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Pashinyan Meets with Community Members in New York

NEW YORK (Combined Sources) — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, in New York for the opening session of the United Nations, met on Sunday, September 23, with members of the Armenian community. During the reception, he spoke at length about the country's political situation domestically as well as international ties.

He addressed the results of the mayoral election in Yerevan, which netted his supporters a landslide victory, and tied it to the upcoming parliamentary elections which he said he sought.

Pashinyan said the outcome of the Yerevan polls gave him the mandate to push for the dissolution of the current Armenian parliament and to schedule snap general elections.

The premier added that on his return to



Prime Minister Pashinyan speaks with the assembled guests listening.

Yerevan he will meet with representatives of major political forces to discuss time frames for the snap elections.

Meeting with members of the Armenian community in New York later on Sunday, Pashinyan said that they must be held “as soon as possible.” But he mentioned no specific date.

Under the Armenian constitution, parlia-

ment can be dissolved only if the prime minister resigns and lawmakers twice fail to choose his or her replacement. Former President Serzh Sargsyan's Republican Party of Armenia (HHK) holds the largest number of seats in the current legislature.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan arrived in New York on a working visit. In the evening of September 23, the head of the government met with representatives of New York, as well as with numerous community organizations and representatives of Armenian organizations.

see PASHINYAN, page 20

Pashinyan Bloc Wins Yerevan Mayoral Race By Landslide

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's bloc scored a landslide victory in municipal elections in Yerevan on September 23, in the first major test of the new leader's political strength, according to final preliminary results.

The Central Election Commission (CEC) said on September 24 that Pashinyan's My Step bloc received 81 percent of the votes, far more than enough to have its top candidate, popular actor and producer Hayk Marutyan, installed as mayor of Yerevan.

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Edmond Azadian's New Book Presented in Yerevan

By Gohar Makaryan

YEREVAN — Edmond Y. Azadian's new Armenian-language book, *With My Time and Contemporaries* [Zhamanagi yev zhamanagagitsneru hed] was presented at the Tekeyan Center in Yerevan on September 19 in the presence of literary critics, teachers and well known figures of Armenian art and

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Edmond Y. Azadian at his Yerevan book presentation

'Crows of the Desert' Sheds Light on Little-Known Hero of the Genocide

By Alin K. Gregorian
Mirror-Spectator Staff

ed and produced by Emmy Award winner Marta Houske.

The film tells the incredible story of one man's heroism during the Armenian Genocide. It has been shown at numerous film festivals and won several awards, much to the delight of Houske. “Crows” tells the story of Levon Yotnakhparian, many members of whose family were killed during the Armenian Genocide. He was one of the lucky ones who escaped, however, he went back to the desert again and again to rescue fellow Armenians.

The film will have its Boston-area premier on Sunday, October 7, at 4.30 p.m. at the Mosesian Center for the Arts in Watertown, and kick off the 2018 edition of the Arlington International Film Festival.

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Armenian Expeditionary Rescue Group, standing, from left, Yesayi Kereshegian, Garabed Kavafian, Hovhannes Kavafian, and Levon Yotnakhparian seated and his younger brother, Dikran, is seated on the floor.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Trump Hails ‘New Era’ In Armenia

WASHINGTON (RFE/RL) — US President Donald Trump has praised mass protests that led to regime change in Armenia in May and said his administration stands ready to help the new Armenian government implement sweeping reforms promised by it.

“Armenia has much to celebrate this year,” Trump wrote to Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan in a congratulatory message on the 27th anniversary of Armenia's independence on September 21.

“A peaceful, popular movement ushered in a new era in Armenia, and we look forward to working with you to help you execute the will of your people to combat corruption and to establish representative, accountable governance, rule of law buttressed by an independent judiciary, and political and economic competition,” read the message publicized by Pashinyan's office.

“I look forward to further strengthening the partnership that began between our countries one hundred years ago,” it said.

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo similarly saluted “remarkable changes” in Armenia. “The peaceful popular movement that transformed the government has ushered in an exciting new chapter of Armenian history,” he said in a written statement.

Trump expressed Washington's readiness to work with the new authorities in Yerevan on “the many areas of mutual interest” when he congratulated Pashinyan on becoming prime minister in May. Pashinyan said afterwards that he would like to “strengthen and expand” US-Armenian relations.

The two leaders chatted briefly at a NATO summit in Brussels in July.

Kocharyan Sues Pashinyan for ‘Public Slander’

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — Armenia's second President Robert Kocharyan has filed a defamation lawsuit against Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan.

In the legal claim published on DataLex judicial information system, the ex-president demands “protection of his dignity and honor from public slander.”

The lawsuit was filed on September 17 and has been assigned to judge Hayarpi Zargaryan.

Kocharyan's advocate, Hayk Alumyan details the claim is concerned with the PM's recent statement in France when he was addressing representatives of the local Armenian community.

“What does immunity mean? So what, is it permitted to organize people's murder and then say, I am immune?” the premier said in his remarks.

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ARMENIA

News From Armenia

Armenia Criminalizes Electoral Bribery, Fraud

YEREVAN (Arka) — The Armenian parliament approved on September 7 in the second and final reading a set of legislative changes that criminalize election bribery.

First Deputy Minister of Justice Artur Hovhannisyan said the changes set a tougher criminal punishment for offering people various enticements to vote for a particular candidate or party in return for cash or goods. He said the crime of electoral bribery has been moved from the Code of Administrative Offenses to the Criminal Code.

He said the changes provide not only for punishment in the form of a fine, but also for imprisonment. In particular, giving an election bribe leads to a fine of 2.5-3 million drams or to 2-3-month arrest or imprisonment.

According to him, the changes ban any charitable activity during the pre-election campaign. He also noted that receiving or demanding a bribe is also criminalized.

Echmiadzin Police Discover Cannabis Farms

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Police officers in Echmiadzin discovered two cannabis farms in the nearby village of Hovtamej amid anti-narcotic operations. The farms were located in the backyards of two homes, owned by local men.

Police said that the owners are brothers, 70 and 65 years of age.

The 70-year-old was cultivating cannabis in his backyard with special irrigation, air conditioning and thermal systems.

Officers confiscated 127 individual cannabis plants with a total weight of 26 kilograms from the farm. The man also had a sawed-off shotgun in his possession.

The 70-year-old's brother operated a similar farm, where officers found 52 plants weighing 8 kilograms. An investigation is underway, police said.

Cyclotron to Be Put into Operation

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — A cyclotron is planned to be put into operation in Armenia by the end of the year, director of the A. Alikhanyan National Science Laboratory (Yerevan Physics Institute, YerPhi) Ani Aprahamian said at a press conference that specialists are already in Armenia and for the previous week have started working on putting the cyclotron into operation.

"Years ago the government of Armenia acquired this equipment, but it did not work until now. The specialists arrived last week and they are working on it. I think it's possible to put it into operation by the end of the year," Aprahamian said. According to her, it's a very important work and will have a great contribution to the healthcare sphere. Particularly, the cyclotron can help to diagnose cancer more precisely.

"The production of isotopes is not just a health issue and we can use them in other spheres as well. I simply think that it's of key importance for the healthcare sphere since the rate of deaths from cancer is rather high in Armenia. If we put it into operation quickly, it will be a serious progress for diagnosing all types of cancers," she said.

French Delegation Meets With Artsakh President

STEPANAKERT (Armenpress) — President Bako Sahakyan received a delegation from the Paris suburban town of Alfortville headed by its mayor Michel Gerchinovitz on September 25.

Various issues related to further developing and deepening the ties with Alfortville were on the discussion agenda.

Sahakyan noted with satisfaction that cooperation with Alfortville was quite efficient underlining his expectations to preserve the positive dynamics of correlation in the future noting the existence of all the necessary preconditions for that.



Hayk Marutyan on the campaign trail

Pashinyan Bloc Wins Yerevan Mayoral Race by Landslide

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Businessman Gagik Tsarukian's Prosperous Armenia Party (BHK) came in a distant second with 7 percent, followed by the Luys alliance, which got 5 percent, the CEC said. Both groups have ministerial posts in Pashinyan's cabinet.

The nine other contenders in the vote, including the parliamentary Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF), fared much worse.

Under Armenian law, alliances need to win at least 8 percent of the vote to be represented in the city council. But the law also stipulates that at least three political groups must be represented in the council, meaning that Luys will also hold seats.

The CEC put voter turnout at about 43.7 percent, up from the almost 41 percent that was recorded in the previous municipal elections in May 2017, controversially won by the former ruling Republican Party of Armenia (HHK). The party, which lost power in May, chose not to contest the latest mayoral race.

An opposition lawmaker, Pashinyan became prime minister in May after leading a wave of antigovernment protests. He still faces a parliament that consists mainly of members of the HHK.

Pashinyan actively participated in the local election campaign, portraying the vote in Yerevan, where nearly half of the country's population lives, as a referendum on his political future. He said he needed a "strong mandate" to push for the holding of snap parliamentary elections in Armenia in the coming months.

Citing the election outcome, a close Pashinyan associate, First Deputy Prime Minister Ararat Mirzoian, said that the premier has received such a mandate. Mirzoian declined to speculate about possible election dates.

"A few months after the revolution and the change of government, people once again confirmed their will to...build a new Armenia," Mirzoian said.

"There is no doubt that early elections to the National Assembly must take place and they are an important condition for the final victory of the revolution," he added.

In a statement, the BHK said it accepted the results of the elections and congratulated the My Step alliance for its election victory.

Justice Minister Artak Zeynalian of the Luys alliance visited the electoral headquarters of My Step overnight to offer his congratulations to the winner.

Pashinyan, whose popularity is

based on his anticorruption and economic reform stance, twice called for a high turnout during voting.

"I hope that my fellow citizens today will very actively participate in the vote and won't stay at home because there is no doubt that you are the ones who will decide [the election outcome]," he said in a live video address aired on Facebook on the morning of election day.

Pashinyan made the same appeal late in the afternoon amid signs that Yerevan voters were not turning out in large numbers. He suggested that the turnout was relatively low because voters are no longer bribed and bused to polling stations by any party.

Pashinyan also sounded satisfied with the authorities' conduct of the elections, saying he hopes they will be "exemplary."

The vote was marked by an unusually small number of irregularities or violent incidents reported by election contenders, local monitors, and media.

Armenia's Investigative Committee said law enforcement authorities received 25 complaints about alleged violations such as attempts at multiple voting. It pledged to investigate all of them.

Armenia's opposition has for years complained that elections were rigged to favor the ruling party.

Pashinyan Visits Landmark Armenian Exhibition At New York's Metropolitan Museum

NEW YORK — Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan joined Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II to visit a major exhibition titled "Armenia!" at New York's Metropolitan Museum. He toured the exhibition halls to get acquainted with the best samples of Armenian art and culture dating as far back as the 4th to 17th centuries, the PM's official website said.

Pashinyan noted that 2018 is a symbolic year for the strengthening of US-Armenian cultural ties. "This year Armenian culture is being presented in the United States of America in an unprecedented manner. It will help make Armenian art and culture more identifiable and attractive for the friendly American people."

Earlier this year, Armenian culture, customs and traditions were exhibited in the heart of the U.S. capital, Washington, DC within the framework of the Smithsonian Folk Life Festival. It provided Armenian people with an opportunity to represent Armenian culture in its unique variety not only to the Americans, but also to thousands of tourists from different parts of the world.

The premier noted that the exhibition brings together the Armenian heritage of 14 centuries with its priceless masterpieces from around the world in one of the most important museums in the world. He expressed conviction that it would undoubtedly change the perception and assessment of Armenia and Armenian art in the United States.

"Due to this wonderful initiative, multiple visitors of the museum can get acquainted with the historical and cultural heritage of the nation who was the first to adopt Christianity as its state religion. More than 140 relics, illustrated manuscripts, miniatures of churches, cross-tones, printed books and other unique exhibits are displayed in the museum, among them works of such renowned authors as Toros Roslin, Sargis Pitsak, Toros Taronatsi, Hakob Jughayetsi, Grigor Tatevatsi," Pashinyan said, noting that for many people this exhibition is the accomplishment of their dream. He added that it was made possible through the efforts of Helen Evans and her partners.



ARMENIA

Armenia Marks the 27th Anniversary of Independence

YEREVAN (PanArmenian.net) – The Republic of Armenia marks the 27th anniversary of Independence on September 21. The Declaration of Independence was adopted by the Supreme Council of Armenia on August 23, 1990. Under the declaration, Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic was renamed the Republic of Armenia.

A referendum on secession from the USSR and the establishment of independent statehood was held on September 21, 1991. 94.9% of the Armenian citizens voted for independence.

Declaration of the Independence.

“The Supreme Council of the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic expressing the united will of the Armenian people; Aware of its historic responsibility for the destiny of the Armenian people engaged in the realization of the aspirations of all Armenians and the restoration of historical justice;

Proceeding from the principles of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and the generally recognized norms of international law; exercising the right of nations to free self-determination;

Based on the December 1, 1989, joint decision of the Armenian SSR Supreme Council and the Artsakh National Council on the “Reunification of the Armenian SSR and the Mountainous Region of Karabakh;” developing the democratic traditions of the independent Republic of Armenia established on May 28, 1918, declares.

The beginning of the process of establishing of independent statehood positioning the question of the creation of a democratic society based on the rule of law,” reads part of the declaration.



Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan walks holding one of his children.



Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and a selfie-seeker as he walks on Independence Day.



A woman hugs the prime minister.

Edmond Azadian's New Book Presented in Yerevan

AZADIAN, from page 1

culture. Azadian is a writer, journalist, editor, literary critic and public figure who at present is president of the Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada and member of the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party (ADL)'s Supreme Council.

This is Azadian's sixth book. He is an overseas member of the Armenian Academy of Sciences, with an honorary doctorate from Yerevan State University.

Hagop Avedikian, the chief editor of the weekly *Azg*, and chairman of the ADL Central

Committee, was the first speaker. He introduced Azadian's prolific creative activities as a journalist and literary critic, declaring, “Throughout his full life, he has never been an observer – he has been a participant. He is a fighter and battler. Azadian's weapon is his pen.”

Ruben Mirzakhanyan, president of the Tekeyan Cultural Association of Armenia and rector of the State Pedagogical University of Armenia, stressed in connection with the publication of Azadian's new volume, that Azadian was the greatest intellectual of the diaspora. He said, “This is not an exaggeration. He is a man of whose quality we must be proud. This book is a great present to Armenian intellectuals.”

Petros Demirchyan, literary critic and vice president of the Writers Union of Armenia, presented Azadian's contribution to literary criticism. He pointed out that it was thanks to his efforts that the works of several Western Armenian writers like Indra and Mikayel Giurdjian were saved from oblivion. Azadian donated Indra's archive, which he had managed to preserve, to the Charents Museum of Literature and Art.

Aleksandr Topchyan, literary critic, playwright and novelist, focused on Azadian's role in literary criticism, remarking that he managed to maintain the link between writer and reader in a wonderful fashion. Yervand Ter-Khachaturyan, who is the compiler of Azadian's volume *With My Time and Contemporaries* and author of its foreword, demonstrated one more time in his comments Azadian's significance in the realm of criticism, and characterized



Hagop Avedikian

Azadian as a broadminded intellectual.

He said, “He writes magnificently about all fields of art – painting, drama and music. He sees phenomena more profoundly and universally, and he relates not only to Armenian but to world literature. Azadian knows diasporan Armenian literature from the inside. He truly knows the diaspora and feels the language with his whole being. We must learn from his writings.”

The final address of the evening was reserved for the author, Azadian himself. He thanked the guests for their presence and Yervand Ter-Khachaturyan for his work of editing, declaring

that his writings were always scattered in the press while Vatche Semerdjian of Los Angeles succeeded in collecting them so that they would be published as a book. He said to Ter-Khachaturyan, “Thanks to you, I became acquainted with myself, just as through you the reader became acquainted with me. I am grateful.”

Azadian spoke about the value and role of his book from the point of view of the preservation of the Western Armenian language. He noted that we can no longer encounter Western Armenian with the same richness as in the creative works of Siamanto, Tekeyan and Varuzhan, and said, “Western Armenian gives me a great potential, but it is in its death throes, and I, perhaps, am one of the last soldiers who fights on behalf of Western Armenian. Consequently, this book is my share of the work of preservation of the Western Armenian language which is dying. The discourse of tomorrow, the literature of tomorrow, will be a literature of love and cooperation between the diaspora and Armenia, constructed with steel words in the velvet revolution; it will be a united pan-national literature. If this book carries out that role and brings that benefit, I will be thankful.”

The guests at the event related lovely memories of Edmond Azadian, each one revealing a different Azadian, not well known to the broader public. The event ended with the consecration of the new book with wine at the hands of Azadian and Mirzakhanyan.



Ruben Mirzakhanyan



INTERNATIONAL

International News

Aix-en-Provence Hosts Days of Artsakh Festival

AIX-EN-PROVENCE, France (Panorama.am) – The Days of Artsakh in France festival was hosted in the French city of Aix-en-Provence, with the events planned within the frameworks of the festival to run through October 13, the Artsakh Foreign Ministry announced.

Artsakh Permanent Representative to France Hovhannes Gevorgyan, member of the France-Artsakh Friendship Circle Senator Sophie Joissains, ex-Mayor Alain Joissains, members of the City Council of Aix-en-Provence, as well as representatives of NGOs and journalists participated in the ceremonial opening of the festival in Aix-en-Provence.

Exhibitions of photographs and graphic works dedicated to Artsakh, lectures on Artsakh and documentary films screenings are planned as part of the festival program.

Days of Artsakh in France festival, which kicked off with a solemn event on November 21, 2017 in Villeurbanne city with the participation Artsakh President Bako Sahakyan, is concluding in Aix-en-Provence.

The festival, which lasted about a year, was hosted by 11 cities of France, which had established friendly relations with the towns of Artsakh. Thanks to this, the visitors of the festival had the opportunity to get acquainted with the past and present of the people of Artsakh and its rich historical and cultural heritage.

President Presents Optimistic View of 2017

YEREVAN (RFE/RL)– In his New Year's address to the nation, President Serzh Sargysan claimed that his administration brought about "large-scale" positive changes in Armenia in the course of 2017.

He also promised continued economic betterment that will lead many Armenians working abroad to return to their homeland.

"The year 2017 was a year of hard work and implementation of serious programs," he said in televised remarks aired on the New Year's Eve. "The pace of large-scale changes did not diminish. Furthermore, we pushed them forward with greater determination."

"Our ambitions are big and we will be consistent in putting them into practice," he said, adding that the results of government policies should be "considerable and tangible" to every citizen.

"Together we will bring back to Armenia our loved ones that had left the country," he declared. "They will come back because they will see more room to work and distinguish themselves in Armenia."

Prime Minister Karen Karapetyan also sounded an optimistic note about the country's future when he congratulated Armenians on the New Year. He pointed to faster economic growth achieved in 2017.

Karapetyan vowed to speed up growth through major reforms and a fight against corruption when Sarkisian named him prime minister in September 2016.

Merkel Skips Official State Banquet with Erdogan in Berlin

BERLIN (Panorama.am) – German Chancellor Angela Merkel announced she would not take part in the first-ever official state banquet to be hosted for Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan here, German media reported on Monday, September 24.

As Xinhua agency reported, Merkel would not attend the event hosted by German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier at his official residence of Bellevue palace.

Although the Turkish leader has already visited Germany dozens of times in his official function as prime minister and president, his current visit marks the first time he has been offered full military honors, as well as a state banquet.

Merkel reportedly justified her absence by saying she already has two lengthy meetings scheduled with Erdogan during his two-day visit from September 27 to 29. However, German media interpreted the decision as a further sign of lasting strains in the traditionally close relationship between Berlin and Ankara.



Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan with UN Secretary General António Guterres

Pashinyan Meets with UN Chief

NEW YORK (Armenpress) – Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan attended a reception for the delegations of heads of state hosted by UN Secretary General António Guterres on September 25.

Pashinyan attended the opening of the general discussions of the UN General Assembly 73th session, during which Guterres and US President Donald Trump spoke.

Guterres talked about the political changes in Armenia during his speech at the 73rd Summit of UN General Assembly.

"The youth of Armenia showed the power of their voice for progressing democracy by the peaceful political changes in the country," Guterres said.

Guterres had commented on the peaceful political changes of Armenia a few days ago, answering questions posed by Facebook users. "Recently we witnessed a fantastic example of peaceful power change which took place in Armenia. It's a fantastic example that speaks about the fact that there are reasons to believe that the new generation will be able to make better solutions than my generation," Guterres had said.

PM Pashinyan Meets with Rwanda President Kagame

NEW YORK (Armenpress) – Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan met with President of Rwanda Paul Kagame at the UN Headquarters on September 24.

The two leaders discussed bilateral relations, as well as issues referring to the organization of the summit of the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie (OIF) to take place in Yerevan soon. Pashinyan and Kagame expressed confidence that the summit will open a new page in the relations between Armenia and African members of the organization, and particu-

larly Rwanda and will foster the development and deepening of cooperation.

Pashinyan highlighted the necessity to raise the level of cooperation and taking practical measures in that direction. The interlocutors expressed confidence that the Francophonie summit will be held at a high level and will strengthen relations between the member states of the organization.

Pashinyan also informed that an economic forum will be held in the sidelines of the summit and invited the businessmen of Rwanda to participate in that forum.



Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan with President of Rwanda Paul Kagame

Artsakh Official Says Anti-Armenian Sentiments Fanned By Azeri Government

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – The Human Rights Defender (Ombudsman) of Artsakh this week issued a special report on anti-Armenian sentiment in Azerbaijan: Organized Hate Speech and Hostility Against Armenians.

Ruben Melikyan told a news conference in Artsakh that the report comprehensively presents the incidents related to Armenophobia, or anti-Armenian sentiments.

"This report is unique by the fact that it presents anti-Armenian sentiment examples in the legal context. This is an issue relating exclusively to human rights, we have presented legal assessments addressing the issues from the perspectives of international law, conventions and precedents. Our main goal is to present the issues of anti-Armenian sentiment to the international community," Melikyan said.

The executive director of the Tufenkian Charitable Foundation Raffi Dudaklyan noted that the facts prove that Armenophobia is organized in Azerbaijan, it doesn't have a one-day or one-month manifestation, it is continuous is nature.

"There are times when this issue [Armenophobia] escalates, sometimes it de-escalates, but it keeps on getting implemented in a constant way," he said.



INTERNATIONAL

Armenians Hold Aurora Dialogues in Berlin

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

BERLIN — It was a refreshing change to see such an initiative in the German capital. As Aurora Humanitarian Initiative co-founder Ruben Vardanyan remarked, participants “were happy to see the representatives of a developing country thinking about universal humanitarian values and expressing concern about dangerous processes unfolding today around the world.” The developing country in question is the Republic of Armenia.

What most Germans know about Armenians has to do with the 1915 Genocide and the ongoing campaign to have Turkey recognize it. But this time, the focus was not Armenia or the past; it was a current and pressing issue facing the entire world: the challenges of global migration and how to meet them.

The Aurora Dialogues, which took place December 4-5 in Berlin, were titled, “Millions on the Move: Need for Development and Integration.” Experts and humanitarian aid organizations shared their experiences and knowledge about global migration with representatives from the political world, business community and civil society. The aim was to develop ideas on how Germany and the European Union might find solutions to deal with the migration and refugee crises.

The choice of Berlin as a venue for this meeting, organized by the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative together with the Global Perspectives Initiative and Robert Bosch Stiftung, with the help of Stiftung Mercator, was not by chance. Considering that Germany has welcomed the lion’s share of refugees over the past several years — one million came in 2015 — and that Europe is the main destination sought by the current generation of refugees, Berlin was the right place.

Staggering Statistics, Lamentable Misconceptions

The sheer dimensions of the problem are mind-boggling. As the conference documented, there are an estimated 65 million people who have left their homes and 700 million worldwide who would do so if they could. In addition, there are groups of people who do not even appear in such statistics, including Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), who have been uprooted from their homes by war or other disasters but are still in their native lands. Then there are about 200 million people who could be displaced by the effects of climate change by 2050.

Before addressing the needs of these desperate populations, one needs to have a clear picture of the phenomenon. “To talk about migration often means to talk about misconceptions,” said Norbert Lammert, former president of the German Bundestag, in his speech. That misconceptions prevail in the public perception of migration is demonstrated by the results of the Aurora Humanitarian Index 2017, a survey of attitudes and trends related to humanitarian matters. The results of the survey, which was conducted worldwide with 6,500 participants from 12 countries, indicated that most people think their own countries have done more for refugees than they actually have. In addition, persons surveyed displayed widespread skepticism regarding the ability of individuals or collective agencies to make a significant difference. Only nine percent of those asked said they thought that their actions could make a difference when it comes to finding a solution to the global refugee crisis. More optimism was displayed by those belonging to the younger generation, particularly regarding the contribution migrants can make to society.

The existence of such misconceptions means that a new approach must be adopted to present a realistic and balanced view of migration, flight, integration and religion. As Mary Robinson, former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and former president of Ireland said, “Stories are important, but unfortunately we hear too little about the people involved. What actually happens to the people whilst on the move as refugees, is important.”

In her view, the media often portray a one-

sided, negative image. “Such distortions, often politically shaped, had an impact on the success of integration, the participants concluded. “We must succeed in bridging the gap between perceived emotions and actual facts,” said Rita Süßmuth, former president of the German Bundestag.

Challenges for Europe

For Dr. Ingrid Hamm, founder of the Global Perspectives Initiative, those addressing the problem “have to begin thinking in much more global terms. When it comes to topics of migration and reasons for flight, there remains a huge lack of information, as well as an increasing need for a stronger dialogue between Africa and Europe.” The conference participants agreed

ing flows of public funds, saying, “Public funds are not tracked strictly enough on the way to the recipient countries. Many public investments are affected by money laundering or get lost along their way.”

The Armenian Role

Embodying the spirit of the Aurora Prize for Awakening Humanity, the Aurora Dialogues offer a platform to experts and dedicated personalities who are engaged in seeking solutions to the global challenges of our time. Now in its third year, the Dialogues provide the stage for an intellectual and interdisciplinary exchange, based on the notion that we should learn from the past in order to make the right choices in the present, to pave the way for a better future

Aurora Humanitarian Initiative

Founded on behalf of the survivors of the Armenian Genocide and in gratitude to their saviors, the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative seeks to empower modern-day saviors to offer life and hope to those in urgent need of basic humanitarian aid and thus continue the cycle of giving

internationally. The Aurora Humanitarian Initiative is Gratitude in Action. It is an eight-year commitment (2015 to 2023, in remembrance of the eight years of the Armenian Genocide 1915-1923) to support people and promote projects that tackle the needs of the most helpless and destitute, and do so at great risk. This is achieved through the Initiative’s various



The Aurora Dialogues were attended by a high-ranking audience. Joining former President of the Bundestag Norbert Lammert as speakers and debaters were the former Chair of the Council of the German Protestant Church, Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Huber, former president of Ireland and UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mary Robinson, UNICEF’s regional director for Middle East and North Africa, Geert Cappelaere, the German Chancellor’s Personal Representative for Africa, Günter Nöke, the Head of the Robert Bosch Stiftung, Christof Bosch and Nobel Prize laureate Laymah Gbowee, alongside many more speakers and participants.

that Europe should define a collective approach, and this involves drafting clear immigration legislation as well. Süßmuth noted that better regulation of migration is the key to fighting xenophobia. She noted the fact that Germany currently “lacks a formal immigration law” which would be needed, to “increase clarity, ensuring an easier, more coordinated process.”

One problem discussed was the lamentable lack of cooperation and coordination on a European level in addressing the refugee crisis. But not only: participants criticized the attitude of several European states that are engaged in denial — not willing to accept reality. Lammert rejected the notion that there is a problem of “absorption capacity,” as some suggest. What is lacking, he said, is a shared responsibility and commitment to solve the problem. “If there is one country in which there is broad awareness that migration cannot be hindered by walls, then it is Germany. Migration is not a sudden state of emergency but, with respect to historical context, a normal aspect of our history — presenting both problems and opportunities,” said Lammert. In fact, a significant proportion of older Germans remember the post-war refugee crisis and were among those fleeing to the West.

If governments are called upon to face the challenges presented, there is a meaningful role to be played as well by private initiatives. The conference discussed how the private sector could promote and accelerate growth, while public initiatives could better conduct projects on a larger scale. Anja Langenbucher, director of the European office at the Gates Foundation, underlined the importance of private initiatives in the development sector: “Private initiatives act as catalysts. At the same time we decrease risks for investors and have clear, quantitative goals. This is an advantage in contrast to public investments.” John Prendergast, US human rights activist, pointed to the need for monitor-

together.

Ruben Vardanyan put it this way, “They (the participants) saw our willingness to share our experience and use it for changing the world around us. I think that we were able to look to the future without forgetting our past.” And if in the past Armenians have experienced the horrors of expulsion, war and genocide, they have also recently had the experience of welcoming refugees into their country.

“Holding the Aurora Dialogues in Berlin,” Vardanyan said, “we wanted to show the world what we are doing. We also wished to inform people that Armenia has made a significant contribution in welcoming refugees, as very few people know that Armenia has already accepted about 20,000 refugees from Syria.”

programs: The Aurora Prize for Awakening Humanity, the Aurora Dialogues, the Aurora Humanitarian Index, the Gratitude Projects and the 100 LIVES Initiative. The Aurora Humanitarian Initiative

is the vision of philanthropists Vartan Gregorian, Nour Afeyan and Ruben Vardanyan who have, already in the second year, been joined by several dozen new donors and partners. The Aurora Humanitarian Initiative is represented by three organizations — Aurora Humanitarian Initiative Foundation, Inc. (New York, USA), the 100 Lives Foundation (Geneva, Switzerland) and the IDEa Foundation (Yerevan, Armenia).

Further information is available at www.auro-rapize.com

Armenia Drops Charges Against Turkish Minor Who Snuck into Armenia

YEREVAN (Armenpress) —Armenian law enforcement bodies have dropped a criminal case initiated against a Turkish citizen for illegally crossing the Armenian-Turkish border on humanitarian grounds, the press service of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia announced.

Umut Ali Özmen, a 16-year old Turkish trespasser, entered Armenia on July 24.

The boy’s father, Mustafa Özmen, is in Armenia and told a news outlet that his son has been released.

“We have informed the Turkish side about the above-mentioned through diplomatic channels. Immediately after receiving relevant response Umut Ali Özmen’s return to Turkey will be organized,” the MFA said.

Mustafa Özmen had appealed to the Government of Armenia and the prime minister with a request to return his son on September 20.

In an interview to Armenia’s Public TV, the boy’s father Mustafa said that his son had crossed the border accidentally.

“My son had no intention to cross the border. He has no friends here, since we are in a field, in a village, he was feeding the livestock with his mother, and there is no border demarcation line in that area. And he didn’t understand that he had crossed the Armenian border. He was just curious about what lay across, and he walked up the hill to look from above,” Mustafa said.

Russian border guards had arrested the boy.

Community News

Feast of the True Cross Commemorated At Diocese

By Florence Avakian

NEW YORK — Held up for display before the crowd of expectant onlookers was an eight-inch silver cross — one unlike any other.

Embedded within its central gemstone was a tiny sliver of wood: a holy relic of the True Cross of Jesus Christ — the cross Jesus carried to Golgotha, and on which he was crucified.

On Sunday evening, September 16, that relic was on display in the sanctuary of St. Vartan Armenian Cathedral in New York. It was held with tenderness in the hands of the Very Rev. Daniel Findikyan, Primate of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, as he entered the sanctuary in a majestic procession, to celebrate the major feast day known as the Exaltation of the Holy Cross.

Findikyan had envisioned and organized this special ceremony in accordance with old traditions of the church, to accentuate the symbolic power of the Exaltation feast — called Khatchveratz in Armenian. It marked the first time the cathedral had celebrated the occasion separately from the morning badarak.

Some two dozen local clergy and deacons — most from the New York-New Jersey-Connecticut region, but one from as far away as California — participated in this awe-inspiring Medz Antasdan: a blessing service over the Four Corners of the Earth.

The Primate extolled the profound significance of this mystical event in a brief conversation before the service.

“This service — blessing the entire world — is an incredibly bold statement on the part of Armenian Christians. Who are we — a tiny group of people — to bless the world?” he said with a touch of irony.

“Yet we invoke the blessings of the Lord on the world because we Armenians know the Savior of the world — and we do His work.”

At exactly 6 p.m. on Sunday, the Primate carrying the Holy Cross was led by clergy and deacons in a ceremonial procession into St. Vartan Cathedral. An eager crowd of the faithful were in attendance.

At each station of the church’s four corners, symbolizing the four corners of the world, the clergy chanted prayers for God’s mercy, while carrying a large tray of basil: the “royal” herb (basileus is Greek for “king”) symbolic of the flowering of the land.

A Powerful Message

In an inspiring message delivered with passionate emotion, the Primate related the story of the hardened Roman military commander who stood at the foot of the Cross as the Lord Jesus Christ drew his last breath. Though it was midday, the sky turned black all over the land, as the Hebrew temple veil split in two with a powerful roar.

“A pagan Roman centurion looked up at the bloody corpse on the Cross,” Findikyan said, his voice reflecting the power of the event, “and realized that he was seeing the true Son of God. Thus, this pagan Roman commander became the first person to recognize Christ as the Son of God.”

The Primate continued: “What motivated a pagan to look at a crucified man, and see in him the love of God? This love has been given to us to find love, joy, life. We have to use our faith and give love to the world, to triumph over every unimaginable cruelty, violence and injustice.”

“We have to redouble our efforts to build bridges and unity not only amongst Armenians, but also throughout the world. This must be the mission of our church.”

see CROSS, page 8



Edwin Gérard at Garni, Armenia

Edwin Gérard

Armenian Polymath from Everywhere

YEREVAN — My research interests, focused mainly on Armenians in various countries and cultures, are quite varied. At one point during my many years of

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

investigation, I met a person intersecting a number of aspects of my research interests. Actor, director, dancer and playwright, Edwin Gérard is an exemplar of multitalented people with colorful backgrounds and biographies incorporating several spheres of activities, countries, cultures and languages. After more than ten years of correspondence, we met during Edwin’s first visit to Armenia.

Artsvi Bakhchinyan: Edwin Gerard... is this a stage name?

Edwin Gérard: I was born Vartan Hamamdjian, but my father changed our name to Gérard when I was 6. Nevertheless, I do speak Western Armenian. I was born in 1948 and am currently living in France.

Artsvi Bakhchinyan: I always admire polyglots. When I introduced you to an acquaintance of mine — an Armenian lady from Russia with poor knowledge of Armenian — you found a common language with her, which was paradoxically... Chinese. For me it was an amazing moment; two Armenians, one from Russia and one from France, meet in the country of their ancestors and communicate in Chinese. How many languages do you speak?

Edwin Gérard: Ha ha! Now you are going to have people believing I speak fluent Chinese! I only know a few words and phrases — whatever I remember from the two semesters of Chinese I took at UCLA back in the late 70’s, meaning *very little*! That is also the case with several other languages. “How many languages do you speak?” is a difficult question to answer for a polyglot, because we realize, perhaps more than others, what it really means to *speak* a language. I suppose if I counted all the languages, I can exchange a few key phrases in, I would say, 11 or 12. But if I wanted to be 100 percent scrupulous and only counted those languages I speak fluently, I would say seven: English, French, Spanish, Armenian, Portuguese, German and Italian. I can hold a basic conversation in Greek and Turkish, and an even more basic one in Russian, Farsi, Egyptian and Tunisian Arabic.

Artsvi Bakhchinyan: Please tell us about your ancestors.

Edwin Gérard: My parents were born in Cairo, Egypt. Their parents were all Armenians born in Turkey who then migrated to Egypt. My father’s name was Yervant Hamamdjian. He changed his name to “Edward Gerard” after moving to the US! Yervant was born in Cairo in 1912 and was the youngest of three brothers. The other two brothers were named Zareh and Vahe. Yervant’s father, Armenak Hamamdjian, left Istanbul to flee persecution and wandered about for a while in Greece, Bulgaria and the Ukraine (Odessa), before settling in Cairo, where he married my grandmother, Kalenik

see POLYMATH, page 7

Knights and Daughters of Vartan Host Talk by Presidential Speechwriter

WASHINGTON — A public discussion was held on Tuesday, September 11, at St. Mary Armenian Church Cultural hall with guest speaker Aram Bakshian, Jr., speechwriter for Presidents Nixon and Ford and Director of Presidential Speechwriting for Ronald Reagan.

As it is customary with public discussion events hosted by the Knights and Daughters of Vartan, among the guests were Rev. Father Hovsep Karapetyan, pastor of St. Mary Armenian Church, newly appointed Deputy Chief of the Mission of the Armenian Embassy Ara Magarian, newly appointed Consul of the Armenian Embassy Mikayelyan, and First and Second Secretaries Narek Melikyan and David Janazyan.

The evening commenced with a moment of silence requested by Kevork Marashlian to honor all the victims of 9/11 tragedy, which marked its 17th year anniversary.

The event took a much happier turn later with 30-year Knights of Vartan veteran member David Zenian introducing the guest speaker, highlighting Bakshian’s career and incredible work serving three US presidents as their speech writer. Zenian reinforced the key role a speech writer plays stating he/she is in a position to influence the president’s thinking.

Bakshian was then invited to begin his presentation touching upon his family’s history and connection to St. Mary’s Armenian Apostolic Church. His great-uncle was Mihran Mesrobian, a prominent architect who had fled the atrocities of Armenian Genocide and settled in Washington metro area in 1921. Mesrobian’s career as an architect spanned over 50 years and in 1956 he was called upon to design the restoration of the St. Mary Armenian church. He was able to accomplish this project on a limited budget while maintaining the architectural integrity of the Armenian Apostolic sanctuary.

Bakshian gave the audience an overview of his career in the political arena closely working with former three presidents. He also had high praise for Ken Khachigian, another speech writer in the Reagan Administration who lives in California. He expressed great respect for President Ronald Reagan, describing him as a genuine individual who fit public service perfectly. He was not hesitant to express his deep disappointment in the current state of public



Aram Bakshian during presentation

servants whom he described as people with more degrees but culturally illiterate.

During the question-and-answer period, Bakshian concluded that we should not expect political turnaround from the possible meeting of US President Donald Trump and Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan during the coming UN meetings in New York. He noted also that there is no tense issue in the Armenian-American relations, therefore there is no crisis that needs immediate attention. Such a meeting, if it happens, thus will be a demonstration of good will, he added.

The evening concluded with a reception.

— Shoghig Missirian Sahakyan



COMMUNITY NEWS

Edwin Gérard: The Armenian Polymath from Everywhere

POLYMATH, from page 6

Karakashian (or Karaseferian?). Her real maiden name has always been a source of confusion, since her name is different on each of my father's two marriage certificates. (He married my mother after his first wife died at a young age). One of the marriage certificates says his mother's name was "Karaseferian" and the other says "Karakashian."

We do know for a fact, however, that Kalenik was also from Istanbul and had accompanied an Ottoman princess, Shivekar, to Cairo as a lady-in-waiting, when the princess married some Egyptian king or prince. (I've got photos of Kalenik picknicking with the court at the foot of the Giza pyramids!). After she married my grandfather Armenak, her family in Istanbul disowned her for marrying a "commoner," who also happened to be an active member of the Armenian Hunchak party.

Artsvi Bakhchinyan: While studying the history of Armenians in China and Armenians in world cinema I encountered the name of your grandmother – Valentina Amirayan. By the way, I have published an article about her in the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* (November 24, 2017).

Edwin Gérard: My maternal grandmother, née Maria Valentina Hortensia Nedda Arnaud, was the daughter of an Italian Levantine from Istanbul named Nikolai Michele Arnaud and an Armenian mother, née Acabi Hamamdjian, who also happened to be none other than the first cousin of Armenak Hamamdjian (my paternal grandfather). My mother, née Alida Amirayan, was born in Cairo around 1922. I don't know exactly when my mother's grandparents moved to Cairo, but Alida's parents met there and married around 1920. We don't know where the Hamamdjians originated and that's what I'd most like to find out. Judging from the way Acabi spoke Armenian and Turkish, it was obvious they were not real Bolsetsis (Stambouliotes), meaning they were not long settled in Istanbul, but came from somewhere in Eastern Anatolia. I am trying to find out where they came from and can provide linguistic clues to their land of origin. Unfortunately, no one in Istanbul to this day has been able to help me find records of where the Hamamdjians came from.

My mother's father was Stepan Zarmair Amirayan. He too had two brothers, Aram and

Garabed, and they were all born in Izmir, Turkey, before moving to Egypt. Stepan moved from Cairo to Los Angeles to join his daughter and grandchildren in 1955 and died there in 1963. Aram left Egypt in the 1940s to settle in Yerevan, Soviet Armenia. Garabed stayed in Cairo after marrying Araxi, an Armenian woman who had been orphaned at age 4 during the genocide. Garabed and Araxi had two sons, Kaloust and Artin ("Arto") who now both live in Los Angeles.

Kaloust has two sons and Arto has a daughter also named Alida (after my mother), and, I believe, another son. My mother Alida is still alive and lives in La Crescenta, Calif. She's 98. Her daughter, Michèle Ratkovich (née Gérard), lives nearby with her husband Dan and two sons. My grandmother did indeed live in Shanghai and the Philippines for many years and throughout World War II. During her voyages between Egypt and China she met Cecil B. Demille, who invited her to Hollywood to test for the starring role in his "Cleopatra". She did not ultimately perform in that film but she did co-star in other films, notably a film in the 20's called "I Love a Woman" with Edward G. Robinson. She also did a few other co-starring roles in Hollywood films and on TV.

Artsvi Bakhchinyan: Do you consider yourself as a cosmopolitan?

Edwin Gérard: Yes, I suppose if ever there has been a true cosmopolitan, I would fit that category. I know for some that is considered a compliment, but for fanatic nationalists, reactionaries, and fascists, cosmopolitans can be seen as a threat.

Artsvi Bakhchinyan: Can we say you inherited your love for arts from your grandparents?

Edwin Gérard: Not only my grandparents; my mother has always loved the arts, and was for a brief time a dancer as well.

Artsvi Bakhchinyan: How did your acting career start? As a dancer?

Edwin Gérard: They kind of both started at the same time. In the US, children learn music and dance on weekends at private, performing arts "academies." I started tap dancing lessons when I was six, along with piano. Of course, I loved watching the classical ballet classes, but my family thought that wasn't for "little boys" (especially not Armenian boys!). I realize the taboo was not only for Armenians when I saw there were only girls in the class. But I was fas-

cinated by the beauty of the movements and always wished to be able to perform them. At the same academy, I started taking acting classes when I was twelve.

Later, when I was in high school, I started secretly taking ballet classes at the David Lichine/Tatiana Riabouchinska Ballet School in Beverly Hills. I told them my family didn't want my father to know I was studying ballet, so I would not be able to pay for the classes. The school directors said not to worry and they let me study there free of charge! They also realized how difficult it was for boys in the US to openly take up ballet. Lichine and his wife Riabouchinska were both former stars at the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo. They emigrated to America just after the war. She was known as one of the "Baby Ballerinas" of Diaghilev. They served *art* above commerce and supported young people who shared their love for beauty. And Monsieur Lichine also made his ballet students study acting.

My first serious acting parts were offered to me while I was a student at the University of California, Berkeley. Even though I was getting my master's degree in French literature, I would try out for the plays produced by the Drama Department and was often cast in leading roles. I remember my first production there was to play Smirnov in Chekhov's "The Boor." Later I was cast in plays by Musset, Molière, and Ionesco, and co-directed a play by William Butler Yeats called "The Death of Cuchulain." At the same time, I was continuing my dancing with a folk dance troupe and singing with the choir at St. Vartan's Armenian Church in Oakland, Calif.

When I moved to Paris in 1972, I was fully ready to start my career in musical comedy, where dancing, singing, and acting are intertwined. I worked there for six years, mainly performing in musicals. One of my most memorable shows was called "La Révolution Française," and it was the first collaboration of Alain Boublil and Claude-Michel Schoenberg, who later wrote the book and music to the international hit, "Les Misérables."

Artsvi Bakhchinyan: Your creative biography is quite impressive. It seems you are constantly on the stage – dancing, acting, directing and writing for the stage.

Edwin Gérard: I never liked doing only one thing. To me specializing is like a routine. As much as I loved acting, my literary background inspired me to want to create a kind of "total theater," which incorporated dance and music along with pure theater. I suppose you could say I was what the French call an "artiste polyvalent." I was intellectually a product of the sixties. I had the immense privilege of watching Martha Graham perform with her troupe on stage at UCLA when she was in her seventies. She was a living legend, an avatar of total theater, as was Jean-Louis Barrault, whose multi-faceted production of "Rabelais" came to Berkeley and convinced me I needed to be in Paris to do the kind of physical theater work I was passionate about. These were the kind of polyvalent theatre artists I admired and wanted to be like: Graham was an actress, writer, choreographer, director and dancer. Barrault was the same, but he worked first and foremost from literary text, then added all the components of dance, music, poetry, circus acts, and pure spectacle.

In 1980, I was back in Los Angeles. My project was to create a theater company which was politically relevant, entertaining, and which incorporated all the experimental theater techniques I had learned in Europe. My wife at the time, Bettina Fischer, and I created the "LA Experimental Theater." Our first production was "The Baden Play" by Bertholt Brecht, which we performed in a deserted jail in Venice, California. (Just recently, a retired FBI agent that I met by chance told me he remembered being assigned to see that show and report on it!).

We later went on to write our own plays collectively. Our first creation was a play called *Twanglehouse*, a crazy, surrealistic spoof about American consumerism, the frantic acquisition of objects and technological gadgets in particular, and the demise of communication within the family. This was 1981 and what we see today is "Twanglehouse" pushed to an extreme we had never even dreamt of! One critic, Viola Hegy Swisher, writing in *Drama-Logue*, began

her review of the play like this: "The twangling, jangling accoutrements of this stereo era outgrow their usefulness as objects serving civilized human beings..." She summed up the whole point of the play. I remember one time after a performance of "Twanglehouse," an audience member from Nicaragua came backstage with tears in his eyes, thanking us for this play, which he claimed made him understand why his family fell apart.

Other productions by the LA Experimental Theatre included "Medea: Requiem for a Boy with a White White Toy" written and directed by Reza Abdoh. It was one of his first major works while he was still in his early twenties. This was the production that brought Reza into the limelight. Later, he was referred to as "the Picasso of contemporary theatre" and has just had a two-month retrospective of his work at MOMA, in New York.

So to answer your question, yes, in most of my experimental theatre days, I participated as a writer, actor, choreographer, director, as well as dealing with the administrative side of running a theatre company.

Artsvi Bakhchinyan: So you worked with famous innovative directors, like Reza Abdo. This year MOMA celebrates him. How was your cooperation with that amazing director?

Edwin Gérard: When I first met Reza he was barely 21 or 22 and new to LA. He was introduced to me by actors I had worked with and who knew about my interest in experimental work. My first feeling toward Reza was one of great affection. He often came to our house for dinner and became close friends with my wife and my son Sevan as well. He also would invite us for dinner at his place, often with various actors he was working with.

At first, I thought of Reza as a younger brother who was struggling in Hollywood/TV Reality like myself, trying to survive as a creative theatre artist. In LA, acting was then (and still is, largely) almost exclusively realistic/naturalistic. Actors were all looking for high-paying roles on TV and didn't want to waste their time performing in "experimental" productions which agents and casting directors would never attend. Therefore, Reza and I shared a common challenge. We were co-conspirators fighting the complacency of LA theatre audiences, who could not relate to non-realistic acting. How to find actors willing to commit to experimental work given the fact that they had to eat and pay their rent? Moreover, Reza once told me that his two greatest idols – the artists that influenced him more than anyone, were Paradjanov and an Armenian-Iranian director named Arby Ovanessian (whom I later met in Paris and who directed a celebrated film entitled "The Source"). The fact that Reza was an Armenophile also strengthened our bond. I, too, had visited Iran back in 1977 and was enchanted by the beauties of Persian culture.

When it came to theatrical work however, Reza and I were not really collaborators. I performed as an actor in several of his early productions, and especially enjoyed playing Kent in his "King Lear." But once my role changed and I co-produced his "Medea", it was clear Reza needed to be entirely autonomous in his work. Starting at that point, Reza and I continued to be close friends and did not intervene in each other's creative process.

Artsvi Bakhchinyan: Along with classics like Racine, Chekhov, Shakespeare, Brecht, Tennessee Williams you staged also contemporary authors.

Edwin Gérard: In Paris, I directed plays by contemporary American writers like Jane Martin, Christopher Durang, and Sam Shepard, one of my all-time favorite playwrights. I also worked with a partner on an award-winning comedy in French, called "La Honte."

Artsvi Bakhchinyan: What about films? Does your knowledge of many languages allow you to act as people of different ethnicities?

Edwin Gérard: Yes, I'm often called upon to play characters of different nationalities. Once you're known as a polyglot actor, your agent expects you to be able to play in any language. Just last year in LA I played a German-speaking Swiss restaurateur, and a Turkish-speaking "monk" in a monastery in Anatolia (if such a thing exists). But that's Hollywood!

see GÉRARD, page 9

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Bust of AMAA's Rev. Dr. Movses B. Janbazian's Unveiled in Yerevan

PARAMUS, N.J. — On September 3, the unveiling of the bust of Rev. Dr. Movses B. Janbazian, sculpted by Rev. Janbazian's brother Hagop Janbazian, took place at the Movses



Rev. Dr. Movses Janbazian's bust

Janbazian No. 79 Middle School of Yerevan.

The ceremony was attended by Rev. Janbazian's wife, Louisa Janbazian, son Vahak Janbazian, brother Hagop Janbazian, sister Ani Janbazian Hasserjian, Armenia Representative of the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) Harout Nercessian, President of the Union of Armenian Evangelical Churches in Eurasia Rev. Dr. René Léonian, Senior Pastor of the Evangelical Church of Armenia Rev. Mgrdich Melkonian, Deputy Mayor of Yerevan Aram Sukyasyan, head of the General Education Department Anna Stepanyan, former Prelate of the Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church of Canada, Arch. Khajag Hagopian, employees of the AMAA and Armenian Evangelical Churches of Armenia, teachers, parents, and children, and guests from different schools and organizations.

The celebration began with the anthems of the Republic of Armenia and the Movses Janbazian School. School Principal Knarik Hayrapetyan welcomed the guests. Special remarks were made by Rev. Dr. René Léonian,

Hagop Janbazian, Aram Sukissyan, Louisa Janbazian, Arch. Khajag Hagopian and others. They spoke about Rev. Janbazian's life and activities highlighting his patriotic services through the AMAA in Armenia and Artsakh, and his great role in strengthening Armenia-

United States of America, from Istanbul to Canada and to the Motherland and Artsakh, he acted unwaveringly, preached with faith tirelessly and unshakably, remaining steadfast, first to his own person and then to his surroundings. He was consumed slowly, transforming his



L to R: Principal Knarik Hayrapetyan, Hagop Janbazian, Vahak Janbazian, Arch. Khajag Hagopian, Rev. Mgrdich Melkonian, Rev. Dr. René Léonian, Rev. Hovhannes Hovsepyan, Harout Nercessian and Louisa Janbazian

EyeCare Project to Host 'Black and White Ball'

NEWPORT BEACH, Calif. — On Saturday, November 17, the Armenian EyeCare Project will host its annual gala celebrating more than 25 years of "Bringing Sight to Armenian Eyes." The Project is dedicated to achieving its mission to eliminate preventable blindness in Armenia and to making quality eye care accessible to every Armenian in the country.

A "Black and White Ball" will be held at the Balboa Bay Resort overlooking the magnificent Balboa Bay in Newport Beach. The evening will begin with a cocktail reception as guests sip cocktails and enjoy visiting with old friends and new. Robert Duqueneil will provide delightful background music on the piano as guests delight in Cirque du Soleil-inspired acts and roaming artists who will tell their fortune, analyze their handwriting or draw their portrait. Guests will also be able to bid on silent auction items including a trip to Armenia, hotel stays in Las Vegas and other popular destinations, dining certificates to restaurants across southern California, Armenian brandy, lots of wine, Armenian coffee and more!

Following the cocktail hour guests will be transported to Armenia as they enter the Grand Ballroom and begin a sumptuous Mediterranean-inspired five-course dinner starting with the traditional Armenian mezze — a selection of small dishes which give guests a little taste of what's to come throughout their meal.

The evening, presided over by Master of Ceremonies John Hovanesian, will include live music by the Hosharian Brothers; a dance performance by Artur Aleksanyan and his Dance Troupe; a Live Auction with opportunities to win a romantic weekend getaway at the Balboa Bay Resort; an Armenian rug by Tufenkian Carpets; a one-of-a-kind bottle of fine wine; jewelry and more.

The evening will honor Allergan, Inc. for 25 years of support with a special presentation by

founder, Roger Ohanesian, MD, Allergan PLC (NYSE: AGN), headquartered in Dublin, Ireland, is a bold, global pharmaceutical leader. Allergan is focused on developing, manufacturing and commercializing branded pharmaceutical, device, biologic, surgical and regenerative medicine products for patients around the world.

The Project will also share its achievements over the past year with a moving film by Art Simon Productions. These have included the completion and Grand Opening of the Project's fourth Regional Eye Center in Gyumri, donated by Luther J. Khachigian in memory of his father; a country-wide diabetes program to eliminate diabetic retinopathy, a preventable eye disease, by photographing the retinas of every diabetic in Armenia annually; a neonatology program for infants; a country-wide eye screening program for children through the public schools and much more.

"We have planned a wonderful evening for our friends and supporters and we look forward to everyone joining us as we celebrate another successful year," said AECF Director of Communications Adriana Dermenjian. "Our community's attendance at our Gala will help us to achieve our mission to eliminate preventable blindness in Armenia and provide access to quality eye care for every adult and child in the country."

All proceeds from the Armenian EyeCare Project Gala will benefit the organization's programs in Armenia, which include five Regional Eye Clinics, a Mobile Eye Hospital, a Center of Excellence for the Prevention of Infant and Childhood Blindness, an eyeglass distribution program, subspecialty clinics, a number of medical education and training programs and more.

For more information or to RSVP, email leslie@eyecareproject.com or visit eyecareproject.com/gala.

Diaspora ties in education and other spheres.

Sculptor Hagop Janbazian said: "Soaked with national and spiritual ideas, with Rev. Janbazian's magnificent vision and efforts, the AMAA established its center in the newly independent Armenia, which for the past 27 years has continued its mission of extending a hand to the disadvantaged, the poor, the needy, the students, the children and to all mankind in the Homeland and Artsakh. Yes, Rev. Janbazian's life was a daily sacrifice for the people and for the Homeland that he worshipped. From Anjar to Beirut and Damascus, from Brazil to the

life into a pure and living example with a complete, devotional, nationalistic and spiritual moral fervor."

Following the official unveiling of the bust, the school children gathered in the Auditorium and presented a special program dedicated to the life of Janbazian. The program concluded with a video presentation which highlighted Janbazian's activities in Armenia and Artsakh.

(Translated and adapted from the Armenian version written by Andranik Mardoyan, Press Secretary of AMAA-Armenia)

Donation

Mary and Gregory Abrahamian, Lee Abrahamian, Diane and Gerard Roy and David Abrahamian donated \$200 to the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* in memory of Hratch Berberian and Chahe Berberian, the sons of the late composer, Hampartzoum Berberian, and Serpuhi Berberian.

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LARRY BEDROSIAN

Feast of the True Cross Commemorated at Diocese

CROSS, from page 6

Procession to Cathedral Plaza

The clerical procession proceeded to the cathedral's open-air plaza in the midst of Midtown Manhattan: a suitable place to symbolize the world. There, the Primate prayed before a table on which the Reliquary stood amid a tray of basil. He blessed the large crowd, many with tears in their eyes.

With great reverence, the clergy and deacons knelt and kissed the cross holding the Relic. The people then followed, each with faces reflecting hope and inspiration.

At a reception held on the plaza, many of the attendees reflected on the power of the ceremony.

Fr. Paulos Kuriakose, one of the participating priests of the Syrian Orthodox Church, said

that this was his first time in the Armenian Church. "The service was very powerful. Several times, it brought me to tears," he said.

Frank DeFeo, a New York firefighter who often attends the Sunday badarak with his Armenian wife, called the service "very impressive. The Relic in the Cross was the most holy thing for me. I felt blessed to be a witness at this ceremony."

Findikyan, emotional after the ritual, explained that walking outside the church to the plaza symbolized taking the message to the world. "Looking in the eyes of the people standing before the cross on the plaza, I felt that the ritual spoke to them."

"We need the message of the Relic of our Savior to resonate throughout our communities," he said.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Edwin Gérard: The Armenian Polymath from Everywhere

GÉRARD, from page 7

Artsvi Bakhchinyan: In 2007, with Vartan Matiossian I published a monograph about Armen Ohanian – an extraordinary dancer and writer of very colorful biography. You are also fascinated by that woman, having written a play about her in French.

Edwin Gérard: I came across the first of several of her autobiographies, which she wrote in French, called *La Danseuse de Shemakha*. It spoke of her childhood and early adulthood in Azerbaijan, then in Iran, Turkey, and Egypt. I was blown away by the quality of her French. You would think she was a classic French author from the 1800s. I couldn't believe that French was probably her third, or fourth, or fifth language (after Armenian, Russian, Azeri, and Farsi!) and she could so master the nuances, so perfectly articulate her ideas and feelings in French. I was particularly moved by a scene where she is in the presence of British ladies at the Semiramis Hotel in Cairo. Her observation of how these ladies appeared to act like “white goddesses” alongside the darker “eastern ladies and gentlemen” somehow struck a chord in me, perhaps because I grew up in an Anglo-Saxon culture where color played such an important role, while never really being acknowledged openly.

I envisioned my piece as a dance-drama, where Armen Ohanian is played by an actress/dancer. It would not only include dance styles from the Caucasus, Iran and Egypt, but also her own, invented movements and masks, influenced by German expressionists like Mary Wigman. The production would be costly and I have not yet found the funding to produce the play the way I would like to see it done.

Artsvi Bakhchinyan: Teaching is another field of activity you are actively involved in.

Edwin Gérard: I've always loved teaching. For a long time, I taught acting and theatre history in various schools and universities in the US and France. I even ran the summer acting program for the New York Film Academy in Florence, Italy for several years.

However, since the age of 60, I have felt there are more important things I need to be teaching, given my particular background in literature, music and the arts. In my view, the terrible cuts in arts education taking place in schools in America and Europe are creating a generation of culturally “deprived” graduates.

Fewer and fewer students have the opportunities my generation enjoyed in more prosperous times, when schools included art history, music history, theatre history, philosophy and languages in their curriculum. Today, the humanities are disappearing completely from the pub-

nergies on raising cultural awareness, not only for students who want to become artists, but for all future programmers, engineers, technocrats, and business people. Francois Rabelais wrote “*Science sans conscience est la ruine de l'âme*.” Which translates as “Knowledge, with-

an amazingly passionate and dedicated asset to the company. I've also known and worked with Gerald Papasian and Nora Armani over the last forty years. Gerald and I performed together at the LA Theatre Center, and I participated in organizing their locations for their Armenian film, “Last Station,” in Paris. I've also worked with Vartan Petrosyan on some of his comedy routines in English, while we were both living in Paris.

Artsvi Bakhchinyan: Edwin, you are finally in Armenia. Better late than... later! What are your feelings?

Edwin Gérard: Yerevan was not at all what I had imagined it to be. It surpassed all my expectations, and in a positive way. I was expecting to see faces marked of years of hardship and suffering, but what I found was quite the opposite. Yerevan looked to me like one of the most dynamic, convivial and forward-looking cities I've seen in a long time. The energy, animation, and night-life was on a par with the most acclaimed capitals of Europe. Yerevan was also far more cosmopolitan than I had imagined. You hear so many different languages spoken on the street. The food was delicious almost everywhere and was prepared with a refinement you rarely see in most countries. People were friendly and courteous, regardless of whether you understood them or vice-versa.

I tried to see as much as I could during my stay, took a three-day tour to Artsakh, and visited Dilijan, Sevan, and most of the famous churches. Seen from the outside, Armenia always seemed to me like a tiny country. But when you're inside it, traveling through the provinces, Armenia feels huge, vast and empty. There seems to be so much room, so much space still left to fill.

The contrast between the provinces and Yerevan is great. I don't know if I could live outside of the capital, yet there is so much to be done throughout the country. Artsakh was beautiful and also felt huge and empty of people. The recent history of that land and the struggle of the Kharabaghtsis touched me deeply. It was a life changer.

Artsvi Bakhchinyan: And the traditional question about your upcoming projects and activities.

Edwin Gérard: From October to the end of December, I will be playing Theseus and Oberon in Shakespeare's “Midsummer Night's Dream” with the Auroville Theatre Group in Pondicherry, South India. I had worked with this company several years ago, as a director, and now they have invited me back, this time as an actor.

Now that I am 70, I often ask myself, “If I were told I had only a few months to live, what would be my biggest regret?” And the answer is that I didn't do my own one-man comedy show in Paris. My experiences there in my 20s, now well digested, and then again in my 40s and 50s, are so full of anecdotes and observations of the changes that have taken place there, that I'm sure I could write at least a 60-minute show and it would be very funny. What I appreciate so much about the French is that they love watching foreigners make jokes about them. I think I would really enjoy getting back on stage in Paris!

Right now I'm taking some time to rest, write and paint in Alexandria before leaving for India. I'm studying my lines for Oberon.

I can't wait to return to Armenia very soon and spend a longer period of time there. Perhaps directing an Armenian version of *The Dancer of Shemakha* would be a good first project.



Edwin Gérard in Armenia.

lic school system. The majority of university students have never heard a Beethoven Symphony, viewed Picasso's “Guernica,” or seen a Shakespeare play, or even heard of Homer, Dostoevsky, Dickens or Kafka. France, which once took pride in producing the most culturally literate high school graduates, now pays little or no attention to the humanities in their educational system.


I will always consider myself a teacher as well as an artist. But more as a gateway than an instructor. I simply want to open doors to young people to experience the arts, not impose a specific vision or philosophy on them. At this time in my life, I would like to focus my

out conscience, is the ruin of the soul.” The arts, philosophy, and the humanities instill conscience and cultural awareness, so schools need to continue teaching them.

Artsvi Bakhchinyan: Have you ever been involved in Armenian culture? Do you know Armenian art professionals working for Armenian culture?

Edwin Gérard: Unfortunately I never attended Armenian school. My parents were very worried that I would not learn English fast enough, so they avoided speaking to me in Armenian. They themselves arrived in California a few months before my birth and were struggling to improve their English themselves. I learned Armenian from my great-grandmother who spoke a mixture of Turkish and Armenian and who had no interest in mastering English. Whatever I learned about Armenian grammar and vocabulary I taught myself when I was in college.

As a result, I was never able to participate in Armenian cultural events, aside from music and dance and the Divine Liturgy. However, I've worked and collaborated with many Armenians in the Diaspora like Levon Parian, Knarig Boyajian, Gerald Papasian, Nora Armani, Kaaren Yeghiazarian, and Vardan Petrosyan. I once worked with a promising graphic designer / photographer named Levon Parian in Los Angeles, who did some amazing photos of “Twanglehouse.” In the early 1980s I had also won the Armenian Allied Arts Association first prize for poetry in English and was invited to read my work at their awards dinner. Perhaps it was there that I first met Knarig Boyajian, an Armenian mystic poetess from Baghdad, and felt she was truly a kindred spirit. Later she asked me to recite her poetry in English at a banquet organized to honor her work. We had an Armenian mime in the LA Experimental Theatre named Kaaren Yeghiazarian, who was



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COMMUNITY NEWS

Rohingya Testimonies Added to Visual History Archive at USC Shoah Foundation

LOS ANGELES — For Rohingya villager Shafika Begum, life in Myanmar was isolating but for the most part peaceful until 2012.

That's when the Myanmar military of the Buddhist-majority began making regular sweeps through her village. The soldiers demanded resources from the Muslim-minority Rohingya; about once a month, they would come to Begum's father's farm to collect a chicken.

Catastrophe struck the village, Tula Toli, on August 30 of 2017. As part of a coordinated attack across the Rakhine State that had begun a few days prior, the Myanmar Army and local collaborators burned down dwellings and unleashed a massacre, gunning down Begum's husband, father-in-law and younger sister as they were trying to flee.

This is the account Begum, 20, gave to the University of Southern California (USC) Shoah Foundation from a refugee camp in Bangladesh. Filmed in March, her interview is among 11 Rohingya testimonies added in late August to the Visual History Archive.

The integration of the new collection means the Archive now represents nine genocidal events: the Holocaust, the Armenian Genocide during World War I, the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, the 1937 Nanjing Massacre in China, the Guatemalan Genocide of the early 1980s, the Cambodian Genocide of the 1970s, the ongoing South Sudan Civil War, the Central Africa Republic conflict of 2012, and anti-Rohingya Mass Violence of 2017.

The Rohingya interviews — excerpts of which were aired by CNN on August 24 as part of a partnership with the institute — were among 88 new testimonies to go live on August 26. The update brings the total number of testimonies in the Archive to 54,534.

Twenty-seven testimonies were added to the



Rohingya villagers escaping Rakhine in Myanmar (New York Times photo)

new Countering Antisemitism collection; most are in French. This category now includes 42 personal stories of witnesses to contemporary antisemitism for a program that integrates the testimonies into outreach, education and research programs to help counter antisemitism today.

Two new testimonies were added to the Rwanda collection, bringing the total to 86. They include the five-and-a-half hour testimony of Consolée Nishimwe, who lost her father and three brothers in the genocide against the Tutsi when she was 14.

One testimony was added to the Institute's South Sudan Civil War collection, bringing the total to five.

Forty-seven of the new testimonies pertain to the Holocaust; the majority are Jewish survivors. The bulk of these were recorded by three other organizations — Jewish Family and Children's Services, Montreal Holocaust Museum, and the Museum of Jewish Heritage in New York City. The interviews have been preserved, indexed and archived by USC Shoah Foundation under the Preserving the Legacy initiative. Eight new

Holocaust testimonies were recorded by USC Shoah Foundation.

To access the full Archive, users must be on the premises of one of the 138 subscribing institutions worldwide. But anyone with internet access can view a limited number of testimonies on the online version of the Archive, provided they register for free at <http://vhaonline.usc.edu/login>.

Since the last update in July of 2017, the Institute has also added nearly 160 indexing terms to the Archive's search function.

Sitting Down for Closer Relations Between Chicago and Yerevan

CHICAGO — Chicago's budding friendship with Armenia's capital city, Yerevan, took a step forward on September 9, during a special ceremony in Connor Park.

The busy corner, just off Chicago's Michigan Avenue, was the setting for the unveiling of six park benches, donated by local Armenians, proclaiming the enduring partnership between the two cities. The benches share a "family resemblance" with ones familiar throughout Yerevan, and make for a cozy resting place amid Connor Park's beautiful landscaping and surrounding architecture.

The honorary consul for the Republic of Armenia in Chicago, Oscar Tatossian, welcomed the crowd to the dedication ceremony, which included formal speeches by dignitaries and a performance by youthful Armenian folk dancers.



Honorary Consul for the Republic of Armenia in Chicago, Oscar Tatossian with family and friends





Arts & Living

Society for Armenian Studies to Hold Conference on First Armenian Republic

SAN ANTONIO, Texas — An international conference, “Innovative Approaches to the History of the First Republic of Armenian, 1918-1920” will take place from noon to 3 p.m. on Thursday, November 15, here. The conference, co-sponsored by the Society for Armenian Studies (SAS) and the Armenian Communities Department of the Gulbenkian Foundation, will be held in the Travis D (3) room of the Grand Hyatt San Antonio in conjunction with the Middle East Studies Association 52nd Annual Meeting to take place at the same hotel November 15-18.

The conference will consist of two sessions and is open to the public. SAS President Bedross Der Matossian (University of Nebraska, Lincoln) will deliver the opening remarks. The first session, chaired by Tsolin Nalbantian (Leiden University), is titled “The First Republic in the International



Tsolin Nalbantian

Context.” It consists of three papers: George Bournoutian (Iona College) “The Territorial Demands of the Armenian Republic: Reality versus Naiveté”; Vartan Matiossian (Armenian National Education Committee, New York) “The Recognition of the First Republic of Armenia in South America (1918-1920)”; and Ari Sekeryan (University of Oxford) “Rethinking the Establishment of the First Republic of Armenia: Reactions of the Ottoman-Turkish and Armenian Press in Istanbul.”

The second session, chaired by Barlow Der Mugrdchian (California State University, Fresno), is titled “Gender, Personalities, and Culture during the First Republic.” It consists of four papers: Seda D. Ohanian (National Academy of Science of Armenia) “Armenian Women in the Parliament of the First Republic (1918-1920)”; Jakub Osiecki (Jagiellonian University in Krakow) “The Trip of Apostolic Visitor Rev. Antonio Delpuche to Yerevan as the Attempt to Establish Diplomatic Relations between the Republic of Armenia and the Vatican”; Khatchig Mouradian (Columbia University) “Becoming Aram: The Legacy of a Revolutionary Statesman”; and Khoren Grigoryan (Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography of the National Academy of Sciences of Armenia) “Banknotes of the First Republic of Armenia: 1918-1920”.

Richard G. Hovannisian (UCLA and Chapman University) will deliver the concluding remarks.

Scholars will deliver a dozen other Armenian-themed papers during the course of the MESA conference, November 15-18.

For a full program of their sessions, visit the MESA website at <https://mesana.org/pdf/18-preliminary-program-9-12.pdf>

The Society for Armenian Studies represents scholars and teachers in the field of Armenian Studies. It publishes the peer-reviewed Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies, available on its website: societyforarmenianstudies.com.

For more information about the Society, contact Der Matossian at bdermatossian2@unl.edu.

All sessions are free and open to the public. No registration is required.



A scene from Yerevan Opera's production of “Carmen”

Orbelian Brings Talent To Yerevan Opera, Takes it on Tour

YEREVAN — In 2016, when Constantine Orbelian received the call from Armenia asking him to become artistic director of the Yerevan Opera House, no one could have imagined that epic changes were on the horizon. Two years on

By Natalie Teperdjian

and under the guidance of Orbelian, this landmark institution has begun to write a new chapter in its history and embarked on its first international tour in 25 years. (See <https://mirrorspectator.com/2017/06/08/constantine-orbelian-back-in-the-sort-of-ussr/>)

For 85 years the Armenian National Opera and Orchestra has played an iconic role in the Armenian narrative. Historically significant opera, ballet, orchestral, dance and other creative performances have been brought to life, and its building in the heart of Yerevan serves as the epicentre of the city's vibrant street and even political culture. But despite all this, in the last 17 years the Opera has only produced 8 new opera productions, 4 of which never made it far beyond the opening night. Financial constraints, lack of support and political unrest all contributed to this dearth of productivity. But the arrival of Orbelian has started to change all this.

In his brief time with the Opera, Orbelian, an internationally acclaimed pianist and conductor, has injected new life into the Opera. “I came here to support a national treasure,” said Orbelian. “We have so much untapped potential within the Opera and across Armenia. Before the end of the year we will have 6 new opera and ballet productions on stage, more than was launched in the last 17 years combined.”

This new vitality has already manifested significant results with the Opera embarking on its first international tour in almost 25 years. Masterfully bringing to life Bizet's “Carmen” and Mozart's “The Magic Flute” to packed audiences at the beautiful and acoustically excellent Dubai Opera House in the UAE who were witnessing the first-ever performance of either in the country. Two hundred performers, Tech crew, a costume team, full orchestra, Opera chorus, children's chorus, conductor and directors travelled from Yerevan to Dubai.

Later this month the Opera will continue its international tour when they open the new Kuwait Opera House located on the compounds of The Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center with the new production of the Magic Flute and orchestral selections marking a significant first for both the Opera and Kuwait. The Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center, informally known as the Kuwait Opera House, is a prominent cultural center in Kuwait, located on the Gulf Road in the capital Kuwait City. It is the largest cultural center and opera house in the Middle East.

see ORBELIAN, page 17

Tigran Hamasyan Concert at UCLA To Benefit Children of Armenia Fund

LOS ANGELES — The University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) Center for the Art of Performance (CAP UCLA) announces the return of pianist and composer Tigran Hamasyan in a solo performance featuring works from his latest album, “For Gyumri,” to benefit the Children of Armenia Fund (COAF) on Sunday, October 14 at 5 p.m. at Royce Hall.

Considered one of the most remarkable and distinctive jazz-meets-rock pianists of his generation, Hamasyan fuses potent jazz improvisation with the rich folkloric music of his native Armenia.

A companion to last year's “An Ancient Observer,” “For Gyumri” (February 2018, Nonesuch) is dedicated to his hometown of Gyumri, where he was born in 1987 before relocating with his family to Los Angeles in 2003. He currently resides in Yerevan.

Hamasyan describes the songs as “musical observations about the world we live in now, and the weight of history we carry with us.” *All About Jazz* hailed “For Gyumri” as “a loving tribute to his home city” and *The Guardian* raved, “he's the hottest pianist in jazz, and he likes to mix things up, whether it's bebop, thrash metal or dubstep. But his heart is in the folk music of his native land, Armenia.”

Hamasyan began playing piano at age 3 and won the 2003 Montreux Jazz Festival's piano competition at age 14. He released his debut album, “World Passion,” in 2005 and the following year won the prestigious Thelonious Monk International Jazz Piano Competition. In addition to awards and critical praise, Hamasyan has built a dedicated international following, as well as praise from Chick Corea, Herbie Hancock and Brad Mehldau.

Additional albums include “New Era” (2007); “Red Hail” (2009); “A Fable” (2011), for which he was awarded a Victoires de la Musique (the equivalent of a Grammy Award in France); “Shadow Theater” (2013); “Luys i Luso” (2015); and “Mockroot” (2015), for which he won the Echo Jazz Award for International Piano Instrumentalist of the Year.

Ten percent of ticket sales from this performance will be donated to COAF, an organization that has been using community-led, comprehensive approaches in reducing poverty in rural Armenia since 2003. Its strategic programs in education, healthcare, child and family services, community engagement and economic development help Armenian village youth access the resources to achieve and, in turn, give back to their communities and the world. The organization has dramatically improved the quality of life for 75,000 people in 44 villages over the past 15 years.

COAF SMART is the organization's newest initiative designed to jumpstart the advancement of rural communities by connecting them to the world by use of advanced communication and information technology. The first state-of-the-art COAF SMART Center opened its doors in northern Armenia in May of this year, offering 150,00 locals both project-based and action-based learning programs. COAF's board of directors cover all administrative costs, allowing 100 percent of donations to go toward funding programs. The organization has consistently secured the highest rating on Charity Navigator.

Tickets are available at cap.ucla.edu, Ticketmaster and the UCLA Central Ticket Office.



ARTS & LIVING

‘Crows of the Desert’ Focuses on Little-Known Hero of the Genocide

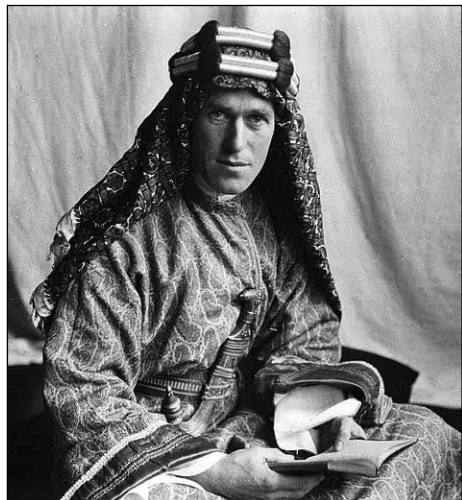
CROWS, from page 1

During a recent interview from her office in California, the veteran filmmaker recalled that while working with Paul G. Turpanjian, he gave her a copy of a relative's memoirs which related the story of Levon Yotnakhparian and his heroic exploits. It had been edited and published by his namesake grandson Levon Parian. Turpanjian went on to executive produce the documentary.

She said, “I read it and he goes, ‘do you think that we can make a film out of it?’”

She noted that the story was “remarkable. I decided to take it on. I was tired of doing commercials.”

Not only does the story have an Armenian hero, but it sheds light on the collaboration of a large number of Arab and Druze helpers that



T.E. Lawrence

came to the aid of the Armenians. And to top it off, the story features T.E. Lawrence, better known as Lawrence of Arabia.

She assumed that the project would take a couple of months, however, it turned into a labor of love of many years.

The harrowing subject, and the sheer amount of violence she read about and saw have taken their toll on Houske. “I am still recovering, quite frankly,” she said, noting that she spent a solid four years, starting in 2013 to work on the film.

Houske said that in general she loves the “time travel” aspect of delving into history.

As for this story, she said, “It is more important than ever that we learn from the past.”

She said, “It is a mess in the Middle East. It is heartbreaking that they have blown up cities,” like Palmira, Baghdad, Aleppo and Damascus.

“It is a horrible slaughter of innocent people,” she added. “This documentary is embedded with emotion. The first six months or so, as I started work on it, at times I would lay my head down on my desk and cry a bit, due to the overwhelming ‘terribleness’ of it all – the inhumanity and outrageous cruelty. (And I am not a weepy person by nature.) The horrible stories are literally ‘beyond belief’ and yet true. Most likely more than we can possibly imagine.”

Bringing the Story to the Masses

One of the main difficulties in creating documentaries about the Armenian Genocide is the scarcity of footage and the lost documents as a result of the interminable desert marches.

Houske successfully sought help from the Bibliotheque Nubar of the AGBU in Paris, and many other individuals and organizations.

For Houske, one of the most unbelievable aspects of the older Yotnakhparian's story, as well as the story of the Armenian Genocide, was that she had no idea about it.

“I could not believe I didn't know anything about the Armenian Genocide,” she said.

Yotnakhparian, when he survived, asked the leader of the Arabs, King Hussein Bin Ali, to help the Armenians. The shocked monarch complied and sent an edict ordering Arab tribesmen and soldiers to take care of the Armenians, telling them “to take care of them as you would our own.”

(This was the exact area where Lawrence was, near Aqaba, a port on the Red Sea that is now part of Jordan. The Arabs were also fighting against their Ottoman overlords, seeking independence. They were aided in their efforts by the British forces, in which Lawrence played a major role. In the aftermath of World War I, Syria and Jordan were established and Iraq, which Faisal became king of.)



Levon and the Armenian Expeditionary Rescue Group

The Armenians also received help from the Druze community, based in Jabal al-Druze, in what is now straddling the Syrian-Jordanian border. The Druze are Arabic speaking but not Muslims; their community is focused on their religion, which is a mixture of Islam, Greek philosophy and Hinduism.

“The Druze played a key role” in helping Armenians, Houske said. A Druze chieftain, allied with King Faisal, and close to Lawrence, Hussein al-Atrash, protected the refugees fleeing the Ottoman Turks.

Houske noted, “The refugees were in a war zone. World War I was still going on, especially Levon's particular areas of emphasis, south of Damascus, down to Aqaba and east to Jabal al Druze.”

The area is much further south than Aleppo, the stopping point of many survivors of the desert marches.

Praise from Garapedian

For some of the people trying to get the film made, having a non-Armenian filmmaker at the helm was a plus, since they hoped the story would reach those outside the community more readily.

Award-winning filmmaker Carla Garapedian had a lot of praise for “Crows” as well as Houske.

“‘Crows of the Desert,’ like many historical documentaries about the Armenian Genocide, relies on eyewitness testimony, documents, photographs and newsreel. Marta Houske goes a step further. She has taken the remarkable story of Levon Yotnakhparian and the Armenian Expeditionary Rescue Group, and created a dramatic film, all factually based, with all the detail one needs to immerse oneself into those difficult

She added, “There are also official documents in this film that have never been seen before. The Armenian Genocide period does not have a lot of moving pictures to document it. There is, however, some newsreel. Marta went through a lot of historical newsreel, looking for footage that could be relevant. The film recently won a prestigious award in London for its use of footage (FOCAL International Awards 2018). I collected the award for the team because I was there in London and happy to support the film. It deserves that recognition.”

Garapedian also added that she thought Houske's background was an asset.

“I think Marta would not take ‘no’ for an answer when she was told some of the footage or documents she was looking for wasn't available. Sure, an Armenian would go the distance, too – but Marta had a particular determination, based on her experience working on other films and subjects. It is her determination that makes this film work, I believe. I also think she was willing to dramatize the subject in a way some Armenians might shy away from. How do we get people to identify with a man like Levon? How do we get them to empathize? She approached that problem from a non-Armenian perspective which, I think, brought something special to the film.”

A Unique Hero

The efforts of Yotnakhparian are astounding to Houske.

“He was incredibly brave,” she said. “Levon had gone through the slaughter. Most of his family was killed. He was a master tailor [for the Ottoman army] and they kept using him. He

correspondence with the AGBU.

“For Levon it was very important that the memoirs be published. He wanted the Arabs to be acknowledged for what they had done to help Armenians,” Houske said.

Eventually, after the Genocide, he became a hospital director in Damascus. However, his work was not done. The local archbishop convinced him to reconstitute the expedition group to go back into the desert and gather the orphans left in the desert.

And he agreed.

“He went door to door, finding Armenian children,” Houske said. The members of the group would say an Armenian phrase and see if any of the children recognized the phrase.

The Arab leadership announced that all Armenian women and children living with Arab families should be handed over to the Armenian searchers.

In yet another miraculous coincidence, one of the orphans found was Levon's brother.

And Leonard Nimoy

Houske worked for many years with the late, great Leonard Nimoy, known to many as “Mr. Spock” from “Star Trek,” on his series, “In Search of,” an assignment she recalls as being “one of the most fun jobs” she ever had. As for Nimoy, she calls him “a very nice man; intelligent, compassionate, polite, very artistic, very decent.”

Her “Star Trek” credentials run even deeper, as she was a close friend of the show's creator, Gene Roddenberry. And to tie the whole thing together, Roddenberry seemed to be aware of what had happened to the Armenians. In the



From Left, Marta Houske, Paul Turpanjian, Dr. Vahram Shemmassian and Dr. Carla Garapedian

times – down to the howling wind, sand storms and marauding animals. It is a very dramatic story, dramatically told. She also tells the Jordanian part of the story. Jordan's role during the genocide tends to be forgotten or discarded. Many Armenians were, in fact, helped by Arabs in Syria and Jordan. I met Marta through the Armenian Film Foundation, founded by the late J. Michael Hagopian. Michael Hagopian interviewed many Arabs who helped Armenians during the genocide. Some clips from those survivors are in this film.”

returned from a job and asked where all the Armenians [serving in the army] had gone to.”

The unsatisfactory answer he received was that they had all been moved to another barracks overnight. Of course, that was not true; the Armenians soldiers were systematically separated and killed.

The story of what he saw and what he endured live thanks to his dictating his memoirs to his wife, Vartuhi. In addition, he kept every scrap of documentation that he could, including letters from King Faisal, transportation documents and

episode “Errand of Mercy” from season 1 of the show, Captain James T. Kirk, on a rescue mission, compares the massacre to the fate of the people of “Armenia and Belgium,” “the weak innocents who always seem to be located on the natural invasion routes.”

After the showing of the “Crows of the Desert” on October 7 at 4:30 p.m., Levon Parian, the grandson of the film's subject, will be available for a question-and-answer session. In addition, Parian's photographs will be on exhibit at the Mosesian Center's lobby.

Christina Maranci to Present New Book on *Art of Armenia* at Tufts

MEDFORD, Mass. — Prof. Christina Maranci of Tufts University will present her newly published book, *The Art of Armenia: An Introduction* (Oxford University Press) at the Tufts Alumnae Lounge, 40 Talbot Ave, Medford, on Thursday, October 4, at 7:30 p.m. The program is the first Annual Prof. Charles B. Garabedian Lecture and is sponsored by the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR), the Darakjian Jafarian Chair in Armenian History, and the Tufts Armenian Club.

Armenia has a material history and visual culture that reaches back to the Paleolithic era. *The Art of Armenia* provides a survey of the arts of Armenia from antiquity to the early modern times. It covers a range of media, including architecture, stone sculpture, works in metal, wood, and cloth, manuscript illumination, and ceramic arts, and places Armenian art within broad historical, archeological, and cultural contexts. *The Art of Armenia* offers students, scholars and heritage readers of the Armenian community a complete and authoritative introduction to 3,000 years of Armenian art, archeology, architecture and design.

Maranci is Arthur H. Dadian and Ara T. Oztemel Professor of Armenian Art and serves as chair of the Department of Art and Art History at Tufts University, as well as an academic advisor to the Armenian Museum of America and to NAASR. She has published and lectured widely, having authored three previous monographs and more than 70 essays, articles and reviews, including the books *Medieval Armenian Architecture: Constructions of Race and Nation* (2001) and *Vigilant Powers: Three Churches of Early Medieval Armenia* (2015). For the latter work, in 2016, she received from NAASR the Dr. Sona Aronian Book Prize for Excellence in Armenian Studies. Her work combines scholarship on the history of Armenian art and architecture with advocacy for at-risk Armenian heritage, particularly medieval monuments in the Republic of Turkey.

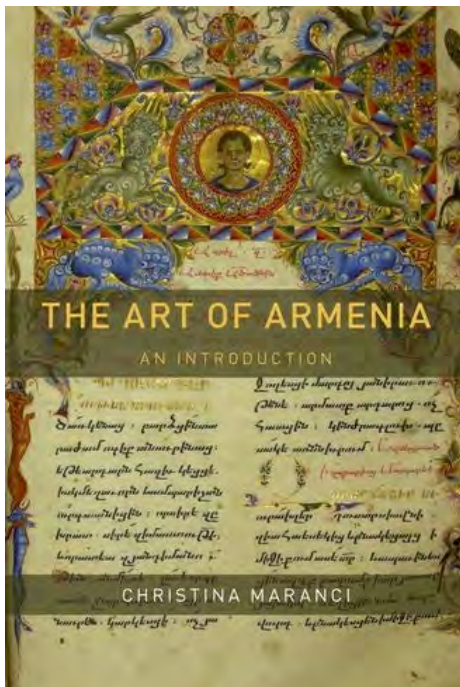


Prof. Christina Maranci

Garabedian (1917-1991) was born in Everett, Mass., and graduated magna cum laude from Everett High School and Tufts University (A.B. English and history). He attended Harvard Law School and graduated magna cum laude from Boston University Law School. During World War II, he served in the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), and in the late 1940s he began his teaching career at Suffolk University Law School. His expertise was tort litigation and damages,

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Cover of *The Art of Armenia*

courses which he continuously taught at Suffolk University Law School for over 40 years. At the time of his death, Garabedian was the senior faculty professor at Suffolk University Law School. The annual lecture in his memory has been established at NAASR by Garabedian's niece, NAASR Board Member Joan E. Kolligian.

This event is free and open to the public. A reception and refreshments will immediately follow the program and question-and-answer session.



Recipe Corner

Guest Recipe

by Christine Vartanian Dadian

Belgian Endive with Roquefort, Walnuts & Cranberries

By David Vartanian of the Vintage Press Restaurant, named one of America's Best Chefs*

This salad with crunchy walnuts is for real blue cheese lovers. Pair with a grilled steak or lamb chops and boiled baby red skin potatoes for a classic steak house meal.

ROQUEFORT DRESSING

INGREDIENTS

- 1/4 cup Roquefort cheese
- 3/4 cup mayonnaise
- 1/3 cup buttermilk
- 2 limes, juice of
- 1/2 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1/8 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1 tablespoon red wine vinegar
- Pinch black pepper

PREPARATION

1. Melt Roquefort cheese in the oven or in a pan on top of the stove, being very careful not to scorch. Let cool.
2. In a bowl, combine the melted cheese, mayonnaise, buttermilk, juice of two limes, Worcestershire Sauce, cayenne, red wine vinegar, and black pepper; mix well until all ingredients are combined. If desired, add an additional 2 ounces of Roquefort cheese for an even more intense flavor.

SALAD

INGREDIENTS

- 4 heads Belgian endive
- 1/4 cup cranberries, dried
- 1/2 cup California walnuts, coarsely chopped
- 4 ounces Roquefort cheese, crumbled
- 1/2 cup Roquefort dressing, prepared

PREPARATION

1. Trim the base of the endive using a diagonal cut, then separate the leaves.
2. Toss the cranberries, nuts and Roquefort together in a bowl, being careful not to break up the Roquefort too much.
3. Spoon the mixture into the endive leaves and garnish with the watercress. For advance preparation: Fill the Belgian endive leaves up to three hours before, cover and chill. Garnish just before serving. Drizzle with Roquefort Salad Dressing, as desired.



Chef David Vartanian is the award winning manager and chef at the Vintage Press Restaurant*

The Vintage Press Restaurant in Visalia, CA is renowned for its outstanding food and service. Owned and operated by the Vartanian family since 1966, critics believe this is the best restaurant in the Sequoia region and a true fine-dining experience, with white tablecloths, plush red leather banquettes and exceptional service. The Vintage Press Restaurant serves classic beef, lamb, seafood and specialty dishes. The menu encompasses a wide range of influences, meaning you could order the excellent lamb kebobs while your companion feasts on chile relleno. Classic American dishes are quite well done, especially the restaurant's famed filet mignon. The wine list is similarly superlative.

Wine Spectator magazine said the restaurant has "one of the best restaurant wine lists in the world," while the Los Angeles Times called the restaurant "...a bastion of culinary merit."

Frommer's.com says the Vintage Press Restaurant is "the best restaurant between San Francisco and Los Angeles." Read what Frommer's has to say about the Vintage Press Restaurant: <https://www.frommers.com/destinations/sequoia-and-kings-canyon-national-parks/restaurants/vintage-press>

If you are in Visalia, visit the Vintage Press Restaurant, 216 N. Willis St. Visalia, CA 93291, <http://www.thevintagepress.com/>

See: <http://www.visalialifestyle.com/guest-chef-series-a-taste-of-armenia/>
See: <https://walnuts.org/recipe/belgian-endive-with-roquefort-walnuts-cranberries/>



ARTS & LIVING

TEKEYAN CULTURAL ASSOCIATION
MIHER MEGERDCHIAN THEATRICAL GROUP

20th Anniversary Banquet

20

CELEBRATING
20 YEARS
OF THEATER

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 2018 - 7:00PM

The Palisadium
700 Palisadium Drive, Cliffside Park, NJ 07010

Special Entertainment by
KRIKOR SATAMIAN

Master of Ceremonies
GERALD PAPASIAN

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TAMAR HOVHANNISIAN - Armenia | GAGIK KARAPETYAN - Armenia | GERALD PAPASIAN - France
KRIKOR SATAMIAN - California | HOVHANNES BABAKHANYAN - California
VARTAN GARNIKI - New Jersey | HAROUT CHATMAJIAN - New Jersey

*Special musical performance by **HOVHANNES BABAKHANYAN***

Donation: \$150pp

For more information and tickets please contact
MARIE ZOKIAN 201-745-8850 / TALAR SARAFIAN 201-240-8541



Artur Makaryan

From New York to Paris, from Armenia to New York

By Lilit Petrosyan

NEW YORK – Artur Makaryan is an emerging New York City-based Armenian theatre and opera director, and a recent graduate of the Columbia Graduate School of the Arts and Juilliard Opera Directing Fellowship. He has worked all over the world, under the tutelage of Ann Bogart, Stephen Wadsworth and Tadashi Suzuki, among others. He is currently busy putting the finishing touches before he takes off for Europe to present his latest endeavors to the international theatrical stage, “HamletMachine” and “Black Garden.”

Why did you decide to take on producing such an incredibly complex play as “HamletMachine”?

I’ve been longing to resume working with Armenian actors, and last summer, when I was visiting Armenia, I got together with an incredibly talented actor, Narek Baghdasaryan and immediately offered him to take part in the play. It is a solo performance, one-person show, a lot of which requires intense physical performance and not so much speaking.

Within very short timelines and with the support of Luys Foundation and AGBU, we produced a play that has all credentials to be called a contemporary art, a genre that is still not very popular in Armenia. My team and I wanted to experiment and see what we can achieve in that field.

What’s the main message of the play that you want to convey to your audience?

When we say Hamlet, we think of Shakespeare and lengthy elaborate monologues. In this case we have an adaptation of Shakespeare’s “Hamlet” and Henrikh Muller’s “HamletMachine.” It’s a play, which essentially is Hamlet’s visit to a psychotherapist, where Hamlet is in an emotional turmoil trying to reevaluate, justify and understand the motives of people who he kills in Shakespeare’s play. “Hamlet” is presented as a utilitarian who adheres to maximize the good and produce the best consequences possible despite all the circumstances present. This is in direct contrast to Kant’s moral philosophy where all actions are performed in accordance with some underlying principle and duty rather than emotions or end goals.

A lot of times, within the Armenian reality as well, the matter of pride and revenge is placed above the ramifications which sometimes can be catastrophic. Diplomacy, fair judgment and the ability to see the bigger picture are the core messages of the play.

What festivals have you presented “HamletMachine” so far?

The play was presented in Armmono International Festival in Yerevan. Later this year, we have performances in Lithuania, Moldova and New York. In New York, we’ll be playing at Theatre Row on 42nd Street famous district as part of the United Solo Theatre Festival, the world’s largest solo theatre festival in October 24.

It seems like the message of diplomacy, tolerance, self-criticism and self-reflection runs as a thread through the other play of yours, “Black Garden.” Why is that so important to you?

“Black Garden” is inspired by the historical events in Nagorno-Karabakh where over 30,000 soldiers were killed between 1988-1994. It is a theatrical collage that portrays the distressing extent of an Armenian woman’s trauma who is haunted by the memories of a lost lover.

We’ve created the play with an intention to launch a dialogue towards peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan, countries that have been unable to resolve a conflict over the disputed territory for decades. As an Armenian, I have never met an Azeri in my life, yet we are presumed enemies. With this play, we try to bring awareness of the conflict to an international stage and create a platform for a dialogue.

It’s interesting to note that the author of “Black Garden,” a play about the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, a topic which is so incredibly Armenian, is American. How did this happen?

The author of “Black Garden” is Gordon Penn, an American playwright who I met during my studies at the Columbia University. Until recently, Gordon knew only the briefest about Armenia. It was until he was managing actors in Los Angeles, where he happened to live in the part of Hollywood called Little Armenia that things changed. Moreover, we have quite an international team working on this two-hander play, Tamara Sevunts, a Canadian-Armenian actress from Montreal and Alex Marz, an American actor.

With the new political reality in Armenia, what are your immediate plans with Armenia?

I know one thing for a fact – you can never sit and wait for someone to give you an opportunity. You should come up with your own opportunities, and the new realities in Armenia motivate you to do so. Currently I am thinking about new projects and I would love to work with the National Theatre of Armenia and the National Opera and Ballet Theatre as the new directions are extremely progressive and supportive of producing new plays and operas. I’d love to have an input into the development of the Armenian theatre.

Additionally, I’ve been thinking about starting an English-speaking performance series in Armenia which would not only make the international language more scalable across the country, bring the tourists to see Armenian theatre but will also give an opportunity to perform plays in their original language. As part of that project, I am also trying to launch a play translation project to translate Armenian plays into English. This will multiply our chances to be presented on the international stage and make our message more accessible and relatable.

Հայաստանի Թեքեյան Մշակութային Միությունը սիրով հրավիրում է Ձեզ մասնակցելու գրականագետ Երվանդ Ազատյանի հեղինակած «ԺԱՄԱՆԱԿԻ ԵՒ ԺԱՄԱՆԱԿԱԿԻՑՆԵՐՈՒ ՀԵՏ» գրքի շնորհանդեսին,

որը տեղի կունենա 2018 թվականի սեպտեմբերի 19-ին ժամը 15:00-ին Թեքեյան Կենտրոնի մեծ դահլիճում (Խանջյան 50):

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ARTS & LIVING

C A L E N D A R

FLORIDA

JANUARY 20-27, 2019 — Armenian Heritage Cruise XXII 2019. Western Caribbean Cruise aboard the Royal Caribbean’s Allure of the Sea. Traveling to Nassau, Cozumel, Roatan, Costa Maya. Cabin Rates, starting from \$949/person based on double occupancy, including port charges and ACAA registration fee. Government rates of \$137.45 are additional. Armenian entainment, Armenian cultural presentations, Armenian Festival Day, Tavlou and Belote Tournaments and much more. Call Travel Group International at 1-561-447-08750 or 1-866-447-0750 ext. 108, contact person Janie.

CALIFORNIA

SEPTEMBER 28 — Tekeyan Cultural Association Los Angeles chapter will host a literary presentation titled “William Saroyan at 110: The Man and the Writer,” featuring speaker Prof. Osheen Keshishian. Followed by artistic program. Friday, 7.30 pm. Glendale Central Library, 22 E. Harvard St., Glendale.

OCTOBER 14 — Pianist and composer Tigran Hamasyan, Sunday, at 5 p.m., Royce Hall,, UCLA 10745 Dickson Court, Los Angeles. Hamasyan, considered one of the most remarkable and distinctive jazz-meets-rock pianists of his generation, fuses potent improvisation with the rich folkloric music of his native Armenia. Featuring works from his latest album, For Gyumri, the solo concert will benefit the Children of Armenia Fund. Tickets: Single tickets: \$29–\$59. Online: cap.ucla.edu. UCLA Central Ticket Office: 310-825-2101, Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Royce Hall box office: open 90 minutes prior to the event start time.

NOVEMBER 17 — Join the Armenian EyeCare Project for its Annual Gala at the beautiful Balboa Bay Resort in Newport Beach, CA. The fun-filled evening will begin at 6:30pm with a cocktail hour and silent auction followed by a delicious Mediterranean-inspired meal, live music and dance entertainment, and an exciting live auction. Tickets are \$500 per person and for those 35 and under, \$250 per person. To RSVP or for more information, please call 949-933-4069, email leslie@eyecareproject.com or visit eyecareproject.com/gala

MASSACHUSETTS

SEPTEMBER 29 — Armenian Children’s Singer Joelle, from Montreal, will perform on Saturday at 4 pm. At the Armenian Cultural and Educational Foundation, Hovnanian Hall, 47 Nichols Ave., Watertown. Tickets \$20 per person, children 2 and under free. Organized by St. Stephen’s Armenian Elementary School PTO. For tickets, event@ssaes.org or 617-926-6979.

SEPTEMBER 29 — The 7th Annual Benefit Dance to benefit Syrian Armenian Relief and Fund for Armenian Relief. Saturday, Armenian Church of Our Saviour, Cultural Center, 34 Boynton St., Worcester. Dance to the music and vocals of the Mugrditchian Ensemble with local favorites Mark Der Mugrditchian, Kevin Magarian, Arthur Chingris, with special guest artists Greg Krikorian and George Reghellis. Sponsored by the Armenian Churches of Worcester County: Holy Trinity Armenian Apostolic Church, Armenian Church of Our Saviour, Armenian Church of the Martyrs, Soorp Asdvadzadzin Armenian Apostolic Church. Doors Open at 7.30 p.m. For tickets, reservations or information contact Jay Kapur (508) 740-4464, Eva Kopoyan (508) 757-6195, Magdy Faltaous (508) 278-3805 or Donna Barsamian (508) 769-3279. Donation \$35 in advance, \$45 at the door. Deluxe Mezze, coffee and dessert, with cash bar.

SEPTEMBER 30 —Holy Trinity Armenian Church welcomes Susan Osman, television and radio anchor and host, including almost 20 years with the BBC. Author and screenwriter. 12.15 p.m. in Johnson Hall, Holy Trinity Armenian Church, 145 Brattle St., Cambridge. Her talk, “I Heard God Laughing” Hafiz will address how God often has different plans for us than we have for ourselves. For more information, contact the church office at 617-354-0632 or email office@htaac.org.

OCTOBER 1 — “What Attracted HFB Lynch to Armenia? Origins and Influences,” public lecture by Christopher Young, Crown Court Judge (retired), England. Boston University Modern Armenian History and Literature Lecture Series, organized by the Charles K. and Elisabeth M. Kenosian Chair in Modern Armenian

History and Literature. Lynch was the author of a two-volume magnum opus, Armenia: Travels and Studies, in 1901, the final product of his extensive journeys and research in the historic Armenian lands in the Ottoman and Russian Empires. Monday, 7 p.m. Center for Integrated Life Sciences and Engineering, Colloquium Room 101/106A, 610 Commonwealth Ave., Boston University, Boston. Open to the public. Free admission. Reception to follow.

OCTOBER 1 — St James Men’s Club Family Night Dinner Meeting - social hour, and mezza at 6:15 p.m. and dinner at 7 p.m., St James Armenian Church Charles Mosesian Cultural and Youth Center - Keljik Hall, 465 Mt. Auburn Street, Watertown, MA. On Monday, October 1, 2018 there will be a St James Armenian Church Men’s Club Family Night dinner meeting. In addition to our regular members and attendees, we invite wives and children, who are teenagers and older. The speaker will be Alex Cohen, marketing representative for Costco Wholesale. His presentation title will be “The Costco Story”. Mezza and Losh Kebab & Kheyima Dinner \$16/person. For additional information call the St James Church office at 617-923-8860 or call Hapet Berberian at 781-367-6598

OCTOBER 7 — “CROWS OF THE DESERT: A Hero’s Journey through the Armenian Genocide,” Film by Marta Houske. Sunday, 4.30 p.m. A documentary based on the Memoirs of Levon Yotnakhparian, a brave man’s struggle to not only stay alive, but to help save his fellow Armenian survivors from near extinction in the 20th Century’s first genocide. Screening of the film (62 min) followed by a Q&A (45 min). This film contains depictions of carnage and difficult situations. Parental discretion advised. General Admission \$15. Students with valid ID and Seniors (over 65) \$10 Group of 4 \$12 per (use promo code: CROWS4) Group of 10 \$10 per (use promo code: CROWS10) Group of 20 \$8 per (use promo code: CROWS20). Mosesian Center for the Arts, Watertown, Arsenal Center.

OCTOBER 12-13 — St. James 71st Annual Bazaar. Delicious Armenian Food and Pastries. Silent Auction, Attic Treasures, Booths and Vendors. Raffles, Children’s Activities, and more. Details to follow. St. James Armenian Church, 465 Mt. Auburn St., Watertown. For more information contact 617.923.8860 or info@stthagop.com or visit www.stjameswatertown.org.

OCTOBER 19 — The Armenian Museum of America will embark on a bus trip to The Metropolitan Museum of Art on Friday to see their new exhibition “Armenia!,” which explores the arts and culture of Armenians from the 4th-17th centuries. Two illuminated manuscripts from the Armenian Museum’s collection will be among the incredible objects on display. Tickets are \$175 and for members only. The bus will leave Watertown at 7 am, and tickets include round-trip transportation to The Met on a coach bus with WiFi and restrooms, admission to The Met, an Armenian continental breakfast on the bus, and a guided interpretative tour from Christina Maranci, PhD, Professor of Armenian Art and Architecture. The group will leave The Met at 6 p.m., and an evening snack will be provided on the bus before arriving back in Watertown around 10 pm. For more information or to purchase tickets, visit www.armenianmuseum.org or call 617.926.2562, ext. 4.

OCTOBER 20 – Hye Kef 5: Onnik Dinkjian Performs at DoubleTree by Hilton in Andover, MA, with Ara Dinkjian and local ensemble, for Armenian Friends of America, 7 pm to midnight. All proceeds benefit the Armenian churches of the Merrimack Valley. For tickets: John Arzigian – 603-560-3826; Lucy Sirmaian – 978-683-9121; Peter Gulezian – 978-375-1616; Sharke Der Apkarian – 978-808-0598; Kathy Geyer 978-475-8309.

OCTOBER 21 — 5th Annual Trinity Tailgate, New England Patriots vs. Chicago Bears, sponsored by the Trinity Men’s Union of Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston, 12:15 p.m., Sunday, Charles and Nevart Talanian Cultural Hall, 145 Brattle Street, Cambridge. All are invited to a tailgate party to watch the game, 1 p.m. kick-off, on a 12 foot high-definition screen. Lots of food, beverages and snacks. For further information, call the Holy Trinity Church Office, 617.354.0632 or email office@htaac.org.

OCTOBER 28 — Reception Celebrating the 57th Anniversary of Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston and Honoring Parishioners of the Year Nancy D. Kasarjian and Carol Krikorian on their Retirement, following Church Services, Charles and

Nevart Talanian Cultural Hall, 145 Brattle Street, Cambridge MA. Save the date; details to follow. For further information, call the Holy Trinity Church Office, 617.354.0632, or email office@htaac.org.

NOVEMBER 4 — Celebrating the Life and Work of Diana Der Hovanessian, Organized by the Armenian Cultural Foundation and co-sponsored by Amaras Art Alliance, Armenian General Benevolent Union - New England affiliate, Armenian International Women’s Association, Armenian Museum of America, The Friends of the Longfellow House, Hamazkaine Armenian Educational and Cultural Society - Boston, National Association for Armenian Studies and Research, New England Poetry Club, and Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada. Sunday, 3 p.m. Armenian Cultural Foundation (441 Mystic Street, Arlington). Admission free and open to the public.

NOVEMBER 14 — Najarian Lecture on Human Rights at Historic Faneuil Hall, Boston. Wednesday. Doors open at 6.45. Program at 7.30 p.m. “INCARCERATION Untangling the web of injustice.” Speakers: Secretary Andrea J. Cabral, former Massachusetts Secretary of Public Safety, Author, Enforcing and Defending Chapter 209A Restraining Orders in Massachusetts; Marc A. Levin, Esq, Vice President of Criminal Justice, Texas Public Policy Foundation and Right on Crime; Founder, Foundation’s Criminal Justice Program Moderator: Sheriff Peter J. Koutoujian. 30th Sheriff of Middlesex County. President, Massachusetts Sheriffs’ Association. Founding Member, Law Enforcement Leaders to Reduce Crime & Incarceration. Reception follows at the Bostonian Hotel. An endowed public program of Armenian Heritage Park on the Greenway. Advance Registration is appreciated. hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org

NOVEMBER 30 and DECEMBER 1 — Trinity Christmas Bazaar, Friday, 12 noon-9 p.m., Saturday, 10 a.m.-7 p.m.; Holy Trinity Armenian Church, 145 Brattle Street, Cambridge MA. Save the date; details to follow. For further information, contact the Church office, 617.354.0632 or email office@htaac.org.

DECEMBER 9 — Christmas Holiday Concert – Erevan Choral Society and Orchestra, 7 p.m., Church Sanctuary, Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston, 145 Brattle St., Cambridge. Save the date; details to follow. For further information, call the Church office, 617.354.0632 or email office@htaac.org.

DECEMBER 16 – Candlelit Labyrinth Peace Walk, Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston, Sunday, 4:30-5:30 p.m., Walk the Candlelit Labyrinth. Tie a Ribbon on the Wishing Tree. Hot Chocolate & Desserts, hosted by The Bostonian Hotel. RSVP appreciated hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org

SEPTEMBER 18, 2019 – SAVE THE DATE! InterContinental Hotel, Boston. Extraordinary Benefit for Armenian Heritage Park’s Endowed Fund for Care.

NEW JERSEY

SEPTEMBER 29 – TCA Mher Megerdchian Theatrical Group 20th Anniversary Banquet Celebrating 20 Years of Theater at 7 pm. at the Palisadium, 700 Palisadium Dr. Cliffside Park, NJ. Featuring Special Entertainment by Krikor Satamian. Master of Ceremonies Gerald Papasian. Presentations by past and present MMTG Directors. Special Musical Performance by Hovhannes Babakhanyan. Donation: \$150 pp. For more information and tickets please call, Marie Zokian (201) 745-8850, Talar Sarafian 201-240-8541.

SEPTEMBER 30 — Armenia Fund USA and Ardzagang Armenian TV are proud to present Artash Asatryan and Band, guest singer Grisha Asatryan, from Armenia on Sunday, 4 p.m. Don’t miss the performance by the son and grandson of the legendary Armenian singer Aram Asatryan! Proceeds will benefit Fruitful Artsakh Project. Location: Bergen PAC, 30 N. Van Brunt St, Englewood, NJ. Tickets: \$50, \$70, \$90. Please call Box Office 201-227-1030 or visit www.bergenPAC.org

NEW YORK

SEPTEMBER 22 - January 13, 2019 – ARMENIA! at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Armenia! is the “first major exhibition to explore the importance of Armenians and their remarkable achievements in a global context...” https://www.metmuseum.org/exhibitions/listings/2018/armenia

continued on next page



ARTS & LIVING

Orbelian Brings Talent to Armenia, Takes it on the Road

ORBELIAN, from page 12

“We are overjoyed to be part of these firsts for the UAE and Kuwait,” said Orbelian. “Our invitations to perform in both countries are a true testament to the artistry of the Opera company and marks the important relationships between these countries and Armenia as a whole as they share our vision for the importance of a thriving arts community.”

All this innovation, however, belies the opera’s minute budget, and its rehearsing and performing in a building that is a visual icon for the city, but needs much repair inside. Every great city has a thriving Opera House. From Sydney to Moscow, from Milan to New York a rich tapestry of historically significant and modern musical journeys come alive on the stages of these opera houses. Bringing culture and



“Magic Flute” cast Kim Sargisyan- baritone, Papageno and Julietta Aleksanyan- Soprano, Pamina

vibrancy to audiences. Each thrives in large part due to their team of business leaders and supporters who financially back the arts and understand the significance of a thriving arts community, which Armenia is still lacking.

Orbelian’s vision is infectious, captivating all those who have an audience with this creative giant. He has plans for everything from developing an updated production of the “Anush” opera to developing an archive library to preserve Armenia’s rich performing arts history. But it is clear that Orbelian cannot continue indefinitely to carry the full weight of the Opera’s journey forward on his own. It’s rare that such perfect moments arise where a historically significant national arts institute is poised at the edge of major change and opportunities exist to play a role.

But that’s exactly where the Armenian National Opera is today. While the curtains will soon close on its first successful international performances in the UAE and Kuwait what comes after is yet to be seen. Whatever the future holds, however, the story is waiting to be enriched by people around the world ready to foster the physical space and human talent pool to ensure Armenia is firmly on the map with the world’s greatest arts centers.

Zeroonian’s Film ‘The Mouse in the Bread’ Premieres in Arlington

ARLINGTON, Mass. — A socially awkward (but endearing) teenager. A husband and wife in a lackluster marriage. A bad boyfriend. These are just a few of the characters in “The Mouse in the Bread,” a locally produced independent film from director Sharisse Zeroonian, which will premiere at the Capitol Theater in Arlington on October 4.

Set in Watertown, the film imagines a world where people embrace each other, however flawed they may be, as parents, as children, as spouses, etc., but when one member of the family commits a crime, this utopia falls apart, and the characters slowly start to find fault with each other.

“What also makes the film unique is the fact that even though the main character and her family are Armenian-American, it represents a completely depoliticized vision of Armenian-American life and focuses more on who the characters are as people apart from their ethnic background. Movies that show members of marginalized communities being real people with ordinary everyday experiences rather than just figureheads for political issues or outright stereotypes of their group are hard to find, so I think this will be an important movie for that reason,” says



An image from the film, with Sharisse Zeroonian

Zeroonian, who also wrote the film and plays the role of its main character.

The film will start screening at 6:30 p.m., though doors will open at 6 p.m.

Admission is free, but there will be a small “tip” jar for anyone who wishes to donate a small amount of money to the cast and crew.

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CALENDAR

from previous page

NEW JERSEY

SEPTEMBER 30 — “Armenia Way” Official Street Co-Naming Ceremony. Fr. Abraham Malkhasyan and the Parish Council of the Armenian Church of the Holy Martyrs are happy to announce that the official ceremony to co-name 210th Street between Horace Harding Expressway and 58th Avenue in Bayside, New York as “Armenia Way” will take place on Sunday, at 12:30 p.m. Please join us as we celebrate this historic occasion with the participation of politicians and community leaders. Special celebratory fellowship will follow the ceremony.

OCTOBER 13 — Concert: “Armenian Songs From My Heart.” On the occasion of the 60th Anniversary of the

Consecration of Holy Martyrs, Ruthann Turekian (soprano) dedicates this concert to Dn. Onnik Dokmecian, Dn. Edward Karnikian and Mary Selvinazian, for their support of her musical pursuits and to her late mother, Margaret Bedrossian Turekian. Concert includes works by Gomidas, Alemshah, Hekimian, Suni, Khachaturian and others. Concert in Holy Martyrs Church sanctuary to start at 7:30pm (doors open at 6:45pm). Tickets \$40 (advanced purchase), \$45 at the door. For tickets, please call (718) 225-0235. Reception to follow concert in Kalustyan Hall.

CANADA

OCTOBER 5 — Montreal book presentation by Adrienne G. Alexanian on her father’s memoir, *Forced into Genocide: Memoirs of an Armenian*

Soldier in the Ottoman Turkish Army, Friday, 7:30 p.m. AGBU Montreal Center – Demirdjian Hall, 805 Manoogian Street Saint Laurent , QCH4N1Z5. Reception and book signing to follow. (All proceeds from the sale of the books will be donated to the AGBU). RSVP – info@agbumontreal.org (514) 748-2428

Calendar items are free. Entries should not be longer than 5 lines. Listings should include contact information. Items will be edited to fit the space, if need be. A photo may be sent with the listing no later than Mondays at noon.



COMMENTARY

COMMENTARY

Yerevan Mayoral Race Is Dry Run for Parliamentary Elections

By **Edmond Y. Azadian**

(writing from Yerevan, Armenia)

These are not ordinary times in Yerevan, nor was the mayoral race ordinary which took place on September 23. The snap election to choose a new mayor for the capital of Yerevan took place following the early resignation of the previous mayor, Taron Margaryan.

The significance of the election will have a far-reaching impact on the political landscape of Armenia, far beyond bringing to power new faces in light of the Velvet Revolution, which catapulted the former opposition leader, Nikol Pashinyan, to the office of prime minister.

Observers in Armenia and the region have been watching the developments which will serve as a bellwether for the emerging political trends in and around Armenia.

It was ironic when Pashinyan announced that by watching the outcome of the Velvet Revolution even Azerbaijani people will bring about a revolution in their own country.

Citizens in Armenia have pinned their hopes on the new prime minister, who has promised modern, organized and efficient governance in an atmosphere of brotherly love and tolerance.

However, the former members of the political elite are not sleeping and are still eager to return to power.

different groups competing, which included four alliances and eight political parties.

In order to succeed, the political parties had to garner 6 percent of the vote and the alliances 8 percent.

The election was not a direct one for the mayor; it was for 65 city elders. Whichever party received a commanding lead would appoint its leader as the city's mayor.

It is important to note that this was the first free election in the country and voters were warned of stiff punishment for irregularities and bribes. Any voter offering or receiving bribes would be risking a jail term of five to eight years.

There were intense debates about the merits of the candidates, particularly about the comedian Maroutyan.

There was a relaxed atmosphere when the voters approached the ballot box.

Unofficial results showed that the voter turnout was light, 44 percent. This result gave some political ammunition to the ousted leadership which tried to correlate the results to lackluster support for the new leadership, since Pashinyan had campaigned heavily in support of his team, headed by Haik Maroutyan. Even on the early morning of the election, on his way to New York for his appearance at the United Nations, the prime minister made it a point to cast his ballot before leaving.

There are 848,343 registered voters in Yerevan.

In fact, it turned out that the election participation was only 3 percent lower than in the previous election. The government party explained the shortfall with the fact that in the past, people were bribed to vote. Even the dead and absentees figured among the voters.

Also, political parties provided transportation to the voters to buy their voices.

The current election was on a voluntary basis and in a peaceful atmosphere to reflect the realistic profile of the electorate.

The results were as follows: My Step, 81 percent; Loosy Alliance 4.9 percent; ARF (Dashnaktsutyun), 1.6 percent; Tsirani Yerkir (Zarouhi Postanjan's party), 1.3 percent.

The remaining groups received 1 percent or fewer votes.

The election results blew off the mask of the previous elections, when parties claimed more popularity than they actually enjoyed.

Now comes the real issue: As long as the Republican party enjoys a majority (61 members) in the parliament, Pashinyan will be heading a lame duck government. Therefore, based on the overwhelming victory of his party in Yerevan, he assumes that he has already received a mandate from the electorate to dissolve the parliament.

Although there are various mechanisms to dissolve parliament, they are cumbersome and time consuming, whereas time is of the essence to Pashinyan.

The other way is to submit the budget to the parliament and seek its approval. In case of a negative vote, the government would have a second chance, after which the government would have no confidence and resort to dissolving the parliament.

Nikol Pashinyan came to power in a dramatic fashion. Although he did not have a parliamentary majority, he was able to force the parliament members to vote him in, through popular action. His announcement after the release of the election results indicates that he may opt again for the revolutionary method that served him so well in the spring.

In the meantime, the old guard is getting organized to offer stiff resistance to Pashinyan. Besides the old guard, dissident groups splintered from Pashinyan's own Yelk Alliance will resort to opposing him, though there is no indication yet whether this latter group may join the old guard in opposition. As long as disparate groups oppose Pashinyan's moves, he may be able to force the dissolution of the parliament and call for new elections, which experts predict will take place in the fall of 2019. If Pashinyan has his way, he will expedite the elections and move them to late spring or early summer.

The Velvet Revolution has transformed the political landscape in Armenia. We may soon witness true democracy in action.



The Velvet Revolution has not yet run its course to bring about the promise which the leader pledged. Indeed, an odd situation has developed, where the executive is in the minority relative to the legislative body; the Republican Party still has a commanding presence in the parliament with 61 members. The Prosperous Armenia Party of Gagik Tsarukyan has 31 members, the ARF 7, and the Yelk Alliance 9, which includes three members from Pashinyan's My Step (Eem Kayleh) movement.

Although in the past Prosperous Armenia and the ARF entered into coalitions with the ruling Republican Party, at this point, they act independently and they have not yet solidified into one opposition alliance. If such a scenario were to happen, Pashinyan's government might be paralyzed. That is why the prime minister is looking beyond the elections.

As long as the Velvet Revolution remains unsettled, the political process will continue to be in a very fragile situation. While Pashinyan has momentum on his side, it is in his interest to organize early snap elections to consolidate his power. That is why the Yerevan mayoral election became so crucial in forecasting Armenia's political future.

The mayoral elections on September 23 took place with 12

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COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

Prominent Pro-Erdogan Istanbul Armenian Engages in Pro-Turkish Propaganda

Despite the many violations of Armenian cultural and religious rights in Turkey, there are some Armenians in Istanbul who praise the Turkish regime and particularly its fascist President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

These few pro-Erdogan Armenians, who enjoy special privileges and access to high-ranking Turkish officials, represent themselves as protectors of the local Armenian community's interests. But in reality, they have selfish motives. They either have personal business interests with corrupt Turkish leaders or seek to maintain their undeserved positions in Armenian community institutions. One such individual is Bedros Sirinoglu, Chairman of the Board of Sourp Prgich Armenian Hospital in Istanbul.

In a recent interview with journalist Pinar Isik Ardor of *Forum USA*, a Turkish-American newspaper, Sirinoglu made several false statements about the Armenian community in Turkey and distorted the facts of the Armenian Genocide.

Sirinoglu's words were "shocking," according to Istanbul's *Nor Marmara* Armenian newspaper. Sirinoglu told *Forum USA* that Armenians have never lived as comfortably as they

have been during Erdogan's leadership. He also made untrue statements about the Armenian Genocide, stating that "the events of 1915 were organized by outside powers intending to dismantle and overthrow the Ottoman Empire."

Furthermore, Sirinoglu told *Forum USA*: "Before Erdogan's time, we could not even paint or repair our churches. We could only do it when the state pretended not to notice such actions." Sirinoglu repeatedly claimed he has done good deeds for the Armenian community in Turkey. Several years ago, he said he had requested a meeting with Erdogan which was immediately granted. He asked Erdogan to permit the placement of a cross on the dome of the Holy Cross Armenian Church in Akhtamar. He reportedly told Erdogan: "Just as you cannot have a mosque without a minaret, similarly you cannot have a church without a cross." Sirinoglu claimed that "Erdogan had the cross placed overnight on the Akhtamar church." If Sirinoglu was so influential, why didn't he ask Erdogan to restore the status of the Akhtamar as a Armenian church instead of designating it a "museum," allowing religious services to be performed only once a year! Sirinoglu also ignored the fact that Armenians and others worldwide, including the Armenian Patriarch of Istanbul, had demanded the placement of the cross on the dome of the church. Sirinoglu was not the only one to make such a request.

Calling them "fictional scenarios," Sirinoglu contradicted the various Western reports that Armenian religious rights are restricted in Turkey. The 67-year-old Sirinoglu told the Turkish newspaper: "Since my childhood days Armenians have not had any problems."

When the Turkish journalist reminded Sirinoglu that some Armenians are not pleased with his words, he responded: "If you don't speak as they wish, they become hostile. I stand by the state. I do not betray my own country. I am an Armenian, but I am a Turkish compatriot. Our faith orders us to be faith-

ful to the state. Our Bible preaches likewise."

Sirinoglu's most controversial remarks pertain to his misinterpretation of the Armenian Genocide. He stated that "he approaches with suspicion the [Armenian victims'] numbers used regarding 1915." He added that "Armenians, Jews and Greeks were wealthy in that period, which is why there was enmity against them. Now the Armenian population is gradually decreasing. The birth rate is low. The death rate is high. There are also mixed marriages."

When the Turkish journalist asked Sirinoglu if the Armenians, Greeks and Jews share the same point of view, Sirinoglu answered affirmatively and added: "We only disagree about the events of 1915. Greek Patriarch Bartholomew has a reserved and principled position, also regarding the government. The Jews also like the state, but they are also men of principle. They do not abandon their principles. The Jews living here do not betray Turkey, but they are tied to Israel."

Finally, Sirinoglu responded to a question regarding the recent decrease in the value of the Turkish lira. Repeating the same answer given by Erdogan, Sirinoglu blamed foreign powers for orchestrating "this game against the Turkish economy."

This is not the first time that Sirinoglu has made such false statements on the Armenian Genocide. For example, after meeting with then Prime Minister Erdogan in 2010, he told the Turkish media that "1915 was nothing more than a feud between loving friends, instigated by third parties." He went on to say that his "grandfather was among the victims, but so were many Turks."

Back in 2010, Armenians in Istanbul launched a petition announcing that Sirinoglu is not their leader and does not represent the Armenian community. Angered by Sirinoglu's statements, the petitioners stressed: "We live in a different Turkey," not the Turkey described by Sirinoglu!

LETTERS

Attacks on Diocesan Assembly Unhelpful

To the Editor:

Having just read the vicious letter sent by Rebecca Bakalian Hachikian from Los Angeles (see MS September 8 issue), attacking Jim Kalustian, chairman of the Diocesan Assembly and longtime servant of the Armenian Church, I am compelled to respond.

It is so easy to be a critic from 3,000 miles away and to throw bombs against a good man who is trying to do the difficult job of dealing with a perennial problem of the Diocese. Financing a \$ 4.7 million budget through various means available, most of which are becoming more tenuous every year.

What is the problem? The Diocese needs a steady source of income to not only meet its daily programs but to further develop its services for the vastly more complicated community it serves throughout the eastern region.

The original founders of the Diocesan complex were wise and thoughtful individuals who were not afraid to create something unimaginable just 50 years after the genocide. Namely a beautiful cathedral and diocesan headquarters in the heart of New York City to be cherished and supported for many years in the future. Fortunately, it contains an asset that can be utilized and monetized for the benefit of the Diocese.

The proposed plan, as I understand it, is still being finalized. Whether it is an outright sale of the air rights or a long-term lease is one question that needs to be decided? Is this the best available option to develop the air rights? Are we getting the best expertise from professionals to independently advise us as we move forward towards a decision?

Instead of jumping to conclusions isn't it better to wait until all the facts are known? The best place to debate this in detail is the Diocesan Assembly in May 2019. Even before then, the community at large should also be heard through regional town hall meetings throughout the diocese. By then we will have the facts and input from all sides for all the delegates to the Assembly to consider and decide.

It does no good to prematurely conclude that it's a good or bad plan without knowing all the facts. All of us in the diocesan community need to be patient and make the correct decision at the appropriate time.

This is not the time to vilify one individual or seek to destroy an idea that needs to be seriously considered for the good of the entire church.

Throwing insults is not helpful especially coming from an individual who has no stake in the matter in the first place.

Michael Haratunian
Franklin Lakes, NJ

What Is the Future for St. Vartan Cathedral and Diocese?

To the Editor:

After months of turmoil, there seems to be a reprieve with regard to the initial plan to "sell or lease" the air rights of the Cathedral/Diocesan property. For the time being there is calm in the waters, but that does not mean the circumstances that triggered this storm are laid to rest.

By building this wonderful complex (that I have often referred to as a "Beacon" to the world), the greatest Armenian generation of the 20th century, made their mark. They, in my view, never thought that the future was going to be 'so financially stressful' that such severe measures would need to be made to the extent of what almost occurred a few months ago. But, there was definitely concern in this regard.

I remember my father, Joseph Chorbajian, (a member of the original Steering Committee and the first \$1 million campaign chairman) telling me stories about how some members of the Steering Committee wanted to buy the empty lot on the southeast corner of 34th and 2nd Avenue with the intention of eventually "selling/leasing the air-rights" and having a privately-owned underground garage built to accommodate the cars for services/events at the Cathedral. They were forward thinkers!

It would interest the reader to know, that some of the naysayers to this idea on the Committee were individuals who were financially well positioned and honored today as being the main sponsors in the development/building of the complex. This is water under the bridge but had those naysayers heeded that sage advice, today's problem would have been significantly of less concern, if at all.

I have spent months thinking about what my father and his peers

Like People Find Each Other

To the Editor:

The recent letters to the editor in the *Mirror-Spectator* by two members of the St. Nersess Seminary Board of Directors, Kevork Toroyan (August 25, 2018) and Moushegh Michael Haratunian (September 20, 2018 online), advocating for the sale of the land of the Diocesan Center in New York, remind me of the famous classical Armenian saying "Like people find each other." In the interest of full disclosure, Mr. Toroyan and Mr. Haratunian should have revealed in their letters to the editor that beginning in 2012 they were part of the triumvirate, along with the current Diocesan Council chairman, Mr. James Kalustian, who failed to complete an agreement with a developer to build a 30-plus-story building directly on the plaza of St. Vartan Cathedral.

It is troubling that those with no historical attachment to St. Vartan Cathedral like Mr. Haratunian feel the most compelled to publicly comment. Yet, according to Mr. Haratunian, those as far away as 3,000 miles, who do have a direct connection, should not comment, as they "have no stake in the matter in the first place."

Those with deep familial or regional ties to St. Vartan Cathedral and the Diocesan Center are mistakenly considered "emotional" according to Mr. Toroyan and Mr. Kalustian. As they have repeatedly failed in gaining the support of the community due to their uninspiring ideas and a lack of confidence in their negotiating skills, they cast the first stone by insulting those who truly believe that St. Vartan Cathedral is the birthplace of their soul.

what say if they were with us today as to what should be done next. For sure, they would never have approved the idea to outright sale or lease of the air-rights! That would have been completely against any concept they would consider given the dangers in doing so. Lest we remember, the purchasing the particular parcel of land which now houses the Cathedral/Diocese was done so with the idea that unrelated future construction could not occur thereby encroaching on the complex.

Had the plan the current Trustees/Council attempted to ram through during this year's Diocesan Meetings been successful, the possibility of who would/could be a future owner or occupier of the new structure or its apartments/offices would have been left wide open!

No matter what "clauses" one can build into an agreement between sellers/buyers, etc., you can never totally control who or what entity will eventually move into a building that now looms 30+ stories over the Cathedral. This is the US and discrimination is not supposed to be part of our nation's creed!

Although this is sadly violated, we live in a country that has a legal system that permits the offended to take action. Therefore, even if there is the world's finest contract written, that will not prevent any entity from taking the Armenian Cathedral/Diocese into a court of law and sue them for discrimination.

Having said all of this, where do we go from here?

My thought, and I think this would be the thought my father and his collaborators would agree to, is that a building does get

see LETTER, page 20

It is common knowledge that Mr. Kalustian exhorts the Diocesan Council to think like a corporate "Board of Directors" and make "hard decisions" even if the shareholders disagree. In the "Statement from the Diocesan Council" on August 11, 2018, it reveals "Out of the approximately \$100 million currently managed by ACEF, just under \$42 million is in the name of the Diocese, much of which is restricted for specific purposes." Instead of being transparent, the Diocesan Council conveniently neglected to reveal the exact percentage of the \$42 million that is not restricted and could be used to renovate the Diocesan Center.

Mr. Haratunian correctly advocates for a detailed discussion at the upcoming Diocesan Assembly in May 2019 in Massachusetts. The entire rollout by Mr. Kalustian at the last Diocesan Assembly has become a public relations disaster for the Diocesan Council from coast to coast and now even reaching Armenia. Mr. Kalustian and a few of his ideologues on the Diocesan Council, who comfortably sit in the tahlj of the Diocesan Center, in the same seats of the legendary giants who sacrificed for decades before them, greatly underestimated the will of those who deeply care about St. Vartan Cathedral and the Diocesan Center. Frankly, they should move their Diocesan Council meetings to the Diocesan Bookstore for a dry run, the same location Mr. Kalustian so eloquently recommended for the re-location of the Diocesan staff last May.

Mr. Kalustian should leave his game of "Three Card Monte" for others to play in St. Vartan Park.

Rebecca Bakalian Hachikian
Los Angeles



Pashinyan Meets with Community Members in New York

PASHINYAN, from page 1

Pashinyan thanked the assembled for their warm welcome and noted that many have already met in Armenia and expressed hope that they will show that in the homeland today there is a dif-

ferent mood, but the atmosphere.

"The only thing that is possible in Armenia is lawfulness, democracy, independent judiciary and free economic competition," Pashinyan said. He stressed that "unlike previous years, there are no monopolies in Armenia and there are no people who are above the law."

The prime minister underlined that today Armenia has great challenges and hopes for the resolution of the issues with the Diaspora as well.

"The pivotal meaning of the revolution is that every citizen of Armenia felt at a certain moment the momentum of his position and felt that this is the way to determine Armenia's future and future," he said.

He spoke at length about the country's economy and the need to reinvigorate it.

"Today, the structure of our economy does not give us any optimism, and we have to change it," he said. "Today, our most important problem is to attract new investments. For this purpose, we need to have tax code reform, to establish an independent judiciary, to maintain a stable political situation, for which we have to hold snap parliamentary elections in the near future."

He also stressed that within the context of Armenia-Diaspora relations, it is investments, rather than charities that should be encouraged. "Armenians can support Armenia in just one way: to start economic activity in Armenia, to establish a business and to work."

He also singled out the Tumo Center, which



Prime Minister Pashinyan meets journalist Florence Avakian.



Prime Minister Pashinyan and Foreign Minister Zohrab Mnatsakanyan meet with United Nations General Secretary Antonio Guterres.

What Is the Future for St. Vartan Cathedral and Diocese?

LETTER, from page 19

erected, but, it is owned and operated by the Armenian Diocese of America. This way, it is always going to be under the control of the Church and if it is private property, there are many more laws (still not perfect) that will protect who occupies/resides in it.

One idea that has bounced around over these last few weeks is that the future New York Armenian Home (NYAH) becomes part of the new structure. Without any success over the last three years to locate a property to build on in New York, the NYAH almost lost their gain of \$50 million from the sale of their Flushing property.

Unbeknownst to the majority of us, me included, when a charitable organization sells property, it doesn't have the same privileges that a private corporation does with those assets. That is why it is a charity and permitted to act as one with the benefit of not paying taxes to the federal/state/local governments. The Attorney General office watches over this like a vulture and they certainly did so where the NYAH was concerned.

Fortunately, due to the smart advice given to the Home by someone who is not a Board member, a portion of those assets have been earmarked for the NJAH, while the balance is placed in an Endowment Fund. The aim is to still find a place to build a new NYAH.

So...there are alternatives. The most important things I have learned are:

There shouldn't be knee jerk reactions when there are problems no matter how slow that jerk is.

The secrecy by which this plan was executed did more damage to the Trustees and Council than could have been imagined. Building trust and confidence in this group of individuals will take a long time to return, if ever.

There needs to be individuals, without hidden agendas, who are brought from the outside who are knowledge specific about the situation to provide expertise. No matter how smart, dedicated, or well-intended the members of the Trustees and Council are, they are volunteers! This is light years from being hired for a specific position because you come with credentials.

Once a new plan is put into place, a written

report needs to be made available to the community as to the whys and wherefores going forward. The Cathedral/Diocese is not a private entity! It represents the members in the Armenian community, who paid for the building and maintaining of them. Like all investors, that community is owed accountability!

There is always more than one way, and maybe a better way, to get to the same goal.

Before there is a new wave of protest against the suggestion that I have made, I think it's important to stop for a moment and think about what, if any other alternatives there are. If you don't have an alternative suggestion, or are not willing to dig deeper into your pockets to support the Cathedral/Diocese, I recommend you not condemn the idea of the construction of an addition to the Cathedral complex.

If there are better alternatives, by all means, present them, in writing to the Diocesan Trustees and Council as well as the community. There is a silver lining in everything that goes awry; let's make this lining gold!

Joyce Chorbajian

has become one of the most important centers of modern Armenia, for praise. "We hope that new international brands will be created in Armenia, which will change the fate of the state and the Armenian people in a strategic sense."

As for foreign policy, he said "We are going to develop relations with all international partners, but we are not going to do it at the expense of another partner. We will try to raise the relations with Russia, the EAPC partners, Iran, Georgia, the EU and the United States to a new level."

While in New York Pashinyan met with UN Secretary General António Guterres at the UN Headquarters on September 24.

Pashinyan highlighted the close and firm cooperation between Armenia and the UN for the protection and strengthening of values adopted by the UN.

Guterres expressed confidence that effective cooperation with Armenia will further strengthen and develop.



Prime Minister Pashinyan meets Armenian-American benefactor Aso Tavtarian.

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At the Foot of Ararat:
**Armenian Folk
Dance**

Tuesday, October 23, 2018

12:30 p.m. - 1:30 p.m.
and 7:00 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.
at the Paramus Campus,
Technology Education Center - TEC-128
(Park in Lot B - Section G)
Refreshments will be served.
RSVP to Nvair Beylerian at nbeylerian@bergen.edu
or www.bergen.edu/pjr/events

The traditional village dances were as characteristic of Armenian culture as the language, food, songs, and other ancient customs. Susan Lind-Sinanian, Textile Curator at the Armenian Museum of America in Watertown, MA will introduce and teach line dances that she has collected over the last forty years from immigrants and survivors of a lost generation from western Armenia. Come join us in the footsteps of our ancestors to learn and celebrate this heritage. Wear comfortable footwear. Appropriate for all ages.

Bergen Community College Office of Multicultural Affairs
peace, justice & reconciliation
TEKRYAN CULTURAL ASSOCIATION
AIWA ARMENIAN INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION, INC.