

Abstract: From Creation to Creativity: The Transmission and Transformation of Music Symbolism in early Armenian Literature

Appropriation of music, listening to music through/within/and beyond the sounds and silence of creation must appeal to its Creator's voice, hidden in a variety of ways in creatures and in human, and touching the most introspective ties of their communication. The lecture is dedicated to the music symbolism in medieval Armenian spirituality, in its exegetical tradition connected with the notion of ceaseless prayer, the creative power in humans, the human structure or theological anthropology, and rational sacrifice. The images of music by St. Ephrem, the Armenian Philonic corpus, other Greek sources preserved in early Armenian translation as well as Armenian authors as of the 5th through the 14th century, are presented (in their most expressive examples) in the light of Christian experience of harmony, silent music as everlasting harmony and logos in creation or hints to this logos, uttered and inner speech, and voice in these trajectories. The widespread image of the human-lyre in Armenian tradition expresses the unity of two worlds through the human medium and communication of all the material creation (the realm of which he bears as king in his threefold soul: nutritive, animal, and rational) manifested through the human voice (Vardan Arewelc'i [d. 1271], Hovhannēs Erzēnkac'i [1225/1230-1293]), the mystery of revealed wonder in the Incarnate Word, its embrace by beings uttering this Word at a deeper layer of "branched" monophony, as well as constant making-producing of the same Logos in the everlasting mystery of the Eucharist (Gregory of Narek, 10th cent.). Accordingly, the string of the lyre becomes the voice of creation, a string stretched to God. Through music and its cognates (dance, musical instruments) is expressed the mystery of resounding, reunion and inner transformation of human abilities, inner spaces in "musical"-spiritual conversion (Nersēs Lambronac'i [1153-1198], Vardan Arewelc'i, Grigor Tat'evac'i [1346-1409]). In Armenian literature, in harmony with common Christian heritage, authors created the structure of music in all its spheres from cosmic dimensions to inner inspirations. All the spaces seem to be penetrated by the soul of music, incessant and inaudible, supposed and reincarnated, with all its possible transformations from the deepest silence to the word of God.