

Armenia Becomes First Country to Join the St. Jude Alliance to Battle Pediatric Cancer

MEMPHIS and LOS ANGELES (Combined Sources) – Anna Hakobyan, the wife of Armenia's Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan concluded her tour of the US, during which she focused on raising funds for the treatment of cancer-stricken children in Armenia.

On April 12, Armenia became the first country to join the St. Jude Global Alliance, a multimillion-dollar effort launched last year to improve treatment for children with cancer in low- and middle-income countries by 30 percent over the next decade.

Hakobyan visited Memphis, Tenn., the headquarters of St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital, where she signed the agreement.

Her visit to the US has raised much-needed funds for the City of Smile Foundation, which helps pay for the treatment of children at the Muratsan Pediatric Cancer Clinic in Yerevan. Her visit to Boston alone raised more than \$150,000 for the hospital. (<https://mirrorspectator.com/2019/04/11/city-of-smile-banquet-is-great-success-with-headliner-anna-hakobyan/>)



Anna Hakobyan on stage at the AAMS gala in Los Angeles

To date, City of Smile has raised enough funding to fully support the care of 120 children.

"Childhood cancer is quite expensive.

Support from the foundations is really essential," said Dr. Gevorg Tamamyan, a pediatric hematologist/oncologist at the Pediatric Cancer and Blood Disorders Center of Armenia. "These foundations are trying to help the kids receive appropriate care regardless of their ability to pay, so every child receives appropriate care and no one is left out if they don't have the resources."

"When you work in a limited-resource setting, you have a lot of challenges you need to overcome – the drugs, the personnel, the research capacity, education opportunities, lack of awareness and so on," Tamamyan said.

By joining the St. Jude Global Alliance, Armenia will join other countries all working to solve the challenges of treating pediatric oncology and make treatment and diagnosis available to all children, regardless of nationality or geographic location.

"It's a way to develop our capacity, improve our results, to learn and to exchange our ideas and to make more kids healthier," Tamamyan said.

Armenia is a critical region for St. Jude's global effort, including the eastern Mediterranean and Eurasian regions.

"They have been critical in helping organize and provide support," said Dr. Carlos Rodriguez-Galindo, chair of St. Jude's Department of Global Pediatric Medicine.

Neighboring Georgia and Azerbaijan are anticipated to follow Armenia's lead to join the St. Jude Global Alliance, as well as many other regions not only in the caucuses, but in the former Soviet Republic areas.

Rodriguez-Galindo classified the 2018 Armenian revolution as critical to the success of the partnership.

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The Mardiros family with the Joint Senate/House Resolution (Aram Arkun photo)

State House Program Commemorates Genocide Anniversary with Keynote Speaker Afeyan

By Aram Arkun
Mirror-Spectator Staff

BOSTON – The venerable chamber of the Massachusetts State House once again filled with Armenians and their supporters on April 12 for the annual commemoration of the tragedy of the Armenian Genocide. Though 104 years may have

passed, the reverberations of this event continue to affect millions of people's lives, and the pageantry and traditions of the State House make it one of the most impressive places in the United States at which this is manifested.

see COMMEMORATION, page 11

Tekeyan Boston Chapter Organizing Activities, Welcomes New Members

WATERTOWN – The Tekeyan Cultural Association (TCA) recently reconstituted its greater Boston chapter after a series of meetings. The chapter is based in Watertown and uses the facilities of the Baikar Building, where the North American headquarters for TCA is located.

The chapter on April 10 elected as its chair Dr. Aida Yavshayan. The vice chair is Masis Parunyan, secretary Vatche Der Torossian, treasurer Sossy Yogurtian and vice treasurer Maral Tanielian Der Torossian. Other executive members include Nathan Kibarian, Sarkis Gavlakian and Armen Adourian.

Chapter members helped organize the recent visit of the UCLA VEM Ensemble to the Boston area. TCA Boston is organizing an evening with California novelist see TCA, page 20



From left, Dr. Aida Yavshayan, Masis Parunyan, Vatche Der Torossian, Nathan Kibarian, Maral Der Torossian, Sossy Yogurtian, Sarkis Gavlakian and Armen Adourian

NEWS IN BRIEF

Armenia Sends Condolences to France

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – Various leaders in Armenia issued letters of support to their French counterparts as well as the people of the nation over the tragic fire at the Notre Dame Cathedral on Monday, April 15.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan sent a condolence letter to President of France Emmanuel Macron.

"Honorable Mr. President, we are shocked by the tragedy that took place in Paris. Notre-Dame de Paris is one of the most significant and beloved symbols of European civilization and the entire Christian world. For Armenians it is a unique embodiment of the French culture and spiritual heritage which we have identified with Paris and its centuries-old history.

Armenia expresses its solidarity with the French people and shares their feelings. At the same time, we hope that all of us will take the necessary steps to restore the former look of the temple."

Yerevan Mayor Hayk Marutyan wrote to his Parisian counterpart, Anne Hidalgo. "Our thoughts and prayers are with Paris," he wrote.

Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II added, "It is with deep pain in our hearts that we follow the tragedy that is happening in Paris. The Notre Dame Cathedral is one of the centuries-old testimony of Christian faith, and together with its historic mission also an important symbol in modern times of our friend France. We express our prayers and support to all people of France, to our Catholic sister church."

MP Raises Issue of Genocide Recognition

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – Vladimir Vardanyan, Member of Parliament representing the My Step faction, and member of the Armenian delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), used this platform on April 16 to raise the issue of adopting a respective set of tools for the recognition and condemnation of the Armenian Genocide.

"The agenda of the session included a serious section relating to hate speech. On the sidelines of this I have touched hate speech in my remarks. No genocide can be committed without hate speech. Moreover, a question was raised that 100 years have passed since the Armenian Genocide, we still face many Armenophobic cases in the member states of the Council of Europe. And from this perspective we will use this platform by demanding to adopt a respective set of tools in connection with the recognition and condemnation of the Armenian Genocide," Vardanyan told reporters.

He stated that they have also touched upon other genocides, such as that of Rwanda, taking into account the fact that the prevention of crimes of genocide plays a major role in Armenia's foreign policy.

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Remember Baku

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ARMENIA

News From Armenia

Senior Government Official Coy About Corruption Probe

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) —The head of an Armenian government agency tasked with combatting financial irregularities in the public sector on Tuesday, April 16, pointedly declined to deny reports that he may face corruption charges in an ongoing investigation conducted by the National Security Service (NSS).

Two senior officials of the agency, the State Oversight Service (SOS), were arrested and charged with corruption in late February. The NSS claims that they colluded with a private firm to “illegally interfere” in and personally benefit from government-funded supplies of medical equipment to three hospitals.

A senior executive of the firm, Zorashen, was also taken into custody. All three suspects denied the charges.

The head of the SOS, Davit Sanasaryan, dismissed the NSS allegations at the time. He said that his agency had on the contrary tried to break up another company’s monopoly on those medical supplies.

One of Sanasaryan’s two arrested subordinates was released from custody last month. The other, more senior SOS official, Samvel Adian, remains under arrest.

Armenia media reports said on Tuesday that the NSS has identified Sanasaryan as a suspect in the case and may therefore indict him too. The SOS chief did not refute or confirm those reports when he spoke to reporters later in the day. He cited the secrecy of the corruption investigation.

Asked whether he has been summoned by the NSS for interrogation, Sanasaryan said: “Ask the NSS.”

“We will wait until the NSS releases official information,” added Sanasaryan. “I am interested in seeing the case fully solved and all the guilty individuals held accountable.”

Sanasaryan is a former opposition and civic activist who had for years challenged Armenia’s former government, accusing it of corruption and incompetence. The 34-year-old participated in last spring’s “velvet revolution” led by Nikol Pashinyan, Armenia’s current prime minister. Pashinyan named him to run the SOS shortly after coming to power in May.

Constitutional Court Nominee Rejected

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — The National Assembly on April 16 refused to appoint a new member of Armenia’s Constitutional Court nominated by President Armen Sarkissian.

Sarkissian picked Gor Hovannisian, a legal scholar based in Germany, from among three potential candidates for the vacant position in the country’s highest court.

Hovannisian needed the backing of at least 79 members of the 132-seat parliament. Only 24 deputies voted for him in secret ballot, with 75 others voting against his candidacy.

Hovannisian’s appointment appeared to have been blocked by Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s My Step alliance which controls 88 parliament seats. Speaking before the vote, parliament speaker Ararat Mirzoyan cited “discrepancies” in documents submitted by him.

Another senior My Step lawmaker, Nikolay Baghdasarian, said the documents do not prove that the nominee possesses at least 15 years of professional experience required for being a Constitutional Court judge.

Hovannisian earlier held separate meetings with lawmakers from the three political groups represented in the parliament and answered their questions. He won unequivocal support only from the opposition Bright Armenia Party (LHK) holding 16 seats. LHK leader Edmon Marukian praised Hovannisian before the vote, saying that the candidate is not connected to Armenia’s current or former governments.

Sarkissian’s two other Constitutional Court picks were rejected by the former parliament last fall. One of those nominees, Vahe Grigorian, reportedly enjoys the backing of Pashinyan and political allies. Grigorian was one of the three candidates considered by Sarkissian this time around.

Grigorian has a long history of human rights advocacy. He has also cooperated with opposition groups that challenged former Presidents Serzh Sargsyan and Robert Kocharyan.

Pashinyan’s PACE Speech Draws Mixed Opposition Reaction

STRASBOURG, France (RFE/RL) — An Armenian opposition leader on Friday, April 12, praised Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s latest remarks on Nagorno-Karabakh but disputed his claim that Armenia has become a full-fledged democracy since last year’s “velvet revolution.”

“Of course, there were many interesting and good points,” Gevorg Gorisyan of the Bright Armenia Party (LHK) said, commenting on Pashinyan’s speech delivered in the Council of Europe’s Parliamentary Assembly (PACE) on Thursday. “In particular, with regard to the Karabakh issue, on human rights in Karabakh and the conflict’s resolution and peace.”

“But there were also some flaws such as [Pashinyan’s claims about] the establishment of democracy, economic miracle, reforms which have only just begun, a process where we see numerous shortcomings,” Gorisyan said.

“Armenia is today unequivocally a democratic country with absolute freedom of expression and freedom of assembly,” Pashinyan declared on the PACE floor. He said his government has eliminated “systemic corruption,” broken up economic monopolies and created “prerequisites for everyone’s equality before the law” since taking office less than a year ago.

Gorisyan countered that the civil liberties cited by Pashinyan are necessary but not sufficient for a democratic political system which he said also requires



Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan attends a debate at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, April 11.

an effective system of checks and balances. He said the prime minister is reluctant to curb sweeping executive powers inherited from the country’s former leader, Serzh Sarkisian.

Sergey Bagratyan, a senior lawmaker representing the opposition Prosperous Armenia Party (BHK), also hailed parts of Pashinyan’s speech that related to the Karabakh conflict. In particular, he said, Pashinyan was right to make a case for international recognition of the Karabakh Armenians’ right to self-determination.

While stressing the importance of his

“constructive and positive dialogue” with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev, the Armenian premier called for direct contacts between the two societies. He rebuked the PACE for having “paid no attention whatsoever to supporting non-governmental organizations operating in Nagorno-Karabakh.”

Pashinyan also criticized pro-Azerbaijani resolutions on Karabakh adopted by the PACE in the past. He charged that one of those resolutions “became a prelude” to offensive military operations launched by Azerbaijan in April 2016.

Workers Protest as Tsarukyan-Owned Plant Plans Mass Layoffs

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Hundreds of workers of a cement plant owned by businessman Gagik Tsarukyan went on strike on Monday, April 15, after management announced plans to lay them off, saying that the Armenian government will not protect it against much cheaper cement imports from Iran.

Citing mounting losses incurred by domestic cement manufacturers, the government decided earlier this year to impose hefty tariffs on those imports. A relevant government bill, portrayed as an anti-dumping measure, was discussed by an Armenian parliament committee on economic issues on Friday.

Tsarukyan’s Multi Group holding company says that the bill was amended at the last minute to make sure that the tariffs do not apply to cement clinker, a nodular material developed before the final stage of cement production. Later on Friday, the group informed most of the 1,100 or so employees of the Ararat Tsement plant that they will be laid off within two months.

The workers responded by going on strike in protest. They also blocked a road leading to the plant located just outside Ararat, a small town 50 kilometers south of Yerevan.

Meeting with the workers, Multi Group’s chief executive, Sedrak Arustamian, insisted that the onus is on the government to save the plant from closure.

“As a result of Friday’s [parliament committee] meeting it was decided to remove clinker from the bill,” he said. “If they decided not to include clinker, then it’s better for us to also import clinker and provide the market [with cheaper cement.]”

Arustamian argued that Ararat Tsement would need a fraction of its current workforce to manufacture cement with Iranian clinker.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan gave no indication that his government is

ready to meet Multi Group’s demand when he commented on the strike. He described it as a “problem between the employer and employees.”

The Ararat plant faced an uncertain future amid mounting tensions between Pashinyan’s My Step alliance and

Tsarukyan’s Prosperous Armenia Party (BHK), the largest parliamentary opposition force. Earlier this month Tsarukyan publicly criticized the government’s economic policies and said many government officials are incompetent.

Pashinyan Unrepentant About Flag Outburst

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan rejected on Monday, April 15, human rights activists’ and opposition leaders’ criticism of his angry behavior and sacking orders issued during a visit to a customs facility in Yerevan.

Pashinyan had berated a customs officer, Hayk Martirosyan, for not standing at attention when he began inspecting the facility on April 9. He then entered an office and noticed an apparently dirty Armenian flag there before ordering everyone working in the room to be fired.

Human rights activists condemned Pashinyan’s behavior, saying that he is not legally allowed to order such sackings. They also decried Martirosyan’s humiliation in front of TV cameras.

Martirosyan and the chief of the customs terminal resigned from their jobs following the incident. The State Revenue Committee (SRC), which comprises the Armenian customs service, denied forcing them to quit. The SRC chief, Davit Ananian, also claimed that Pashinyan “urged,” rather than ordered, their dismissal.

Opposition politicians added their voice to the criticism. One of them compared Pashinyan’s behavior to Belarusian strongman Alexander Lukashenko’s periodical public outbursts, while another published an open letter earlier on Monday accusing the prime minister of violating labor rights.

Pashinyan scoffed at the letter. “If things continue like this, the next letter will be about us violating Serzh Sarkisian’s labor rights,” he said, referring to Armenia’s former leader overthrown in last year’s “velvet revolution.”

Pashinyan said that Martirosyan’s failure to stand at attention in his presence highlighted customs officers’ lack of respect for many citizens dealing with the customs service. “Why do you think we are getting hundreds of letters complaining about customs bodies?” he told reporters.

“He could have avoid writing the [resignation] letter,” Pashinyan said of Martirosyan. “What should I do? My position is that such people must not be [in the customs service.]”

“I think that no action aimed at enhancing [state bodies’ proper] attitude towards the national flag has been as effective as that incident,” he added.



INTERNATIONAL

Argentine College to Teach History of Armenian Music

By Anna Gziryan

CORDOBA, Argentina (Armenpress) – The history of Armenian music, Armenian musical instruments is already taught as a separate subject in the Music Education Professional College of the Argentine city of Córdoba. This initiative was led by Argentina-based Armenian musician, duduk player Gagik Gasparyan.

“Armenian culture has been officially adopted as a separate subject in the Argentine college. I am very happy and proud that I managed to do this. This step enables foreign young people to get acquainted with the Armenian music, folk instruments. I think culture is the key to recognizing Armenia,” he said.

Gasparyan said that his proposal to teach Armenian culture as a separate subject was welcomed. And this was not a coincidence because he has carried out consistent works with the music specialists of Argentina, educational institutions for many years and presented them the Armenian music.

“When I presented my proposal to the college executives, it was accepted with a great pleasure. The first lecture took place in early April, and the audience was excited. They were interested in our history and culture. The experience shows that if we are able to introduce our culture with a right emphasis, it sounds interesting to foreigners. Armenians have lived in Argentina for 100 years. If initially we were ‘closed,’

now a different trend is noticed. We are seeking to introduce our culture to the broader circle by cooperating with the Argentine musicians. Today I have reached the point that the proposals to present the Armenian culture are already being made to me,” Gasparyan said. He informed that there is also a comprehensive cooperation with other educational facilities of Argentina. They hold concerts and lectures with the musicians invited from Armenia during the year. In 2015 the Culture ministry of Chile made a decision to dedicate the whole year to the Armenian culture. During this period 15 lectures were delivered about the Armenian music, instruments and history.

The musician said he is going to invite different Armenian musicians this year so that they will deliver lectures at the college.

“I launched the program alone, but also want to include other musicians who will have their contribution. Introducing the Armenian culture to the broad circle in foreign states is a great task,” he said, adding that his program to present the Armenian culture also has a tourism significance. Many people do not only show interest towards the history of the Armenian culture, but

also want to visit Armenia to get acquainted with the country. And there is already an agreement on visiting Armenia with 37 people from Argentina.

For many years Gasparyan has worked on introducing the Armenian



Gagik GasparyanAr

music, the Armenian musical instruments, in particular duduk, to the broad circles of Argentina, South America. Currently he has launched a new initiative called “Music Without Borders.” He stated that within the frames of this program famous songs will be performed with duduk. The musician is working on this project for already two years.

He informed that he also launched the shooting of a documentary about the Armenian culture in partnership with one of the local filmmaking companies. Armenian dance, architecture, cuisine and history will be presented in the film. The film crew is expected to visit Armenia to work on the spot.

International News

Football Federation Offers Support for Mkhitarian

NYON, Switzerland (Armenpress) – Henrikh Mkhitarian and Arsenal will be given the full support of the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) in order to secure a visa for the Armenia international to play in the Europa League final in Azerbaijan next month if the club reach the May 28 showpiece in Baku, ESPN reported citing sources familiar with the matter, the organization announced on April 16.

Mkhitarian, captain of the Armenian national football team and midfielder for Arsenal, was omitted from the Gunners’ squad last year for a match that took place in Baku.

Earlier in 2015 when Mkhitarian was with Borussia Dortmund, the German club decided not to take the Armenian international to Baku for a match against Gabala due to “security reasons.”

Azerbaijan currently bans citizens of Armenia from entering its territory.

The Europa League final will take place in the Azerbaijani capital.

“European football’s governing body has insisted that all efforts will be made to ensure that the process runs smoothly”, ESPN said in an article.

A UEFA spokesperson told ESPN FC: “It is a standard procedure for UEFA to send letters of support to associations, clubs or embassies in order to obtain visas for players and allow them to play in UEFA competition matches.”

Notre Dame Was Set to Host Liturgy for Genocide Victims

PARIS (Panorama.am) – Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris, ravaged by a massive fire on Monday, April 15, was set to offer a liturgy on April 22 to commemorate the victims of the Armenian Genocide in the Ottoman Empire.

France will mark April 24 as a commemoration day of the Armenian Genocide, with the relevant decree signed by President Emmanuel Macron on April 10.

According to the document, a ceremony paying tribute to the genocide victims will be held in Paris on this day every year. Similar events may also be held in every city at the initiative of the local governments.

Macron announced his decision to make April 24 as a national day of commemoration of the Armenian Genocide at the Coordinating Council of Armenian Organizations (CCAF) gala in Paris on February 5.

Tourists from St. Petersburg Choose Yerevan

YEREVAN (Arka) – The Russian online travel service Svyaznoy Travel analyzed the sale of airline tickets from Russian St. Petersburg to the CIS countries, Europe and Russia, saying Armenia’s capital Yerevan was the most popular destination in the CIS in the first quarter of 2019 with 31 percent of tourists choosing it.

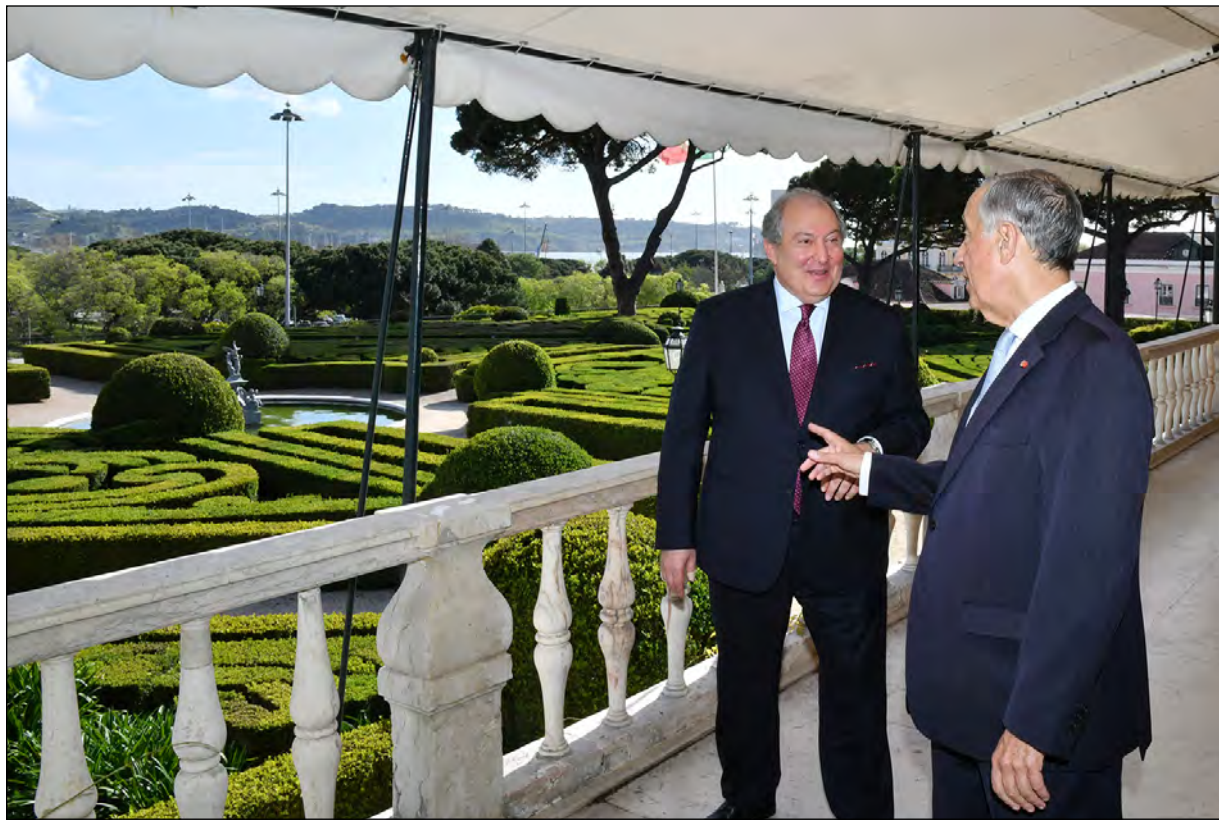
The capital city of the neighboring Georgia, Tbilisi, was the most popular foreign destinations (20 percent), while Moscow was the most popular Russian city among residents of St. Petersburg with 51 percent choosing it.

According to Svyaznoy Travel, the demand for travels to the CIS countries in the first quarter of 2019 increased by 39 percent compared to the same period last year. It says this ongoing trend is associated with relatively cheap airfare and visa-free travels.

Besides, travels by residents of St. Petersburg to Georgia have surged by 40 percent. “Georgia has been attracting tourists in any season for many years already,” according to Andrei Osintsev, director of Svyaznoy.

According to the online service, the second most popular destination in the CIS from St. Petersburg was Belarus (15 percent of all bookings) and the third was Azerbaijani capital Baku (11 percent).

Out of foreign destinations, tickets to Spain and Prague were also in demand, booked by 6 percent of tourists. Aivazovsky 4-20



President Armen Sarkissian, left, with President of Portugal Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa

Sarkissian Meets with Portuguese Counterpart

LISBON, Portugal – President Armen Sarkissian, within the framework of his working visit to Portugal on April 9 met with the President of Portugal Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa.

de Sousa welcomed the visit of his Armenian counterpart to Portugal.

Underscoring the close historical and cultural ties of the two countries and peoples, the President of Portugal spoke with great reverence about the famous Armenian-Portuguese entrepreneur and benefactor Galust Gulbenkian and about the activities of the Foundation named after him.

In his turn, President Sarkissian hailed humanitarian and cultural activities of the Galust Gulbenkian Foundation and noted that the foundation serves as a bridge in the Armenian-

Portuguese relations. The presidents of Armenia and Portugal exchanged views on the possible areas of cooperation. They concurred that the two countries could become successful partners in the areas of science, education, and modern technologies.

Referring to Portugal’s space station program for launching satellites, Sarkissian said that Armenia has a great scientific potential in this area. The two also discussed tourism. Noting that many more tourists from Armenia might visit Portugal and many more tourists from Portugal might visit and discover Armenia, the parties stressed the importance of establishing an air link between the two countries and research on the existing opportunities.

Community News

House, Senate Introduce Bills On Genocide Recognition

WASHINGTON — The Armenian Assembly of America (Assembly) joined the Congressional Caucus on Armenian Issues this week for the annual commemoration of the Armenian Genocide on Capitol Hill. Prior to the commemoration, bipartisan Armenian Genocide resolutions were introduced in both the House of Representatives and Senate.

Spearheaded by Congressmen Adam Schiff (D-CA) and Gus Bilirakis (R-FL), over 80 Members of Congress have already co-sponsored the House resolution, H.Res. 296, which was introduced on Monday.

“This resolution highlights a proud chapter in American history, where, thanks to America’s unprecedented humanitarian intervention, thousands and thousands of survivors of the Armenian Genocide were saved in what US Ambassador Henry Morgenthau described as a ‘campaign of race extermination’ and what Major General James G. Harbord — who served as General John J. Pershing’s Chief of Staff during World War I and led an American Military Mission to Armenia — reported from the USS Martha Washington that: ‘Mutilation, violation, torture and death have left their haunting memories in a hundred beautiful Armenian valleys, and the traveler in that region is seldom free from the evidence of this most colossal crime of all the ages,’” stated Armenian Assembly Executive Director Bryan Ardouny.

The following day, Senators Ted Cruz (R-TX) and Bob Menendez (D-NJ) introduced with 14 co-sponsors a similar Senate resolution, S.Res. 150, which expresses “the sense of the Senate that it is the policy of the United States to commemorate the Armenian Genocide through official recognition and remembrance.”

“This bipartisan resolution highlights a proud chapter in US history in providing humanitarian assistance and helping to save the survivors of the first genocide of the twentieth century,” stat-



Armenian Assembly Communications Director Danielle Saroyan Ashbahian, Rep. Katherine Clark, and Armenian Assembly Massachusetts State Chair Herman Purutyan

ed Armenian Assembly Executive Director Bryan Ardouny. “We commend Senators Menendez and Cruz for this important human rights initiative,” Ardouny said.

The importance of these resolutions were stressed during the commemoration, attended by Armenian Caucus Co-Chairs Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ), Gus Bilirakis (R-FL), and Jackie Speier (D-CA); Caucus Vice Chair Adam Schiff (D-CA); and Representatives Judy Chu (D-CA), Katherine Clark (D-MA), Jim Costa (D-CA), TJ Cox (D-CA), Josh Gottheimer (D-NJ), Brad Schneider (D-IL), Brad Sherman, Raja Krishnamoorthi (D-IL), and Pete Visclosky (D-IN). Elise Kenderian Aronson presided over the standing-room only commemoration as the Mistress of Ceremonies.

To watch the speeches of Representatives Pallone, Bilirakis, Speier, Schiff, Clark, Costa, Cox, Sherman, and Visclosky during the 2019 see CONGRESS, page 7



Planting trees in Armenia

Armenia Tree Project Celebrates 25 Years Of Growth

WOBURN, Mass. — In recognition of the International Day of Forests, Armenia Tree Project announces its plans to commemorate its 25th anniversary through 2019 and into 2020 with a series of programs and celebrations. Founded in 1994 by activist Carolyn Mugar, Armenia Tree Project (ATP) has furthered Armenia’s economic and social development by restoring more than 5.7 million trees across the country and creating hundreds of jobs through tree-related programming.

In celebration of the anniversary, several events will expand the group’s reach as it highlights its success to date. In October, ATP will co-host an inaugural conference in Yerevan for local, regional, and global leaders in forest restoration. Forest Summit: Global Action and Armenia, will take place at American University of Armenia’s Acopian Center for the Environment from October 20-23, 2019. Further details on speakers and programming will be announced in the weeks ahead.

“The year ahead is shaping up to be a very exciting time in our organization’s growth,” says Jeanmarie Papelian, executive director of Armenia Tree Project. “We are proud of the progress that we’ve made thus far, and the benefits that our trees have provided to the people and ecology of Armenia. We’re excited for the work that lies ahead, and the partnerships and people that will join us as we go.”

Also in the fall, the organization will celebrate the planting of its six millionth tree in Armenia. In the US, the group is planning a series of receptions around the country for supporters to share in their passion for the organization.

“Much of our support over the past 25 years has come from the generosity of the Armenian-American community, with several notable exceptions including donors in Europe and Armenia,” says Papelian. “Through our large and small events in 2019, we’ll celebrate the successes we’ve enjoyed thus far, and our bold visions for the future, and we’re thrilled to get started.”

Armenia Tree Project supports three main initiatives: Planting trees in urban and rural locations, environmental education, and sustainable development and poverty reduction.

The decline of Armenia’s forest cover was caused by many factors including unsustainable logging, use of wood as fuel for cooking and heating, the blockade of the 1990s by Armenia’s neighbors, deforestation by the mining industry, and climate change. Erosion, habitat loss, and diminished supplies of clean water are consequences of a low level of forest cover.

“The level of deforestation in the 1990’s meant the landlocked country of Armenia was on a troubling trajectory toward desertification before ATP stepped in and began to reforest the country,” explains Papelian. “Through education and reforestation, ATP remains busy with reversing the trend.”

Anna Astvatsaturian Turcotte and ATP Team Up for Forest Memorial to Baku Pogrom Victims

PORTLAND, Maine — Author, human rights advocate and Baku refugee, Anna Astvatsaturian Turcotte, spearheaded a fundraiser to plant a Memorial Forest for the upcoming 30th anniversary of the Baku atrocities. The Memorial Forest will be planted in Talin, Armenia. In the 30 years since the last massacres of Armenians in Azerbaijan, all traces of the Armenian community of Azerbaijan and its contributions to the history and culture of the region have been systematically erased by the current ruling regime of Azerbaijan. The forest will memorialize the lost and the survival of a vibrant and talented Armenian community from Azerbaijan.

This initiative is made possible by the support of donors worldwide and the expertise of the Armenia Tree Project located in Yerevan and Woburn, Mass. (www.armeniatree.org). The planting of the forest will provide a place in Armenia to mourn the killed innocents, the bulldozed-over graves of loved ones, and lost cultural sites of the Armenian community in Azerbaijan. The initiative and its presence will celebrate the survivors of these heinous crimes who fled, scattering around the world, building successful lives for themselves in all corners of the earth. Armenians who fled Azerbaijan and Armenia Tree Project look to the future, as will this project, which is an investment in the health and well-being of Armenia’s next generation.

Over 200 Armenians and non-Armenians worldwide raised \$15,000 to plant this memor-



Anna Astvatsaturian Turcotte

ial forest in Talin. The idea between Anna Astvatsaturian Turcotte and ATP came about in the spring of 2018 during the 30th anniversary of Sumgait massacres of Armenians. They have been working and planning of the project for one year.

The forest is being planted on two hectares of land located on the outskirts of the town. Of the 2,000 trees, 500 are fruit trees to supply food to Talin and the surrounding community. The planting site is the location of an old forest that was planted during Soviet times and cut in the 1990s during the crisis created by the energy blockade by Turkey and Azerbaijan.

In addition to the forest planting, ATP will also expand its environmental education programs in Talin in 2019-2020. ATP’s environmental education team will visit the town for a series of lessons on reducing plastic use and why environmental protections are important.

ATP and the Talin community planted the majority of the trees in November and April. Astvatsaturian Turcotte will visit Talin on May 7 at 11:00 when the last 100 trees will be planted. A blessing of the Memorial Forest and a Khachkar at the entrance of the forest will be blessed by the Church. The community event with Anna Astvatsaturian Turcotte is open to public and media. Please email the above address if you required direct telephone contact information.

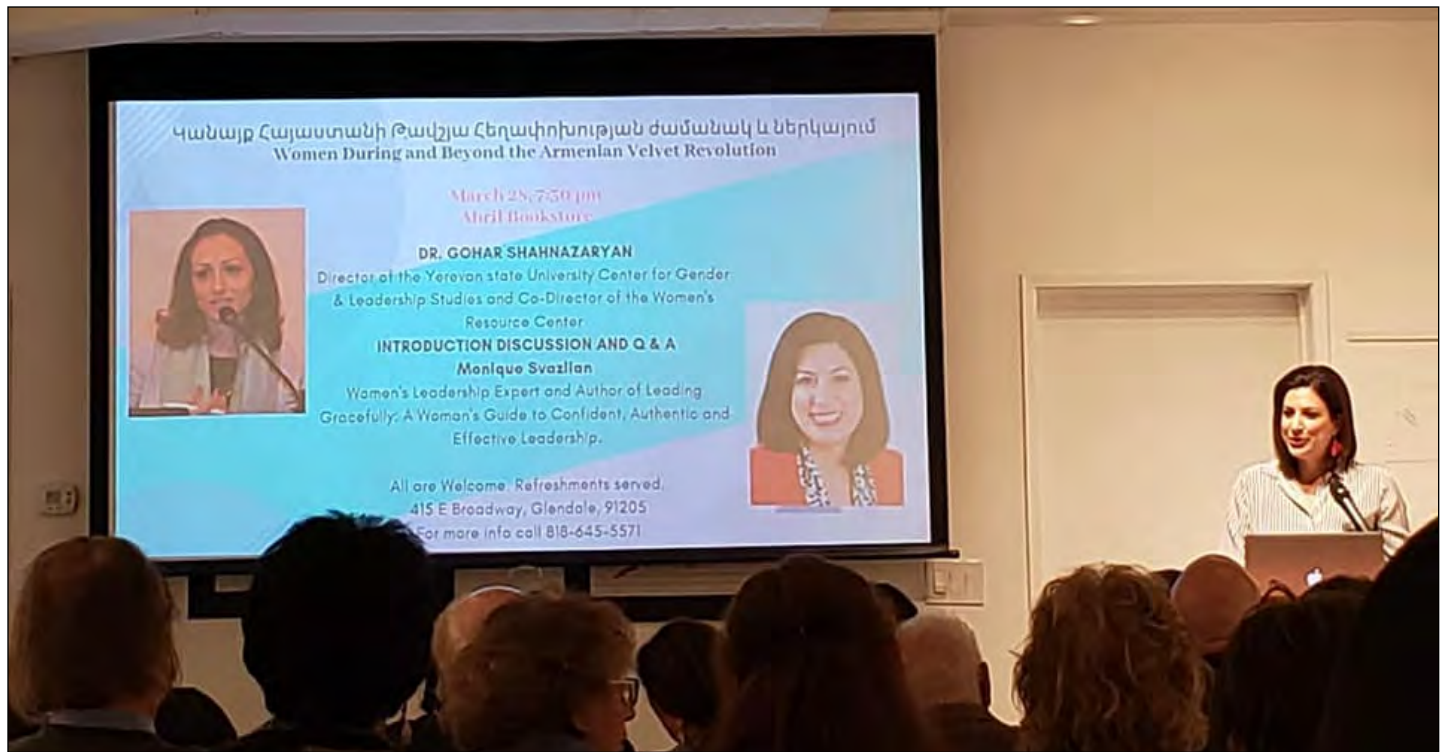
Shahnazaryan Illuminated Women's Role in Velvet Revolution and Aftermath in Glendale Talk

GLENDALÉ — It has been almost a year since the historic Velvet Revolution in Armenia and many are still wondering how this small country was able to overturn decades of corrupt politics in such a short time frame, without any bloodshed.

On Thursday, March 28, at Abril Bookstore, Dr. Gohar Shahnazaryan gave a slightly different perspective on the events that occurred, specifically around the important and critical role that women played during the Velvet Revolution. The night was co-hosted and made possible by the Armenian Women's Network.

Shahnazaryan is the director of Yerevan State University's Center for Gender and Leadership Studies and the co-director of the Women's Resource Center NGO in Armenia. She holds a PhD in sociology and is an associate professor at the Department of Applied Sociology at Yerevan State University.

Having spent most of her life fighting for human rights, particularly women's rights in Armenia, Shahnazaryan spoke about the new way in which women participated in the revolution alongside their male counterparts. Women were being viewed as sisters and voicing their support of one another and their fight for equality. "I want to address my sisters who stand together, hand in hand and fight a double fight for the change of



Monique Svazlian at the podium



From left, Anahit Cowe, Gohar Shahnazaryan, Monique Svazlian, Rose Berjian Panoyan, Marine Babouryan (members of the Armenian Women's Network)

power in Armenia and for their equal rights in public,” said Maria Karapetyan, an activist and member of the Reject Serj initiative.

The uniqueness of the Velvet Revolution was that there was no bloodshed and for the most part, lacked violence or deaths. During the presentation, Shahnazaryan explained that one of the reasons for this was due to the large role that women played with their non-violent and peaceful strategies of resistance.

She shared images of young women in public spaces, occupying street crossings, roadways, and standing up to police in riot gear. For the first time ever, women were taking political spaces reserved for men and acting as strategists, organizers and active participants in the movement, as well as having discussions about gender roles and equal rights. Women were acting as moral shields, actively negotiating with police and pleading their case to keep the peace or standing in the front lines to prevent violence. Women of all ages, from young babies to grandmothers participated in the revolution in various ways, shapes or forms, whether it was young mothers standing in the streets blocking traffic with their strollers, or grandmothers marching in the streets.

Shahnazaryan also spoke about the aftermath of the revolution and pointed out the fact that,

unfortunately, the women who were so influential in creating the biggest shift in political history in Armenia during recent times did not manage to achieve gains in political representation. There is only one female minister and out of 132 members of parliament, 24 percent are women. Although there was an increase in the number of women who ran for political office, such as for Yerevan city mayor and other regional offices, the number of women who were elected was still pretty low.

The presentation was followed by a rich discussion and question and answer session moderated by Monique Svazlian, a women's leadership expert and author of *Leading Gracefully: A Woman's*



Dr. Gohar Shahnazaryan

Guide to Confident, Authentic and Effective Leadership. Topics mentioned included the myriad other challenges that are facing women in Armenia, such as domestic violence, and how the laws protecting women are still behind where they need to be in terms of creating equal protection for women. Also discussed was the newly created Women's Fund of Armenia, created to support local initiatives to create more opportunities for economic, social and political development for women in Armenia.

The evening ended on a hopeful tone for the future of the women in Armenia, with many opportunities and possibilities given the challenges that still exist. To learn more about the Women's Fund, established in 2018 to support the building of a woman's movement in Armenia, or to donate, visit:

Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/womensfundarmenia/>

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OBITUARY

Sam Pilafian, Tuba Maestro of Multiple Genres, Dies at 69

By Richard Sandomir

TEMPE, Ariz. (*New York Times*) — Sam Pilafian, a virtuoso tuba player who performed an eclectic mix of classical, jazz, pop and rock music and brought unflagging exuberance to teaching young tubists, died on April 5 at his home in Tempe, Ariz. He was 69.

His wife, Diann (Jezurski) Pilafian, said the cause was colon cancer.

As a busy soloist, a founding member of the influential Empire Brass quintet and a

the tuba to Fred Rogers on an episode of “Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood” in 1985.

“You have to blow through buzzing lips,” Pilafian told Mr. Rogers.

After creating a sound, Mr. Rogers said, “Your lips tickle.”

Mr. Pilafian tickled his lips during more than 40 years of diverse collaborations. He played with the singers Bernadette Peters and Barbara Cook; the Duke Ellington and Lionel Hampton orchestras; the ensemble on the Philip Glass album “Koyaanisqatsi” (1982); the New York Philharmonic and the Boston Symphony Orchestra, as a substitute or soloist; and Pink Floyd, on the 1979 album “The Wall.”

“I did a lot of studio work back then,” Pilafian told the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* in 1990, discussing his work on “The Wall.” “I had always studied jazz, so when I got to New York, I just ended up doing a lot of rock ‘n’ roll.”

Recalling his work with the trumpeter Lew Soloff and the trombonist James Pugh, he added, “When they combined our sound, they sweetened it so my tuba actually sounds more like a French horn on the album.”

But Pilafian is best known for his work with Empire Brass, whose repertoire includes Renaissance and Baroque music, transcriptions of classical works, show tunes, Christmas songs and

pieces composed for the quintet. It has released more than two dozen recordings.

Empire Brass embraces the classic brass quintet configuration — a pair of trumpets, French horn, trombone and tuba — and has long been known for its virtuosity and showmanship.

“You have not often heard an ensemble that played with more gusto than this one,” the *New York Times* music critic Donal Henahan wrote of an Empire recital in 1977. “Individual notes were hit in the center and chords were blended with the transparency that comes from exact corporate intonation.

Phrases, even at dashing tempos, were lyrical and supple. Balances were perfectly achieved without any obtrusive effort.”

Vignola recalled being a guest artist at a recording session with Empire Brass in the early 1990s when the producer asked him to make a jazz record with Pilafian. “Travelin’ Light,” the first of several albums they made, helped start them off as a touring duo.

“Who would have thought, a jazz tuba and an acoustic guitar?” Mr. Vignola said in a telephone interview from Sweden, where he was performing. “We were an odd couple, but our act went over. Sam was a great entertainer and, like Louis Armstrong, broke all the rules.”

James Samuel Pilafian was born on October 25, 1949, in Miami. His father, James, was a lawyer, and his mother, Rosa (Boyajian) Pilafian, known as Shocky, was a paralegal in her husband’s firm and managed their commercial properties.

Sam played the accordion as a youngster. But he switched instruments at 11 on the advice of a veteran tubist, who told him that if he played tuba he would always have friends.

He was a quick study and within a few years had joined the musicians union and was playing in hotel orchestras that backed headliners like Frank Sinatra and Liza Minnelli, and in a six-piece Dixieland band that performed at racetracks and other places around Miami.

While attending what is now the Frost School of Music at the University of Miami, where he earned a bachelor’s degree, he had a summer fellowship at the Tanglewood Music Center for advanced music training in Lenox, Mass. His tuba playing impressed Leonard Bernstein, who was an adviser there, and who enlisted him in the orchestra for the premiere of his theatrical work “Mass” at the opening of the Kennedy Center in Washington in 1971.

Tanglewood was also the birthplace of Empire Brass.

Michael Tilson Thomas, the music director of the San Francisco Symphony, was then a conducting student at Tanglewood. He told Bernstein that the five brass instrumentalists “should begin playing together because we sound alike, although we had never met,”

Pilafian told the *Post-Dispatch*.

“So we did,” he added, “and we became a rehearsal band, getting together just to rehearse.”

He remained with the group for 22 years, leaving in 1993.

Pilafian, whose tuba mentors included Arnold Jacobs, the longtime former principal tubist of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, was also a teacher for many years. He held positions at Boston University, Berklee College of Music, the Tanglewood Institute, Arizona State University and the Frost School. He and a fellow tubist, Patrick Sheridan, developed a series of exercises adapted from martial arts and yoga to help singers and wind and brass players breathe more effectively.

“My teaching philosophy has always been predicated on catching students doing something right,” he told the magazine the *Brass Herald* in 2013.

The tubist Andrew Hitz recalled being a shy 14-year-old at Tanglewood in the summer of 1990 when Mr. Pilafian eased his fears.

“I could play as well as anybody, but I was scared and in tears,” Hitz said by telephone. “But Sam was able with me, and countless others, to insulate us from criticism and make us feel you were safe, while challenging the hell out of you. The gift he gave me is that I never again questioned whether I belonged with any musicians.”

In addition to his wife, Pilafian is survived by his sons, Alexander Sarkis Pilafian and Zev Levin-Pilafian, and his sisters, Marni Pilafian and Nerisa Gay Pilafian.

When Pilafian was in college, he was determined to do whatever was necessary to elevate his musicianship. So he tried an experiment with a friend, Mike Gerber, a blind pianist, he told *NDSU Magazine* in 2017, when he was a visiting artist at North Dakota State University.

Fascinated by Gerber’s heightened sense of hearing, Mr. Pilafian bandaged his own eyes. He was disoriented that first day but felt that his hearing had noticeably improved after three days. On Day 4, he concluded that his listening had grown dramatically acute, and he could play back whatever Mr. Gerber played on the piano.

“Nothing was the same after that,” he said.



partner to the acoustic guitarist Frank Vignola in the jazz group Travelin’ Light, Pilafian expanded the musical possibilities of his lumbering instrument.

“He’s easily the best tuba player I’ve ever played with,” the trumpeter Charles Lewis, another original member of Empire Brass, said by telephone. “He could do everything — play all kinds of music — and he could light up a room.”

Pilafian, a natural entertainer, was once nicknamed the Evil Knievel of the Tuba for daringly playing *The Clarinet Polka* while standing on his head. He also tried teaching

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COMMUNITY NEWS

US House, Senate Introduce Bills on Genocide Recognition

CONGRESS, from page 4

Congressional Armenian Genocide Commemoration, visit facebook.com/ArmenianAssembly

"I'm proud to join the Armenian Assembly of America in commemorating the Armenian



Armenian Caucus Co-Chair Rep. Gus Bilirakis and Armenian Assembly Board Member Annie Simonian Totah

Genocide, both in Washington and around the country, so that the memory of the 1.5 million lives lost will never be forgotten. We know from our own historical records about forced marches, about women and children being starved, and about how cultural and intellectual leaders were targeted first, proving the intent of the genocide was the removal of Armenian culture. Fortunately, they failed. But in order to make 'Never Again' a reality, not just a slogan, we must ensure what happened is not forgotten. It's time the US government stand on the right side of history and officially acknowledge what we all know to be true: the Armenian Genocide happened, and nothing like it can ever happen again," Rep. Judy Chu (D-CA) said.

"It is critical we acknowledge the Armenian Genocide and the horrors the Armenian people suffered at the hands of the Ottoman Empire. As an Armenian American, I am committed to ensuring we properly recognize these crimes against humanity and stand strong against any genocide

denial," Rep. Anthony Brindisi (D-NY) said to the Armenian Assembly.

In his remarks, Armenian Ambassador to the United States Varuzhan Nersisyan thanked the Armenian Caucus and all those who have supported and continue to support the recognition of the Armenian Genocide. He stressed the importance of condemning one of the greatest tragedies of the 20th century as an important step towards preventing future genocides.

Artsakh Representative to the US Robert Avetisyan thanked everyone for being part of this important commemoration, and quoted President Franklin Delano Roosevelt who said: "Any oppression, any injustice, and any hatred is a wedge to destroy and attack our civilization."

"Today is a day of memory. We mourn the loss of 1, 500,000 fallen compatriots. Armenians in the entire world misses tens of thousands of



Levon Charkoudian, Maryland State House Delegate Lorig Charkoudian, Diran Adalian, and Armenian National Institute Director Dr. Rouben Adalian

architects, doctors, composers, teachers, and clergy. The Armenian Genocide was indeed and remains a crime against the entire humanity. Today is a day of gratitude. Within so many nations, including the United States who were among the first to react and who saved countless lives by responding with diplomatic and humanitarian missions," Avetisyan stated. "We are sincerely graceful for the Members of the US Congress and their staff for their respect, steadfast support for their fellow Americans of Armenian descent, and their continued efforts towards formal recognition of our tragedy. And I say this as an Artsakhtsi, whose fledgling democratic home continues to develop under constant threats of another genocide," he added.

Additional remarks were given by former US Ambassador to Armenia John Evans and Congressional Armenian Staffers Association Co-Chair Maria Martirosyan who is Congressman Jimmy Gomez's (D-CA) Legislative Correspondent. Maryland State House Delegate Lorig Charkoudian was also in attendance for the commemoration, with her father Levon Charkoudian, who was Commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Community Affairs under Governor Francis Sargent.

Eastern Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church Vicar Bishop Anoushavan Tanielian gave the invocation, and Diocesan Legate of the Armenian Church of America Archbishop Vicken Aykazian provided the benediction.

St. James Armenian Church to Host 117th Diocesan Assembly and Gala Banquet

WATERTOWN — St. James Armenian Apostolic Church of Watertown will welcome all of the Clergy and lay delegates of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church, as it hosts the 117th Diocesan Assembly and Clergy Conference from April 29 to May 5.

The week-long gathering will include the Clergy Conference and conclude with the Diocesan Assembly. The culmination of the week's event will be the Gala Banquet on Friday, May 3, in the Celebration Ballroom at the Boston Marriott Burlington hotel. The evening will begin with a cocktail reception at 7 p.m., with the banquet to follow at 8 p.m. The Very Rev. Daniel Findikyan, Primate of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church, will preside.

This year, the Diocese will honor Nancy Guleserian and her late husband, Edward, who long supported St. James Armenian Church, in gratitude for their long-support of, and impact on the Diocese and Armenian



Ed and Nancy Guleserian

faithful and communities in America and throughout the world. The Guleserians have been fervent supporters of the Armenian Church, the Eastern Diocese, St. James, and many Armenian and local organizations. Edward and Nancy are previous recipients of

our St. James Parishioners of the Year Award and, in 2007, the prestigious Eastern Diocesan St. Nersess Shnorhali Medal.

Also to be honored at the banquet as the Friend of the Armenians will be Dr. Helen Evans, the Mary and Michael Jaharis Curator for Byzantine Art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, and Curator for last year's the "Armenia!" exhibit. Dr. Evans is directly responsible for showcasing Armenia's Christian Art, and was instrumental in the permanent display of major works of Armenian art in the medieval galleries.

For tickets, visit the St. James website at www.stjameswatertown.org.



Prof. Helen Evans



The Denial of Armenian Genocide And the Killing Order of Talat Pasha LECTURE and BOOK SIGNING By Dr. Taner Akcam

Dr. Akcam holds the Kaloosdian and Mugar chair of Armenian Genocide Studies at Clark University

Historian and sociologist, Dr. Akcam is one of the first Turkish intellectuals, to acknowledge and openly discuss the Armenian Genocide.

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Program

English Speaker

Professor Kevork Bardakjian

Alex & Marie Manoogian Armenian Chair,
Armenian Language & Literature
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor

Musical Interlude

Ms. Narine Ghambaryan

Master Kanon player & instructor

Armenian Speaker

Monsignor Andon Atamian

Vicar General of the Armenian Catholic Eparchy in the U.S.

Reception to follow

Public is invited



COMMUNITY NEWS

Discovering Armenian Heritage and Culture

HARTFORD, Conn. — Connecticut was home to a program of music, demonstrations, a panel of renowned scholars and Armenian food on Saturday, March 30, as the University of Connecticut presented a comprehensive program and festival titled “Discovering Armenian Heritage and Culture.”

Held at the historic Mark Twain House and Museum in Hartford, the program drew some 150 people from Connecticut and the northeast eager to learn more about all things Armenian.

The event was sponsored by the University of Connecticut's Office of Global Affairs and School of Social Work and was made possible by the generous support of the Alice K. Norian Endowment at the University. In 2004, Alice K. Norian bequeathed more than \$500,000 to restart Armenian studies at the University of Connecticut. The bequest included funds to be dedicated to an annual lecture on Armenia, which would be open to the public as well as the University community.

The program began with a welcome by Dr. Nina Rovinelli Heller, dean of the UConn School of Social Work, who co-chairs the committee along with Daniel Weiner, vice president for Global Affairs.

Heller reviewed some of the history of bringing Armenian students to UConn and welcomed visiting faculty and students in social work from Yerevan State University. She also reviewed other joint programs including archeology social work and agriculture between the two universities.

During the first segment of the morning program, Yerekin Maggie Stepanian gave a demonstration on making Armenian string cheese, with samples for all and Prof. Mari

and lecturer in digital media and design at the University of Connecticut. The panel was moderated by Kathryn Libal, director of Human Rights Institute and Associate Professor of Social Work and Human Rights, University of Connecticut. Following the panel presentation, a number of comments and questions were posed by the audience.

Marsoobian was available to autograph copies of his book, *Reimagining A Lost Armenian Home: The Dildilian Photography Collection*, as was Firkatian for her book. Marsoobian and Firkatian are both members of the Norian Community Advisory Committee which is made up of members of the Connecticut Armenian American Community.

Following the presentation, a sumptuous and generous Armenian meal, inspired by some of the recipes in Firkatian's book, was served at no cost to all attendees.

The program lasted through the morning and into the afternoon.

Weiner was delighted to see the turnout for the event. “Community participation is critical in making our events a success, and this event was a great success. The engagement by both the presenters and the attendees throughout the day was wonderful. Our relationship with the Armenian-American diaspora is very important to the University. Shedding light on Armenian History but also keeping memory alive is very important, and this is why we will be offering the “Armenian Virtual Memory Project” course in the fall, in consultation with the speakers from the March 30 event.”

Attorney Harry Mazadoorian, also a member of the Norian Community Advisory committee, praised the effort which had gone in to making



The panel at the University of Connecticut

Firkatian of the University of Hartford discussed her new book, *Home Again: Armenian Recipes from the Ottoman Empire*.

Brilliant musical performances were rendered by Tatev Amiryan, composer and pianist and soprano Anna Hayrapetyan, with pertinent commentary between the various performances.

The musical selections were followed by a powerful panel presentation on “Discovering Your Armenian Roots: How to Research Genealogy & Ancestry.” The panelists included George Aghjayan, director of Armenian Historical Archives; Marc A. Mamigonian, director of Academic Affairs at the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR); Tsolen Sarian, executive director of Project SAVE Armenian Photograph Archives; Armen T. Marsoobian, professor and chair of the Philosophy Department at Southern Connecticut State University; and Catherine Masud, documentarian

the presentations of the day such a great success and particularly noted the work of Zahra Ali, director of Global Partnerships and Outreach at the UConn Office of Global Affairs as well as Maureen Zavodjancik, events assistant. He observed that the attendees had demonstrated great enthusiasm and satisfaction with the day's activities.

The Norian Armenian Programs Committee is charged with supporting and enhancing the University of Connecticut's Armenian programming and, in particular, its connections with Yerevan State University.

The faculty programs committee has representatives from the disciplines of anthropology, archaeology, geography, agriculture and resource economics, pathobiology, and social work.

More information on the Norian programs at Global Affairs Department can be found at <http://armenia.uconn.edu>.

TEKEYAN CULTURAL ASSOCIATION
MHER MEGERDCHIAN THEATRICAL GROUP (MMTG)

CALENDAR

OF EVENTS 2019-2020

107
APRIL

ALL RISE ...
 "All Rise, the Court is in Session" is a play by Perch Zeytunzyan, based on the trial of the Armenian Hero Soghomon Tehlirian, directed by Gerlad Papisian. This will be the 8th performance of this renowned play.
 Kenmore Middle School | WASHINGTON, DC | 4:00PM | \$35

RELOADED
 Mher Megerdchian Theatrical Group's Comedy Club joins Huyser Music Ensemble with a special appearance in their newest show entitled "International Rhythms II - Reloaded".
 St. Illuminator's Cathedral | NYC | 7:30PM | \$20

03
MAY

18
MAY

COMEDY CLUB
 Enjoy a brand new Comedy Show by MMTG's Comedy Club. With Wine & Cheese.
 Tekeyan Cultural Center | Englewood Cliffs | 8:00PM | \$35

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19
MAY

02
JUNE

LOBSTER NIGHT
 Enjoy some delicious lobster with lavish seafood appetizers while enjoying some comedy performed by MMTG's Comedy Club.
 Jack's Lobster Shack | Cresskill | 7:30PM

A NEW PLAY (COMEDY)
 SAVE THE DATE
 Details to follow...

12
OCTOBER

13
OCTOBER

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CHRISTMAS GALA
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 Details to follow...
 ST. THOMAS CHURCH | Tenafly | 8:00PM

07
DECEMBER

18
APRIL

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Armenia Becomes First Country to Join the St. Jude Alliance to Battle Pediatric Cancer

ALLIANCE, from page 1

“Whenever you see the will of the people to create a better country, a better world, a better life for every one of their citizens, things start changing, and that’s what happened in Armenia,” he said.

Tamamyan was among the St. Jude national outreach participants who came to St. Jude in 2012. Since that time, he has been closely collaborating with St. Jude, which in February resulted in the opening of the Pediatric Cancer and Blood Disorders Center of Armenia.

In the U.S., the cure rate for children with cancer is 80 percent, but that is not the reality for the rest of the world.

Medical Society Gala in LA

The Armenian Medical Society (AAMS) and their community of supporters gathered together at the Sheraton Universal Hotel in Los Angeles on April 6, to celebrate the work of the organization and honor the achievements of two extraordinary individuals.

Hakobyan was the keynote speaker. She addressed the importance of having the capabilities to provide comprehensive, state-of-the-art cancer treatment for children afflicted with cancer in their homeland, and to receive this care regardless of the family’s ability to pay. Hakobyan noted that in less-developed countries, such as Armenia, cancer is often equal to a death sentence, but with proper treatment and resources, it can be overcome.

“We are gathered here today to support these children,” said Hakobyan. “Together we can fight for every child with cancer and it is our obligation to not let them lose the fight due to lack of resources. City of Smile Foundation was established to change their



Serj Tankian receives an award from the Armenian American Medical Society.

can receive the care they so desperately need was truly remarkable.”

Serj Tankian, singer, poet, songwriter, visual artist, activist, composer and the voice of



The AAMS Executive Board with Mrs. Anna Hakobyan

lives, to move them in a positive direction, and to bring a smile to the face of these children and their families. We are starting it by saving one smile at a time. Tonight, there are hundreds of people present which means so many people are standing by the sides of these children and their parents and giving a piece of hope and a hand of support.”

Armenian American Medical Society President, Armond Kotikian, DDS, MD, FACS, was thrilled with this year’s response to the need. “Our partnership with City of Smile created an opportunity for our organization to make a real and meaningful impact the lives of children suffering from oncological and hematological diseases in the heart of Armenia,” he said. “Seeing how so many people opened their hearts to the foundation and generously gave so that these children

System of a Down, was honored with the AAMS lifetime achievement award. Humble in his acceptance, Serj noted the importance of working together to provide the basics for students, patients, veterans, and the most disenfranchised in the homeland. “We need to find more ways to help organizations, such as City of Smile, reach their objectives in our new, free, independent, and hopeful Armenia,” remarked Tankian.

During her visit to Los Angeles, Hakobyan also participated in a gala celebration marking the 25th anniversary of the Consulate General in the city.

During her visit to the US, Hakobyan also visited Washington, DC and New York.

(Parts of a story by Michelle Corbet of the *Daily Memphian* were used in this report.)



Anna Hakobyan with Ambassador Varuzhan Nersesayn and Consul Dr. Armen Baibourtian and guest in Los Angeles



Anna Hakobyan, wife of Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, was in Memphis Friday, April 12 to sign an agreement with St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital. (Patrick Lantrip/Daily Memphian)



COMMUNITY NEWS



armenian
museum
of america

art
culture
eternity

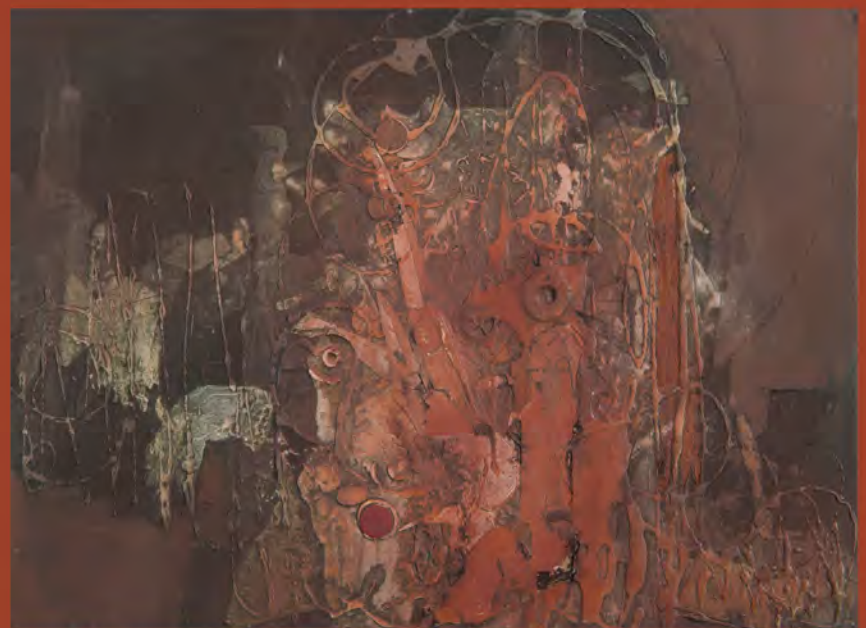
The Armenian Museum presents a new exhibition that explores the intertwined lives of diplomat Diana Apcar (1859–1937) and artist Berj Kailian (1914–2014).

In the Shadow of Branches

Diana Apcar | Berj Kailian



Diana Apcar with husband Michael, 1890



Untitled, mixed media on masonite, about 1970, Berj Kailian



Untitled, mixed media on masonite, about 1970, Berj Kailian



Diana Apcar with family in her backyard in Yokohama, Japan, 1920

AN UNTOLD STORY

Find out how a de facto Armenian diplomat living in Japan helped hundreds of Armenian refugees from the Genocide immigrate to the United States. See paintings from the Museum's collection by Berj Kailian, who was five years old when Diana reached out to unite her with her family in Massachusetts in 1919.

OPENING RECEPTION & GALLERY TALK:

April 24, 2019, 6–8:30 pm

6 pm: Candlelight gallery viewing to observe Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day, 1st floor

7 pm: Reception and gallery talk, Adele & Haig Der Manuelian galleries, 3rd floor

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COMMUNITY NEWS

State House Program Commemorates Genocide Anniversary with Keynote Speaker Afeyan

COMMEMORATION, from page 1

The morning began with the ceremonial procession of the sergeant-at-arms, elected officials and Armenian clergy of the three main denominations in Massachusetts entering the hall led by the Homenetmen Scouts bearing Armenian and American flags. Rev. Dr. Avedis Boynerian of Armenian Memorial Church of Watertown gave the invocation and Representative David Robertson recited the Pledge of Allegiance. The children of St. Stephen's Armenian Elementary School sang the Armenian and American anthems.

Rep. David Muradian, the sole Armenian member of the Massachusetts House of Representatives, welcomed the guests and served as master of ceremonies. Massachusetts State Senator Will Brownsberger recognized the elected municipal and state officials present.

Speaker DeLeo and Keynote Speaker Nubar Afeyan

Sheriff of Middlesex County Peter Koutoujian, a regular presence at important Armenian-American events, introduced Speaker Robert A. DeLeo. He first, however, briefly presented his family's story of fleeing Marash to



Dr. Nubar Afeyan (photo: Ken Martin)

the United States. Koutoujian also commented on the recent visit of Anna Hakobyan, wife of Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, to Boston for the City of Smile Foundation banquet, where Koutoujian was master of ceremonies, and noted the encouraging changes over the past year in the Republic of Armenia.

Koutoujian gratefully declared that DeLeo consistently has encouraged Armenians involved in Massachusetts government like himself, Muradian and former Rep. Rachel Kaprielian (whom Koutoujian pointed out in the audience). Though he does not have a district which is primarily Armenian or has an -ian at the end of his name, DeLeo has participated regularly in the annual commemorations of the genocide, Koutoujian said, not because he has to but because he wants to. Koutoujian exclaimed that DeLeo chooses to never forget, as a supporter of social justice and the Armenian community.



Speaker Robert DeLeo (photo: David Medzorian)

DeLeo in turn said that the Commonwealth of Massachusetts is a place that cherishes freedom. He said that he came to the issue through Speaker George Keverian, who began this commemoration many years ago, and consequently learned about the Armenian heritage and the Armenian Genocide. DeLeo cited Peter Balakian's book, *The Burning Tigris*, which

and Americans, we must insure that human spirit outshines inhumanity" in today's world.

Muradian presented the keynote speaker of the program, Dr. Nubar Afeyan, a well-known biotech entrepreneur and philanthropist based in Boston. Afeyan is founder and chief executive officer of Flagship Pioneering. Afeyan noted that though he has given talks around the globe, this was the first time he had spoken in this august setting, close to his residence.

In his broad-ranging talk, Afeyan pointed out that the first Armenian came to America at the start of the 17th century, and the story of Massachusetts and the United States was intimately connected from its beginning with the immigration of many groups, including the Armenians. Afeyan then gave a copy of Hayk Demoyan's hefty book which documents the Armenian presence in America, *Armenian Legacy in America: A 400-Year Heritage*, to DeLeo as a gift.

Afeyan summarized the historical events of the Armenian Genocide and the lack of international formal contemporary acknowledgment, which leaves room for denialism. He focused on the birth of saviors and survivors, which he said often have been overlooked in the narrative. Afeyan like Speaker DeLeo referred to Balakian's *The Burning Tigris* and read an excerpt pertaining to the meeting of American humanitarians in Boston's Faneuil Hall, only a short walk from the State House.

Afeyan spoke of his grandparents from Adapazar and Urfa, both in the Ottoman Empire, and how his paternal grandfather was



Sheriff Peter Koutoujian, left, and Rep. David Muradian (photo: Ken Martin)

informed him about the actions of Americans concerned about the Armenian Genocide as it was happening. He declared his hope that not only the US but the rest of the world can fully acknowledge the events that befell the Armenians during World War I as genocide, and that this would lead to healing. The legacy of those events must not be forgotten, he said, but at the same time, he continued, "as humans

rescued by German officers. The stories he heard growing up led him to understand that many survivors owed their lives to saviors. While the survivors could not pay them back, he said that today's Armenians can do something in their name to help people suffering today in the same way their ancestors did.

This was the inspiration for the Aurora Initiative, established four years ago by Afeyan, Vartan Gregorian and Ruben Vardanyan. The initiative attracts public attention to the atrocities taking place around the world while seeking to support and inspire modern-day saviors, through "gratitude in action."

Afeyan said he feels the urgency as an immigrant to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to do something in response to the opportunities given him, as do many other Armenians. They are descendants of Armenians who were given a second chance at life. To best make use of that second chance, Afeyan urged fellow Armenians "to use our past as a force for good, to find a way to express this gratitude by supporting today's refugees and needy, embracing humanitarian causes just like the ones that saved our lives. And above all, let's work on making America great, in the way it was when those devoted Americans, some 125 years ago, walked to Faneuil Hall to take up our cause."

see STATE HOUSE, page 12



THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE THE ANNUAL COMMEMORATION IN TIMES SQUARE

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**WE REMEMBER
AND DEMAND**



Rep. David Muradian (photo: David Medzorian)



COMMUNITY NEWS

State House Program Commemorates Genocide Anniversary

STATE HOUSE, from page 11

Recognitions and Acknowledgments, Musical Inspiration

Rep. Jonathan Hecht of Watertown took the podium to acknowledge the presence of human rights organizations whose representatives were present to support the Armenian event, including the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Boston, the Massachusetts Coalition to Save Darfur, the Anti-Defamation League of New England, and the Watertown Citizens for Peace, Justice and the Environment. Hecht noted the presence of a survivor of the Tutsi Genocide in Rwanda in the audience. He asked for a moment of silence in the audience out of respect for the 25th anniversary of that genocide, and for the audience to rededicate itself to preventing the out-



Aurelian and Anahid Mardiros receive the Joint Senate/House Resolution from Rep. Andres Vargas, right (photo: David Medzorian)

break of genocide anywhere in the world.

Hecht read a proclamation from Gov. Charles D. Baker proclaiming April 24, 2019 to be Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day and then presented it to Asdghig "Starrie" Alemian, a genocide survivor who turned 109 this March. Despite her advanced age, Alemian has attended all of the recent Armenian Genocide com-



The Keverian family with Alfred Lattanzi and scholarship recipients (photo: Ken Martin)

memorations with her family.

Marilyn Devaney of the Massachusetts Governor's Council, a lifelong resident of Watertown, recalled the terrible stories she heard from Armenian Genocide survivors, and called for a moment of silent prayer for former Speaker George Keverian. She called for each person to lobby Congress to get a resolution passed acknowledging the Armenian Genocide, and then presented the resolution of the Governor's Council calling for the same.

Rep. Andres Vargas from Haverhill presented the Joint Senate/House Resolution honoring Aurelian and Anahid Mardiros for their contribution to Armenian causes in Massachusetts and elsewhere through philanthropy and leadership. The resolution points out that they are an example of the classic American success story, immigrating from Romania to create A&A Industries, a successful family-run business, now based in Peabody, which manufactures precision machine components.

Their factory fabricated and donated the



Keverian Scholarship recipients Joshua Powers, left, and Maxwell James Fathy, right, with Alfred Lattanzi (photo: Ken Martin)

monument with its base for Armenian Heritage Park in Boston, which powerfully remembers the Armenian Genocide and celebrates the immigrant heritage in one of the most prominent spots in Boston. Aurelian Mardiros and family members from A&A Industries annually volunteer time to supervise the reconfiguration of the sculpture.

The family quietly supports many Armenian causes in Massachusetts and elsewhere, including schools, scholarships and organizations like the Daughters of Vartan (in which Anahid Mardiros served as Matron), Knights of Vartan, Armenian Relief Society, the Armenian Mirror-Spectator, the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research and Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston.

Many members of the Mardiros family were present in the audience to witness the presentation of the Resolution to the Mardiros couple.

The program then turned to music to inspire the audience. State Rep. David Rogers introduced clarinetist Narek Arutyunian. He was born in Armenia and raised in Moscow, where he soon became a prize-winning musician. He moved to the United States to attend the Juilliard School and obtain a master's degree from the Manhattan School of Music. In addition to solo recitals, he has performed as a soloist with many orchestras throughout the world.

Arutyunian performed two pieces: the hymn Wondrous It Is to Me, written by the 8th century Khosrovidukht, one of the earliest known Armenian women composers, and the festive Spanish Caprice by Ivan Olenchik. He introduced both pieces succinctly.

Second Annual Keverian Public Service Scholarship

George Keverian's name over the years has been mentioned again and again at the State House commemorations by both officials and Armenian community members. This is not a coincidence, as Keverian was the one to initiate the commemoration while he was in office as

Speaker of the House of Representatives in 1985. The next part of the program perpetuated Keverian's memory.

The Keverian family, joined by the family of Alfred Lattanzi, a close friend of Keverian, created the Honorable Speaker George Keverian Public Service Scholarship to keep Keverian's legacy alive and use the lessons of his life to inspire new generations of young leaders. The scholarship is "supporting the work of students who strive to create positive change by helping individuals reach their potential, communities achieve their goals, and society advance the principles of democracy." Alfred Lattanzi himself emotionally presented the second annual George Keverian Memorial Scholarship recipients, quoting Keverian, who declared, "Service should not be rendered as a favor conferred or as a debt, but as a simple, natural devotion to our fellow man."

Lattanzi thanked the Armenian Student Association (ASA) and Everett High School for selecting the two recipients of the scholarship, who each were awarded \$5,000. Maxwell James Fathy was selected by ASA not only for his impressive accomplishments but because he wishes to pursue a career in public service to enact meaningful change in society. Born in Newton, Mass., he graduated Newton North High School in 2010 and then Tufts University (Cum Laude) in international relations. He is currently studying at the Fletcher School at Tufts for a master's degree in law and diplomacy.

The second recipient, Joshua Powers, is a graduating senior academically ranked 5th in his class of 515 at Everett High School. He has held positions of leadership and service including president of the Student Council and president of the National Honor Society. He aspires, he said, to increase "the connection between different types of people and create a more welcoming and tolerant society."

To learn more information about the scholarship email gkeverianscholarship@gmail.com

Conclusion and Reception with Governor Baker

Muradian in his closing remarks declared that Armenians must not forget what happened in the past, for it formed those alive today. Instead, he said, "We can use education, and educating individuals that we come across, to change the planet one person at a time." One day what happened to the Armenians will



Genocide survivor Asdghig "Starrie" Alemian with, standing from left, daughter Claire, Rep. David Muradian and Governor Charlie Baker (photo: Jirair Hovsepien)

achieve recognition and genocide will never happen again to people of any race, religion or nation.

Muradian thanked Michael Demirchian as chair of the Boston Armenian Genocide Commemorative Committee. After the Order of Intercessory Prayer was conducted by the Armenian clergy present, the crowd of attendees went downstairs for light refreshments. Governor Baker arrived there, and mingled with the crowd, including many of the speakers and program participants.

BRAVO! Ms. Rebecca Bakalian Hachigian for her letter to the *Mirror Spectator*

**The time has come for Mr. James Kalustian and his cohorts to resign.
Today, not in May.**

Elect:

Very Rev. Fr. Oshagan Gulgolian

Fr. Gomidas Zohrabian

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Arts & Living

Belmont, Mass. Library Spotlights Armenian Titles

By David Boyajian

BELMONT, Mass. — During April, the Belmont Public Library is displaying a selection of books, DVDs, and CDs on the Armenian Genocide and Armenian history and culture.

Library Director Peter Struzziero and his staff facilitated the display whose items can be borrowed by patrons.

The library is part of the Minuteman Library Network, a regional consortium of 36 public and five college libraries. The Network contains several hundred Armenian titles.

Belmont's April display has so far included *The History of the Armenian Genocide* by Vahakn Dadrian; *Killing Orders* by Taner Akçam; "Architects of Denial," a film by Dean Cain and Montel Williams; *Armenia, the Survival of a Nation* by Christopher Walker; *Tadem, My Father's Village* by Robert Aram Kaloosdian; *Neither to Laugh nor to Weep* by Abraham and Vartan Hartunian; *Goodbye, Antoura* by Karnig Panian; *Treasures from the Ark: 1700 Years of Armenian Christian Art* by Vrej Nersessian; "Komitas-Aslamazian," a CD by the Chilingarian Quartet; Armenian Folk Arts, *Culture, and Identity* by Levon Abrahamian and Nancy & Sam Sweezy; *The History of Armenia* by Simon Payaslian; *The Kingdom of Armenia* by M. Chahin; *Armenia and Karabagh Travel Guide* by Matthew Karanian; *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh* by Franz Werfel; *The Sandcastle Girls* by Chris Bohjalian; and other titles. As items are borrowed, additional ones are added.

A group of local Armenian Americans conceived the idea of a library display for Armenian Genocide Commemoration Month. They suggested nearly 40 titles available in the Minuteman Network on topics and genres such as the Genocide, history, religion, art, music, film, food, travel, and fiction.

The group consisted of Jirair Hovsepian, Lucine Kasbarian, Heather Krafian, Marc Mamigonian, Judith Ananian Sarno, and the author.

Hovsepian brought about the town's annual official proclamation on the Armenian Genocide and is an elected member of Belmont's Town Meeting which decides the town's budget and bylaws. Kasbarian is a book and article author and a political cartoonist. Krafian is a board member of the Armenian Relief Society, Eastern Region and co-chairs St. Stephen's Armenian Elementary School's School Committee in nearby Watertown. Mamigonian is the director of Academic Affairs at the National Association of Armenian Studies and Research. Ananian Sarno is active on town government boards and is an elected member of Belmont's Town Meeting. The author is a freelance journalist and activist.

The Belmont Media Center is producing a community cable television spot about the display, along with a brief interview with this article's author. The spot will be viewable on the center's website.

Libraries are a valuable community resource to which Armenian Americans should contribute.

(The author's articles are archived at Armeniapedia.org/wiki/David_Boyajian.)



The Belmont Public Library display



Santiago Nazarian

The Bizarre Existentialism Of Santiago Nazarian

YEREVAN/SÃO PAULO — Forty-one-year-old Santiago Nazarian was born in São Paulo, in the family of plastic artist Guilherme de Faria and writer and translator Elisa Nazarian. He studied literature and graduated in Social Communications in São Paulo. He worked as a bookstore salesman, advertising copy writer and English teacher. Nazarian practiced body art and traveled a lot. He soon achieved prominence as a writer.

In 2007, Nazarian was selected by the International Book Fair in Bogota as one of the 39-highest-profile Latin American writers under the age of 39. In 2010, the

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

influential Brazilian newspaper *Globo* named him among the 8 most interesting domestic debutants in the literature of the last decade. His books include *Olívio* (2003), *Nameless Death* (Planeta, Brazil

2004), *Holiday of Me* (2005), *Chewing Humans* (2006), *The Building, Boredom and the Blind Boy* (2009), *Pornofantasma* (2011), *Biophobia* (2014), *Dark Snow* (2017), and *Dead Dragon's Party* (2019). Nazarian received literary prizes and his works have been translated into Spanish, Italian, English, German and Serbian. He is also a translator and does scripts for television.

What concerns Santiago Nazarian the writer? Your literature is classified as "bizarre existentialism," in which you mix classic references of existentialist literature with pop culture, trash and horror. Could you please explain this style?

Although my writings are deeply rooted in Goth, Romanticism and Surrealism, I also have this huge influence of pop culture, of course, including videogames, pop music and horror. I guess it is pretty common for anyone who was born at the end of last century, but many writers, especially in Brazil, try to deny that influence; their books are always influenced by Sartre, not by Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. So, as a (once) young writer, I tried to incorporate those new aesthetics into my literature.

Dear Santiago, how much you can be called a successor of the rich traditions of Brazilian literature?

Uh, I wouldn't know. I really do not try to follow any traditions and I do not even think Brazilian literature is that rich. But for sure I was born and raised in Brazil and my writing must be soaked with Brazilian traits that I could not tell. I guess it would be easier for you guys out there to identify it.

Who are your preferred authors in Brazilian and international literature? Mine is Jorge Amado.

Most of my favorite writers are gay: Oscar Wilde, Thomas Mann, Dennis Cooper and James Baldwin. Here in Brazil: João Gilberto Noll, Marcelino Freire, Lúcio Cardoso, João Silvério Trevisan, Caio Fernando Abreu. About Jorge Amado — I have only read in high school his *Capitães de Areia* — it is a good book, I remember enjoying it. But his universe is not really my cup of tea — actually there are loads of soap operas in Brazil inspired by his work, do you know?

I did not know. And today Paulo Coelho is considered as the most famous Brazilian writer. I remember when he came to Yerevan. At the meeting with him it was even impossible to enter the Union of Writers of Armenia. He is not my preferred author, but how you could explain the huge level of his popularity?

He does self-help literature travestied as fiction; so people read nice messages they can apply to their lives. Also they read what they already know, because it is common sense, so they feel smart when they read it.

Your books' titles hint at gothic and vampire subjects. How urgent do they remain for 21st century literature?

I think my books mix this gothic feeling with a more modern pop sensibility, and this is not very common in Brazilian literature yet. I used to say

see NAZARIAN, page 17

Komitas Vartabed Takes Centerstage At Western Diocese

By Taleen Babayan

BURBANK, Calif. — The religious, spiritual and cultural influences of Komitas Vartabed headlined the 2019 Reclaim Conference in honor of the 150th anniversary of his birth, in an all-day event and concert dedicated to the visionary church figure, held at the Western Diocese in Burbank, on Saturday, April 6, under the auspices of Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, Primate of the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of North America.

While Komitas is known throughout the world as the savior of Armenian music, notating and preserving centuries-old music, essentially saving it from annihilation before the Armenian Genocide, he was first and foremost a valued member of the Armenian Church, contributing greatly to its mission and to its Divine Liturgy.

Establishing the tone of the conference in his opening remarks, Rev. Vazken Movsesian noted that the Armenian Church is "alive" but encouraged further engagement.

"We are learning about Komitas Vartabed today as a man of the church," said Movsesian, who highlighted that Komitas had a deep understanding of his faith. "Our whole intention is to reclaim Komitas because he believed in the church and understood God through the Armenian Church."

Reflecting on Komitas as an Armenian clergyman, Rev. Vazken Boyadjian, pastor of the Holy Resurrection Armenian Church in Redmond, Washington, recognized him as a "prophet."

Despite the difficulties Komitas faced in his life, from being orphaned as a youngster, to surviving the trauma of the Armenian Genocide, he "never fell down and never lost his faith."

"The opposite occurred, and he became victorious over his hardships," said Boyadjian, elaborating on the difficult childhood of Komitas, born Soghomon Soghomonian in 1869, losing first his mother, then his father, who was a Deacon in the Armenian Church.

To grapple with these losses, Komitas began to sing as a way to relive his memories with his parents, and due to his good voice, he was enrolled at the Gevorgian Seminary at Echmiadzin at the age of 12, although he did not know how to speak Armenian due to the restrictions of the Ottoman government.

"Komitas served our people with his talents," said Boyadjian, who remarked that he stayed true to his roots, not only by setting out to protect the music of the Armenian people, but by remaining by their side through their gravest time in history.

"He strengthened the spirit of the victims during the Armenian Genocide by praying for them and singing to them during the death marches," he said. Fr. Vazken also revealed a lighter side to Komitas, who enjoyed Armenian dance and telling jokes, even staging the plays of Hagop Baronian with his friends. Ultimately, Komitas ventured into the countryside to write down the songs of the Armenian people that were passed down in the oral tradition, which segued into the day's second talk "Komitas Vartabed as a Discoverer of the Armenian Identity," led by Rev. Fr. Zacharia Saribekian, pastor of the St. Apkar Armenian Church in Scottsdale, Arizona, who highlighted that Komitas was a man "filled with the Armenian Spirit and the Holy Spirit."

Saribekian noted that following the Armenian Genocide, Komitas again became an orphan but "through suffering a new birth occurred."

He read from the writings of famed poets Yeghishe Charentz and Barouyr Sevag, who

see KOMITAS, page 14



ARTS & LIVING

Komitas Vartabed Takes Centerstage At Western Diocese

KOMITAS, from page 13

reference Komitas in their works as a creator and compare him to Mesrob Mashdots because one was a prophet for the Armenian language, and the other for Armenian music.

“Komitas returned to us the Armenian songs,” he said. “He brought these unique words and melodies back to the ears of Armenians.”

As a spiritual leader, he showed the Armenians how to serve the church, and as a music teacher, he taught his students how to find their inner selves and how to discover their own identities, “understanding the souls of his students and reaching them on a soulful level.”

Following lunch, the program continued with a discussion titled, “Revealing Komitas Vartabed’s Character From His Personal Letters,” led by Hayk Madoyan, ecumenical officer of the Western Diocese.

While Komitas wrote often to those close to him, from poet Hovhannes Toumanyan to singer Margarit Babayan, only 184 of his letters have been preserved. Through his personal writings, however, Madoyan concluded that “Komitas was an ordinary man like us who faced his share of challenges.”

The content of the preserved letters reveal 10 different characters of Komitas, according to Madoyan, including an eagerness to learn, work ethic, glimpses of research, kindheartedness, self-expression in art, internal and external struggles, issues with nervousness, cheerfulness, patriotism and love for church, conviction and vision. Madoyan read selections from the letters aloud, which brought to life Komitas’s persona, such as showing glimpses of his research when recounting to Babayan his experience visiting Mount Ararat to collect Kurdish melodies.

“It’s important we go to the source and take the time to read the personal letters of Komitas in order to better understand him,” said Madoyan.

During his segment, Derderian elaborated on the Divine Liturgy of Komitas Vartabed and the Komitasian Badarak, which is “more pure, more cleansed and more to the roots.”

“The Komitasian Badarak has been considered the miracle of all Badaraks,” said Derderian. “What captures my attention when I hear, listen and sing this Badarak is the success and talent of Komitas in being able to harmonize the words and the music that has been harmoniously intermingled and cannot be separated.”

Derderian elaborated on how the meaning of the words embody the hymns, from Der Voghormia to Soorp Soorp and how the “level of his endearing and wondrous creation has captivated, inspired and moved a people in search of its identity.”

Citing research from the late Patriarch Torkom Manoogian, Derderian said the former Patriarch of Jerusalem coined the term, “Vehapar of the Armenian Song” when referring to Komitas. He also noted that to “truly capture and encapsulate the essence of genius of Komitas Vartabed,” a series of extensive lectures and seminars would need to be studied on an academic level due to the breadth of his accomplishments.

“Komitas embraced the sacredness, sanctity and mystery of the Divine Liturgy,” said Derderian. “He was moved by the humility of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and served his Divine Liturgy to the faithful so that through his sacrament the faithful may embrace God’s presence in their lives.”

The final presentation of the conference, “The Genius of Armenian Music,” led by Prof. Vatche Mankerian, focused on the musical gifts of Komitas.

Although more than half of the 4,000 songs Komitas collected, wrote and transcribed were lost, Mankerian emphasized the pieces that survived, including *Hov Arek Sarer* (Come, Breeze), which depicts the Armenian villager. He played this song for audience members, which was recorded and sung by Komitas himself in Paris in 1912. As his captivating voice filled the room, the past fused with the present, particularly when

Mankerian played *Antuni* (Homeless), sung by Armenag Shahmuradian, an opera student of Komitas Vartabed.

“To this day this song is close to our heart and a relevant song unfortunately,” said Mankerian, while elaborating on the many genres of music and themes that the music of Komitas encompasses, from happiness to sadness, to daily life work to weddings.

“People sang these songs for all different occasions,” he said, noting the German discipline Komitas adopted while a student at Frederick William University in Berlin at the turn of the 20th century. “The genius of Komitas is that he realized these songs of the countryside had value.”

To express the impact that Komitas continues to have in the Diaspora in the 21st century, not only among Armenians but around the world, Mankerian concluded by playing compositions by the Hover Chamber Choir performed during a concert at Carnegie Hall in New York on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide.

“Musicians who are aware of their identities can continue this work in a more modern approach,” he said.

In his closing address, Derderian reflected

on the profound conference, remarking that “Komitas Vartabed is a giant in our Armenian Church.”

The program culminated in a special concert dedicated to Komitas Vartabed’s 150th anniversary that took place at Kalaydjian Hall and featured folk songs for string quartet by Komitas Vartabed, performed by the Aslamazian String Quartet, Armenian Chamber Orchestra and directed by Armen Der Gevorkian; Komitas *Piano Suites*, arranged and performed by Prof. Vatche Mankerian; and the Komitas *Chorales* performed by the St. Leon Shnorhali Choir, led by musical director Alenoush Yeghnazar and piano accompaniment by Gegam Achtchian.

“The concert was a great success and covered different genres,” said Yeghnazar. “The guests were impressed with the music and the family-oriented atmosphere and they said the selections left them wanting to hear more.”

The conference and subsequent concert humanized Komitas Vartabed and enlivened him not only as a cultural icon but as a dedicated servant of the Armenian Church. Through the discussions about his life and works as well as his music, guests gained a much more thorough understanding of

Komitas, his mindset and his innumerable contributions to the Armenian religion, faith and culture.

The participation of the youth in this wide-scale event was a testament to the everlasting presence of Komitas Vartabed in today’s world. Aside from helping with logistics, the younger generation, many of whom are members of the ACYOA of the St. Leon Cathedral, participated in the conferences and were on hand to assist in any capacity.

“The youth executed their responsibilities very conscientiously and I was very proud of the way they handled everything,” said Fr. Vazken Movsesian, who noted that the first Reclaim in 2017 targeted the youth of the church, which remains a priority of the Western Diocese.

“The Reclaim Komitas Conference teaches us about one of our church’s greatest known clergyman and one of the greatest Armenian musicians whose music touches our souls,” said youth member Deacon Gevork Takmizyan. “Komitas Vartabed is the reason why I continue my service on the church altar and he plays a big role in my life as a musician, whose music will continue to live within me.”

Recipe Corner

Guest Recipe

by Christine Vartanian Datian

Lemon Curd with Fresh Summer Berries in a Phyllo Cup

Contributed by David Vartanian of the Vintage Press Restaurant, named one of America’s Best Chefs*



LEMON CURD

9 large egg yolks
3 large eggs
1 cup sugar
1 cup freshly squeezed lemon juice

PHYLLO CUPS

6 phyllo sheets
2 ounces melted butter
1 tablespoon superfine sugar
2 pints fresh berries

LEMON CURD DIRECTIONS

Put the egg yolks, eggs and sugar in a stainless steel bowl; whisk them together and then stir in the lemon juice. Put the bowl over a pot of simmering water and stir continuously with a rubber spatula. When the curd starts to thicken, switch to a whisk. Cook the curd until thick. This should take about five minutes. Strain the curd into a glass or plastic container and cover the surface directly with plastic wrap. This prevents a skin from forming. Refrigerate the curd for several hours until cold.

PHYLLO CUPS DIRECTIONS

Cut each phyllo sheet lengthwise into thirds and then each third in half. Butter the phyllo sheets and then sprinkle with sugar. Layer six sheets crosswise on top of each other. Press into a large muffin tin or other oven-proof mold. Bake for 10-12 minutes at 350° degrees until golden.

ASSEMBLY:

When ready to serve, divide the curd into the phyllo cups. Top with fresh berries and serve. Serves 6.



*Best Chefs America features premier chefs like David Vartanian who have been nominated and recommended by their peers in the culinary field. Go to: <https://www.bestchefsamerica.com/>

Go to: <https://www.thearmeniankitchen.com>



ARTS & LIVING

Armenian Heritage Park: Meaningful Public Art, Reconfigured

By Steven Vilkas

BOSTON — In my article “In Appreciation Of Boston’s Armenian Heritage Park,” I began laying the foundations for why this place has quickly become one of my absolute favorite destinations for mindfulness practice, walking meditation, art appreciation, and simple relaxation. Much like the sculpture, which forms one half of what I consider to be a double-sided jewel (the other half being the labyrinth complete with a small bubbling fountain in its center), the park has come to represent many things to its many visitors. A playground for children running, dancing, and exploring the winding pathway becomes a different sort of romantic stroll for couples, seats for elders to soak up the sunshine and a place for busy professionals and travelers alike to take a much-needed break.

“Refuge,” “Oasis,” “Hidden Treasure,” are a few familiar keywords which my fellow greeters and visitors were using on Sunday afternoon following the early morning reconfiguration of the Abstract Sculpture, an annual tradition which helps to exhibit the message of “pulling apart and coming together” as part of the immigrant experience. Representatives from The Friends Of Christopher Columbus Park, The Eliot School (where I went as a child) and many supporters turned out to gather, plan a whole new year’s worth of events, and contemplate the significance of what the park has become. I have to admit that, at times, emotions welled up within me knowing that my late mother would have loved how much fantastic progress has taken place, and she would have joined in every effort to support its continued preservation.

Tsoleen Sarian has made being a greeter one of the principal highlights of recent years. Our shared devotion for the Park is joined to an affinity for Armenian history, culture, and contributions to society. She’s managed to organize our greeters so effectively, developing a program which ensures everyone who visits is not only made to feel welcome, but that engagement is always organic and comfortable by default. My fellow greeters, from whom I gratefully take plenty of cues, help to continuously shape this story of coming together, sharing, and impacting the City of Boston as positively as possible.

I think back to my very first encounter with the group, which was for World Labyrinth Day long ago. It was a dreary, drizzly day, but the elements were braved and I was brave enough to make an introduction which would prove to be a watershed moment. Now I rarely walk the labyrinth alone, with new friendships and insights gained, and I have learned over an appreciable period how important it is for us to reach out to those around us and be present. We should also, always, be conscious of the importance of remembrance—of not only studying history but of



The new configuration of the abstract sculpture at the Armenian Heritage Park (Matt Conti Photo, from the North End Waterfront)

protecting and learning from it to the best of our abilities as well. I’ll close with this: Pythagoras tells us all the way from Antiquity: “There is geometry in the humming of the strings, there is music in the spacing of the spheres.” If you would make a visit to the park, undoubtedly you’d be able to hear and appreciate the sublime symphony of the concepts integrated as part of its essence. There are others who could express these concepts

much more eloquently than I can, but the park invites and welcomes everyone, Archimedes and otherwise.

(Steven Vilkas is co founder of S&S Consulting, a Boston-based firm dedicated to leadership development, and a North End resident. This article originally appeared on April 11 on the website Medium.)

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Tekeyan Cultural Association Metro Los Angeles Chapter

Presents

AN EVENING OF COMEDY II

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Contact • info@TekeyanLA.org for group seating (12 per table)
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ARTS & LIVING

CALENDAR

ARIZONA

NOVEMBER 2-3 — ARMENIAFest at St. Apkar Armenian Apostolic Church. Weekend food and cultural festival featuring traditional Armenian foods, beverages, exhibits, music and dance performances. 8849 E. Cholla St., Scottsdale.

CALIFORNIA

APRIL 22 — 7:30 p.m.: Hans-Lukas Kieser, “Talat Pasha: Father of Modern Turkey, Author of Genocide,” at the Ararat-Eskijian Museum, 15105 Mission Hills Road, Mission Hills, CA. Co-sponsored by the Ararat-Eskijian Museum, Nor Serount Cultural Association, Hamazkayin Educational and Cultural Society, and the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR).

APRIL 27 — The Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada Presents the 2019 North American tour of the VEM Ensemble of the UCLA Herb Albert School of Music, Danielle Segen, mezzo-soprano, Ji Eun Hwang, violin 1, Aiko Richter, violin 2, Morgan O’Shaughnessey, viola, Jason Pegis, cello. 7:30 p.m. Tekeyan Cultural Association Los Angeles Chapter Cosponsored with Abril Bookstore, 415 E. Broadway, Glendale. For tickets, call Abril 818 243-4112. Introductory remarks by Artistic Director Professor Movses Pogossian. Performing a world premiere of Tekeyan songs by the Los Angeles-based composer Artashes Kartalyan, commissioned by the Tekeyan Cultural Association, and masterworks by Komitas, Khachaturian, Mirzoyan, Hovhannes, and Schubert. For more information, email tcadirector@aol.com.

APRIL 28 — Christina Maranci, “The Art of Armenia: An introduction,” at the Ararat-Eskijian Museum. Co-sponsored by the Ararat-Eskijian Museum and the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR). 4 p.m.

MAY 4 and MAY 5 — 2nd Feminist Armenian Studies Workshop: Gendering Resistance and Revolution, at the University of California, Irvine. Co-sponsored by the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR)/Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation Lecture Series on Contemporary Armenian Topics.

MAY 5 — Mathew Karanian, “The Armenian Highland: Western Armenia and the First Armenian Republic of 1918,” 4 p.m.at the Ararat-Eskijian Museum, 15105 Mission Hills Road, Mission Hills, CA. Co-sponsored by the Ararat-Eskijian Museum, Kharpert Cultural Association, and the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR).

MAY 19 — The Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada Presents the 2019 North American tour of the VEM Ensemble of the UCLA Herb Albert School of Music, Danielle Segen, mezzo-soprano, Ji Eun Hwang, violin 1, Aiko Richter, violin 2, Morgan O’Shaughnessey, viola, Jason Pegis, cello. 7:30 p.m. Tekeyan Cultural Association Los Angeles Chapter Cosponsored with Abril Bookstore, 415 E. Broadway, Glendale. Introductory remarks by Artistic Director Professor Movses Pogossian. Performing a world premiere of Tekeyan songs by the Los Angeles-based composer Artashes Kartalyan, commissioned by the Tekeyan Cultural Association, and masterworks by Komitas, Khachaturian, Mirzoyan, Hovhannes, and Schubert. Tekeyan Cultural Association, Pasadena-Glendale Chapter, TCA Beshgeturian Center, 1901 North Allen Ave., Altadena. For more information, email tcadirector@aol.com.

CONNECTICUT

APRIL 27 — Connecticut Commemoration of the 104th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. Connecticut Hall of the House at the State Capitol, 210 Capitol Avenue, Hartford. 11 a.m. Speaker will be Salpi Ghazarian, director of the University of Southern California’s Institute of Armenian Studies. Her topic will be Looking to the Future Without Forgetting the Past. Please arrive by 10:30 a.m. to clear security and be seated. Reception and refreshments to follow.

MASSACHUSETTS

APRIL 20– Annual Procession and Raising of the Armenian Flag at Lowell City Hall in commemoration of the 104th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. Procession to be led by the Lowell Armenian-American Veterans Honor Guard. Participants should meet at the corner of Merrimack and John Sts. in Lowell at 9:30 a.m. Sponsored by the Armenian National Committee, Merrimack Valley (ANCMV) with the partici-

pation of all area Armenian Churches and Organizations. **APRIL 24 — Armenian Heritage Park Armenian Genocide Commemoration,** 7 to 9 p.m. Bus transportation available. Reserve by April 22. Bostonagcc@gmail.com

APRIL 24 — Save the Date! “In the Shadow of Branches: Diana Apar/Berjouhi Kailian. The Armenian Museum. In recognition of Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day. 6–8.30 pm. The Armenian Museum presents a new exhibition in the Adele & Haig Der Manuelian galleries that explores the intertwined lives of diplomat Diana Agabeg Apar (1859–1937) and artist Berjouhi Kailian (1914–2014). The Armenian Museum wishes to engage in meaningful dialogue around this solemn subject that permeates Armenian experience around the world. Candlelight viewing of the galleries followed by a discussion of the traumatic effects of the Genocide to remember the victims, survivors, and individuals who chose to intervene.

APRIL 25 — Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston Presents The Dr. Michael and Joyce Kolligian Distinguished Speaker Series: Anthony Ray Hinton, Author of *The Sun Does Shine: How I Found Life and Freedom on Death Row*, “Surviving Criminal Justice in America.” Charles and Nevart Talanian Cultural Hall, 145 Brattle Street, Cambridge MA 02138. Reception and book signing to follow talk. Open and free to the public. For further information, contact the Holy Trinity Church office, 617.354.0632, email office@htaac.org, or log onto www.htaac.org/calendar/event/622/.

APRIL 27 — Trinity Talent Showcase, doors open 7 p.m., show starts 7:30 p.m., Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston, Charles and Nevart Talanian Cultural Hall, 145 Brattle Street, Cambridge MA. All are invited to an entertaining evening of traditional and unique talents with featured entertainer Hilby, The Skinny German Juggling Boy, and music by Black Sea Combo. Cabernet Table Seating: \$20/person or \$100 for full table (max. 6 people), paid table reservation deadline is April 22. Auditorium Seating: \$10 in advance, \$15 at door. Cash Bar/Refreshments available for purchase. To reserve online or for further information log onto www.htaac.org/calendar/event/689/ or call the Holy Trinity Church Office, 617.354.0632.

APRIL 30 — Panel, “A Trend or an Exception? Democratization in Armenia and Authoritarianism Worldwide,” featuring Anna Ohanyan (Stonehill College), Dimitri Sotiropoulos (Visiting Scholar, Center for European Studies, Harvard), and Valerie Sperling (Clark University), moderated by Lisa Gulesserian. Tuesday, 7:30 p.m.: . At Harvard University, Fong Auditorium (Boylston Hall). Co-sponsored by the NAASR/Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation Lecture Series on Contemporary Armenian Issues, AGBU YP Boston, and the Harvard Armenian Students Association.

MAY 2 — First Thursdays: Jazz at the Armenian Museum, Thursday, 8–10 p.m. Armenian Museum of America, Watertown. Featuring the John Baboian Quartet. More details coming soon!

MAY 3 — 117th Diocesan Assembly Gala Banquet. Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern). V. Rev. Fr. Daniel Findikyan, Primate, Presiding. Honoring Diocesan Award Recipients: Armenians of the Year - Edward (of blessed memory) and Nancy Guleserian, and children Kristine and Michael; Friend of the Armenians Dr. Helen Evans. 7pm Cocktail Hour, 8pm Dinner and Program. Boston Marriott Burlington. Hosted by St. James Armenian Church in Watertown. \$125 per person. Advance Reservations Required by April 25th. Purchase tickets online at www.stjameswatertown.org or by calling the church office at 617.923.8860. assembly@stthagop.com.

MAY 4 — Guests and Members, join us at the First Armenian Church Nahigian Hall, 380 Concord Avenue, Belmont, MA, for NAASR’s 65th Annual Assembly of Members , Luncheon, and Program, on Saturday, 12-3:30 pm. Registration and Check-in at 11:30 am. Featured Presentation on NAASR’s new global headquarters by the architectural, engineering & design team of Symmes, Maini & McKee Associates – Ara Krafian, CEO. Luncheon: \$18 per person. Please register by April 26, 2019. To register, visit <https://interland3.donorperfect.net/weblink/> weblink.aspx?name=E332049&id=22

MAY 4 — Celebrate Public Art two-part program during ARTWEEK BOSTON. Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston. 1 p.m. World Labyrinth Day: Walk as One. Join people in cities and towns in 35 countries world-wide walking in peace and harmony including Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada,

Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, England, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Peru, Poland, Romania, Russia, Scotland, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Uruguay and USA followed by reception to view the 2019 configuration of the abstract sculpture , hosted by Eastern Lamejun Bakers and MEM Tea Imports. RSVP appreciated hello@armenianheritagepark.org.

May 5 — Andre! You saw him last year perform on stage with Sirusho in Boston, and now he’s back by popular demand! One of Armenia’s most popular stars, Andre will appear in a concert with Sayat Nova Dance Company of Boston. Don’t miss out on this energetic evening of song and dance. Reserve your seats now! Shaw Auditorium, Watertown High School, 50 Columbia St., Watertown. Doors open at 4:30, concert begins at 5 p.m. Donation: \$45, \$60 and \$80. For tickets call Vrej - 339-222-3429, Meghri - 617-932-9237 or email SNDC.ANDRE@GMAIL.COM ! Tickets are also available online at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/andre-in-boston-with-sayat-nova-dance-company-tickets-59460537067>.

MAY 6 — St. James Men’s Club Dinner Meeting - social hour and mezza at 6:15 PM and dinner at 7:00 PM, St James Armenian Church Charles Mosesian Cultural and Youth Center - Keljik Hall, 465 Mt. Auburn Street, Watertown, MA. The speaker will be Dick Flavin, poet laureate of the Boston Red Sox. He is the senior ambassador of the Boston Red Sox and voice of Fenway Park, serving as public address announcer for Red Sox day games. His television commentaries won seven New England Emmy Awards. He is a nationally known speaker and is a member of the Massachusetts Broadcasters Hall of Fame. Mezza and a Losh Kebab & Kheyma Dinner \$17/person. Ladies invited. For additional information call the St James Church office at 617-923-8860 or call Hapet Berberian at 781-367-6598.

MAY 6 — Irina Ghaplanyan, “Post-Soviet Armenia: The New National Elite and the New National Narrative,” at the AGBU Center, 247 Mt. Auburn St., Watertown, 7:30 p.m. Sponsored by the NAASR/Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation Lecture Series on Contemporary Armenian Issues. Further details to follow.

MAY 9 — The Armenian Museum of America and the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) present an illustrated talk by author Matthew Karanian, The Armenian Highland: Western Armenia and the First Republic of 1918. On Thursday, May 9, 2019, 7:30 pm at the Armenian Museum of America, 65 Main St., Watertown. Copies of The Armenian Highland will be available for purchase. Reception following program.

MAY 10 — Lenny Clarke & Friends. Fundraiser to benefit the Armenian Apostolic Church at Hye Pointe Building Fund. 8 p.m. The Armenian Apostolic Church at Hye Pointe, 1280 Boston Road, Bradford. Mezze/Appetizers are Included & Cash Bar. Call Dro Kanayan at 978 828 5755 or Stephanie Naroian at 978 835 1636 for tickets or tables and packages are available. Tickets will only be sold in advance, not at the door.

MAY 15 — The Tekeyan Cultural Association and the Armenian General Benevolent Union will present a literary evening with writer Aris Janigian, author of *Waiting for Lipchitz at Chateau Marmont*, *Bloodvine* and *Riverbig*, among others, with discussant author, poet and editor Susan Barba. 7.30 p.m., AGBU Building, 247 Mount Auburn Building. Free, reception to follow. Books will be on sale.

MAY 19 — SAVE THE DATE! Concert at the Armenian Museum. Concert to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the birth of Komitas Vardapet and poet Hovhaness Tumanyan. Sunday, 2-4 p.m.

MAY 19 — “International Food Festival – A Taste of the World,” presented by the Women of Holy Trinity, Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston, 12:30-2:30 p.m., Charles and Nevart Talanian Cultural Hall, 145 Brattle Street, Cambridge. Join us to sample authentic cuisine from 9 countries: Armenia, Iran/Persia, Lebanon, Greece, France, Russia, Brazil, China and Italy. Donation: \$15 adults; \$10 children 12 and under. Tickets on sale at the door. For further information, contact the Holy Trinity Church Office, 617.354.0632.

JUNE 1 — Armenian Food Festival, Saturday, 11:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m., Armenian Church at Hye Pointe, 1280 Boston Road, Haverhill. Chicken, Losh Kebab, Kheyma, and Dolma Dinners. Armenian Cuisine featuring Spinach Pie, Lahmajoon, Cheese Beoreg, and more. Pastries Paklava, Kadayif, Cheoreg and morePlus Activities for the Children, White Elephant Table, Gift Basket Raffles.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE



ARTS & LIVING

C A L E N D A R

FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

JUNE 6 — First Thursdays: Jazz at the Armenian Museum, Thursday, 8–10 p.m. Armenian Museum of America, Watertown. Featuring The Black Sea Salsa Band. More details coming soon!

JUNE 12 — Tea and Tranquility. Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston. Wednesday from 4:30 p.m. -6 p.m. Meet & Greet. Walk the Labyrinth. Enjoy refreshing Ice Teas, hosted by MEM Tea Imports and dessert. Introduction to walking the labyrinth, mindful and meditative walking at 4:45pm. RSVP appreciated hello@armenianheritagepark.org

JUNE 13 — SAVE THE DATE. Film Screening: “Motherland” At the Armenian Museum in Watertown. Cosponsored by the Armenian International Women’s Association (AIWA). Thursday. More details coming soon!

JUNE 17 - AUGUST 16 – Abaka Dance Academy, Summer Program for ages 5-12, with principal/director Apo Ashjian at 101 Bigelow Ave., Watertown. Arts and Crafts, Indoor games, Sports, Music, Dance, Free T-shirts, Friday pizza and much more. Weekly sessions at \$250/week, begin June 17 - August 16, 8 am - 3 pm. Late stay available upon request. Please register at www.abakadanceacademy.com. For more information or questions, email abakadanceacademy@gmail.com or call 617-283-2010.

JUNE 27 — Under a Strawberry Moon. Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston. Thursday at 8:30 p.m. Meet & Greet. Moonlit Labyrinth Walk. Luscious Chocolate Dipped Strawberries, hosted by vicki lee’s and refreshing Ice Teas, hosted by MEM Tea Imports and the fabulous Berklee Jazz Trio. RSVP appreciated hello@armenianheritagepark.org

JUNE 28 — July 10 – St. James Armenian Church 7th Pilgrimage to Armenia. Led by Fr. Arakel Aljalian. Join us and Discover the Land of our Ancestors. All are welcome. Registration deposits due March 1; Full Payment due April 1. For full details visit www.stjameswatertown.org/armenia.

JULY 17 — Tea and Tranquility. Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston. Wednesday from 4:30-6 p.m. Meet & Greet. Walk the Labyrinth. Enjoy refreshing ice teas, hosted by MEM Tea Imports and dessert. Introduction to walking the labyrinth, mindful and meditative walking at 4:45pm. RSVP appreciated hello@armenianheritagepark.org

AUGUST 14 — Tea and Tranquility. Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston. Wednesday from 4:30-6 p.m. Meet & Greet. Walk the Labyrinth. Enjoy refreshing Ice Teas, hosted by MEM Tea Imports and dessert. Introduction to walking the labyrinth, mindful and meditative walking at 4:45pm. RSVP appreciated hello@armenianheritagepark.org

AUGUST 22 — Under the August Moon. Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston. Thursday from 7:30– 9 p.m. Delightful evening for supporters, partners & friends featuring fabulous signature dishes, hosted by anoush’ella and the Berklee Jazz Trio. RSVP appreciated hello@armenianheritagepark.org

SEPTEMBER 16 — Registration is now open for the 2019-2020 sessions of the Abaka Dance Academy, 101 Bigelow Ave., Watertown, MA. Principal/director

Apo Ashjian. Classes begin September 16 for grades Nursery II - Grade 10 students. Check the schedule and enroll today at www.abakadanceacademy.com. For more info, email abakadanceacademy@gmail.com or call 617-283-2010.

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

SEPTEMBER 22 — Sunday Afternoon for Families and Friends. Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston. 2:00pm-4:00pm. Wonderful afternoon with The Hye Guys Ensemble featuring Ron Sahatjian and Joe Kouyoumjian. Hoodies, Face Painting and more RSVP appreciated hello@armenianheritagepark.org

OCTOBER 19 — The Vosbikians are coming to the Merrimack Valley. The Armenian Friends of America proudly present their Annual HYE KEF 5 Dance, featuring The Vosbikians. The DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel, Andover, MA. Tickets Purchased before 9/13/19 will include the Great Venue, Outstanding Buffet, The Vosbikian Band and 5 Free Raffle Tickets Adults \$75.00 & Students 21 & under \$65 Specially priced AFA Rooms available through 9/17/19. For Tickets and more information, Contact: Lu Sirmaian 978-683-9121 or Sharke’ Der Apkarian at 978-808-0598 Visit www.Armenia-FriendsofAmerica.org

NOVEMBER 1,2 — NAASR Grand Opening and Gala. Friday, Grand Opening & Ribbon Cutting, NAASR Vartan Gregorian Building, at NAASR’s new world headquarters, 395 Concord Avenue, Belmont, MA. Saturday, NAASR 65th Anniversary Gala, at the Royal Sonesta Hotel, Cambridge. 6 pm Reception, 7 pm Dinner and Program. Honoree Dr. Vartan Gregorian, president of the Carnegie Corporation of New York; Master of Ceremonies David Ignatius, columnist for the Washington Post and novelist; Featuring renowned soprano Isabel Bayrakdarian, accompanied by the Borromeo String Quartet, performing a program of songs by Komitas. Further details to follow.

NOVEMBER 16 — St. Stephen’s Armenian Elementary School 35th Anniversary Celebration. 6:30 PM Cocktail Reception, 7:30 PM Dinner and Program. The Westin Waltham - Boston, MA \$150 per person.

NEW JERSEY

MAY 18 — St. Nersess Armenian Seminary invites you to Hope & Gratitude, a celebration honoring Archbishop Khajag Barsamian and Bishop-elect V. Rev. Fr. Daniel Findikyan. 6:30pm. Old Tappan Manor, Old Tappan, NJ. \$150pp. For reservations and booklet donations, please contact Mrs. Lynn Beylerian, event co-chair, at 201-914-0354 orlynnbeylerian@gmail.com. More info at www.stnersess.edu.

OCTOBER 25 — Honoring Dr. Taner Akçam. Abajian Hall St. Leon Armenian Complex, Fair Lawn. Sponsored by Knights and Daughters of Vartan, Under the Auspices of Primate Very Rev. Fr. Daniel Findikyan.

NEW YORK

APRIL 28- Sunday at 1:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. Armenian Genocide Commemoration at Times Square, NYC

Sponsored by : Knight & Daughters of Vartan, AGBU, ADL-Ramgavars. Armenian Assembly of America, ANCA and Armenian National Council

OHIO

APRIL 28 — Book presentation by Adrienne G. Alexanian, editor of her father’s memoir, *Forced into Genocide: Memoirs of an Armenian Soldier in the Ottoman Turkish Army*, Sunday 2 p.m. Maltz Museum of Jewish Heritage. In co-sponsorship with St. Gregory of Narek Church and Armenian Cultural Group, 2929 Richmond Road Beachwood, Ohio 74122 RSVP info@mmjh.org or (216) 593-0575. Book sale/signing during reception following the presentation – proceeds will be donated

PENNSYLVANIA

MAY 4 — Save The Meher Statue Dance/Fundraiser - Saturday, 8 p.m. Sponsored by the Philadelphia Chapter of the Knights & Daughters of Vartan. Santerian Hall - 101 Ashmead Rd, Cheltenham. Live entertainment with Anto Vartanian and the Artsakh Band, Full Mezza, Dessert Table, Cash Bar; For tickets, visit phillykov.com or call 610-389-4633

RHODE ISLAND

APRIL 28 — Armenian Martyrs’ Memorial Committee of Rhode Island will commemorating the 104th Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide on Sunday, starting at 12:45 p.m. at the Martyrs Monument in North Burial Ground, Branch Avenue, Providence. The three Armenian Churches and clergy along with their deacons and choir will participate in the memorial services. Local federal and state officials are invited to speak or attend as well as the local Armenian organizations. Keynote speaker Stephen Kurkjian who spent nearly 40 years as an editor and reporter for The Boston Globe. For further information, email joycey41@cox.net

MAY 5 — The Cultural Committee of Sts. Sahag and Mesrob Church will present the first in a series of talks, “Meet with Armenian Doctors,” on Sunday, at 1 pm., in Hanoian Hall of the church complex. (70 Jefferson St., Providence, RI). Dr. Sevak Stepanian, anesthesiologist will speak and take questions. Admission is free and open to the public.

TEXAS

APRIL 26 — The Cultural Committee of the Sts. Sahag & Mesrob Armenian Church Armenian Martyrs’ Memorial Committee of Rhode Island Presents a Memorial Concert dedicated to victors and Saints of the Armenian Genocide, 7 p.m., 150th Anniversary of Gomidas Vardabed, 150th Anniversary of Hovhannes Toumanyan. Performed by the Armenian Chorale of Rhode Island, Junior Choir, Soloists Under the Direction of Maestro Konstantin Petrossian. Program: Patriotic Songs, Songs by Gomidas, and from Anoush Opera, Sts. Sahag & Mesrob Armenian Church Sanctuary, 70 Jefferson St., Providence. Donations gratefully accepted. Refreshments.

The Bizarre Existentialism Of Santiago Nazarian

NAZARIAN, from page 13

that in Brazil you are either a solemn writer or a bad one, because the use of those references from popular culture are only found in commercial literature, or something for young readers. And it is not easy for me, you know, because people do not know how to label me. Young readers usually find my writing difficult, and the literati find my themes dumb.

What kind of cooperation do you have with TV? I hope not with soap operas, which at one time were also very popular in Armenia.

No, I am not a big fan of soap operas, although they are very big here in Brazil. So far I have only written 13 episodes of a TV series about crimes of passion for a cable network.

You bear the family name of your mother, writer Elisa Nazarian. Do you know where she hails from?

A little; my mother’s father came from Kharpert. I know they came to Brazil around time of the massacres of the 1890s. My grandmother’s maiden name is Gasparian, but I do not know much about her family. Actually, my grandparents never talked much about their roots and they have never been to modern Armenia, although they were always proud to say we are Armenians.

You traveled a lot. And you have been also in Armenia. Was this trip special for you?

The most special. I never really understood what was to be Armenian – was it not a nationality? So was it like an ethnicity? Could you be Armenian and an atheist? My visit to Armenia in 2015 was a way to get closer to those answers, starting with getting a visa in the embassy, where our surnames made a difference; and there... I would walk in the streets and see so many people that resembled a cousin, an aunt... I have been to almost 30 countries, and I have always had the feeling of being kind of an intruder, that is, being a tourist. But there in Armenia, when I was doing tourism, it seemed I was facing the history of my own people,

and the people there made me feel that way.

Do you have any Armenian traditions in your family?

No, not really. My grandfather died when I was 13, and he never spoke much about Armenia, we do not know much about his past. There is the story of a brother who disappeared in 1915. Well, there was some food, basturma. I’ve never been close to my father – I am much closer to my mom’s side, the Armenian side. That’s why I bear her name, even though my full name is Santiago Nazarian de Faria.

Recently you published your first book for children, which was a surprise for your readers. Many writers of Armenian descent include some Armenian topics in their writings. Have you done it so far and do you intend to do so later?

I have never felt capable of doing it until now. After 2015, my visit to Armenia and all, I thought it was about time. So I started doing my homework, reading memoirs about the genocide. I have read a lot for this next novel, mostly historical accounts and memoirs on the genocide. My

favorite one is Four Years in the Mountains of Kurdistan by Aram Haigaz, even though it is a very... particular view on that period, but also some old Armenian folk tales – Zoolvisia, the Golden Maiden and all that. All in English translations! I loved Mayrig, the book by Henri Verneuil... I had a great uncle, Fernando Gasparian, that published lots of things about Armenian history – things like [Arthur] Toynbee and Michael Arlen. I got those books from my mom. I even translated a very good memoir, A Hair’s Breadth from Death by Hampartzoum Chitjian, into Portuguese and it is coming out now in Brazil. I also talked to key members of the Armenian community in São Paulo, as unfortunately we do not have “direct survivors” anymore. Actually my next novel on the Armenian Genocide and the life of a surviving family here in São Paulo is a little about my Armenian grandfather, trying to understand his origins. It is coming out later this year or early the next one, published by Companhia das Letras, in Brazil. I hope it sees an American edition soon.



COMMENTARY

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COMMENTARY

Politicizing Sexual Orientation in Armenia

By Edmond Y. Azadian

The acceptance of different sexual orientations and gender identities is being discussed and debated all around the world, and particularly, in the Western world. Now, these issues have exploded on the scene in Armenia. What is happening in Armenia cannot be characterized in any way other than an explosion.

Admittedly, any reference to gender and sexuality is a minefield. The LGBT community in the West in the past few decades has gradually aimed for greater acceptance and openness. The issue has become even an asset for some as many have placed gay rights as part of the greater human rights agenda.

It is not only Armenia that is dealing with these complicated issues of gender and identity. Even the West is still grappling with these issues as well as modern feminism. Just recently, Prof. Harvey Mansfield of Harvard University was disinvited from being the commencement speaker of Concordia University in Montreal, after some of his more incendiary comments about women, specifically their narrower skillset because of biology, came to light.

Variations on sexual preferences or identity are natural phenomena which have long been stigmatized around the world and continue to be treated as such in many societies which treat gay individuals as evil or abhorrent, suffering from a form of psychosis. However, in a field such as the arts, the proportion of homosexuals is high. Biased attitudes continue against them, even in Western societies, where LGBT members have gained solid support.

One of the most famous songs of Charles Aznavour is *What Makes A Man* (Comme Ils Disent), in which he adopts the viewpoint of a lonely gay man. And the recent Academy Award-winning movie “Bohemian Rhapsody,” dealt with the lyrical aspect of that human condition.

Now, a group that has long been in the shadows, transgenders, are becoming more visible and are putting the issue on the map politically. These are people who are simply not comfortable in the gender they were born in and want to be identified as the opposite gender, sometimes after surgery but not always. This group suffers from a high rate of attempted suicides as many in society are quick to ridicule or even attack them. One famous example is Caitlyn Jenner, the former Olympic athlete Bruce Jenner. As the erstwhile stepfather of Kim Kardashian, Jenner gained a lot of fame and her transition on a reality TV show made the issue even more ordinary.

Despite advances achieved in Western societies regarding the acceptance of sexual or gender deviance from the norm, there is still latent resistance.

President Clinton had found a temporary stop-gap solution for gays and transgenders serving in the US armed forces, by his policy of “don’t ask, don’t tell.” Now, President Trump is undoing that loophole.

Which leads us to ask that if gender and sexual preference issues have not yet found a universal level of understanding and acceptance in more forward-thinking societies, what can we expect from more conservative societies?

The controversy is now affecting Armenia in its highest national forum, in the parliament. Armenia is still a patriarchal, conservative society. Even during the Soviet era, when egalitarianism was promoted, gays and lesbians were stigmatized and were considered evil a priori.

That bias continues and many crimes are committed to “punish” or even to eliminate people who live alternative lifestyles. Emancipation may and should come through education, not shock therapy, as was the case around the world until not too long ago.

During a session of parliament on April 5, when human rights issues were being debated, a transgender woman named Lilit Martirosyan was clandestinely smuggled in and took the podium to air the grievances of the transgender community in Armenia.

She said, “I ask you to look at me as the collective image of tortured, raped, physically abused, burned, stabbed, killed, emigrated, subjected to discrimination, poor and unemployed transgender people.”

Lilit also enumerated particular crimes committed against individual transgenders.

The appearance of the activist on the podium of the parliament and the way she was brought there threw Armenia’s entire political world into confusion and a blame game ensued.

The first attack was on MP Naira Zohrabyan, a member of the Prosperous Armenia party, who was chairing the session during which organizations and NGOs were invited to a hearing, includ-

ing the NGO Right Side, headed by Martirosyan.

Zohrabyan, in her turn, was furious that she was not warned ahead of time about the activities of the organization.

The outrage mushroomed to become a national issue, when the country is facing existential danger. On April 8, a rally took place in front of the parliament. The participants in the rally proposed to “reconsecrate” the parliament to “clear it of transgender presence.”

The scandal also involved the government on the highest level. Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, addressing the issue and human rights in general, asked “Is Lilit Martirosyan a human being?”

The question naturally assumed that a human being therefore has human rights. But later, he was trapped into the politicization of the debate by stating that Martirosyan’s speech was “a carefully planned political provocation” by the former Republican Party, apparently to undermine the new government.

He further addressed the former leaders and said that “I was telling them that ‘you are gay activists’ and they did not believe me.” He also suggested that the members of the previous administration, which had issued a new passport for Martirosyan with the gender designation of female, clearly had a different perspective.

Martirosyan cited specific cases of crimes against the gay community. No government official addressed the issue, nor did any take responsibility for investigating those crimes and bringing the criminals to justice. However, officials have the time and resources to dismantle the leadership of Spayka, a huge conglomerate which is exporting Armenia’s agricultural products to Eurasian countries.

The political debate has spilled over into the streets, causing more crimes.

A 15-year-old was stabbed by a 35-year-old man, after the latter assumed the former was gay. Two months earlier, a transgender woman was attacked in her apartment. Another gay man was beaten by several men while he was walking.

Armenia is usually ranked as a “hostile place for LGBT people” by Human Rights Watch. A 2016 survey by the group Pink Armenia found that 90 percent of Armenians think that gay rights should be controlled through legal measures. Armenia currently ranks 48th among 49 European countries on the European gay rights group ILGA Europe annual Rainbow Map.

The way the issue was handled acted as an incendiary bomb thrown from the forum of the Parliament and it triggered outrage and political turmoil; the issue further received international reverberations. United Nations and the European Union officials jumped into the debate to question and condemn Armenia’s record on human rights and gender issues, to which the Foreign Ministry issued a rebuke. Indeed, Anna Naghdalyan, the Foreign Ministry spokesperson, said, “Our international partners should demonstrate more respect and sensitivity toward Armenian society and refrain from undue engagement in public debate, even if they disagree with its tone. We would like to remind them that the principle of public morality is part of international commitments on human rights and cannot be ignored.”

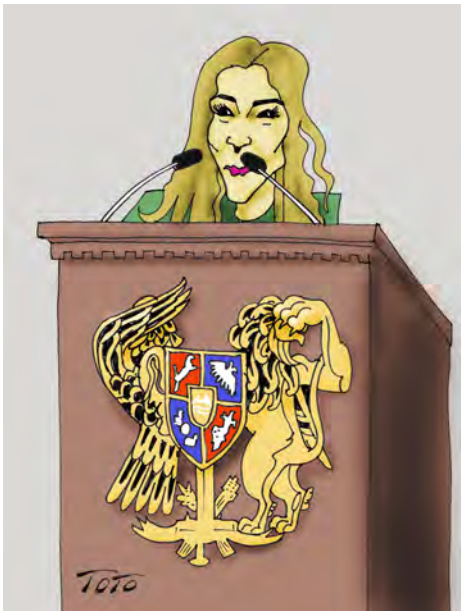
Armenia is a conservative society and its evolution in social acceptance will certainly take time. Even then, because of its more closed, inward looking stance, it will not be the same as Western Europe. What should not happen is for foreign-based NGOs and other civil society bodies to insert themselves in the issue, and by extension, in the country. Are there problems? Yes. But will foreign intervention help? We don’t think so. In fact, it might cause the issue to backfire.

To demonstrate the discrepancy between the West and Armenia in this regard, we can turn to an essay by a young writer in *Azg*, Gevorg Gurumlyan, who wrote: “The national struggles against immorality will continue spiritually and physically. National dignity is above all. Let them say what they want. If we have to become a progressive nation by putting up with immorality, forgive me for saying that we prefer to remain a regressive society.”

Emancipation for Armenia will come through education and through exposure to Western values. But even then, it will not be on par with the west.

If left alone, the young and progressive leadership of the country will be able to steer Armenia toward a more open and tolerant society, without the heavy hand of outsiders.

As the recent incident and subsequent developments show, politicizing sexual orientation remains a toxic and explosive domain.





COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

Pashinyan Passes First Political Test In the International Arena

Last week, Armenia's Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan made his first appearance at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) in Strasbourg, France.

Pashinyan gave an impressive speech to the representatives of 47 European countries. Even more impressive were the Prime Minister's answers to their dozen questions. While his speech was prepared in advance, the questions were impromptu and the answers had to be delivered on the spot.

Pashinyan began his speech by thanking the Council of Europe for repeatedly saving him from being imprisoned by the previous Armenian regime or reducing his sentence. He was being prosecuted for articles he had published as editor of the Orakir newspaper.

The Armenian Prime Minister then proceeded to recount the impressive democratic advances his country has made since last year's peaceful "Velvet Revolution."

Pashinyan took advantage of the opportunity to criticize the PACE members for not supporting the democratic developments in Artsakh. Even though "Nagorno-Karabakh is still not recognized internationally as a sovereign state, but is there international debate on whether the people living there are human beings?" Pashinyan asked.

In response to a question from French Parliamentarian Ms. Dalloz about corruption, Pashinyan stated: "Personally, the greatest thing I can do against corruption is for me personally to remain outside corruption. ...The very first thing is that I, my family and my relatives must be scrutinized even more

closely than others, and it is very important to me that transparency should be a key aim in Armenia. I will not say that it is 100% successful, but it is leaping forward with giant steps. About 10 days ago a criminal case was initiated against one of my close relatives. I do not want to jeopardize their right to the presumption of innocence, but the fact is that the case is going to be investigated entirely lawfully and impartially...."

Ms. Aghayeva of Azerbaijan asked when would Armenia comply with resolutions and documents of international organizations on Artsakh? In his response, Pashinyan urged "the participation of the representatives of Nagorno-Karabakh in the peace process. It is hard to imagine how we can resolve the conflict without the main party to the conflict being involved in the peace talks and without talking to them. As I said in my statement, we will continue to try to reinstate the dialogue within the OSCE Minsk Group between Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh. Many of you might not know this, but there was a direct meeting between a leader of Nagorno-Karabakh and a leader of Azerbaijan in the past, so there is precedent. Elected representatives from Nagorno-Karabakh were almost always involved in the negotiations. It is said that, that was the case up to 1998, but I can tell you that up until 2018 Karabakh's representatives were present in the peace talks. Let us not forget that Robert Kocharyan, before he became President of Armenia, was elected president of the republic of Nagorno-Karabakh. Thereafter Serzh Sargsyan represented Armenia but he was also one of the leaders of Karabakh. So Nagorno-Karabakh was represented at the negotiating table throughout the negotiations, and it is our objective today to create the conditions for this dialogue between Nagorno-Karabakh and Azerbaijan not to be interrupted...."

In response to a question by Ms. Tomic from Slovenia about the rights of the LGBT community in Armenia, Pashinyan responded: "Armenia is committed to the rule of law and all citizens have the same rights and obligations in the Republic of Armenia."

Mr. Aydin of Turkey expressed his concern about Pashinyan's recent statements on changing the negotiating format on Artsakh under "pressure from the Diaspora and the oligarchs within the country." Pashinyan repeated the

answer he had given to the Parliamentarian from Azerbaijan, adding that: "I have already explained that we are absolutely not expecting or demanding to change the format. ...How do we see the Nagorno-Karabakh issue being resolved without the involvement of Nagorno-Karabakh? The word 'occupation' is used quite frequently, but the people who live in Nagorno-Karabakh were born there. They live there, as did their parents, grandparents, great-grandparents and great-great-grandparents - I could go on! How can someone occupy the land where they, their children and their ancestors were born, and where their ancestors are buried? ... I recently did something that might seem strange. In a press conference, I publicly asked a rhetorical question: do Azerbaijan's President and leadership have nothing to say to the people of Nagorno-Karabakh and the people of Armenia? I would like the opportunity to speak to the people of Azerbaijan. I can do that today, but I do not want it to be one-sided and I want to ensure that it is not perceived as an act of provocation. I want to initiate such discourse with government, people and young people. Our agenda is one of peace, and we do not propose to change the format."

Regarding a question asked by Mr. Arieu of Ukraine on "who does Crimea belong to?" Pashinyan answered: "... We often find that our friends are on different sides of a conflict, and it is hard for us to choose between two friends. We are sometimes forced to make a choice, but globally our choice is pro-peace, pro-dialog, pro-stability and pro-development."

In response to the final question from Mr. Masiulis of Lithuania regarding whether Armenia would be more pro-European and less pro-Russian, Pashinyan responded: "When I was a member of the opposition, I declared that I did not accept that Armenia or any other country ought to be pro-Russia, pro-Europe, pro-America or whatever. I consider myself to be a pro-Armenia politician. I think that French politicians are pro-France, Ukrainian politicians are pro-Ukraine and Russian politicians are pro-Russia...."

Armenia's Prime Minister skillfully responded to all the questions and sometimes, cleverly avoided answering them. This was the first test of his political competence in the international arena which he passed with flying colors!

A Response to the Recent Upset at Yerevan's Opera House in the Armenian Republic

By Michelle Ekizian

WHETHER the recent grapevine gossip floating around in the Armenian press of the possible dismissal of conductor Constantine Orbelian from his dual post as artistic director and general manager of Yerevan's Opera House because of skeptical and

archaic Soviet era remnant protocols is of rumor mill, malice or ignorance, now is the time for people to come together in support of Orbelian and speak the truth. He does not need to be defended as his history at the Opera House says it all.

A breath of springtime and hope for the institution, Orbelian developed in his opening tenure a new and exciting groundbreaking artistic profile for the Armenian National Opera Ballet Theatre (ANOBT). He has dealt with administration glitches burdened with the stagnant residue of a bygone Soviet era of pro-forma arts management, and is in the process of bringing the Opera House and its administrative work ethic and MO up to date for the 21st century.

The orchestra's learning curve is also quickening and streamlining, and will soon compare with the disciplined focus of the top international opera houses.

Last year Orbelian introduced the musicians to the music of Giuseppe Verdi—scores, which were not on their somewhat stagnant "playlist" (of old and limited clichéd fare) — and then arranged for them to go on tour with new productions featuring cutting edge design and staging components in the United Arab Emirates (a first in the company's entire history).

Aside from introducing new repertoire — including numerous classical music iconic blockbusters — a new work ethic, new staging and design concepts, and touring possibilities in the past three years, Orbelian introduced to the company top mainstream international classical music industry pedagogues, acclaimed soloists, stage directors, set designers and administrators. These are collaborations that can help place the Opera House and its Armenian Opera Ballet Theatre on the map among tourism and cul-

tural offerings amidst major music presenters across the world.

To run an opera house is a lot like running a country. A transparent and visionary leader must be equally matched by pro-active assistants and supporters. Despite the trait that exists amongst the Armenian musicians (and the Armenian people in general) that everyone thinks they are the "concertmaster," Orbelian has garnered respect and ensemble conviviality from his musicians. He has successfully achieved the cooperation of his music team, and

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brought the Opera House to unprecedented new heights. Simply put, Orbelian is the best person for the dual job roles at hand.

But the musicianship and leadership capabilities are just one facet of the boundlessly energetic Orbelian as his attendance at this week's Metropolitan Opera Gala in New York indicates. Not a party animal, but a keen networker, he is on the international high cultural (and society) arts scene to interface with the likes of financial powerhouses, stellar artists, billionaire CEO's and major global arts funders and advocates in promotion of his progressive agenda for putting the ANOBT on the world map/stage. Through his world beat schmoozing and hustling, his opera ventures go unfathomably beyond the narrow reach of the cloistered

and comfort zoned mentality of the Armenian Opera House during its yesteryears. For the record, his far-reaching projects for the Armenian Opera House over the past three years include an incredibly fabulous series of "first time evers." Under the guidance of Orbelian, the ANOBT has:

- rented from Moscow's Stanislavsky Theater its production of Massenet's "Manon" which was directed by Andres Zagars and starred tenor Liparit Avetisyan for four sold out performances for Armenia's Francophone Festival,
- purchased the entire sets and costumes of the children's ballet "Cippolino" by Karen Khachaturian (Aram's nephew) from Bolshoi Theatre for sold out performances,
- produced a new "Carmen" directed by Naire Stepanyan for a tour to Dubai which opened the inauguration of the Dubai Opera House,
- staged Mozart's "Magic Flute" (astoundingly, never performed in Armenia before) in a multimedia production with director Paolo Micciche featuring art work by Henri Rousseau,
- produced a new production of Tchouhadjian's operetta "Gariné" directed by Gerald Papazian,
- performed the concert production of Verdi's "Attila" (another repertoire first for the Armenians) with Georgian superstar bass Paata Burchuladze and Hayk Tigranian,
- brought to the ANOBT stage Renee Fleming (a real coup) with plans of inviting of other vocalist legends to come,
- and is currently preparing a concert performance of Rossini's "Viaggio a Reims" (another first time repertoire entry in Armenia) prepared by conductor Mkrtich Babadjanian.

(Michelle Ekizian is a composer creating hybrids of classical, rock, musical theater, opera and Armenian ethnic recastings in richly orchestrated, epic-like settings. For the Interfaith Committee of Remembrance at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, her commissioned Remembrance collection confronts issues of intolerance and survival in the perspective of the human spirit, of which her new musical theatre opera "Gorky's Dream Garden" explores the life of the modern painter Arshile Gorky. She is a recipient of a Prix de Rome from the American Academy in Rome, Guggenheim Fellowship, NEA Grant and a Doctorate in Music Composition from Columbia University.)



Western Diocese Welcomes Armenian School Graduates for Special Ceremony

By Taleen Babayan

LOS ANGELES — As high school seniors around the country embark on the next chapter of their lives and prepare to enter college life, the Western Diocese has ensured that Armenian school students remain rooted in their faith, values and culture, during its annual symbolic Graduation Communion Ceremony that took place on Thursday, April 4, at the St. Leon Cathedral in Burbank. The graduating classes of the AGBU Vatche and Tamar Manoukian High School and the AGBU Manoogian-Demirdjian High School, both leading day schools in the Los Angeles metro area, participated in this timely program that created a strong foothold and a sense of comfort for students.

Setting the context of the ceremony, Arpi Avanessian, Principal of the AGBU Manogian-Demirdjian School, recited portions of Vahan Tekeyan's acclaimed poem "Yegeghetsin Haykakan," tying the significance of the Armenian Church into the nationhood and in the daily lives of Armenians, highlighting that "we are strong when we are together as a school, as a family and as a church."

"You are the reason for our happiness this evening," said Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, Primate of the Western Diocese, in his address to the students. "This is a day of celebration as you inspire us with your faith, your wisdom and your future accomplishments." He noted the supportive environment for the students and recognized the clergy in attendance, including Fr. Manoug Markarian (St. John Armenian Church in Hollywood), Rev. Fr. Shnork Demirjian (St. Peter Armenian Church in Van Nuys), Rev. Fr. Vazgen Boyajyan (Holy Resurrection Armenian Church in Redmond, Wash.), Rev. Fr. Khajag Shahbazyan (St. Leon Armenian Cathedral, Burbank), and Rev. Fr. Sarkis Petoyan (St. Gregory Armenian Church in

Pasadena).

Reflecting on his own educational experiences at Gevorkyan Theological Seminary in Armenia and the University of Oxford in the United Kingdom, Derderian related to the emotions the students are experiencing as they leave behind their familiar surroundings. He remarked that the evening was an emotional moment for him as well, since he watched the graduating students grow from children into adults during his service to the Western Diocese.

"You were shy and uncertain first year students, holding tight to your parent's hands, but you grew up under the care of your priests and pastors, bonding with us spiritually during our visits," said Derderian. "You inspired us with your bright ideas, which oftentimes became headlines of our sermons, and on a personal level you challenged me with your smart questions, surprised me with your meticulous observations, enlightened me with your academic achievements and impressed me with your mature faith. In other words, we started school together sixteen years ago and we graduate together as we become partners in God's Good Word."

Derderian imparted advice and wisdom, encouraging students to navigate through the challenges, struggles and "moments of fear, despair and disappointment" that they may face in their futures. Instead of succumbing to "stress and depression," he advised them to gravitate towards their faith.

The evening's keynote speaker, Nina Hachigian, ambassador and deputy mayor of international affairs in the City of Los Angeles, urged students to be "engaged in the solutions to the problems harming humanity and the planet."

She emphasized the importance of service to "your community, your country, God and humanity."

Hachigian spoke of the many ways that the students can serve, including through public service, while conveying her personal and

professional experiences as a US ambassador and how she worked with dedicated, driven and smart people "who want to make the world a better place."

"It was important for me to know I was making the effort even though I didn't always see the results," said Hachigian, who received her BS from Yale University and her JD from Stanford University. She expressed to the students the different ways to serve, from becoming a doctor and healing people to becoming an engineer and cleaning up the atmosphere, to becoming a journalist who uncovers the news.

"The key is to have a service mindset," she said. "Think about whether your actions are helping the world around you."

She also advised the students to volunteer, either at homeless shelters, Sunday School, planting trees in Armenia or joining a protest, noting that the most important aspect is "to be an engaged citizen of the United States."

Hachigian left the students with a piece of advice to be kind.

"Please serve and please be kind and then you'll be sure to leave the world and your era better than you found it," she concluded.

As the ceremony came to a close, each student was given a gift as well as a Bible, which Derderian said would be "a companion throughout your life."

"As the first Christian nation, it is important for us as students to practice our nation's religion," said Karina Piliguian, a senior at the AGBU Manoogian-Demirdjian School. "The communion was the first step in our graduation process and it was a sentimental moment for the seniors as we prepare to leave and enter the 'real' world."

"Our Senior Communion was very helpful because it reminded and reconnected us to the church both physically and spiritually," said Aren Chinchinian, a senior at the AGBU Manoogian-Demirdjian School. "In order to keep the Armenian culture alive within us as we embark on new frontiers, we were reminded that our religion is an essential part of our culture and it helps us identify who we are."

Tekeyan Boston Chapter Organizing Activities, Welcomes New Members

TCA, from page 1


Aris Janigian, with poet and editor Susan Barba as presenter at the Armenian General Benevolent Union New England Center in Watertown on May 15 at 7:30 p.m.


Tekeyan was an active presence in Boston community life for many years, promoting Armenian literature, music, theater, and other aspects of culture. Hopefully it will be able to do even more in the future, while working with all the other wonderful organizations in the area. The local chapter will be able to participate in programs brought by the TCA Central Board to

different parts of the United States and benefit from the presence of the TCA headquarters, as well as of the Armenian Mirror-Spectator which TCA supports.

To make all of this possible, TCA Boston is looking for new members of all ages and welcomes new ideas from the community. Several other cultural and culinary events are being planned for this year.

For more information about the Boston chapter and its activities, contact tcaboston@gmail.com. For more information about TCA in general, email tcadirector@aol.com or call 617 924 4455.






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Artistic Director
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Ji Eun Hwang
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Morgan O'Shaughnessey
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Jason Pegis
Cello



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TCA Beshgeturian qCenter
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