

# Obama Congratulates Armenian President

WASHINGTON (ArmeniaNow) – United States President Barack Obama has sent a message to his Armenian counterpart, Serge Sargisian, with congratulations on his winning reelection in a process still being disputed by the local opposition.

In a letter released by Sargisian's press office, Obama reaffirmed Washington's stated desire to deepen relations with Armenia during his second term.

"I would like to congratulate you on your reelection as President of the Republic of Armenia. I look forward to continuing our work together as we both begin our second terms," wrote Obama.

"As we move ahead, I would like to build on the strong ties between our countries and peoples, and to further expand our partnership. We remain strongly committed to Armenia's development and look to your leadership to promote continued improvements in democracy and the economic reforms that will present opportunities to both the people of Armenia and the Americans looking to invest in a valued partner with significant potential. We will continue to strongly support progress in the Nagorno-Karabagh peace process,



President Serge Sargisian and President Barack Obama pictured together on August 4, 2012, during Sargisian's visit to the US.

two countries and to build your legacy as a leader who solidifies Armenia's reforms and furthers the cause of peace for your people and the people of your region.

"You can be assured that the United States, as Armenia's enduring friend and partner, stands with you in working to achieve these worthy goals."

The Central Election Commission last Monday certified Sargisian as the official winner of the February 18 presidential election with nearly 59 percent of the vote. The runner-up, Raffi Hovannisian, who officially polled close to 37 percent of the vote,

which requires meaningful movement toward a settlement that provides lasting peace and security. We also want to continue our work to promote the eventual normalization of Armenian-Turkish relations.

"Your reelection presents opportunities to advance the relationship between our

disagrees with this tally, insisting that he has been robbed of a victory with what he describes as a fraudulent ballot.

Hovannisian, who has staged public protests since February 20, has also dismissed the mostly positive evaluation of the see OBAMA, page 2

## Presidential Runner-Up Takes His Case to Constitutional Court

YEREVAN (Reuters) – Armenia's main opposition party said on Monday the country's president had rigged the result of a February poll and it called on the Constitutional Court to rule that it had been the winner.

Incumbent President Serge Sargisian was declared the victor with 58.6 percent of the vote, against 37 percent for opposition leader Raffi Hovannisian.

"We demand to register the people's victory and to declare Raffi Hovannisian Armenia's president," Hovsep Khurshudyan, spokesman for the Heritage Party, told reporters after submitting an appeal to the court.

The court has 10 days to issue its ruling. Armenia's Central Election Commission see HOVANNISIAN, page 2



**BOSTON — On March 3, members of the ADL District Committee of US and Canada paid a visit to a veteran member of the organization and current secretary of the Tekeyan Cultural Association Central Board, Dr. Nubar Berberian, at his residence in Waltham. The ADL members were in the area to meet with the staff of the ADL District Committee and the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*. Above, from left, are, Arsen Demirdjian (member), Dr. Nubar Berberian, Edmond Azadian (co-chairman) and Dr. Armen Demirjian (treasurer).**

## Uncovering Paradoxes: Playwright Kelly Stuart's Narrative Journey

By Gabriella Gage  
Mirror-Spectator Staff

WATERTOWN — Kelly Stuart is not only a playwright; she is a fearless storyteller who immerses herself in the complexities of the human condition. Along with teaching courses at Columbia's School for the Arts (SoA), Stuart has traveled to Turkey nine times to explore various facets of life there — culture, music, struggle and hope.

The Armenian Dramatic Arts Alliance (ADAA) recently awarded Stuart the third Biennial William Saroyan Prize for Playwriting for "Belonging to the Sky," a lyrical duet of monologues by Sabiha Gokcen (Ataturk's adopted daughter) and assassinated journalist Hrant Dink. The \$10,000 grand prize was announced and presented at ADAA's awards event on December 8 at the Pasadena Playhouse.

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Kelly Stuart during a visit to Ani

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Armenia Will Establish Embassy at Holy See

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – Armenia announced on March 7 plans to open an embassy at the Holy See.

According to the Armenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, deepening relations with the Vatican is of critical importance because of the See's spiritual and political influence.

"Establishing an embassy at the Holy See is of crucial importance as it will give a new impetus to cooperation. Establishment of an embassy will make bilateral works more coordinated and focused, as well as promote the activation of the Holy See's participation in works aimed at maintenance of Armenia cultural values all over the world," stated the ministry in a press release.

Diplomatic relations between Armenia and the Vatican were established on May 23, 1992.

### Mediators Discuss Karabagh Issue

PARIS (ArmeniaNow) – Armenian Minister of Foreign Affairs Eduard Nalbandian met with the co-chairs of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group, Igor Popov, Jacques Faure and Ian Kelly, and the personal representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office Andrzej Kasprzyk on March 3 to discuss issues relating to the process of settlement of the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict.

The sides reportedly addressed the proposal made by the co-chairs during the previous meeting on confidence building measures. An agreement was reportedly reached at this latest meeting.

Nalbandian noted that during the previous two meetings between the foreign ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan, the Azerbaijani side not only failed to publish the texts of the joint press releases that had been agreed upon, but also presented comments which had no relation to the content of the discussions.

He reiterated that Armenia will continue the efforts aimed at achieving a peaceful resolution of the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict.

### Heffern Promotes Closer Ties

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – US Ambassador to Armenia John Heffern emphasized the strength of Armenian-American ties during a recent tour of US Armenian communities.

"My message to the American-Armenians is as follows: Armenian-American ties are strong. Our aim is to help Armenia to have success as a democratic, prosperous and secure country, and we perform our task by encouraging internal reforms, creation of opportunities and options and by fixing Armenia's sight on the West. The embassy and its partners encourage internal reforms in political, economic and social spheres."

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## ARMENIA

## News From Armenia

## Black Sabbath's Iommi Writes Eurovision Song

YEREVAN (Ultimateguitar.com) — Black Sabbath guitarist Tony Iommi has written the Armenian entry to this year's Eurovision song contest.

The song titled, *Lonely Planet*, performed by the Dorians, was selected in a national Armenian vote, and will appear in the live Eurovision semifinals on May 14 and 16. The final vote will take place on May 18.

Iommi's role as a songwriter alongside lyricist Vardan Zadoyan had been kept secret until now.

Iommi has traveled to Armenia several times and has worked alongside friend and Deep Purple singer Ian Gillan to aid the country since the 1988 earthquake.

Iommi and the rest of Black Sabbath will release a new album, "13," in June.

## Help From TV Needed to Make Literature Popular

YEREVAN (Armenrpress) — Contemporary Armenian literature is presentable and competitive, according to the Writer's Union of Armenia President Levon Ananyan, who made the comments during a press conference last week.

He said gains are being made in the popularity of literature and further advances should be made. Ananyan suggested, "It is also of vital importance to have a TV broadcasting hour dedicating to making literature popular as it will help the new generation to return to literature."

## Armenian Visitors Boost Turkish Tourism

YEREVAN (PanArmenian.net) — Narekavank Tour LCC founder and Turkologist Armen Hovannisian recently stated that Armenian tourism in Turkey has yielded positive results in the interstate relations and is helping create an atmosphere of cooperation between the two countries.

"The larger the flow of Armenian tourists to [their] historic homeland, the greater [amount of] attention Ankara [pays] to those areas," said Hovannisian, citing restoration of Armenian monuments behind the growth of Armenian pilgrims.

"In the light of growing tourist flows, local authorities of Van stressed the need to hold a discussion on plans to [further facilitate tourism]," he said.

Director of Narekavank Tour Ashot Soghomonian, in turn, said that the development of a tourism industry was of chief concern to the Turkish government.

A direct Yerevan-Van flight will become available on April 3.

## March 5 Marks Birthday Of Vazgen Sargisian

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — March 5 marked the 54th birthday of the late Armenian military commander, Vazgen Sargisian.

Sargisian was born in Ararat, in 1959. He graduated from the Armenian State Institute of Physical Culture in 1979 before working as a physical education teacher in a village school in Ararat. From 1983 to 1986, he was the Communist Youth League leader at the cement factory in Ararat.

From 1986 to 1989 he headed the publicity department of the Garun (Spring) literary monthly in Yerevan. But the Armenian national movement of the late 1980s saw him abandon this role as he flung himself headlong into political life.

He organized and led the "Mahapartner" special battalion during the Nagorno Karabagh liberation struggle. In 1992-1993 and 1995-1999 he served as Armenia's defense minister. After the 1999 parliamentary election, Sargisian and Armenia's former Communist leader, Karen Demirchian, formed a coalition and won a majority, with Sargisian becoming prime minister. A few months later, both men, along with several others, were assassinated.

Sargisian received the Hero of Artsakh and National Hero of Armenia titles.

# Color-Coding the Post-Election 'Barevolution'

By Gayane Mkrtchyan

YEREVAN (ArmeniaNow) — Following the "Orange" (Ukraine) and "Rose" (Georgia) revolutions of the past decade, the post-February 18 election movement known as "Barevolution" is viewed by some as Armenia's own "orange" or "apricot" revolution.

Ruben Hakobyan, head of the Heritage Party faction, said Armenia is going through an electoral revolution and does not want to call it "orange."

"It is an electoral revolution in Armenia; let anyone [assign] any color to it they want," he said.

Nonetheless, participants of the rallies who have joined the post-election movement, have orange ribbons tied around their arms. Along with the apricot-color "barevolution" — otherwise known as the revolution of greetings — the oppositional movement under Raffi Hovannisian's leadership has introduced new political technologies into the political field of Armenia. His "side-walk" campaign was followed by post-election visits to the provinces, open-air press conferences and speeches by young civil activists — elements of public involvement not seen in previous Armenian campaigns.

Armen Badalyan, expert in political and election technologies; however, said the application of such political tools is pointless if an overall political process is missing.

Comparing the opposition under first president of Armenia and leader of the Armenian National Congress (ANC), Levon Ter-Petrosian, five years ago to today's movement, Badalyan told said, "The difference is not between the tools, but rather the content of the struggle. In 2008, too, there were people who wore orange ties; now it's not ties, but arm-ribbons. Does it change anything? The thing is that in 2008 it was quite clear what Ter-Petrosyan wanted, whereas it is not clear today what Raffi wants."

Heritage Party member David Sanasaryan says in movements such as this both the appearance and the content are important; however, he does not relate those symbols to either the orange revolution or the revolution of roses, and believes that "barevolution" is a good name, especially since it is popular among the youth.

One of the stark differences in this movement is that Hovannisian has not directed insults or hate speech against President Serge Sargisian, whereas Ter-Petrosian's speeches in 2008 were rife with sharp criticism, accusations and offensive language against the authorities.

"In no way does this mean concession or humility. He [Hovannisian] says 'you have lost and must admit your defeat.' It is a new culture to us. And Raffi's 'barev' has been a more important sociological survey than all the other types," Sanasaryan said.

During the public rallies five years ago, Ter-Petrosyan attempted to separate Karabaghis [native of Nagorno Karabagh], and kept pointing out his own Musa Ler roots (historical site of Armenian resistance during the 1915 Genocide. This opposition is, however, focused on erasing that distinction, making a point that an Armenian is an Armenian no matter where he or she was born.

Last week during a rally, assistant to the rector Gevorg Melkonyan called troops from Akhalkalaki (Georgian-Armenian students of Samtskhe-Javakheti) to help deal with the protesting students who had joined the civil movement. Regarding this incident, ANC faction member Nikol Pashinyan said, "We will not allow [them] to put a distinction between Artsakhtsis [same as Karabaghtsi] and Hayastantsis [native of Armenia], or Akhalkalaktis [historical Armenian city, now part of Georgia], or Ijevantis [city in Armenia]. I am Yerevantsi as much as I am Karabaghtsi or Akhalkalakti. Our people has never fought one against another, our struggle is against violence, ille-

gality and lawlessness [and] against anarchy. Hence, this is a struggle for the sake of the unity of the Armenian nation."

During the same rally, popular songwriter Ruben Hakhverdyan said, "What is this, why should someone from a remote Azeri province come and lead us?" The reference was regarding the fact that Sargisian is a native of Karabagh, formerly part of Soviet Azerbaijan. The social networks and media exploded with outrage after the comment.

Sanasaryan said of the incident, "Raffi is guiding the movement... they are simply looking for a blunder to immediately strike a blow against him."

Badalyan is convinced that the current post-election movement is no threat to the official outcome. According to him, the "presidential election" is over and settled.

Sanasaryan counters this stance when he said, "The pulse of the movement is beating steady. Raffi does not want to take the road of confrontation, but I believe that if all the means are exhausted, blocked by the authorities, there will be a confrontation. Our citizens cannot tolerate the fact that their votes have been pocketed. The authorities are not too happy with this method of struggle — an atmosphere of love and warm greetings — when more and more people keep joining us. As soon as the authorities feel they are losing, they will resort to a clash."

## Yerevan to Host Benefit Concert For Young Leukemia Patient

YEREVAN (Hetq) — A benefit concert will be held for 3-year-old leukemia patient, Nelly Petrosyan, on March 13, 7 p.m. at the State Puppet Theater.

The event has been organized by the "Help Armenian Children" NGO, with assistance from the Yerevan State Puppet Theater. Singers from the "Bard" club will participate.

Nelly Petrosyan has withstood needles and various treatments by doctors for the past 20 days. She was recently diagnosed with acute leukemia and was scheduled to receive her first dose of chemotherapy this week.

"I don't know what I feel," said the child's father, Albert Petrosyan. "I didn't understand why this happened. I couldn't speak about it without getting teary-eyed. Afterwards, the doctors said there was hope and that the illness could be treated. So I pulled myself together. I decided to do whatever was needed to save my child. There are many expenses and matters to contend with. I can't afford to be weak," Albert Petrosyan said.

He has already placed the family house and car for sale. He works as a cashier and driver. Now, he has no time for work.

Yolan Hematology Center's Children's Division plan on treating Nelly, but if there is a need for a bone marrow transplant, the child will have to be sent to Europe or Israel.

"She points to her knees and tells me 'Dad, it hurts here.' I can't watch her like that. I have to leave the hospital. I don't know what else to do. My wife sees it all, how Nelly cries when given an injection. It's painful for my wife to witness all that. I have to control my emotions and get down to the business of saving my child," Albert said.

Tickets range from 1,000 to 5,000 drams. Donations for Nelly may be directed to the family.

## Presidential Runner-Up Takes His Case to Constitutional Court

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(CEC) said last month there were no legal violations during the vote that could have influenced results.

International election monitors said the poll was an improvement from previous ones but that it still lacked real competition after some of Sargisian's adversaries decided not to run, fearing the results would be skewed.

Since the February 18 poll, the opposition has organized a series of rallies in Yerevan.

Investors worry over any signs of instability in the South Caucasus state, where 10 people were killed in violence that fol-

lowed Sargisian's initial election in 2008.

Another candidate, Andrias Ghukasyan, who went on hunger strike at the start of the campaign to protest against the organization of the vote, also submitted a complaint to the Constitutional Court.

Armenia's CEC said last month there were no legal violations during the vote that could have impacted results.

Hovannisian, a US-born former foreign minister of Armenia, submitted 70 complaints to the electoral commission, which said last week that the documents were based neither on facts nor legal evidence.

## Obama Congratulates Armenian President

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vote given by international observers as well as congratulatory messages sent to Sargisian from different world leaders, including Russian President Vladimir Putin and European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso.

UK Prime Minister James Cameron in his message said, "Congratulations on your reelection as President of the Republic of Armenia. The presidential elections of February 18 marked another step forward in Armenia's democratic development, international observers judged that they were generally well-administrated and characterized by

respect for fundamental freedoms. That assessment is particularly welcome as Armenia seeks to take forward its relationship with the European Union. I'm sure that your officials will now be looking at how to respond constructively to any recommendation that the international observer mission might make."

US Secretary of State John Kerry had congratulated Sargisian five days before.

Remarkably, Sargisian received no congratulatory message from Obama's predecessor, George W. Bush, when he became president in similarly disputed circumstances in 2008.



## INTERNATIONAL

# From *Stone Dreams* to Nightmare: Embattled Author to Leave Azerbaijan

By Julia Hakobyan

BAKU (ArmeniaNow) – The novel by the Azerbaijani writer Akram Aylisli on Armenian-Azerbaijani relations will not only cost the 75-year-old writer his presidential award and pension, it will force him to leave his homeland. Azeri media reported that the author intends to leave his Azeri home due to safety concerns for him and his family.

“My works are not published and my plays are not performed. My future here is impossible. I made the decision to leave the homeland and move to brotherly Turkey,” Aylisli said.

Aylisli's *Stone Dreams* tells the story

of two Azerbaijani men who try to protect their Armenian neighbors during the Sumgait and Baku pogroms in the closing years of the Soviet Union. The novel also includes a description of violence by ethnic Azeris against Armenians during the 1920s.

The novel – which describes the cruelty of Azerbaijanis against Armenians – provoked public anger and numerous threats against Aylisli in Azerbaijan, soon after it was published. Protests were

held in several Azerbaijani cities demanding Aylisli's exile from the country and the writer's books were burned. The pro-government Yeni Musavat Party has offered a reward of \$12,000 to anyone who “cuts off the writer's ear.” Aylisli's wife and son were fired from their jobs. By a presidential decree the writer was stripped of all government awards, including the “People's Writer” title and his monthly presidential pension of \$1,270.

Armenian and Turkish intellectuals, as well as the US State Department, have issued statements, condemning harassment directed at the writer and urging Baku authorities to stop the persecution campaign. Human Rights Watch, in particular, said that the government of Azerbaijan is making a mockery of its international obligations on freedom of expression. “This is shocking, particularly after Azerbaijani officials flocked to Strasbourg last month to tout the government's human rights record at the Council of Europe,” said a Human Rights Watch representative.

Aylisli, meanwhile, accused Azerbaijani intellectuals of cowardice and indifference to the public debate about his novel.

“They have always supported my position. However, they cannot openly express their opinions because they get salary from the state. The freethinking part of society is openly on my side. Even a group of writers from Turkey supported me. But not one politician in Azerbaijan has called me,” Aylisli said.



Akram Aylisli

The writer said that that the purpose of the novel was to send a message to Armenians, in particular, to the Armenians living in Nagorno Karabagh, that Azerbaijani people see their mistakes. “Time has not yet completely separated us, let us look together [so that we may live] together,” said the writer, adding that now it is the turn of Armenian writers to recognize their country's mistakes.

“I now call on the Armenian writers to tell the truth about the Khojaly genocide and other mass murders. Do not blame the people for the wars. [People are] guilty who use wars to enrich themselves,” Aylisli said.

Armenian expert on geopolitics of the South Caucasus, Anjela Elibegova, said that the purposeful hatred toward the author is partly conditioned by the Azeri's “wag the dog” policy, adding, “Armenian thematic is a zero risk action for the government of Azerbaijan to divert attention from the really serious problems in the country.”

Elibegova said the novel also provoked fury and criticism because it presented the national leader, Heydar Aliyev (the father of the acting president Ilham Aliyev), in unflattering light and contained accusations of organizing the Armenian massacres.

Thomas de Waal of the Carnegie Endowment, said the publication of the novel is a brave act by Aylisli, but unfortunately, instead of encouraging Aylisli as a brave citizen, the Azerbaijani government subjected him to pressures and burnt his books.

## Suspect in Assaults On Armenian Women in Samatya Arrested

ISTANBUL (Hurriyet DailyNews) – A Turkish court decided to charge and arrest a 38-year-old man with charges of “intended murder,” Dogan news agency has reported.

The suspect, identified as M.N., is a Turkish citizen of Armenian origin and was detained as a suspect in five attacks, one of which resulted in death. The suspect lives alone and allegedly committed the assaults for theft, according to unnamed sources.

M.N. was detained by the police on March 2 after one of the victims identified him. A judge in an Istanbul court decided the arrest of the suspect who was set to send to Metris prison later.

On December 28, 2012, Maritsa Küçük was stabbed seven times before her throat was slit at her home in Samatya. Two other attacks were carried out in the same month against elderly Armenian women in the Samatya and Bakirköy districts as well.

One of the women, 87-year-old Turfanda Asik, lost an eye, while the other woman was robbed and severely injured.

Most recently, 84-year-old Sultan Akyar was attacked in Samatya, after which she underwent eye surgery. The blood on an envelope found in Maritsa Küçük's bag belongs to M.N., the agency said, adding that the women who survived the attacks in Samatya identified M.N. as the assailant.

However, the evidence found in the attack against Vehbiye Ö., 80, who was severely wounded in the Sisli district of Istanbul, did not match with suspect M.N., the agency said. Police are continuing their investigation to find the Sisli suspect.

After the suspect's blood samples matched the blood found in Maritsa Küçük's bag, he was questioned again. In his second questioning, he gave a detailed testimony about the incidents, according to the daily. M.N., detained twice before for theft, previously worked at tea houses as a cleaner but had been unemployed for some time.

Police said that M.N. had been stalking his victims before carrying out the attacks.

## Vienna Hosts Rallies on Sumgait Massacre Anniversary

VIENNA, Austria (Panorama.am) – In the hall of the Armenian Apostolic Church of St. Hripsime with the support of the Armenian Embassy in Austria an event was held on the anniversary of Sumgait pogroms and the 25th anniversary of the Artsakh movement. On February 24, Archimandrite Ter Petrosyan Tyrant of the Armenian Apostolic Church of St. Hripsime held liturgy in commemoration of the victims of the massacre.

Armenian Ambassador to Austria Arman Kirakosian, Artashes Geghamyan and Khachik Harutyunyan participated in the Parliamentary Assembly works and also attended the event.

A witness of the Artsakh movement, Herbert Maurer, and a member of the Austrian-Armenian community, Hambardzum Harutyunyan, were among the speakers. Members of youth organizations and Austrian society and media were also in attendance. There was also an exhibition of pho-

tos and documents on the Sumgait pogroms committed in 1988 and there was a presentation on the German and Austrian media's reaction to those events.

Hymns of Armenia and Austria were presented, works by Armenian composers were performed and fragments from the film about Sumgait pogroms were shown.

After the event, more than 100 representatives of the Armenian-Austrian organizations held a silent march towards the central area of Vienna, Stephansplatz, where protest was organized with large number of posters, flags of Armenia and Nagorno-Karabagh and patriotic songs.

On February 26 to 29, 1988, mass pogroms of civilians organized in the city of Sumgait in the Azerbaijani SSR, accompanied with unprecedented brutal murders, violence and pillaging against the Armenian population of the city.

## International News

### Number of Kidnapped Armenians in Aleppo on The Rise

ALEPPO (Armenpress) – According to information from the Syrian Armenian First Aid Body for Emergencies, more than 90 Aleppo Armenians have already been kidnapped during this year of ongoing clashes.

The press secretary of the Armenian National Prelacy in Aleppo, Jirair Reisian, told Armenpress that fortunately the majority of these victims have been released. The number of wounded Armenians exceeds 87. The number of Armenian casualties is around four-dozen.

The overall death toll in Syria recently surpassed 70,000. The number of Syrian refugees has reached 940,000.

### Orhan Pamuk Vies for Independent Foreign Fiction Prize

ISTANBUL (Today's Zaman) – Turkish Nobel laureate author, Orhan Pamuk, has been listed as a candidate for this year's Independent Foreign Fiction Prize for his sophomore novel, *Silent House*. The book tells the stories of family members on the eve of the 1980 coup d'état in Turkey.

Pamuk, who won the award in 1990 for *White Castle* and was short-listed for the prize in 2011 for *The Museum of Innocence*, is among 15 writers, including Syrian writer Khalid Khalifa, presently in contention for the 10,000 pounds sterling prize.

Khalifa made the list for his third novel, *In Praise of Hatred*, which was banned in Syria due to its political content. The book focuses on a girl whose life is affected by events that took place during the Syrian regime's suppression of the Muslim Brotherhood in the 1980s.

Pamuk's *Silent House*, which was published in Turkey in 1983, was translated into English in 2012.

The short list for the prize, consisting of only six novels, will be announced on April 11. Jury members – Boyd Tonkin, literary editor at *The Independent*, internationally-acclaimed Turkish author Elif Shafak, translator Frank Wynne, critic/writer Gabriel Josipovici and editor Jean Boase-Beier – will determine the winner in May.

Launched in 1990, the Independent Foreign Fiction Prize honors both the author of a novel that is in translation in the United Kingdom and the translator of it. Each year, the prize is divided between the author and the translator.

### Georgian PM Apologizes For President's 'Irresponsible Remarks'

TBILISI (PanArmenian.net) – Georgian Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili apologized to the international community for President Mikheil Saakashvili's “recent irresponsible statements.”

“The government of Georgia continues its efforts for speeding up the country's European and Euro-Atlantic integration, for the restoration of its territorial integrity and providing peace in the region. Our task is to fulfill honestly the obligations towards the European Union and the NATO, reinforce relations with our friends, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Turkey and Ukraine and thus put forth steps for normalizing relations with Russia,” said Ivanishvili in a recent statement.

“In addition, the recent irresponsible statements and activities of the president run counter to the course of the Georgian government to the aforementioned directions, tarnish the country's international prestige and create more domestic and foreign problems to the new government. We are sincerely sorry that the heads of the friend governments were put in inconvenient situation as well as the representatives of the international organizations, for which I apologize to them on behalf of Georgia's government,” he added.





# Community News

## SOAR's Colorado Chapter Continues Its Support for Warm Hearth

DENVER — The Society for Orphaned Armenian Relief's Colorado Chapter (SOAR-Colorado) recently sponsored its fourth annual January Art Show to raise awareness and funds for the Warm Hearth group home in Armenia, which services adult orphans with special needs. More than \$3,700 was raised, bringing a total of approximately \$12,000 raised over the past four years. The full amount will be used for the art program at Warm Hearth and will provide the residents with art supplies and vocational teachers who can support them in their artistic work.

During the event, SOAR-Colorado President Maria Stepanyan expressed her gratitude for the Colorado-Armenian community's continued support of the program.

"Over the years, we have sent a message to the world that we are working, each in our small way, to improve the lives of those who suffer needlessly. We are blessed to have family and friends who have been walking this path with us for the last four years, and we thank you for your generosity and your open hearts," Stepanyan said.

Warm Hearth is the first long-term group home in Armenia, committed to providing homes to Armenian orphans with disabilities and mental illnesses who have outgrown other orphanages where they were initially placed. Warm Hearth's organic approach focuses on "providing its residents with a loving and nurturing environment, as it provides for their vocational development and addresses their social, physical, mental and spiritual needs."

The home aims to foster the notion of community integration which honors culture and tradition while respecting the dignity, fulfillment and independence of its residents. Care is individualized, allowing residents to live as independently as possible, as they contribute to their community.

Founded by Natalie Bryant-Rizzieri, who also serves as its executive director, Warm Hearth opened its doors in 2006 to its first group of eight long-term residents from Kapan, Armenia. As a former Peace Corps volunteer in Armenia from 2003-2005, Bryant-Rizzieri worked closely with the initial residents of Warm Hearth at an orphanage in the town of Kapan. The idea for Warm Hearth originated out of her friendship with the orphans with special needs and the realization that they were destined for the government-run psychiatric institutions.

Oversight and management is provided by the Friends of Warm Hearth, established in 2005 and its sister partner, the Jermik Ankyun Foundation, established in 2008. (Jermik Ankyun is the Armenian translation for Warm Hearth.)

As Warm Hearth began to reach out to an extended community of orphaned and abandoned individuals with disabilities, the home realized that it needed a local non-profit dedicated exclusively to the vulnerable population it served.

As Warm Hearth moves forward over the next five years, its focus is to build a sustainable model that can be replicated in Armenia so that more individuals can be served outside of institutional settings. Individuals with disabilities are still often institutionalized and stigmatized. Warm Hearth supporters hope to break that stigma and provide better care for these individuals.

SOAR is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to providing humanitarian relief to orphaned Armenian children and adults. Working with a donor base and a network of partners, SOAR distributes clothing, educational supplies, medicine and other essential resources to orphaned Armenians throughout the world.

To learn more about SOAR, visit <http://www.soar-us.org/>.



Bishop Karamian consecrating the Holy Altar

## Boston-Area Family Renovates Church in Armenia

WATERTOWN and LERNANIST, Armenia — Saturday, October 27, 2012 was a memorable day for the residents of Lernanist village in Armenia's Kotayk Province. After 80 years, on the feast day of the Twelve Holy Doctors of the Universal Church, the Sourp Asdvadzadzin Church there reopened its doors before the faithful. Bishop Arakel Karamian, Primate of the Diocese of Kotayk, assisted by several local clergymen and Deacon Zakar Hachikian of Greater Boston, performed the consecration service and celebrated the Divine Liturgy. Hundreds of villagers along with local government officials attended the church services as well as the banquet that followed. On this joyous occasion, a traditional blessing of madagh service took place and several villagers and guests were baptized.

Lernanist (known as Verin Akhta until 1978) is located near Hrazdan, with a population of approximately 4,000, who are primarily made up of the descendants of the settlers from the historic western Armenian province of Van. Those early settlers built the chapel of Sourp Hagop. However, with the influx of more refugees in the aftermath of the massacres and ethnic cleansing policies carried out by the successive Ottoman governments in Western Armenia, it becomes necessary to build a larger edifice. Consequently, on the grounds of Sourp Hagop, the construction of the Sourp Asdvadzadzin Church started on March 25, 1892 and the newly built church was consecrated on August 25, 1906. Sourp Asdvadzadzin was closed by the Soviet authorities in 1932. The sanctuary was initially used as a grain storage facility and starting in 1970s, it was converted into a function facility where local events and wedding receptions took place. Under the orders of the communist government, the holy altar and bell tower of the church were destroyed, while the interior and exterior of the church as well as the courtyard sustained heavy damage.

Several years ago, at the request of Karekin II, the Catholicos and Supreme Patriarch of All Armenians, Deacon Zakar and his brother Deacon Varoujan Hachikian of the Boston area decided to finance the renovation of the Lernanist church. As part of this project, a new altar and bell tower were built, the roof and windows were replaced, interior and exterior walls and the foundation were reinforced while the concrete church floor was completely replaced with a stone one.

Local artists were able to restore the icons painted on the walls of the church. In addition, the church was provided with a new Russian made bell, icon for the Holy Altar, new liturgical items, vestments, books, furnishings and oriental rugs. The entire project was dedicated to the memory of the Hachikian brothers' late father, Krikor Hachikian. On this occasion, Karamian placed a memorial stone above the main entrance of the church.

Since the official opening of the Sourp Asdvadzadzin Church, services and sacraments have been performed at the parish on a regular basis. Bishop Karamian has appointed an interim pastor for Lernanist while Karekin II will ordain a new priest for the parish in the near future.

By this coming fall, the Hachikian brothers expect the completion of their next church renovation project, a seventh-century church in Talin region of Armenia. This project will be dedicated to the memory of all those Armenians who were martyred by Turkey between 1894 and 1923 in the province of Pontic Amasia.



Deacon Zakar Hachikian and his wife, Gayane, with Bishop Karamian

## Berd Native to Speak About Fear of Azeri Incursions in Border Area

BOSTON — Rev. Aram Mirzoyan, spiritual leader of the Berd region of Tavush Province, in the northeast of Armenia, is visiting US Armenian-American communities during the month of March to tell his community's story of spiritual revival and to help bring awareness to their struggle for survival.

He visited St. Gregory the Enlightener Church in Haverhill on March 8 and is scheduled to perform the service at St. James Church in Watertown as well as speak at on March 10. He is scheduled to visit several churches in California as well.

Berd is a town with a population of 8,000 surrounded by 16 villages. The region has a 186-kilometer border with Azerbaijan, a four-hour drive from Yerevan. Azeri snipers regularly shoot at civilian targets inside the Armenian border and even engage in unprovoked border incursions, killing and frightening Armenians to abandon their homes. The people living in this picturesque region with

alpine meadows, mountain ranges, ravines, rivers and pristine spring water don't want to abandon their homeland and have endured severe hardships over the last 20 years.

The 16,000 inhabitants of the region were cut off from their Christian religion since early Soviet times, when the original St. Gevorg Church in Berd was destroyed by the communist regime in the early 1920s.

Mirzoyan, a young, devoted clergyman, and a native of nearby Chinari village, is overseeing the final stages of construction of a new St. Gevorg Church in the town of Berd, which was begun in late 2011 with the blessing of the Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II.

Major funding for the construction of the church was made possible by a bequest from Fresno native John Stevens, who had visited Berd and saw that they needed a church. Therefore, he included in his will a major donation to build the church.

With enough funds to begin the project, Mirzoyan began the construction of the church, starting with the consecration of the foundation in May 2012 by Archbishop Yeznig, the religious leader of Tavush Province. Completion is expected in 2013.

But to complete the project Mirzoyan needs additional funding, some of which he has raised from former Shamshadin natives, now in Moscow. He is also working to secure the safety of the villagers living directly on the hazardous border.

Mirzoyan is not only concerned with the spiritual development of the community, but also its economy, with 80-percent unemployment, in part due to Azeri aggression and the blockade of the borders.

Catholicos Karekin II and Archbishops Khajak Barsamian and Hovnan Derderian, primates of the Eastern and Western Armenian Church of America, respectively, have blessed this project and urge their parishioners to support Mirzoyan with donations to complete this church as a sign of solidarity with the 16,000 villagers in the Berd region. American-Armenians are not being called upon to make the sacrifices of the brave folks of the Berd region who defend the frontiers, but they can help with critically needed tax deductible donations payable to the Diocese of the Armenian Church, 630 Second Ave., New York, NY 10016.

For further information contact Eva Medzorian, [evamedzorian@gmail.com](mailto:evamedzorian@gmail.com).



Rev. Aram Mirzoyan





## COMMUNITY NEWS

## Fresno State Programs for March Include Lecture by Sona Haroutyunian, Talk by NKR Rep. Avetisyan

FRESNO — Dr. Sona Haroutyunian, the 10th Henry K. Khazadian Kazan Visiting Professor of Armenian Studies at California State University, Fresno, will give her second lecture on “The Theme of the Armenian Genocide in Translation” at 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, March 14. This is one of a three-part series of illustrated public lectures on the theme of the Armenian Genocide.

Her first lecture, February 25, focused on the literary genre as an instrument, which brings greater attention to the historical phenomenon of the Armenian Genocide.

In the second lecture, Haroutyunian will both explore and problematize the power of translation related to the Genocide as an instrument of cultural, historical and linguistic interaction.

What difference does reading genocide literature in translation make? And finally, in what ways have these translations contributed to the awareness of the genocide in their given countries? Exploring the impacts these translations have had in their given countries, there will also be examine the reader reactions following their respective publications in various languages by presenting exclusive interviews with some of the translators. During the lecture the metaphorical relationship between memory and translation will also be examined.

The third lecture, to be held at 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday, April 10, will focus on the theme of “The Armenian Genocide in Cinema” and will deal with the Italian directors the Taviani brothers and their film, “Skylark Farm,” a co-pro-

duction by Italy, Spain, Belgium, France and the European production company Eurimages.

Haroutyunian is a graduate of Yerevan State University, where she received her master’s and later her PhD in philology. She received her second PhD in linguistics at the University of Venice, where she has been a professor of Armenian language and literature since 2001.

Along with teaching, Haroutyunian has also directed her skills towards working as the cultural advisor to the ambassador of Armenia in Italy, and the Italian and Armenian website coordinator and translator for the Armenian Embassy in Italy.

The lecture is free and open to the public and will take place in the University Business Center, A. Peters Auditorium, on the Fresno

State campus.

Robert Avetisyan, Permanent Representative of the Nagorno Karabagh Republic to the United States, will make his first visit to the Fresno area to give a presentation on the 25th anniversary of the Karabagh Movement on Friday, March 22, at 7:30 p.m. The presentation will be held in McLane Hall, Room 121, on the Fresno State campus and is co-sponsored by the Armenian National Committee of America-Central California. The lecture is funded in part by the Leon S. Peters Foundation and the Bertha and John Garabedian Foundation.

The people and government of the Nagorno Karabagh Republic (Artsakh) are celebrating the 25th anniversary of their National Liberation movement. In 1988 the people of Artsakh raised their voices for freedom and dignity and in opposition to any government that rules by despotism. Artsakh’s path was challenged by various ordeals and the people refused to allow these obstacles to break their will and determination.

Avetisyan will give a historical background about the establishment of the Republic of Karabagh and then discuss its current status and the challenges facing the country.

In February 2009, by NKR President Bako Sahakyan appointed Avetisyan to his post in the US.

Since 1997 NKR has maintained a representative office in Washington, DC.

The lecture is free and open to the public. Free parking is available in all campus parking lots.

## ASA Students Participate in Opening Ceremony of Sheriff’s Inauguration

By Katrina Menzigan

LEXINGTON, Mass. — On February 13, students from the Armenian Sisters’ Academy (ASA) participated in the opening ceremonies for the inauguration of the 30th High Sheriff of Middlesex County, Peter J. Koutoujian. ASA students led the assembled dignitaries and officials, along with friends and family, in the singing of the United States national anthem and participated in the pledge of allegiance.

“Our students were very excited to witness and be part of this important aspect of Massachusetts civic life. These children saw how our society passes power from one individual to the next and how the rule of law is structured,” stated Mayda Melkonian, vice principal, ASA.

Students ranged in age from 8 to 11, representing grades 3-5. While many of the students know Koutoujian as a parent at the ASA, many learned how the school community is tied to the broader world around them. Present at the ceremony were dignitaries such as sheriffs from other counties, church leaders, and members of the Massachusetts Honor Guard.

“It was very cool to see the troopers and officers carry in the various flags and banners. We felt it was a very serious ceremony and that we were part of it made us all excited,” observed Sevak Glorikian, a third-grade student.



Elementary students from the Armenian Sisters’ Academy stand on stage with the Massachusetts Honor Guard at the inauguration of Sheriff Peter Koutoujian.

The Middlesex Sheriff’s Office, established in 1692, is one of the oldest law enforcement agencies in the United States. The Middlesex Sheriff’s Office provides care, custody and control of both sentenced inmates and pre-trial detainees at the Middlesex House of Correction in Billerica and the Middlesex Jail in

Cambridge. Additionally, its office operates the Sheriff’s Office of Civil Process, the Cambridge and Lowell Community Counseling Centers and numerous community service and crime prevention programs.

The ASA is currently holding open enrollment for the 2013-2014 academic year.

## Dr. Marchese to Speak at Ararat-Eskijian Museum

MISSION HILLS, Calif. — Dr. Ronald Marchese will present an illustrated lecture on “Treasures of Faith: Sacred Objects from the Armenian Churches of Constantinople,” on Sunday, March 10, at 4 p.m. at the Ararat-Eskijian Museum, Hasmik Mgrdichian Gallery, 15105 Mission Hills Road.

The lecture is sponsored by the Ararat-Eskijian Museum and the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR). A reception will follow the lecture.

Marchese is professor of ancient history and archaeology at the University of Minnesota, Duluth, and has spent the last several years documenting the rich cultural history of the Armenians in Constantinople by studying the works of arts that those Armenians produced.

He received his PhD from New York University and has had a distinguished career in archaeology, having conducted research at the Plataiai Archaeological Excavation in Greece and at Tel Dor in Israel. He is the author of numerous articles and book chapters in the field and the co-author with Marlene Breu of *Splendor and Spectacle: The Armenian Orthodox Church Textile Collections of Istanbul* (Çitlembik Ltd., Istanbul, 2010). He has authored several other books on art and weaving.

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## COMMUNITY NEWS

## Armenian Bar Association Hosts Annual Networking Event

LOS ANGELES — On Saturday, February 9, the Armenian Bar Association and Southwestern Law School's Armenian Law Students' Association jointly hosted the second annual Networking and Information Event for Law Students — a panel presentation and networking event tailored to educate, inform and empower future Armenian attorneys. The event was attended by more than 50 law school students and 20 attorneys.

The program consisted of brief presentations by a panel of 15 attorneys from various fields of legal practice including, but not limited to, prosecution/criminal defense, government, corporate/in-house, entertainment, family, civil litigation, public interest and the judiciary. Among the panelists were Jacqueline Chooljian, US federal magistrate judge, Andre Manssourian, of Orange County Superior Court and Armenian Bar Board of Governors' Executive Board Members Sara Bedirian and Saro Kerkonian.

The event was co-chaired by Armenian Bar Board of Governors' Executive Board Member, Membership Development Committee Co-Chair and Student Affairs Committee Chair Hovanes Margarian and Southwestern Law School Vice Dean and Professor of Legal Analysis, Writing & Skills and Director of the Externship Program Anahid Gharakhanian.

Following the panel presentations, students spoke with all of the panelists and practicing attorneys in attendance through a series of seven-minute speed-networking sessions. "The Armenian Bar Association aims to bridge the gap between the established and future generation of attorneys by fostering mentorship and employment opportunities. Often times the students are too caught up in their education and overlook the vital need to network and develop such connections. This event is particularly effective because it provides the students an opportunity to connect one on one with all of the speakers," stated Margarian.

"Learning about different career opportunities and networking with established attorneys and judicial officers provides an invaluable learning opportunity for our students," Gharakhanian said.

"We are very proud of the generational link that is being cultivated and established by the collaboration of Southwestern Law School, led by its visionary Vice Dean and Armenian Bar member Anahid Gharakhanian along with the scores of volunteer Attorneys on behalf of the Armenian Bar Association," said Garo Ghazarian, chairman of the Armenian Bar Association.

The Armenian Bar Association welcomes all law school students and attorneys to become involved with the association through volunteering on upcoming projects and attending events. Those interested in becoming more active may contact Margarian at hovan@marginianlaw.com. To renew your annual membership, visit [www.ArmenianBar.com](http://www.ArmenianBar.com).

## TCA Arshag Dickranian School Banquet to Take Place on March 22

LOS ANGELES — The 32nd Annual Banquet of the Tekeyan Cultural Association (TCA) Arshag Dickranian School will be held on Friday, March 22, at 7 p.m., at the school's Walter and Laurel Karabian Hall.

The honorees of this year's event are Ara and Julia Aghishian. Ara Aghishian, a prominent attorney, was a member of the Board of Trustees of TCA Arshag Dickranian School and currently serves as the president of Hayastan All Armenian Fund's US Western Region. His wife works as a volunteer teacher at Dickranian School and teaches first grade as well as at the high school.

The annual banquet is a traditional event of the Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO), which brings together the large circle of parents, teachers, students, alumni and guests dedicated to the success of the school. The event also allows students endowed with artistic gifts to present their talents individually or collectively.

For more than 30 years, the Arshag Dickranian School has been instituting a diverse and comprehensive educational program. The event is one of the most important fundraising functions in support of the school.

Tickets are at \$75 for adults and \$50 for students, which may be acquired by contacting the school office at (323) 461-4377 or PTO Chairwoman Armine Gasparyan at (323) 428-4747.

For more information visit the school's website [www.dickranianschool.org](http://www.dickranianschool.org).

## Richard Hovannisian to Lecture on Smyrna Catastrophe

BOCA RATON, Fla. — Prof. Richard G. Hovannisian will present an illustrated lecture, "The Smyrna Catastrophe, 1922-2013," on Sunday, March 31, at 1 p.m., at St. David Armenian Church, 2300 Yamato Road. The program will be co-sponsored by St. David Church and the National Association for Armenian

Studies and Research (NAASR).

September 2012 marked the 90th anniversary of the Smyrna Catastrophe when much of the city, the second largest in the Ottoman Empire, was destroyed by fire during the final phase of the Greco-Turkish War. The calamity, a part of the final phase of the Armenian Genocide, marked the end of a strong Christian presence in the historic Aegean coastal regions and turned hundreds of thousands of Greeks and Armenians into refugees.



Prof. Richard Hovannisian

In this illustrated lecture, Hovannisian will discuss the important role of Smyrna (Izmir) in modern Armenian history and the inferno that engulfed the city in September 1922. Hovannisian is the editor of the recently published *Armenian Smyrna/Izmir*, the eleventh volume of proceedings from the UCLA conference series "Historic Armenian Cities and Provinces." He also traveled to Izmir and environs in June 2012 as the historian-guide for a NAASR Armenian Heritage Tour led by Armen Aroyan.

A book signing of *Armenian Smyrna/Izmir* will immediately follow the lecture. The lecture is free and open to the public.

Hovannisian is the author of *Armenia on the Road to Independence*, the four-volume history *The Republic of Armenia*, and has edited and contributed to more than 25 books including

*The Armenian Genocide in Perspective; The Armenian People from Ancient to Modern Times; Remembrance and Denial; Looking Backward, Moving Forward; and The Armenian Genocide: Cultural and Ethical Legacies*. He was the first holder of the Armenian Educational Foundation Chair in Modern Armenian History at UCLA and currently serves as Distinguished Chancellor's Fellow at Chapman University in Orange County and Distinguished Visiting Lecturer at the University of California, Irvine.

## ABN Hosts Speaker and Networking Event

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. — The Armenian Business Network (ABN) will host a networking event Tuesday, March 12, 7 p.m., at the Terrace Room of the Sheraton Commander Hotel. The event will feature guest speaker, Todd Patkin, who will present his "Great Insights on Succeeding in Life and Business," followed by an 8 p.m. networking session at Nubar Restaurant.

Patkin is the author of *Finding Happiness: One Man's Quest to Beat Depression and Anxiety* and *Finally—Let the Sunshine In, Twelve Weeks to Finding Happiness: Boot Camp for Building Happier People* and *The Sunny Days Secret: A Guide for Finding Happiness*.

Patkin travels the country speaking to businesses, civic clubs, schools, colleges, parents and healthcare facilities. He has presented at events sponsored by the *Chicago Tribune* and Deepak Chopra and has appeared on Fox News Health and in *Reader's Digest*.

To RSVP, contact Arlette Yegumians, at [arlette.yegumians@gmail.com](mailto:arlette.yegumians@gmail.com).

### OBITUARY

## Hagop H. Jamgochian

SHREWSBURY, Mass. — Hagop H. (Jack) Jamgochian of Shrewsbury, formerly of Bloomfield, Conn., passed away peacefully surrounded by his family on February 13, 2013. He was the beloved husband for 67 years of Shamiram (Rose) Jamgochian.

Born in Worcester, he was the son of the late Zareh and Ankine Jamgochian. He was a graduate of North High School in Worcester, Wofford College, Clark University and George Washington University Law School.

Jamgochian was a WWII Veteran, serving in the US Air Force.

As an attorney, he worked with the Internal Revenue Service as the Estate Tax Supervisor. Upon his retirement from government service, he joined the law firm of Charles Stroh where he remained in practice for 20 years.

He was previously a member of the St. George Armenian Church in Hartford, Conn., where he served on the Parish Council, as treasurer of the Building Committee and on numerous other committees. Most recently, he was a member of the Armenian Church of Our Saviour in Worcester.

He was a member of the Knights of Vartan, Armenian Assembly of America, Professional Internal Revenue Employees Association, and the Connecticut and District of Columbia Bars.

He was predeceased by his son, Richard S. Jamgochian, and a brother, Michael Jamgochian. In addition to his wife, he leaves his sister-in-law Margaret Zakarian of Worcester; three children, daughter Melanie Samsel and husband James of Grafton, Mass., son James Jamgochian and wife Marilynn of Milford, Conn. and daughter Susan Atamian and husband Edward of Shrewsbury; six grandchildren, Cristina Feden and husband Jeff; Elizabeth Beck and husband Ray; Lauren Fletcher and husband Eddy; Richard Jamgochian; Ross Atamian and Kirk Atamian and four great-grandchildren, Aubrey, Preston, Kenley and Elizabeth.

Jamgochian's funeral was held Saturday, February 16 at the Armenian Church of Our Saviour, 87 Salisbury St., Worcester. Burial was in Hope Cemetery in Worcester.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Armenian Church of Our Saviour, 87 Salisbury St., Worcester, MA 01609.

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## COMMUNITY NEWS



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Hasan Cemal in Dzirernagapert  
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**Hasan Cemal** is a scholar and the author of a recent book titled "1915: Armenian Genocide," which has become a bestseller in Turkey. In his book, Hasan Cemal not only presented factual data on the tragedy, but, also, he spoke about how his personal views have changed and how he turned from a genocide denier to a recognizer. His courage and his dedication to Armenian cause are remarkable.

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## Armenian Engineers and Scientists Of America Install New Council

GLENDALÉ – At its general membership meeting in January, the Armenian Engineers and Scientists of America (AESA) introduced its new council for the year 2013. The new executive council consists of the following: Mardy Kazarians, PhD, president; Vasken Yardemian, vice president; Mark Abajian, executive secretary and Sasoon Petrossian as treasurer. The Councilors at large are: Marina Guevrekian, PhD, Shant Kenderian, PhD, Stepan Joulfayan, Argineh Shabandari, Talin Petrossian, Armineh Khachatoorian, Vazgen Ghoogassian, Aram Setian and Hagop Bedikian.

as mixers for the young professionals. AESA partnered with other Armenian professional organizations for these events. In addition, AESA joined forces with the Armenian Professional Society (APS) in organizing its annual gala banquet where both organizations recognized Dr. Vahan Gregor for his extraordinary accomplishments with the APS Lifetime Achievement Award and the AESA Victor Hambartsumian Award.

The incoming president, Kazarians, shared his plan and goals for the upcoming year. "We need to revitalize this organization and provide

a forum for the young Armenian engineers and scientists to meet their peers, also conduct or facilitate new technical projects in Armenia and in other Armenian Communities," stated Kazarians. He also discussed focusing on recruitment of new members, enhancing fundraising activities, implementing state-of-the-art communication systems and ensuring that the Science Olympiad Project maintains its quality.

In addition, Kazarians mentioned that this year the organization will start a new scholarship program for Armenian graduate students majoring in engineering and science and will



Seated, from left, Marina Guevrekian, Armen Hovannessian, Mardy Kazarians, Vasken Yardemian; standing, from left, Mark Abajian, Armineh Khachatoorian, Argineh Shabandari, Talin Petrosin, Vazgen Ghoogassian, Stepan Joulfayan, Sasoon Petrossian and Shant Kenderian. (Missing from photo is Hagop Bedikian.)

The outgoing president, Armen Hovannessian reported on last year's activities and achievements. In the past year, AESA organized formal scientific lectures and workshop as well as the annual Science Olympiad competition held in Woodbury University. The competition, involving school-age children, was considered a great success. These activities were well organized and attended by the Armenian community. Hovannessian mentioned social activities such

sponsor mentoring activities for young professionals.

"We are at an important point in AESA's history. This year AESA will celebrate its 30th anniversary of its existence. We must make sure that AESA attracts young professionals to insure organization's perseverance," concluded Kazarians.

For more information, visit AESA's website at [www.aesa.org](http://www.aesa.org).

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## ASA Second Annual Journalism Internship Set for 2013

WARWICK, R.I. – At its January meeting, the Board of Trustees of the Armenian Students' Association of America, Inc. (ASA, Inc.) announced it is again sponsoring two internships in journalism in partnership with the Armenian Weekly and the Armenian Mirror-Spectator.

The ASA, Inc., founded in 1910, is the oldest Armenian student organization in the United States.

In making the announcement, Brian Assadourian, chairman of the ASA, Inc., Board of Trustees, remarked that "The ASA is proud to make these internships available and continues its mission begun 102 years ago of providing financial assistance and professional mentoring to qualified students of Armenian heritage."

Participants in the six-week internship program will receive a weekly stipend of \$150. Interns will work either under the supervision of Khatchig Mouradian, editor of the Armenian Weekly or Alin K. Gregorian, editor of the Armenian Mirror-Spectator. The offices of both newspapers are located in Watertown, Mass.

"It is important to provide opportunities for

students of Armenian heritage to pursue careers in journalism," noted Dr. Michael G. Mensoian, a member of the ASA Board of Trustees.

Mensoian added, "The Armenian Weekly and the Armenian Mirror-Spectator are two of the leading English language newspapers in the United States and Canada keeping our community informed of developments locally as well as in Armenia and the Diaspora through their print and online editions."

Applications for the ASA, Inc., Journalism Internship are now available and may be downloaded at <http://www.asainc.org>.

Applications must be submitted no later than Friday, May 24. Candidates must have completed their sophomore year of college by May 30. Currently enrolled graduate students are also eligible.

Since its establishment in 1910 the Armenian Students' Association, Inc., has encouraged the educational pursuits of Armenians in the United States by providing financial assistance in the form of scholarship grants, professional opportunities through internships, and fellowship through social and professional activities.

### Armenian Students' Association of America, Inc.

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## New York METRO

# Holy Martyrs Church Welcomes New Pastor

BAYSIDE, N.Y. — On Sunday, February 10, Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern), visited the Church of the Holy Martyrs as the parish formally welcomed its new pastor and his family.

Prior to the celebration of the Divine Liturgy, Barsamian ordained Karnik Kilicyan to the rank of acolyte.

In his sermon, Barsamian stressed the importance of service and encouraged the parishioners to continue their involvement in the life of the Armenian Church.

Later that afternoon, 225 people gathered in Kalustyan Hall for a luncheon and program welcoming the Rev. Abraham Malkhasyan, his wife,

Karine, and their two children, Evelina and Armen. Malkhasyan was assigned as the pastor of Holy Martyrs Church in September.

“Fr. Abraham is an enthusiastic young priest,” Barsamian said. “Holy Martyrs is a wonderful, active parish and I am certain the people here will support their new pastor and help his ministry grow.”

During the program, representatives of various church organizations extended their best wishes to Malkhasyan and his family. Parish Council Chair Bruce Ashbahian delivered the opening toast. Arthur Ipek performed on the piano, Malkhasyan sang a song by Komitas and Karine Kocharyan recited poetry. Dr. Lynn Cetin served as the mistress of ceremonies.



New York state Sen. Tony Avella presents Fr. Abraham Malkhasyan and his wife Karine with a Senate resolution.

Malkhasyan was presented with a resolution issued by New York state Sen. Tony Avella.

“I am grateful to the entire community for welcoming me and my family with open arms,” Malkhasyan said. “I am excited to be a part of this wonderful Holy Martyrs family. The pastor and community must work together in full commitment as one body in order to fulfill the Lord’s mission, and I look forward to working with all of you to carry forward the mission of our church.”

The Rev. Simeon Odabashian, diocesan vicar, Rev. Mardiros Chevian, dean of St. Nersess Armenian Seminary; Rev. Karekin Kasparian, pastor of St. Gregory the Enlightener Church of White Plains and Rev. Thomas Garabedian, pastor of St. Anne’s Armenian Catholic Church, were among the clergy taking part in the celebration.



Archbishop Barsamian ordains Karnik Kilicyan to the rank of acolyte.

## 111th Diocesan Assembly To Convene In Boca Raton

### Edward and Janet Mardigian To Be Honored

NEW YORK — The Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern) will hold the 111th Diocesan Assembly May 2 through 5, in Boca Raton, Fla. St. David Armenian Church will host the gathering, Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Diocesan Primate, will preside over all the gatherings and events.

A highlight of the week of activities will be the annual Diocesan Assembly awards banquet, on the evening of Friday, May 3. At that time, Edward and Janet Mardigian will be honored as the Diocese’s 2013 “Armenian Church Members of the Year.” Natives of the St. John Armenian Church of Southfield, Mich., the Mardigians have been benefactors of the Diocese and the Fund for Armenian Relief (FAR), and are continuing the legacy of leadership, participation and support established by Edward Mardigian’s late parents, Edward and Helen Mardigian.

The Diocesan Assembly will convene on Thursday, May 2 at 4 p.m., with sessions continuing to the afternoon of Saturday, May 4. In addition to the regular business sessions and reports from the Diocesan Council, FAR and various Diocesan organizations, one morning session will be devoted to a presentation of the new Diocesan theme for the coming year: “Living the Gospel of Christ.”

Information on all Assembly events is available on the St. David church website, [www.stdavidfl.com](http://www.stdavidfl.com).

# 98th Anniversary Commemoration of the Armenian Genocide

## Friday, April 19, 2013, 10:30 am

### House of Representatives Chamber • Massachusetts State House



Keynote Speech  
Ambassador John Evans



Joint Senate/House  
Resolution Recipient:

**Donald Tellalian**  
Architect of the  
Armenian Heritage Park



At noon, participants are invited to march to the Armenian Heritage Park for additional remarks, music and a brown bag lunch.

*For more information contact:*

Senator Will Brownsberger 617-722-1280

Representative Jon Hecht 617-722-2140

Representative Dave Rogers 617-722-2400

Representative John Lawn 617-722-2304

Lalig Musserian, Coordinator 617-319-2651

Buses will be leaving at 9:00 am from St. James and St. Stephen’s Churches (Buses generously provided by the Knights of Vartan)





## New York METRO

# Domestic Violence Is Topic for AIWA Panel at UN

NEW YORK — On March 14, the Armenian International Women's Association is sponsoring a parallel event at the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) meetings in New York City. The panel discussion will explore the role of men in preventing sexual assault and domestic violence.

The theme for this year's 57th annual CSW session is "Elimination and Prevention of all Forms of Violence Against Women and Girls." CSW meetings attract hundreds of women annually to New York from all parts of the world.

Moderating AIWA's panel will be Judy Norsigian, executive director of Our Bodies Ourselves, the non-profit women's health education and advocacy organization best known for the classic book of the same name on women's health and sexuality, now in its ninth edition.

A prominent national and international spokesperson on women and health issues, Norsigian has appeared on numerous nationally televised programs, and an interview with her appears at makers.com, the website accompanying the new documentary recently aired on PBS: "Makers: the Women Who Made America," narrated by Meryl Streep and featuring leading figures in the women's movement.



AIWA'S Panel at the 2012 session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women included, from left, AIWA/UN Representative Hasmig Tatiosian, Vice President Barbara Merguerian, presenter Sara Anjargolian, presenter Ana Cristina Schirinian, Vice President Joy Renjilian-Burgy and AIWA Main UN Representative Mary V. Toumayan

Participants on AIWA's UN panel and their topics are: Shamita Das Dasgupta (speaking about men's engagement in the South Asian

community); Milena Melkonyan (speaking about advancing men's engagement in Armenia); and three men now active in such

engagement work: Craig Norberg-Bohm, Carl Murrell and Quentin Walcott (speaking about how to create strategies that work).

AIWA's session will take place on Thursday, March 14, 2:30 to 4 p.m., on the 10th floor of the Church Center for the UN, 777 United Nations Plaza. It is open to the public.

AIWA has participated in the United Nations as a Non-Governmental Organization for over a decade and is affiliated with the Economic and Social Council as well as the Department of Public Information.

Last year at the Commission on the Status of Women, AIWA presented a parallel session titled "Rural Women: Imagery & Empowerment," focused on issues and strategies relating to the position of women in Armenia, enhanced by perspectives gained from programs developed in other nations. Illustrated presentations were made by photographer and attorney Sara Anjargolian of Los Angeles, and by attorney and development specialist Ana Cristina Schirinian, of Argentina and Armenia.

Further information about AIWA's workshop at the UN or about AIWA's programs is available from the AIWA office, 65 Main St., Watertown, MA 02472; web: aiwainternational.org.



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## ACYOA Central Council Hosts Retreat

LIVINGSTON, N.J. — Some 40 Armenian Church Youth Organization of America (ACYOA) members, representing seven parishes of the Eastern Diocese and sister Oriental Orthodox churches, took part in a Lenten Retreat at St. Mary Armenian Church on Saturday, February 16.

Titled "Called to a New Life," the daylong retreat was organized by the ACYOA Central Council to give young people an opportunity to explore the origins of baptism, to consider its cleansing power, and to discuss ways to preserve its renewal of the soul.

The day opened with a short session led by ACYOA Executive Secretary Nancy Basmajian. Working in small groups, participants answered a series of questions about their faith and church-going experiences.

Following the introductory activity, seminarian Eric Vozzy gave a talk on how the Old Testament prophet Ezekiel foretold the practice of baptism. He went on to explain that baptism cleanses the soul from sin and offers a new beginning.

The Very Rev. Daniel Findikyan spoke about Nicodemus's late-night encounter with Christ, in which Nicodemus learned about the importance of spiritual rebirth. He stressed that baptism is the beginning of a new life, and that it is up to each person to preserve that life.

Turning to ways this can be accomplished, Deacon Ryan Tellalian discussed St. Paul's teachings as expressed through his letters to early Christian communities.

The ACYOA Central Council was especially

happy to welcome participants from sister Oriental Orthodox churches. "As a Coptic Orthodox, it was interesting to learn more about the Armenian faith," said Wassim Nossair.

Fr. Arakel Vardazaryan, pastor of St. Mary Church, served as the retreat chaplain, and led



The retreat at St. Mary Church concluded with a vesper's service.

a vespers service following the day's sessions. "This Lenten retreat provided real-world connections to everyday life," said Alyne Corrigan. "It showed us ways to keep our Christian spirit alive within."



Retreat participants pose for a group photo.





# Arts & Living

## Revealing Art of Arthur Pinajian on Exhibition in NY

By Florence Avakian

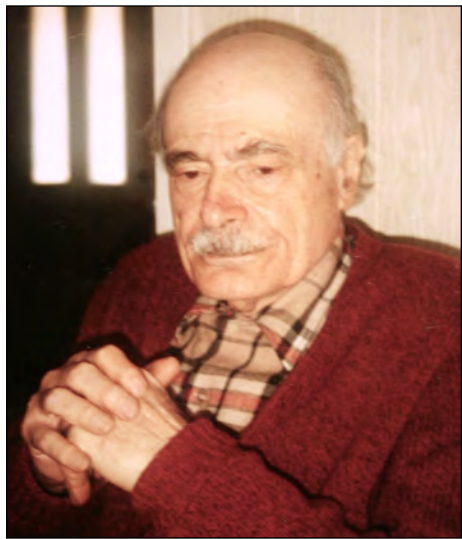
NEW YORK — An exhibition of Arthur Pinajian's abstract paintings opened on Wednesday, February 13, at the Antiquorum, in the Fuller Building, located at 41 East 57th St. The exhibition is a revealing insight into the artistry of a painter who has been compared to Arshile Gorky.

The 34 paintings, which are available for purchase, will be on exhibition until March 10, Tuesday through Saturday from 11:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. A significant part of the proceeds will support the work of the Fund for Armenian Relief (FAR) in Armenia.

Also available is a catalog of his works, titled *Pinajian: Master of Abstraction Discovered*, with essays by several art historians and edited by Peter Hastings Falk.

The opening night reception was opened by FAR's Arto Vorperian, who welcomed the close to 200 guests which included museum officials, art dealers and art lovers. Also speaking was Falk, who revealed that Pinajian did not follow the route of current artists who employ a retinue of agents, dealers and business people. Pinajian, in a word, "did not conform to today's norms. He painted every day, but no one saw his art. He received no reviews and not one of his paintings or works on paper ever was shown in a New York gallery or museum." When he died, his art, which had been stored in his garage, was left to be destroyed at his request. Fortunately, it was rescued at the last minute, as the *New York Times* reported.

Though today, there are few people who know of the brilliant creativity of Pinajian, a couple at the opening reception related that



The late Arthur Pinajian

they had purchased a figurative painting many years ago from the artist for a mere \$100, "so that Pinajian could have money to purchase paint for his work." Basically, he was an artist living from hand to mouth. Today, his abstract paintings at this exhibition are on sale from \$3,750 to \$87,000 each. And a veteran art dealer commented that in a few years the price will shoot to more than three and four times the amounts currently listed as his fame spreads.

Pinajian, the child of Vartanoosh, a skilled embroiderer, and her husband Hagop, who worked for a drycleaner, was born in 1914, with the name of Ashod in Union City, NJ. However, he preferred his nickname, Archie. A precocious youngster, he excelled in school, skipping grades. He possessed a voracious desire to draw with both hands at the same time. Newly graduated from high school in 1930 at age 16, during the Great Depression, with his father and uncle out of work, he took a job as a clerk in a carpet company to support his family. With the untimely death of his mother in 1932, he

see PINAJIAN, page 11



Paintings by Armenian-American artist Seeroon Yeretizian fill the walls of the AGBU-AYA Nazarian Center in Canoga Park.

## Acclaimed Artist Seeroon Yeretizian Unveils Solo Exhibit in California

More than 200 Guests Attend Two-Day Event Hosted by AGBU Los Angeles Chapter

LOS ANGELES — Haunting figures, ancient scriptures and vibrant animals are just some of the images that fill the canvases of renowned Armenian American artist Seeroon Yeretizian's paintings, which delighted audiences during her solo exhibition last month at the AGBU-AYA Nazarian Center in Canoga Park. Organized by the AGBU Los Angeles Chapter from Friday, January 25 to Saturday, January 26, the event drew over 200 guests, among them art connoisseurs and Yeretizian's dedicated fans. For years, they have watched her enrich the local diaspora community with her distinctive work, and welcomed the opportunity to celebrate her many achievements.

On opening night, the crowd listened to words of praise from Yeretizian's friends, colleagues and family, beginning with the exhibit curator and the head of the AGBU Los Angeles Chapter Committee's cultural programs Maral Voskian, who delivered the welcoming remarks. Voskian described the love for Armenian art that both Seeroon and her late husband Harout, who was a member of the AGBU Ardavaz Theater Committee, shared, and lauded her for being as modest as she is talented. She commented, "Seeroon has been a part of our community for more than 20 years, during which she has made a name for herself as both an artist and the owner of the Roslin Art Gallery in Glendale. Knowing how humble she is, I couldn't have imagined she could produce such a vast collection. Yet she has and the AGBU Los Angeles Chapter is proud to spotlight it by hosting this exhibition."

Harry Mesrobian, who worked in the same studio with Yeretizian for years, shared similar sentiments, relaying personal anecdotes that underscored the great impact of her work. Yeretizian's pieces have drawn critical acclaim, Mesrobian described, from public figures and the public at large alike. He recounted many notable stories: the city of Los Angeles voted her as one of the top — out of more than 200 — artists who submitted paintings for the City of Angels art competition honoring the millennium; the prominent Armenian Egyptian painter Puzant Godjamenian has declared her a "modern day Picasso" and Catholicos Aram I insisted that a personal gift she once created for him be put on display. Mesrobian pointed to pieces on view that evening, such as *Splendor of Aypupen*, part of Yeretizian's signature "Illuminations" series.

Following Mesrobian, Seeroon's son, Arno Yeretizian, spoke on her behalf, thanking the event organizers as she looked on from the audience. He then opened the floor, allowing the guests to take in the entire collection, which was filled with themes Yeretizian has dedicated her career to exploring — of history, injustice and nature — and marked by a style that is all her own. It is a style that has been inspired by her ancestral Armenia, her native Lebanon and her current home in Southern California, and honed through an extensive education that includes the AGBU

see SEEROON, page 11

## Arto Vaun and Taline Voskeritchian Launch 'In Conversation' at ALMA

WATERTOWN — Poet Arto Vaun and essayist Taline Voskeritchian led an inspiring evening at the Armenian Library and Museum of America (ALMA) on Wednesday, February 20, launching a new series, "In Conversation," with a large crowd drawn into a stimulating discussion about the nature of poetry and the creative process. The event was unusual not just due to the numbers of people in attendance, but the diverse mix in terms of ethnicity and age.

Despite the large audience, it was an intimate atmosphere with a real exchange of ideas. A musician as well as a poet, Vaun, who is a Watertown native, began the evening by reading from his recent book, *Capillarity*. The rhythm and phrasing of his poems visibly affected the audience. Later, Voskeritchian prodded Vaun to discuss his themes and to think aloud about why he writes poetry rather than prose and what differences he sees between them. Vaun and Voskeritchian discussed the question and problem of memory in the Armenian community (or any community that experiences trauma). Vaun pointed out that it is only through serious art that the tricky concept of memory and identity can be dealt with and remade.

"For me, poetry is the best tool to accomplish this," he claimed, "because it disrupts and implodes language and jars the listener and reader to see the many layers of reality that otherwise might slip by."

The conversational format brought in many people, moved by the poetry and reacting to the issues raised by Voskeritchian. It was a lively,



Arto Vaun

refreshing conversation from many perspectives.

Vaun later commented, "An artist's job is not to make people feel good about themselves... but to provoke, question, explore and get them to dig deep in themselves when otherwise they might just go home and settle back into their routines. Ironically, in being pushed and challenged in a loving way people end up feeling good about themselves and their communities because it is refreshing to be taken seriously, not talked down to and to have an honest dialogue."

The idea of having artists and writers in conversation was the brainchild of Voskeritchian, and ALMA will continue this series.

The next "In Conversation" evening will take place on April 2, featuring author Lucine Kasbarian and editor Wilda Williams of *Library Journal*, who will discuss the challenges of writing for children.

Finally, on April 7 at 5 p.m., ALMA will host the opening of an exhibition of paintings and illustrations by Nonny Hogrogian in conjunction with the next "In Conversation," featuring Hogrogian and poet David Kherdian.



Arto Vaun and Prof. Taline Voskeritchian





## ARTS &amp; LIVING

## Memorial Concert to Pay Tribute to the Late Dr. Elizabeth Gregory

ARLINGTON, Mass. — The late Dr. Elizabeth “Betty” Gregory will be remembered in a memorial concert on Sunday, April 7, at 2 p.m. at the Armenian Cultural Foundation, 441 Mystic St.

The event is organized by family and friends as well as the Friends of Armenian Culture Society (FACS) and the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR), two of the area institutions with which Gregory held leadership roles over the last four decades.

Gregory, who passed away in October 2012, was a dedicated pediatrician with more than 40 years of practice in Arlington, where she lived. As an active community leader, she supported many Armenian cultural and philanthropic causes. She was a founding member of NAASR, a Board member of Cambridge-Yerevan Sister City Association, the National Center for Genocide Studies and FACS. She was the recipient of many civic honors, including the Humanitarian Award from her alma mater, Bates College, the Boston University School of Medicine and the Arlington Board of Selectmen. Massachusetts Gov. Michael Dukakis proclaimed April 9, 1989 as “Elizabeth Gregory Day” in recognition of her 43 years of pediatric practice in the Greater Boston Area.

Participating artists for the April 7 event are pianists Mariam Nazarian and Ani Hovsepien; violin prodigy Haig Hovsepien and tenor Yeghishe Manucharyan and mezzo-soprano Victoria Avetisyan. In a tribute to Gregory’s eclectic and varied taste of music, they will offer a program ranging from Bach and Sayat Nova to Chopin. A reception will follow the program.

The event is free and open to the public. Seating is limited.



Dr. Elizabeth “Betty” Gregory

## Revealing Art of Arthur Pinajian on Exhibition in NY

PINAJIAN, from page 10  
moved his father and sister to a much smaller apartment in Long Island warmed only by a potbelly stove.

Seeking escape from these harsh circumstances, Pinajian, like the general public, would go to the movies, and after seeing Paul Muni in “Scarface,” he started his first comic strip. While still working at the carpet firm, he was hired as a freelance cartoonist by Lud Shabazian, a reporter-illustrator at the New York Daily News, and at age 20, he was promoting himself as a commercial illustrator. Taking only the sessions he could afford at the Art Students’ League and with the aid of the G.I. Bill, he honed his skills in

pletely to art, living in a tiny room. It was not until eight years after his death, that his artistic works saw the light of day. He was an artist who never used the tools of marketability, or exploited commercial connections.

Pinajian’s art displays his emotional quest between figurative and abstract art. His representational art focused on landscapes and female nudes. Renowned art critic John Perreault writes, that through Pinajian’s writings which were scribbled in notebooks or on small bits of paper, we entered into his world of struggle and tension. “Pinajian found no easy answers. Each painting is a puzzle and a struggle, yielding light.”



A painting by Arthur Pinajian

the medium of the modern-day comic book. Regarded as among the pioneers of this new medium, he achieved considerable success in writing and drawing for such publishers as Quality, Marvel and Centaur, and working as an illustrator for ad agencies.

Following his service in the US Army in World War II, where he won a Bronze Star, he was drawn to the works of the old and modern art masters, and endlessly roamed through the Manhattan museums and art galleries. For the last 26 years of his life, he devoted his life com-

The Pinajian story “is or could be the basis of a new myth, that of the secret artist,” continues Perreault. “The secret artist lives among us. He [or she] seems ordinary on the outside and gives little sign of a hidden calling. Yet out of view, the secret artist toils, producing painting after painting. The ecstasy is in the making. Looking at Pinajian’s lifetime of work, we participate in that ecstasy.”

FAR has served hundreds of thousands of people through more than 225 relief and development programs in Armenia and Artsakh.

## Acclaimed Artist Seeroon Yeretizian Unveils Solo Exhibit

SEEROON, from page 10

Tarouhy Hagopian High School in Beirut; the Conservatoire du Liban, where she completed her vocal training; Beirut University College, where she studied fashion design; and most recently, the Otis College of Art and Design, where she obtained her bachelor’s in fine art.

Many guests were able to enjoy Yeretizian’s

work following the exhibition: on sale throughout the event were two books, a compilation of her visual art and a collection of her poems. For more information on Seeroon Yeretizian, visit [www.seeroonart.com](http://www.seeroonart.com).

The Seeroon Yeretizian exhibition and reception were made possible by the AGBU Los Angeles Chapter, Chapter Chair Ara Yessaian and the Chapter’s Ladies Committee.



Maral Voskian, head of the AGBU Los Angeles Chapter Committee’s cultural programs and curator of Seeroon Yeretizian’s exhibit, delivers words of praise for the artist.

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## ARTS &amp; LIVING

# Uncovering Paradoxes: Playwright Kelly Stuart's Narrative Journey

STUART, from page 1

Stuart's own creative journey and career as a playwright began at the University of Laverne in California where she studied music and theater. As a student, she had the opportunity to participate in the Padua Hills Playwrights Festival and assisted Cuban-American playwright, Irene Fornes, who would prove a great inspiration to Stuart as a young playwright.

"[Fornes'] technique seemed to be about the freedom of the imagination, and this is something that has stayed with me. What I got from her plays, and her way of working, is that the imagination is the most dangerous thing to authoritarian systems, it's really the most subversive and powerful thing we have," said Stuart.

For Stuart, plays offer a medium for not just exploring life, but also the narrative paradoxes that exist in human experience. She explained, "When I hear two people tell conflicting versions of a story, a light goes on. It is as if there are two completely different versions of reality. The wonderful thing about theatre, is you can put these two versions of reality on stage together, they can both 'exist' in the same space, and the audience can experience this paradox. It doesn't mean we agree with both sides, but we can find an understanding of them," she said.

Stuart's plays include "Shadow Language," "Demonology," "Life of Spiders" and the internationally-produced "Mayhem."

Stuart's extensive travels and research brought her to Turkey, where she has experienced stories of hope and stories of oppression. Stuart describes the Turkish history she immersed herself in as "very complicated." "This experience for me was juxtaposed by how beautiful Anatolia was, how generous people



Kurdish girls on the road out of Bingol

al Armenians who shared their own stories. "Diyarbakir was a very Armenian city, and it still retains the architecture and influences – I met people who told me 'I am Armenian, but I grew up with Kurdish culture,'" she said. "I met people who said they felt guilty for what had happened to the Armenians, who felt a huge sense of remorse."

Stuart also visited Van and described the city as "one of the darkest places I had seen."

While visiting an archaeological museum there, she discovered a section of the museum devoted to "the genocide of the Armenians

against the Turks," which contained displays of skulls and signs proclaiming that the skulls belonged to Turkish villagers killed by Armenians.

"It was such a revolting display – so disrespectful to the dead. I did not know what to do with my anger, or how to mask it," said Stuart. She would come to realize that many of those living in Turkey have to live among displays of death and are subjected to these dark narratives.

She received a travel grant from the Jerome Foundation to write about Kurdish Dengbêj singers, focusing on the role of language and music in Anatolia. The difficulty of constructing narratives that truly embodied the people and experiences she witnessed in Turkey were a challenge for Stuart. "I had almost given up on theatre because I didn't feel I could translate the experiences I was hav-

ing onto the stage."

While traveling with dramaturg Amy Wegener and researching for "Shadow Language," Stuart visited Diyarbakir, Bingol and Dersim. "I had become interested in the history of Dersim – a place that Ataturk had once said was 'A boil that must be lanced.' It was once populated by Armenians as well as Alevi Kurds [...]" It was this "continuing obsession" with Dersim that eventually led Stuart to write "Belonging to the Sky."

Stuart said she was determined to understand why the people of Dersim had migrated to an Alevi village. It was during this search that an unnamed Turkish historian introduced Stuart to a story she hadn't heard before. The

ple never met, but their stories were interwoven, and so my play is each of them telling their story, and little by little beginning to recognize the presence of the other."

For Stuart, this dedication to Gökçen and Dink's stories has made receiving the ADAA's Saroyan Prize for "Belonging to the Sky" all the more meaningful.

"It was incredibly moving, a really important thing for me. I've been writing about this thing that for most Americans is quite obscure, but I have to write this, and I want Americans to understand the situation – in a human way – because a change in our policies could help the situation of people a great deal."

She added, "Right now we are supporting the most oppressive policies, the jailing of thousands of people for thought crimes, the absurd denial of history and the facts of the Genocide."

According to Stuart, the presence of Armenian community members and families of Genocide survivors at the ADAA ceremony was equally rewarding. "Usually when I present my work I have so much explaining to do to contextualize what I am writing about but the night of the ADAA event, I spent the entire evening listening to people's family stories, and there was nothing I had to explain, they understood what I was writing about, and even though I am not Armenian, I understood them," she said.

Stuart teaches playwriting in the MFA Theatre Program at the SoA. "Our students are incredibly talented, they're an inspiration," she said. "They are also very diverse and they teach me as much as I teach them."

Stuart is currently working on several projects. "I'm writing a kind of memoir/theatre piece about my travels in Turkey that uses a lot of the video I have shot there, and I'm working on a new play." She has recently worked on several short digital video pieces. "I've made several short pieces documenting music and culture – Kurdish music, Alevi music and right now I'm working on more 'New York' pieces that are both narrative and abstract." She added, "I'm planning to do more of a narrative feature this summer – a comedy about a man who finds a lost cat."



A young Kurdish boy encountered on Stuart's travels

were... even the poorest people would insist that they share their last bit of food or tea with a visitor," Stuart said. "I remember seeing a wedding in the streets of Diyarbakir. People had nothing, but they were dancing for hours and we were just passing by and they pulled us into the circle to dance with them."

Stuart has even picked up some of the Turkish language as a function of her extensive artistic work there. "I can speak enough Turkish to get myself in trouble, and not enough Turkish to get out of trouble," she mused.

Stuart also speaks a little Kurdish, in addition to reading French and Spanish.

During her travels, Stuart encountered sever-



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# University of Michigan Hosts Playwright, Actor Eric Bogosian

ANN ARBOR, Mich. — Playwright, novelist and actor Eric Bogosian will present the 2013 Berj H. Haidostian Distinguished Lecture hosted by the University of Michigan’s Armenian Studies Program on Wednesday, March 13 at 7 p.m.

Bogosian will discuss how his decision to write a screenplay about the 1915 assassination in Berlin of the Ottoman Grand Vazir, Talat Pasha, ultimately led him to write a nonfiction text. Bogosian has spent the last five years studying Armenian and Turkish history, interviewing prominent historians around the world, translating primary texts from Armenian, French and German and conducting primary research in the British Archives.

Most recently, Bogosian starred with Laura Linney on Broadway in Donald Margulies’ “Time Stands Still.” He wrote and starred in the play, “Talk Radio,” for which he received Pulitzer Prize and Tony award nominations. For his film adaptation of the play, Bogosian received the Berlin Film Festival Silver Bear Award. In addition to “Talk Radio,” Bogosian

has written a number of full-length plays. As a novelist, Bogosian has written three books — *Mall*, *Wasted Beauty* and *Perforated Heart* — and a novella, *Notes from Underground*.

Bogosian has appeared in numerous films and television programs, starring in Robert Altman’s “The Caine Mutiny Court Martial,” Oliver Stone’s “Talk Radio,” “Under Siege II,” “Wonderland” and as Captain Danny Ross on “Law & Order: Criminal Intent.” He lives in New York with his wife, director Jo Bonney.

The Haidostian Annual Distinguished Lectureship was established by the family of the late Berj Haidostian, a physician in Michigan. Every year, together with the Armenian Studies Program faculty they select a speaker from among internationally-recognized experts on Armenia and Armenians. Recent Haidostian Distinguished Lecturers have included the director Atom Egoyan, Dr. Gerard Chaliand, Dr. Fiona Hill, Thomas de Waal and Dr. Vartan Gregorian.

The lecture is sponsored by the Armenian Studies Program, Arts at Michigan and the Department of Screen Arts & Culture. It is open to the public and will be followed by a question and answer period.

## CALENDAR

### MASSACHUSETTS

APRIL 12 — “A Stone/ Bronze Age Settlement in Yerevan,” 7:30 p.m. presentation by Vladimir Tshagharyan, director of Shengavit Archaeological Preserve; Dr. Mitchell Rothman, archaeologist, Widener University, Penn; and Dr. Susan Pattie, director of Armenian Library and Museum of America (ALMA) Sponsored by Cambridge Yerevan Sister City Association as part of the Cambridge Science Festival in cooperation with ALMA and the National Association of Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR); hosted at ALMA, 65 Main St., Watertown. Admission is free.

### NEW HAMPSHIRE

APRIL 6 — Spring Dance Featuring Armenian and American Music; 7-11 p.m. at the Ararat Armenian Congregational Church, 2 Salem St., Salem. All ages welcome. Tickets \$15, available at the door. For info, email janigian@comcast.net.

### NEW JERSEY

MARCH 15 — The Tekeyan Cultural Association of Greater New York with St. Thomas Armenian Church Cultural Committee Present the Lenten movie, “Hovivuh” (“The Shepherd”) in Tenafly’s St. Thomas Armenian Church auditorium at 7:30 p.m., The film is about the life of St. Krikor Naregatsi and will run for one hour and 32 minutes in Armenian with English subtitles. Director Artak Avdalyan, from Armenia, will be present to discuss the film after the screening. Admission \$20 (students \$10) includes movie screening, post screening “Meet the Director” fellowship and special souvenir DVD of the movie. For more information, call (610)-823-8611.



On March 15, the Tekeyan Cultural Association of Greater New York with St. Thomas Armenian Church Cultural Committee will present the Lenten movie, “Hovivuh” (“The Shepherd”) in Tenafly’s St. Thomas Armenian Church auditorium at 7:30 p.m. The film is about the life of St. Krikor Naregatsi, in Armenian with English subtitles. Director Artak Avdalyan will be present to discuss the film after the screening. Admission \$20 (students \$10) includes movie screening, post screening fellowship and special souvenir DVD of the movie.

## Der-Hovanessian Announces Upcoming Lecture And Poetry Reading

BOSTON and MILFORD, Mass. — Poet Diana Der-Hovanessian will give a lecture on March 29, 1 p.m., concerning the influence of Daniel Varoujan, an Armenian poet killed during the Genocide. The event will be held at 745 Commonwealth Ave., Room 625 and is part of the Boston University lecture series on Literary Translation.

The Friends of the Milford Town Library have also named Der-Hovanessian as the featured poet for their annual celebration of National



Poet Diana Der-Hovanessian

## Sponsor a Teacher in Armenia and Karabagh 2013



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Poetry Month on Saturday, April 13, 3 p.m. at the Granite & Quarry Rooms of the library.

Der-Hovanessian, a New England born poet, was named a Fulbright professor of American Poetry and is the author of more than 25 books of poetry and translations. She has awards from the National Endowment for the Arts, Poetry Society of America, PEN/Columbia Translation Center, National Writers Union, Armenian Writers Union, Paterson Poetry Center, Prairie Schooner, American Scholar and the Armenian Ministry of Culture. She works as a visiting poet and guest lecturer on American poetry, Armenian poetry in translation and also serves as president of the New England Poetry Club.

Poets who have read in previous years’ celebrations include Robert Pinsky, Maxine Kumin, Louise Glück and Franz Wright. The event is free, open to the public and refreshments will be served.





## COMMENTARY

# THE ARMENIAN Mirror- Spectator

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## COMMENTARY

# Has Celibacy in the Church Outlived Its Usefulness?

By Edmond Y. Azadian

Has celibacy in the ranks of the Armenian Church outlived its usefulness, if it had any? This question has become very topical recently. The question is raised in connection with scandals plaguing the Roman Catholic Church.

But first one cannot resist but to believe a conspiracy theory that some groups are out to destroy or weaken the Roman Catholic Church, which is a moral, and yes, political power. While the role of the church has been diminishing in the Western world as a political power, Moslem nations have converted religion into raw, elemental political power.

The problems that beset the Catholic Church are real, but there are abuses in other denominations as well. Then why is the Catholic Church featured so prominently in the news media? The answers to the question may open a can of worms which no one can afford to sustain. That, of course, does not excuse the misdeeds of the individual members of the clergy and the efforts of the institution which tries to push the sins of the sinners under the rug.

The scandals have brought a 900-year-old tradition into the open in this era of the information age.

The issue does not pertain only to the Catholic Church but it is equally important to the Armenian Church.

If faith is of divine origin, so is sex. Both are given by God or by nature, whichever you believe. Therefore, where is the incompatibility between the two that the church fathers have made a taboo of one and have contrasted with the other?

Sigmund Freud theorized that the sexual drive is not only for procreation, but is the basis of all human creativity. Therefore, any religion running counter to human nature, is indirectly opposing His creation. When the individual in this case is a priest, confined by unnatural restraints, he has to act unnaturally, no matter how rational that individual may be.

Frank Bruni in an op-ed article in the *New York Times* (February 26, 2013) offered a frontal attack on the celibacy of the clergy, and here is what he postulated: "The pledge of celibacy that the church requires of its servants is an often cruel and corrosive things. It runs contrary to human nature. It asks too much."

Further down, the writer expands on the corrosive effects of celibacy: "Celibacy is a bad idea with painful consequences. It not only renders the priesthood less attractive, contributing to a shortage of priests, but also influences which men pursue ordination and how they fare. It's a trap, falsely promising some men a refuge from sexual desires that worry them. That's one explanation for what many church experts believe is a disproportionate percentage of gay men in the priesthood."

We seldom pose the fundamental question as to why human sexuality has to have religious determinants.

As education and science advance in western countries, the role of religion has become more defensive and human sexuality has come to be understood as a natural phenomenon, freed of mystique and religious parameters. That is one of the factors undermining the foundation of the organized religion, and consequently of the Roman Catholic Church.

However, no matter how far science advances, faith will always remain and organized religion will capitalize on it.

Indeed, we will always find people citing one of the greatest geniuses of history, Albert Einstein, vouching for the existence of our Creator.

The Armenian Church originally did not endorse celibacy; bishops, archbishops, catholicos were all married. They owned property and they willed their wealth to their children.

Gradually, celibacy became a form of sacrifice by the clergy to prove their piety, although no religious canon mandated it. Like many virtues, it was adopted as a supreme expression of deprivation, gradually developing into hypocrisy or repression against human nature.

There is a French saying which roughly translates as follows: "Chase [or repress] the natural, it will return galloping."

In medieval times, celibate priests used to live in monasteries, where human contact with members of the opposite gender was reduced to a minimum, thus rendering abstention more bearable. At that time, monasteries were built in the wilderness, in isolated locations; that is why in classical Armenia monasteries had become synonymous with the desert (anabad).

While these priests were hoping to keep their sexual desires at bay with the isolation, they eventually caved in. The homosexual ones formed relationships while those who were pedophiles had free reign to torment their young acolytes.

Yet others expressed their frustration through creative sublimation.

The father of St. Gregory of Narek was a married priest, yet he sent his two sons to the monastery to become celibate priests. Gregory of Narek was a devout priest and a genius, therefore he produced many Sharagans and his Book of Lamentation is the purest expression of Armenian poetry. However, it should not be considered a sacrilege if one is tempted to detect subliminal sexuality in Lamentations, especially in the passage describing the Virgin Mary.

In pagan times, Armenians were more promiscuous, or rather, they took human sexuality in stride. The adoption of Christianity brought stigma on human sexuality.

In his best-selling book, *Everything You Always Wanted to Know about Sex but Were Afraid to Ask*, the US physician Dr. David Ruben refers to a curious practice in pagan Armenia. Without citing sources, Dr. Ruben says that the matriarchal Armenian society in pagan times, would allow women to take pilgrims to a shrine, where they would raise money for the temple by temporarily engaging in prostitution, and then return to their families to enjoy enhanced respect and glorification for their services to the temple.

It is a revolting story yet it describes the evolution of behavior towards sexuality in the Armenian society.

It looks like perceptions have moved from one extreme to the other, making abstention one of the features in the lives of our clergy.

The issue of banishing celibacy has been raised many times, but the Armenian Church has always had so many difficulties to contend with that the issue has never been considered seriously, nor have any resolutions been adopted to advance it.

Today, it is even more difficult to bring the issue to the floor of any conclave, because the church is divided. Should Echmiadzin take up the issue, Antelias will blame the Mother See for trampling a "sacred tradition" of the Armenian Church.

Last week, before some allegations against him surfaced, Britain's senior Roman Catholic cleric Cardinal Keith O'Brien said that Catholic priests should be allowed to marry and have children. He added that the requirement for a priest's celibacy was "not of divine origin and should be reconsidered ("Jesus didn't say that").

In today's world, when priests live and serve the church in urban societies, away from the "desert," celibacy has become irrelevant. Very few clerics are able to keep their vows of celibacy. Yet many others have turned it into a travesty while parishioners tolerate it and close their eyes to it.

The Armenian clergy, of course, are not all bound by the oath of celibacy. Celibate and married priests equally serve the church, with different opportunities of promotion. The married priests cannot join the high ranks of bishop, archbishop or catholicos.

The foremost authority on Armenian Church history and canons, Archbishop Malachia Ormanian, wrote in his book, *The Church of Armenia*: "This tough restriction has in our time, acquired the force of law. It is all together unsupported by canonical weight."

Ormanian does not advocate abandoning celibacy outright in the church, however, he believes that educated, married priests must enjoy the same opportunities that the celibate priest enjoys. That will be tantamount to eliminating celibacy.

Writing almost a century ago, Ormanian stated: "There is nothing, therefore, to prevent the present custom, prevalent though it may be, from being superseded by the usages of the primitive church, and access to high ecclesiastical dignities being thrown open to married clergy. Such a course would be highly beneficial to the nation; for the married clergy would escape from a position of inferiority, which is in no way justified, and which especially fetters them by their exclusion from higher offices, which is now their lot."

In his concluding remarks on this issue Ormanian adds: "As a remedy, we are inclined to think that a return to the ancient canons for recruitment of the episcopate would remove the evil."

It turns out that the ancient canons were more modern and their adoption today will remove the church from an anachronism.

The Armenian Church certainly needs reforms to be able to face the challenges of the modern world, especially by espousing social causes and by becoming relevant to today's society. Celibacy is a handicap in the way of executing those reforms.

Now is the time to move forward and not to be afflicted by the disease shaking the Roman Catholic Church.





COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

## Maximizing Armenian Capabilities To Overcome Major Challenges

The Voice of Armenians TV in New York (VOATV NY) held its second annual fundraising banquet on March 2, at The Palisadium in Cliffside Park, New Jersey. On this auspicious occasion, the television network's Board of Directors honored Zarmine Boghosian, writer and Principal of Holy Martyrs Armenian Day School; Dr. Herand Markarian, playwright, director and actor; and Harut Sassounian, publisher of the *California Courier* and president of the United Armenian Fund.

After opening remarks by Master of Ceremonies Haik Kocharian and welcoming words by VOATV Chairman, Dr. Aram Cazazian, the honorees were introduced by Natalie Gabrelian, director of Alternative Education, AGBU; Haroutiun Misserlian, educator and engineer and Appo Jabarian, publisher, *USA Armenian Life Magazine*. Congratulatory remarks were made by curator Vicki

Shoghag Hovanessian and VOATV executive producer and host Karine Kocharyan.

In his acceptance speech, Sassounian shared with the 300 guests in attendance his deeply held convictions based on 40 years of political activism and community involvement. He expressed the hope that the recommendations outlined below would strengthen and empower Armenians worldwide:

1) Encourage the participation of women in every level of community activity. Since women comprise 50 percent of the Armenian people, once old-fashioned obstacles are removed, Armenians could overnight double their overall resources and capabilities.

2) Involve the youth in all societal activities by assigning them special responsibilities, as they constitute the future of the Armenian nation. If Armenians today fail to transmit their achievements and activities to the next generation, all of their efforts would have gone to waste.

3) Treat every Armenian as a family member, regardless of personal disagreements or differences in social, political, and religious affiliation or country of origin. Armenians should relate to each other as equals. No distinctions should be made between Armenians from the Diaspora and the Homeland.

4) Discard the Ottoman and Soviet mentalities inherited by some Armenians. Even though they left the Ottoman Empire long ago, and the Soviet Union more recently, it appears that the regressive influence of these mentalities has not left them.

5) Extend assistance to the people of Armenia and Artsakh, regardless of the differing views about their lead-

ership. Presidents and Prime Ministers are temporary, while the Homeland is perpetual.

6) Strive always to form a coalition rather than causing dissension. Be a unifier, not a divider. Keep in mind the exhortation of prominent poet Yeghishe Charents: "O Armenian people! Your salvation only lies in your collective power." Ideally, the Armenian Diaspora should have a democratically elected representation, bringing Armenians under a single umbrella by a popular vote.

7) Support all community organizations, be they social, cultural, religious or political in nature, thus helping to ensure the survival of the Diaspora. A powerful Diaspora is the backbone of a strong and secure Armenia.

8) Reject feelings of helplessness and inferiority and eliminate all defeatist attitudes. Individually and collectively, Armenians can realize their legitimate aspirations, as long as they work together for the common cause. They can overcome all adversaries and adversities by remaining united and strong. If Armenians can put their domestic house in order, they can easily counter all external threats.

9) Finally, with the approach of the Armenian Genocide Centennial, Armenians worldwide – the Republics of Armenia and Artsakh, as well as the Diaspora – should rally around a single unified message about their demands from Turkey. Armenia and Diasporan communities should not make separate and different demands, causing confusion among their supporters and adversaries. The single word that encapsulates all Armenian demands from Turkey is "Justice," which encompasses moral, financial and territorial restitution to the Armenian nation.

## Marjorie Housepian Dobkin: A Remembrance

Marjorie Housepian Dobkin has died. She was 90. How simply we can mark the passing of one of the finest – should I say, instead, "greatest" – Armenians of her generation in America?

To her should go the credit for the fact that the Armenia Genocide is not forgotten! Oh, yes, there are many who will claim the credit, but to Marjorie should go that distinction.

Famous for her literary works, she was telling a group of non-Armenian friends about the Armenian Genocide, which was unknown to them. Someone suggested that she write about it, and suggested the *Sunday Magazine* of the *New York Times*. Contact was made, and it was agreed that Marjorie would write an essay in time for the Sunday nearest April 24,

By Avedis Kevorkian

1965 (the 50th anniversary of the start of the Genocide).

She did her research, wrote her essay and it was accepted. Eagerly, she and her friends sought out the article on the Sunday before. It wasn't in the magazine. She enquired and was told that it would appear in the following week.

Eagerly, she and her friends sought out the article, the following Sunday. It wasn't in the Magazine. She enquired – or, rather, she tried to enquire. No one seemed to be available to answer the question "What happened?" Phone calls weren't returned.

Eventually, she received a call, and was told that at the last minute, the article was "sent upstairs" and the decision was made not to publish the article. She was told that the article was being returned, and that she would be paid and that she could submit it elsewhere. She was also told that there would be no letter of rejection and that if she told anyone of the phone call, it would be denied.

Disappointed, to say the least, she did tell the story to people, and a Jewish friend was so alarmed that he said that she should submit the article to "Commentary," and to use his name.

Marjorie's report, published as "The Unremembered Genocide," appeared in 1966, and the "unremembered" Genocide was finally remembered, the "forgotten" genocide was not forgotten. And, interestingly, the *New York Times* now formally "recognizes" the historical fact of the Armenian Genocide.

That episode would be enough to put Marjorie on the pedestal she deserves, but there is more.

She was, after all, a novelist. She decided to write a "love story" based in Smyrna, where her parents came from and from where they fled during the burning in 1922. Like all good writers, she did her research on what life was like in Smyrna. To her surprise, she found that there was virtually nothing about Smyrna in the archives and, more amazing she said, nothing about the burning. Her researches turned to that subject, and the product was *The Smyrna Affair*, in 1971, the first and still the most definitive work on the burning of Smyrna. To say that Marjorie had become a heroine for the Greeks is to say that water is wet. Even my status among my Greek friends went up when they learned that I knew Marjorie.

The "love story," which was basically to be the story of her mother and father, alas, was never written.

No trip to New York was complete without a visit to her Riverside Drive apartment and receiving the warm hospitality of Marjorie and her husband, Mac, while enjoying the view of the river and New Jersey. And, of course, her passion about the Armenian Genocide was still burning.

Oddly, I saw more of Marjorie when I was living in London and came to New York on business than after I returned to America, but I shall not forget my last lunch with Marjorie, someone who was truly special. We shall not see her like again, and I shall miss her immensely.

(Avedis Kevorkian is a resident of Philadelphia.)

## Some Highlights from a Father-Son Trip to Armenia

By Haige Garabedian

The trip to Armenia this past June was basically one of pleasure for me, but for Tom, my son and travel companion, it would turn out to be a mixture of business and pleasure. He recently retired as a senior management consultant from Hewitt Associates, a large international human services consulting firm; and in January of 2012, he was appointed managing director of the Armenia Tree Project. Headquartered in Watertown, Mass., ATP is involved in growing and planting trees that are indigenous to Armenia. Additionally ATP nurseries are growing a variety of fruit trees that will provide supplemental income for villagers in outlying areas of Armenia.

Following the earthquake in 1988, people in Armenia had no choice but to cut down trees since electricity, natural gas and fuel oil were not available for home heating or for food preparation purposes.

After a two-day stay in Paris we took Air France to the ultra modern Zvartnotz Airport just outside the environs of Yerevan the capitol

of Armenia. We were warmly greeted by a delegation from the ATP office in Yerevan and were transported to the Villa Delenda which was to be our domicile for the next two weeks. We opted to be put up at the Villa rather than the Marriott where most tourists from abroad stay. Villa Delenda is an elegant bed & breakfast facility located in the heart of Yerevan. Built in 1906 as the private residence for two Mnazakanyan brothers, the villa is currently managed by the "Family Care Foundation." Income derived from rentals is used to support the Spitak Art School and to provide maternal and child health services throughout rural areas in Armenia and nearby Nagorno Karabagh.

Breakfast time at the villa was most enjoyable. Aside from partaking of an overwhelming variety of breakfast foods we enjoyed the company of tourists from several European countries. One couple from Italy was in Yerevan for the purpose of completing arrangements for an upcoming international convocation of book publishers. Jamie Connerton, a retired teacher from California, told us about a hiking venture he had lined up for his daughter and son-in-law who hailed from the New York area.

see TRIP, page 16

## LETTERS

## Time for Change in the Armenian Church

To the Editor:

Some changes have to be made – and soon – if the Armenian Church is to remain vibrant.

I am a member of an Armenian Apostolic (Loosavorchagan) Church and in the same town there is another Armenian Apostolic Church, only five miles away, one being a Diocesan Church and the other a Prelacy one.

With due respect to the leaders of both flocks, their way is no longer working, especially in small communities.

I say this because of the noticeable decline in mid-week Lenten services at both churches. Reportedly, one church has had five and seven people attending, and the other two to five.

It is a shame that we cannot hold this service jointly, as it would enhance the beautiful service with more people participating in the Penitential Prayers of St. Nersess.

Having said this, I am making a plea to our

church leaders to see the light. Those of us who do attend this service are very disheartened to see this downhill trend, and strongly urge them to direct a joint service at this holiest season of the church calendar. Our only division has been our political persuasions, which our children do not understand nor wish to understand nor research.

After 80 years, I think the time has come to open our eyes.

Socially, in our community, at last, we are all very compatible, meeting weekly at a seniors' group in my church. We share the identical faith, background, ancestry hailing mostly from historic Armenia, cuisine, music, etc. Why can't we start the ball rolling, with a simple directive from our leaders to combine Lenten services? Maybe this will be the first step to unity.

Name Withheld





# AGBU France's Sayat Nova International Composition Competition And Concert Put Global Spotlight on Rising Talents

## Over 400 Guests Gather in Paris to Honor Legendary Armenian Bard

PARIS — A year of celebrating the 300th anniversary of the birth of Sayat Nova came to a close this past December with a sold-out concert event presented by the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) France that featured world premieres, fresh young talent and memorable tributes to the Armenian bard whose legacy has endured for three centuries.

More than 400 guests gathered in Paris to honor the life and work of Sayat Nova, filling the city's Salle Cortot — a national landmark and one of the country's most prized concert halls — to capacity. Among them were AGBU France District Chair Philippe Panossian, AGBU Europe and France District board members, Archbishop Norvan Zakarian, Primate of the Armenian Diocese of France, representatives of the Armenian and Georgian embassies, Director of the Cultural Institute of Mexico in Paris Sara Valdes, as well as concert chair Richard Abdalian and the artistic director of the concert Christian Erbslöh-Papazian.

The event, which took place on Thursday, December 13, 2012, had been months in the making. In May, AGBU issued a call for applicants for its second Sayat Nova International Composition Competition, the winners of which were showcased at the concert.

The first competition was organized in 2006 in Paris during one of AGBU's Centennial celebrations. Both then and now, the jury of established musicians and experts was overwhelmed with the positive response.

In 2012, submissions came in from 18 countries. Relying on only a few guidelines — that the piece utilize five Western classical instruments combined with the Armenian duduk, and that it quote a Sayat Nova text — each applicant arranged an original composition layering both traditional and modern elements. The panel, which was composed of local artists held in high esteem internationally, was presided over by composer and inspector at the French Ministry of Culture, Laurent Chassigny.

He commented, "AGBU's Sayat Nova International Composition Competition contributed so beautifully to the musical creation, while laying a bridge between expressions, cultures and traditions in relation with the rich Armenian culture."

Other members of the jury panel included pianist and conductor Alain Altinoglu; composer

and orchestra professor at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique de Paris Anthony Girard; composer and professor at the Haute Ecole de Musique of Geneva Michael Jarrell; composer and former director of the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique de Paris Alain Louvier; composer and founder of the 2E2M ensemble Paul Mefano; harpist Iris Torossian, as well as Sayat Nova scholar Elisabeth Mouradian.

This year, the judges decided to award a second and third prize, which were presented, respectively, to composers Tomás Barreiro, a native of Mexico, and Ernest Dulgarian, who is based in Yerevan.

Before the competition winners debuted their work, Panossian welcomed the crowd, pointing to Sayat Nova's lasting influence and setting the theme for the first half of the program, which was dedicated entirely to the troubadour. Prior to presenting Barreiro and Dulgarian with certificates, he remarked, "This international competition and concert underscores AGBU's commitment to attracting and supporting young classical composers, bringing them closer to the traditional Armenian repertoire and helping to promote the musical heritage of tomorrow."

The evening opened with two duduk players who performed Sayat Nova's Ashkharoumes Akh Chim Kashi. They were followed by pianist Sofya Melikyan and AGBU Performing Arts Department Artistic Director Hayk Arsenyan, who shared the piano bench to play *The Universe in a Nutshell*, which was written by the Sayat Nova competition's 2006 winner Artur Akshelyan and made its world premiere at the AGBU New York Special Events Committee (NYSEC) Performing Artists in Concert earlier that month. Lastly, French conductor Claude Brendel led an international ensemble of musicians from Armenia, Finland, France, and Serbia, who are all members of prestigious Parisian orchestras and together brought to life the winning pieces, Barreiro's *The Death of the Nightingale* and Dulgarian's *Whispers*, both of which were met enthusiastic applause. (A CD recording of the winners' works were distributed to all guests.)

The second half of the program continued to put traditional Armenian music in a global context, with pieces played, in large part, by AGBU scholarship recipients, many of whom hail from Armenia and have trained in some of Europe's finest institutions with support from AGBU.

Saxophonist Hayrapet Arakelyan, pianist Hayk Arsenyan, baritonist Hovhannes Asatryan, pianist Christian Erbslöh-Papazian, pianist Sofya

Melikyan, mezzo soprano Karine Ohanyan, violinist Ani Poghosyan, pianist Jean-Christophe Sarkissian and pianist Ursula von Lerber are just a select few of the hundreds of emerging artists who have benefitted over the years from the AGBU Performing Arts Fellowship Program, which is administered by the AGBU Scholarship Program. In each performance, the artists commemorated some of the best known names in classical music, among them the late Edvard Mirzoyan. Five of the group's pianists, along with saxophonist Arakelyan, joined together for Aram Khachaturian's famous *Saber Dance*, which received a standing ovation, and the entire ensemble closed the evening with an encore of

tions of Armenian culture and its Mexican sonorities, fulfilled — and exceeded — all of my expectations. It was my pleasure to present Barreiro with the special prize to have his work presented in Carnegie Hall in New York." For Barreiro, the experience in Paris was one of the highlights of his career. As he described, "I was honored to hear my work performed for the very first time before such a large audience and some of the most respected figures in the field. With AGBU's support I look forward to continuing to create my next piece, and am thrilled to have the opportunity to share it at Carnegie Hall, where every artist dreams of being showcased."

The AGBU France concert was organized



An international ensemble including AGBU scholarship recipients receives a standing ovation from over 400 guests at Paris's prestigious Salle Cortot during AGBU France's biennial concert event.

Edgar Hovhannissian's beloved Yerevan Erebuni.

Though the official anniversary of Sayat Nova's birth has come to an end, it is only the beginning for competition winner Tomás Barreiro. In December 2013, as part of his prize, he will appear onstage at Carnegie Hall for the next NYSEC Performing Artists in Concert to premiere *The Death of the Nightingale*. The highly anticipated work will take an unconventional approach, incorporating recordings from the recent AGBU concert with soundtracks from the subways of Mexico City, New York and Paris and a live ensemble of duduk players, pianists and other instrumentalists. AGBU Performing Arts Department Director Hayk Arsenyan, a composer, pianist and member of the French Union of Composers in Paris, who was a consultant to the competition jury bearing the Carnegie Hall Special Prize, commented on Barreiro's success; "The *Death of the Nightingale* immediately stood out because of its compositional techniques and dreamlike quality. Hearing it live, with its reflec-

under the auspices of the Armenian Embassy in Paris and in association with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The Clamart Conservatory, the Cultural Institute of Mexico in Paris, the Mayor's Office of the 17th Arrondissement, the Mexican Students' House, *Nouvelles d'Arménie* Magazine and *Sabatours* were event partners.

Both the Sayat Nova Competition and its concert are a biennial event that fall under the AGBU Artists label, which promotes the values of creation, excellence, artistic talent and heritage. The 2012 Sayat Nova competition and its concert were organized by AGBU Europe Board Member Richard Abdalian, pianist and initiator of the Sayat Nova competition Christian Erbslöh-Papazian and AGBU Europe Project Manager Zarouhi Odabashian. To learn more, visit <http://sayatnova.agbueurope.org>. For more information on AGBU concerts, email [performingarts@agbu.org](mailto:performingarts@agbu.org).

## Some Highlights from a Father-Son Trip to Armenia

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Other residents intended to visit monasteries. Armenia holds the distinction of being the first nation to declare Christianity as its state religion (301 AD) and proudly boasts that the fourth century Cathedral of Holy Echmiadzin is the world's oldest functioning cathedral.

Christianity was preached in Armenia by the apostles Thaddeus and Bartholomew some 30 years after the death of Christ. The country is populated with a multitude of monasteries. Many of them are located in the most unlikely places — high atop mountain peaks and on the brinks of ravines overlooking deep gorges. Oftentimes they were hidden from view to avoid destruction by marauders.

On mornings when Tom was involved in conducting meetings with staff members at the ATP office, I ventured out on my own to make visits to two places on my agenda. The first was to the Aram Khachaturian Museum. At the invitation of the Symphony Society of Greater Hartford the world-famous composer had guest-conducted the Hartford Symphony Orchestra in a concert program that took place at the Bushnell Memorial on February 12, 1968. From my personal archives I had put together a collection of items: concert promotional pieces, Hartford Courant news articles which chronicled Khachaturian's goings and comings during his three-day stay in Hartford, as

well as other memorabilia. I turned these materials over to the museum's archivist Anahit Shahmanian who accepted them with grateful thanks.

My second visit was to the Matenadaran. The pride of Armenian culture, the Matenadaran in Yerevan houses one of the most extensive and richest collections of manuscripts and illuminated manuscripts in the world. A building was recently added to the Matenadaran complex and I was most fortunate to take a personal tour of the new facility by Erna Shirinian who serves as director of the office in charge of translating manuscripts in the German language.

Everyone who goes to Armenia must visit the Cascade complex. Launched by the Soviets in the 1980s the structure which cascades down one of Yerevan's highest promontories was abandoned after the 1988 earthquake and the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991. In 2002 the project was revitalized.

During the next seven years every aspect of the structure was renovated and completely reconstituted thanks to the combined efforts of the city of Yerevan, the Armenian government and the financial support of the Cafesjian Family Foundation, headed by Gerald Cafesjian, retired executive vice president of US-based West Publishing.

The interior of the Cascade structure houses

escalators which carry visitors upwards to eight levels of the Cafesjian Center for the Arts. At each level there are exhibit halls which display a variety of works of art: paintings, statuary, stunning creations of glassware and murals. The special events auditorium at the top level of the Cascade offers a spectacular panorama of Yerevan and a view of Mount Ararat in the distance.

Another highlight of our trip was a visit to Tatev which is among the oldest (ninth century) and most prominent monasteries in Armenia. Within walking distance of the monastery is the launching site of the world's longest aerial tramway — as recorded in the Guinness Book of Records.

The facility was constructed at a cost of \$18 million. Cable cars, which can accommodate 25 passengers, travel the 3.5-mile length of the tramway at 23 mph. A one-way trip takes fifteen minutes. The cable car traverses over spectacular gorges and at its highest point passengers are 1,056 feet above ground level providing for a very exhilarating ride.

Traveling in the ATP van we made a number of trips to southern regions of Armenia where the ATP organization is interested in establishing nurseries to benefit people in those areas. One of those trips was to Goris located approximately 240 miles from Yerevan.

In the evenings when Tom wasn't involved

with ATP matters we enjoyed walking to Republic Square. A stone's throw from Villa Delenda, the square is a public meeting ground that fronts the Marriott Hotel. Here we experienced the hustle and bustle of a modern-day metropolis. We observed parents leisurely strolling with their children at their sides, teenagers riding their bicycles around the Square, as well as a never-ending procession of taxis dropping off and picking up passengers from the nearby Marriott Hotel.

Most evenings hundreds of people would be seated around the square's immense pool waiting for the water fountains to be turned on. Once that happened, taped music would come on and jets of water would stream skyward pulsating to the music of the *Sabre dance* or to the renowned voice of singer Charles Aznavour. Combined with colored lighting and sound effects the one-hour water-music show captured the attention and awe of young and old alike.

Walking leisurely back to the villa served to bring joyful endings to the days and created fond memories of my trip to Armenia. Truly, the visit turned out to be a Rip Van Winkle experience for me. After a lapse of 25 years, I was amazed and gratified to find that Armenia had become a modern vibrant country that has made tremendous strides since the days when it was one of the republics of the Soviet Union.