.

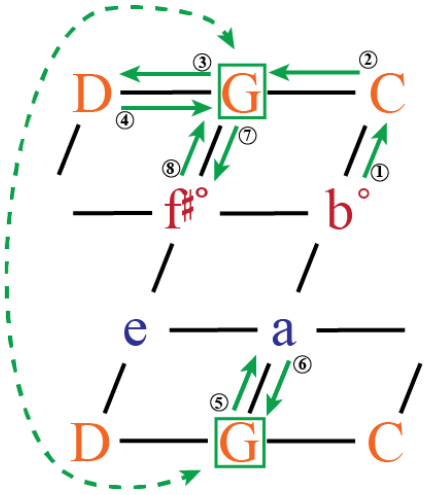


Figure 4.21. The harmonic progression of "Haprpan" on the harmonic lattice.

In the first four measures of "Haprpan," the progression of harmony begins with b° from the Locrian line and moves up to C on the Mixolydian. The progression then remains on the Mixolydian line, moving from C to G to D^6_4 and back to G^6. To reach the next harmony (a^6 on the Aeolian line) in one step, we have to remember that the top and bottom Mixolydian lines are the same line. Therefore, we can pivot from the top G to the bottom G in order to reach a^6. To finish out the progression, we move back to G^6_4, pivoting once more back to the top G, and then finishing the progression by moving to $f♯^{\circ 7}$ and then to G.

It is still possible to analyze this progression from a Western harmonic viewpoint. The D^6_4 can be interpreted as a passing V^6_4 between the two tonic G chords. and the $G^6_4 \rightarrow f♯^{\circ 7}$ could be interpreted as a cadential $V^6_4 \rightarrow V^{♭9}_7$. However, this Western analysis does not take into consideration that the tonic pitch of the melody is A, not G. The correct roman numeral analysis

for G is VII. We could consider the first six measures of the example to be a tonicization of VII, but the harmony would still be VII–ii°–i (or VII–I if we interpret ii° as a prolongation of VII by arpeggiation). We would have to dismiss the VII-ii°-I (or VII-I) progression as a peculiarity of Komitas's style for the traditional Western analyses to be valid.

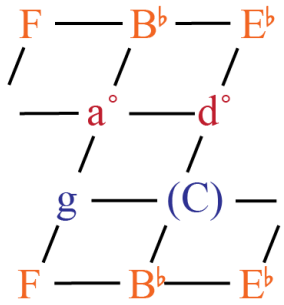


Figure 4.22. Hypothetical lattice cross-section for "Der getso."

However, even with this concession, both analytical methods are not possible in all of Komitas's works. In early works, like "Der getso," the music does not follow the lattice progression structure. From measures 5-6, moving from i-VI would require traveling three pathways to move from g to E♭. The progression from E♭ would travel two pathways to reach c (changed to C^7 in the music as a result of chromatic alteration). Conversely, works using modes with chromatic alterations, such as *Makam Hijaz*, use harmonic progressions that do not necessarily function within a Western harmonic paradigm.

Harmonic lattices in chromatically altered modes

When the mode of a work makes use of chromatic alterations, the mechanism of the harmonic lattice becomes more complex. In the previous section we mentioned that in general, harmonies on the Mixolydian line are major, harmonies on the Aeolian line are minor, and

harmonies are diminished. Chromatic alterations in the mode's scale also alter the available harmonies on each line. We will examine these changes using "Marmin derunagan" [Մարմին տէրունական] from Komita's *Badarak*, or *Divine Liturgy*.

The *yeghanag* for "Marmin derunagan" is a *Makam Huzam* variant which uses several chromatic alterations in its structures.[115] The fifth degree of the *Huzam* pentachord is a perfect fifth above the tonic as the result of being chromatically raised, and the fourth degree is lowered to create an augmented second between the fourth and fifth degrees. The upper *Kurdi* tetrachord structure lowers the second degree. Finally, in the pre-extension, the leading tone is raised. Therefore, in *Makam Huzam* as it appears in "Marmin derunagan," the fourth degree changes from (E) to (to E♭), the fifth degree (F) is raised (to F♯), the sixth degree changes from (G♯) to (G), and the leading tone (A) is raised to (A♯) in comparison to the diatonic aggregate scale. The complete scale of *Makam Huzam* with alterations and series labels is as follows:

Table 4.2. *Makam Huzam* scale for "Marmin derunagan" with chromatic alterations and series labels.

	LT	*Ton.*		*Dom.*						
G	A♯	B	C	D	E♭	F♯	G	A	B	
M	A♯	L	M	A	L♭	M♯				*Huzam 5*
Pre-Ext.						A	L♭	M	A	*Kurdi 4*

To build the harmonic lattice for "Marmin derunagan," we first begin by mapping the pitches of *Makam Huzam* onto the full harmonic lattice without alterations. We are removing the alterations for the sake of making the position of the pitches and the series they represent easier

[115] "Variant 1" in Kazarian's description of *Makam Huzam*. Kazarian, *Western Armenian Music*, 455.

to see. We will add them back after we map the pitches out. In Figure 4.23, The *Huzam* pentachord is circled in green; the *Kurdi* tetrachord is circled in purple; and the pre-extension is circled in turquoise.

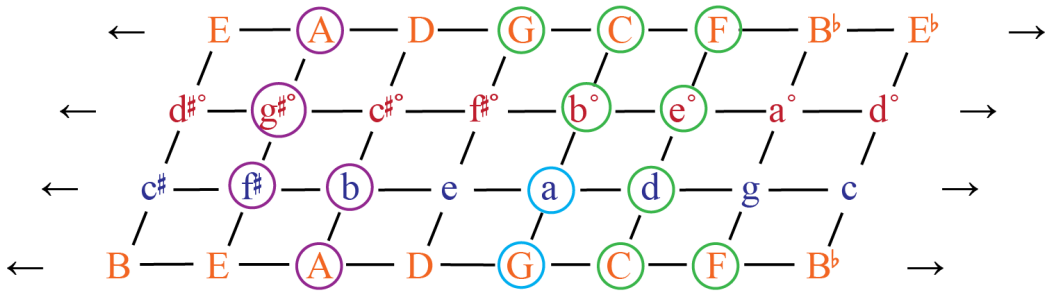


Figure 4.23. *Makam Huzam* pitches mapped onto the harmonic lattice with alterations omitted.

When we remove the pitches that are not associated with *Makam Huzam* from the lattice, we are left with two unconnected structures (Figure 4.24). This happens because the conjoining pitch between the *Huzam* pentachord and the *Kurdi* tetrachord belongs to the Mixolydian series in the lower structure, and then Aeolian in the upper. This is different than in *Makam Beyeti* from "Haprpan," for which the upper and lower structures were conjoined without breaking the progression of series. As a result, the pitches of this mode correspond with the harmonies of the lattice in the manner demonstrated in Figure 4.24.

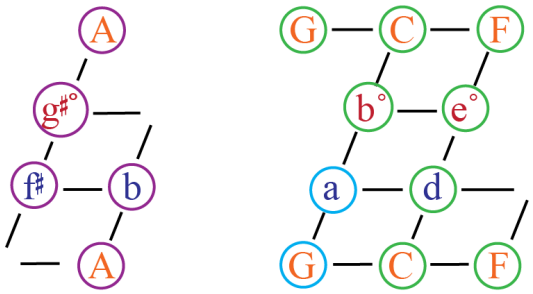


Figure 4.24. Isolated structures of *Makam Huzam* with alterations omitted.

Here is the same lattice with the alterations reintroduced:

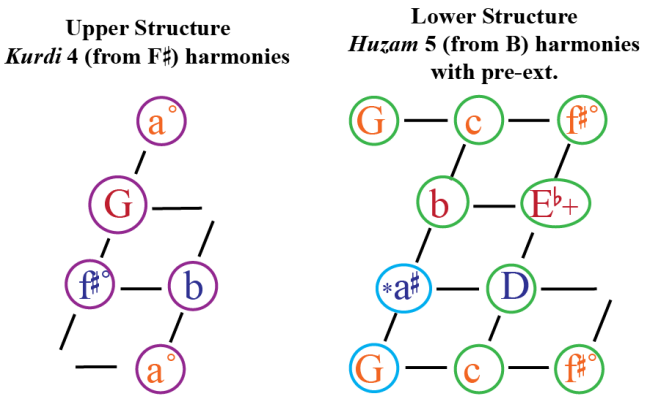


Figure 4.25. Separated lattice structures of *Makam Huzam* (with alterations).

As mentioned earlier, Komitas's harmonies will only move either one harmony away or within a single diamond of the lattice. With the separation between the structures in *Makam Huzam*, at first it might appear that movement by only one distance is no longer possible. However, because the conjoining pitch (F♯) exists in both the Mixolydian line (in the *Huzam* structure) and the Aeolian line (in the *Kurdi* structure) as a diminished harmony, we can think of these as a bridges between the two structures. At any point, the f♯° harmony can be reinterpreted as a Mixolydian or Aeolian line harmony. Two other harmonies of *Makam Huzam* also exist simultaneously in two different series. G major exists both on the Mixolydian line in the lower structure and pre-extension and on the Locrian line in the upper structure. B minor exists both on the Locrian line in the lower structure and the Aeolian series in the upper structure. All these points can also be used to pivot between series on the harmonic lattice. Figure 4.26 illustrates these pivot points.

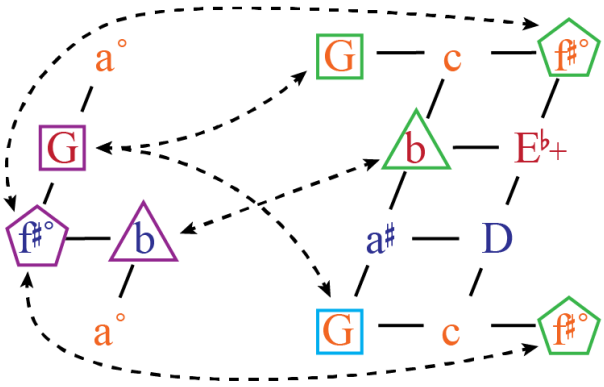


Figure 4.26. Pivot points in the *Makam Segah* lattice.

Note that as we have added the alterations back in, the quality of the harmonies of the lattice have changed. For example, a D pitch on the Aeolian line would normally represent a D minor harmony. However, because F is raised to F♯ in the creation of *Makam Huzam*, we are left instead with a D major harmony on the Aeolian line. The chromatic alterations also allow for additional substitutions based on enharmonic interpretations of the pitches. For example, G minor becomes an available harmony by reinterpreting A♯ as B♭. These alternate harmonies can be used in the place of any harmony on the lattice sharing the same root. Table 4.3 shows the substitution options that appear in "Marmin derunagan," including both naturally occurring substitutions and those made with enharmonic reinterpretations.[116] The chords that use enharmonic spellings are marked with an asterisk in the table. Note, these substitutions only change a harmony's quality, not its series. This is how we are able to have, for example, major harmonies on the Aeolian.

[116] Komitas is very diligent about keeping the original spelling of the enharmonic note. For example, he sometimes spells B major chords with an E♭ instead of D♯. This is likely due his inclination towards horizontal thinking. Therefore, it is possible, and perhaps preferrable in some situations to analyze these chords as B minor chords utilizing 4-3 suspensions.

Table 4.3. Harmonic substitutions in "Marmin derunagan."[117]

Harmonies on unaltered lattice	†a[♯] (♯rt)	b°/b	C	d	e°	F♯/f♯	g°/G	A
Harmonies on lattice with alterations	†a[♯]ø7 (♯rt)	b	c	D	E♭+	f♯°	G	a°
Series	A	L/A	M	A	L	M/A	L/ M	M
Alternative Harmonies Resulting from Alterations	a♯° no 5 ♭3	b *B	*c° (C)	Daug Dno 5th	*E♭ *e♭	f♯°7 (♯3)	*g	

There are a couple peculiarities about the substituted harmonies caused in particular by the A♯ leading tone in pre-extension. If the A was not raised to A♯ in order to fulfill its role as a leading tone, its unaltered harmony would be an A minor chord (as expected for an Aeolian series harmony) and its altered harmony would be an A diminished chord. When Komitas raises the leading tone from A to A♯, he keeps the third, fifth, and seventh as they would have been otherwise. In cases where he omits the fifth, such as in measure 3, we can comfortably label the harmony as an A♯ chord of some quality. However, when he does include the fifth, such as in measure 4, it makes more sense within the modal context to think of the harmony as an A diminished chord with a raised root, especially because it appears at a cadence.

The other peculiarity caused by the raised leading tone is its effect on the harmony for F♯. With alterations, the natural harmony for F♯ is an F♯ diminished chord. If we apply the same principle with this harmony as we did with the pre-extension A, i.e., raising the A to A♯ while keeping the rest of the pitches the same, we create diminished chord with a raised third, just

[117] There are more substitutions possible for *Makam Huzam* than are included in this table, especially if we were to include all substitutions that use pitches from the other variant of *Makam Huzam*. The C Major chord (notated in parentheses) in the table is an example of a harmony borrowed from the other variant.

like we observed earlier in "Hayrig, Hayrig." In this case, at the final cadence, the resulting harmony is an F♯ fully diminished seventh chord with a raised third in first inversion.

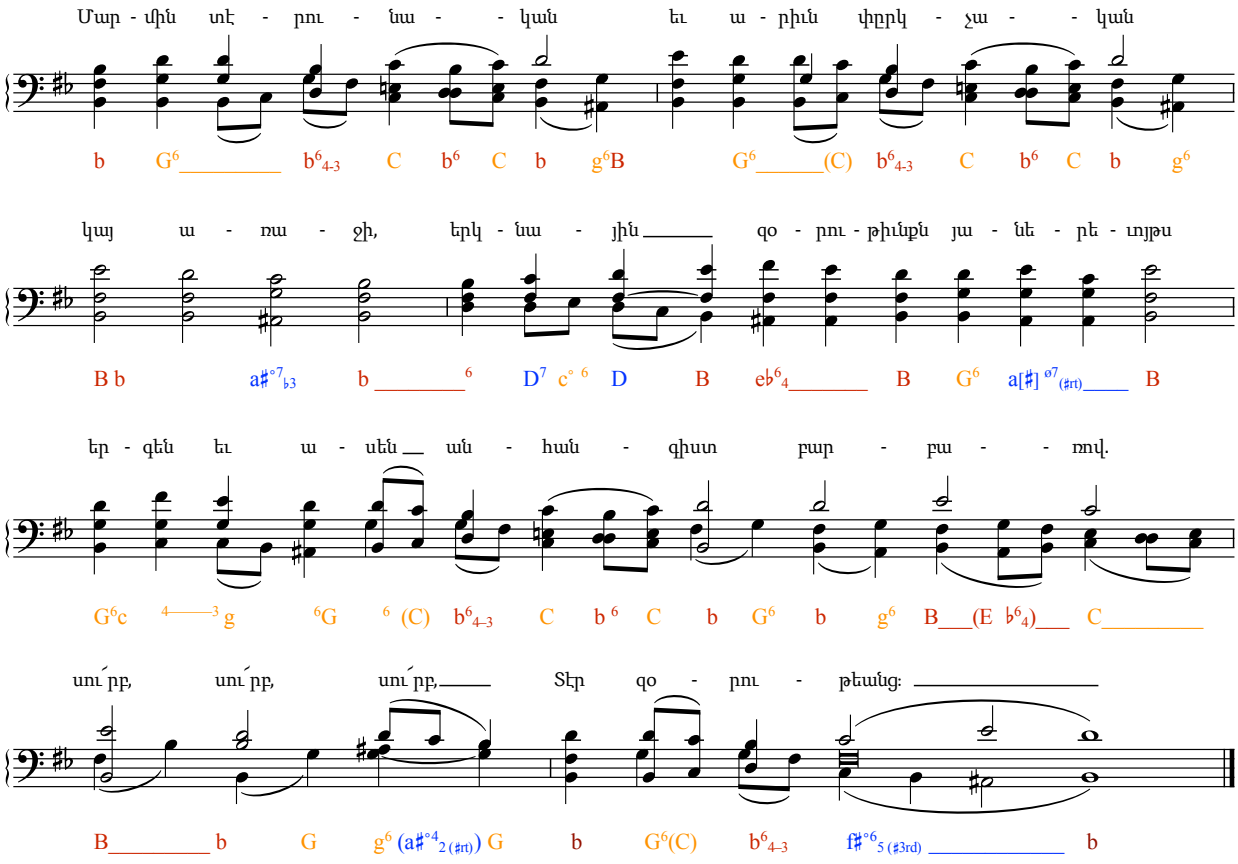


Figure 4.27. Progression of harmony in "Marmin derunagan."[118]

When we take all these substitutions and alterations into account and return to the piece's harmonic lattice in Figure 4.26, we can follow the progression of harmony along the paths of the lattice, just like we did for "Haprpan." For ease of following along, the harmonies in the analysis in Figure 4.27 are color-coded to show which series (Mixolydian, Aeolian, or Locrian) they belong to, regardless of which substitution or enharmonic reinterpretation is used.

[118] From Komitas, *Complete Works* vol. 7, 40-41.

It is important to emphasize that while these harmonic lattices I discovered in Komitas's work do explain his harmonic choices, there is no evidence that he was consciously using them. Rather, it is more likely that they emerged as a result of his preoccupation with polyphony. Despite the homo-rhythmic appearance of the music, many of the harmonies in the analysis above are formed from coinciding combinations of passing tones, neighbor tones, appoggiature, etc. Additionally, each of the three voices can stand on their own as melodies, acting cohesively, but independent from one another. For example, the melody of the middle voice (Tenor II) centers around the fifth degree (F♯). As a result of this note's gravity, the chromatic alteration of the fourth degree (E♭) is removed, raising it to E-natural and shifting the Tenor II voice into the other variant of *Makam Huzam*.[119] For the Tenor I and Bass voices, which center around the tonic pitch (B), the fourth degree is always chromatically lowered, because the melodies always have a trajectory to the tonic. These observations seem to indicate that forming harmonies through counterpoint between "authentically" Armenian melodies is what Komitas meant by "a common style" that "matches the style of the music."

[119] The usage of raising the E♭ to E in the middle voice is not dissimilar to the usage of *musica ficta* in Renaissance counterpoint.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS

I have explored three key criteria that governed Komitas's conception of Armenian musical identity. First is the relationship between melody and mode. He believed Armenian melodies are simple, without excessive ornamentation, and follow Armenian modal constructions, behaviors, and tonal hierarchies. The second is the relationship between melody and language. He believed that the Armenian language, its natural prosody and pacing, should be reflected in the rhythm and meter of Armenian music. The last is the relationship between melody and harmony. He believed that the method of harmonic progression in Armenian music should reflect the nature of the Armenian musical modes. For Komitas, this was accomplished with contrapuntal thought processes, causing harmonic lattices based on the Armenian modes to manifest in his later works.

Komitas not only judged Ghorghanyan based on these criteria, but also criticized numerous other Armenian musicians, composers, and musicologists. His critiques had a monumental effect on many scholars of Armenian music to this day. Many modern-day Armenian musicians and musicologists who devoutly follow Komitas's teachings will judge the "Armenian-ness" of music using Komitas's principles. Even critics of Komitas, like Kazarian, use these principles on some level in their determination of Armenian musical identity. The issue, as a result, becomes a matter of how one interprets these principles based on their aesthetic tastes. Komitas believed that language rules governing the music make it authentically Armenian. For Kazarian, any music in the Armenian language is Armenian. Komitas was guided by his training in Etchmiadzin, Tiflis, and Berlin and his taste for simplicity and purity. Kazarian is guided by his decades of performing Western Armenian music and his training at the Juilliard school.

Did Komitas really discover the secret to true Armenian musical identity? In my estimation, no. For all he spoke about Turkish, Arabic, and Persian "corruption" of Armenian music, he neglected to see the "corruption" of the Western art tradition in his own pursuits, documenting Armenian folk and sacred melodies and converting them into concert works suitable for European audiences. So many aspects of the Armenian music he was trying to preserve were lost in the westernization process. I believe Komitas himself would likely argue that he was merely influenced by Western music, not corrupted by it. After all, he did believe that mutual influence occurs when cultures interact. In a 1913 article for the *Azatamart* newspaper in Istanbul, he wrote, "The *mutual* influence of national styles is an undeniable phenomenon, and there is no nation that remains isolated from such merging of idioms. Each nation appropriates a thing it does not possess from one that does and integrates it into its national style."[120]

The other problem is that the range of Armenian music is so broad, and he omits so much of it, that his narrow conception of Armenian musical identity, based mostly on the music he studied in Etchmiadzin and villages in central and eastern Armenia, cannot sufficiently explain all of it. On some level, even he recognized this himself. In the same 1913 article for the *Azatamart* newspaper, in response to criticisms of him, he said, "As for myself in particular, nobody can expect me to be knowledgeable in all the branches of Armenian music. I have my specialization; I am barely able to be useful in that area, and I do not intend to pursue a thousand things. I can do one thing, and that I can do well, according to my training."[121] I think that in

[120] Komitas, *Essays and Articles*, 208.

[121] Ibid., 209.

this discourse, because of Armenians' tendency to deify him, it can be easy to forget that he was just one man with one perspective on Armenian music; his work was not all-encompassing.

It is understandable why this happens, after all his work inspired countless musicians and beloved composers, but did he discover the absolute truth about Armenian musical identity? Again, I say, no. I believe that what Komitas did discover, was his own compositional voice. This was best stated by his teacher, Richard Schmidt, "You have created a noble and unique musical style, which passes like a clear red line through everything that you have written and composed. I call that style the Armenian style…because it is a novelty, given the musical world known to us."[122] Through his research and immersion into two distinct musical cultures, Eastern and Western, Komitas discovered what "Armenian music" meant *to him*. Thus, because of his passion for his work and his story, the Armenian people were inspired by him. It was the Armenian people who absorbed his voice and deemed him a figurehead of Armenian cultural identity, as they have done with the composers and musicians who came after him.

[122] Komitas, *The Letters of Komitas Vardapet*, 33.

CHAPTER 6: AN OVERVIEW OF CHASING SUNS

Historically, choir concerti are extended compositions (around five to ten minutes in duration) for a capella choral chorus, performed during the Divine Liturgy of Russian Orthodox church service while the clergy take communion.[123] They normally were constructed of multiple, contrasting movements. Because there is no official liturgical action taking place while the clergy take communion, the music of choir concerti was less restrictive than in the rest of the service—to a degree. This allowed composers, such as Ukrainian born, Russian Imperial composer Dmitri Bortniansky, to thrive in this genre. Bortniansky was one of the most prolific composers of choir concerti during the Classical Era. His musical training in Italy gave him the ability to compose in this freer style, while his reverence for the Russian Orthodox tradition helped him to understand the acceptable limits of that freedom.[124] Many of his works became standard repertoire for the Russian Orthodox Church, and in the late years of his life, he even became the church's sole censor for all published sacred music.

From Bortniansky's time onward, the length and complexity of choir concerti began to gradually expand. They became one of the first places in which new musical styles were incorporated into Russian sacred music.[125] This expansion of the genre also opened the doors for freer composition in other parts of the Russian liturgical music, such as the Ordinary hymns, the All-Night Vigil, and others. By the turn of the twentieth century, choir concerti were no longer being written for the express purpose of the Russian Orthodox church service. Works were

[123] Vladimir Morosan, "Russian Choral Repertoire," in *Nineteenth-Century Choral Music*, ed. Donna Marie Di Grazia (New York: Routledge, 2013, 436.

[124] Ibid, 437.

[125] Ibid, 440.

being written for the concert stage. An example of these works is Alexander Gretchaninov's *Passion Week* (Op. 58), written in 1911. *Passion Week* is a setting of thirteen hymns which, when performed in their entirety, make up approximately an hour of music. Clearly, this was not a work intended for a brief moment in of church service.

In the Soviet Era, choral concerti also started to take on a more secular quality. Georgy Sviridov's concerto, *Pushkin's Garland*, sets ten poems by Alexander Pushkin, of which only one poem is overtly sacred. This is a departure from earlier choir concerti which normally used texts from the psalms and occasionally from feast-day Propers. Of course, any discussion about Soviet Era choir concerti must mention Alfred Schnittke's *Concerto for Choir* which sets the fourth prayer from the *Book of Lamentations* by the Medieval Armenian monk, poet, and mystic, Grigor Narekatsi. Schnittke's concerto is not only grandiose in its scope, i.e. four movements with a total duration of approximately forty-five minutes, it is extremely virtuosic and demanding of the singers.

I believe it is these qualities have become the defining characteristics of the modern choir concerto, virtuosity and grandiose in scope. It seems to me that some composers have begun to take interest in the choir concerto genre, but not many.[126] Joby Talbott's *Path of Miracles*—which I would classify as a choir concerto, even though it is not officially labeled as such—immediately comes to mind as a work that has become frequently performed in the last five years. Similar to the Schnittke concerto, it is a virtuosic four movement work lasting over an hour in duration. The text is a sacred libretto in multiple languages (Spanish, Greek, Latin, English, etc.) by Robert Dickinson about telling the story replicating a pilgrimage along the

[126] Perhaps this is due to a misunderstanding of the meaning of the term "choir concerto." As I was writing and telling musically knowledgeable friends about *Chasing Suns*, it was common for them to associate the term with other types of concerti, such as violin concerti, piano concerti, concerti for orchestra, etc., which are an entirely different genre of music.

Camino de Santiago. Other than *Path of Miracles*, I know of few others, save for Tigran Mansurian's *Ars Poetica*.

I view *Chasing Suns* as a continuation of the choir concerto tradition. Like Sviridov's *Pushkin's Garland*, my concerto is conceived as a secular concerto, despite having three sacred settings in the work; like the Schnittke concerto, it is virtuosic and expansive; like Talbot's *Path of Miracles*, it makes use of multiple languages; and following the choral concerto tradition in general, there is much variation and contrast in style, mood, harmony, etc. between each of the movements. In this chapter I will discuss the texts and structure of *Chasing Suns* as well as the conception of each of the twelve movements. Many of the things I will discuss in this chapter will be more detailed than I would typically include in a program note. If you are someone who enjoys ambiguity when experiencing art and prefers not to "see how the sausage is made," I would recommend not reading further. If you enjoy a deeper understanding of a composition's construction and are interested in the more philosophical or narrative details of why I made certain decisions, then feel free to proceed. Either decision is valid.

The Structure of *Chasing Suns*

As human beings, our lives are constantly governed by different cycles: life and death, night and day, love and loss, fortune and misfortune, hunger and satiety, and many more. In Medieval philosophy, these cycles make up the *Rota Fortunae*, the great wheel of fate that, like time, is always turning. At its core, *Chasing Suns* is a work about these life cycles, and how we as humans experience them. On a less macrocosmic scale, *Chasing Suns* is not only a reflection of my life experiences, but also a reflection of the wide array of choral musical styles I have been fortunate to experience. Each movement is inspired by both different life experiences and

different musical forms from traditions and composers that have shaped who I am as a musician today.

The Construction and Organization of the Twelve Movements

Like the twelve positions of a clock, there are twelve movements in *Chasing Suns* which pass through three phases, Love, Loss, and Healing. The first movement of each phase begins with a setting of an Armenian hymn. The first movement is a setting of "Տէր ողորմեա՛" (Lord Have Mercy), the Armenian equivalent of the mass "Kyrie." The fifth movement is "Սուրբ, սուրբ" (Holy, Holy), the Armenian equivalent of the "Sanctus." The ninth movement is "Ի վերին Երուսաղէմ" (In Heavenly Jerusalem), which is a hymn from the Armenian funeral rites. To me, these three movements are the only sacred movements in *Chasing Suns*. While it is true that George Herbert's "Love Bade Me Welcome," the text for the fourth movement, makes subtle references to scripture, I do not view the poem as religious.[127] The three sacred movements act both as preludes to each of the three phases and interludes joining them together. As such, they share the same tonal centers (although not necessarily the same mode) as their neighboring movements. Movement 1 shares a G tonal center with Movement 2; Movement 5 shares an F tonal center with the primary tonal center of Movement 6;[128] Movement 9 shares both a tonal center of B with Movement 8 and D♭ with Movement 10.

[127] I will elaborate more on this in my description of the fourth movement.

[128] Secondary tonal centers are denoted in Figure 6.1 in parentheses. These tonal centers are often significant modulation areas. In Movement 6, the piece modulates to an "a" tonal center and then back to "f." However, the modulations are permanent in Movements 8, 9, and 12.

With the exception of F♯ in the eighth movement and E in the twelfth movement, every tonal center (or its enharmonic equivalent) appears twice, each time in a different modal context. This relationship of the tonal centers reinforces the relationships between the three overarching phases. For example, the movement most engrossed in love (Movement 3) and the furthest into the pits of grief and despair (Movement 7) both share a tonal center of "E♭" to mirror how the capacity to grieve deeply is only possible if one has experience loved equally as deep. The final movement of the Love phase (Movement 4) shares a tonal center enharmonically with the beginning of the Healing phase (Movement 10 and the ending of Movement 9) to reflect the view that for healing to begin, one must start with love.

Another cycle in *Chasing Suns* is the alternation of languages between movements. Six of the movements are in Armenian and six of the movements are in English, representing the two cultures that have guided my life as both an Armenian and as an American. The Love and Healing phase alternate Armenian and English. As a result, if we examine the clock-like structure of the work, any movement in the Love phase is in the opposite language of its mirrored counterpart across the vertical axis. The middle four movements are a palindrome across the vertical axis. The fifth and sixth movements are in Armenian and English, respectively, and the seventh and eighth movements are in English and Armenian, also respectively.

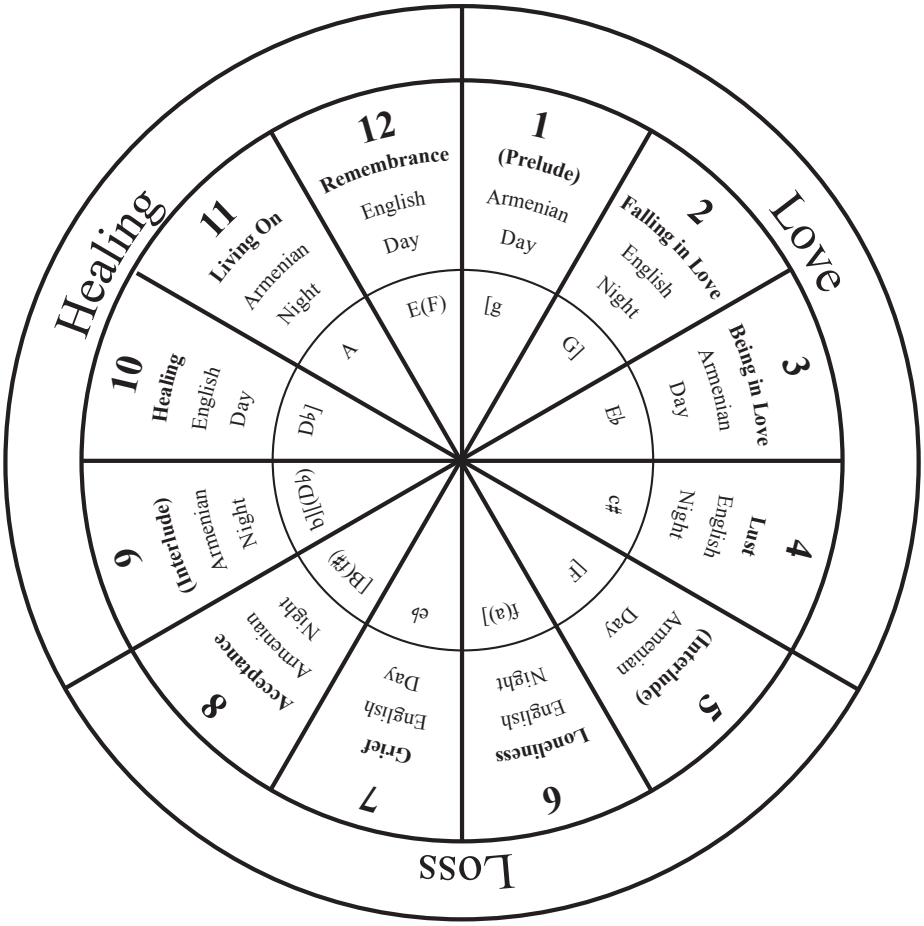


Figure 6.1 The structure of *Chasing Suns*

Returning to the clock metaphor, the final cycle of *Chasing Suns*, and the one that gives the concerto its title, is the succession of night and day. When reading through and organizing the texts, I associated each text with either night or day. Sometimes, the designation was based on the text's contents. For example, the second stanza of the text in the second movement, "Garden Magic" by Bliss Carman, begins with, "I love to walk at evening…." "Garden Magic," therefore, became a night movement. However, in other instances, like with the three Armenian hymns, the night and day designations were based solely on my subjective interpretation. The movements are organized so that they alternate between day and night until the Healing phase. The alternations in the Healing phase mirror the Loss phase against the axis between movements

8 and 9, symbolizing the undoing of pain caused by loss. The alternations of the Love phase in turn, mirrors that of the Healing phase across the axis between the first and last movements of *Chasing Suns*, symbolizing how the act of healing helps us reset and learn to love again.

Choral Divisi

I mentioned earlier that *Chasing Suns* draws from multiple choral traditions. I will discuss the specifics as they pertain to each movement in my detailing of the individual movements later in this chapter. However, as part of the effort to showcase different choral styles, I also varied the types of choral divisi from movement to movement. I wanted to avoid Schnittke and Talbot's approaches to choral divisi, i.e., using prolonged sections of upwards of eight-part divisi. I have long believed—probably due to the influence of David Conte and the late Conrad Susa during my studies at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music—that aspiring choral composers should be proficient in writing for four voices before writing in eight or more voices. Schnittke and Talbot are definitely masterful in their multi-divisi concerti, but I believe that works for four or five voices can be just as fulfilling and harmonically rich. Therefore, even though I do use up to twelve-part divisi in one moment of Movement 9, and a double choir in Movement 8, the majority of the music in *Chasing Suns* uses various four or five-part divisions of the chorus.

On Mode

My usage of modes in *Chasing Suns* does not follow any particular modal structure. Generally, I tend to intuit melodies when composing without consciously thinking about their modal implications. My melodies are usually governed, in a broader sense, more by the

demands of the text (in choral/vocal works) and any overarching pitch/tonal centers that I have mapped out when preparing the composition. As someone who has been fascinated by Schenkarian prolongation principles in music (albeit not zealously), they often play a determinative role in my tonal center choices. I generally apply these principles not to prescribed Schenkarian linear progressions, but instead to existing motives of the music. For example, a piece in four sections whose central motive is up a perfect fourth, up a major second, down a perfect fifth might use C F G C as tonal centers.[129] The actual modes of these tonal centers would then be determined by the mood of the text and any dramatic or expressive needs of the individual movement and the work as a whole.

Because I tend rely on my aesthetic intuition when writing the melodies, my music also generally uses "bastardizations" of established modes (especially ones I am most familiar with such as the major and minor modes). I call these modes "bastardized" because they do not necessarily follow established hierarchical systems or traditional harmonic functions. Both the melody and the harmony tend to be governed more by a section's tonal center, motivic content, and counterpoint. That said, over the past few years, as I have learned more about Middle - Eastern modal systems, they have also begun influencing my writing. There are a handful of movements in *Chasing Suns* which I do my best to abide by *Makam* principles in both melody and modulation. I will detail those in the descriptions of the individual movements.

A brief note about key signatures, because I do think about tonal centers and often use major/minor adjacent modes, I do use traditional Western key signatures in my music. Most often I use whichever one is necessary to make the music easier to read, covering as many

[129] Occasionally, I use name cryptograms as an alternative to Schenkarian prolongation principles. Although, I do not remember or have any notes indicating that I have done so in *Chasing Suns*, but it is possible.

accidentals as possible. In works that use serial techniques or manufactured scales, like Movement 6, or sections with multiple tonalities, like the duple section of Movement 2, I tend to omit key signatures.

Thematic and Motivic Continuity

My approach to the thematic material of *Chasing Suns* is similar to that of Sviridov's *Pushkin Garland*. With the exception of Movement 10 which quotes the themes of the previous nine movements in one section, each of the movements are thematically independent from one another. However, there is a secret motive the permeates through *Chasing Suns*. Due to the highly personal nature of the motive, I will not be disclosing what it is. Aside from myself, I believe there is only one other person who would recognize it and its meaning immediately. Having said that, I am not entirely certain how obvious the motive is to anyone else, but I would welcome any attempts to try to identify it. I am happy to have my Elgar moment.

Descriptions of the Individual Movements

What follows are brief descriptions of the twelve individual movements of *Chasing Suns*. I will discuss the basics of their construction, their inspiration,[130] their place in the work as a whole, and any other noteworthy details.[131] As I compose, I tend to put a lot of thought into

[130] To clarify, when I refer to "the inspiration" for a movement, I am referring to a musical style, tradition, or composer that influenced the movement. When composing under the influence of that inspiration, I was not attempting to either mimic or authentically recreate the music of that inspiring composer or tradition. My goal was to see what it would happen if I were to channel my own compositional voice through the lens of the art that inspired me.

[131] The full texts for each movement can be found in Appendix B.

every compositional decision, but unfortunately, I also tend to forget much of it when a piece is completed. I will do my best to recall what I can in this chapter.

Movement 1: Տէր ողորմեա [Lord Have Mercy]

When looking through Komitas's choral works, at one point I decided to compare the more than ten different settings of "Տէր ողորմեա" (Der voghormia). The version that caught my attention was the version performed on Komitas's Paris concert-lecture in 1906. It features a tenor soloist, who sings the familiar "Der voghormia" hymn melody as a *cantus firmus*, and the choir accompanies the soloist contrapuntally. I was struck, not only by the very Western, Renaissance-adjacent approach to the composition, but by Komitas's liberal use of chromatic harmony, especially for a work that was premiered in 1906, almost a decade after Komitas finished his studies in Berlin.[132]

My setting of "Der voghormia" is inspired both by this version of "Der voghormia" by Komitas as a *cantus firmus* composition and by Antonio Lotti's "Crucifixus" in that I have removed the soloist and expanded the choir to eight voices. The *cantus firmus* is sung by the Tenor IIs. However, true to the style, I also introduce the *cantus firmus* at the octave in diminution in the Alto I voice as the piece approaches the final cadence.

My setting is roughly in a g minor adjacent mode. However, as the hymn melody is in *Ḥ – Makam Husseyni*, the piece opens with the pitch C, which has a perfect fourth (or fifth) relationship with the tonal center of the movement, G. This will be important later.

[132] Perhaps the reason for this is due to the fact that the concert was taking place in the West in the midst of the Romantic Era, and that *cantus firmus* counterpoint is a Western approach to composition.

Dramatically, the first movement is a "Day" movement. As a prelude to the entire concerto, I wanted it to feel like the rising of the sun at the break of day, transitioning *attacca* into the second movement.

Movement 2: Garden Magic

The second movement, "Garden Magic," is a setting the poem of the same name by Bliss Carman, one of my favorite poems to set. The poem, for me, perfectly encapsulates the feeling of walking home in the evening having just fallen in love. It is a similar sentiment expressed in Brahms's "Der Gang zum Liebchen." My setting makes use of SATB chorus and four soloists (one of each voice part). The only uses of divisi are in the Sopranos in measure 57 (for logistical purposes) and in the entire choir into eight parts in measures 117-129.

This movement is inspired by the English madrigal tradition and its methods of text painting and expressing themes of love. For example, in the fourth stanza, "I love the trees that guard it…," the Tenors and Basses accompany the Sopranos and Altos with short, homorhythmic gestures to represent the trees that surround the garden. In the fifth stanza, "I love the brook that bounds it…," the lower three voices sing the melody using *faux bourdon* to mirror the winding of the brook.

The tone of "Garden Magic" is inspired by the music of Sir John Rutter. One of my earliest, public solo debuts was singing the "Pie Jesu" solo in the Sonora Master Chorale's performance of his *Requiem Mass*, and to this day I enjoy singing his jubilant Christmas music during Advent season. As result, however, most of the modal and harmonic language of this movement is about as close as I typically get to Western tonal, functional harmony. I treat the key areas almost completely as if they are major or minor.

The structure for this movement is inspired by the Ottoman *saz-semaisi*. A traditional *saz-semai* has eight sections, which alternate between *hane* [house] and *teslim* [refrain], starting with the first *hane.* The first three *hane* and all the *teslim* are in a $\frac{10}{8}$ meter, and the final *hane* is in $\frac{6}{4}$. As a *saz semai* progresses, typically each ensuing *hane* becomes more modally adventurous with the third *hane* being the most adventurous. In "Garden Magic," I make a handful of alterations to this traditional form. Structurally, I add a retransition section between the final, duple *hane* and the final *teslim*. I take the opportunity to really lean into the "fa la las" of English Madrigals, for the retransition. I also add a codetta at the end. It is just an extension of the final *teslim* to add some dramatic finality to the movement. Its melody is essentially a variation of the *teslim* theme.

Table 6.1. The form and keys of Movement 2, "Garden Magic."

	Hane 1	*Teslim 1*	*Hane 2*	*Teslim 2*	*Hane 3*	*Teslim 3*	*Hane 4*	*Retrans.*	*Teslim 4*
Meas.	1	17	25	41	50	69	77	116	131
Key	G	G	D	G	E & D♭	G	(simultaneously) C, G, & A then D	D	G

Metrically, instead of using $\frac{10}{8}$, I use $\frac{6}{8}$, and in place of $\frac{6}{4}$, I use $\frac{2}{4}$. I make these change to keep up the English madrigal feel of the work. Using predominantly $\frac{6}{8}$ gives the work a jig-like feel. Keeping with the *saz-semai* tradition, however, each *hane* in "Garden Magic" becomes progressively more modally adventurous. The first *hane* is in G, the tonic key. The second modulates to the dominant key area, D. The third begins in the key of the chromatic mediant, E, and then modulates to D♭ via a chromatic mediant relationship. At this point, the tritone relationship between the key of the first and third *hane* means the third *hane* is as far as is

possible from the home key of G. Like the fourth *hane* of many *saz-semai's*, the one in "Garden Magic" has two parts. The first is a quasi-fugue in three simultaneous keys sung by the Mezzosoprano, Tenor, and Baritone soloists. The Baritone is in C, the Tenor is in G, and the Mezzo is in A. The second features the Soprano soloist, accompanied by the choir in D, the key of V, which leads us back to the home key of G for the final *teslim*.

Movement 3: Սեր-Հովիկ [Little Love-Wind]

"Սէր-Հովիկ" (Ser-Hovig), Movement 3, is inspired by Komitas, not only by the nature of him being the author of the poem, but also through his choral music. In this movement, I tried to embody characteristics of Komitas's choral works. The piece is littered with sixteenth-note tetrachord runs, a common embellishment that Komitas uses. The tonal center of the movement is E♭, but it occasionally dips into D♭. In keeping with his affinity for simplicity, the entirety of "Ser-Hovig" is in four voices (SATB) with no divisi. The one major way in which I deviated from Komitas is my use of the 𝄾 meter, almost always subdivided in the Western Armenian style, 2+2+3. As a Western Armenian, I felt this was an opportunity to start reclaiming this meter and demonstrate that Armenian music can thrive and be beautiful in it.

Movement 4: Love Bade Me

Although George Herbert is known for his sacred poetry, I do not view "Love Bade Me" as one of his sacred poems, despite the fact that there are undeniably religious references in it. When I read "Love Bade Me," I see a poem that oozes with carnality, sexuality, and eroticism through innuendo. As such, even though there are settings of this text which treat it reverentially as a sacred text, such as the Vaughan Williams setting, which I make a head nod to in the final

measures of my setting, I decide to lean into the carnal interpretation of Herbert's poem. This interpretation of the poem is not without precedent. Many poets of the time used innuendo to allude to the lewd and the carnal.[133] Even in English madrigals, there are many instances where the "fa la las" are intended as a subtle representation of sexual acts.

My setting of "Love Bade Me" for five voices (SSATB) is inspired by the Italian madrigal tradition, which also has a history of musical innuendo. When I remember past performances singing the madrigals of Claudio Monteverdi, Guilio Caccini, and others, the sighing "*Ahi!"* gestures which symbolize sexual pleasure remind me of lines in the Herbert such as "Ah, my dear…." I did my best in this fourth movement to use those and other Italian madrigal-isms to emphasize the carnal nature of the poem. Harmonically, I use the tension between minor seconds as symbolic representation of orgasmic desire. This is especially true of the C♯ major-minor chord that concludes both the opening phrase and the piece as a whole.[134] However, the dissonance of the major-minor quality of the chord also introduces a conflict which is left unresolved at the end of the Love phase.

Movement 5: Սուրբ, սուրբ [Holy, Holy]

In stark contrast to the sexuality of the fourth movement, the fifth movement, "Սուրբ, սուրբ" (Surp, surp) is a fairly conservative and reverential interlude in F. It is inspired by Makar Yekmalian's setting (also in F) from the Armenian Divine Liturgy. I approached this

[133] For a detailed analytical perspective of eroticism in "Love Bade Me," see Aaron Kunin's book *Love Three: A Study of a Poem by George Herbert*.

[134] A fun aside, leading into the final cadence, I notate "*poco morendo*" in the score. While this is probably not a practical or musically sound indication, given that there is a *messa di voce* in the final three measures, its reason for being becomes more obvious when one remembers that a French euphemism for "orgasm" is "*Le petit mort*."

piece as if I had been asked by The Holy See to compose a new setting for the liturgy. In that situation, I feel it would be necessary to set the hymn in a manner that does not stray too far from the original melody, and the harmony should remain simple. To aid in this process, I drew additional inspiration from two other choral works in F, Bruckner's motet, "Os Justi," and Rachmaninoff's "Bogoroditse Djevo" from the *Vespers*. For the longest time, "Os Justi" was my absolute favorite piece of music. It remained that way until I was introduced to Rachmaninoff's "Bogoroditse Djevo," which to this day is still my favorite piece of music. My setting of "Surp, surp" is a synthesis of these three great musical works channeled through my compositional voice.

Movement 6: To One

The sixth movement is the first main movement (not including the interlude) of the Loss phase. The texts and inspirations for this phase come mainly from my past. "To One" uses two different texts from my undergraduate studies in San Francisco. The first is an excerpt from Edgar Allen Poe's "To One in Paradise," which I was introduced to while preparing to conduct the west-coast premiere of Benjamin Boyle's cantata setting of the text. The second poem is "l(a," a peculiar poem by E. E. Cummings that I first came across in my undergraduate poetry class and have been obsessed with ever since.

Table 6.2. The form of "To One" overlayed with the text of "l(a."

Cummings Poem:	l	(a leaf		falls)	oneliness
Starting Measure	1-4	5-84		85-132	133-144
Section	Intro.	Canon Part 1	Convergence	Canon Part 2	Closing
Tonal Center	F	A		A♭	F
No. of Measures	4	80		48	12

"To One" is a mensural canon sandwiched between an introduction and a closing section. This mirrors the construction of the Cummings poem in which "a leaf falls" is sandwiched inside the word "loneliness." The introduction and closing sections use F as a tonal center. The canon itself begins with A and descends to A♭ after the convergence point. This is a movement that is heavily influenced by Schenkarian principles. We can think of the structure of the tonal centers as a kind of "*Ursatz*" where the first F rises to the A, the first note of the *Urlinie*, which then descends to A♭, and then again to F. The *Urlinie* notes are derived from the opening intonation by an Alto soloist. This motive of the intonation itself comes from reading the first, second, and fourth lines of "l(a," as solfege syllables—i.e., la, le, fa.

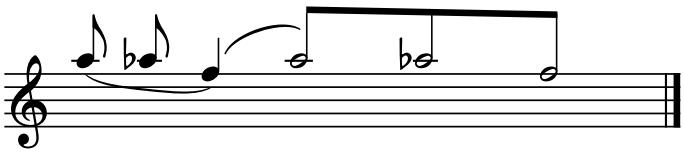


Figure 6.2. "*Ursatz*" for "To One."

The upper four voices of the choir, the Sopranos, Altos, Tenors, and the Tenor Soloist, sing the mensural canon on the Cummings text. The Basses act as a free voice, supporting the harmony on a text excerpted from "To One in Paradise." The canon itself spans 128 measures from measure 5 through 132. The mensuration ratios, from longest to shortest, are 8:5:3:2 and their convergence point, between measures 84 and 85, occurs at their golden ratio division in the melody. As a result, the first part of the longest melody is 80 measures, the next longest is 50 measures, the next is 30 measure, etc. In Part 1 of the mensural canon, the Sopranos have the longest melody on A, the Altos have the second longest melody at the fifth (E), the Tenors have the second shortest melody at the fourth (D), and the Tenor soloist has the shortest melody, also

on A. In Part 2, the Tenors and Sopranos switch their melodies so that the Tenors have the longest melody, and the Sopranos have the second-shortest.

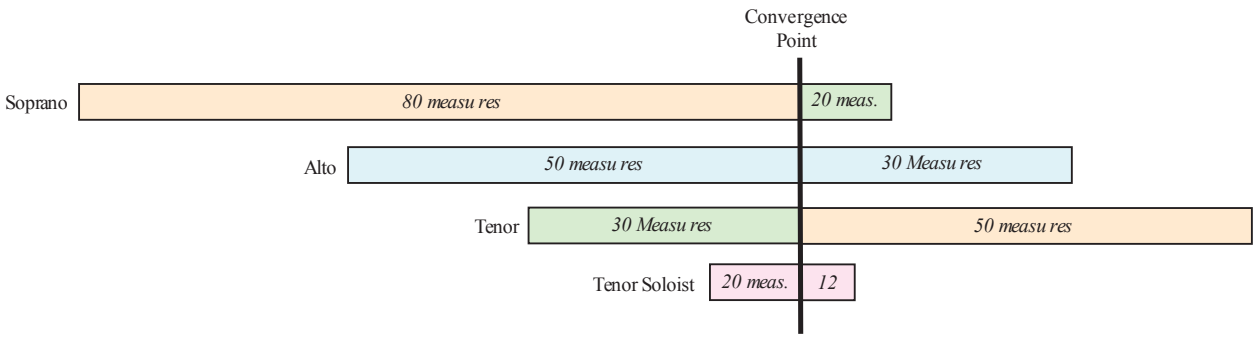


Figure 6.3. Structure of the mensural canon in "To One."

Movement 7: Ashes of Life

"Ashes of Life" is flashback to my older, darker, and more angsty choral writing style. The harmonies are heavy and I use aleatory to build textures; I used to use both of these elements frequently in my writing. Thankfully they are well suited for a five voice setting (SATBB) of Edna St. Vincent Millay's poem, which very powerfully expresses the pain of grief. The initial pain of loss expressed in the first stanza is excruciating and unbearably torturous. The waves of grief hit frequently and powerfully. In the second stanza, when more time has passed, the pain is no longer torturous, but it depresses to the point of helplessness. In the final stanza, after even more time has passed, the pain is now numbing, life has become numbing, and though the passing days become a blur, we are expected to trudge on.

Movement 8: Անուշ զեփյուռը [The Sweet Zephyr]

"Անուշ զեփյուռը" (Anush zepyurə), with poetry by Heranush Arshagian, is inspired by Komitas's "Es kisher, lusnag kisher." It is one of the first of Komitas's works that I was ever

introduced to. My setting of "Anush zepyurə" uses a double choir. Like Komitas in "Es kisher," I utilize the syllable "lo" as a neutral syllable to outline the harmonies. When the pitches of these harmonies are spread across the double choir, which typical are seated SATBBTAS, it creates a panning effect. The final measures take advantage of this panning effect by staggering *messa di voci* across the double choir, creating waves of sound with the cluster chords.

Cluster chords aside, the main feature of this movement are the modal melodies, sung by the Sopranos and Altos in the first section, and by the Tenors and Basses in the second. The Soprano-Alto melody is in ԴԿ *Tarts. – Makam Rast* on B, which at its conclusion, reveals itself to be a pre-extension to the mode of the Tenor-Bass melody, ԴԿ *– Makam Ussak*. I did my best to be true to the melodic behavior of these modes in this movement, even including an idiomatic opening motive for ԴԿ *– Makam Ussak* at the modulation point.

Movement 9: Ի վերին Երուսաղէմ [In Heavenly Jerusalem]

"Ի վերին Երուսաղէմ" (I verin Yerusaghem) is the hymn that father was frequently asked to sing at funerals. I composed the first versions of this movement in the first year after his death in 2023. Aside from a quotation of the original hymn in the closing section, this movement is not inspired by any Armenian settings, but rather by the Schnittke *Choral Concerto* and African-American spirituals, especially Moses Hogan arrangements.

This interlude connecting the Loss and Healing phases of *Chasing Suns* begins, like "Anush zepyurə," in B (although minor instead of major/*Rast*). It features a Soprano soloist, accompanied by a choir in six voices. Both the treble (Sopranos, Middles, Altos) and bass (Tenors, Baritones, and Basses) voices are each divided equally into three. In total there are seven voices in the work. However, in measures 29-34, the six choral voices divide in half to

expand to briefly to twelve voices (excluding the Soprano soloist who does not sing in that passage). This movement ends in D♭, returning enharmonically to the unresolved conflict of the C♯ major-minor in order to begin the Healing phase, starting with the tenth movement, which also begins in D♭.

Movement 10: On Love

For me, "On Love" is the most important movement in the entire work. Every movement of Love and Loss in *Chasing Suns* leads up to this moment when healing begins. Musically, "On Love" does not draw from any particular source of inspiration. It is my current, unfiltered compositional voice married to the words of Kahlil Gibran from his novel, *The Prophet*. I edited out an excerpt from the chapter titled "On Love" to suit the purposes of the movement. The first edits I made was to remove unnecessary lines, such as, "Like sheaves of corn he [Love] gathers you unto himself. He threshes you to make you naked."[135] I then rearranged the order of some of the lines to reflect the message I wanted to send. Finally, I replaced words and phrases, doing my best not to change the meaning of the text too much. For example, Gibran refers to love as "he." For me, because "love" is an abstract concept, it really should not be gendered in the English language where our nouns do not have a gender in the way that nouns in the romance languages do. Another example, I changed the phrase "For love is sufficient unto love" to "For love is enough for love." I personally find the phrase "sufficient unto" awkward to both sing and set to music.

[135] Kahlil Gibran, *The Prophet*, accessed online via Project Gutenberg.

Musically, I will refrain from saying too much other than what I have already mentioned. The only thing I will mention is that the section from measure 34 to 62 is the only passage in the entire concerto that uses themes from the other movements. The Mezzosoprano and Bass soloists, accompanied by the choir, sing through what I consider to be the "Ten Commandments of Love," set to melodies from the first nine movements. The choir takes over the ninth commandment theme beginning in measure 51, and then concludes with the tenth commandment (beginning in measure 56), utilizing chords based on the tonal centers of *Chasing Suns* up to that point in reverse order.

Movement 11: Իրիկուն [Evening]

"Իրիկուն" (Irigun) is the final large movement of *Chasing Suns*. It is inspired both by the music of the many composers who write music based on their ethnic roots, Komitas, Parsegh Ganatchian, Béla Bartók, Sydney Guillaume, and so many more, and by the Western Armenian Music I grew up hearing, such as Richard Hagopian, Onnik Dinkjian, John Berberian, etc.

"Irigun" uses three prominent meters from the Western Armenian tradition, the $\frac{10}{8}$ Georgina rhythm, $\frac{6}{8}$, and $\frac{2}{4}$. This piece is in *F2 – Makam Husseyni* in A, but it does modulate in a manner consist with the modulation destinations of *Makam Husseyni*. For example, the C section, beginning in measure 49, modulates to the *Tartsvadzk* mode, *Makam Shed Hijaz Humayun* off the fifth of *Makam Husseyni*. I also notate the microtonal pitches in the score, but have done so in a manner that if they are too difficult to sing, they can be removed and the piece should still convey the character of the modes.

Movement 12: Chasing Suns

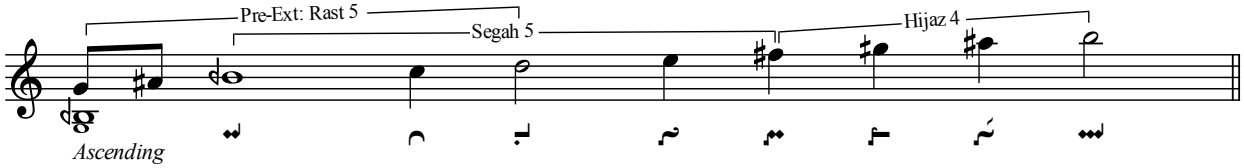
The final movement, while part of the three main Healing movements, functions as a short and simple epilogue to the entire concerto, not unlike a chorale at the end of a Bach cantata. It is also the movement that gives the concerto its name, based on the text by Aurelius Johnson.[136] The poem was written watching the sun set while on an plane ride from the East Coast of the United States back home to the West Coast. The piece begins in E, but modulates to F for the final stanza, "And so we spent our days chasing suns, running from moons, to the place where the waters kiss the dunes." To understand the reason for this final modulation to F, rather than remain in E, we must harken back to the first movement, which opened with the perfect fourth/fifth relationship between the opening pitch, C, of *Chasing Suns* and the key of "Der voghormia," G. The final movement ends in F, because it in turn shares a perfect fourth/fifth relationship with C, which follows the circle of fifths to return to the opening key of G. Thus, even as the cycle of *Chasing Suns* concludes, it also prepares us for the cycle to begin anew. The *Rota Fortunae* continues to turn.

[136] Aurelius Johnson is my pen name. It is an anglicization of "Vasken Ohanian."

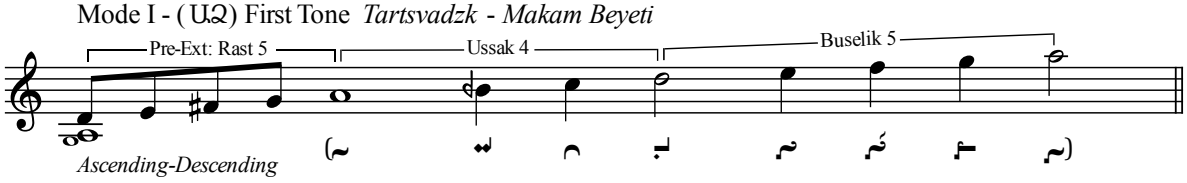
APPENDICES

Appendix A: Armenian Modes in Full (Do = C)

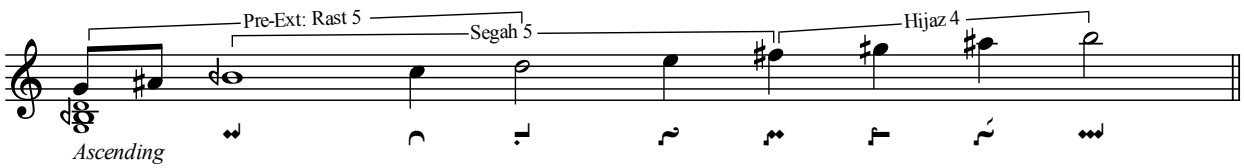
Mode I - (ԱՋ) First Tone - *Makam Heftgah*



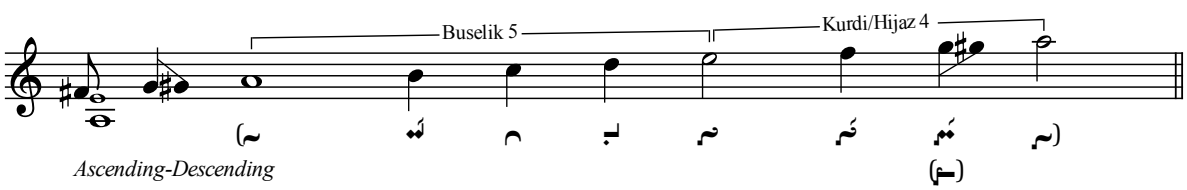
Mode I - (ԱՋ) First Tone *Tartsvadzk - Makam Beyeti*



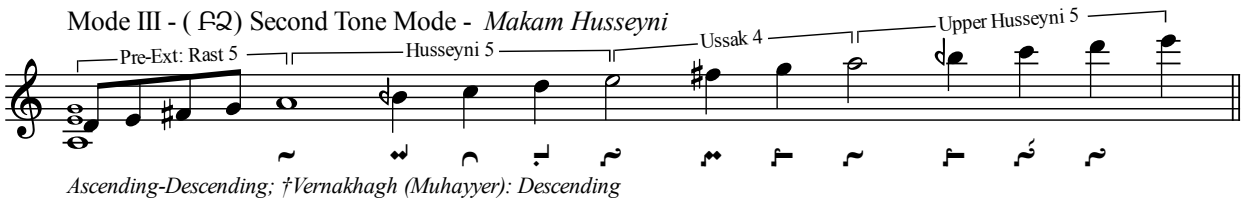
Mode II - (ԱՉ) First Side Mode - *Makam Segah*



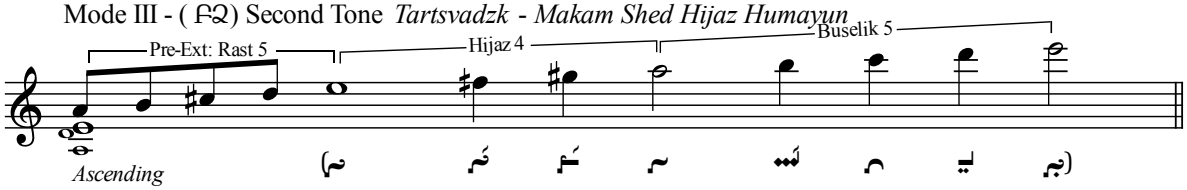
Mode II - (ԱՉ) First Side *Tartsvadzk - Makam Buselik*



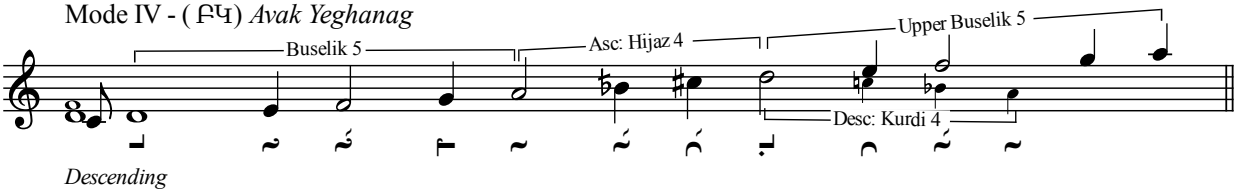
Mode III - (ԲՋ) Second Tone Mode - *Makam Husseyni*



Mode III - (ԲՋ) Second Tone *Tartsvadzk - Makam Shed Hijaz Humayun*

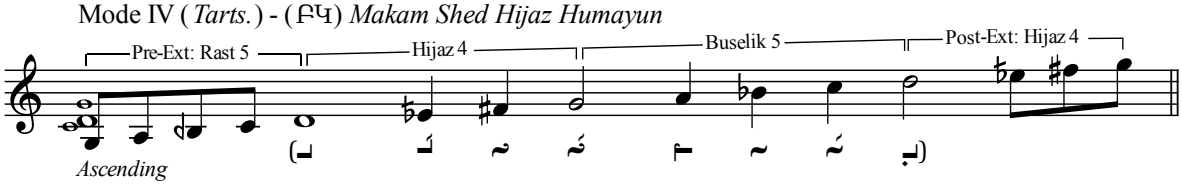


Mode IV - (ԲԿ) *Avak Yeghanag*



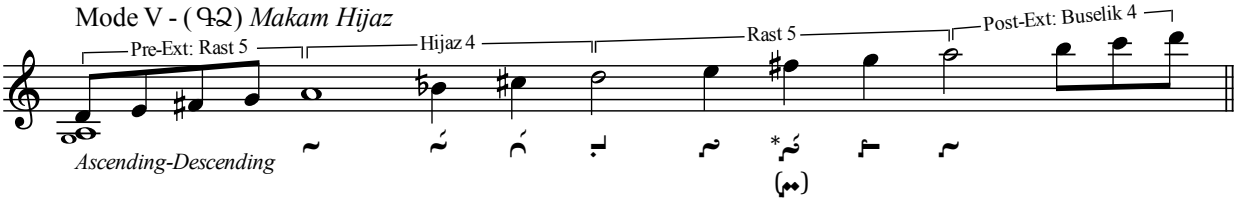
Descending

Mode IV (*Tarts.*) - (ԲԿ) *Makam Shed Hijaz Humayun*



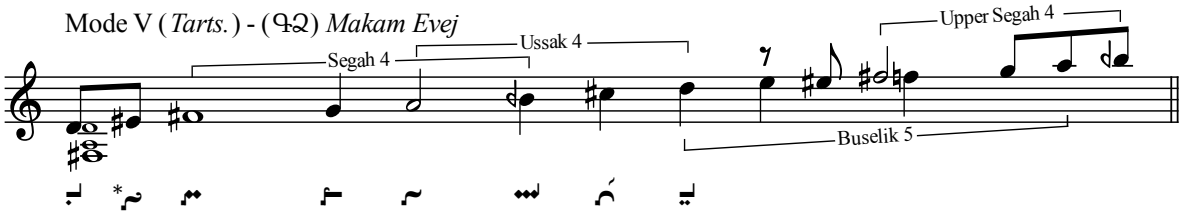
Ascending

Mode V - (ԳՉ) *Makam Hijaz*



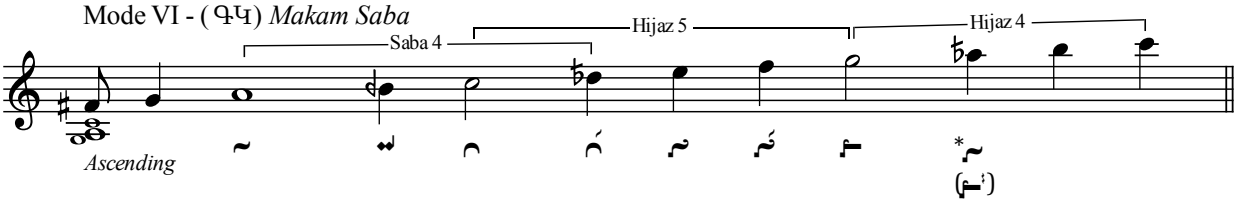
Ascending-Descending

Mode V (*Tarts.*) - (ԳՉ) *Makam Evej*



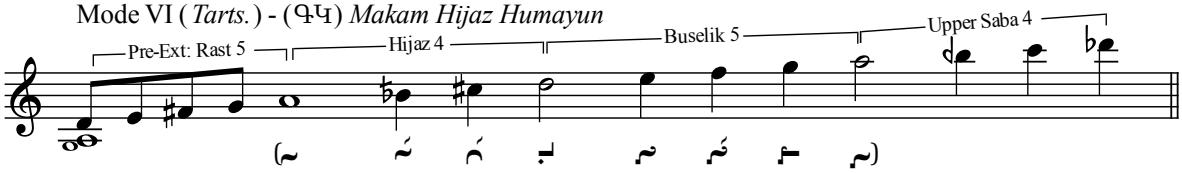
Descending

Mode VI - (ԳԿ) *Makam Saba*



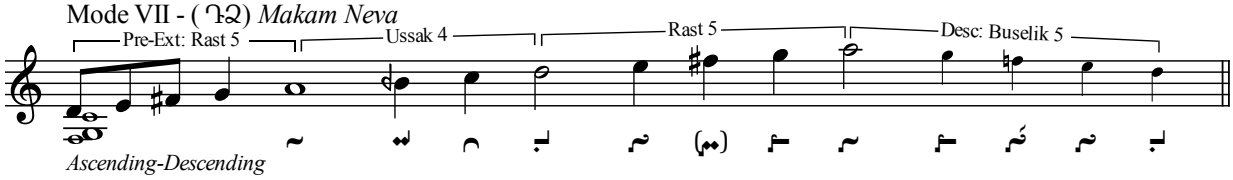
Ascending

Mode VI (*Tarts.*) - (ԳԿ) *Makam Hijaz Humayun*

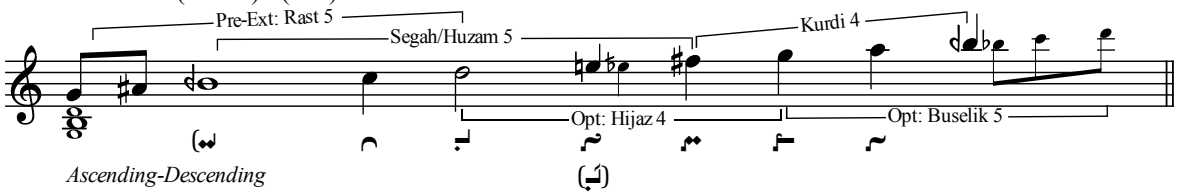


Descending Saba into Ascending-Descending Hijaz

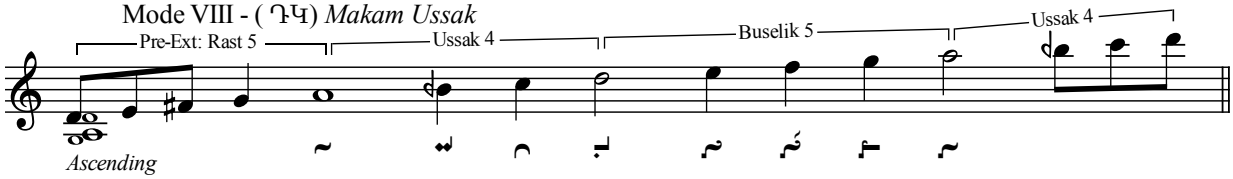
Mode VII - (ԳՋ) *Makam Neva*



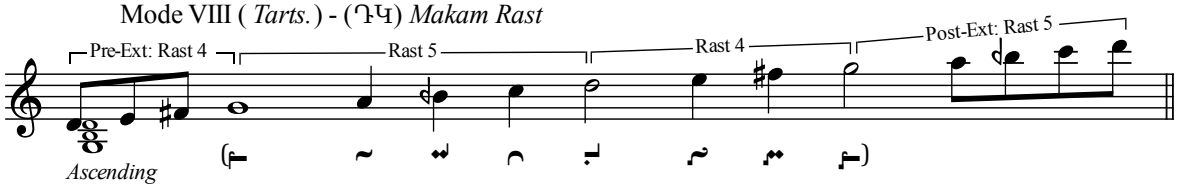
Mode VII (*Tarts.*) - (ԳՋ) *Makam Huzam*



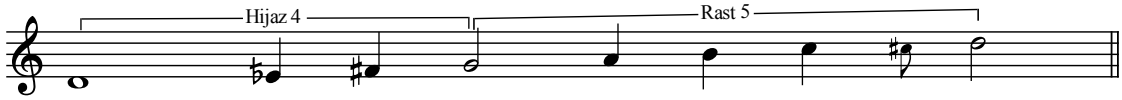
Mode VIII - (ԳԿ) *Makam Ussak*



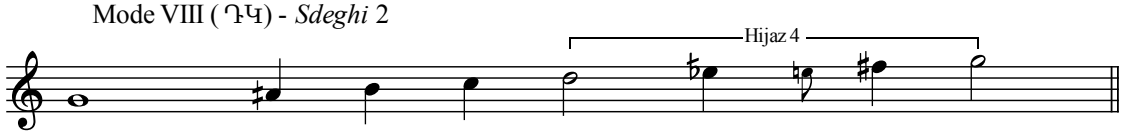
Mode VIII (*Tarts.*) - (ԳԿ) *Makam Rast*



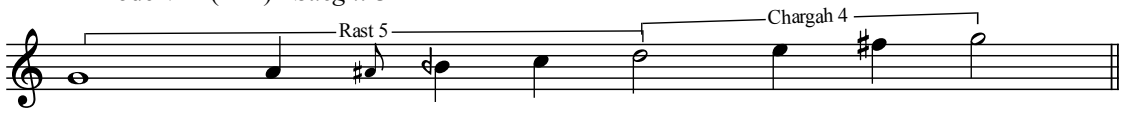
Mode VIII (ԳԿ) - *Sdeghi* 1



Mode VIII (ԳԿ) - *Sdeghi* 2



Mode VIII (ԳԿ) - *Sdeghi* 3



Appendix B: Texts Used in *Chasing Suns*

Movement 1: Տէր ողորմեա

Տէր, ողորմեա	Lord, have mercy
(Ավանդական)	*(Traditional)*

Movement 2: Garden Magic

Within my stone-walled garden
(I see her standing now,
Uplifted in the twilight,
With glory on her brow!)

I love to walk at evening
And watch, when winds are low,
The new moon in the tree-tops,
Because she loved it so!

And there entranced I listen,
While flowers and winds confer,
And all their conversation
Is redolent of her.

I love trees that guard it,
Upstanding and serene,
So noble, so undaunted,
Because that was her mien.

I love the brook that bounds it,
Because its silver voice
Is like her bubbling laughter
That made the world rejoice.

I love the golden jonquils,
Because she used to say,
If soul could choose a color
It would be clothed as they.

I love the blue-gray iris,
Because her eyes were blue,
Sea-deep and heaven-tender
In meaning and in hue.

I love the small wild roses,
Because she used to stand
Adoringly above them
And bless them with her hand.

These were her boon companions.
But more than all the rest
I love the April lilac,
Because she loved it best.

Soul of undying rapture!
How love's enchantment clings,
With sorcery and fragrance,
About familiar things!

– "Garden Magic" by Bliss Carman

Movement 3: Սեր-Հովիկ

Շնչե՛, հովիկ,	Blow, little wind,
Դու թոթովիկ՝	You stuttering
Կյանքի սերը՝	love of life
Սրտի բերը՝	bringer of love
Պարուրելով,	Embracing,
Ծարուրելով՝	Intertwining
Ծովի ալքեն,	from the sea waves,
Ամպի ծալքեն,	from the clouds' folds,
Ալ ծաղկունաց	and flowering
Հրո հալքեն,	from the molten blaze,
Թող նա վառե՛ իմ ծոցիկին ոսկի լույս,	Let [her]* set aflame the golden light of my chest,
Հողմահարե՛ դու բոցիկին, որ իմ հույս՝	and you, fan the flame, so that my hope
լանջիս վրա	on my breast
Յավէտ եռա՛:	will gush forever.
– «Սեր-Հովիկ»	*– "Little Love-Wind"*
գրած Կոմիտաս Վարդապետ	*by Komitas Vardapet*

*The Armenian language does not have gendered pronouns. Using "her" in this translation is a personal choice, but any third-person singular pronoun could be used here.

Movement 4: Love Bade Me

Love bade me welcome. Yet my soul drew back
Guilty of dust and sin.
But quick-eyed Love, observing me grow slack
From my first entrance in,
Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning,
If I lacked any thing.

A guest, I answered, worthy to be here:
Love said, You shall be he.
I the unkind, ungrateful? Ah my dear,
I cannot look on thee.
Love took my hand, and smiling did reply,
Who made the eyes but I?

Truth Lord, but I have marred them: let my shame
Go where it doth deserve.
And know you not, says Love, who bore the blame?
My dear, then I will serve.
You must sit down, says Love, and taste my meat:

So I did sit and eat.

– *"Love Bade Me Welcome" by George Herbert*

Movement 5: Սուրբ, սուրբ

Սուրբ, սուրբ, սուրբ Տէր զօրութեանց
Լի են երկինք եւ երկիր փառօք քո,
Օրհնութիւն ի բարձունս,

Օրհնեա՛լ որ եկիր եւ գալոցդ
ես անուամբ Տեառն,
Ովսաննա ի բարձունս։

(Ավանդական)

Holy, holy, holy Lord of power,
Heaven and Earth are full of your glory,
Blessings in the highest,

Blessed are they who come
in the name of the Lord,
Hosanna in the highest.

(Traditional)

Movement 6: To One

Thou wast that all to me, love,
For which my soul did pine—
A green isle in the sea, love,
A fountain and a shrine,
All wreathed with fairy fruits and flowers,
And all the flowers were mine…

[…]

No more—no more—no more—
Shall bloom the thunder-blasted tree,
Or the stricken eagle soar…

– "To One in Paradise" (Excerpt)
by Edgar Allen Poe

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– "l(a" by e.e. cummings[*]

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Movement 7: Ashes of Life

Love has gone and left me and the days are all alike;
Eat I must, and sleep I will, — and would that night were here!
But ah! — to lie awake and hear the slow hours strike!
Would that it were day again! — with twilight near!

Love has gone and left me and I don't know what to do;
This or that or what you will is all the same to me;
But all the things that I begin I leave before I'm through, —
There's little use in anything as far as I can see.

Love has gone and left me, — and the neighbors knock and borrow,
And life goes on forever like the gnawing of a mouse, —
And to-morrow and to-morrow and to-morrow and to-morrow
There's this little street and this little house.

– "Ashes of Life" by Edna St. Vincent Millay

Movement 8: Անուշ զեփյուռը

Անուշ զեփյուռը մեղմիկ
Գգվեր երեսը ծովին,
Ու մեղմով մը կը զարներ
Ալիքները ծովափին։
Շատ իրիկուն ես մինակ
Հոն կերթայի ու ժամեր
Կանգնած աղուոր ծուակին
Կը յառեի իմ աչքերս։

– «Անուշ զեփյուռը»
գրված Հերանուշ Արշակեան

The sweet gentle zephyr
embraced the face of the sea
and delicately struck
the waves to the seashore.
Many a night, I would
go there alone and for hours,
standing, and would affix my
gaze on that beautiful pool.

– "The Sweet Zephyr"
by Heranush Arshagian

Movement 9: Ի վերին Երուսաղէմ

Ի վերին Երոսաղէմ,
Ի բնակարանըս Հրեշտակազ,
Ուր Ենովք եւ Եղիաս
կան ծերացեալ աղաւնակերպ,
Ի դրախտին Եդեմական
պայղարազեալ արժանապես,
Ողորմած Տէր,
ողորմեա՛ հոգվոցն մեր ննչեցելոց։

(Ավանդական)

In heavenly Jerusalem,
in the dwelling of angels,
where Enoch and Elias
have gone to age like doves,
in the paradise of Eden
shining deservedly,
Merciful God,
have mercy on the souls of our departed.

(Traditional)

Movement 10: On Love

When love beckons to you, follow [it],
Though [its] ways are hard and steep.

And when [its] wings enfold you, yield to [it],
Though the sword hidden among [its] pinions may wound you.

And when [it] speaks to you, believe in [it],
Though [its] voice may shatter your dreams
as the north wind lays waste the garden.

For even as love crowns you,
So shall [it] crucify you.
Even as it ascends to your height
and caresses your tenderest branches that quiver the sun,
So shall [it] descend to your roots
and shake them in their clinging to the earth.

For love is…love.
Love has no…desire but to melt
and be like a running brook that sings its melody to the night.
To know the pain of too much tenderness.
To be wounded by your understanding of love;
and to bleed willingly and joyfully.
To wake at dawn with a winged heart
and give thanks for another day of loving;
To rest at the noon hour and mediate in love's ecstasy;
To return home at eventide with gratitude;
And then to sleep with the beloved in your heart
and a song upon your lips

For love is [enough for] love
Love has no desire, but to [be love].

– *"On Love" from* The Prophet *by Kahlil Gibran, edited by Vasken Ohanian*

Movement 11: Իրիկուն

Սա իրիկո՛ւնն ըլլայի ես,
եւ հըպէի ճակտին ամէն անցորդի,
չքնաղագեղ ու նըւաղուն յամուրդի
սա իրիկո՛ւնն ըլլայի ես։

Սա իրիկուննըլլայի ես,
լի երգովը թռչուններուն, մարդերուն,
ու տարրերուն աղաղակովը տրոփուն՝
սա իրիկուննըլլայի ես։

Սա իրիկո՛ւնն ըլլայի ես,
թոյլ, նազենի, շըղարշային, վարդաբոյր,
ու ծըփայի զերթ ոսկեսար վարագոյր
վըրան ամէն հոգիի։

Սա իրիկուննըլլայի ես,
լի զանգակին ղօղանջներովս երկնաճեմ.
խնկապատար, օծուն, ջահուաղ ժամի պէս
սա իրիկո՛ւնն ըլլայի ես։

Սա իրիկուննըլլայի ես,
իմ անդորրիս մէջ ոգեւար աղջըկան
մարող ճրագին բոցեր տալու իմ ցոլքէս.
սա իրիկո՛ւնն ըլլայի ես։

Սա իրիկուննըլլայի ես,
լի զոռ ծափովս ովկիանի ջուրերուն.
սիւքին ծաղիկ մեղեդիքովս ակաղձուն,
սա իրիկո՛ւնն ըլլայի ես։

Սա իրիկուննըլլայի ես,
որ կը մարի սատափ բարձին վրայ ցայգուն.
թօթափող վարսքը գունագեղ ու ծփուն,
սա իրիկո՛ւնն ըլլայի ես։

Սա իրիկո՛ւնն ըլլայի ես,
համայնական, չքնաղ, քաղցրիկ, լուսագէս.
եւ ամենուն տայի հուրքէս, ոսկիէս։
Սա իրիկո՛ւնն ըլլայի ես։

– «Իրիկուն» գրած Միսաք Մեծարենց

If I could be this evening,
I'd graze the brow of all who passed by,
charming and languishingly swooning,
If I could be this evening.

If I could be this evening,
full of the songs of birds, people,
and the beating clamor of the elements,
if I could be this evening.

If I could be this evening,
soft, gentle, veiled, with a rosy aroma,
and spread like a golden veil
on every soul.

If I could be this evening,
full of the chiming of celestial bells;
incensed, anointed, like a torch-lit mass
if I could be this evening

If I could be this evening,
in my tranquility, giving the flames of my
reflection to the spirited girl's lamp,
if I could be this evening.

If I could be this evening,
full the ocean water's fierce claps;
the breeze's flower with a full melody,
if I could be this evening.

If I could be this evening,
that dims into night on a pearly pillow;
fading like a comet's tail, radiant and shining
if I could be this evening.

If I could be this evening,
universal, splendid, sweet, illustrious;
and I could share with all my light, my gold.
If I could be this evening.

– "Evening" by Misak Medzarents

Movement 12: Chasing Suns

We left on a journey;
we left for a distant light,
casting a dark shadow.

We left, rushing and
running and
racing
away
for
a glimmering fantasy.

And so, we spent our days
chasing suns,
running from moons
to the place where the waters kiss the dunes.

– *"Chasing Suns" by Aurelius Johnson*

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