



Հ.Մ.Ը.Մ.-ի ԳԼԵՆԴԵԼԻ ԱՐԱՐԱՏ ՄԱՍՆԱՃԻՂԻ
ՄՇԱԿՈՒԹԱՅԻՆ ԲԱԺԱՆՄՈՒՄՔ

Homenetmen Glendale Ararat Chapter
Cultural Division

Get to Know...

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KOMITAS

SEPTEMBER 26, 1869 — OCTOBER 22, 1935

The well known classicist of Armenian music and the founder of Armenian ethnomusicology Soghomon Soghomonian, called Komitas, was born in Kutalya, Turkey, on September 26, 1869. He was named Komitas after an important 7th century Armenian hymn writer. While still a child, he was sent to the Gevorkian Theological Seminary in Etchmiadsin, Armenia, where he came into contact with music. Following his graduation from the Academy in 1883, he was appointed conductor of the cathedral choir. In 1895 Komitas studied musical theory in Tbilis. From 1896 to 1899 he lived in Berlin where he attended Richard-Schmidt Conservatory (voice, composition and choral conducting) as well as the Friedrich-Wilhelm University

(musicology and aesthetics). In 1899 he obtained the degree of Doctor of Musicology (PHD) and returned to Etchmiadsin to organize the cathedral choir. His works include the "Holy Mass" for four male voices as well as outstanding examples of vocal works based on folk music themes. From 1910 Komitas lived in Constantinople, where he founded the choir, "Gusan", with 300 members. They organized several successful concerts. To him, the credit is due that he visited the remote regions of Armenia, where he collected the songs of the peasants. This way he preserved the memory of Armenian talk-songs for future generations. Following a concert with Armenian music in Paris, Claude Debussy said: "Had Komitas only composed the one song 'Homeless', even then he would have been a great artist". In 1915, the Turkish government realized its plan for the systematic destruction of the Armenian people, and 3/4 of the Armenian population perished (2 million victims). In April 1915, Komitas was arrested together with the number of outstanding Armenian writers, publicists, physicians, and lawyers. After the arrest, accompanied by violence, he was deported far in Anatolia where he became a witness of the brutal extermination of the nation's bright minds. And in spite of the fact that due to the intervention of influential figures Komitas was returned to Constantinople, the nightmare he had experienced left a deep ineradicable impression on his soul.

Komitas remained in seclusion from the outer world, absorbed in his gloomy and heavy thoughts – sad and broken.

In 1916 Komitas' health deteriorated and he was put in a psychiatric hospital. However, there was no hope that he would recover. The medicine was powerless against the destructive disease. The genius of Armenian music found his final shelter in Paris, in the suburban sanatorium Vil-Jouif where he spent almost 20 years of his life.

On October 22nd 1935 the life of the Great Komitas came to an end. In the spring of 1936 his remains were transported to Armenia and buried in Yerevan – in the Pantheon of prominent art figures.

