

**GURDJIEFF/  
DE HARTMANN**

**MUSIC FOR THE PIANO**

**VOLUME IV**

**HYMNS FROM A GREAT TEMPLE  
AND OTHER SELECTED WORKS**

Georges Ivanovitch Gurdjieff  
Thomas de Hartmann

# Music for the Piano Œuvres pour piano

Definitive Edition

Volume IV

Hymns from a Great Temple  
and other Selected Works

Hymnes d'un grand temple  
et autres œuvres choisies

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*Dedicated to the memory of Jeanne de Salzmann (1889–1990), to whom Gurdjieff entrusted the continuation of his work. Her untiring efforts inspired and guided the publication of this music.*

*A la mémoire de Jeanne de Salzmann (1889–1990) à qui Gurdjieff confia la responsabilité de continuer son œuvre. Elle fut l'infatigable inspiratrice de cette publication, qui sans elle n'aurait pas vu le jour.*

*Zum Gedenken an Jeanne de Salzmann (1889–1990), der Gurdjieff die Fortführung seiner Arbeit anvertraute. Ihre unermüdlichen Bemühungen gaben dieser Veröffentlichung entscheidende Impulse.*

# Facsimiles

Original melody and rough draft for No. 3 Mélodie originale et brouillon pour N° 3 (page 30) .....	7
Rough draft for No. 8 Brouillon pour N° 8 (page 40) .....	52
Final manuscript for No. 21 Manuscrit final pour N° 21 (page 69) .....	68
Original melody and rough draft for No. 13a Mélodie originale et brouillon pour N° 13a (page 87) .....	84

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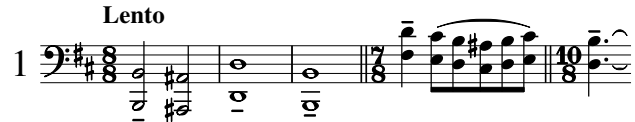
# Contents

Preface .....	9
Préface .....	13
Vorwort .....	19

## Hymns from a Great Temple Hymnes d'un grand temple

Hymn No. 1 • Hymne N°1 26

**Lento**

1 

Hymn No. 2 • Hymne N°2 28

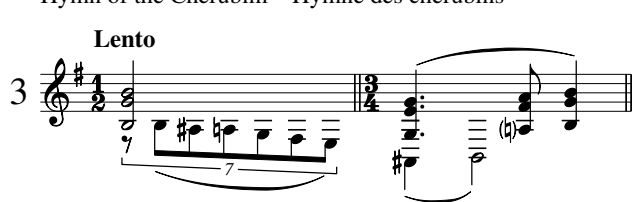
**Lento**

2 

Hymn No. 3 • Hymne N°3 30

Hymn of the Cherubim • Hymne des chérubins

**Lento**

3 

Hymn No. 4 • Hymne N°4 32

**Larghetto**

4 

Hymn No. 5 • Hymne N°5 34


**Andante cantabile**

5 

Hymn No. 6 • Hymne N°6 36

From a Temple in India • Hymne d'un temple de l'Inde

**Allegretto con moto**

6 

Hymn No. 7 • Hymne N°7	38
------------------------	----

*Rythme oriental*  
*Oriental rhythm*

7 

Hymn No. 8 • Hymne N°8	40
------------------------	----

*En contrepoint de rythme*  
*Rhythms in counterpoint*

8 

Hymn No. 9 • Hymne N°9	43
------------------------	----

**Pesante e molto largo**

9 

Hymn No. 10 • Hymne N°10	44
--------------------------	----

Essene Hymn • Hymne essénien

**Larghetto misterioso**

10 

## Fragments from / de

### *The Struggle of the Magicians* *La Lutte des mages*

Fragment No. 1 • Fragment N°1	49
-------------------------------	----

Act / Acte III:

Before Rossula's decision to go to the sorceress

Avant la décision de Rossoula d'aller auprès de la sorcière

**Lento. Lamentoso**

11 

Fragment No. 2 • Fragment N°2	50
-------------------------------	----

Dance in G minor • Danse en sol mineur

12 

Fragment No. 3 • Fragment N°3 53

Act / Acte V:  
When Gafar and Zeinab walk in a somnambulistic state  
Quand Gafar et Zeinab marchent dans un état somnambulique

[Lento, molto liberamente] *poco*

Fragment No. 4 • Fragment N°4 56

[Lento, molto liberamente]

Fragment No. 5 • Fragment N°5 58

The Very Sweet Time • En souvenir d'un temps très doux  
[Molto liberamente]

Fragment No. 6 • Fragment N°6 60

Act III: Tibetan Dance • Acte III: Danse tibétain

Four Early Pieces  
Quatre compositions anciennes

Tibetan Dance • Danse tibétaine 62

Allegro ma non troppo

Tibetan Movement • Mouvement tibétain 63

Allegretto, un poco pesante

Trinity • La Trinité 64

Allegretto

Tibetan Melody • Mélodie tibétaine 66

Moderato

Four Selected Works  
Quatre œuvres choisies

The Essentuki Prayer • La Prière d'Essentouki 69

Lento

Return from a Journey • Retour de voyage 70

[♩ = 100]

The Initiation of the Priestess  
L'Initiation de la prêtresse 72

Andante

The Bokharian Dervish, Hadji-Asvatz-Troov  
Le derviche boukharien, Hadji-Assvatz-Trouv 80

Tempo rubato

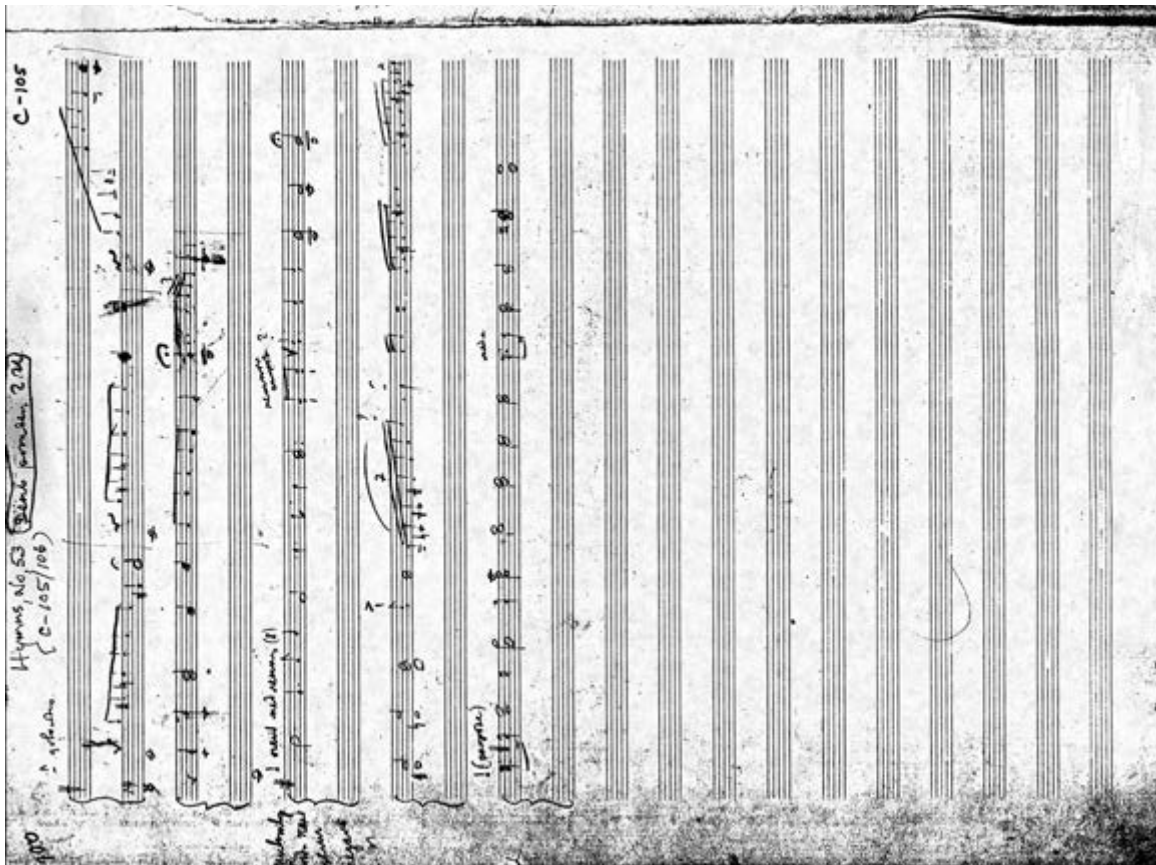
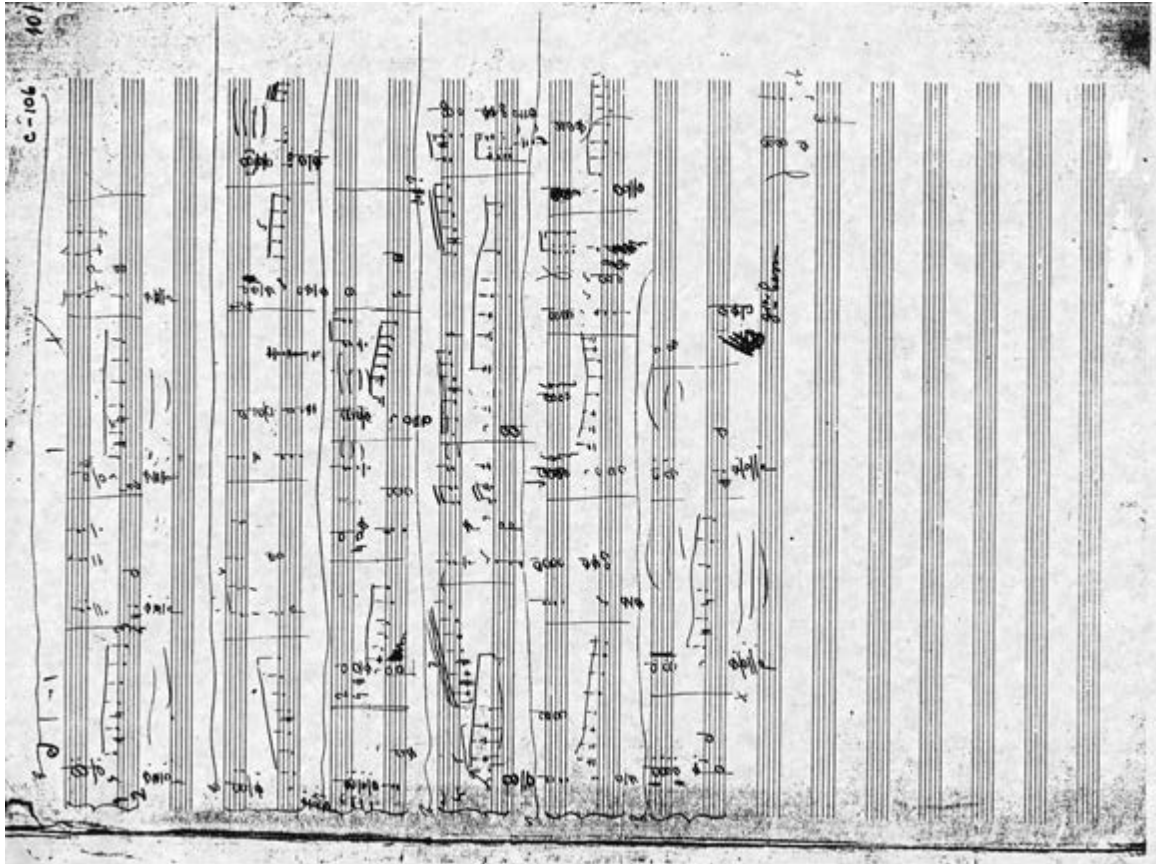
Appendix • Appendice

Fragment No. 3(a) • Fragment N°3(a) 87

Fragment No. 5(a) • Fragment N°5(a) 88

Rubato

Critical Notes	.....	91
Notes critiques	.....	97
Kritische Anmerkungen	.....	103
Chronological Order of Compositions / Ordre chronologique des compositions	.....	109



Original melody and rough draft for No. 3 / Mélodie originale et brouillon pour N° 3 (page 30)





Georges Ivanovitch Gurdjieff (1917)



Thomas de Hartmann (1923)

## Preface

The piano music in this definitive four-volume edition was composed by G. I. Gurdjieff and Thomas de Hartmann in Fontainebleau, France, during the 1920's. While the music has only recently been introduced to the general public through a number of recordings, it has been for over sixty years an integral part of the teaching developed by Gurdjieff.

### G. I. Gurdjieff

George Ivanovich Gurdjieff (1866–1949) was born of a Greek father and an Armenian mother in Alexandropol near the border of Russian Armenia and Turkey in the Caucasus, an area where many different ethnic groups had lived together for centuries. His father was one of the local bards known as “Ashokhs” who could improvise on religious or philosophical themes in verse and song and, as Gurdjieff described, would often recite one of the many legends or poems he knew, according to the choice of those present, or would render in song the dialogues between the different characters. Later, discovering the great antiquity of these legends, Gurdjieff began to attribute particular significance to them.

The eldest of six children, Gurdjieff lived as a young boy with his family in Kars (now in Turkey), where he sang in the choir of the Russian Orthodox Church. His quick mind and musical ability attracted the attention of the Cathedral dean, who assumed responsibility for the boy's education. Along with the usual school subjects, Gurdjieff was tutored in religion and medicine.

Despite this training, his many questions about the meaning of man's existence remained unanswered. With a group of companions, he began to search for a body of knowledge which, he suspected, had its roots in ancient traditions and might explain the contradictions he could not resolve. He and the other “Seekers of Truth,” as they called themselves, traveled to Egypt, Tibet, Afghanistan, and other countries throughout Central Asia to discover these sources. Such journeys gave him the opportunity to listen to and assimilate the music of many ethnic traditions and ultimately led him to certain temples and monasteries, where he studied special forms of ritual, dance, and music.

After some twenty years of search, Gurdjieff appeared in Europe with a complete teaching that bridged the esoteric knowledge of the East and the scientific methodology of the West. He went to Moscow in 1913, where he gathered around him people interested in studying his ideas. P. D. Ouspensky, author of the most comprehensive book about Gurdjieff's ideas, *In Search of the Miraculous*<sup>1</sup>, was part of this group.

In 1916 the young Russian composer Thomas de Hartmann joined Gurdjieff's circle in St. Petersburg. As the turmoil of World War I and the Russian Revolution descended upon them, Gurdjieff left Russia with some of

his pupils, including de Hartmann and his wife, traveling to Essentuki and Tiflis in the Caucasus. Joined in Tiflis by the painter Alexander de Salzmann and his wife Jeanne, they continued later to Constantinople and Berlin.

Finally settling in France in 1922 at the Château du Prieuré in Avon near Fontainebleau, Gurdjieff established his Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man, which attracted a large number of people, mainly from England and the United States. Physical and intellectual work and a great variety of exercises, dances and movements were all part of an intense activity in support of Gurdjieff's aim: to offer to those present the means to discover their essential nature and develop its hidden possibilities.

After a near-fatal automobile accident in 1924, Gurdjieff changed the forms in which he conveyed his teaching. In just two years, beginning in 1925, he and de Hartmann composed most of the music in this collection. During this same period, Gurdjieff embarked on his major writing project, *All and Everything*.<sup>2</sup>

Over the years he made several trips to America to visit groups of people studying his ideas, as well as to give lectures and public performances of the movements and sacred dances. He gradually curtailed the activities of the Institute and closed it in 1932. Toward the end of the 1930's he resumed, with renewed intensity, work with his pupils in Paris which continued throughout World War II, the occupation, and afterwards until his death on October 29, 1949.

### Thomas de Hartmann

Thomas Alexandrovich de Hartmann (1885–1956) received his musical education in the Russian school. Born in Ukraine to parents of German ancestry on September 21, 1885, de Hartmann was already drawn to the piano by the age of four. When he was nine his mother enrolled him in the academic military school in St. Petersburg. There his talent was soon recognized and he was permitted to spend all his spare time on musical studies.

At the age of eleven he was accepted by Arensky as a pupil in harmony and composition, and by Madame Annette Esipova-Leschetzky for the piano. He later studied counterpoint with Taneiev, and in 1903 received his diploma from the St. Petersburg Conservatory, which at that time was under the direction of Rimsky-Korsakov.

When he was only 21, his full-length ballet, *The Scarlet Flower*, was premiered to great acclaim by the Imperial Opera of St. Petersburg with Legat, Pavlova, Karsavina,

<sup>1</sup> P. D. Ouspensky, *In Search of the Miraculous*, New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1949; London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1950.

<sup>2</sup> G. I. Gurdjieff, *All and Everything* (comprising three series): *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson*, New York & London: Viking Arkana, 1992; New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1950; London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1950; *Meetings with Remarkable Men*, New York: Dutton, 1963; London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963; *Life Is Real Only Then, When "I Am,"* New York: Viking Arkana, 1991.

Fokine and Nijinsky in the cast. Tzar Nicholas II was present and, in recognition of de Hartmann's accomplishment, authorized his release from active military service to the status of reserve officer so that he could devote all his time to music. This enabled him to move to Munich to study conducting with Felix Mottl, a disciple and friend of Richard Wagner.

In Munich between 1908 and 1912, de Hartmann, along with Arnold Schönberg, joined the avant-garde cultural movement launched by Franz Marc and Wassily Kandinsky, whose anthology, *Der Blaue Reiter*, articulated the modernist search before World War I for a common spiritual basis of artistic expression. De Hartmann's article, in that landmark publication, entitled "On Anarchy in Music," proclaimed, "By discovering the new laws, art should ... lead to an even greater, more conscious freedom – to different, new possibilities."<sup>3</sup> During this period he sketched the music for Kandinsky's experimental stage production, *The Yellow Sound*. De Hartmann returned to St. Petersburg in 1912 where his career continued to flourish. His musical activities included compositions for orchestra, piano and voice, music for the ballet, a one-act opera, and chamber music.

In 1916, his meeting with Gurdjieff gave a new direction to his life. De Hartmann said:

*It was clear to me long before I met Gurdjieff, . . . that to be able to develop in my creative work, something was necessary – something greater or higher that I could not name. Only if I possessed this "something" would I be able to progress further and hope to have any real satisfaction from my own creation . . .*<sup>4</sup>

For the next twelve years de Hartmann and his wife worked closely with Gurdjieff. When the Bolshevik revolution broke out, they first followed him to the Caucasus and then to Turkey. Whenever conditions of life permitted, de Hartmann and his wife, an opera singer, continued their own musical activities, teaching and giving concerts. Later, between 1922 and 1929, they lived at Gurdjieff's Institute in France where most of the music in the present volumes was composed.

In 1929, de Hartmann left the Institute and resumed his career, composing sonatas, concertos, ballet music, symphonies, the opera *Esther*, song cycles, and a setting for voice and piano of the final pages of James Joyce's *Ulysses*. During this period he earned his livelihood by writing scores for films.

In the late forties and early fifties Jeanne de Salzmann, who had become Gurdjieff's closest disciple, invited de Hartmann to give recitals of the music he had composed with Gurdjieff, to oversee the publication of a limited five-volume edition, and to compose new pieces for Gurdjieff's movements and sacred dances. From 1951, de Hartmann lived and worked in America until his death on March 26, 1956.

<sup>3</sup> Th. v. Hartmann, "Über Anarchie in der Musik," in *Der Blaue Reiter*, München, R. Piper & Co. Verlag, 1912, page 94.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas and Olga de Hartmann, *Our Life with Mr Gurdjieff*, Definitive Edition, London: Penguin Arkana, 1992, page 5.

## The Music

In the course of his search to understand all facets of human nature, Gurdjieff became convinced that the music of different cultures both preserved and revealed essential characteristics of those cultures and also conveyed deeper meanings rooted in their traditions. He possessed an extraordinary capacity for remembering the intricate melodies he heard during the twenty years he spent living and traveling in Central Asia and the Near East. These "recordings" were essential for the work that was to follow.

The music Gurdjieff encountered descends from aural traditions of ancient provenance. As a rule, this music is not written down but relies on the musician's exact knowledge of its characteristic melodic movements. As in most monophonic music, a sense of harmony is implied by the melodic intervals themselves, often underpinned by a drone of the tonic, or with the added fifth. In certain styles one also finds a complex rhythmic interaction between melody and accompaniment. The systems of tuning, varying from region to region, are derived from divisions of the octave that result in intervals unfamiliar to Western ears.

De Hartmann, a musician of European culture, needed time and a special preparation to become sensitive to a musical language so different from his own, and to be able to hear – in the sense of receive – the essence of the music that was being conveyed to him. He described his first musical contact with Gurdjieff:

*In the evenings, he came with a guitar and would play, not in a usual manner, but with the tip of the third finger, as if playing a mandolin, slightly rubbing the strings. There were only melodies, rather pianissimo hints of melodies from the years when he collected and studied the ritual movements and dances of different temples in Asia. All this playing was essentially an introduction for me into the new character of the Eastern music which he wished later to dictate to me.*<sup>5</sup>

It was around this time (1917) in Essentuki that Gurdjieff began to develop extensively his movements and sacred dances. At first he provided the musical accompaniment himself on the guitar, (under wartime conditions no piano was available), while de Hartmann had to practice the exercises.

In 1919 when Gurdjieff and his pupils went to Tiflis, work on these exercises continued and, with a piano available, de Hartmann was asked to play. De Hartmann wrote:

*. . . Gurdjieff gave us the different modes of several nationalities, and not only the modes but also . . . details peculiar to the character of each nationality. These modes served later on for the creation of music for a variety of exercises . . .*<sup>6</sup>

It was also in 1919 that Gurdjieff sent de Hartmann and his wife to Erivan, the capital of Armenia, where the de Hartmanns gave concerts of European music and of the works of the Armenian composer Komitas Vardapet. As de Hartmann describes:

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, condensed from pages 43–44.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, page 141.

*Mount Ararat was wrapped in a shroud of mist: an unforgettable sight. To accompany this vision there was authentic Eastern music, played on . . . the tar – a kind of stringed instrument. Through this trip to Erivan, . . . Gurdjieff gave us the opportunity of listening to Eastern music and musicians, so that I could better understand how he wished his own music to be written and interpreted.*<sup>7</sup>

For the five years between 1919 and 1924, the collaboration of the two men focused on music for Gurdjieff's movements and sacred dances. In 1925 the full intensity of the composing of the music in this edition began:

*I had a very difficult and trying time with this music. Gurdjieff sometimes whistled or played on the piano with one finger a very complicated sort of melody – as are all Eastern melodies, although they seem at first to be monotonous. To grasp this melody, to write it in European notation, required a tour de force.*

*How it was written down is very interesting in itself. It usually happened in the evening in the big salon of the Château. From my room I usually heard when Gurdjieff began to play and, taking my music paper, I had to rush downstairs. Soon all the people came, and the music dictation was always in front of everybody.*

*It was not easy to notate. While listening to him play, I had to scribble down at feverish speed the shifts and turns of the melody, sometimes with repetitions of just two notes. But in what rhythm? How to mark the accentuation? Often there was no hint of conventional Western meters; at times the flow of melody . . . could not be interrupted or divided by bar-lines. And the harmony that could support the Eastern tonality of the melody could only gradually be guessed.*

*Often – to torment me, I think – he would begin to repeat the melody before I had finished my notation, usually with subtle differences and added embellishments which drove me to despair. Of course it must be remembered that this was never just a matter of simple dictation, but equally a personal exercise for me, to grasp the essential character, the very noyau or kernel of the music.*

*After the melody had been written down Gurdjieff would tap on the lid of the piano a rhythm on which to build the bass accompaniment. And then I had to perform at once what had been given, improvising the harmony as I went.*<sup>8</sup>

By this method over 300 piano pieces were worked on during those two years.

What is unique in this music is its specific combination of elements: the ethnic melodies, the ritual music of remote temples and monasteries, and the cadences of the Orthodox liturgy so intimately familiar to both men – all these transformed by Gurdjieff through de Hartmann's craftsmanship and absolute dedication. What resulted was sometimes distinctly Eastern, often clearly Western, but almost never typically either one. It is as though many of the specific attributes of the sources were distilled to leave a music largely free of elaborated structure and decorative detail or of characteristic pianism.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, page 136.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, condensed from pages 245–246.

The force and clarity of its speech emerge from the underlying intention to speak directly to the listener's inmost self.

A close examination of the manuscripts yields a revealing insight: there are very few occurrences of rewriting in any of the various stages of notation. From the first dictation of the melodies, through harmonization and addition of rhythm, until the final manuscript, there is no evidence of basic change in compositional structure. In any process of composing this would be unusual, but in a collaboration it is quite extraordinary. The common understanding of the two men and the accelerated pace of their work together led to a fusion of musical thought – resulting in a creation as if from one mind. They became one composer.

The period of their musical collaboration ended in 1927. The manuscripts remained in various stages of completion: in some cases the melody alone was noted down, while in others the melodic line was partially harmonized and the piece never finished. This edition contains only those pieces that reached their full and final development.

The fair copies produced in the 1920's by de Hartmann in his impeccable calligraphy generally contain few indications of tempo, dynamics, phrasing, or articulation marks. Only in preparing the manuscripts in the early 1950's for a limited private edition did he add such indications, formalize the genres, and establish the sequence of pieces in each volume. Therefore, most of the previously unpublished manuscripts in this edition appear with few performance indications. It is left to the pianist to explore and find in the music itself the key to their interpretation.

## Introduction to Volume IV

### 1. Hymns from a Great Temple

A major part of the musical œuvre of Gurdjieff/de Hartmann, – and from a certain point of view perhaps the most important part – is comprised of the Sacred Hymns. It is in these works that one finds, remarkably, the most inward and, at the same time, the most nearly objective expression in all of this body of music.

Among these sacred hymns there is a group of ten, which were singled out under the title *Hymns from a Great Temple*. While the exact significance of this designation remains mysterious, it is clear that in these hymns one discovers an often enigmatic music, which seems to take us directly to the heart of Eastern Christianity.

As in all of the pieces called Hymns, the forms of the Great Temple Hymns are not in any way related to the conventional notion of a church hymn. They may be ceremonial or ritualistic in character, but that is merely their exterior guise. Within that form, as in so many of these pieces, even dances or songs, lies a quality of deep interior questioning, a yearning for Truth.

In certain of these ten hymns, the quality of the sacred may emerge only after repeated hearings, when the music has been allowed to penetrate beyond our usual associative patterns. And still they may appear cryptic and elusive. Their real meaning seems to remain hidden. And perhaps it is just those hymns that refuse to yield