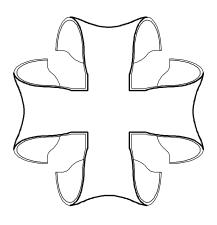
## JEFF MANOOKIAN

## STRING QUARTET

"Dances of St. Gregory"



## STRING QUARTET No. 1

"Dances of St. Gregory"

preface –

The Abramyan Quartet, which petitioned and premiered this work, took its name as homage to the memory of violinist Ashot Abramyan. I had the privilege of knowing this extraordinary musician, human being and friend in the last years of his life. When Ashot and I (as a pianist) collaborated on a recital, no one had any idea that this would be his final public performance. In fact, the concluding piece on the program was a composition I wrote for especially Ashot.

Writing a new opus for the Abramyan Quartet, indeed, bridges the gap of the passing of my friend and memorializing his legacy. In contemplating a thesis for my first string quartet, I chose a work imparting obeisance to Armenia and its unique musical heritage. Ashot Abramyan and I both come from a proud Armenian heritage.

The year 2001, in which this work's premiere took place, is also the commemoration of 1700 years when Armenia accepted Christianity as its national religion. This transpired in 301 through the valiant efforts of St. Gregory – many times referred to as Gregory the Illuminator.

St. Gregory (Grigor Loussavorich, circa 257–337) was the son of the Parthian Anak who had murdered Khosrov, king of Armenia. In his attempt to escape from his crime, Grigor's father and his family, with the exception of himself and a brother, were drowned in the Araxes River. His brother fled to Persia. Grigor was rescued by a Christian nurse, taken to Caesarea and was baptized. Soon after his marriage, Grigor parted from his wife – who became a nun – and returned to his native Armenia. There, Grigor proclaimed his Christianity and refused to take part in the pagan rites of King Tiridates, son of the slain Khosrov. For this, and for his father's assassination of King Khosrov, Girgor was tortured in a variety of horrific techniques. After which, he was thrown into a pit full of dead bodies, poisonous filth, serpents and left for dead. Grigor spent 15 years in this pit – kept alive only by the bread and water given to him by a pious widow.

Meanwhile, a holy virgin named Rhipsime was executed for resisting King Tiridates' advances. For this wicked act, Tiridates was cursed and became possessed by a devil. A vision was bestowed onto Tiridates' sisters that nothing could save their brother and king but the prayers of Grigor. At first, no one gave heed to this revelation – since all believed that Grigor was long dead. Eventually, Girgor's decrepit state was discovered and he was freed from the pit.

Through his prayers, Grigor lifted Tiridates' curse and exorcized his evil spirit. Subsequently, he taught the Christian Gospel to this king and converts him. Grigor's treatise, which he presented to Tiridates, is now accepted as the official creed of the Armenian Church – which boasts being the oldest Christian church on earth.

In 302, Grigor was ordained bishop. And in 303, he founded the Cathedral of Etchmiadzin, near Mount Ararat – which to this day is the seat of the supreme patriarch, or catolicos (the head of the Armenian Church). Sometime before his death, Grigor retired to a solitary life in the wilderness. This patron saint of Armenia is now venerated in both the Eastern and Latin Churches.

Armenia was once a grand country in regards to population and geographical size. But through steadfast adherence to its Christian beliefs, frequent pogroms and the epic Genocide of 1915-1923 wiped out close to two-thirds of its populace and usurped almost 90 percent of its land. The, now, diminutive country of Armenia is located at the north-eastern borders of present-day Turkey. Approximately two million Armenians live within its country borders, while over six million Armenians are scattered over the globe – owing to the mass exoduses during the great Genocide.

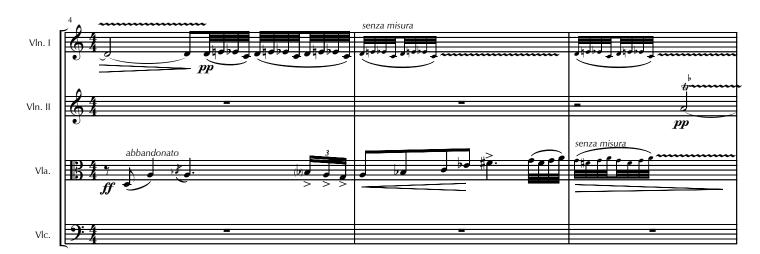
String Quartet No. 1 "Prayers and Dances of St. Gregory" was composed during November and December of 2000, and it premiered on April 29, 2001 by the Abramyan Quartet (violinists Gerald Elias and Lynnette Stewart, violist Scott Lewis and cellist John Eckstein) in the Elizabeth "Libby" F. Gardner Concert Hall – Salt Lake City, Utah.

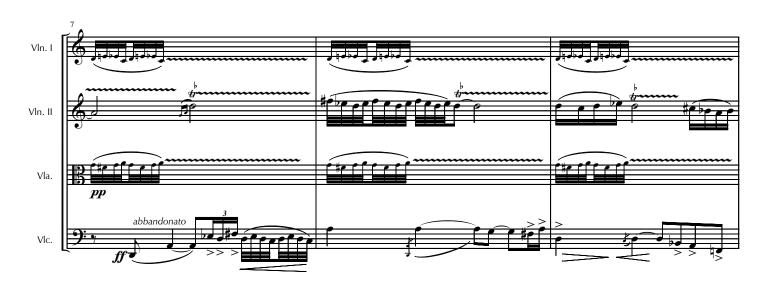
The five movements of "Prayers and Dances of St. Gregory" celebrate the life, deeds and legacy of Grigor Loussavorich. Some of the melodic content is "borrowed" from the rich tome of medieval, religious and folk music of Armenia. And some of the tunes are original. But the entire composition pays homage to the modes, rhythms and spirit of Armenian music.

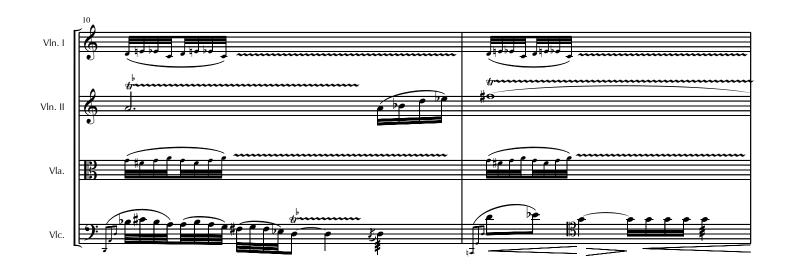
## **STRING QUARTET No. 1**

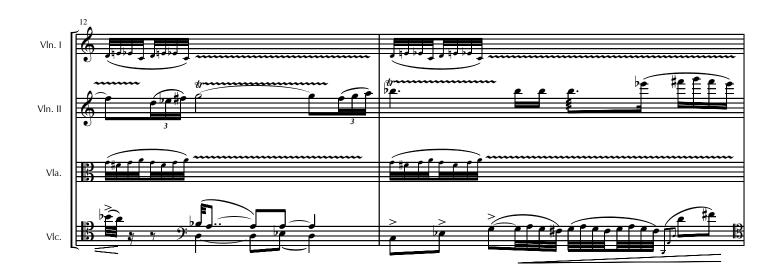
"The Dances of St. Gregory"

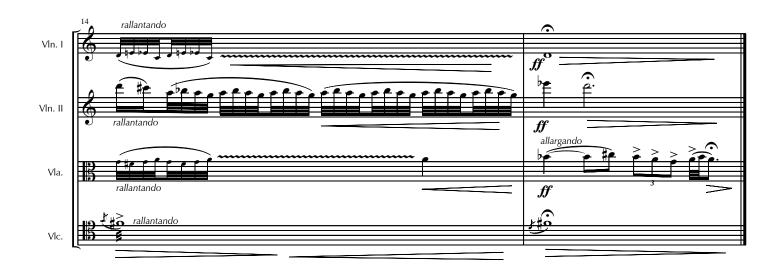












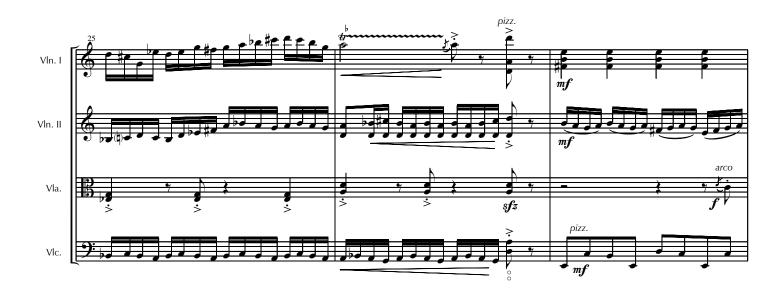


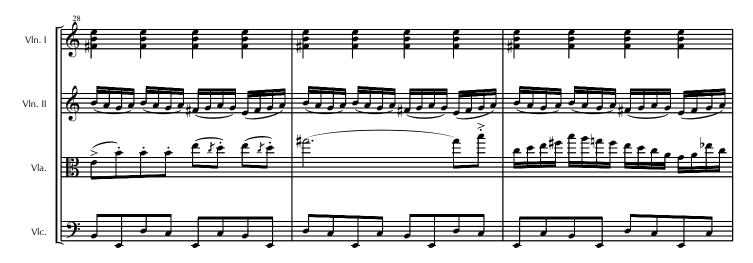


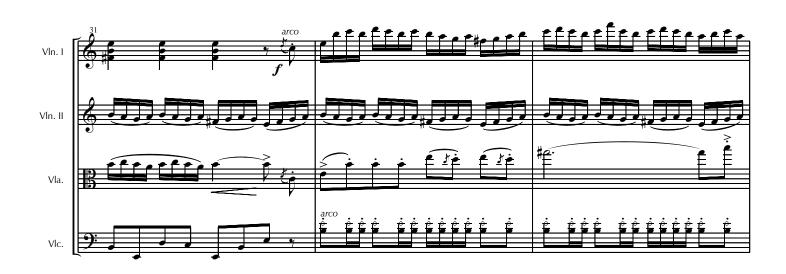




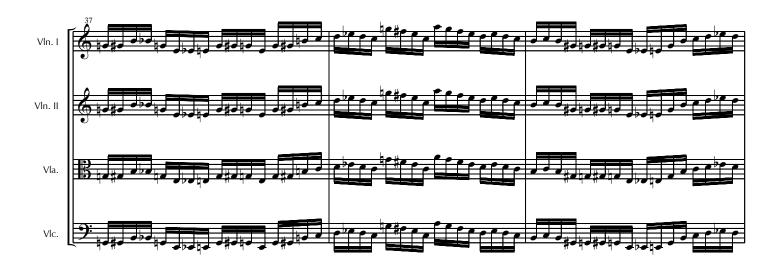




































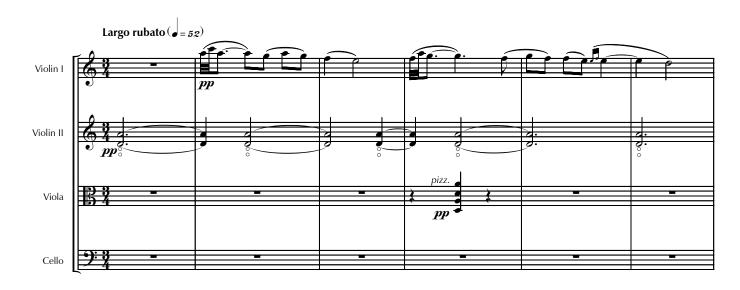


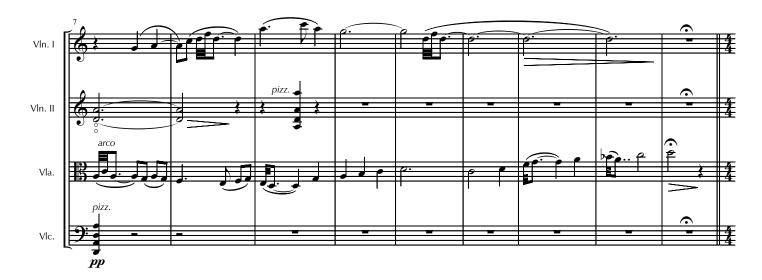












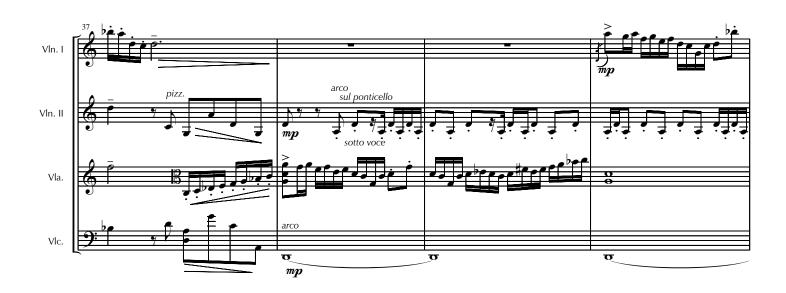


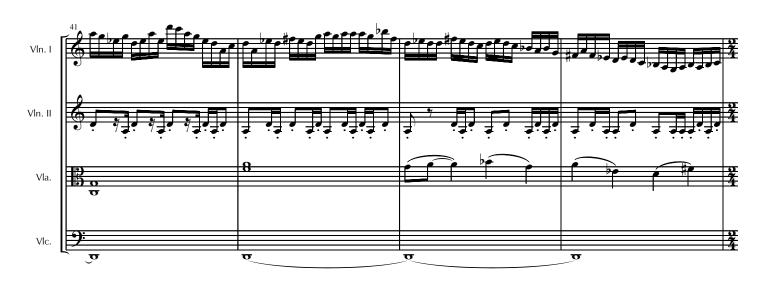








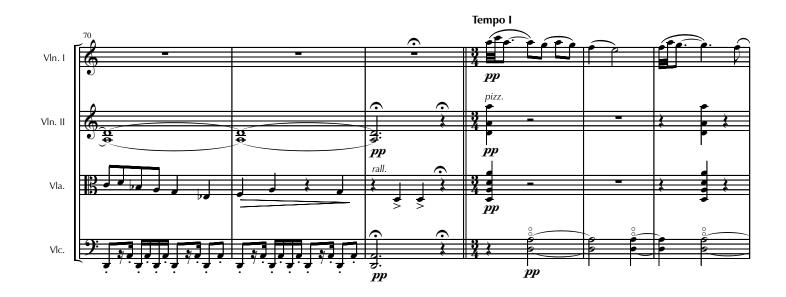






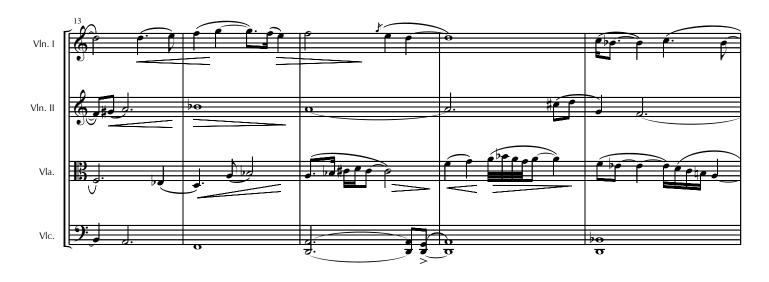






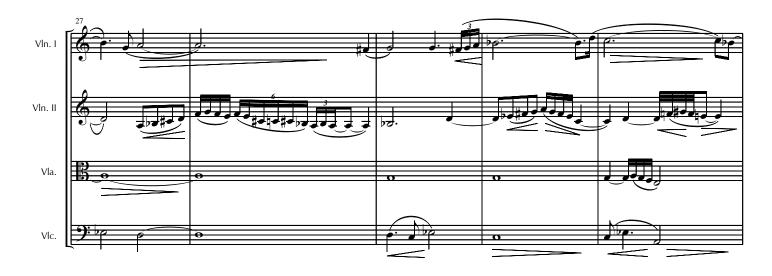




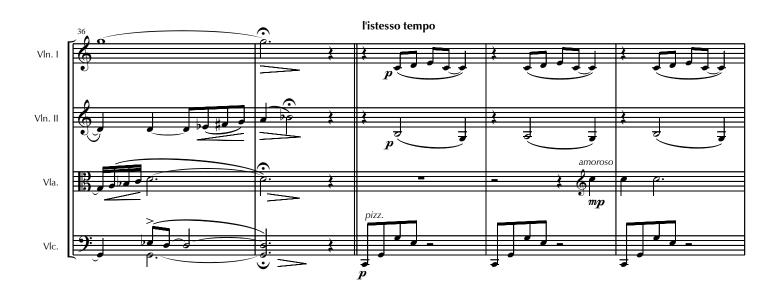














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