

DEPARTMENT OF  
**MUSIC**  
AT PRINCETON

**To: Faculty**  
**From: Gregory D. Smith, Administrative Assistant**  
**Date: July 21, 2015**  
**Subject: John Graham's Dissertation**

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The abstract for John Graham's dissertation is attached. The reader's reports of Rob Wegman and Peter Jeffery are also attached. One copy of John's dissertation will remain in my office (Room 312 Woolworth) for you to review. (The other copy will be placed in the Cone Graduate Seminar Room) John's essay is entitled "*The Transcription and Transmission of Georgian Liturgical Chant*."

John's Final Public Oral defense is tentatively scheduled on Tuesday, August 18, 2015 in the Edward T. Cone Graduate Seminar Room, 226 Woolworth Center at **2:00 p.m.**

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GEORGIAN LITURGICAL CHANT

John A. Graham

A DISSERTATION

PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY

OF PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE

OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

RECOMMENDED FOR ACCEPTANCE

BY THE DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC

Adviser: Rob C. Wegman

September 2015

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PRINCETON UNIVERSITY  
The Graduate School

Date 7/20/2015

**REPORT ON THE DISSERTATION PRESENTED FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY TO THE DEPARTMENT OF Music**

Author: John A. Graham

Title: The Transcription and Transmission of Georgian Liturgical Chant

Supervisor: Prof. Rob Wegman

- A. Having read this dissertation and found it acceptable in scope and quality. I recommend it in fulfillment of the dissertation requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy:

Peter Jeffery

(Reader's Name in Type)

*Peter Jeffery*  
(Reader's Signature)

- B. Having read this dissertation and found it unacceptable in scope and quality. I do not recommend it in fulfillment of the dissertation requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy:

(Reader's Name in Type)

(Reader's Signature)

Please assess (**on this or on an attached sheet**) the contribution of the dissertation to the field, commenting on major strengths as well as any weaknesses. If the dissertation is acceptable, please suggest any revisions that might be of help in making the dissertation publishable. If the dissertation is unacceptable please indicate its shortcomings in full detail.

John Graham's dissertation is the first major study in a western language of the liturgical music of the Orthodox Church located in the former Soviet Republic of Georgia. This tradition is important for many reasons, but little known because of the difficulty of the Georgian language. The Georgian language is not Indo-European; in fact its only relatives are even lesser-known languages like Svan. It has some loan-words from Persian (which is Indo-European) but that's about it. It is such a bizarre language that the word for "father" is "mama" and "mother" is "deda." Crazy. John, however, has spent a huge amount of time in country and learned the language --quite an achievement.

During the 19th century, Georgian musicians and church officials gradually realized that the traditional master singers were dying off without successors, and that the oral tradition would soon be lost. At the time, the Georgian church was controlled by the Russian Orthodox Church, which was only too happy to see the Georgians switch to Russian music. So there were a number of efforts to get the Georgian oral tradition written down in what was called "Russian notation"--what you and I would call the old familiar five-line staff with the usual equipage of eighth, quarter, half and whole notes. Georgian graduates of Russian conservatories had a big role in this effort. However, the transcription effort raised all kinds of issues which different transcription projects handled differently. The traditional NOTE: Under the provisions of the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, this Report becomes part of the student's record as soon as it is submitted to the department or to the Graduate School and therefore may be examined by the student upon request.

Revised 11/09/12

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At the core of John's dissertation is a detailed account of all the individuals and groups who made transcriptions, with discussion of the kinds of transcriptions they made and the issues they faced. He has managed to come up with photos of most of them, newspaper accounts, correspondence and articles they published, as well as the transcriptions themselves. There is a lot of new information here that is available nowhere else, not even in books published in Georgian.

But John has also ventured into other areas. The texts of Georgian chant are frequently translations of the texts of Byzantine chant, and the Georgian chants are assigned to the "same" eight modes as Byzantine and Gregorian chant. The medieval manuscripts contain neumes that nobody knows how to read. The church polyphony has interesting relationships with the folk polyphony; both have regional "schools" that are native to different parts of Georgia. And all of this material is barely known to Euro-American musicology or ethnomusicology!

This humongous door-stopper of a dissertation contains enough original material for at least two books, and will serve as the first stage of John's life work. In Georgia he will be a national hero unless Vladimir Putin gets there first. But John's work has implications beyond Georgia. The Georgian "rules" for improvising polyphony and ornamenting the "unheard" model melodies will be of great interest to people who study these kinds of phenomena in the other musical cultures of the world. There is no question that this dissertation is a massive original contribution that should be approved.

Peter Jeffery