

also sung in classical style; modern compositions, sung in classical style; and finally a selection of para-liturgical folk hymns, sung in a folk style.

2. "Celebration Hymns," released by the Anchiskhati Church Choir in 1995 is a stellar example of the neo-traditional performance style promoted by the Mtiebi Ensemble in the 1970s, here applied to sacred music. The diction is clean, tempos normalized to be more speech-like, and individual voices stand out from the choir in the upper voice parts, which are sung by soloists for a free range of ornamentation. The repertoire is entirely composed of chants recovered from the archival transcriptions of 19th and early 20th century chant-masters.

Both choirs sing in the style of their own performance aesthetic, and it is curious that there is very little overlap in the selection of repertoire for the two albums. The correlation of repertoire and performance practice for both the classical and neo-traditional models begs examination.

One of the only chants that appears on both albums, *Shen Khar Venakhi* [You are a Vineyard] (a widely popular hymn whose performances over the last five decades has been at the center of both the renewed awareness of Georgian sacred music), may serve as an interesting case study for these questions. The Rustavi ensemble performance of the hymn is deliberately slow, sweet, and delicate, while the straightforward, unornamented rendition by the Anchiskhati Church Choir is performed at the tempo of most liturgy chants; that is to say, at the speed in which it is natural to sing and understand a text. The secular mainstream society associates this chant with weddings and celebrations as well as moments of deep cultural pathos, such as the death of a dignitary or the loss of a battle.⁶

Meanwhile, the newly religious have reclaimed the 12th century *Shen Khar Venakhi* text by King Demetre II as a hymn dedicated not to wedding brides, but to the Holy Theotokos.⁷ Besides the subtle but not insignificant differences in arrangement (discussed in Examples 1 and 2), the fundamental signifier of this reclamation by the neo-traditionalists is through performance practice. A curious phenomenon occurs when for example, the Patriarch's Choir performs in a western classical style in public, but in a neo-traditional manner in for church services. In the performance of *Shen Khar Venakhi* (and other chants like it), therefore, this hymn is actively appropriated to serve both a secular nationalist and conservative religious function.

6 During the Russia-Georgia conflict in August, 2009, *Shen Khar Venakhi* was performed by the Basiani Ensemble and televised live by CNN and local networks, carrying the local signification of 'We Shall Overcome.'

7 In a bizarre twist, a Russian arrangement of *Shen Khar Venakhi* substituted the text for the Cherubic Hymn, which has since become very popular in the Orthodox Church of America in an English translation. Georgians are baffled at this substitution of text, and point to the many examples of the Cherubic Hymn that have survived since the transcription of the traditional chant at the end of the 19th century as viable Cherubic hymns.

N. 46 Shen Khar Venakhi... Ghvtis Mshobelisa

Vasili Karbelashvili, 1898

1. Shen khar ve - na - khi a-khlad agh - qva ve - bu - li
 2. Nor - chi k'e - ti - li e-dems shi - na ner - gu - li

3. Al - va su - ne - li sa - mo - tkhes agh - mo - sru - li
 4. Ghmert - man she - gam - ko ver vi - na - gjobs ke - bu - li

5. da ta - vit tvi - sit mze kha - r da gan - brts'qi - nve - bu - li

* original published in the key of F, transposed for purposes of comparison

Example 1

Shen Khar Venakhi (Ex. 1), shows the variant that the Anchiskhati Church Choir sings, as transcribed by the master chanter Vasil Karbelashvili at the turn of the 20th century. *Shen Khar Venakhi* (Ex. 2), diagrams the four-part men's arrangement sung by the Rustavi ensemble.⁸ At a quick glance, the two variants appear to contain only superficial differences, such as the middle voice ornaments, doubled bass, and alternate ending in Ex. 2, bb. 1-4, but in reality these subtle differences hint at their distinct transmission through the 20th century.

8 The Rustavi variant was likely adapted from a concert version of *Shen Khar Venakhi* sung by the large academic state choirs in the 1950s.