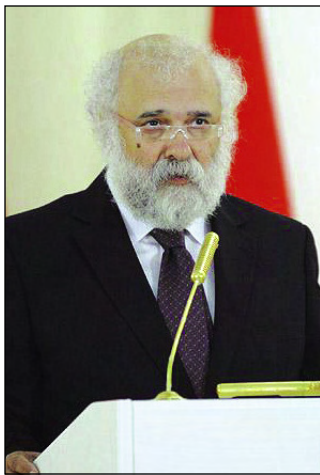




Kourken Melikian, with President Serge Sargsisian, and Ragip Zarakolu, right



21 Receive Presidential Medals

YEREVAN – On May 29, the official awards ceremony of the presidential medals was held at the presidential residence. Awards were bestowed upon 21 winners, who were selected from a pool of 149 candidates in 12 categories.

“Success of the scientists and artists are pleasing for all of us, and we see it as our duty to highlight and emphasize your work. For me, and I am confident for our entire society. Particularly important are the awards bestowed upon the young people since they allow us to maintain permanence and the continuity of our culture’s development,” President Serge Sargsisian said.

One of the winners for outstanding contributions to international recognition of the Armenian Genocide was Turkish national Ragip Zarakolu.

“The Turkish old generation knew what happened in Anatolia at the beginning of the last century, while the young generation was conditioned to think it’s a lie,” he said.

Another recipient was Kourken Melikian, dean of the Eastern Sciences Department of the State University of Yerevan, who received the Movses Khorenatsi Medal.

Since its founding in 2001, 205 scholars, scientists and artists, including 14 foreigners have been awarded the President’s Prize.

The President’s Prize is sponsored by the Boghossian Foundation, based in France.

Senate Appropriations Committee Supports Continued Assistance For Nagorno Karabagh

WASHINGTON – This week, the Senate Appropriations Committee approved its version of the Fiscal Year (FY) 2013 State, Foreign Operations Appropriations Bill outlining US funding and policy priorities abroad, including Armenia and Nagorno Karabagh, reported the Armenian Assembly of America.

The Appropriations Committee recommended “assistance for victims of the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict in amounts consistent with prior years and for ongoing needs related to the conflict.” In addition,



Sen. Mark Kirk (R-IL)

the Committee urged “a peaceful resolution to the conflict” and the bill itself made funds available for “confidence-building measures and other activities in furtherance of the peaceful resolution of conflicts,

including in Nagorno Karabagh.”

“The Senate Appropriations Committee’s inclusion of assistance to Nagorno Karabagh advances important US foreign policy and humanitarian priorities in the region and will provide for those most affected by this conflict,” said a spokesperson for Sen. Mark Kirk (R-IL).

Sources familiar with the bill noted that funding for Armenia in terms of economic and military assistance mirrors the President’s request, which included the following: \$27.22 million in Economic Support Funds, \$2.5 million in Global Health Programs and \$2.82 million in International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement. The administration’s request also called for \$2.7 million in Foreign Military Financing (FMF) for Armenia and allocates \$600,000 each in International Military Education Training (IMET).

The bill also restated the six customary exemptions for humanitarian and other assistance to Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act. Section 907 was enacted in 1992 and requires the government of Azerbaijan to take “demonstrable steps to cease all blockades and other offensive uses of force” against Armenia and Nagorno Karabagh.

Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-VT), chairman of the State, Foreign Operations Appropriations Subcommittee noted that while over

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Date Set for Free-Trade Talks Between Armenia, EU

By Sargis Harutyunyan

BRUSSELS, Belgium (RFE/RL) – The European Union (EU) will officially open on June 19 negotiations with Armenia on a far-reaching free-trade agreement that should significantly deepen Armenia’s integration with the 27-nation bloc, it was announced on Wednesday.

Armenian and EU officials made the announcement after a regular session of a joint body dealing with commerce and

other economic affairs.

The two sides plan to create a Deep and Comprehensive Free-Trade Area (DCFTA) as part of an “association agreement” currently being negotiated by them. The agreement stems from the EU’s Eastern Partnership program covering six former Soviet republics.

The EU member states gave the final green light to formal talks with Yerevan on the DCFTA in February. The launch of those talks was delayed last year because of EU objections to a controversial mechanism

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Mirror-Spectator Holds Anniversary Program

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. – On Thursday, May 24, about 250 friends and supporters of the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* gathered at the Royal Sonesta Hotel to pay tribute to the newspaper on its 80th anniversary.

Receiving awards of excellence were NBC News’s Janet Shamlian and Politico’s Charles Mahtesian. Gregory Adamian, the chancellor and president emeritus of Bentley University, received a lifetime achievement award. The event merited a write-up in the *Boston Globe* the following day. A detailed story, photographs and a list of donations will appear in next week’s issue.



From left: Gregory Adamian, Janet Shamlian and Charles Mahtesian

Clinton to Visit Caucasus

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton will arrive in Armenia on June 4 at the start of what will be her second tour of the region in less than two years.

Clinton will visit the three South Caucasus states as part of an eight-day trip to countries in northern Europe, the Caucasus and Turkey.

She will discuss “regional security, democracy, economic development and counterterrorism” in Yerevan, Baku and Tbilisi, the US State Department said on May 25. The State Department also said Clinton would meet with leaders from civil society groups in all three countries.

The Armenian Foreign Ministry announced on Monday that Clinton will hold talks with President Serge Sargsisian and Foreign Minister Eduard Nalbandian on “a broad range of issues relating to the development and deepening of the US-Armenian friendly partnership.”

Armenian Appointed To Uruguayan Cabinet

MONTEVIDEO (Armenpress) – President of Uruguay Jose Mujica appointed Lillian Keshishyan as minister of tourism. Prior to this appointment, she held the post of vice minister. Keshishyan has held the post of deputy in the country’s parliament and is set to become the first person of Armenian descent to become a member of the government.

One of Keshishyan’s achievements is the initiation of a petition for the European Union to demand from Turkey the recognition of the Armenian Genocide.

PM Sargsisian, Medvedev Meet

ASHGABAT, Turkmenistan (Armenpress) – During his visit here to participate in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) Council of Heads of Government, Prime Minister of Armenia Tigran Sargsisian met with his Russian counterpart, Dmitry Medvedev. The two parties discussed a range of issues on Armenian-Russian military cooperation, the Armenian government’s press service said.

Medvedev told Sargsisian he is happy to refer to bilateral relations at the CIS meeting in Ashgabat. “I am happy for our new meeting and for the opportunity of discussing those issues,” he stressed.

Sargsisian told him, “You know that we attach special significance to relations with Russia. Russia is our strategic partner, including in respect to the economic ingredient. Russian investments in our economy make 60 percent, that is, Russia is ahead of all the countries making investments in Armenia. And we are surely interested in strengthening of those relations.”

INSIDE

Say Cheese

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ARMENIA

News From Armenia

Designer from Turkey Participates in 'Yerevan Fashion Week'

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – An Armenian fashion designer from Turkey participated in the fourth national award ceremony of “Yerevan Fashion Week” festival, which was held May 25.

Turkey’s representative, Julia Mutlo, of Armenian descent, prepared an exhibition based on photos of Armenian provinces, founder of Yerevan Fashion Week Arman Antonyan said.

Antonyan said Armenian fashion designers from Armenia, Nagorno Karabagh and Russia also presented their collections.

During the 10-plus years of the event, numerous professional designers and more than 200 undergraduates have participated in the exhibition.

“The festival will promote consolidation of the Armenian fashion, revelation of new names. It is also an assessment to the professional fashion designers,” he noted.

Well-known singers, TV hosts, actors and public figures participated.

Ellis Island Organization Head Visits Armenia

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – At the invitation of President Serge Sargisian, chairman of the US-based National Ethnic Coalition of Organizations, Nasser Kazeminy, paid a visit to Armenia last week. He visited the Tsitsernakaberd monument and laid a wreath there.

“The crime in the beginning of the century – the murder of millions of Armenians is one of the sad moments of my life. But we must state that Armenian nation was so strong and brave that could make that fact cognizable and did his best in order it was not forgotten and would not be repeated in future,” Kazeminy said.

Praising the work of Sargisian, the chairman expressed his admiration saying that Sargisian has brought Armenia to the international arena in a short period. He added Sargisian is the only foreign president that had been awarded an Ellis Island medal.

Turkish MP: Lack of Political Dialogue Is Obstacle for Armenia And Turkey's Development

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – Without political dialogue it will be hard for Armenia and Turkey to develop their economic cooperation, Turkish Member of Parliament (MP) and head of the Turkish delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (PABSEC) Ismail Safi said last week.

The Turkish delegates are taking part in the current PABSEC session in Yerevan.

Safi said that Armenia and Turkey have a whole number of moot questions, so, they can hardly pick up and solve just one of them, in this particular case, the problem of trade. “We should overcome all the existing contradictions,” the Turkish MP said.

The problem of trade is that the goods exported from Turkey to Armenia are first sent to Georgia, while Turkey does not import Armenian goods in such a way.

Safi believes that the PABSEC is a good platform for settling the key problems. He said that the Turkish delegation will do its best to improve Turkish-Armenian relations.

Armenian MP and head of the Armenian delegation to PABSEC Areg Ghukasyan said that Armenia and Turkey have signed protocols for establishing diplomatic relations and developing cooperation. “The protocols stipulate the need to open the border and to develop trade. But the only obstacle is the reluctance of the Turkish parliament to ratify them,” Ghukasyan said.

ATP Plants More Than 230,000 Trees In 11 Regions of Armenia This Spring

YEREVAN – Armenia Tree Project (ATP) has recently completed its spring programs after planting a total of 233,466 trees throughout the country. The total includes 140,366 seedlings planted in the town of Saratovka in northern Armenia, 51,100 seedlings that were provided to communities to establish new forested areas and 42,000 fruit and decorative trees planted at 118 sites in 11 regions.

ATP continues to cooperate with new programs established in Armenia. In April, ATP provided seedlings and professional expertise in planting trees and shrubs in the yard of the new Ayb High School in Yerevan’s Kanaker-Zeytun district. Teachers, students, friends and parents joined ATP to plant 905 trees and shrubs on the school grounds.

“The Ayb High School combines the best of Armenian schooling traditions and contemporary learning technologies. The school has built a new culture of learning to raise the



ATP planting at the Ayb School

competitiveness of Armenian education. This ambitious initiative is deeply valued by ATP, as it shares our

mission of educating younger generations,” said Community Tree Planting Program Manager Arthur Harutyunyan, who led the tree planting at the school.

One of ATP’s other projects was joining the Barekamavan Development Project on the Tavush border. “Barekamavan Village is on the Azeri border and is extremely poor. From 200 families, only half still live in the village, therefore it was a priority for us to start working in this village,” said Harutyunyan.

With the help of the Armenian communities in Ireland and Dubai and the support of organizations such as AGBU and Macademias, three greenhouses were built for families in Barekamavan. “With the income they get from the crops, they will be more encouraged to stay in the village, raise their children here and ensure a strong presence in this strategic border community,” added Harutyunyan.

ATP provided 206 pear, apple, almond and cherry trees to families in Barekamavan and 30 evergreens were planted around the local churchyard. “ATP has made it a priority to provide the majority of its fruit trees to people in the poorest and most disadvantaged communities,” Harutyunyan said.

ATP also provided fruit and nut trees to needy communities in Ghursali, Nerkin Khndzoresk, Lernamerdz and Teghenik.

ATP’s Social, Economic and Environmental Development for Sustainability (SEEDS) team established new forest areas in the northern community of Saratovka, located several miles from Stepanavan. ATP launched SEEDS in 2011.

“There were no trees or forested areas near Saratovka. Therefore, we hope the people here will make use of the fruit trees and enjoy the greenery in their community,” noted SEEDS Program Manager Vardan Melikyan. The new forest was established with oak, pine, ash, apple and pear trees. It is located near a lake which will create beautiful scenery and serve as a shelter for various water birds.

The planting in Saratovka was implemented by seasonal workers hired by ATP from Vanadzor and neighboring villages, many of whom were Armenian refugees from Azerbaijan. Within the framework of ATP’s community forests program, 41,100 tree seedlings were provided for planting in Teghenik, Karenis and Tsakhkunj and another 10,000 seedlings were provided to the city of Chambarak in the Gegharkunik region.

For more information, visit www.armeniatree.org.

Rebirth of ADL in Armenia

By Garen Bakhshiyany

YEREVAN (Azg) – During the tumultuous pre-election campaign in Armenia, many people missed seeing the conventions of two officially-registered parties, which took place on April 22 at the Tekeyan Center.

The parties are two structures of the Armenian Democratic Liberal party (ADL) operating under different names: ADL of Armenia (HRAK) and Armenagan Ramgavar party (Armenagan-ADL). Those two conventions took place within hours of each other with the same goal, to announce the unification of the two entities under one label, Armenian Democratic Party (Armenia).

The continuing internal dissention within the oldest political party had adversely impacted its political stature, not only in Armenia, but also in the diaspora. It is not difficult to prove that some internal shake-ups developed within its structure when the party moved to Armenia, in the aftermath of Armenia’s independence.

During the first stage of its activities, thanks to its respectable reputation, HRAK was able to form the second largest group in the Armenian parliament. Unfortunately, later on, because of unsavory political mechanisms in Armenia, the oldest traditional political party was pushed out of the scene during the 1995 parliamentary elections, through massive fraud perpetrated by authorities at the time.

HRAK, which was based on the classic principles of democracy and liberalism, was a typical parliamentary party with its ideology and with its performance. The leaders of the Armenian National Movement (HNSH) denied the political arena to HRAK in order to pave the way for hodge-podge groups of opportunists who entered the parliament in large masses. As a result, HRAK’s disappearance from parliament caused internal divisions in the party structures, both in Armenia and in the diaspora.

The structures of the ADL in Armenia and the diaspora failed to come up with a formula to create unity; that resulted in the hijacking of the HRAK’s leadership in Armenia, who

then abused the moral and material capital which the party had developed over the years, and they were used for personal and selfish goals.

The party was on the brink not only of internal divisions but actual demise. Measures had to be taken to salvage the party. Thus, a group of traditionalist Ramgavars, true to their oaths, took the initiative to form Armenagan ADL, whose first item on the agenda was the unification of the party; and that process began from Armenia, for obvious reasons.

The April 22 decision to unite the party was the result of long deliberations and hard work. The June 3 convention will mark the pinnacle of those activities as the two parties will unite and for the first time, ADL (Armenia) will act as one consolidated party in Armenia. Of course, the success of the ADL Armenagan could not be achieved if a few leaders in HRAK did not cooperate, realizing the severity of the situation. Unity was achieved thanks to the understanding of these leaders, whose dedication to the ideology of the party are beyond reproach.

We believe that overcoming the internal crisis in Armenia has already generated a positive impact throughout the diaspora, where different regions will emulate and replicate the unifying processes of Armenia.

It goes without saying that the ADL cannot survive in the diaspora without powerful structures in Armenia.

The germ of unity must be contagious also in the diaspora, where unjust “expulsions” of dedicated leaders must be rectified.

On April 22, HRAK rescinded its decision, which had “expelled” leaders who had dedicated their lives, over many years, to create and strengthen the party. We believe that reprieve will also have its reflection on the diaspora structures.

Today, the members of HRAK and Armenagan RAK boards are actively working to convene the unification convention on June 3, which will put an end to internal divisions and will mark a new beginning for the oldest Armenian political party. It will be an actual rebirth and march towards new achievements.

(Translated from a piece in the May 23 issue of Azg daily.)



INTERNATIONAL



The members of Armenia's national soccer team

Soccer: Armenia Getting Ready For Double 'Friendly' Challenge

YEREVAN (ArmeniaNow) — The Armenian national team is playing two friendly games in as part of their preparations for the 2014 FIFA World Cup qualifying tournament commencing this fall.

Vardan Minasyan's team first traveled to Austria, where in Vienna on May 31 they were scheduled to play Euro-2004

winners and Euro-2012 finalists Greece before hosting Kazakhstan in Yerevan on June 5.

Dutch specialist Raymond Verheijen, who was recently engaged by the Armenian Football Federation to work with the team as assistant coach until the end of the 2014 FIFA World Cup

qualifying campaign, has already joined the team in preparation for the friendly games. The renowned specialist will be in charge of the players' physiques and rehabilitation.

Head Coach Vardan Minasyan said at a press conference in Yerevan that he is going to engage all of key players in the upcoming friendly games, in which, however, he will also experiment with some tactical schemes.

"In these coming friendly matches we won't focus much on the result, especially that we are going to test a new thing, and it is possible we will end up getting nothing out of it," Minasyan said.

The matches in Vienna and Yerevan were the first occasion for Armenia players to wear their new official Adidas kit (all red for home games and all white for away matches).

The 2014 FIFA World Cup 2014 qualification tournament starts for Armenia on September 7, with an away fixture against Malta followed by a highly-anticipated match against Italy in Yerevan on October 12. The other rivals of the Minasyan side in Group B are Denmark, the Czech Republic and Bulgaria.

Monitoring Committee of PACE to Present Report on Post-Elections in Armenia

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — The monitoring committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of Council (PACE) of Europe on May 31 will discuss the government procedures of several member states. According to the PACE official website, the committee will focus on Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Serbia and Albania.

The report on Armenia will be presented by Axel Fisher (Germany) and John Prescott (Great Britain). Also, a discussion will be held on the parliamentary elections in Armenia, which were held on May 6. A report on parliamentary elections in Serbia will be presented by David Harutiunyan (Armenia) and Indrek Saar (Estonia).

The committee is due to approve a report on government obligations of Montenegro. It will also hold a closed-door hearing on recent issues in the Russian Federation. Also on the agenda are the monitoring procedures and post-monitoring dialogue with Monaco and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Date Set For Free-Trade Talks between Armenia, EU

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nism for import valuation and taxation of imported alcoholic beverages applied by Armenia's customs service. The Armenian government scrambled to meet relevant preconditions set by the EU's executive body, the European Commission.

Luc Devigne, a senior official from the Commission's Directorate General for Trade, said the government still needs to do "a lot" to secure a permanent free trade regime with the world's largest and most affluent single market. "We will keep monitoring this during the negotiations," he told reporters in Yerevan after the meeting of the EU-Armenia Subcommittee on Trade, Economic and Related Legal Issues.

"In the meeting the EU side welcomed the progress achieved so far and encouraged the Armenian side to further intensify its reform efforts," the EU Delegation in Yerevan said in a separate statement. It said the subcommittee members "shared their assessment of the latest developments" in Armenia's business environment.

The DCFTA envisages not only mutual lifting of all trade barriers but also harmonization of Armenian economic laws

and regulations with those existing in the EU. Garegin Melkonian, a deputy minister of economy who led the Armenian side at the subcommittee meeting, emphasized this fact.

"In contrast to simple free trade that we have with a number of countries, we are talking about a more comprehensive and complete package which will not only serve as a serious basis for the development of Armenia-EU ties but also stim-

ulate processes of internal development and reforms in Armenia," Melkonian told a joint news briefing with Devigne.

"In other words, this will eventually lead us to improved economic administration and conformity with European standards," he said.

Devigne declined to speculate how long the impending DCFTA talks will last. "I'm not into the forecast business," he said. "Otherwise, I would be in a dif-



European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso (R) and Armenian President Serge Sargsian at a news conference in Brussels, on March 6.

International News

Azerbaijan Recalls Ambassador to Iran

BAKU (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Reports from Azerbaijan indicate the government has recalled its ambassador to Iran "for consultations."

The move to recall Ambassador Cavansir Ahundov follows Iran's decision last week to recall its ambassador to Baku, also for consultations.

On May 29, the Iranian Embassy in Baku said Azerbaijani authorities had prevented a senior Iranian official from entering Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijani officials are meanwhile reported to have asked Iran to clarify the whereabouts of two young Azeri poets who were allegedly detained in the Iranian city of Tabriz.

Tensions between the Islamic republic and Azerbaijan have escalated in recent months, after Azerbaijani authorities arrested a number of men with alleged links to Iran who were reportedly plotting attacks in Azerbaijan.

Ties have also been strained recently over reported closer ties between Azerbaijan and Iranian rival, Israel, according to RFE/RL.

Vladimir Putin to Pay State Visit to Armenia

MOSCOW (Armenpress) — President of Russia Vladimir Putin is likely to pay a state visit to Armenia in September, said director of the Institute of Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) members Konstantin Zatulin at a press conference in the Novosti international press center.

"As far as I know Armenian side has already invited President Vladimir Putin and now the issue of the date must be decided" said Zatulin. According to him, Putin is tentatively scheduled to arrive on September 7 within the framework of CSTO's Collective Rapid Reaction Force exercise.

"The works of organizing the visit have already been started and will finish successfully," he said.

Armenian-Syrian Soldier Killed

DAMASCUS, Syria (ArmeniaNow) — The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has confirmed that an Armenian soldier in the Syrian army was a casualty in the fighting between Syrian and rebel forces near the border of Turkey.

Levon Kouyoumdjian, 20, of Damascus is the third Syrian soldier of Armenian descent killed in the civil war there since the beginning of the year.

Turkey Expels Syrian Diplomats

ANKARA (AFP) — Turkey said Wednesday it had ordered Syrian diplomats to leave the country within 72 hours following the massacre of more than 100 civilians in Houla.

"As the host country, it has been demanded... that Syria's charge d'affaires in Ankara and all other diplomatic personnel leave our country within 72 hours as of May 30, 2012," the Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

The measure does not include Syria's consular corps in Istanbul.

"It is out of the question for us to remain silent and not respond to this action which constitutes a crime against humanity," it added.

The ministry also warned it would take additional measures if the Damascus regime continued to commit such crimes.

Syria's charge d'affaires was summoned to the Foreign Ministry and notified of the decision.

On Tuesday, Western powers including the US, Britain, France and Australia, kicked out the highest-ranking Syrian diplomats in their countries to increase pressure on President Bashar al-Assad.

The coordinated expulsions followed mounting international outrage over the massacre in the central town of Houla, in which at least 108 people, including 49 children, were killed, according to UN figures.

Turkey, once a strong ally of Syria, broke with Damascus after Assad's regime began cracking down on dissent in March last year.

Community News

ALMA 7th Spring Sports Raffle Underway, Drawing To Take Place on July 17

WATERTOWN – The Armenian Library and Museum of America (ALMA) has launched its annual Spring Sports Raffle, giving participants the chance to win some of the most sought-after tickets to the best games in New England. This year, supporters and sports fanatics can play to win 10 high-priced, highly-prized packages valued at more than \$16,000.

Participants can take the chance to win dozens of sports tickets, including a Private Luxury Box for 22 guests to see the Red Sox play at Boston's Fenway Park, four Red Sox vs. Yankees tickets three rows behind the batter's box, four Patriots tickets in a private suite, courtside Celtics tickets and many other prizes.

Tickets are \$100 each or five tickets for \$300. Raffle tickets can be purchased at www.almainc.org or by calling ALMA.

In addition to the general drawing, buyers of five tickets for \$300 will also be entered into a special drawing that will entitle them to two tickets to a Bruins game and the opportunity to visit with Bruins announcer Jack Edwards in the NESN booth between periods.

All proceeds from this campaign benefit ALMA's exhibits, programs and work in preserving Armenian artifacts and history.

The Spring Sports Raffle will conclude on July 17 with Edwards pulling the winning tickets during the "Final Inning" Reception. The drawing will take place in ALMA's Contemporary Art Gallery from 6 to 7:30 p.m. with an array of ballpark snacks. Winners need not be present.

Playwright Van Dyke Speaks with Students at St. Stephen's School

WATERTOWN, Mass. – On May 3, playwright and lecturer Joyce Van Dyke was invited by St. Stephen's Armenian Elementary School to speak to the upper elementary students about her latest play, "The Deported/a dream play," which ran with great success, on four consecutive weeks in Boston this spring.

Van Dyke told the students about the plot of the play, how she came to write it and the real people behind the play. Using many flashbacks to provide historical information, the compelling play was inspired by the true stories of two of its main characters – the playwright's grandmother, Elmas Sarajian Boyajian, who is called "Victoria" in the play, and her best friend, Varter Nazarian Deranian. They escape the Genocide and find new lives – and each other – in the US.

Students listened attentively to every detail that Van Dyke shared. Some students wanted to know more about Van Dyke's grandmother, who served as the model for a protagonist. Other students were interested in the steps that go into producing a play. One fourth grader asked when it would be produced again. Another asked if it was on YouTube.

Fourth- and fifth-grade students at St. Stephen's learn about the Armenian Genocide each April. Van Dyke added her voice to the many narratives shared before.



Joyce Van Dyke speaks with students in Grades 4 and 5 at St. Stephen's Armenian Elementary School in Watertown.



String cheese made by Sun-Ni features the image of founder Kosrof Der Ohanessian.

Americans Become Familiar with Sun-Ni Armenian String Cheese

PHILADELPHIA – For many Armenians, food is one of the most fundamental elements of their identity. Thus, making Armenian food accessible and known in the United States contributes in a modest way toward preserving an aspect of Armenian culture, and Monica Whitcomb and the Sun-Ni Cheese Company play a role in that process. The Sun-Ni Cheese Company, located in Wayne, a suburb of Philadelphia, is one of the leading makers of Armenian string cheese in the United States.

The company was founded through the efforts of Kosrof Der Ohanessian, an Armenian native of Arapgir or Arapkir in the Ottoman Empire. As a young boy who lost most of his family in the Armenian Genocide, he came to the US in 1925 via Cuba and Canada. He had some distant relatives in Philadelphia, which at the time was a big center for Arapkir Armenians. He worked at a variety of jobs for several decades until he was able to open a delicatessen with a friend in the 1960s.

Even before this, he and a friend would make string cheese in his kitchen for fellow Armenians. However, according to his granddaughter, Monica Whitcomb, he began to experiment and tried to Americanize its taste. It was too salty and unpalatable to Americans initially. He made his cheese from whole milk, and included black nigella seeds and the spice *mahleb* for flavor. Der Ohanessian began to sell his version in his deli.

The deli, in Center City or downtown Philadelphia, sold a variety of other Armenian and Middle Eastern foods, including *lahmejun*, *börek*, *köfte* and various Middle Eastern delights.

Der Ohanessian's wife, Mary Mazmanian, born in the United States, did much of the cooking, along with other relatives and some local Armenian women. The deli became a meeting place of sorts for local Armenians and was a successful business, but in 1973 Der Ohanessian's partner wanted to retire and therefore the business was sold. Der Ohanessian was not ready to retire, and as a result, he began to focus on his string cheese, marketing it to more stores. He was so successful that he had to ask several of his daughters and their husbands to take it over.

This is how the Sun-Ni company was formed, named after the sisters Sonya and Nina. Later a third sister, Adrienne Seropian, and her husband also joined the company.

Kosrof Der Ohanessian passed away in the late 1970s. The cheese continued to be individually made in pots, but more and more women had to be hired, largely Armenians, to do the preparation in a new location which also had a retail store in the front. It was too small for the growing business and so they moved to a

see SUN-NI, page 5



Sun-Ni hummus

FAR Banquet Honors Armenia's Other Children

By Florence Avakian

NEW YORK – "Every time I saw a suffering child in Armenia, it reminded me of 1915," said Archbishop Vicken Aykazian, who is credited with being a founding member of the Fund for Armenian Relief (FAR) Children's Center in Yerevan. The year was 2000, and the center, then designated for Armenia's most vulnerable children, was in deplorable condition. Now, 12 years later, the center is a safe, protective and compassionate home for abused, abandoned, poverty-stricken children under the sponsorship of FAR, and managed and run by a devoted and professional staff. In its 12-year record, it has helped 9,000 children.

On Friday, May 18, the Friends of the FAR Children's Center held a gala banquet at the Kavookjian Hall of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America to honor this institution and the thousands of children who have benefited from its dedication. Among the guests attending were Primate of the Armenian Diocese (Eastern) and FAR Board of Directors President Archbishop Khajag Barsamian; Diocesan Legate in Washington, DC, and FAR Board member Aykazian; Armenia's Ambassador to the United Nations Garek Nazarian; FAR Board Chairman Randy Sapah-Gulian; FAR Board Vice Chairpersons Dr. Edgar M. Housepian and Prof. Annette Choolfaian; FAR Friends Honorary Chair Sirvart Hovnanian and Director of the FAR Children's Center Dr. Mira Antonyan, who had traveled from Armenia for the occasion.

One Child at a Time

Following the invocation by Aykazian, Sapah-Gulian as master of ceremonies, welcomed the more than 200 attendees who sat at tables decorated with unique centerpieces – lollipops featuring the smiling faces of the center's children. He paid special tribute to Sirvart Hovnanian, wife of the late entrepreneur and benefactor Kevork Hovnanian, who with see FAR, page 6

Garabedian to Speak at St. James Armenian Men's Club Meeting

WATERTOWN – On Monday June 4, Tom Garabedian, managing director of the Armenian Tree Project will be the speaker at the dinner meeting of the St. James Armenian Church Men's Club. The topic will be the Armenia Tree Project (ATP).

Garabedian was appointed in January as the managing director of the ATP with responsibilities for program oversight, staff development and finance. Garabedian worked for 34 years as a principal and consulting actuary with Hewitt Associates, retiring in January 2011. He has a degree in mathematics from Bowdoin College, is a member of the Hopkinton Zoning Board of Appeals and chair of Hopkinton Commissioners of Trust Funds. Garabedian is one of the founding family members of the Armenian Church of the Holy Translators in Framingham, Mass., a trustee of the Armenian Church Endowment Fund and a trustee of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church. He is married to the former Dora Verne Kishibay, and they have three sons, Deran, Berj and Gregory.

The social hour starts with mezza at 6:15 p.m. followed by a complete Armenian dinner at 7 p.m. Tickets are \$12 per person. The dinner meeting will be at the St. James Armenian Church, Charles Mosesian Cultural & Youth Center, Keljik Hall, 465 Mt. Auburn St. Women are welcome.

Armenian and Religious Dignitaries Visit St. Stephen's Armenian Elementary School

WATERTOWN – On May 22, after the opening ceremony of the Armenian Heritage Park was held, a delegation comprising Armenia's Minister of Foreign Affairs Eduard Nalbandian, Diaspora Minister Hranoush Hakobyan and Ambassador to



Principal Houry Boyamian chats with Armenia's Ambassador to the US Tatoul Markarian.

the US Tatoul Markarian visited St. Stephen's Armenian Elementary School. They were accompanied by Archbishop Oshagan Choloyan, Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Rev. Archpriest Antranig Baljian, the pastors of the Armenian Churches of the Greater Boston area and James Kalustian, president of the Armenian Heritage Foundation. The members of the staff and the school board greeted the visiting guests. The excited students waved Armenian flags.

In her welcoming remarks, Principal Houry Boyamian expressed her gratitude to the dignitaries for visiting the school during their short stay in Boston. She presented an overview of the school's achievements and mentioned that the fifth graders were in Armenia for a two-week trip, the ninth such annual trip to Armenia. She then invited the students to present the program they had prepared for the occasion.

After the students' performance, Cholyan and Barsamian, followed by Nalbandian addressed the students, expressing their appreciation in the accomplishments of the school and the important role it plays in the community.



From left, Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, Archbishop Oshagan Choloyan, Prelate, Prelacy of the Armenian Church of America, and Foreign Minister Eduard Nalbandian of Armenia visit St. Stephen's Armenian Elementary School.

Americans Become Familiar with Sun-Ni Armenian String Cheese

SUN-NI, from page 4

nearby larger location. The family bought a machine designed to make mozzarella which it modified for Armenian string cheese. Despite the machine, which cooks and softens the curds, each string cheese still had to be stretched and twisted by hand into the tradition braided shape. Another machine wrapped the finished cheese in plastic.

In the 1990s and then in 2001, Sonya Bulkey bought out her two sisters. In the late 1990s, She moved the manufacturing of the cheese to the factory in New Jersey which was already selling her the curds used to start the process. Bulkey's daughter, Monica Whitcomb, who joined the firm in 2001, explained that they trained the mozzarella company to make string cheese, and at least once every two weeks she would visit to make sure quality was being maintained. The company delivered the finished product on a weekly basis. Having a factory prepare the cheese (which still is hand stretched and twisted) is more efficient, partly because of all the inspections and paperwork that complicate the work of a small food processing company.

Whitcomb eventually became the president of

the company, and her mother passed away in 2009, leaving her and her father as the sole owners. Whitcomb said that initially she did not intend to go into the family business, and in fact, she is the only one of the third generation in the family that did so. She explained: “After college, I worked for the American Red Cross in financial development. I got to go to Armenia and work over there for the Red Cross. After some years, when I saw the things happening at the company I felt I could do something positive there.”

She arranged for a redesign of the packaging of the cheese with an image of her grandfather, Kosrof, on the front in 2002, and introduced some new lines such as marinated string cheese. Whitcomb said that in addition to continually striving to increase sales, she is still thinking of other products to produce. One that has been successful is hummus. She said, “My uncle used to make it for us for lunch, and I thought we should make it for sale. We are looking for other things like that – taking an Armenian or Middle Eastern delicacy and making it mainstream.”

A plant in Wilmington, Del., makes the hummus, as well as some of the cheese now too. The

Sun-Ni Cheese Company no longer directly sells any cheese retail and since it does not do the cheese preparation either, four people, including Whitcomb, are sufficient in headquarters to run the business.

The company sells primarily to large chains, as well as to food distributor firms which send it to mid-sized and mom-and-pop style small stores. Internet retail sales are handled by ParthenonFoods.com, a Greek-run site based in Milwaukee, Wis.

While it is hard to tell what percentage of sales of string cheese are to Armenians and Middle Eastern or Balkan ethnic groups (some of whom have their own string cheese variants), it is always a struggle to introduce string cheese or other food products Americans are generally unfamiliar with outside of the Northeast, California and a few Midwestern cities like Chicago or Detroit. Only large corporations have the resources to use television and other media with constant advertising.

Whitcomb said, "It takes a lot to get people who don't know about it to eat it. We deep discount it at grocery stores so somebody will try it. I do a lot of demonstrations in stores and food shows. Everybody who has never had it is

surprised.” However, being seen as Middle Eastern or Mediterranean (though not necessarily the less-recognized Armenian) helps sell the cheese now because of the growing popularity of such products as Greek yogurt, *tzatziki* and *hummus*.

Slowly Sun-Ni Armenian string cheese is being picked up by major food companies. Whole Foods has been carrying it for a number of years and now is distributed by three of its geographic divisions. Whitcomb is working to increase the number of Whole Food divisions carrying her products. Walmart just accepted it last October for its premium large stores or supercenters in the geographic region east of



Khosrov and Mary Der Ohanessian on their wedding day

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Saint Louis. There are 450 such stores. While Whole Foods is willing to an extent to pioneer products, other big chains usually want proven sales. This is why, for example, Walmart does not want to sell string cheese in areas where it is not yet known to the general populace. Many other familiar chains, such as Stop and Shop, Wegmans, Pathmark, Walbaums and Ukrop's, carry Armenian string cheese.

There are three or four Armenian string cheese companies in the US and several non-Armenian ones. None use the traditional goat or sheep milk. Some do not use *mahleb*, and others use skim milk. It is hard to say which is the biggest one, but certainly Sun-Ni is not the smallest – and it is expanding. More Armenians, scattered throughout the United States, can now find one of their favorite cheeses, while more and more Americans are becoming acquainted with a beloved Armenian food.



COMMUNITY NEWS

FAR Banquet Honors Armenia's Other Children

FAR, from page 4

Archbishop Torkom Manoogian and Housepian, founded FAR. And he expressed deep appreciation to Edward and Janet Mardigian who donated \$2 million in support of the FAR Edward and Helen Mardigian Child Protection Foundation.

Silva Torosian (with Nadia Gharibian) as the co-chair of the Friends of the FAR Children's Center, in her greetings, called the evening a "celebration" of these children and the center "that is fighting to have them lead a normal life, one child at a time."

In expressing appreciation to the Friends of FAR, Barsamian noted that the theme of the evening is "compassion for the welfare of others, for the most needy and defenseless."

He recalled that more than two decades ago, at the time of the disastrous earthquake in Armenia, Manoogian, Kevork Hovnanian and

lapsed. Homeless, poverty-stricken, hungry street children were often arrested. She related that in 1997, Aykazian had seen the dilapidated building and called it "unacceptable." Following negotiations by Aykazian and the Armenian Ministry of Internal Affairs, the building was given for 50 years to FAR, and with a generous donation by child advocacy expert Barbara Lorinci, opened in 2000. "A hovel became a home" for the 9,000 children that have passed through its doors. "From the housekeeper to the cook, the care and love of the staff have helped one child at a time. Join us on our extraordinary journey," she urged.

A video presentation showcasing the center — the only one in Armenia for vulnerable youth suffering from poverty, abuse, neglect, abandonment and crime, was shown on a large screen as the "best bastion of hope, and a place to heal in an unfortunate landscape." It dis-



FAR Children's Center Executive Director Dr. Mira Antonyan



The late Kevork Hovnanian and his wife, Sirvart, at the opening of the Children's Center in 2000.

Housepian "surveyed and made a compassionate vision for FAR as an outreach in health, medicine, education, economic and social development." And in 2000, FAR took over the Children's Center under the inspiration of Aykazian, becoming a place of "light, hope and love."

In honor of Aykazian's efforts "in taking up the fight for child protection" 12 years ago, the Primate gifted him with a silk painting made by one of the center's children, showing a child healing from the wounds inflicted by society, "a child who symbolizes the thousands of youngsters in the Children's Center."

From a Hovel to a Home

Annette Choolfaiian, professor at the New York Medical College, FAR Board vice chair and one of the founding members of the Children's Center, recalled that with the collapse of the USSR, the child protection system also col-

played the "one-on-one" counseling and care by the staff.

Secrets of the Center

Antonyan, the center's director, revealed the secrets of the center — "warmth, love, understanding, a non-critical attitude and professionalism. These are all that was, and is needed for these children to recover from their damaged childhood. Up to 2005, the center served approximately 4,000 children who were mostly beggars. Since 2005, the children are no longer beggars in the streets. But for many, they are at severe risk due to the absence of relevant family care and due to neglect, sexual and physical abuses and maltreatment — all being consequences of poverty."

Since its inception by FAR, the Children's Center "has become a place of hope for more than 9,000 children," she continued. "Around 200 children are sheltered in the center every

year. They recover and get out of hopeless situations. The center is ready to admit and support any child in a difficult situation at any time of the day and night."

Antonyan related that experts from more than 22 countries have recently visited the center, and "were surprised to see such an advanced center in Armenia. UNICEF has also recognized that its services are the best and most cost-effective in Armenia, with an advanced methodology." However, because the Armenian government "is still lacking resources to properly protect its children, the role of the civilian community and charitable organizations is crucial. Every penny provided by you is of great value to us," she said with emphasis. "Thank you for joining and being with us."

"Without you we could not make this difference," she said to a standing ovation.

During the evening, the Akhtamar Dance

Ensemble in colorful Armenian costumes had performed several selections to the delight of the audience. And the Arthur Apkarian and the Armenia Band from Canada played music for



Children at the FAR Children's Center

the dancing pleasure of the guests.

Thanks to the efforts of the Friends of the FAR Children's Center, significant funds were raised.

To donate to the FAR Children's Center in Yerevan, contact FAR at far@farusa.org.

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In memory of their grandfather, Khazar Bogosian, ADL Chapter of New Britain, Conn. charter members, Violet and Peter Galazan, donate \$100 to the Armenian Mirror-Spectator.

Diocese's Khrimian Lyceum Marks 25 Years

NEW YORK – The Diocese's Khrimian Lyceum marked the 25th anniversary of its establishment with a cultural program at the Diocesan Center on Saturday, May 19.

Archbishop Yeghishe Gizirian presided over the afternoon program during which students showcased their talent through musical performances, poetry recitations and other activities. The Rev. Mardiros Chevian, dean of St. Vartan Armenian Cathedral, was also present.

One highlight was the performance, in Armenian, of Hagop Baronian's comedy, "The Perils of Politeness." The play was directed by Vartan Garniki and featured students, Arthur Ipek, Arthur Kesenci, Ara Arsenian and Vahe Gemdzian.

A dance choreographed by Naira Mkrtchyan

had students executing elaborate footwork while donning traditional Armenian costumes. Students also sang a selection of songs under the direction of Maro Partamian, with Florence Avakian accompanying on the piano. They recited poetry and gave performances on piano, trumpet and violin. Tamar Tokman sang and gave a solo dance performance.

A brief documentary, titled "What it Means to be Armenian," was screened for the audience. The film, prepared by the Lyceum students earlier in the academic year with assistance from instructor Lisa Kletjian, featured reflections on their understanding of the Armenian identity.

The audience – which comprised Khrimian Lyceum alumni, staff, parents and other guests – also enjoyed a slideshow of photographs high-



Students perform Hagop Baronian's comedy, "The Perils of Politeness."



Students perform a dance.



Archbishop Yeghishe Gizirian encourages young people to preserve their heritage.

lighting the institution's 25-year history.

Gizirian closed the program with a message and benediction. He encouraged the young people to preserve their heritage and continue their involvement in the life of the Armenian Church.

"The cultural and faith basics the students receive are enhanced with their artistic expression in the Armenian tradition," said Gilda

Buchakjian, director of the Khrimian Lyceum and the Diocese's coordinator of Armenian Studies. "In addition, the students feel a strong sense of camaraderie among their peers and can't wait to get together during the Lyceum sessions."

The Khrimian Lyceum was founded in 1987. The project was spearheaded by Sylva der Stepanian, the Diocese's former Armenian Studies coordinator, under the guidance of then-Primate Archbishop Torkom Manoogian. The educational program takes its name from Catholicos Mkrtich Khrimian, a proponent of equal education for men and women who officially established the Armenian Church of America in 1898.

In its quarter-century of activity, the Khrimian Lyceum has helped countless young people strengthen their Armenian language skills and develop a deeper understanding of the Armenian faith, history and culture.

An art show of student work on display last week highlighted scenes from the Lyceum's history. Students also unveiled a commemorative yearbook, co-edited by Tamar Tokman and Christopher Artun, dedicated to the 25th anniversary celebration.

"It was an exciting celebration," said Buchakjian. "The credit goes first to the parents who are cognizant about the importance of this identity-building education and to the teachers who communicate it."

Other students who participated in the program were: Armen Arsenian, Varujan Beledkian, Shant Bekarian, Armen Bjimian, Daniela Haigian, Talar Hovsepian, Sarine Kabarian, Patrick Kerestegian, Matthew Krikorian, Arthur Mouradian, Julia Naldjian, Lara Ozyan, Christina Rymond, Brian Sarafian, Kyle Torosian, Andrew and Linda Yenigac and Lerna Yesiltepe.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

St. Mark Church Hosts 110th Diocesan Assembly

SPRINGFIELD, Mass. — The 110th Diocesan Assembly, hosted by the St. Mark Church of Springfield, Mass., from May 3 to 5, continued the Eastern Diocese's focus on lay ministry and highlighted parish efforts to encourage lay participation in the life of the Armenian Church.

Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern), presided over the meeting of 143 clergy and lay delegates, representing parishes from across the Eastern Diocese.

The assembly opened on Thursday, May 3, with a reading of the message of Karekin II, the Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians.

"As spiritual and lay servants working in our communities, you have, with consistent dedication, seen many accomplishments in your parish and diocesan life," Karekin II wrote.

The assembly was chaired by Raffi Balian, of St. Mary Church of Washington, DC, with Thomas Garabedian, of Holy Translators Church of Framingham, Mass., serving as vice chair.

Delegates heard reports from the Diocesan organizations, including the Legate's Committee, Armenian Church Endowment Fund (ACEF), Fund for Armenian Relief (FAR), Ararat Center, St. Nersess Armenian Seminary and the Diocesan Council. They also held elections for various Diocesan boards.

A Far-reaching Mission

Diocesan Legate Archbishop Vicken Aykazian, director of ecumenical relations at the Eastern Diocese, and Legate's Committee member Antranig Garibian spoke about efforts to raise awareness about the Armenian Church among ecumenical and interfaith groups and to advocate for the Armenian community at various levels of government.

In the past year, Aykazian met with officials in President Barack Obama's administration, as well as Senate and House leaders to discuss the situation of Christians in the Middle East. The region continues to be a concern, Aykazian said, as the Christian population declines in the face of ongoing threats.

In addition to extensive global travel, he visited parishes across the Diocese throughout the year to inform them about the Diocese's ecumenical efforts and to encourage them to participate in ecumenical activities on a local level.

ACEF Board members Bruce Ballard, Tom Garabedian and Roseann Manoogian Attar presented the report of the Armenian Church Endowment Fund. They stressed that despite economic difficulties, ACEF returns have outperformed the market and the organization's own benchmark since 2000.

ACEF had \$74.4 million in assets, with a total



A total of 143 clergy and lay delegates, representing parishes from across the Eastern Diocese, took part in the Diocesan Assembly earlier this month.

In the past two decades, FAR has allocated \$290 million in humanitarian assistance and developed more than 220 programs in Armenia, including the Children's Center in Yerevan, Vanadzor Old Age Home, Gumri IT Center, Continuing Medical Education program, scholarships and soup kitchens, among other initiatives. Last year, the organization was able to raise \$3.5 million to fund its programs.

Sapah-Gulian also spoke about the success of the tribute held in honor of Charles Aznavour last year, where more than 600 guests gathered in New York City. This year, a banquet at the Diocesan Center in New York on May 18 benefited the FAR Children's Center in Yerevan.

Ararat Center Board member Aram Hintian gave a presentation highlighting the eight-year history of the 65-acre camping, retreat and conference facility, and encouraging parishes to make use of the Ararat Center for retreats and meetings.

He noted that the Ararat Center plans to renovate its pool in 2012 and hopes to raise funds for the project in the coming months.

A report from St. Nersess Armenian

offices and other facilities.

He stressed that the new complex would broaden the reach of the seminary while preserving its popular youth and deacon training programs.

Thursday evening's session concluded with small-group discussions on ministries for parish revitalization. Delegates attended presentations on personal prayer, vocations, generational mentoring and the use of social media in the Armenian Church. The presentations encouraged delegates to think about their role in parish life and prepared them for Friday's focus on the Diocesan theme of "Vocations: The Call to Serve — Ministry of the Faithful."

On Friday, following the theme session on lay ministry, delegates heard from James Kalustian and Lisa Esayian, who presented an update on the "Guidelines for Diocesan Bylaws of the Armenian Church" — a proposed constitutional framework for all Armenian Church dioceses, worked out during meetings of a five-member committee at Holy Echmiadzin.

Kalustian served on the five-member committee and offered a comparison of the guidelines to the bylaws of the Eastern Diocese, which was completed by a second committee appointed by the Diocesan Council and Primate four years ago at the request of the Diocesan Assembly.

Following a discussion, delegates voted to approve a statement asserting the conviction of the Diocesan Assembly that the existing Diocesan Bylaws conform to the spirit of the proposed guidelines and enumerating several provisions which might require further study.

Called to be disciples

On Saturday, the Rev. Hratch Sargsyan gave an inspirational sermon on the importance of participation in Christ's ministry. "Everyone here is called to be a disciple of Christ," he said. "In Christianity there is no passive role. There are no bystanders."

Organization reports continued with a presentation by Danny Mantis, chair of the ACYOA Central Council. He spoke about the four focus areas of the youth organization, including faith-based programming, strengthening local chapters, building an alumni association and offering Christian education opportunities to young people. Mantis added that the ACYOA plans to work with the Women's Guild and other Diocesan organizations to develop new programming in the coming year.

Deacon Rubik Mailian, chair of the Sacred Music Council, outlined the organization's workshops, publications and scholarship programs. He encouraged parishes to nominate young people for participation in the Boyajian Youth Choir Directors Program this summer.

Charlotte Sevazlian, chair of the Women's Guild Central Council, highlighted the successes of last year's programming and spoke about the council's efforts to increase membership in parish guilds, to strengthen fundraising efforts and to boost electronic communications.

The Rev. Tateos Abdalian, the Diocese's director of Mission Parishes, profiled two mission parish communities in Atlanta, Ga., and Jacksonville, Fla. He spoke about a leadership-training seminar organized for parish leaders in Atlanta and the recent purchase of a community center in Jacksonville, adding that in both cases the Diocese has been working with the communities to help develop them into full-fledged parishes.

Oscar Tatosian, Diocesan Council chair, presented a report on behalf of Diocesan departments. He highlighted the work of the Diocese's in the past year and showed a brief video summarizing the activities and programs of 2011.

Delegates heard from Papken Megerian, treasurer of the Diocesan Council, about the Diocese's financials and approved revisions to the 2012 budget and a new 2013 budget. Echoing last year's message, Megerian emphasized that the Diocese would continue a very disciplined financial course.

Dr. Sam Mikaelian, coordinator of development at the Diocese, spoke about the success of the 2011 Annual Appeal: the Diocese raised \$915,946 and attracted a sizeable number of new donors. Mikaelian announced that in 2012 the Annual Appeal would be dedicated to the 65th anniversary of the ACYOA.

In new business items, delegates adopted two proposals to amend the Diocesan bylaws (both will have to be approved again at next year's assembly to go into effect). The first proposal would reduce annual parish dues for college-age members. The second proposal would clarify a bylaw concerning quorums at parish assemblies. Delegates also voted to devote special attention at next year's Diocesan Assembly to the task of increasing dues-paying membership.

Next year, the Diocesan Assembly will be hosted by St. David Church of Boca Raton, Fla.

Listed are the names of individuals elected to Diocesan boards and positions during the 110th Diocesan Assembly: Board of Trustees, Thomas Garabedian; Auditing Committee, Melanie Kevorkian Brown; Nominating Committee, Rev. Tavitt Boyajian, Dr. Lynn Cetin, Charles Guleserian, Aram Hintilian and Steven Megrdichian; Proposal Committee, Rev. Stepanos Doudoukjian, Rev. Hratch Sargsyan, Jacqueline El Chemmas, Van Krikorian and Richard Norsigian.



Diocesan Council members listen to a presentation during the 110th Diocesan Assembly.

of 1,745 endowed funds at the end of 2011. A total of \$3.1 million was distributed to beneficiaries in March 2011.

Randy Sapah-Gulian, chair of the Board of Directors of FAR, spoke about the organization's accomplishments in its three areas of focus: protecting Armenia's vulnerable population, supporting education and research and promoting business development.

Seminary was given by its dean, the Very Rev. Daniel Findikyan, and board member Michael Haratunian. Findikyan spoke about the seminary's rich online resources, including its Music Lab and online lectures.

Haratunian gave an overview of plans to relocate the seminary to a new location on Armonk, NY. The new complex would include dormitories, a chapel, library, classrooms,



COMMUNITY NEWS

‘Member of the Year’ and ‘Friend of the Armenians’ Honored at Diocesan Assembly

SPRINGFIELD, Mass. — Clergy, delegates and community members gathered at the Basketball Hall of Fame on Friday, May 4, to honor two individuals for their support of the Armenian Church and contributions to the greater Armenian community. The Grand Banquet of the 110th Diocesan Assembly was hosted by Springfield’s St. Mark Church.

The award for “Armenian Church Member of the Year” was bestowed on Dr. Gregory Adamian, the former president of Bentley University and a much-admired community leader, who has served on the boards of the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research and the Armenian General Benevolent Union, and as a Diocesan Assembly delegate from St. James Church of Watertown, Mass.

“Anyone who meets Gregory Adamian immediately appreciates his grand spirit and generous soul,” said Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Primate of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America. “We are blessed to have a man like Gregory Adamian among us, who is passionately committed to our church and Diocese.”

Adamian spoke about his involvement in the Armenian community and the many friends with whom he has worked over the years. He recalled his trip to Armenia in the early 1990s and shared his memories of visiting Khor Virab monastery and descending into the pit where St. Gregory the Illuminator was held captive for 13 years.

“One of the greatest highlights of my life was receiving the St. Sahag and St. Mesrob Medal, presented to me personally by Catholicos Karekin I,” said Adamian, who attended the banquet with his wife, Deborah.



Archbishop Khajag Barsamian presents the Rev. Dr. Olav Fykse Tveit with the “Friend of the Armenians” award.



Archbishop Khajag Barsamian presents Dr. Gregory Adamian with the “Armenian Church Member of the Year” award.

He expressed his gratitude to the Eastern Diocese for the recognition as “Armenian Church Member of the Year.”

“I am proud of this honor that I’ve received tonight, and I am proud to be Armenian,” he said. “God bless the Armenian Church.”

The Rev. Dr. Olav Fykse Tveit, general secretary of the World Council of Churches, was the recipient of the Diocese’s 2012 “Friend of the Armenians Award.” Tveit traveled to Armenia last year, where he met with Karekin II, the Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, and visited the Armenian Genocide Memorial at Dzidzernagapert in Yerevan.

“The World Council has been a great supporter of our church — sharing our sorrow at the time of the earthquake, advancing the cause of Genocide recognition and celebrating the independence of our homeland and the great milestones of our history,” Barsamian said. “In his leadership role, on the world stage, Dr. Tveit has become an eloquent champion of causes that are deeply important to us —

not simply as Armenians, but as Christians and as human beings.”

Tveit spoke about the Armenian Church’s ecumenical efforts and expressed his appreciation to Archbishop Vicken Aykazian, the Diocese’s ecumenical director who serves on the World Council of Churches Central and Executive committees. In addition to his remarks at the May 4 banquet, Tveit addressed delegates during the Second General Session of the Diocesan Assembly earlier that day.

Tveit said that his work on the ecumenical stage “has been a journey into a deeper understanding of what the cross of Christ means, both as a sign of solidarity with everybody who is suffering and also as a sign of a future — a future of resurrection and life.”

He added, “A church like yours, which knows very much what the longing for peace and justice means, has much to offer the other churches who need the WCC to support their efforts towards a just peace.”

Friday’s banquet also featured a performance by the local vocal ensemble, the September Girls.

Aykazian delivered the invocation that began the banquet. Assembly Organizing Committee Chair David Jermakian offered a celebratory toast; Diocesan Council chair Oscar Tatosian introduced the honorees and Hagop Boyajian served as master of ceremonies. Lynn Diefenderfer chaired the banquet committee for the host parish.



Clergy, delegates and community members gathered at the Basketball Hall of Fame in Springfield, Mass., on May 4, to honor two distinguished individuals for their support of the Armenian Church.

Following Christ to a More Dynamic Parish Ministry

SPRINGFIELD, Mass. — At the 110th Diocesan Assembly, Archbishop Khajag Barsamian addressed the delegates with a message outlining the qualities of Christ that one needs to follow. During the morning session on Friday, May 4, on the Diocesan theme “Vocations: The Call to Serve — Ministry of the Faithful,” he emphasized the importance of humility, outreach, forgiveness, compassion,

restore God’s image in us,” Barsamian said. “It is important that each one of us, as a leader of the church, fully embraces Christ’s life and follows his example.”

George Marootian, who moderated Friday morning’s discussion, drew on Bible passages and lessons from Armenian history to illustrate the meaning of following Christ. “God allows us to cross over at any time in our life’s walk from eternal death to eternal life through belief in his son, Jesus Christ,” he said.

In small groups, clergy and delegates discussed how they see the church as a community of believers and how they make Jesus essential in their lives. They also brainstormed ways to help others come closer to Christ through parish programs.

Representatives from three parishes presented local models of ministry and encouraged parish leaders to build personal relationships with parishioners. Kary

Valenziano, of St. James Church of Evanston, Ill., said how her community has been assisting immigrants from the Middle East by offering them jobs and helping them become involved in community activities.

Valenziano also spoke about parish programs — such as the annual festival, blood drive, and

homeless outreach — that attract new members and expose the parish to the non-Armenian community in Evanston.

Shannon Bagdigian of Holy Resurrection Church of New Britain, Conn., described a new organization she launched to provide spiritual nourishment and to promote community involvement among parishioners. Titled “Hye Angels,” the group volunteers in local soup kitchens, collects funds for food drives and engages in other service-oriented projects. Bagdigian said that it has also given young people an opportunity to find a sense of purpose and to give back to their community.

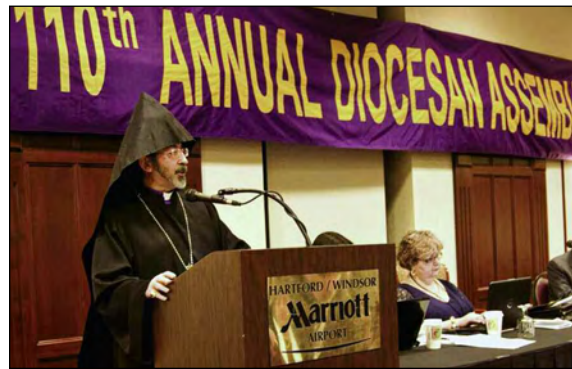
Nina Stapan, of St. David Church of Boca Raton, Fla., spoke about the work of parish organizations. She described the dedication of altar servers, as well as the members of the choir, Women’s Guild, Armenian Church Youth Organization of America, Sunday School and other groups. She also mentioned that the parish offers Christian education courses to help adults learn about their faith.

The parish presentations were followed by staff testimonials from Jennifer Morris, the Diocese’s youth outreach coordinator, and Christopher Zakian, director of communications.

Before the Friday morning theme session



George Marootian moderates the discussion on lay ministry.



Archbishop Khajag Barsamian addresses the delegates.

sacrifice, tolerance and a sensitivity to the needs of others.

“Christ came to show us how to come back to God. He came to show us how to restore God’s image in us. He taught us that if we follow his example, practice his words as recorded in the Gospels, and learn from his parables, we can

closed, Barsamian rose to make a special presentation to three women who exemplified the spirit of lay ministry. Tanya Bukucuyan, Lucy Murad and Anne Terkanian were honored for their leadership and devoted service to the Children of Armenia Sponsorship Program (CASP). The program, a collaboration of the Women’s Guild Central Council and the Fund for Armenian Relief, brings aid to Armenia’s needy children.

“Reaching out to children in our homeland brings to life Christ’s message about the special blessing of children,” the Primate said, “and I would like to recognize these three women for sustaining the beautiful ministry CASP represents.”



Arts & Living

Armenian Artists to Participate at the Chopin Symposium

By Ara Arakelian

BOSTON – In celebration of the life and art of Frederic Chopin, the Rivers School Conservatory based in Weston will present a three-day symposium, June 15–17. Among many local and invited guests artists are pianist Sergei Babayan and mezzo-soprano Victoria Avetisyan.

Babayan will play the opening recital on the evening of Friday, June 15, at 7:30 p.m. He will also present a master class on Saturday, June 16, at 2:30 p.m.

Avetisyan will participate in the closing concert on Sunday, June 17, at 4 p.m., in a performance of rarely-heard works and accompanied by the symposium's artistic director, Roberto Poli. Other guests include, pianist Andrew Tyson, cellist Ronald Lowry and Chopin scholars Zofia Chechlinska and Jonathan Bellman.

Babayan is a celebrated pianist and one of the most sought-after piano teachers in the United States. Born in Gumri, Armenia, Babayan studied in Moscow Conservatory with legendary teachers Vera Gornostaeva, Lev Naumov and Mikhail Pletnev. He is first-prize winner at many coveted piano competitions,



Sergei Babayan



Victoria Avetisyan

including the Cleveland, Hamamatsu and Scottish International Competitions. He heads the Sergei Babayan Piano Academy at the Cleveland Institute of Music, where he coaches a group of pianists who wish to explore

together the highest levels of artistic expression and individuality. He has produced winners of major international competitions, including the 2011 Gold Medalist of the 2011 Tchaikovsky and Rubinstein International Piano Competition. Avetisyan is a graduate of the Komitas State Conservatory in Yerevan and received her artist diploma from Boston University, studying with Sharon Daniels. A recipient of numerous distinctions, Avetisyan is the winner of the Andrew and Anne Pinto Award at Connecticut's Opera Guild Scholarship Competition. She has also earned the Gerda Lissner Foundation Award and the second prize in the Liederkrantz Vocal Competition. Her operatic roles include Fedora in the highly-touted world premiere of Donzetti's "Elisabeth," Carmen in Bizet's "Carmen," Fenema in Verdi's "Nabucco," Amelinde in Viardot's "La Cendrillon," Zita in Puccini's "Gianni Schicchi," Marcellina in Mozart's "The Marriage of Figaro" and Ursula in "Beatrice et Benedict" by Hector Berlioz.

Information for the Chopin Symposium can be obtained by visiting www.riversschoolconservatory.org.



Violinist Sergey Khachatryan accompanied by his sister, Lusine Khachatryan

A Violin and its Master Have their Moment

NEW YORK (*New York Times*) – In this city, audiences are regularly treated to performances by well-known musicians and never is there a shortage of excellent music to experience. Yet for all the virtuoso playing – however enjoyable it may be – it is still rare to hear an artist communicate with the level of searing intensity that

By Vivien Schweitzer

Sergey Khachatryan achieved in his sublime interpretation of Bach's *Partita for Solo Violin No. 2* at Alice Tully Hall last week.

A performance of a Bach partita or sonata for unaccompanied violin also presents a rare opportunity to see a violinist completely alone onstage, in this case without even a piano or music stand in the background.

Khachatryan has recently recorded the sonatas and partitas; the cover of the disc features him shrouded in darkness, eyes raised piously and hands pressed together above his instrument.

This was certainly a deeply spiritual performance, personal and very expressive. As soon as Khachatryan began the opening *Allemande*, one could sense how intent the audience began listening, as he achieved the all-too-uncommon feat of seducing a rustling, coughing crowd into silence.

The concluding *Chaconne* – the approximately 15-minute movement that consists of a series of 64 variations on a stately four-bar, triple-meter dance theme – has entranced listeners for centuries.

In a letter to Clara Schumann, Brahms wrote: "On one staff, for a small instrument, the man writes a whole world of the deepest thoughts and most powerful feelings. If I imagined that I could have created, even conceived the piece, I am quite certain that the excess of excitement and earth-shattering experience would have driven me out of my mind."

There were moments of plaintive beauty when Khachatryan played the monumental *Chaconne*, and equally heart-wrenching moments during the *Sarabande*. His sweet-toned approach is not the Baroque purist's aesthetic, but not a note or phrase seemed ill advised.

The performance after intermission proved equally intense. Khachatryan was joined by his sister, Lusine Khachatryan, a gifted pianist, for an exciting rendition of Beethoven's *Kreutzer Sonata*, whose tumultuous dialogue and seething drama inspired Tolstoy's novella of the same name. Such a sense of danger pervaded this fiery interpretation that you could easily imagine the jealous husband of Tolstoy's story reacting in fury after hearing his wife performing this passionate music with another man.

The drama continued with the encore, the soulful, turbulent *Introduction* for violin and piano (1957) by Armenian composer Edvard Mirzoyan.

His sweet-toned approach is not the Baroque purist's aesthetic, but not a note or phrase seemed ill advised.

Film Attempts To Document Armenia's Influence on Europe

By Alin K. Gregorian

Mirror-Spectator Staff

WATERTOWN – A new film by history buff Arsen Hakobyan of Armenia intends to put into perspective Armenia's influence on Europe, both in terms of exporting Christianity, as well as exporting its church architecture and numerous saints.

The film, shot on location in Armenia as well as in Georgia and several European countries, gives as examples churches in Europe that were built heavily influenced by the Armenian church structure – most perfectly and earliest executed in Echmiadzin and Bagaran. Among those churches is San Satiro in Milan, the original structure of which was based on the seventh-century Bagaran church.

The DVD can be watched in Armenian, English, Russian or French.

The film also spends time on the reported travels by Renaissance genius Leonardo DaVinci in Cilicia, specifically around the Taurus Mountains. According to his Codex Atlanticus, housed in the Ambrosian Library in Milan, he spent some time in Cilicia in the 1480s, where he witnessed an earthquake in Erzanga. He had reportedly gone there at the behest of the Sacred Sultan of Egypt. He sketched many faces, as well as the topography of the region.

The filmmaker, Hakobyan, said that the film would be "for all the people who don't know Armenia and Armenian history." In particular, he said, Armenians sent many proselytizers to Europe to preach Christianity, some even long before the formal adoption of Christianity as the state religion in 301 AD.

For example, St. Minas or San Miniato in Italian, preached the new religion in Tuscany and was beheaded in Florence on October 25, 250 AD. As a result, a church was named for him, honoring him as the first Christian martyr of the city. The late saint is depicted in the fresco in the dome of the church, and referred to as "the king of Armenians."

St. Minas was not alone; about 20 Armenians are counted among the saints in Italy.

The Ararat Mountains are referred to the home of Noah, and as such, its presence on Armenian soil gave the country a certain religious cache, "an altar of Christianity," according to the film.

The traditional structure of the Armenian Church, four equidistant wings with a square on top and a dome on top of the square, is visible in several European churches.

Another Armenian-style church is Germigny-des-Prés, built by Oton Matsaetsi, an Armenian architect in 806-811, in Orleans, France.

There are plenty of Armenian saints venerated by Catholics in the rest of Europe. For example, St. Servatius, or San Servato, who according to two books from the Middle Ages was born in Armenia, is recognized in the Netherlands and Belgium. There is a church in his name in

see FILM, page 12



ARTS & LIVING

Remembering Henri Verneuil

MONTREAL – The spirit of the late filmmaker Henri Verneuil's (Ashod Malakian) descended on May 19 to his fans assembled in Tekeyan Cultural Association headquarters here to commemorate the 10th anniversary of his passing.

Organized by Vision Créative Tekeyan, the sparse stage decoration consisted of a platform,



Marie-Laure Cimetier

dominated by the traditional cinematographer's portable chair inscribed "Henri Verneuil" on the back leather, a 16-millimeter camera, a film



Fernandel

cutter, several reels, a reel case and a portrait of the late cinematographer projected on the screen.

Following welcoming words, Marie-Laure Cimetier engaged in a casual conversation and audiovisual presentation with director of the program Demci Arzoumanian, who highlighted the incredible achievements of Verneuil, a ver-

satile architect, journalist and radio anchor, with 50 years in cinema that resulted in some 70 movies with international stars such as, Fernandel (a lifelong close friend), Claudia Cardinal, Jean Paul Belmondo, and across the Atlantic, Anthony Quinn, Yul Brynner, Henri Fonda and Zaza Gabor, producing a cross-pollination of the European and American cinemat-



Henry Verneuil


ic technology. In 1996 he merited the César for his career achievements, and in 2000 he was elected member of l'Académie des Beaux Arts. In the 1980s he turned the novel he had written, *Mayrig*, a kind of autobiography, into a film of the same name, with a sequel known as "588 rue Paradis," the august signature of his cinematographic career, starring Omar Sharif and Claudia Cardinale. He thus sealed a life of perfect harmony uniting his Armenian identity, French nationality and international fame.

After a presentation of Verneuil's career, "Mayrig" was screened.

The saga starts with his childhood age 1915 and unfolds into a massive chaotic migration of the family to Marseilles, where in an entirely foreign environment, life restarts in primitive conditions and develops gradually to a well-off life, thanks to strong family-friendship-community ties.

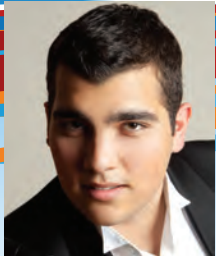
The team of Vision Créative Tekeyan deserves a hearty congratulation for offering the community high-quality and professional presentations in the art of films. Led by Demci Arzoumanian, an accomplished and versatile artist, the team consists of Roupen Boyadjian (sound and beginning credits), Sarkis Ekizian (video), Barkev Batmanian (photography), Eddi Huseindjian (technical support), Marie-Laure Cimetier (presenter) and their assistants.

– H.A.




61st Armenian Night at the Pops

PRESENTED BY THE FRIENDS OF ARMENIAN CULTURE SOCIETY



Featuring
Narek Arutyunian, clarinet
Boston Pops Orchestra
Keith Lockhart, Conductor



**Friday
June 8, 2012
at 8:00 PM
Symphony Hall,
Boston**

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– The Washington Post

For Tickets and Information, please visit:
www.FACSBoston.org



A large audience attended the program.



The team of Vision Créative Tekeyan, from left, Demci Arzoumanian, Roupen Boyadjian, Sarkis Ekizian, Eddi Huseinjian and Barkev Batmanian



ARTS & LIVING

Hovenesian Leaving Music Worcester

By Richard Duckett

WORCESTER, Mass. (*Worcester Telegram and Gazette*) — Stasia B. Hovenesian is stepping down as executive director of Music Worcester Inc. after more than 38 years of leading the organization that oversees the Worcester Music Festival — the longest-running music festival of its kind in the country that has brought in orchestras from around the world — the Worcester Chorus and many other musical and educational activities in the community.

Hovenesian said she will stay on with Music Worcester until a new executive director is in place. She told the Music Worcester board of directors privately in December of her intentions to step down. The board has been conducting a national search for her successor, said Dr. Joel Popkin, president of Music Worcester. “I will take with me very special memories of the many artists of enduring fame I have met and worked with, the excitement I have shared with you, the audience, during great evenings of exceptional music making, and the smiles and comments at concert’s end as the audience left the hall,” Hovenesian wrote in the new brochure for Music Worcester’s 2012-13 season, which will include the 153rd Worcester Music Festival.

The brochure reveals her intentions publicly.

By the same token, she said in an interview that “although this position has enhanced my life in so many ways, it is very demanding, time consuming and quite stressful. And after 38 years I felt that it was time to step down and let someone else take over.”

“Stasia has been Music Worcester for all these years,” Popkin said. “I guess the bottom line is that she will most be remembered for decades of bringing Worcester to a cultural levels that would never have been attained without her.”

Erin I. Williams, Worcester’s cultural development officer, said, “Stasia has been a true treasure for the city of Worcester and, really, the state of Massachusetts.” The Worcester Music Festival, which concludes its 2011-12 season June 3 when the Worcester Chorus performs Carl Orff’s *Carmina Burana* in Mechanics Hall, is unrecognizable in its current form from what it was when Hovenesian became executive director of the then Worcester County Music Association (Music Worcester’s predecessor) in the fall of 1973. From 1958 to 1974, the centerpiece of the festival had been a weeklong residency by the Detroit Symphony Orchestra. But in 1975, a labor dispute forced the orchestra to cancel and threatened the festival itself.

It was her greatest challenge, Hovenesian said. “Three weeks before the opening of festival they went on strike and I had to find replacement orchestras and soloists for the week. With the unflinching cooperation of guest artists and orchestras, the music festival was saved.”

The music festival subsequently moved to a new concept: concerts from diverse, acclaimed

orchestras taking place from October to June. For example, the 2012-13 season, the last that Hovenesian will have chosen, begins with the Warsaw Philharmonic October 19 at Mechanics Hall and also includes the National Symphony Orchestra of China, Siberian Virtuosi, Academy of St. Martin in the Fields (from London) and Beethoven Orchestra Bonn (Germany).

With that, the hard fact is that attendance at classical music concerts nationwide has been in decline. But Hovenesian said Music Worcester is on solid footing. Asked how the 2011-12 season has fared, she said, “Actually, out of the entire season, our attendance suffered during the unseasonal major snow/ice storm that took us by surprise on October 29 and the second major storm on March 1. We had anticipated a much larger audience for Nadja Salerno Sonnenberg (New Chamber Orchestra), so that was a disappointment. Otherwise, we had good houses.”

Hovenesian’s pending departure follows the recent exits of several well-known and long-serving leaders of some of Worcester’s most prestigious cultural institutions.

James A. Welu was director of the Worcester Art Museum from 1986 until he was succeeded

in November by Matthias Waschek. Welu had begun at the museum as assistant curator in 1974. Tower Hill Botanic Garden Executive Director John W. Trexler officially retired March 15 after nearly 28 years. Joyce R. Kressler, executive director of First Night Worcester for 14 years, also stepped down in March. (Replacements for Trexler and Kressler have not yet been publicly announced). Steven M. Pitcher announced in April he would step down as president of Worcester’s Ecotarium. The natural world museum plans to have a new director by the end of the year.

Williams said, “Worcester is very fortunate to have so many gifted people. We are in a place of strength right now, and from that viewpoint Worcester will continue to thrive as a cultural community.”

But the circumstances of each of the departures are different, as are the personalities. Hovenesian has been known as both a formidable and caring leader.

Asked to describe Hovenesian’s personality, Mary Fletcher, longstanding Music Worcester board member and past president, said: “Indefatigable — not a lovely word, necessarily, to use to describe a lovely lady, but Stasia is tire-

less. She is bright, witty, a hard worker and the consummate professional. Stasia has no ego. None of what she does is about her. She is devoted to preserving the legacy of the Worcester Music Festival and see that it continues into the future in Worcester. She has certainly fulfilled that mission for 38 years with great flair.”

Asked if she preferred the term “retiring” or “stepping down” to describe her departure, Hovenesian said, “Since the dictionary lists one of the definitions of ‘retiring’ as ‘to withdraw from active life’ I prefer to say that I am stepping down from my position in order to have the free time to lead a more active life.”

When asked what she will miss most, she said, “The excitement of planning the season, discussions with my colleagues at CAMI (Columbia Artists Management), some of whom I have worked with for over 30 years, and being involved with the Worcester chorus.”

She said what she won’t miss is “worrying about snow storms and cancellations during winter concerts.”

“I have no plans other than enjoying being in the audience of what the arts community has to offer.”

Review:

‘Feng Yi Ting’ a Wonder of Culture, Sound and Story

Egoyan-Directed Opera Part of Spoleto Festival

By Yiorgos Vassilandonakis

CHARLESTON, S.C. (*Post and Courier*) — “Feng Yi Ting” plays like a traditional Chinese theater piece. On one level, that is, because on another very interesting level, it offers a deeper, poignant perspective on tradition versus transition, on cross-pollination of cultures, on the age of globalization itself.

Guo Wenjing is as Chinese as it gets. Part of the select group of composers accepted to the Beijing Central Conservatory, known as the Class of 1956, he is the only one who chose to stay in his homeland, unlike some of his colleagues who have enjoyed successful careers in the West. They, too, use traditional Chinese influences in their music. But no one can quite “walk the walk” like Guo Wenjing, who has developed a language that has completely assimilated genuine (and constantly developing) Chinese elements within a contemporary language that owes much to Stravinsky and Lutoslawski. It’s precisely in this intentional duality where the success of his music lies.

“Feng Yi Ting” has a straightforward setup, very operatic actually. The plot tells of an ambitious and strong woman who takes control of her world using her charm and seduction, and whose defining line is: “I’d rather be a broken piece of jade, than an intact tile of clay.”

The story is told from the perspective of the heroine, very traditionally, and on one level, it could have been presented as a traditional Chinese play with not much else happening. The composer, however, treats the above setup as an object put through a prism of non-traditional harmonic, rhythmic and timbral elements, creating a kaleidoscopic swirl of sounds, which the brilliant director Atom Egoyan sets on stage with remarkable refinement and sensitivity.

The opera is minimally scored for a mixed ensemble of 15 players, among them a *dizi* (bamboo flute), a *sheng* (Chinese mouth organ), a *pipa*, an *erhu* and several exotic percussion instruments, augmented by a Western string quartet, wind trio and harp.

The inventive score is lean, percussive, buoyant and quite colorful, at times using the instrumentalists as a unison choir and employing extended techniques, all in context and good taste. There are several extended percussive

passages driving the action, culminating in wonderful bursts of sound, followed by resonant space, as well as freer quasi-aleatoric sections that allow the piece to ebb and flow very gracefully.

Language is important in Guo Wenjing’s music, and it is apparent that the rhythms, pitch patterns and prosodies of his native tongue are making their way into the shaping of the musical gestures.

The two characters sing in the traditional Chinese way, a virtuosic, high-pitched nasal falsetto with lots of inflections and wide vibration that takes a bit to get used to but is nevertheless delivered brilliantly by the soprano Shen Tiemei, a wonderful presence on the stage, and tenor Jiang Qihu.

I wish I had an ear for the subtleties of the language. Then again, this production was intended for a Western audience, and, as mentioned before, the language neatly fits into the larger picture as an object of sorts.

Egoyan is a master storyteller, and he is the real auteur of this production, as he was able to capture the concept of the score and blow it up on the stage and screen, using technology

seamlessly, with an eye and sensibility that channeled Bernardo Bertolucci and Sergio Leone. Surely he must have had in mind the shadow theater scene in “Once Upon a Time in America” when he was devising his concept for “Feng Yi Ting.”

Through the use of projection, shadow play, and spectacular video art by Tsang Kin-Wah, he and his set designer Derek McLane create a surreal surrounding veil to the story that takes it out of its geographical and temporal confines and turns it into a universal experience.

The juxtaposition of the characters dressed stunningly in vivid colors by Han Feng, against black-and-white grainy projections of themselves, shadow figures and a moving assembly line of statuettes combined seamlessly into a swirling collage that consumed the audience.

The highest achievement of this production was getting all the proportions right. The duration, scope, size of ensemble, stage and projection proportions, even the choice of venue — the wonderful Dock Street Theatre — came together perfectly to tell a story. Isn’t that the very essence of opera?

Author Ahnert to Discuss *Knock at The Door* in Glendale

GLENDALE, Calif. — Margaret Ajemian Ahnert, author of *The Knock at the Door: A Journey Through the Darkness of the Armenian Genocide*, will give a talk on Wednesday, June 27, at 7 p.m. at the Glendale Central Library Auditorium, 222 East Harvard St.

Ahnert, the winner of the 2008 New York Book Fair Award for Best Historical Memoir, was born in New York City. She has an MFA from Goucher College and a bachelor’s from Goddard College. She has pursued a variety of careers: producing television documentaries and lecturing as a docent at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

The Knock at the Door is the story of Ester, Ahnert’s mother, and her terrifying experiences as a young woman during the year of 1915, the Armenian Genocide in Turkey. Ester was separated from her foster family at the age of 15, during a forced march away from her birth town of

Amasia. She narrowly avoided kidnapping, faced unspeakable horrors at the hands of soldiers and was forcibly married to an abusive Turkish wagon-driver. Throughout her ordeal, she reminded herself that “this, too, will pass,” a mantra which enabled her to survive these nightmarish experiences. Eventually, she escaped captivity and was able to make her way to America.

The Knock at the Door is published in several languages including Spanish, Italian, Polish, Armenian and Turkish. The publisher of the Turkish edition is in jail for publishing the book because it is against the law in Turkey to publish anything that is anti-Turkish.

The program is sponsored by Abril bookstore and Glendale Public Library.

For information, contact Elizabeth Grigorian at egrigorian@ci.glendale.ca.us or call the Glendale Public Library.

Admission to the talk is free and seating is limited.

Film Attempts to Document Armenia’s Influence on Europe

FILM, from page 10

Brussels and in fact he is considered the patron saint of the city of Maastricht.

The film also refers to a couple of European peoples, including the Basques and Bavarians, as having Armenian roots. Currently, Hakobyan is working on a sequel, focusing further on the Armenian roots of some European nationalities.

“From Ararat to Europe” will be shown on Sunday, June 3, at 4 p.m. at the Ararat-Eskijian Museum in Mission Hills, Calif.

To purchase a copy of the film, write to Hakobyan at arsen2003a@yahoo.com

ARTS & LIVING

The One That Got Away: ‘Picasso and Françoise Gilot: Paris-Vallauris, 1943–1953’ at Gagosian and Frank Stella at L&M Arts

By Marika Pollack

NEW YORK (*GalleristNY*) – Pablo Picasso was 61 when he met Françoise Gilot, a pretty 23-year-old art student, in a Parisian café in 1943. That he seduced her surprised no one; that she eventually left him was, given his successes with women, pretty shocking, and became the subject of several books and films. Artworks originating during and depicting their decade-long relationship are now on display at Gagosian Gallery, where they constitute the fourth Picasso exhibition there curated by the artist’s biographer John Richardson. This period of Picasso’s production isn’t as inspired as his early collage, as eccentric as his late imaginary portraits (the subject of Gagosian’s 2009 show “Picasso: Mosqueteros”), or as inventive as the passionate painting in last spring’s “Picasso and Marie-Thérèse: L’amour fou.” Instead, the pottery, paintings, lithographs and sculptures, shown alongside a room of paintings by the young Gilot – who curated the exhibition in tandem with Richardson – are placidly domestic. The two artists often worked from the same subject: their family life in the south of France and, especially, their young children, Claude and Paloma.

This work was made in the home of a man who has settled down. The paintings’ surfaces are, in most cases, composed of the layered washes of oil paint that require time to dry between coats; it’s a leisurely process, in contrast to the hurried, thick impasto or slapdash constructions of the earlier years. He dotingly depicts the children playing games in “La Lecture et les Jouets” (1953) and the decorative “Les Jeux” (1950). Daughter Paloma’s moon-round face in the grisaille oil painting “Paloma et sa Poupée” (1952) is caressed by electric-blue highlights. The family of four is depicted in silhouette in “Chinese Shadows” (1952), one of Picasso’s most bourgeois images.

The Picasso-Gilot relationship was a Mediterranean idyll: photographs on display in the show place them in Antibes, the Chateau Grimaldi, Cannes and Vallauris, where his success afforded them comfortable homes, lithography and pottery studios, and the company of famous friends. He introduced her to Matisse early in their courtship, and Matisse chose the vegetable green and cool blue tones with which Picasso would render Gilot in “Femme au collier jaune” (1946) and in the serene “Femme en vert et mauve” (1947). Picasso depicts Gilot with a tiny, delicate face, enormous breasts and square hips, in his habitual easy interweaving of beauty and sex. In a wall of lithographs he repeats her sharp, handsome eyebrows, wide sculptural nose and signature single beauty mark. The crumpled drawing “Femme Peignant” (1953) captures her painting, absorbed by her work. More often than not, though, Picasso depicted her as just another object in the house: wringing out her mane of dark hair, calmly playing with their two children or just there, as in the interlocking shapes of “Mère et deux enfants” (1950). A wall of small twisted figurines equate her nude, seated, maternal body with the malleable clay and metal from which they’re made.

An extended-exposure photograph of Picasso drawing with light is paired with one of Gilot doing the same, suggesting mutual aesthetic influence. And yet it is her paintings that are Picassoesque, there is no vice versa (the ones that aren’t channel Van Gogh, or a Balthus-y realism). Of the two, she was more invested in chronicling the details of daily life. The children are real children in her work, rather than abstracted blocks of color. They write real words (“Liberty!”); they light real matches. The sliced up anchovies in “Les Poissons et Couteau” (1942) leak real guts:

the world Gilot inhabits in her art is populated by actual people with independent volition and irreducible qualities, rather than with Picasso’s endless plastic possibilities. Unfortunately, her paintings tend toward moralistic messages – the dignity of old age, the willfulness of youth. She exhibited with famed dealer Daniel Henry Kahnweiler until her 1953 breakup with Picasso; his gallery dropped her three years later (at Picasso’s urging, she would claim).

It must have been difficult for Gilot to encounter the women Picasso had discarded still stubbornly hanging around even as they grew old: his first wife, the ballerina Olga Khokhlava; his crazed mistress Dora Maar; the youthful and pliant Marie-Thérèse, whom he persisted in visiting each Sunday. After leaving Picasso, Gilot made a project of reclaiming her autonomy – it was probably her best move. In this show, she resolutely portrays her time with Picasso as a meeting of equals. But there are ironies here. By the time they met, the man who had made incisive discoveries about texture and form, who had painted the “Demoiselles” and “Guernica,” was an old man enjoying the comforts and privileges of success and, for all her feistiness, pretty Gilot was among those privileges. If Picasso wanted nothing more than for the world to think he was still virile and young by choosing and reinventing himself through her, that anxious desire indicated that his artistic potency was on the wane. Her independence may have remained intact in spite of him, but it’s undeniable that she accrued the lion’s share of her life’s attention and fame as a result of her liaison with Picasso. However difficult it was for Picasso to bear the blow of her leaving him – she claims to be the only woman ever to do so – he appears to have recovered swiftly; he started an affair with his quiet pottery assistant, Jacqueline Roque, just a year later and married her in 1961.

Gilot clearly relished being in the driver’s seat of this exhibition. If Picasso’s occasional claim was that he “invented her,” that he had made drawings of women who looked like her before she was born (“You should be thankful to me”), she retaliated by resisting him, running away, removing their two children to Paris and finally by writing the definitive tell-all book, *Life With Picasso*, about their relationship in 1964. In this show’s catalog she writes, “When Picasso became disagreeable, he could be very disagreeable. And when I don’t want to be nice, I, too, can be very un-

nice.” That the French have made Gilot an officer of the Legion of Honor is perhaps not so much a testament to her work as a visual artist as it is a recognition that her dedication to insisting on her side of the story, and her right to tell it – in art, books, lectures and exhibitions like this one – is, ultimately, a feminist enterprise.

A few blocks over from Gagosian, and worlds away aesthetically, is a bravura demonstration of what Picasso sought in Gilot: the raw talent that, when it accompanies youth, annoys pundits and changes paradigms. In his early 20s in the late 1950s, Frank Stella created an extraordinary series of monochrome paintings, now on view at L&M Arts. Fifteen Stellas made between 1958 and 1962 are on loan from major museums and the artist’s private collection to make up an exhibition that, if you are interested in postwar painting, you must see.

Even if you know Stella’s iconic black paintings, like “Zambezi” (1959), you may not know how economical and satisfying they are in person. The lines in between the black paint stripes fuzz slightly on the unprimed canvas; the industrial paint on notched canvas works have edges covered by what looks like duct tape. The tiny, sparkly “Untitled” (1959) is a revelation. “Delta” (1958) takes up Jasper Johns’s drippy, striped flags and renders them in black enamel. Two rhymed L-shaped, copper-colored paintings, “Creede I and II” (1961), shift the figure-ground relationship to a dance between the painting’s form and the gallery’s white walls. These are artworks that changed the way art worked.

When people chastise the contemporary art market for occasionally rewarding very young artists, they seem unaware that extraordinary things have long happened in the studios of those who are 22 years old. This show allows us to be physically present with paintings that are endlessly reproduced in art history books; it’s a moving experience that results in visitors to the gallery backing up from the paintings, then zooming in on them, smiling and sharing their enthusiasm with perfect strangers.

Last Thursday, a show of Stella’s eccentric new sculptures opened at the nearby gallery Freedman Art. When this critic asked the artist about his old work, he seemed genuinely unconcerned. “Ah, the past,” he said, waving his hand in the air, and wandered away to talk about the present.

(This article originally appeared in the observer.com.)

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NEW YORK

JUNE 16 – St. Nersess Armenian Seminary annual Summer Picnic. 150 Stratton Road, New Rochelle. Festive day of music with John Berberian Ensemble, kebab meals, children’s activities, including a magician, an attic treasures sale, Baykar the Armenian vendor and more. Plus, purchase super raffle ticket for \$50 to win three cash prizes. Free parking and admission. Visit www.stnersess.edu or call (914) 636-2003 for more information.

SEPTEMBER 29 – Save the date. Armenia Fund 20th Anniversary Gala, 7 p.m. at Gotham Hall in New York City.



On June 16, St. Nersess Armenian Seminary will hold its annual summer picnic, at 150 Stratton Road, New Rochelle, NY, featuring the John Berberian Ensemble, kebab meals, children’s activities and more. Admission is free.

COMMENTARY

Azeris Are Winning the Media War

By Edmond Y. Azadian

Azerbaijan's political clout is growing in the Caucasus, despite internal dissensions as well as the beatings and jailing of the journalists, because major powers are not interested in those finer matters, unless they became the necessary tools to meddle in the internal affairs of some targeted sovereign countries, marked for regime change.

Currently, Azerbaijan has been elected to the UN Security Council non-permanent membership and in a rotating system, it is presiding over the UN Security Council. If you need to figure out the moral bankruptcy of international politics, you have to watch the war-mongering President Ilham Aliyev, delivering his speech at the UN forum lambasting Armenians as aggressors and occupiers of Azeri territory.

Two major factors have contributed to Azerbaijan's accession to the Security Council seat, defeating Slovenia: 1) It is reported that between \$100 to \$140 million were "donated" to developing countries to buy their votes. Islamic countries are regularly brainwashed at Islamic conferences that Christian Armenians have massacred their fellow Muslims in Karabagh, playing the religion card. Most vocal among the Islamic countries is Pakistan, under different administrations (Benazir Bhutto, Pervez Musharraf and the current rulers). They are natural supporters of their Muslim Azeri brothers, never mind that the Karabagh conflict is not a religious issue. Therefore, the Islamic bloc does not need any bribes to support Azerbaijan's candidacy. 2) Azerbaijan's newfound friendship with Israel has also helped to rally many Western countries around that country. Azeris are playing an incendiary role in the region, providing their territory to Israel as a launching pad, in preparation for an eventual confrontation with Iran.

Interestingly, no binding resolutions can be adopted at the UN Security Council level on the Karabagh issue, because the co-chairs of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) are also part of that body and they are not ready to relinquish their mediator's role to the UN.

However, Azerbaijan and Turkey will gain a lot of public relations mileage every time they can bring the issue to the UN forum. This poses a very serious challenge to Armenia's foreign policy establishment. Armenia has seasoned diplomats, beginning with Foreign Minister Eduard Nalbandian, and ending with Garen Nazarian, Armenia's ambassador to the UN.

Armenia cannot depend too much on world powers, who have demonstrated time and again that Azeri oil is worth more than Armenian blood. Therefore, they have to rely on the limited resources at their disposal.

One may wonder what Diaspora Armenian activism can provide to the Foreign Ministry's diplomacy. An organized and politicized diaspora can act as the extension of Armenia's foreign policy establishment. But are we ready, willing and capable of playing

that role? Do we have the political vision to assume such a role?

Some introspection, admission of responsibility and guilt, if you will, are in order here.

The Armenian community was informed a long time ago about Azeri President Ilham Aliyev's appearance at the UN. In addition, no one had any doubts what kind of speech he was about to deliver. Only an impressive massive rally at the UN could blunt Aliyev's message, reverberating in the news media. Our diplomats were already conducting their task, quietly. But Aliyev stood up at that world forum and told his side of the story without an effective challenge from "the one-million-strong US Armenian community."

Who was supposed to take the initiative? Our religious leaders have a good excuse and they cannot get involved in politics; never mind that Aliyev's politics destroys thousands of khachkars, religious symbols in Nakhichevan with another few hundred houses of worship. Out of thousands of attendants at the Times Square commemoration, a few hundred must have the political motivation to counter Aliyev at the UN. Some of our lobbying groups are locked in other battles and therefore let Aliyev enjoy a free ride at the UN.

That leaves the burden to the Armenian political parties; the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party (ADL) is split, and whatever the legitimate leadership undertakes on the East Coast, some renegades undermine the initiative, under orders from their Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) bosses.

The ARF led a half-hearted demonstration at the UN headquarters, probably giving a good laugh to the Azeri delegation. It was reported that only 50 demonstrations showed up with some banners. That was enough for domestic consumption to boast that only the ARF challenged Aliyev's arrogance, whereas it may have done more damage than good.

If the ARF leadership considered that this was a cause of paramount importance, they could have invited other groups also to participate, if they were not concerned sharing the glory with them. After all, that party was able to mobilize more than 1,000 demonstrators at the Armenian Embassy in New York to protest the signing of protocols with Turkey. Many more showed up under their leadership in Los Angeles and Beirut to harangue and insult Armenia's president during that period.

Had no one showed up at the UN, the Azeri delegation could be mystified, thinking that Armenians have a secret formula to counter their onslaught. But the way the community reacted pacified the Azeris that they can dismiss Armenian political power in the US, which demonstrated its quixotic face at the UN.

Perhaps it is not altogether fair to single out the ARF leadership in this case, since the entire community is responsible for the debacle. And after that we cannot play the role of armchair guru, blaming Armenia's foreign policy establishment battling the Azeri public relations and media onslaught.

As we can see, the Azeris are winning the media war assisted by petrodollars and their friends in higher positions.

What a Great Time to Study Armenian Genocide

By Jonathan Kay

This week, a Turkish court approved a criminal indictment against four former Israeli military commanders for their alleged role in the deaths of nine Turkish activists who were trying to break Israel's blockade of Hamas-run Gaza in 2010. The indictment calls for between 8,000 and 18,000 life sentences for each of the Israeli men.

That is a lot of life sentences — especially given last year's UN report concluding that, while Israel had used excessive force against the knife- and club-wielding Turkish *jihadis*, the blockade itself was perfectly legal.

As an arithmetic experiment, imagine if the Israeli army had done something truly monstrous — like, say, kill upwards of a million Armenians, as the Ottoman Turks did during World War I and the years that followed. Scaling the death toll upwards by the roughly five orders of magnitude separating the two episodes would yield between 800-million to 1.8 billion life sentences for the Armenian Genocide's Turkish architects.

Alas, those killers have long since given up this earthly vale of tears. Many died in their beds — unlike the Armenian men and women who perished from exposure or starvation, clutching their children's bodies, during their

forced marches through the Anatolian hinterlands.

As it happens, a new book on this historical episode — *The Young Turks' Crime Against Humanity: The Armenian Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing in the Ottoman Empire*, by Clark University's Prof. Taner Akçam — recently has been published by Princeton University Press. Akçam is the first scholar of Turkish origin to publicly acknowledge the Armenian Genocide.

Until now, his work has been taboo in Turkey, which still denies the truth of what happened between 1915 and 1923. But given this week's news about the Israeli flotilla indictments, it would seem the Turks are exhibiting a new-found zeal for litigating the crimes of the past. What better time to crack open Akçam's book?

The first theme that jumps out at you from Akçam's research is the obsessive zeal with which the Turks of the early 20th-century era counted and sorted the Anatolian population by religion and ethnicity. Christians — Greek and Armenian alike — were singled out for special scrutiny. But even non-Turk Muslims were seen as suspect. Millions of Kurds, for instance, were ethnically cleansed from certain regions in a bid to weaken their political claims. "In order to reform the Kurdish element and transform it into a constructive entity, it is necessary to immediately displace and send [Kurds]

to the assigned places in Anatolia mentioned below," reads one 1916 telegram cited by Akçam. "In the place of resettlements the *sheikhs*, leaders and *mullahs* will be separated from the rest of the tribe and sent to different districts ... to places where they will be unable to maintain relations with other members."

The overarching demographic goal of the Ottoman Turks prior to WWI — which would become part of the rationale behind the Armenian Genocide and the lesser crimes committed against other minorities — was what Akçam calls "the 5 percent to 10 percent rule": officials sought to cleanse each region of the country such that resettled non-Turk groups would constitute not more than one-in-20 or one-in-10 within the larger population. One way to meet this mathematical threshold was through massive, long-range population transfers. Another strategy, which was implemented as World War I unfolded, was outright extermination: cadavers didn't count toward the five-to-10 quota.

The process by which Ottoman officials and generals used military exigencies as a pretext for annihilating large swathes of the Armenian population is complex: the details are contained in chapters five through eight of Akçam's book, along with the names of the men responsible. But it is the anecdotes that stand out in a reader's memory, such as this

continued on next page

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COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

Armenians Should Form a United Front Before Any Negotiations with Turkey

My latest column on Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu's efforts to initiate a dialog with the diaspora generated numerous reactions from both Armenians and Turks.

Turkish newspapers, TV stations and websites gave extensive coverage to Davutoglu's reported overtures to Armenians. The Turkish media linked the foreign minister's initiative to Armenian plans for the commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the Genocide in 2015.

Armenians posted dozens of comments on websites and Facebook in response to my column which was circulated worldwide in English, Armenian, Turkish, French and Russian. The Armenian reaction was understandably skeptical and cautious. Armenian government officials quietly followed the reports on Davutoglu's meetings without making any public comment, while the Armenian press in Istanbul simply reprinted what the Turkish media had published on this topic.

Armenian readers raised two key issues: Who would represent the diaspora if and when Armenians start negotiating with Turkey, and what should be the specific Armenian demands from the Turkish government?

These are highly-complex issues deserving serious consideration by Armenians worldwide. Ideally, diaspora representatives should be selected through elections in various countries, as proposed in my earlier columns. Those elected would have the right to represent Diaspora Armenians in any negotiations.

These representatives would have to coordinate their decisions and actions with the Armenian government, particularly on the critical issue of negotiating with Turkey, by forming a joint delegation. As Armenians learned from the recent fiasco of the Armenia-Turkey Protocols, it would be unthinkable to reach a settlement with Turkey without the participation and agreement of both Armenia and the diaspora.

In the absence of an elected diasporan structure, representatives of the three main Armenian political parties, jointly with the Armenian government, could take the lead in forming a single negotiating team. To make the delegation more inclusive, several major community organizations and prominent individuals could be asked to join, including representatives of Armenians in Turkey.

Another critical issue is framing the agenda of negotiations with Turkish officials. What are the Armenians' concrete demands from Turkey? This is an extremely serious and sensitive matter that requires in-depth knowledge of the Armenian Cause and expertise in negotiating strategies and tactics.

It would be instructive for Armenians to review how Israel and 23 major Jewish organizations came together as the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany, to obtain restitution for Holocaust victims, and how these organizations coordinated their positions with the State of Israel, which signed a separate Reparations Agreement with West Germany? Over the years, as a result of their collaborative efforts, the coalition of Jewish Diaspora organizations and Israel received more than \$70 billion dollars in restitution from Germany.

Additional lessons could be learned from examples of financial settlements resulting from mass torts, asbestos exposure and product liability and claims arising from destruction of the World Trade Center and the Gulf oil spill.

There is, however, a significant difference between the Holocaust and the Armenian Genocide. While the Jewish people were exterminated in European countries under Nazi rule, Armenians were massacred and forcefully driven from their ancestral homeland. Therefore, no amount of monetary payment will fully compensate Armenians for the loss of their historic lands. Armenians should seek not only compensation for their personal losses, but also the return of Western Armenia as arbitrated by President Woodrow Wilson – a claim Turkey has repeatedly rejected.

Should serious negotiations materialize, the joint Armenian delegation could ask Turkey to take the following preliminary actions to show its good faith:

- Compensate all Genocide victims;
- Rebuild and return all religious sites to the Armenian Patriarchate of Istanbul;
- Return all confiscated private and community properties to their Armenian owners;
- Provide the Republic of Armenia with special access to the Turkish port of Trabzon for commercial purposes;
- Give Armenians visa-free entry to Ararat, Ani and other Armenian historical sites in Turkey;
- Lift the blockade of Armenia;
- End Turkey's official policy of denial of the Armenian Genocide and annul Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code and
- Refrain from all hostile policies directed against Armenia and Artsakh (Karabagh).

These measures, if agreed upon, would represent significant progress in the pursuit of Armenian claims from Turkey, whereas the issue of territorial restitution could be addressed separately through international legal action.

What a Great Time To Study the Armenian Genocide

from page 14

one, quoted from a 1918 debate in the Ottoman Chamber of Deputies:

"There was a county head in the military district. He loaded the Armenians onto a caique on the pretext of sending them off to Samsun [by boat] and then dumping them into the sea. I heard that the governor [of the province of Trebizond] Cemal Azmi performed this act personally ... As soon as I arrived [in Istanbul], I told the interior minister those things that I had seen and heard ... But I was unable to persuade him to take any action ... I tried over a period of perhaps three years, but it was not to be. They would claim it [had happened in] the war zone, say things like this."

Almost a century later, Turkish officials still "say things like this" when confronted with evidence of the Armenian Genocide. To this day, Turkey's formal position is that the Armenians endured a mere "relocation" exercise during a period when they were suspected of comprising a pro-Russian fifth-column threat. Five years ago, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Erdogan asked his government officials to use the phrase "1915 Events" to describe the Armenian Genocide – an obscene euphemism akin to referring to the Jewish Holocaust as "that thing that happened in the early 1940s."

Many nations and ethnic groups whitewash their own history. Russian school textbooks underplay the hideous crimes of Stalin, for instance. And Chinese officials are scandalized whenever someone mentions the atrocities against Falun Gong practitioners or Tibet. But unlike Turkey, these nations generally do not posture as guardians of human rights and international law.

If Turkey presumes to lecture Israel or anyone else about crimes against humanity, it could start with a frank admission the epic horrors that Turks themselves perpetrated against Armenians and other minorities. Even then, the Turkish case against Israel will have little merit. But at least, it will not stink of hypocrisy.

(Jonathan Kay is managing editor for comment at the *National Post* and a fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies. This commentary originally appeared in the May 29 issue of the publication.)

Perseverance

World Armenians commemorated April 24 and will do so again next year; plans are underway to commemorate the centennial the year after. There is no doubt that Homeland Armenia and the entire

By Nubar Dorian

Armenians worldwide will join together to raise their voices, to mourn their martyrs, pray together, march together and with one united, loud and hopeful voice, demand justice and restitution, in spite of Turkey's denials, distortions and untruths, along with mountains of evidence that lays bare the torture, starvation, cruelty and death of more than one-and-a-half million innocent Armenians.

Tragically, there are Armenians who continue non-involvement in "Armenian Rights" under the pretext of staying away from "Armenian politics." They label all efforts of demands, our rights, parochial, illusory, hopeless even though our cause is lofty, viable, worthy of sacred pursuit, the proof of which is the fact that this first genocide of the 20th century did not disappear from the world screen for almost a century. The Armenian Genocide is now recognized by more than 3 billion people of nations and the centennial will be commemorated very soon, in spite of millions of dollars Turkey plans to spend to deny and claim innocence.

We know Turkey is strong in land (some Armenian land, as well), rich in army, tanks and planes. But their inability to make us forget the slaughter, rape, murder and theft of our Armenian brethren, the occupied lands, the destruction of our churches and especially our "rights," our "demands" and justice, lives on in every Armenian heart and mind and wants their rights. The Armenian is no longer "the starving Armenian." We now have an independent country, have more than 6 million Armenians in the diaspora, faithful to the Homeland. We have wealth and influence and a voice at the United Nations, most especially, we have justice on our side. Turkey should know, or already knows, that all the centuries yet to come, that

Armenians will pursue their cause until justice visits them. Already, Turkey's armor of denial is showing cracks and fissures.

As we approach our centennial, our actions, pronouncements and programs will be a triumph of a well orchestrated, united and cohesive commemoration. This occasion will be a celebration of all "perseverance." This word, perseverance, has been one cause for celebration. We have persevered against all odds. Even to the most callous Armenian, Genocide is a very sad promenade in the field of memory and never will die and be buried. It will always be a reservoir of Armenian nightmares.

April 24 will continue to appear in every Armenian's home calendar every year yet to come. It will be a day to remember, to pray, to recall man's inhumanity to man. It will also be a day to celebrate Armenian Perseverance. I share with you the following words of Abraham Lincoln that a very good friend made available to me:

"Failed in business, age 24, ran for legislator and defeated, age 29, defeated for Congress, age 34, defeated for Congress, age 39, defeated for Congress again, age 46, defeated for vice president, age 47, defeated for senator, age 49, elected president of the United States, age 51."

The whirling center of Armenian thought shows to never entertain the possibility of defeat in our pursuit of Genocide recognition, reparation and the return of our lands. Flood of anger, sorrow and pain will never relent in the Armenian heart. We shall overcome Turkey's denial, blister or power. The story of April24 will be told and re-told for all generations yet to come, just like our grandparents and parents persevered, in abject, hopeless difficult times, so shall we and our children.

There are certainties for Armenians and those yet to come. One is that Echmiadzin is the fountainhead of our faith; another is that the Mount Ararat sky will always welcome the sun-kissed breath of mist. Still another is that reflection of moon-light will visit Lake Sevan. A rock-solid certainty is that Turks committed Genocide, our rights were violated and demands our limitless perseverance.

(Nubar Dorian is a resident of Cliffside, NJ. He is active in the community, including as a Diocesan Delegate.)

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The *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* welcomes articles, commentaries and community news from our readers. In order to assure the accurate and timely publication of articles submitted, please note the following policies:

- All articles submitted should be typed, double (or triple) spaced and printed in a type size large enough to be clearly legible (10 point or larger). Submissions that do not conform to these specifications will be assigned lowest priority.
- Articles sent by fax are acceptable, and e-mail submissions are encouraged.
- All submissions should include the name of a contact person and

a daytime telephone number.

- Deadline for submission of all articles and advertising is noon on the Monday of the week of publication.
- Photos will be published without charge at the discretion of the editors and art director. Photos will be returned only if a self-addressed and stamped envelope is included.
- The *MS* will publish only one article about an upcoming organizational event. For major special events, exceptions may be made only by special arrangement with the editors.
- Telephone numbers, ticket prices and other details (at the discretion of the editors) will not be included in press releases.

Malatya: Post-Armenian life in modern Turkey’s once Armenian city

By Gayane Mkrtchyan

MALATYA, Turkey (ArmeniaNow) – Armenian brothers Arman and Murad, who live in Turkey’s southeastern city of Malatya, open the doors of the 250-year-old Armenian Holy Trinity (Tashhoron) Church in the city’s Cavusoglu district and invite in the group of visiting Armenian and Turkish journalists.

The church that once saw liturgies and was filled with the fragrance of incense now has no dome and it is without the altar, it is all ruins on the inside – a king without a crown in the city long run by the Turks.

“The Turkish government has made a decision about the renovation of the church. The work will begin soon. They say that after the renovations it will serve either as a library or a cultural center,” says Serdar Boyaci (Sardar Boyajian), a representative of the Malatya Armenians’ Haydar Union. Boyaci says that their grandfathers told of a time when Malatya had four Armenian churches. Today, the Holy Trinity and Grigor Lusavorich (Gregory the Illuminator) churches are in ruins, one was



A street in Malatya

nalist Hrant Dink, who was assassinated in Turkey in 2007, is now home to only 60 Armenians, who are not afraid to speak openly about their ethnic identity and about being Christians. Still, according to Boyaci, there are also about 150 “hidden” Armenians in the city who have converted to Islam.

Unlike in Istanbul or other Christian communities where Armenians are not afraid of speaking openly about their ethnicity, in Malatya doing so seems to be more dangerous.

The guide accompanying the group of Armenian journalists, Ali Bey, connects it with the events that occurred in Malatya two years ago, when clandestine nationalist groups committed attacks against Christians.

Boyaci accompanied the group to the Armenian cemetery in Malatya, where the oldest gravestone is to Martha Obozyan who died in 1910. He shows his grandfather’s gravestone Grigor Orguneser (Ansurlyan). There used to be a community called Ansur in the territory of Malatya, from where the name originated. The

names engraved on many of the gravestones are of Armenian origin, but the endings are Turkish.

“To avoid interethnic clashes and social tension a law was passed in Turkey in 1934 by which all citizens of the country regardless of their ethnicity must have Turkish names,” says Ali Bey.



Interior of 250-year-old Armenian Holy Trinity Church in Malatya

Andranik Ispiryan, a specialist in Turkish studies who was also among the group of visiting journalists, says that with this step the Turkish authorities were solving the issue of “Turkinizing” all citizens of the country.

Boyaci talks about how Malatya city authorities destroyed a chapel that was recently built in the Armenian cemetery which also served as a place for the local Armenians to gather.

“We had applied to the municipality to provide funds to restore the defunct prayer house in the Armenian cemetery, but we got a refusal. We asked them to be allowed to restore it with our own means, and they agreed. Construction cost about \$65,000. The opening of the center was on February 2 this year, but the next day the municipal authorities had the structure demolished with the explanation that it looked like a church,” says Boyaci.

The Haydar organization and Turkish media made the case public, after which Malatya’s municipality came up with an explanation that they only wished to make a few modifications to the building to make sure it didn’t look like a church. In the end, the city authorities promised that the prayer house would be restored by November of this year.

Boyaci also accompanied the group of journalists to the Grigor Lusavorich Church, which is a few kilometers away from Malatya, in the Kurdish village of Venk.

The church situated on a small hill looks like

a gem hidden deep in the ocean – on the outside it has a foreboding appearance, but inside, from amid the ruins, one can still see its once beautiful features. It has no altar, no dome, and surely no one to take care of anymore.

Within the premises of the church Kurdish and Turkish children were playing games. They stared at the visitors of this forgotten church in surprise.

Sanym, a Venk villager, says that every year in August they have many Armenian visitors coming to see their holy place.

“This is their saint’s holiday, they come to celebrate it. Our grandfathers say that once Armenians used to live here,” he says. Boyaci says that Turkish authorities also have a program to repair the Grigor Lusavorich church, but after repairs this church will also serve as a cultural center.

In the evening Malatya turns on its light, revealing the tremendousness of the place. At a local antiques shop there is an item in the image of a cross. The seller, who speaks only in Turkish, gives an affirmative answer to the question whether it is supposed to be an Armenian thing. Then the Turkish seller starts displaying other Armenian items – saucers, trays, crosses... Then suddenly he tries to explain in Turkish that he is also of Armenian origin. It turns out his father was named Grigor and mother Satenik. They named him Hakob, but later he had to get the name of Remzi



Serdar Boyaci showing his grandfather’s gravestone

turned into a mosque, and they cannot now locate the other at all.

Boyaci knows only a few words in Armenian, he mainly speaks Turkish. The office of the organization he runs is situated in Istanbul. It includes about 200 Malatya Armenians who live in Turkey and in other countries of the world. Haydar also has a Facebook account.

Malatya, a city of about 400,000 and birthplace of the late human rights activist and jour-

Erebouni Dance Ensemble to Stage Inaugural Performance

WATERTOWN – The newly formed Erebouni Dance School and Ensemble will stage its inaugural performance at the Shaw Auditorium of the Watertown High School on Sunday, June 17, at 5 p.m.

The school’s artistic director, Arman

Mnatsakanyan has inspired all his students in the art of dancing and in less six months he is taking his group on to the stage. He has made a special trip to his native Yerevan, to find and bring costumes for his dancers. A graduate of Armenian State School of Dance, Mnatsakanyan began his career in Pioneer Palace while still in school and in 1995 joined the “Friendship” State Dance Ensemble, where he became one of its premier soloists, performing in many countries. He has studied at the State Pedagogical University’s dance department, founded the Golden Age Dance Ensemble winning numerous awards and coached a winning team on Shant TV emulating America’s “Dancing with the Stars” program.

Formed under the umbrella of Hamazkayin-Boston, the mission of the Erebouni Dance School and Ensemble is to provide an educational environment for our children, where they can learn the fundamentals of dance in a structured manner. The primary goal is to teaching Armenian traditional folk dances.

For more information, visit www.hamazkayin-usa.org/boston.

Senate Appropriations Committee Supports Continued Assistance For Nagorno Karabagh

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all funding in this “bipartisan bill” is “\$2.6 billion below the president’s budget request and \$1.2 billow below the Fiscal Year 2012 level,” at the same time it still “addresses the priorities of Senators of both parties.”

Further action on this bill and its counterpart in the House of Representatives has not been scheduled.



Armenian brothers Arman (left) and Murad

used to be home to a 20,000-strong Armenian community were erased after the 1915 Genocide. The few survivors of the extermination policy of the Young Turks’ government were deported and took refuge in different countries. A lot of them went to eastern Armenia and settled down in a Yerevan suburb that was named Malatya.

(Gayane Mkrtchyan has been visiting Turkey as part of the Support to Armenia-Turkey rapprochement project of the Global Political Trends Center and Eurasia Partnership Foundation.)